

Problematic Parents: An Efficacy Analysis of Code of Conduct Policies in Ontario Minor
Hockey Associations

Zach Heipel, BSM (Honours)

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Faculty of Applied Health Sciences, Brock University
St. Catharines, Ontario

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EFFICACY ANALYSIS OF CODE OF CONDUCT POLICIES

Abstract

Minor hockey in Canada holds significant historical and cultural importance. Many children in Canada aspire to become professional hockey players and many parents dream of their child succeeding in the sport at the highest levels. This perceived importance runs the risk of creating a hypercompetitive environment with overinvolved parents that can adversely affect multiple minor hockey stakeholders, such as young athletes, coaches, referees, administrators, and other parents. Existing research has examined violations from parents in various youth sport settings and a lack of institutional policies to inform, monitor, and discipline parents who violate behavioural expectations. Many studies have recommended the inclusion of parental education tools and association disciplinary procedures, but current literature lacks a fundamental understanding of current behaviour policies and their effectiveness. This study examines the contents of code of conduct policies in Ontario minor hockey associations, the behaviour expectations of parents, the effectiveness of code of conduct policies, the various violations that parents commit, and potential recommendations to improve parental behaviour. Employing constructivist epistemology and qualitative research design, this study used interpretive phenomenology and thematic analysis to analyze two types of data: 58 existing code of conduct documents, and 21 semi-structured interviews with minor hockey rep coaches and administrators. This analysis revealed that while many Ontario minor hockey associations have some form of conduct policy in place, content and implementation varies significantly between associations. Furthermore, while participants perceived that parental behaviour appears to be improving in recent years, misconduct incidents still commonly occur with significant negative consequences to various minor hockey stakeholders. Participants identified many strategies to better prevent and respond to parental misconduct in minor hockey are identified and examined,

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making this study useful to minor hockey associations in developing better policies and procedures to effectively deal with parental misconduct incidents.

Key Words: Minor Hockey, Policy Evaluation, Parental Behaviour, Code of Conduct

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In recent years, minor hockey in Canada has encountered a plethora of issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic (Chidley-Hill, 2020), concussions (Johnson, 2011), on-ice violence (Cusimano et al., 2016; Fogel, 2014), declining participation rates (Lajoie & Valji, 2020), and increasing equipment prices and registration fees (Rutherford, 2009). However, one issue that continues to be at the forefront of Canadian minor hockey is overinvolved parents who can be involved in verbal and physical altercations with their own child, other players, parents, coaches, and referees (Gillis, 2014; Monette, 2017; Robidoux & Bocksnick, 2010; Thompson, 2010). These altercations have become known as *rink rage* by academic researchers and media organizations and can negatively influence youth's experiences in minor hockey (Deacon, McClelland, & Smart, 2001; Gillis, 2014). The purpose of this study is to identify and understand current parental code of conduct policies in Ontario minor hockey associations, examine their efficacy, document the lived experiences of minor hockey coaches' and administrators' relationships with parents in relation to the policies, and make policy recommendations to improve parental behaviour.

In addition, the goal of this study is for minor hockey organizations to use findings to improve stakeholders' experiences by providing a safe and inclusive environment. Minor hockey associations and scholarly research claim several benefits to sport participation including personal growth, lessons on teamwork, responsibility, skill-building, physical activity, social integration, and social change (OMHA, 2017; Wankel & Berger, 1990). In addition, Mandigo and Couture (1996) highlight the importance of fun as a key motivator for children in organized sport by stating, "children find physical activities fun when personal objectives and intrinsic factors such as skill development, improvement, optimal challenge, control over the

environment, intrinsic motivation, opportunity to participate and constructive feedback are emphasized over extrinsic factors such as winning” (p.58). To reap the potential benefits of minor hockey, parents need to play a key role in the development of their child. Previous research has identified parents as a key agent in the socialization process of children (Dorsch, Smith, & McDonough, 2009). If parents are unable to provide adequate support through methods like positive encouragement, active listening, commitment at practices and games, and refrain from embarrassing their child, their experience in sport can be negative (Gleddie, 2013; Merkel, 2013). Yielding a negative experience can be concerning as participation in youth sports has declined due to parental overinvolvement, concussion awareness, and overall cost associated with playing (Strashin, 2016; Witt & Dangi, 2018). As a result, this study aims to be a resource for minor hockey associations to understand the potential strengths and weaknesses of current policies and potential recommendations to enhance the experiences of relevant stakeholders.

Research Questions

The research questions that have guided this study include:

1. What code of conduct policies exist in Ontario minor hockey associations?
2. What behavioural expectations do Ontario rep minor hockey coaches and administrators have for parents?
3. What are Ontario rep minor hockey coaches and administrators perspectives on the effectiveness of conduct policies?
4. To what extent do Ontario rep minor hockey coaches and administrators perceive parents adhering to and violating conduct policies?
5. What recommendations do Ontario rep minor hockey coaches and administrators have for improving parental conduct policies?

Governance Structure of Minor Hockey

The term ‘minor hockey’ is used in this proposal to describe amateur ice hockey for players below the junior level. In Canada, hockey players are classified by their age and skill level. Hockey Canada is the national governing body of the sport and controls most hockey-related participation in the country (Hockey Canada, n.d.). Under Hockey Canada are 13 amateur hockey federations for each province and territory (Hockey Canada, n.d.). As the official national sport organization (NSO), Hockey Canada has the power to implement new rules and regulations subject to the voting rights of its members. Members can remove Board of Directors, propose, amend, or repeal any articles, bylaws, regulations, or playing rules of Hockey Canada (Greenhow & Doherty, 2021). Elected board members do not have any affiliation with any member affiliations and have the obligation to review terms of reference and partner agreements (Greenhow & Doherty, 2021).

The 13 provincial/regional/territorial federations are responsible for governance and administration of hockey related participation within their jurisdiction and representing their local members at Hockey Canada meetings (Greenhow & Doherty, 2021). Their overall purpose is to foster development at regional and grassroots levels by working with regional and local associations. Each level of Hockey Canada operates semi-autonomously with policy and practices within their own jurisdiction through specific by-laws (Greenhow & Doherty, 2021). However, each member still needs to operate in a manner consistent with the regulations and rules of Hockey Canada (Greenhow & Doherty, 2021).

This study focuses on rep minor hockey in Ontario. Ontario has the largest number of minor hockey participants for a province or territory with 254,000 registrants and is comprised of three branches that include the Ontario Hockey Federation (OHF), Hockey Northwestern Ontario

(HNO) and Hockey Eastern Ontario (HEO) (Hockey Canada, 2020; Wigfield & Snelgrove, 2018.). The OHF is the largest of the three branches with 164,303 male players and consists of four core regional members that facilitate the participation of minor hockey in the province (Hockey Canada, 2020; Ontario Hockey Federation, 2018). These include Alliance Hockey Association (AHA), Greater Toronto Hockey League (GTHL), Ontario Minor Hockey Association (OMHA), and Northern Ontario Hockey Association (NOHA) (Wigfield & Snelgrove, 2018). The HEO is the second largest branch with 25,607 male players and is comprised of 11 districts in the Ottawa and surrounding area and operates within the Ottawa District Minor Hockey Association (ODMHA) and Central Canadian Hockey League (CCHL) while HNO is the smallest branch with 4,466 male players and is divided into three separate zones in and surrounding Thunder Bay with the east and west zones divided into three addition subzones (Hockey Canada, 2020; Wigfield & Snelgrove, 2018). Table 1 below provides an overview of each provincial branch and member organizations that facilitate minor hockey in the province.

Table 1

Overview of provincial governing bodies and regional organizations for minor hockey in Ontario.

Provincial Governing Body	Regional Organizations
Ontario Hockey Federation (OHF)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alliance Hockey Association (AHA) • Greater Toronto Hockey League (GTHL) • Northern Ontario Hockey Association (NOHA) • Ontario Minor Hockey Association (OMHA)
Hockey Northwestern Ontario (HNO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central Zone • East Zone (1,2,3)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West Zone (1,2,3)
Hockey Eastern Ontario (HEO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ottawa District Minor Hockey Association (ODMHA) • Central Canada Hockey League (CCHL)

Moreover, players are grouped into seven different age categories to create a level playing field based on the players physical development. In 2019, Hockey Canada announced that age categories would be renamed for the 2020 season to be more concise and prevent confusion over certain terms that could be deemed offensive in a certain context (Toronto Star, 2019). The age categories include U7 (formerly Initiation or Tyke), U9 (formerly Novice), U11 (formerly Atom), U13 (formerly Peewee), U15 (formerly Bantam), U18 (formerly Midget), and U20 (formerly Juvenile) (Hockey Canada, n.d.).

In addition, minor hockey players are placed into specific categories based on their skill level. There are two main groupings for players: non-competitive and competitive. Non-competitive leagues include recreational ‘house league’ where players are randomly put onto teams and are not assessed on their skill level (OMHA, 2020). Recreational sport is undertaken for leisure and enjoyment, with a focus on skill development for youth from various abilities, requiring less time commitment than competitive sport (Lyle & Cushion, 2017; Trudel & Gilbert, 2006). Associations can vary in how their house league programs operate. Smaller associations in rural areas are likely to field fewer house league teams for each age division and elect to play against other local associations in the area. Larger associations will divide their group of players into teams and play against one another internally through the association during the season. However, certain associations will create a house league select team of the best players in the division and play other neighbouring associations throughout a season

(OMHA, 2020). In contrast, competitive sport tends to include performance as a measurable goal. Participants are often selected based on skill through tryouts, play in formalized tournaments, playoffs, and require a higher level of coaching certification (Lyle & Cushion, 2017; Trudel & Gilbert, 2006). The classifications for rep hockey include AE or MD, A, AA, and AAA with AAA being the highest competitive level in Ontario (OMHA, 2020). Smaller associations typically have the capacity to produce one or two rep teams per division while larger city centers with more registered players can produce a team for each classification in each division.

Key Stakeholders for Study

The study is important for multiple stakeholders including minor hockey associations, parents, administrators, coaches, youth hockey players, and sport management scholars. The following paragraphs will outline each stakeholder and how the study applies to their involvement in minor hockey

1. Minor Hockey Associations

Minor hockey associations are responsible for offering recreational and competitive sports as well as successful creation and implementation of policies to provide a safe environment for stakeholders including players, parents, coaches, referees, staff, and volunteers (Cote & Hay, 2002). Findings from this study can provide information for associations, both within and beyond minor hockey associations in Ontario, to adjust policies by analyzing the experiences of coaches and administrators. While the findings of this study are not generalizable outside of Ontario where policies and hockey cultures differ, there is transferability to other similar contexts. Potential associations that could benefit from this research range from local-level minor hockey associations and their individual codes of conduct policies to provincial

(OHF, HNO, HEO), national (Hockey Canada), or international (USA Hockey) governing bodies to implement recommendations into their associations. Likewise, findings of this study might be helpful in the development of parental conduct policies and strategies beyond the sport of hockey, benefitting associations in other sports (e.g., Ontario Basketball).

2. Minor Hockey Coaches

Minor hockey coaches are essential to this study for two reasons: One, their relationship with parents and players is part of an interconnected relationship known as the *athletic triangle*, which can be defined as shared information and experiences between players, parents, and coaches in a youth sports setting (Smoll, Cumming, & Smith, 2011). Their positioning within the *athletic triangle* allows coaches to witness unique interactions and develop meaning from their experiences (Smoll et al., 2011). Two, coaches are required by their minor hockey association to understand existing policies in place to monitor and enforce with parents. By examining their experiences with parents and developing potential recommendations to improve parental behaviour in minor hockey. This knowledge is beneficial to the study as coaches can provide rich descriptions related to parental policy effectiveness compared to other members in the association with limited knowledge of current policies. Moreover, other coaches would be able to use findings to compare to their own experiences and implement strategies to better facilitate the *athletic triangle* relationship and improve parental behaviour through communication channels regarding concerns or complaints, team meetings, and establishing team rules for parents and players (Camire, Trudel, & Forneris, 2012; Smoll et al., 2011).

3. Minor Hockey Administrators

Minor hockey administrators are very similar to the role of coaches for this study as they too have unique experiences and perspectives on parental behaviour by working as volunteers

through the day-to-day operations of their local association (Baker, 2019). These roles are typically occupied by parents with children who play minor hockey or have progressed beyond the system and want to maintain an active role in the organization, or current and former coaches who have taken advanced roles to facilitate the operations of the association. Like coaches, administrators are required to understand code of conduct policies designed for parents and have a functioning knowledge of the role of provincial and national governing bodies in minor hockey (Baker, 2019). In some cases, specific board members are directly responsible for creating and updating policies designed for all members of their local minor hockey association and following mandates from regional, provincial, and national governing bodies. As a result, administrators possess knowledge beyond other minor hockey stakeholders through their perspective and experiences to help answer research questions and understand the current cultural setting of minor hockey in Ontario.

4. Minor Hockey Parents

Minor hockey parents are key in the socialization process and development of their children. Parents are the primary contact for minor hockey players and provide registration, equipment, transportation, and feedback that can affect the participation of their child (Dorsch, Smith, & McDonough, 2009; Turman, 2007). In addition, parents are involved in an *athletic triangle* with athletes and coaches and must conform to acceptable standards of behaviour and establish open communication with coaches (Smoll, et al., 2011). As a result, findings help parents understand their expected behaviour and understand their responsibilities from coaches' perspectives and allow the opportunity for parents to attempt to objectively self-analyze their own behaviour to identify potential bad habits they have developed from their child's participation in minor hockey and correct them based upon coaches' experiences and

recommendations to make minor hockey more inclusive for participants. In addition, the analysis of code of conduct documents from various Ontario minor hockey associations and provide a more thorough understanding of required behaviour by analyzing a plethora of different local associations and their behavioural expectations for parents.

5. Minor Hockey Players

Minor hockey players are essential stakeholders because they are part of the athletic *triangle* with parents and coaches by receiving instructions, support, and constructive criticism (Smoll et al., 2011). Both parents and coaches act as role models for players to improve social and skill development. However, players can be the victim of both verbal and physical abuse from parents either directly (ex: a player being yelled at by their parent for making a mistake) or indirectly (ex: a player witnessing their parent yelling at an official from the stands) (Lewis, 2018). Such incidents of abuse can have lasting impacts on a child's social development and threaten educational attainment and social derailment (Worthman, Tomlinson, & Rotheram-Borus, 2016). Preventing incidents through implemented policies can protect a vulnerable population, heighten the benefits of participating in youth sport, and reduce the likelihood of incidents that deter participation in minor hockey.

6. Sport Management Scholars

A final important stakeholder for the study is sport management scholars to review findings and develop additional research regarding parental behaviour and conduct policies in minor hockey in and beyond a Canadian context. Recently, sport management scholars have urged peers to address social issues beyond collegiate and professional sporting contexts and to target public/youth sport, physical activity, and recreation (Love, Bernstein, & King-White, 2020). This study attempts to create social change by offering solution-based recommendations

to improve policies in minor hockey associations that has traditionally lacked within sport management research (Cunningham, 2014). In addition, the findings could generate interest in parental behaviours in other sport settings or different geographical locations, identify potential differences based on gender, or between team and individual sports.

Positionality Statement

The characteristics that define my social position include being a white, middle-class, cisgender, straight, non-disabled male. Through these characteristics I recognize my privilege of not experiencing marginalization through my race, ability, sexual orientation, or any major disadvantage from my socioeconomic upbringing. My awareness of these privileges has become apparent through my experience at Brock University during my undergraduate degree. My upbringing in rural southern Ontario did not include exposure to a diverse population with different experiences. As a result, I lacked knowledge regarding my privilege in relation to marginalized groups. Today, I have a more thorough understanding of the harsh realities in a broader social context to understand the inequalities in marginalized populations by learning the experiences of others at Brock University and existing research that highlights inequalities of racism (Newman, 2014; Thibault, 2009), sexism (Fink, 2016; Hindman & Walker, 2020), and abuse (Nite & Nauright, 2020) in a sport context.

My relation to this research topic, research questions, and relevant social structures is based on firsthand experiences playing rep hockey for over a decade that shaped my personal values surrounding work ethic, respect, and ability to work on a team and are consistent with previous research on the benefits of youth sport (Wankel & Berger, 1990). These experiences included working with teammates, fundraising, volunteering in the community, and practicing skill development which translated to how I conducted myself at school and work. In addition, I

worked as a membership coordinator where I gained firsthand experience into the day-to-day operations of a minor hockey association and interacted regularly with coaches regarding their experiences and needs. In addition, my involvement provided additional knowledge of the culture of parents, coaches, players, and the policies and procedures from governing bodies. In addition, my race and nationality are similar to common youth hockey demographics in Canada (Craig, 2009) and combined with my experiences have made me an insider into the culture of minor hockey.

Regarding my experiences in minor hockey, I was lucky to have parents who fostered my passion for and aided my involvement through rep programs, summer hockey camps, and power skating lessons. One example occurred when I played on the local novice rep team. Our scheduled practices started at 6:00am every Sunday morning. I was so consumed by hockey that I had my father take me to the rink 30 minutes before the scheduled ice time at 5:30am when the arena manager arrived and allowed me to practice on the dimly lit ice while my father watched in the stands. In addition, the lessons and comradery with teammates throughout my experiences helped mold me into who I am today and provided countless childhood memories. Consequently, negative experiences in minor hockey existed as well. I have seen numerous examples of parental misconduct from parents yelling at their child, fights between parents in the stands and abuse hurled at referees. Seeing this behaviour on a regular basis was one of the contributing factors that led me to stop playing minor hockey after my first year in the midget division. It was a disappointing seeing the sport I had invested so much time and energy into become something I no longer wanted to participate in. Thankfully, my parents understood and respected my decision to stop playing.

As years past, I rediscovered my passion for playing hockey from recreational pickup games. I was glad to have hockey back in my life as I missed the competitiveness of playing. My passion for sport has always existed and it led me to Brock University where I earned a bachelor's degree in Sport Management in 2019. During my undergraduate work, I developed an interest in sport for development and youth sports and the issues pertaining to them. As a fan and participant, I viewed sport as a positive experience to build character and develop transferable skills applicable to life. While this can certainly be true, it is naïve to ignore social issues in sport and my education made me re-evaluate my own experiences and develop a passion for wanting to make a positive change. As someone who shares both positive and negative experiences in youth sports, I find it essential to provide the opportunity for readers to understand the issues in minor hockey and offer solution-based recommendations to improve behaviour and experiences of stakeholders in minor hockey. My goal with this research is not to portray minor hockey in a negative light but rather to take a critical approach to understand if the sport has made inroads to create positive experiences for its stakeholders and minimize cases of parental misconduct. My goal is to understand if rep coaches, and administrators believe their associations' policies are effective and if there is room for improvement.

Through a sport management lens and using qualitative research methods, I have continuously considered my role as an insider with the culture of minor hockey associations while conducting this study, analyzing results, and writing my thesis. My experience has supported my research in understanding common practices, procedures, and language used in the hockey community that may present challenges to outsiders. It did, however, have the potential to create limitations. For example, my knowledge of minor hockey could create blind spots by assuming aspects of the culture are common knowledge. This could also occur with participants

who have knowledge of my experiences and may not provide similar details if I were an outsider to hockey culture. Keeping this in mind, I strived to remain reflexive while seeking to understand the experiences of others. It was essential to understand that every person has their own unique experiences, and I continuously examined my own views and subjectivity. To accomplish this, I used a reflexive journal to detail my experiences and remained in contact with my academic supervisor and peers for their expertise, guidance, and perspective to remain ethical and conscious of my own subjectivity and decisions.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The overwhelming majority of children participate in youth sport, with 90% taking part in some form of organized sport (Turman, 2007). According to Margenau (1990), “sports are one of life’s important growth experiences and the parent and the child will both grow together in the experience” (p.2). Similar thoughts are echoed by Wankel and Berger (1990) who assert that youth sports create the ability for participants to personally grow, learn teamwork, responsibility, skill-building, social integration, engage in physical activity, and foster social change.

Despite the potential social and health benefits for participants, Thomas (1977) warns “the popularity of competitive sports for children does not mean that the programs are free of controversy, as a frequent criticism of youth sports programs is that they are organized by an adult – for adults” (p.43). Although parental involvement can produce positive outcomes through acceptance, self-worth, and providing support despite failure (Averill & Power, 1995; Lavoie & Stellino, 2008) and despite Thomas’s quote being from 1977, its prevalence today can be argued based on negative outcomes from parental misconduct in the form of pressure, verbal and physical abuse that can reduce athlete’s enjoyment and lead them to withdraw from youth sport (Witt & Dangi, 2018). These negative outcomes have created the need for code of conduct policies and parental education programs from youth sport associations to minimize incidents and help parents understand their role as a youth sport parent and create a distinction between providing pressure and support (Elliott & Drummond, 2014).

The purpose of this chapter is to review current literature related to code of conduct policy development and effectiveness, the potential positive and negative impacts from parental involvement, the role of coaches in the development of youth athletes, and the motivations, impact, and importance of administrators in youth sport. Gaps in the literature are highlighted

related to parental policy effectiveness in both minor hockey and youth sports despite issues of parental misconduct in minor hockey being recognized as an issue by media, the courts, and academic scholars (Deacon, McClelland, & Smart, 2001; Gillis, 2014). The studies reviewed vary in their methodology, sample size, and data analysis to provide a well-rounded overview of different paradigms and theoretical perspectives on the success and failures of code of conduct policies, positive and negative outcomes from parental behaviour, and the importance of coaches and administrators in youth sports.

Conduct Policies in Sport

Across the sporting world, scandals and abuse have created the need for more management of ethical behaviour in sport clubs at professional, amateur, and recreational levels. A common method for addressing behavioural issues is code of ethics policies (Kaptein & Schwartz, 2008; Singh, 2011; Webley & Werner, 2008). An ethical code is a strategic document implemented in an organization by imposing rules and regulations through a top-down approach (Kaptein & Schwartz, 2008). Adelstein and Craig (2016) argued the purpose of an ethical code serves an internal and external purpose. On one hand, ethical codes aid their target audience to abstain from misbehaviour and reduce the unpredictability of members as a form of internal risk management (Adelstein & Clegg, 2016). On the other hand, ethical codes function as an external marketing tool for the organization to demonstrate its adherence to ethics (Adelstein & Clegg, 2016).

The effectiveness of codes of ethics policies is debatable based on systematic reviews. For example, Kaptein and Schwartz (2008) analyzed 79 empirical studies that examined the effectiveness of business codes and found: 35% of studies with codes were effective, 16% found the relationship was weak, 33% found there was no significant relationship, 14% presented

mixed findings, and one study found business codes to be counterproductive. Sport is, however, a different context than business. Sport has several characteristics, such as high media visibility and consumer loyalty that create a unique context that differs from traditional businesses (Babiak & Wolfe, 2009).

In organized sport, the need for improved ethical behaviour has been understood by the sport management academic community (Kjeldsen, 1992). The frequency and seriousness of rules violations depict that many sport administrations fail to control events, athletes, fans and/or themselves (Kjeldsen, 1992). Previous research of ethical policies in sport found administrators believed it is essential for stakeholders to understand ethical principles and review ethical codes as part of their responsibilities (Vargas-Mendoza, Fregoso-Aguilar, Madrigal-Santillan, Morales-Gonzalez, & Morales-Gonzalez, 2018). Vargas-Mendoza and co-authors (2018) found that governing entities need to reinforce the basic principles of ethical conduct derived from policies and reinforce expectations to stakeholders. This is reiterated by Weaver, Trevino, and Cochran (1999) who argued codes are presumed to be ineffective unless distributed to members of an organization and even distribution does not guarantee members will read it. Sims (1991) argued members need to be familiar of the content of the code to impact their behaviour. A study by the Ethics Resource Center (1994) found when the implementation of a code was not supported by the instruments, it created a negative effect on employee perceptions of ethical behaviour. When a code was supported by ethics training and an ethics office, the code had a positive effect on employee perceptions (Ethics Resource Center, 1994). In addition, organizations must understand that ethical codes and models cannot offer the resolution for all ethical problems and dilemmas in organizations. For example, athletes break the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) doping policies on a regular basis despite anti-doping policies and testing in place

(Vargas-Mendoza et al., 2018). As a result, ethical codes need to be implemented and supported by organizations and include sanctions and disciplinary procedures to handle violations (Vargas-Mendoza et al., 2018).

Regarding behavioural policy effectiveness in sport, preliminary research has been conducted at the collegiate, club, and youth levels. Jordan et al. (2004) analyzed National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) coaches' perceptions of conference code of ethics. The study sampled 109 NCAA Division I, II, and III coaches who answered a quantitative questionnaire developed by generating ideas from previous research and were subjected to 11 individual experts on higher education and intercollegiate athletics (Jordan et al., 2004). Coaches were shown a variety of statements and asked to rate their importance on a 7-point Likert scale (Jordan et al., 2004). Results indicated coaches valued the ideals of sportsmanship, promotion of values (e.g., honesty, integrity, and fair play), healthy environment, and professional conduct as important to code of ethics (Jordan et al., 2004). Coaches believed codes should be targeted towards athletic administrators, coaches, and student-athletes with athletic administrators and coaches responsible for ensuring ethical conduct for collegiate athletics (Jordan et al., 2004). When coaches were asked if codes should be specific or general in nature, more than half indicated a code should contain both specific and general standards and disciplinary warnings (Jordan et al., 2004). As a result, coaches in general agreed with current code of ethics in NCAA conferences but felt they should be involved in the development process (Jordan et al., 2004). Finally, the researchers urged administrators to continuously review codes of ethics to ensure they are addressing problems within organizations.

In a club and recreation sport context, Waegeneer, Van De Sompele, and Willem (2016) used a content analysis of code of ethics in sport clubs and analyzed their effectiveness through

questionnaires with members through the Ethical Climate Index (ECI). The ECI analyzes moral sensitivity, judgement, motivation, and character. In total, the authors analyzed 119 codes of ethics across soccer, gymnastics, badminton, equestrian, tennis, and judo sport organizations (Waegeneer et al., 2016). Their research found code of ethics revolved around six different themes including solidarity, integrity, fair play, children's rights in sport, respect for diversity, and inclusion while a lack of procedural content and sanctions also existed (Waegeneer et al., 2016). Overall effectiveness was determined by consequentialist statements and a combination of regulatory and inspirational phrasing with explicit guidelines for members that stimulated awareness (Waegeneer et al., 2016). These results demonstrate the requirements for code of ethics to address unethical behaviour in sports clubs.

Furthermore, additional research by Waegeneer, Devisch, and Willem (2017) analyzed code of ethics effectiveness from a quantitative research design by using independent variables that included (a) code creation: motivation for establishment; (b) code content: target audience; (c) code implementation: timing of communication, format of communication, availability of internal and external help desk; and (d) code enforcement: support for whistleblowers, procedures for complaints and violations, and sanctions that influenced the depended variable for effectiveness measured by the aforementioned ECI. Most sport organizations (53%) had some form of ethical code, with coaches being involved in the code development process (81.8%), and the majority containing guidelines for athletes (96.3%) and coaches (88.0%) while only 65.8% were directed towards parents (Waegeneer et al., 2017). Communication of code of ethics was predominately done at registration or the start of each season (68.6%) while 34.2% had codes listed on their website, and 28.9% of organizations mentioned code of ethics in a pre-season meeting (Waegeneer et al., 2017). A total of 2,242 responses were gathered from a questionnaire

sent to various Flemish sport clubs. Results indicated the effectiveness of an ethical code was higher when the motive of the code was for improved ethical behaviour in the organization (Waegeneer et al., 2017). Likewise, they found coaches have a positive effect on collective moral judgement, sensitivity, and character of a sports club by participating in the creation process of ethics codes (Waegeneer et al., 2017). In addition, they found that including the intended audience and a help desk had no effect on ethical behaviour, inclusion of discipline procedures had a negative impact of collective moral sensitivity, and protection for whistleblowers created higher collective moral sensitivity (Waegeneer et al., 2017). The results confirm existing research that the mere presence of ethical codes does not guarantee ethical behaviour. Certain limitations of the study included the potential for additional variables that could contribute to code effectiveness through informal communication (ex: competent manager) (Waegeneer et al., 2017). In addition, because the study used a quantitative analysis, nuanced explanations related to code effectiveness from participants could not be explored. As a result, exploring code of conduct effectiveness through qualitative analysis could provide enhanced descriptions from stakeholders on the complexities of parental behaviour.

Moreover, findings were reinforced in a follow-up longitudinal study with non-professional European football teams by Constandt, Waegeneer, and Willem (2019). Data collection took place in two measurement points with a three-year gap between data collection periods (Constandt et al., 2019). In the first phase, 73 clubs were given the ECI while 47 repeated the process in the second data phase (Constandt et al., 2019). Results indicated that 61 of the participating clubs had an ethical code in place and found involving sponsors in code development, attempting to professionalize the organization, offering members the ability to ask questions to the Board of Directors, and supporting whistleblowers aided code of ethics

effectiveness (Constandt et al., 2019). Overall, the study reiterated existing findings that found more effort is needed to enhance ethical behaviour in sport organizations and simply inputting a code does not guarantee improved behaviour of stakeholders. Therefore, ethical leadership formed by a moral person/moral manager is prerequisite to create ethical code in the daily practice of sport organizations. As a result, the authors identified a need to bridge the gap between policy and practice (Constandt et al., 2019).

In a youth sport context, Elliott and Drummond (2014) led a qualitative study to analyze the impact of sport policy on parental behaviour in Australian youth football. The authors used focus groups and individual interviews with parents, youth athletes, and coaches, which included 102 participants, 20 focus groups, and 11 interviews. The authors used social constructionism theory which takes a critical stance towards taken for granted understandings and requires meaning and knowledge to be created from social processes and allowed the authors to interpret parental influence in youth sport and significance of behavioural policies (Elliott & Drummond, 2014). They identified that a lack of consequences within code of conduct policies normalized overt, aggressive, and abusive behaviour from parents in elite level sport because they did not receive punishment for their violations (Elliott & Drummond, 2014). Participants emphasized a need for additional policies to reinforce expectations from governing organizations of the behavioural expectations for parents. These included educational DVD programs, using prominent sport figures as ambassadors, and additional reinforcement from administrators and coaches opposed to a form at the beginning of each season (Elliott & Drummond, 2014). Furthermore, the authors recommended a top-down approach for Australian football organizations to implement policies to manage parental behaviour in youth sport (Elliott & Drummond, 2014).

Similarly, Wiersma and Sherman (2005) analyzed volunteer youth sport coaches' perspectives on education/certification and parental codes of conduct. The study used focus groups with a total of 25 volunteer youth coaches and identified four themes: coaching education content areas of need; barriers and problems of offering coaching education opportunities; coaching education recommendations; and efficacy of parental codes of conduct (Wiersma & Sherman, 2005). Coaches identified overinvolvement from parents and inconsistency of administrations to aid coaches as important issues and provided recommendations to improve parental behaviour by including a 24-hour rule before speaking to an association representative, mandatory sportsmanship training, and harsher penalties for parents that violated code of conduct policies (Wiersma & Sherman, 2005). While breaking new ground, Wiersma and Sherman's (2005) study analyzed relatively sparse literature on policy in youth sport and offered specific recommendations from 2005 that have been implemented by Hockey Canada and some local associations. However, this research is now somewhat out-of-date due to changing association needs and additional research is needed to understand the current landscape of youth sports and specifically, minor hockey.

Previous research in minor hockey has studied different populations including players, coaches, and parents. However, research into policy effectiveness in minor hockey is limited. Most research has been directed towards concussion protocol policies and their effectiveness (Black et al., 2017; Coghlin, Myles, & Howitt, 2009; Cusimano et al., 2011; Robidoux et al., 2020) and exploring proposed solutions of the relative age effect within minor hockey divisions (Baker et al., 2010). One recently published study analyzed the impact of the Respect in Sport Program, a mandatory course taken by parents to understand required behaviours from the players perspective (Tamminen et al., 2020). The study was one of the first to analyze

behavioural policy effectiveness in a minor hockey context and used a longitudinal analysis over three years using online surveys to analyze athletes' positive and negative experiences, prosocial and antisocial behaviour, parental support and pressure, and sport enjoyment and commitment (Tamminen et al., 2020). In total, 366 athletes completed at least one survey while 83 completed multiple surveys for the longitudinal analysis (Tamminen et al., 2020). The results found associations that implemented the Respect in Sport program reported greater improvements in antisocial behaviour towards opponents and improved personal and social skills (Tamminen et al., 2020). The authors suggested the program has created small improvements in athletes' experiences over time to become an effective tool to implement in minor sport organizations (Tamminen et al., 2020). However, the study found no significant changes in negative experiences of players or reduced parental pressure (Tamminen et al., 2020). Although the study provided a rare look into policy effectiveness, the study omitted coaches and parents despite being the primary target of the program.

As a result, this study builds on existing research on policy effectiveness by providing an analysis of actual code of conduct policies used in Ontario minor hockey associations alongside qualitative interviews with coaches and administrators on the effectiveness of the policies.

Role/Impact of Parental Involvement in Youth Sport

In addition to understanding existing research dedicated to code of conduct policy in sport, another area of relevant literature is parental involvement in youth sport. Existing literature explains parental involvement can create both positive and negative experiences depending upon the level of involvement desired from stakeholders such as players, coaches, and administrators. Parental involvement can impact a player's level of sportsmanship, commitment, enjoyment, performance, and self-esteem in sport. Turman (2007) claimed youth athletes can be affected by

their parent's negative behaviour and portray themselves in a similar manner. For example, a player may witness their parent argue in the stands with referees, other parents, players, and coaches and mirror their parent's behaviour resulting in poor sportsmanship. In addition, an emphasis on performance and winning from parents can cause stress and anxiety and lower the satisfaction and enjoyment of the child from participating in youth sports (Turman, 2007).

Ross, Mallett, and Parkes (2015) emphasized that parents can have both a positive and negative effect on their children in youth sport. The researchers conducted semi-structured interviews with eight coaches and four administrators in Australia. Positive effects or experiences from parents included parents showing appreciation to coaches/administrators, providing unconditional support to their child, constructive feedback, developing caring relationships with coaches/administrators, and letting their child have control over their autonomy (Ross et al., 2015). Consequently, negative effects or experiences from parents included parental anger/complaints, negative interactions regarding child's progress, communicating conditional support based on performance, hindering athlete development, and having inappropriate levels of involvement. In addition, coaches and administrators that had experience with parent education efforts believed additional resources were needed to communicate expected behaviour with parents (Ross et al., 2015). As one participant pointed out, "it's not as simple as telling parents what they should be doing" (Ross et al., 2015, p.615). As a result, findings demonstrated the various ways parents can positively or negatively impact their child's involvement in youth sport and should be explored to find similarities or differences in a Canadian sport setting.

Furthermore, research suggests the amount of involvement from parents can vary based upon gender. Kanters, Bocarro, and Casper (2008) conducted a quantitative study with youth

hockey players between the ages of 9-11 and their parents to determine if they shared congruent views to pressure and support. The study found support from parents is interpreted as an adequate level of involvement while players perceived pressure as overinvolvement and harmed their participation (Kanters et al., 2008). The study also found most pressure came from fathers because participants depicted a mother's involvement was hindered by other obligations such as homework and preparing meals (Kanters et al., 2008). Similar claims are made by Coakley (2006) who described a father's role in sport consisting of critiquing their child, engaging with coaches, selecting equipment, while also guiding and supporting their child as he/she learns to play. Coakley also claimed differences in a father's behaviour can also be dependent whether their child is a son or daughter, finding fathers treated their son's involvement in sport as turning them into a man while daughters are encouraged to be polite and ladylike (Coakley, 2006). Findings suggested gender influences how male and female youth sport athletes experience pressure. However, findings are not meant to be generalized as the experiences of youth and roles of parents can drastically vary depending on their knowledge and experiences in sport (Knight et al., 2016).

Similarly, LaVoi and Stellino (2008) also used a quantitative study based on interactions between youth hockey players and their parents. In total, 259 male hockey players aged 10-16 in the United States participated in the study that found positive and negative behaviours resulted from parental involvement (LaVoi & Stellino, 2008). These behaviours were grouped into themes that included "play and talk tough" which consisted of trash talking, arguing, and fighting, "complain and whine" regarding penalties, playing time, and poor sportsmanship, "concern for opponents" through a willingness to congratulate or apologize to opponents, and "graciousness" from being considerate of others through actions like thanking coaches and

referees after games (LaVoi & Stellino, 2008). The authors found both mothers and fathers contributed to positive behaviours, but fathers were predominately responsible for negative influences. As a result, pressure and support from parents can impact a child's level of enjoyment, stress, motivation, and participation and, therefore, parental involvement should entail positive responses to good performance, encouragement of skill development and emphasis that mistakes are okay and part of learning (LaVoi & Stellino, 2008).

Furthermore, Knight et al. (2016) explored the influencers of parental involvement in youth sport. The authors used a quantitative survey with 70 parents and found parents took up distinct levels of involvement that included being a supporter, coach, administrator, or provider (Knight et al., 2016). In addition, the authors found parents could hold multiple roles depending on their level of involvement (Knight et al., 2016). Using thematic analysis, the authors found parents level of involvement could be influenced by different variables including the youth sport context (level of competition), other parents and coaches, concerns regarding own behaviour, knowledge and experience of sport, experience as a sport parent, and goals, expectations, and beliefs for their child's sport (Knight et al., 2016). Parents with higher behavioural influencers had increased levels of parental involvement (Knight et al., 2016). As a result, parents are not homogenous, and the delivery of policies cannot be delivered in a "one size fits all" program and coaches and associations need to recognize these differences to develop and maintain positive relationships.

Wuerth, Lee, and Alfermann (2004) sought to understand what levels of parental involvement were received well from youth athletes. The researchers had mothers, fathers, and athletes answer a quantitative questionnaire related to the following categories: active involvement, praise and understanding, directive behaviour, and pressure (Wuerth et al., 2004).

Athletes answered the questionnaire twice over a 12-month interval. The results indicated athletes appreciated only low levels of pressure but high levels of praise and understanding (Wuerth et al., 2004). Mothers viewed themselves as a source of praise and understanding while fathers gave a greater amount of directive behaviour compared to mothers. The amount of pressure an athlete felt was correlated with the amount of directive behaviour and instruction from a parent (Wuerth et al., 2004). Effectively, existing research suggests that youth athletes perceive a certain level of parental involvement as beneficial to their development and parents should understand where to draw the line on their child's athletic development.

Interestingly, research from Dunn, Dorsch, King, and Rothlisberger (2016) sought to understand potential reasons for parents applying significant pressure onto their children. One potential reason is the growing financial resources needed to play organized youth sports. The researchers recruited 600 potential families across all 50 American states. In total, 163 parent-child dyads participated in the study by taking a private online internet questionnaire (Dunn et al., 2016). The researchers hypothesized that increased financial investment would create higher athlete perceptions of pressure (Dunn et al., 2016). Their findings supported this hypothesis and found children's enjoyment levels decreased through added pressure (Dunn et al., 2016). This study demonstrated the potential motivations for parents to become overinvolved in their child's development due to increased financial investment. This is of particular interest to minor hockey as registration and rep fees can result in families paying thousands of dollars for one season of minor hockey.

Moreover, a shift in culture towards a more involved parental culture in youth sports has recently been analyzed. In their ethnographic study, Stefansen, Smette, and Strandbu (2018) illustrated a shift in involvement from parents from previous decades. The researchers found

traditional parental involvement in the 1970s and 1980s often consisted of parents dropping their child off at a practice or game and being absent from the field of play (Stefansen et al., 2018). Today, a new generation of parents across social classes see involvement in sports as normal and can connect with their child emotionally to further development. These findings were interpreted as a normalization of youth sports that parents experienced growing up and new cultural ideas and methods to parenting that is referred to as “deep involvement,” an intensified form of parental engagement (primarily by fathers) in the middle class (Stefansen et al., 2018). This study is another example of the shifting attitudes towards involvement and can help explain why minor hockey parents have increased their level of involvement compared to previous generations.

Subsequently, Witt and Dangi (2018) conducted a review of existing literature to understand the factors that led to children dropping out of youth sports. In total, the authors reviewed 43 different publications and identified interpersonal constraints such as parental pressure as a common theme to explain why children stopped participating in youth sports (Witt & Dangi, 2018). In addition, the authors reviewed suggestions to minimize sport dropouts and increase youth engagement that included redefining sports to be centered around fun, balancing parental involvement, encouraging multi-sport participation, enabling children to have autonomy, encouraging child participation, decreasing parental pressure, beginning sport participation at an appropriate age, and parents avoiding living their sports dreams through their children (Witt & Dangi, 2018). Although the study did not uncover new primary research, it effectively summarized articles dedicated to understanding why children stop playing youth sports with a main reason being overinvolvement from parents who put too much pressure on their children and live their athletic fantasies through them.

Moreover, Wiersma and Fifer (2008) discovered challenges exist for parents to be self-aware of their behaviour in youth sport. The authors found investment of time and money are viewed as offering support to their children but found it difficult for parents to understand emotional support related to pre/post game talks, motivation, and balancing competition and fun (Wiersma & Fifer, 2008). The study found parents understand their role in youth sports and the behavioural expectations but found it difficult to act appropriately in the “heat of the moment” (e.g., if their team was losing, an officiating decision they did not agree with, their child made a mistake, or was not playing to their potential) which caused them to engage in negative parental behaviour (Wiersma & Fifer, 2008). As a result, parental education is important to reduce incidents of negative involvement in youth sport.

Similarly, Omli and LaVoi (2011) conducted a study to understand why parent spectators act inappropriately at youth sporting events. To address their research question, the authors used a mixed-method survey with participants asked to describe examples where they got angry at a youth sport event (Omli & LaVoi, 2011). In total, 773 parents participated in the survey from a Midwestern American city with their children participating in a variety of different sports that included baseball, basketball, football, volleyball, lacrosse, soccer, softball, track and field, and wrestling (Omli & LaVoi, 2011). A grounded theory analysis was used to interpret qualitative data and generated three types of offenses (uncaring, unjust, incompetent) and four categories of perceived offenders (referees, coaches, participants, other parent spectators (Omli & LaVoi, 2011). The quantitative analysis found 66.8% of parents reported getting angry at a youth sport event with the most common triggers being referee incompetence (18.5%), athlete unsportsmanlike conduct (12.7%), coach incompetence (11.9%), and parent unsportsmanlike

conduct (11.0%) (Omli & LaVoi, 2011). The importance of this study highlights youth sport being a potentially volatile social setting that can produce negative behaviour.

Looking specifically at a Canadian minor hockey perspective, Bean, Jeffery-Tosoni, Baker, and Fraser-Thomas (2016), conducted a study with 10 hockey insiders using interviews that explained why negative parental behaviour occurs in Canadian minor hockey. The participants revealed stakeholder abuse, excessive investment, over-stepping coaching lines, and encouragement of aggressive behaviour were the most common typologies for parents to break behavioural expectations (Bean et al., 2016). In addition, participants explained the motives from parents by wanting a return on their investment, the hope of their child becoming a professional athlete, and living their athletic aspirations through their children (Bean et al., 2016). Participants also proposed potential solutions that included effective parent education programs, targeted curricular content, and more effective reporting and discipline procedures (Bean et al., 2016). The authors contributed to understanding how and why negative behaviour occurs and added a valuable source to the literature through examples of negative behaviour and potential recommendations that have since been implemented by Hockey Canada, provincial sport organizations, and local minor hockey associations that can be analyzed for their effectiveness.

This study builds on and contributes to existing literature on the role and impact of parental behaviour in minor hockey in Ontario through qualitative interviews with coaches and administrators who identify their expectations for parental conduct, the role of policy in shaping parental conduct, how well parents conform to the stipulations of conduct policies, and how policies can be improved to ensure optimal parental behaviour in the sporting lives of their young youth sport athletes.

Role/Impact of Coaches in Youth Sport

An additional area of relevant literature extends to the role and impact of youth sport coaches. Smoll, Cumming, and Smith (2011) created the concept *athletic triangle* to illustrate the relationship between coach, athlete, and parent. The authors emphasized this concept as a natural element of youth sports where the coaches' role is to effectively communicate with parents and positively impact young athletes' participation (Smoll et al., 2011). Their overall objective was to assist coaches in fostering a positive relationship with parents. To achieve this, the authors developed a coach-parent meeting guide to implement at the start of each season to cover the following: the differences between youth and pro sport models, main objectives of youth sports, details of the specific sport program, coaching roles, parental responsibilities, and coach-parent communication/relations (Smoll et al., 2011). The importance of this article is to provide resources to coaches on how to effectively interact with parents to reduce behaviour-related issues. In addition, because the *athletic triangle* involves all three stakeholders, each party needs to understand this unique relationship and work together cohesively to adhere to implemented policies and guidelines (Smoll et al., 2011).

Furthermore, Jowett and Timson-Katchis (2005) explored the influence parents have on the coach-athlete relationship. Researchers interviewed 5 coach-athlete-parent triads (15 total participants) with the athletes being female swimmers who participated at national competitions in the Republic of Cyprus (Jowett & Timson-Katchis, 2005). The study used a conceptual framework that emphasized how major processes such as opportunity, information, and support would affect the coach-athlete relationship and contribute to dyadic withdrawal and realignment (Jowett & Timson-Katchis, 2005). The study found several themes where parents influenced the coach-athlete relationship through opportunities, information, and support, while the quality of

the relationship depended on closeness, commitment, and complementarity (Jowett & Timson-Katchis, 2005). In addition, the study found dyadic withdrawal occurred for parents when athletes became more interdependent with coaches by spending more time training and exerting more influence on their life (Jowett & Timson-Katchis, 2005). Consequently, dyadic realignment occurred for athletes with a stronger coach-athlete relationship and created additional friendships in an athlete environment (Jowett & Timson-Katchis, 2005). This study highlighted how parents and coaches are intertwined in creating a psychological effect on athletes and engaging in a positive relationship fosters an appropriate atmosphere.

Similarly, Vella, Oades, and Crowe (2011) tested the relationship between coach transformational leadership behaviours, the perceived quality of the coach-athlete relationship, team success, and the positive developmental experiences of youth soccer players. The authors used a cross-sectional analysis from 455 youth athletes between the ages of 11-18 and completed the Differentiated Transformational Leadership Inventory for Youth Sport, the Coach-Athlete Relationship Questionnaire, and the Youth Experience Survey for Sport (Vella et al., 2011). The study found transformational leadership had a moderate positive correlation with developmental experiences (Vella et al., 2011). In addition, the study found the most influential leadership traits that created a positive coach-athlete relationship included individual consideration, intellectual stimulation, and appropriate role modelling (Vella et al., 2011). This article is of importance because it illustrated the role of coaches in the development of youth athletes.

Specifically in a minor hockey context, Preston, Allan, and Fraser Thomas (2021) used an ethnographic research design to explore how four AAA minor hockey coaches facilitated positive youth development (PYD). The coaches and teams were observed over the course of one minor hockey season with two interviews conducted with each coach (Preston et al., 2021). Their

findings revealed coaches discussed and demonstrated several behaviours to facilitate PYD that included setting high standards, providing leadership opportunities, being a role model, and communicating with athletes through honest communication and teachable moments (Preston et al., 2021). However, the sport structure (i.e., professional sports model) focused on competition and performance restricted coaches from instilling PYD (Preston et al., 2021). In addition, coaches' own motivations to achieve performance success also presented challenges to fostering PYD and despite the coaches being capable of fostering personal development with players, the performance-oriented structure of minor hockey limited the ability for coaches to prioritize personal development over winning (Preston et al., 2021). As a result, the findings presented future considerations needed for elite youth sport coaches to implement PYD more effectively.

Although coaches can have a positive role on the development of youth athletes, it is possible for coaches to also have a negative impact through actions that ignore their association's code of conduct. In a study of five coaches of elite youth athletes in gymnastics using semi-structured interviews by Jacobs, Smits, and Knoppers (2016), it was revealed that coaches can demonstrate abusive behaviour that can become normalized in an association if not effectively handled, become power hungry from their role as an elite coach, and direct enormous pressure and criticism towards youth athletes with negative consequences to the athletes. As a result, the impact of coaches on youth athletes cannot be assumed to always be positive as adverse effects can occur through lack of support, poor communication, and abuse of power structures with youth athletes' model (Jacobs et al., 2016).

Existing literature has revealed that it is important for coaches to analyze their roles and behaviours in the positive development of youth athletes. This study builds on existing literature by qualitatively interviewing coaches about their perspectives and experiences working with

youth athletes, as well as their parents, in creating positive developmental opportunities and experiences.

Role/Impact of Administrators in Youth Sport

A final area of relevant literature is the role and impact of administrators in youth sport. Administrators at the local level are vital to the success of youth sport associations with most members being volunteers dedicated to providing services to benefit others (Cuskelly, 2004). Specifically, youth sport association administrators can take on multiple roles to help their local association properly function. These can include being a member of the board of directors, treasurer, secretary, or registrar (Cuskelly, 2004). These roles differ from coaches by taking place off the playing surface and are not as visible to other association members to understand their importance to the success of youth sports. Positions can vary in the amount of time per week dedicated to an administrative role. Grasmuck (2006) estimated that coaches and administrators in a Little League baseball association dedicated an average of 300 hours of volunteer labour during a season. In addition, administrators provide a different perspective compared to coaches based on gender differences.

Trussell and Shaw (2012) found gender dimensions within volunteer roles in youth sport associations. Fathers fill highly visible roles such as coaches while mothers traditionally operate behind the scenes as fundraisers and administrators (Trussell & Shaw, 2012). Furthermore, many youth sport administrators volunteer because their own children participate in the association and have a direct impact on their child's perceptions and experiences. Trussell (2016) interviewed 19 children who had fathers and mothers involved in their local youth sport association. Using a constant comparative method for data analysis. Trussell (2016) found gendered differences between father and mother volunteer roles, with mother's formal volunteer roles receiving a lack

of recognition. In addition, the benefits of having a parent involved in youth sports include an enhanced sense of connection between parent and child, the creation of enhanced sense of togetherness, and enhanced values of skill development and teaching on and off the playing surface (Trussell, 2016). However, certain disadvantages also arose that included heightened tensions from parent-sibling dynamics from the amount of commitment from parents in a role to another child, and conflict in peer groups where a parent's role could negatively impact a friendship (Trussell, 2016).

The role of commitment is crucial to the success of an administrator. With growing expectations from governing bodies related to legislative policies and increased pressure to follow association rules, the amount of time and effort requires a dedicated volunteer, similar to the commitment required to coach. In their study to understand the relationship between commitment, experience, and performance of youth sport administrators, Engelberg, Skinner, and Zakus (2011) used a quantitative survey with a five-point Likert scale with administrators in a youth athletics organization in Queensland, Australia. They found that commitment was the best predictor of involvement while organizational commitment is the best predictor of overall knowledge. In addition, experience, or number of seasons as a volunteer, emerged as a predictor for increased involvement and knowledge (Engelberg et al., 2011).

Administrators can have a variety of different motivations for wanting to participate in youth sport. Engelberg, Skinner, and Zakus (2013) conducted focus groups with 34 individuals (23 females, 11 males) and found having a child is a primary reason of involvement for most parent volunteers (Engelberg et al., 2013). Non-parent administrators cite prior involvement in a particular sport as a primary motivating factor and wanting to make a meaningful contribution to the community and improving the life and sport skills of youth (Engelberg et al., 2013). The role

of commitment amongst volunteers can vary. Some find with time, they became more involved in the association, but others felt their commitment decreased over time, especially if they had a negative experience (Engelberg et al., 2013). The researchers created four different typologies for volunteers. These included “mums and dads” who have a child in youth sports and feel obligated to volunteer in an as needed basis; “the specialists” are parents who also have a child involved in youth sports and will act as a coach but stay away from administrative or board of director positions; “uber volunteers task-oriented” who have a deep connection with the association and hold an important administrative role; and “uber volunteers team-oriented” who share similar traits to uber volunteers task-oriented but are more socially driven when interacting with other volunteers (Engelberg et al., 2013). As a result, different volunteer administrators can exist in youth sport associations and their level of dedication and reasons for volunteering can vary based on their experiences or position in the association.

Moreover, sport administrators offer a unique perspective because they are involved in the development and enforcement of behavioural policies in their local association. Noble and Vermillion (2014) conducted a quantitative survey in the wake of the Penn State child abuse scandal to understand sport administrators’ perceptions and knowledge of organizational policies of child maltreatment. A purposive sampling strategy was used where 450 administrators were identified as potential participants in three American Midwestern states (Noble & Vermillion, 2014). The researchers adapted the Kenny’s Educators and Child Abuse Questionnaire into the Administrators and Child Abuse Questionnaire (ACAQ), and asked question related to their ability to identify child maltreatment, knowledge and awareness of organizational policies and procedures, and attitudes towards organizational training on child maltreatment on a five-point Likert scale (Noble & Vermillion, 2014). In total, 155 surveys were conducted for a 34.4%

response rate (Noble & Vermillion, 2014). The findings indicated that most sport administrators were aware of how to identify abuse while nearly 85% were aware of their organization's policies and procedures related to child maltreatment (Noble & Vermillion, 2014). However, responses varied on if their organization provided adequate training in reporting child abuse with only 36.2% agreeing their organization provided enough training to handle situations of child maltreatment and 36.8% agreeing their organization provided enough information for dealing with child maltreatment situations (Noble & Vermillion, 2014).

Similarly, the current landscape of understanding current parental issues in sport and designing a potential framework for parent education programs has also been discussed using sport administrators. Dorsch et al. (2019) collaborated with parents, coaches, and administrators to understand their perspectives of a community-based sport education program in the United States. Using a constructivist thematic analysis, the authors were able to find nine emergent themes that included: parents sport goals for their children, parents' involvement in youth sport including impacts of involvement on children, and barriers to implementing parent education and potential information to be included (Dorsch et al., 2019). Specifically, coaches and administrators highlight parental overinvolvement as an issue in the sport that puts pressure on youth athletes and create relationship issues with coaches and other parents (Dorsch et al., 2019). When discussing the creation of a potential parent education program, participants identified family related time constraints, the potential where parents do not see the need for such a program, and lack of funding as potential barriers to implementation (Dorsch et al., 2019). With regards to potential content, participants discussed creating a parenting guide on how to appropriately behave and temper expectations (e.g., odds of playing in college or professionally), provide education on the rules of the sport for new parents, and be tailored to the age of a

parent's child (Dorsch et al., 2019). However, the participants were unable to come to a consensus on how a program should be delivered (e.g., in person, online, textbook) (Dorsch et al., 2019).

This study builds on the existing research examining the role and impact of administrators in youth sport by examining their experiences and perspectives on parental misconduct, the effectiveness of conduct policies and education programs, and strategies to improve parental conduct to promote a positive playing experience for minor hockey players in Ontario.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this study is to identify and understand current parental code of conduct policies in Ontario minor hockey associations, examine their efficacy, document the lived experiences of minor hockey rep head coaches' and administrators' relationships with parents in relation to the policies, and make policy recommendations to improve parental behaviour. This study employed qualitative research methods designed to study naturalistic real-world settings to generate rich descriptions based on the lived experiences, beliefs, attitudes, behaviour, and interactions of participants (Pathak, Jena, & Kalra, 2013; Patton, 2002). Qualitative research is used to interpret meaning from participants in accordance with the researcher's epistemological stance and research design to identify patterns, themes, and explain interpretations (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Patton, 2002). This chapter outlines the epistemological position, research design, and data analysis approach for the study to provide clarity and context for the reader before delving into the findings and discussion section. This study employed an exploratory qualitative research design using interpretive phenomenology as the guiding methodology, unobtrusive documents, and semi-structured interviews as methods for data collection, and thematic analysis to analyze and interpret data. Through this rigorous qualitative approach, the study's research questions are addressed which focus on understanding code of conduct efficacy and coaches' and administrators' perspectives parental behaviour in Ontario minor hockey associations. To reiterate, the research questions that have guided this study include:

1. What code of conduct policies exist in Ontario minor hockey associations?
2. What behavioural expectations do Ontario rep minor hockey coaches and administrators have for parents?

3. What are Ontario rep minor hockey coaches and administrators perspectives on the effectiveness of conduct policies?
4. To what extent do Ontario rep minor hockey coaches and administrators perceive parents adhering to and violating conduct policies?
5. What recommendations do Ontario rep minor hockey coaches and administrators have for improving parental conduct policies?

For this study, qualitative research allowed in-depth exploration of experiences and issues in real-life settings from the perspective of rep minor hockey coaches and administrators in Ontario minor hockey associations. This approach is ideal for social science disciplines and evaluating policy effectiveness by explaining, describing, and exploring events or phenomena in everyday contexts to understand links to form new policy initiatives (Patton, 2002). In addition, participants' role in qualitative research is more active compared to quantitative research studies by providing detailed experiences and collaborating with the researcher to address the purpose of the study and answer research questions (Patton, 2002). For this study, a qualitative study allowed information to be captured through *how*, *what*, and *why* questions that offer insight into *what* policies currently exist, *how* policies are enforced, *why* they are effective or ineffective, and *what* potential recommendations could be implemented (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

More specifically, this study analyzed rep minor hockey in Ontario opposed to also analyzing house league hockey, girls' minor hockey, or coaches and administrators in different Canadian provinces or territories. The justification for this decision was to focus on one section of minor hockey to accurately portray the lived experiences of minor hockey stakeholders opposed to fragmenting the research with different variables based on competition level, gender, and geographic location. Because qualitative research uses smaller sample sizes, it is logical to

have each participant from the same subsection of minor hockey to accurately interpret and present stakeholders lived experiences and achieve data saturation through detailed contextual analysis of certain events, conditions, and relationships (Patton, 2002).

Research Paradigm

The research paradigm or epistemological stance that informed data collection, analysis, and discussion of findings is constructivism. Honebein (1996) describes constructivism as an approach that asserts people construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world through experiencing things and reflecting on said experiences. The constructivist paradigm portrays the idea that learning does not always happen from traditional methods from teachers lecturing in a class (Honebein, 1996). To a constructivist, learning occurs when the participant discovers the knowledge through experimentation and doing (Kalender, 2007). This philosophical approach can be described by renowned philosopher Confucius who famously said: “I hear, and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand” (Vaillancourt, 2009, p.272). A main advantage of this approach is the close collaboration and shared meaning created between the researcher and participant by allowing the participant to share their experiences and describe their views of reality (Crabtree & Miller, 1999; Lather, 1992). Through this study, minor hockey coaches and administrators constructed meaning through experiences and interactions in minor hockey associations that shape attitudes, beliefs, and opinions.

Interpretive Phenomenology

Due to the nature of research questions and gap in the literature related to understanding existing policies in place, effectiveness related to parental code of conduct in minor hockey associations, and comprehension of parental misconduct incidents, phenomenology was selected as the most appropriate research design for the study. Phenomenology is an approach that seeks

to describe a phenomenon through the perspective of those that have experienced it by determining *what* was experienced and *how* it was experienced (Neubauer et al., 2019). This includes gathering rich descriptions and perspectives from qualitative methods such as interviews, participant observation, and unobtrusive documents (Neubauer et al., 2019). From an epistemological perspective, phenomenological approaches are based on personal knowledge and subjectivity with an emphasis on personal perspective and interpretation with data. Truth is comprised of multiple realities with data being subjective. Researchers seek a shared subjective awareness and understanding in the research with knowledge being co-constructed and constantly revised (Burns et al., 2022). As a result, it is essential to understand the subjective experience of participants to gain insight into their motivations and eliminate taken-for-granted assumptions within the research (Burns et al., 2022).

Specifically, interpretive phenomenology has evolved from earlier methodologies. Husserl's early 20th century version of phenomenology was positivist with philosophical underpinnings based on human knowledge being the root of knowledge, the researcher acting neutral and objective through bracketing, and findings being descriptive in nature (Burns et al., 2022; Neubauer et al., 2019). Newer interpretations of phenomenology emerged after Heidegger's creation of interpretive phenomenology in the 1960's based on the constructivist paradigm and move beyond description and seek to delve into meaning and understand/interpret experiences from participants by being subjective and the co-constructor of knowledge (Burns et al., 2022). Opposed to using bracketing, strategies like reflexivity and unknowing are used to properly situate the researcher in the data and eliminate pre-conceived notions of data (Munhall, 2012).

In relation to data collection and analysis, interpretive phenomenology starts with posing research questions designed to understand a phenomenon of a specific situation and when accessed, helps inform strategies for change (Munhall, 2012). Munhall (2012) explains all experiences are situated in a context influenced by embodiment, space, time, and relationships and aligns with Heidegger's philosophy of participant perspectives being influenced through *being-in-the-world*. Once research questions are proposed, the researcher recruits participants who have experienced the phenomenon of interest and share their experiences to answer the study's research questions. For this study, the phenomenon of parental behaviour was of interest in relation to code of conduct policy effectiveness (Munhall, 2012). To address this phenomenon, minor hockey coaches and administrators were recruited to provide their experiences and answer the study's research questions.

Data from interpretive phenomenology studies is typically collected from interviews (Munhall, 2012). There are two reasons for using interviews: One, the researcher is active in the understanding of a specific phenomenon under investigation (Neubauer et al., 2014). Two, interviews are seen as mutual interactions between participants and the research where data can emerge, experiences can be probed, and authenticated (Neubauer et al., 2019). The researcher's approach to data collection involves a strategy referred to as *unknowing* that is achieved through acknowledging preconceptions and biases related to the research and to the best of their ability set these aside during data collection to be open-minded to understanding different perspectives of participants (Munhall, 2012). To achieve this, journaling is used where the researcher documents their experiences, preunderstandings, and biases to remain reflexive during the research process (Munhall, 2012). This approach has its benefits over bracketing as Munhall (1994) explains bracketing in phenomenology, where the researcher remains completely neutral

may not be possible. Instead, the process of unknowing offers a more realistic approach for the research to allow different perspectives and meanings to emerge from data.

Data collection and analysis can occur simultaneously through the researcher by exploring findings through their self and participants in the context of their life-worlds (Munhall, 2012). According to Munhall (2012), data collected from participants and the researcher is processed through four life-worlds to enhance the understanding and interpretation of findings. The four life-worlds consist of corporeality, spatiality, temporality, and relationality and are interconnected together from the singular life-world concept of an individual (Munhall, 2012). Corporeality understands the mind and body are not separate and experience phenomena together (Munhall, 2012). Spatiality considers the environment where an individual experiences a phenomenon and contributes to the participants perspectives of meaning (Munhall, 2012). Temporality considers the influence of previous experiences and history that occur during experiences and influence the present (Munhall, 2012). Finally, relationality situates meanings of participant experiences in the context of relationships with individuals and the context of the phenomenon (Munhall, 2012).

Regarding presenting research findings, Munhall (2012) suggests interpretive phenomenology is atheoretical by providing a foundation from which theorizing can commence. The in-depth understanding of participant experiences is communicated through individual narratives by using the participant's own spoken words to understand the phenomenon (Munhall, 2012). Member-checking is used to accurately capture the lived experiences of participants and not only seeks similarities and differences in participant narratives but ensures to tell different perspectives related to parental behaviour and code of conduct policy effectiveness in Ontario minor hockey associations (Munhall, 2012).

Data Collection

This research study is designed to depict the viewpoints of participants and understand a particular phenomenon by using multiple sources of data to ensure an issue or phenomena is explored through multiple lenses to improve accuracy of findings and achieve triangulation (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Specifically, two distinct research methods were used: 1) unobtrusive content analysis of 58 parental code of conduct policies in Ontario minor hockey associations and, 2) 21 semi-structured interviews and were achieved through analyzing parental code of conduct policies in Ontario minor hockey associations and semi-structured interviews with minor hockey rep head coaches and administrators in Ontario. Each data source is discussed below with their inclusion justified for the study.

1) *Parental Code of Conduct Policies*

The first method of data collection was unobtrusive data through parental codes of conduct in Ontario minor hockey associations. Unobtrusive data are documents that do not interfere with the context of the research or require human engagement from research subjects, such as interviews and questionnaires (Connelly, 2017). Data can be collected from the natural context or environment and can include observation, physical traces, archives, and documents that can be used online or offline and at aggregate or individual levels (Araujo & Neijens, 2020). Collecting unobtrusive data allows a researcher to reach hard to get respondents, provides accessibility to data, and allows data collection to take place over an extended period (Araujo & Neijens, 2020). Using unobtrusive documents provides a rich description of data and allows the researcher to give a detailed analysis of user/association behaviour without running the risk of subjects changing their behaviour when they know they are being observed or asked questions (Connelly, 2017).

Codes of conduct documents are typically found in a minor hockey associations rules of operation manual, a document that is annually updated to create transparency with stakeholders on policies and procedures of the association, or a specific code of conduct provided on the association website. The justification for this data collection method is a lack of research surrounding current code of conduct policies in youth sport and more specifically, in minor hockey. Therefore, this method provided information into an understudied area of sport management research and allowed for the next phase of data collection to determine if current policies designed to monitor parental behaviour and handle violations are effective.

Sample Recruitment

The process of obtaining a reputable sample size of code of conduct policies began by compiling a list of minor hockey associations in Ontario that feature a rep or travel team component. Each provincial governing body (OHF, HEO, & HNO) was visited with a list of member associations extracted and put into an excel spreadsheet. For this sample and study, associations with only house league or recreational teams were omitted to ensure the sample used associations with a rep team component. In total, 323 associations came from the OHF, 67 from HEO, and 26 from HNO for a total of 416 minor hockey associations.

From the sample list of minor hockey associations, the process of compiling a representative sample began. A random sampling technique was used to form a representative sample of code of conduct policies in Ontario minor hockey associations (Cho et al., 2016). Each association was assigned a number and a random number generator was used to determine which association websites were visited. In total, 100 associations were randomly selected for unobtrusive analysis.

2) Semi-Structured Interviews with Rep Coaches & Administrators

The second data collection method used was semi-structured interviews with minor hockey rep coaches and administrators. Semi-structured interviews are a qualitative data collection method where a researcher asks participants a series of predetermined and open-ended questions from an interview guide to capture lived experiences, perspectives, and symbolic meanings from participants (Creswell, 1998; Jamshed, 2014). This method is used when researchers do not have the opportunity to interview a participant on multiple occasions and allows researchers to keep the interview on track and be flexible to identifying new insights that can be probed with participants (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). The benefits of using semi-structured interviews include having questions prepared ahead of time to maintain structure and a consistent data set, allows informants to express their views in their own language, and provides reliable and comparable qualitative data based on participants lived experiences (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006).

Interviews were conducted on the telephone given the COVID-19 pandemic, were audio recorded, and fully transcribed. Telephone conversations offered a medium to using semi-structured interviews by allowing a naturally flowing conversation and provided rich textual transcripts to be used in qualitative data analysis (Cachia & Millward, 2011). Interviewees used two predetermined interview guides designed for each participant group can be found in Appendix C.

Participant Recruitment

Two strategies were used for participant recruitment. First, snowball sampling was used by asking personal contacts within minor hockey about participating in the study. Second, purposive sampling was used through publicly available contact information for minor hockey

coaches and administrators on team websites throughout Ontario using a predetermined recruitment email. Not all potential participants responded to the initial interview request. However, correspondence with interested participants led to a scheduled interview. Criteria for participation in the study included being an adult who was an active minor hockey rep head coach or administrator within a minor hockey association in Ontario. Participants had to be adults to ensure they could provide free and informed consent to participate in the study and had to be head coaches and administrators based on their responsibilities and interactions with parents and existing knowledge of current policies. Former coaches or administrators who were not currently involved in minor hockey were not ideal as Hockey Canada and affiliated members have implemented new guidelines and policies. Coaches and administrators were required to have a minimum of one year experience. Additionally, rep coaches were most appropriate given additional competitiveness, financial resources, expectations of coaches, and higher coaching qualifications present in minor hockey (Gleddie, 2013; Wiersma & Fifer, 2008) and the inclusion of administrators provided unique experiences involved in creating, maintaining, and enforcing current code of conduct policies and interactions with coaches, parents, referees, and other volunteers (Noble & Vermillion, 2014).

Data Analysis

Data analysis for code of conduct policies and interview transcripts used a thematic analysis approach by grouping common topics, ideas, and patterns of meaning into themes from a data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017). The advantages of using a thematic analysis include its flexible approach that can be modified to meet the needs of many studies and provide a rich and detailed account of data. King (2004) argued thematic analysis provides the ability for researchers to handle large data sets effectively and produce an

organized final report to highlight similarities, differences, and unique insights between participants. Thematic analysis can contain both inductive and deductive analysis and is a recursive and reflexive process of moving back and forth between phases to generate themes produced by theoretical assumptions, disciplinary knowledge, research ability, experience, and content of data (Braun et al., 2016). The analysis used the six-phase model created by Braun, Clarke, and Weate (2016) that includes familiarization, coding, theme development, refinement, naming, and writing up findings.

Furthermore, coding is described as word or short phrase that symbolically captures a portion of language-based or visual data (Saldana, 2009). Data can consist of interview transcripts, participant observation, journals, field notes, drawings, artifacts, documents, photographs, videos, web-based information, literature, and so on (Saldana, 2009). Codes are used to retrieve and categorize similar chunks of data so a researcher can segment data to a research question, hypothesis, construct, or theme (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014).

Analyzed parental codes of conduct used open line-by-line coding to identify commonalities. Multiple read throughs were performed to ensure accuracy and to identify new codes that were not previously identified. In total, each parental code of conduct section was analyzed four times. In total, 54 unique codes were found in the unobtrusive analysis and ranged from a wide variety of expected behaviours for parents themselves and how to interact with other stakeholders in minor hockey. Axial coding was then used to examine the relationship between codes to categorize information and organize data into themes (Braun et al., 2016). In total, five identifiable themes were identified to simplify each code's contents and understand the main objectives of analyzed codes of conduct sections. In addition, descriptive statistics were used to

depict how common a phrase or trait appeared. This was used to identify commonalities and understand the frequency of certain codes in each code of conduct section.

Subsequently, upon completion of interviews with participants, audio recordings were transcribed to begin thematic analysis. Transcription from all 21 interviews produced 248 pages of text. Data familiarization began by reviewing interview contents (Braun et al., 2016).

Interviews were thoroughly read over to gain a comprehension for contents and prepare for the coding stage of analysis. Each interview was put into a Microsoft Word document and was assigned a title and organized based on the role of participants being either a current minor hockey rep head coach or administrator. Transcripts were put into a two-column table with the first column containing the interview between the researcher and participants while the second column was used for inputting codes and the researcher's thoughts and interpretations of the data.

Moreover, data analysis for interview transcripts started with open line-by-line coding to analytically break down the data set, accumulating important pieces of information with a descriptive label, and making connections by labelling similar information with the same codes. Within open coding, three specific types of codes were used (Evaluation, In Vivo, Emotion). First, evaluation coding was used to analyze participants administrators' perspectives on code of conduct policy effectiveness in minor hockey organizations. This type of coding is used for policy and evaluation studies (Saldana, 2009). Second, in vivo coding was used as a common form of coding for qualitative studies that uses phrases from the participant to retain language in the data record (Saldana, 2009). Phrases that were repeated lead to theme development used for both interview transcripts and code of conduct policies (Saldana, 2009). Third, emotion coding was used for interpersonal participant experiences to improve the understanding their attitudes

and beliefs (Saldana, 2009). After codes were generated through open coding, axial coding occurred to examine the relationship between codes, creating large amounts of categorized information into broader categories that was then sorted into themes after repeated analysis and revision of documents and transcripts (Bruan et al., 2016).

Ethical Considerations

The research followed Brock University guidelines from the Research Ethics Board (REB), which follow the Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS 2). Ethics clearance for this study was obtained as part of a larger research study on spectator violence and harassment in Canada. Precautions were undertaken to avoid any harm to occur to participants of the study and included participants being given the option to withdraw from the study any time during the research process. The following paragraphs provide additional details about the ethical practices enforced and maintained.

Informed Consent & Participant Rights

An informed consent form was read to participants before the beginning of each interview. Participants were informed of what the study entailed, the potential benefits, and risks of participation, how the interview data would be stored and used, and provided information on resources if anything psychologically triggering occurred during or after the interview process. This was done to ensure that no identifying information on participation would be released. Participant's identity remained confidential and were able to withdraw from the study until two weeks after the interview. Consent was also asked to participants to be audio recorded for the purpose of writing up transcripts verbatim to be read, analyzed, and incorporated into findings.

Participant Confidentiality

All participants in the study had their identities remain confidential with only the researcher, thesis supervisor, and professional transcriber allowed access to data. Creswell (1998) states that names of participants should be masked in the data to protect their identities and any repercussions from their participation in the study. This is essential as it is possible that interviews could contain conversations that reflect negatively of a coach's or administrator's affiliated association related to incidents of parental misconduct or poor structure from instituted policies and disciplinary procedures. As a result, participants names used in transcripts and the final study were replaced with anonymous acronyms (e.g., A1: Administrator #1; HC1: Head Coach #1). These measures ensured coaches and administrators do not have their reputations affected and their contributions will be used to extend research on the role of policy and parental behaviour in minor hockey associations.

Information Storage

Based on REB guidelines, explanations regarding how materials are secured and disposed need to be provided. All audio tapes recorded from interviews were secured and stored electronically on a password-encrypted personal computer of the researcher. Audio recordings was fully transcribed with any identifying information deleted from the transcription. Audio files were deleted once interview transcripts were completed. The transcripts and recordings were only accessible to the researcher and the thesis supervisor (Dr. Curtis Fogel) for the purposes of analysis to retain confidentiality between participants. As mentioned earlier, all names within transcripts were removed and replaced with anonymous acronyms to keep the identities of participants confidential.

Associated Benefits and Risks

Participants were informed of the potential benefits and risks associated with this research study. Potential benefits from participating in the study discussed with participants included allowing coaches and executive members to: describe their experiences in minor hockey, aid in the potential development of new policy recommendations for minor hockey associations and share their own strategies and expectations for other coaches and administrators. Benefits also included parents to become more informed of expected behaviours and negative repercussions of overinvolvement on children and coaches. Overall, this study was designed with the potential to lead to safer, more inclusive minor hockey programming in Ontario.

In terms of risks, participants did not experience any physical or social risks, or deception from the study. However, one potential risk included negative psychological effects for coaches providing their experiences. Recalling examples of parental misconduct could trigger negative emotions and as a researcher providing a safe environment for participants to share their experiences is of the utmost important. As a result, strategies to combat a potential incident included, turning off recording devices to allow participants to pause and collect themselves, reminding the participant had the option to withdraw from the interview, and referring participants to counseling services to effectively help individuals by trained professionals. Information on accessing a free help line was provided to all participants on the informed consent form that was reviewed before commencing the interview. No participants reported experiencing any distress before or after the interviews.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity refers to the ongoing process that involves reflection to continuously construct and shift understanding of social realities and experiences (Barrett, Kajamaa, &

Johnston, 2020). Reflexivity challenges the status quo through continuous questioning, examining, accepting, and articulating attitudes, assumptions, perspectives, and roles (Barrett et al., 2020). Because the research study was qualitative and interpretive, strategies to maintain reflexivity were essential. The starting point was the inclusion of my positionality statement to inform readers of my place in the research as an insider within minor hockey and larger social structures. From here, a research journal was used to reflect, detail, and justify experiences and decisions within the research process. Specifically, field notes answered four questions highlighted by Markham (2017): 1) What led me to that perception? 2) How do I know that? 3) So what? 4) Why did I conclude that? In addition, I met regularly with my supervisor for an additional perspective and reflect on my own positionality within the research. These strategies helped myself remain a reflexive researcher and be able to understand experiences and justify my decisions in the research process.

Trustworthiness and Rigour

Trustworthiness provides an opportunity to support the quality of data collection and interpretation by including subjects in the evaluation process. According to Creswell (1998) and Kingsley (2008), qualitative research often views verification being related to the researcher's interpretation of data collected and analyzed. A form of trustworthiness/credibility used in the study was member-checking with participants. After interviews were transcribed, participants were emailed their interview transcript to review and provide feedback for any corrections or additions to be made. In addition, an audit trail was used for the study. An audit trail is a qualitative strategy to establish conformability of findings and involves establishing findings are based on participant responses opposed to my own preconceptions (Cutcliffe & Mckenna, 2004). This included providing raw data from interviews and findings that connect to existing literature.

Dependability

In qualitative research, dependability is often referred to as reliability (Neuman & Robson, 2009). Patton (2002) stated triangulation of data helps establish trustworthiness and dependability in research. Due to qualitative researcher being highly interpretive, reliability can be potentially problematic as different researchers develop different interpretations and results. As a result, the use of triangulation contributed to the dependability of data for the study by using multiple forms of data to collaborate and strengthen findings. This included empirical data collection from two stakeholder perspectives and multiple methods to understand the current practices among minor hockey associations to set standards of behaviour with parents and handle violations if they should occur. In addition, the researcher's perceptions as an insider in minor hockey and existing literature also increased dependability and understanding of behavioural policy effectiveness in minor hockey. For a constructivist epistemology, data provided multiple perspectives related to how rep coaches construct meaning from their experiences and represents their version of truth and understanding.

Chapter 4: Findings & Discussion: Thematic Analysis of Parental Code of Conduct Policies

The first guiding research question of this study was: What code of conduct policies exist in Ontario minor hockey associations? To answer this question, 100 minor hockey associations in Ontario were randomly selected. Upon selection, their association website was visited, and respective codes of conduct or rules of operation manual were downloaded, analyzed, and coded into distinct themes. Of the 100 associations selected, 58 contained an identifiable parental code of conduct section. A breakdown of the analyzed websites found 81 associations were from OHF affiliated members with 50 containing a parental code of conduct section for a 61.73% success rate, 10 associations were affiliated with HNO with only one containing an identifiable code of conduct section creating a 10% success rate, and 9 associations were affiliated with HEO with seven containing a parental code of conduct section for a 77.78% success rate.

According to Sparkes and Smith (2017), theme development is about clustering codes to create “higher-level” patterns to refer to meanings that capture more than one specific idea or code. As a result, themes are broader and have layers clustered together to capture rich nuance and diversity as opposed to a single idea (Sparkes & Smith, 2017). Theme development took place with each code separated into categories to represent a broader context related to policies within code of conduct sections. In total, five themes were identified to answer RQ1 regarding the current code of conduct policies in place for Ontario minor hockey associations and included the following:

1. Athlete-Centred Focus
2. Dispute Prevention & Resolution Measures
3. Spectator Behaviour
4. Culture & Integrity of Hockey

5. Social Relations with Key Stakeholders

The analysed themes are outlined in the following sections by providing the frequency of codes found during analysis and their contents related to the desired behaviour from parents in minor hockey associations. Certain codes were more frequent than others with certain associations using their regional governing or national governing body policy as their own. Others incorporated the guidance of a governing body but made their own adaptations to their own association. Additionally, certain associations took the approach to make their own code of conduct with varying degrees on their length and complexity, while others had no recognizable code of conduct present on their association website. In total, 58 Ontario minor hockey associations had a recognizable code of conduct section viewable on their association website while 42 associations had no discernable document available for viewing.

Athlete-Centred Focus

Table 2.1

Overview of codes and frequency found in athlete-centred focus theme.

Code	Frequency
Do not ridicule/embarrass/give negative comments to child	56.90%
Hockey is designed to be fun	55.17%
Be a role model for your child	50.00%
Effort more important than victory/not about winning and losing	48.28%
Do not force child's participation	41.38%
Do not have unrealistic expectations/players are not professionals	24.14%
Growth and skill development of child	22.41%
Ensure child has proper/certified equipment	12.07%

Child is part of a team that works together	12.07%
Be on time to practices, games, meetings, etc.	12.07%
Enjoy child's participation in hockey	6.90%
Respect child's identity and let them live their own successes	5.17%
Ask child about the "highlights" rather than performance	5.17%
Do not pressure child beyond their capabilities	5.17%

The first identified theme in the thematic analysis of code of conduct policies was to inform parents that minor hockey is centered around the athlete's participation and enjoyment in the sport, as opposed to catering to fanatical urges and competitiveness some parents display at their child's youth sport events. In total, 14 unique codes and phrases were found during analysis with the most common phrase being "do not ridicule/embarrass/give negative comments to child" (56.90%) to avoid creating a negative atmosphere for their child's development and allow for enjoyment in minor hockey. This coincides with other codes directed at parents' behaviour and included to "enjoy child's participation in minor hockey" (6.90%), and "do not have unrealistic expectations/players are not professionals" (24.14%) by understanding the age and level of skill of their respective child. These codes demonstrate the perceived importance of creating a positive atmosphere rather than one that is hyper-competitive resulting in unrealistic expectations on youth athletes from parents.

Similarly, certain codes focused on the level of involvement from parents in their child's minor hockey development and varied in their frequency. Certain code of conduct documents instructed parents to "respect child's identity and let them live their own successes" (5.17%) by giving them their own autonomy to make decisions. This code was similar to "do not pressure

child beyond their capabilities” (5.17%) and “do not force child’s participation” (41.38%) and “ask child about the “highlights” rather than performance” (5.17%) by putting less pressure on a player and allowing them to control conversations with parents about their experiences and refer to events they found enjoyable during practices or games. These findings reiterate the overall theme of the athlete being the focus and should be given the right to make their own decisions regarding the amount of participation and level of competitiveness they want to pursue in minor hockey.

Moreover, certain codes instructed parents on specific actions and responsibilities they need to provide to their child. In general, parents were instructed to “be a role model” (50.00%) for their child’s development by providing support and allowing their child to be able to look up at them as a role model they can learn from and incorporate their personality and characteristics into their youth development given the impression and influence parents can have on their children. A less frequent but nonetheless interesting finding stated parents are responsible to “ensure child has proper/certified equipment” (12.07%) to reduce the likelihood of injury and ensure the parent(s) are focused on the health and safety of their child. Similarly, a minority of analyzed code of conduct documents informed parents they are responsible to “be on time to practices/games/meetings etc.” (12.07%) by providing adequate transportation for their child to participate in minor hockey activities.

Finally, identified athlete-centred codes also related to on-ice components of minor hockey. Specifically, parents are reminded their “child is part of a team that works together” (12.07%) and is an individual intrinsically tied together with teammates pursuing team goals and should not receive superior or unequal treatment compared to their teammates. Additionally, parents are instructed to understand “effort is more important than victory and not about winning

and losing” (48.28%), with a focus on “growth and skill development” (22.41%), and that “hockey is designed to fun” (55.17%), which should be the focus in the delivery of minor hockey in local associations to create an environment focused on PYD.

Dispute Prevention & Resolution Procedures

Table 2.2

Overview of codes and frequency found in dispute prevention and resolution procedures theme.

Code	Frequency
Potential consequences for negative behaviour	82.76%
Reference to provincial/national governing body policy/involvement	63.79%
Association disciplinary process	48.28%
24-hour rule process	43.10%
Pre-season acknowledgement form	25.86%
Association appeal process	22.41%
Speak Out! Program	6.90%

The second identified theme was dispute prevention and resolution procedures for parents that break code of conduct policies. To begin, over a quarter of analyzed documents contained a “pre-season acknowledgement form” (25.86%) for parents to sign at the beginning of each minor hockey season. The form included the associations code of conduct to ensure parents understood their expected behaviour by having to read and sign the document before their child could participate in on-ice activities. Therefore, the information would presumably be fresh in mind for parents and reduce the odds of not understanding their association’s code of conduct and act as a preventative measure for minor hockey associations to have a record of parents agreeing to abide

by the association code of conduct and be used by the associations during dispute resolution procedures if violations occurred during the season.

Furthermore, a portion of documents included the association complaint process for stakeholders to use if they were to have any issues to bring to the association. This took place through the “24-hour rule process” (43.10%), a policy where minor hockey stakeholders are instructed to wait a mandatory of 24-hours after a game or practice where they witnessed something they disagree with to file a complaint as a cool-down period to reduce hostility and potentially the number of complaints. These complaints are to be addressed by of board of directors who would discuss how to address the issue by conducting an investigation, organizing a meeting, or handing out a suspension. Surprisingly, this policy has been implemented by local associations as no regional, provincial, or national governing body have the 24-hour rule mandated. Interestingly, the “association appeal process” (22.41%) appeared less frequently and outlined the right to appeal for a parent if they received punishment from the association. These processes typically appeared in the Rules of Operation manual, the guiding document for local associations compared to a more simplified code of conduct document that outlined expected behaviour and was more concise in its writing of behavioural expectations.

Subsequently, many minor hockey associations reminded parents of the ramifications they could face including having their membership revoked. In total, “potential consequences for negative behaviour” appeared in the majority of analyzed code of conduct documents (82.76%). However, the amount of description and detail related to discipline procedures varied amongst associations. Less than half of analyzed policies included “association disciplinary processes” (48.28%) with some associations implementing a three-strike process that escalated with each violation. The first violation would result in a parent-coach meeting to discuss how to peacefully

resolve the issue, the second meeting would require a meeting with a member from the association's board of directors, while the third meeting would require a representative from the provincial governing body. Other associations included potential suspensions for parents by not allowing them to be a spectator during games for a set period while others outlined the types of behaviour and incidents that would result in a suspension ranging from more minor incidents such as verbal abuse at referees to more serious infractions including physical confrontations and even having to pay for damages if they were to occur on arena property.

Finally, "reference to regional/provincial/national governing body policy/involvement" was present in almost two thirds of analyzed documents (63.79%) and typically referred to the governing body's involvement in more serious incidents where a representative would work in accordance with local associations to file reports and hand down potential suspensions. In addition, many documents referred to or used their regional or provincial governing body's code of conduct to establish expected behaviour across a plethora of local associations. In addition, the "Speak Out! Program" was less frequently discussed and only present in select documents (6.90%). The program was established by Hockey Canada to educate and prevent bullying, harassment, and abuse in hockey throughout Canada (Hockey Canada, n.d.). The program uses workshops and resource materials for governing bodies and local associations to increase awareness and handle incidents (Hockey Canada, n.d.). The few associations that referenced this program included a Speak Out! Coordinator to provide educational resources to handle incidents. Interestingly, no analyzed code of conduct mentioned the Respect in Sport program, an online program mandated by Hockey Canada designed to inform parents of their expected behaviour and prevent issues across minor hockey (Strashin, 2016). The program is to be taken by at least one parent before their child can participate in any minor hockey activity. As a result,

the inclusion of provincial or national governing body statements and policies demonstrates how certain local associations incorporate different resources into their own policies and mandates for parents.

Spectator Behaviour

Table 2.3

Overview of codes and frequency found for spectator behaviour theme.

Code	Frequency
No verbal abuse or harassment	91.38%
No physical abuse or violence	86.21%
No alcohol or drug substances	56.90%
Cheer positively and no booing	43.10%
Do not interfere in team preparation	25.86%
Respect team locker room and bench	18.97%
Do not coach from the stands	13.79%
Social media usage	12.07%
No hazing	3.45%
No recording devices in the locker room	1.72%

The third identified theme is required spectator behaviour guidelines for parents. Analyzed policies varied in their wording and covered a range of different behavioural expectations for parents in the stands, in locker/dressing rooms, and outside the arena. The most common codes related to the expected behaviour from parents during games and practices. Specifically, nearly every analyzed code of conduct referenced “no verbal abuse or harassment”

(91.38%) would be tolerated towards any stakeholder (coaches, players, referees, parents, rink staff, etc.). Similarly, “no physical abuse or violence” (86.21%) with any members in a minor hockey setting was also present in the majority of analyzed documents but interestingly, was slightly less frequent compared to refraining from verbal abuse and harassment. These codes often specified behaviour occurring in the stands, but some association code of conduct documents explicitly specified these forms of behaviour were not permitted on arena property including dressing rooms, lobbies, and arena parking lots. In addition, certain code of conduct documents varied in the amount of description or examples provided regarding what constituted verbal or physical abuse with some documents providing examples such as: yelling, swearing, inappropriate gestures, banging glass, throwing items onto the ice, damaging arena property, pushing/shoving, and fighting.

Furthermore, identified codes for behaviour occurring in spectating areas during games and practices instructed parents how they should show appreciation by being told to “cheer positively and no booing” (43.10%) and even encouraged to cheer positively for good plays made by the opposing team, not just their own. A final identified code related to spectator behaviour in the stands informed members to “not coach from the stands” (13.79%). This code was less frequent and is aimed at spectators who feel the need to shout instructions to prevent confusion to players hearing instructions from both coaches and parents. Parents are to refrain from coaching their child or any other players during games or practices and are instructed coaching is only allowed in public spaces from coaches listed on the team roster. As a result, the inclusion of instructions for spectators in the stands demonstrates certain minor hockey associations position to monitor behaviour.

Interestingly, codes related to spectator behaviour were also found at other locations in the arena. A specific area of contention was the locker/dressing room. One interesting code was parents are told “do not interfere in team preparation” (25.86%) and referred to creating an unwelcoming environment for the opposing team that affected their ability to prepare for a game. This included ransacking dressing rooms, banging on doors, and creating other distractions that would be viewed as unsportsmanlike. Similarly, certain codes of conduct also addressed how parents should behave around their own team areas and are instructed to “respect team locker room and bench” (18.97%) by not interrupting team preparation, intermissions, team discussions, and avoid going to the bench to voice their concerns. A few analyzed documents went a step further by asserting “no hazing” (3.45%) and “no recording devices in the locker room” (1.72%) were allowed to prevent any inappropriate activities and harm to youth players through exploitation or abuse that could result in criminal behaviour and involvement from law enforcement if a serious incident were to occur. Overall, these codes were not as frequent but illustrate an increased level of involvement and thought from some minor hockey associations by instructing how parents should behave in other locations within the arena and attempt to ensure the safety of youth minor hockey players.

In addition, certain codes contained instructions that could apply to multiple contexts both in and outside the arena. The most notable code being “no alcohol or drug substances” (56.90%) permitted for consumption on arena property or attending any game or practice while intoxicated or being under the influence of drugs. Parents are instructed to be mindful of the effects of the physical and cognitive effects of drugs and alcohol and are instructed to refrain from their consumption to reduce the risk of verbal or physical incidents occurring, embarrassment to their child, and impact the enjoyment of others involved in a minor hockey

setting. Some code of conduct documents instructed parents to not give their child any form of illegal drug substance including the use of performance enhancing drugs that could negatively impact their health and well-being. As a result, the inclusion of provisions to prevent the use of alcohol and drug abuse for both parents and players demonstrates a willingness from certain minor hockey associations to manage factors that could create violations and legal issues regarding behaviour.

Finally, “social media usage” (12.07%) was discussed by some minor hockey associations and stated participants should be held to the same standards as other forms of traditional media. Specifically, the policies indicated that comments or remarks deemed inappropriate and detrimental to a team, association, or individual will not be tolerated and are subject to disciplinary action. Parents are reminded the language they use should refrain from comments that could be disrespectful, abusive, offensive, racist, or sexist or that constitutes abuse, bullying, or harassment, be mindful of privacy and confidentiality regarding images, names, and player information being shared, ensuring respect regarding concerns or disputes is not misrepresented, and being mindful of information being shared where retweets from a third party could be considered an endorsement (OMHA, 2018). Additional examples of promoting negative influences or criminal behaviour described could include drug use, alcohol abuse, public intoxication, hazing, and sexual exploitation (OMHA, 2018).

Culture & Integrity of Minor Hockey

Table 2.4

Overview of codes and frequency found for culture and integrity of minor hockey theme.

Code	Frequency
Maintain respect/fair play/integrity	86.21%

Follow the rules of minor hockey	56.90%
Retain confidential information	12.07%
Disclose potential conflicts of interest	5.17%
Learn the rules of the game	5.17%
Participation is a privilege, not a right	5.17%
No tampering	1.72%
Do not provide incorrect information regarding child	1.72%

The fourth theme identified within code of conduct policies relates to maintaining the culture and integrity of hockey. Most associations with a code of conduct policy included a generalized statement that instructed parents to follow their provincial associations values of “respect, fairness, and integrity” (86.21%) and to “follow the rules of minor hockey” (56.90%) and offer a holistic instruction to parents to respect the general principles of hockey and prevent actions or behaviour that would be deemed unethical or break the written rules of the sport. These two codes often referenced their regional or provincial governing body as an overarching vision to be invoked by local associations. Therefore, this recognition and inclusion of additional governing bodies illustrates an approach by national, provincial, regional, and local associations to collectively use similar phrases to establish consistency in the message relayed to minor hockey parents regarding their expected behaviour.

Moreover, many identified codes within this theme were less frequent in analyzed code of conduct policies and offered more in-depth instructions for parents regarding their actions to uphold the culture and integrity of minor hockey. One interesting finding that appeared rather simple but uncommon was for parents to “learn the rules of the game” (5.17%) to ensure they

have an understanding to how the game is played, fit in with the culture of minor hockey, and behave accordingly with actions and decisions made during games and practices. For example, this could include understanding the types of penalties called, offside and icing, the length of games, and the various positions in minor hockey (e.g., center, right wing, left wing, defence, goalie). Additionally, the inclusion of the phrase “participation is a privilege, not a right” (5.17%) was also iterated by certain associations that informed parents their involvement in minor hockey is not a guarantee and to remain a member, they must uphold the associations integrity and values or risk losing their membership.

Although rare, certain code of conduct policies also delved into various parental misconduct incidents including the level of involvement parents have in their child’s minor hockey experiences and the ethical measures they should make. For example, some documents explained parents “retain confidential information” (12.07%) regarding players and the association and should “disclose potential conflicts of interest” (5.17%). These specific codes often apply to parents who held roles within the association including being a coach, member of a player selection committee, or executive board member where decisions made could be a breach of confidentiality or create unethical personal benefits for an individual through their role. Similarly, other codes related to ethical behaviour included “no tampering” (1.72%) to prevent parents from interfering to cause damage or make unauthorized alterations and behave in a corrupt way and “do not provide incorrect information regarding child” (1.72%) to prevent parents from filing false information such as fraudulent birth certificates to give their child an advantage. The inclusion of more in-depth codes related to ethical behaviour from parents, although less frequently discussed, demonstrates some attention to ensuring the values and integrity of minor hockey is being upheld.

Social Relations with Key Stakeholders**Table 2.5**

Overview of codes and frequency found in social relations with key stakeholders' theme.

Code	Frequency
Respect officials/referees	77.59%
Support and show appreciation for coaches	60.34%
Respect the opposing team	50.00%
Parents and coaches need to mutually work together	34.48%
Work together with other organizations/affiliations	5.17%
Ensure association fees are paid	5.17%
Respect the trainer's knowledge	3.45%
Coaches provide rules to parents	3.45%
Cannot sue organization	3.45%
Provide notice to coach regarding vacations	3.45%
Use constructive criticism about organization	1.72%
Alert coaches regarding medical conditions	1.72%

The fifth and final theme from the thematic analysis is for parents to establish and maintain positive social relations with various stakeholders. As mentioned in earlier themes, are required parents to refrain from abusing stakeholders as a spectator. This theme differs by being more directed at fostering positive relationships with others involved in a minor hockey association as opposed the previously discussed athlete-centred focus theme regarding player participation. The most common stakeholder identified for parents in code of conduct policies

was to “respect referees/officials” (77.59%). Parents are reminded that referees can make mistakes and if a disagreement were to arise, it should be discussed proactively in a polite manner by the coach as opposed to yelling and screaming and abusing officials. Doing so can create a hostile environment that could result in a coach being ejected and increase the risk of parental misconduct incidents occurring.

Moreover, the second most common stakeholder identified was to “support and show appreciation for coaches” (60.34%). Specifically, code of conduct policies explained coaches are often volunteers and spend a considerable amount of time organizing and executing practices and games. As a result, parents were informed to recognize this role and show appreciation for the effort of coaches to make parents children’s minor hockey experience enjoyable. Through the thematic analysis, additional codes related to the parent-coach-athlete relationship were identified. For example, around one third of analyzed code of conduct policies explained “parents and coaches need to mutually work together” (34.48%) through sharing information, providing guidance, and understanding the interconnected relationship between parents, coaches, and players. Although less common, certain codes delved even further into this notion of a mutual working relationship. For example, some code of conduct documents informed parents they should “provide notice to coach regarding vacations” (3.45%) where players would miss practices or games and allow the coach to schedule around their absence through changing lineups and potentially making a call-up from a lower-level team (e.g., calling up a AA player to the AAA team in the association). Likewise, parents should “alert coaches regarding medical conditions” (1.72%) so the coaching staff would take the necessary precautions and be aware of how to potentially handle a medical emergency (e.g., if a player suffers from an allergy or asthma). Coaches themselves were also instructed to “provide team rules” (3.45%) to parents so

they understand team rules related to player dress codes, arrival times for practices and games, away tournaments protocols, and communication regarding parent concerns or issues. Therefore, coaches are seen as a key stakeholder within some association code of conduct policies providing additional detail to parents on the nature of the relationship.

Another stakeholder mentioned in a minority of code of conduct policies included the minor hockey association itself. Parents are instructed to “ensure association fees are paid” (5.17%) to prevent any potential legal issues regarding unpaid fees. These fees could include the initial registration fee, additional rep hockey fees that include equipment, apparel, and tournament fees, or hockey camps administered through the association. One association instructed parents to “use constructive criticism about organization” (1.72%) to create a positive dialogue surrounding concerns, issues, or areas of improvement for the association and prevent heated conversations between parents and members of the association. Surprisingly, two associations stated in their code of conduct that parents “cannot sue the organization” (3.45%) for any incidents that occurred the association was not considered liable. In addition, if a parent decided to sue anyway, they would have to pay the legal fees of the association if any incident proceeded to court. A final code revolved around parents who hold multiple roles in a minor hockey association (e.g., coach or board member) and are instructed to “work together with other organizations/affiliations” (5.17%). This could include sharing information with local, regional, provincial, or national governing bodies regarding association daily activities, scheduling, issues, or mandates.

Finally, the few remaining stakeholders identified in the thematic analysis included “respect the opposing team” (50.00%) and “respect the trainer’s knowledge” (3.45%). Respecting the opposing team was found in half of analyzed code of conduct policies. Parents

are instructed to not engage in verbal arguments with parents on the opposing team or show any poor sportsmanship to opposing team players. Interestingly, the role of trainers was brought up by two minor hockey associations and were less frequently discussed compared to the relationship parents should have with coaches. Parents are instructed to respect their decisions given their qualifications by being a certified trainer from Hockey Canada and their team duties in leading activities (i.e., stretches, off-ice training, nutrition, etc.), and assessing injuries if a parent is not qualified themselves.

Discussion

The goal of conducting a thematic analysis on existing code of conduct policies in Ontario minor hockey associations was to answer RQ1: What code of conduct policies exist in Ontario minor hockey associations? To answer the research question, five distinct themes were found in code of conduct sections addressed to parents regarding their actions and behaviour required for their association. As discussed, themes included: 1) athlete-centred focus, 2) dispute prevention and resolution procedures, 3) spectator behaviour, 4) culture and integrity of minor hockey, and 5) social relations with key stakeholders. In addition, each theme contained descriptive statistics to analyze the frequency of codes present and allowed for summarizing the content of code of conduct documents in Ontario minor hockey associations. Furthermore, this section will interpret findings from the thematic analysis, discuss how findings relate and differ from previous studies, and how findings contribute to policy research and understanding of minor hockey.

As discussed in the literature review, policy research in a youth sport context is sparse. Despite this, limited research in this area related to code of conduct and ethics in sport are largely consistent with findings from this study. Most notably, in a content analysis by Waegeneer, Van

De Sompele, and Willem (2016) themes such as integrity, fair play, and children's rights in sport were found present in documents. Interestingly, similar themes were found in the thematic analysis of conduct policies of Ontario minor hockey associations. Specifically, themes of athlete-centred focus, and culture and integrity in minor hockey were identified to remind parents that youth sports are intended to be catered to their child's personal and skill development, opposed to parents forcing child participation, having fanatical urges, or unethical behaviour. The similarities between the two studies suggests content in code of conduct and ethics documents can contain similar information related to expected behaviour across various sport disciplines and that despite certain sports having unique characteristics is not isolated to a particular sport.

The inclusion of athlete-centred focus in conduct policies is important. This is supported by existing research by Turman (2007) who explained the potential negative effects parental behaviour can have on children and how increased emphasis on performance and winning can lead to increased stress and anxiety that can lower the satisfaction and enjoyment of a child in youth sports. Similarly, Wuerth and co-authors (2004) discussed how youth athletes desire low levels of pressure and high levels of praise and understanding from their parents. The study also found parents should not exceed the amount of parental involvement desired by their child and understand when to draw the line (Wuerth et al., 2004). Additionally, previous research on explaining the motives of overinvolvement in minor hockey stem from parents wanting a return on investment, the lure of pro sport, and living out athletic aspirations through their child help explain many of the phrases in place for the athlete-centred focus theme that attempt to address these issues that include: "do not force child's participation," "do not ridicule/embarrass/give negative comments to child," and "do not have unrealistic expectations/players are not

professionals” (Bean et al., 2016; Dunn et al., 2016). Therefore, the goal of these statements is to influence parental behaviour and encourage parents to positively support their child by providing guidelines on their behaviour, responsibilities, level of involvement, and on-ice components.

The need for an athlete-centred focus in youth sports is reiterated by research related to the need for parental education programs, which is discussed in multiple other studies. In their systematic review of understanding athlete dropout in youth sports, Witt and Dangi (2018) suggest that in order to minimize youth sport dropout, associations need to redefine sport to be centered around fun, balance parental involvement, decrease parental pressure, avoid parents living their sport dreams through their children, and give children their own autonomy. Similar findings were presented by Dorsch, King, Tulane, Osai, Dunn, and Carlsen (2019) who found parental education content should include statements that temper expectations and provide education on the rules of the sport. Participants from Ross, Mallett, and Parkes (2015) study believed additional resources were needed to communicate expected behaviour with parents while Elliott and Drummond (2014) and Wiersma and Sherman (2005) explain additional policies are needed to reduce abusive and problematic behaviour that has become normalized from parents. This is furthered by Knight, Dorsch, Osai, Haderlie, and Sellers (2016) who stated the delivery of parental policies cannot be a “one size fits all” program because parents are not a homogenous group with many holding different roles in the association and vary in their level of involvement. Findings from this study indicate that most Ontario minor hockey associations are including some athlete-centred elements in their conduct policies. Common phrases included: “Hockey is designed to be fun,” “be a role model for your child,” “respect child’s identity and let them live their own successes,” and “do not pressure child beyond their capabilities” emphasize the overarching goal of minor hockey is to be fun by using code of conduct documents as a

parental education tool. Given the growing body of literature that has shown how important this aspect is to youth sport conduct policies, all associations should be including affirmative athlete-centered statements that parents should abide by and clearly state other expectations of appropriate parental behaviour.

In this study it was also found that there is high variability on the level of detail and consistency on policies and procedure for how associations will deal with parents who engage in misconduct. Elliott and Drummond's (2014) and Waegeneer, Van De Sompele, and Wilem (2016) both found that a lack of consequences in conduct policies normalized overt, aggressive, and abusive behaviour from parents who did not receive punishment for incidents due to a lack of procedures in place to handle violations. From the findings of this study, it appears that while some Ontario minor hockey associations have emphasized discipline and dispute resolution procedures and sanctions in their policies, others have not, creating potential problems. While 82.76% of analyzed documents included "potential consequences for negative behaviour" in their association, the amount of detail varied with 63.79% "referencing their regional/provincial/national governing body policy/involvement," 48.28% included a more detailed "association disciplinary process," and 22.41% including an "association appeal process" for violators. Therefore, associations should continue to emphasize potential consequences for parental misconduct, so violations do not become normalized in an association and have a negative effect on stakeholders.

Existing research by Wiersma and Sherman's (2005) has also led to a recommendation that a 24-hour rule to be implemented to create a gap before a parent could speak to an association representative when a dispute has arisen. 43.10% of analyzed code of conduct documents in this study included reference to the "24-hour rule process," which does not come

from any regional, provincial, or national governing body mandates. Instead, the inclusion of the policy is made by the local associations. While Wiersma and Sherman's (2005) 24-hour rule recommendation has been integrated in some associations, it has not been done consistently and has not been undertaken by any governing body who has the ability to implement mandates for local minor hockey associations.

Similarly, another recommendation made by youth sport coaches in Wiersma and Sherman's (2005) study involved the implementation of mandatory sportsmanship training for parents in youth sports. This too has been adopted by many Ontario minor hockey associations and governing bodies through the Respect in Sport Program, an online module course for parents to take to learn about their expected behaviour in youth sports. Hockey Canada has mandated the program to be taken by one parent per player before participating in any minor hockey activities (Strashin, 2016). The effectiveness of the program has also been analyzed by Tamminen, McEwen, Kerr, and Donnelly (2020) through the perspective of youth hockey players in a longitudinal study. The researchers found improvement in personal and social skills among players but could not find if the program had a significant change in negative experiences or reduced parental pressure (Tamminen et al., 2020). While Hockey Canada has mandated participation in the program, not one analyzed code of conduct in this study mentioned the Respect in Sport program. This omission could potentially hamper its success through lack of distribution and communication which is essential for policies and programs to be successful (Sims, 1991; Weaver et al., 1999).

One area of consistency across the codes of conduct that were analyzed was the inclusion of guidelines for parents to refrain from verbal abuse and harassment and physical violence. However, certain associations delved into more complicated issues including the use of social

media and banning of hazing rituals that have often been an unwritten rule and cultural issue in sport by including parameters for parents to follow to prevent harm to stakeholders in minor hockey. Existing research has identified a need to deter parental anger and aggression in the many different forms it can take (LaVoi & Stellino, 2008; Omlil & LaVoi, 2011). An important finding of this study is that Ontario minor hockey associations that have a visual code of conduct do appear to consistently include statements deterring parental aggression and violence.

In a study of NCAA code of ethics policies, Jordan, Greenwell, Giest, Pastore, and Mahony (2004) identified themes of sportsmanship, honesty, integrity, fair play, healthy environment, and professional conduct as important. In addition, coaches believed codes of ethics should contain both specific and general instructions for stakeholders to adhere to with the presence of disciplinary warnings. Interestingly, these important policy features are addressed to some capacity in many analyzed code of conduct documents in Ontario minor hockey associations parents are given both general and specific instructions to “maintain respect/fair play/integrity,” “follow the rules of minor hockey,” “retain confidential information,” “disclose potential conflicts of interest,” and “no tampering.” To promote the culture and integrity of minor hockey, these important elements could be included in conduct policies more universally.

The analyzed code of conduct policies identified key stakeholders that parents should maintain positive social relations with and act respectfully towards including players, coaches, referees, association volunteers, and other parents. The inclusion of these groups is supported by existing research. Omlil and LaVoi (2011) support this notion in their grounded theory analysis that found four main groups caused parents to act out in anger including referees, coaches, participants, other parent spectators. Ross, Mallett, and Parkes (2015) identify that showing appreciation to coaches in particular and fostering a positive relationship as crucial to creating a

positive experience in youth sport. In addition, previous research involving the *athletic triangle* identifies the important interconnected relationship between coaches, parents, and players, and that communication and trust needs to be established to foster a positive relationship (Smoll et al., 2011). This can be found through identified codes that include: “respect officials/referees,” “respect the opposing team,” “support and show appreciation for coaches,” and “parents and coaches need to mutually work together.” Positive relations with various minor hockey stakeholders are critical and most analyzed code of conduct policies in this study account for this.

Limitations

The findings of this code of conduct document analysis are not without limitations. For one, the sample used did not account for every single registered Ontario minor hockey association with a rep component. Therefore, findings cannot be generalizable to all minor hockey associations as the sample was limited to 100 association websites out of 416 affiliated associations. Furthermore, within those 100 association websites, 58 total documents were found and analyzed. It is possible certain associations that were not analyzed in the study could contain differing codes compared to the analyzed documents despite consistency across many documents that used the same phrasing or adopted a larger governing body’s code of conduct document. Finally, it is also possible that certain minor hockey associations have a parental code of conduct but have not made it accessible on their website. It should not be assumed that because their policy is not publicly available on their website that it does not exist; however, these potential policies were not included in this analysis. As identified in the findings, some associations have parents sign a physical code of conduct document at the start of each season. This is supported by previous research by Waegeneer, Devisch, and Willem (2017) who found that the

communication of the code of conduct in analyzed sport organizations was predominately done during registration or at the start of each season by 68.6%, while 34.2% of organizations listed a code of conduct on their website, and 28.9% mentioned the code of conduct in a pre-season meeting. Therefore, it is possible some associations have omitted the use of an online version of the code of conduct in favour of a hard copy to be used at the start of each season. Regardless, some concerns could be raised for the 42 association websites visited that did not include a parental code of conduct and raises the question as to how some local associations are communicating expected behaviour with minor hockey parents and the procedures in place to handle incidents. This illustrates the potential need for governing bodies to put increased emphasis on the inclusion and communication of parental code of conduct documents with local associations.

Moreover, the limited geographic scope of analyzed code of conduct documents can also be seen as a limitation to the application to other sporting contexts, gender, hockey playing levels, or geographic locations of minor hockey. This study focused specifically on minor hockey in Ontario and the results should not be seen as generalizable to other contexts, though many parallels likely exist with other contexts that could help policy development and refinement. For example, sport organizations affiliated under the umbrella of Baseball Canada or Soccer Canada could have different phrases and expected behaviour addressed to parents that apply to their unique sport. This could also apply to individual sports for organizations like Tennis Canada where expected behaviour of parents could have unique characteristics different to the team environment of minor hockey. From a minor hockey perspective, results could vary based on various Canadian provinces or territories who despite being affiliated under Hockey Canada can differ from how their provincial governing bodies and local associations view the

importance of code of conduct documents. This was observed with Ontario having three distinct provincial governing bodies as OHF and HEO associations had more parental code of conduct policies in place compared to HNO associations. Lastly, this could also apply to different countries that both use a similar minor hockey structure like USA Hockey or certain European countries that use a club model opposed to the pay-to-play model popularized by North American youth sport organizations.

A final limitation of findings relates to the lack of information regarding the Respect in Sport program. Despite no analyzed code of conduct mentioning the program, its implementation suggests an attempt to address parental behaviour that has been advocated for by participants and researchers in previous studies. Therefore, the lack of understanding regarding specific phrases and information in the program does not encompass all the measures in place by Ontario minor hockey associations to address parental behaviour in this study. As discussed, research by Tamminen and co-authors (2020) has begun to evaluate the program through the perspective of minor hockey players. As a result, future research should be directed at the Respect in Sport program to gain a more thorough understanding of its contents and how it attempts to inform parents about their expected behaviour and evaluate its success from the perspectives of other minor hockey stakeholders (e.g., parents, coaches, and administrators). Findings could prove to be useful on clarifying the similarities or differences compared to parental code of conduct documents.

Conclusion

Overall, the findings and discussion provide an exploratory look into Ontario minor hockey associations regarding their content addressed to parents regarding expected behaviour. Despite certain limitations regarding the generalization of findings based in a specific province

and singular youth sport, and not being able to thoroughly analyze the Respect in Sport program, the findings contribute to an increased knowledge of the contents of code of conduct documents. The five identified themes involving an athlete-centred focus, dispute prevention and resolution measures, spectator behaviour, culture and integrity of minor hockey, and social relations with key stakeholders provides a synopsis of how Ontario minor hockey associations approach parental misconduct incidents by using varying phrases and repercussive language to communicate their message with parents. These findings therefore contribute to academic literature by enhancing the knowledge of parental code of conduct document in Ontario minor hockey through their desired behaviour and presumed responses to handling incidents which goes beyond previous research that has analyzed various infractions of parents as opposed to analyzing the policies in place deigned to deal with parental misconduct.

Chapter 5: Findings & Discussion: Thematic Analysis of Semi-Structured Interviews

Chapter 4 provided a detailed examination of the content of conduct policies in Ontario minor hockey associations in relation to parental behaviour. Through qualitative interviews with rep coaches and administrators, the efficacy of these policies in reducing parental misconduct is explored in this chapter. From July 2021 to September 2021, 21 interviews with minor hockey coaches and administrators were conducted. This aligns with research conducted by Crouch and McKenzie (2006) who argue 15-20 interviews ensure themes are accurate and saturation can be achieved. The duration of interviews ranged from 19 minutes to 134 minutes. 17 participants were male while four were female. Of the 21 participants, 9 were minor hockey rep head coaches while 12 were administrators. However, many participants held multiple roles in their respective association(s) or had previous experiences coaching. One head coach was also an administrator, four administrators were former head or assistant coaches, and two administrators were current assistant coaches. Administrative positions from participants included: President, Director of Hockey Operations, Director of Risk Management, Ice Scheduler, Parent Liaison, Operations Coordinator, Speak-Out Coordinator, and Vice President of Rep hockey. Administrators oversaw the entire rep system of the association (AAA, AA, A, AE, MD) as part of their job requirements while four coaches were currently involved at the AAA level, three at AA, and two at A. In addition, most coaches had experience at various levels of rep hockey and interchanged at various age and skill levels. Experience of participants ranged from one to 25 years with the average amongst the sample rounded up to 13 years. A full breakdown of participants is provided below in Table 3.

Table 3

Overview of participants detailing their position within their minor hockey association, level of competition, years of experience, and gender.

Participant	Role	Sex	Rep Level	Experience
A1	Administrator	Male	All levels	25 years
A2	Administrator	Male	All levels	23 years
A3	Administrator	Female	All levels	10 years
A4	Administrator	Female	All levels	10 years
A5	Administrator	Female	All levels	9 years
A6	Administrator	Female	All levels	1 year
AAC1	Administrator/Assistant Coach	Male	All levels	15 years
AAC2	Administrator/Assistant Coach	Male	All levels	7 years
AFC1	Administrator/Former Coach	Male	All levels	25 years
AFC2	Administrator/Former Coach	Male	All levels	10 years
AFC3	Administrator/Former Coach	Male	All levels	4 years
AFC4	Administrator/Former Coach	Male	All levels	3 years
HC1	Head Coach	Male	AAA	25 years
HC2	Head Coach	Male	AA	24 years
HC3	Head Coach	Male	AA	17 years
HC4	Head Coach	Male	AAA	16 years
HC5	Head Coach	Male	AAA	8 years

HC6	Head Coach	Male	A	7 years
HC7	Head Coach	Male	A	6 years
HC8	Head Coach	Male	AAA	5 years
HCA1	Head Coach/Administrator	Male	AA	20 years

This chapter focuses on the following research questions:

2. What behavioural expectations do Ontario rep minor hockey coaches and administrators have for parents?
3. What perspectives do Ontario rep minor hockey coaches and administrators have in relation to code of conduct policies effectiveness?
4. To what extent do Ontario rep minor hockey coaches and administrators perceive parents adhering to and violating conduct policies?

Expected Behaviour of Parents

To answer RQ2, participants conceptualized their version of a model hockey parent. Responses shared similar characteristics with themes identified in RQ1 regarding the key tenets of code of conduct policies in Ontario minor hockey associations. Most notably, participants reiterated the need for an athlete-centred focus where their child is given autonomy over their willingness to play minor hockey and be given the necessary positive support from parents without falling for the lure of professional sport at young ages:

AAC1: Whatever it is that your child is trying to achieve, whether it's just from a social aspect, they got into hockey, because they wanted to make friends, or because their friends play hockey, support that. If they want to be the next great player, support that as well and there are a variety of ways to do that, but I really think that a good parent is one

that knows when to take a step back and let the child engage the activity as opposed to the helicopter parent.

In addition to providing support, many participants emphasized the importance of having realistic expectations and not falling for the lure of professional sport. An interesting perspective from a participant is unsupported expectations by certain parents and explains that on macro scale, certain parent has unrealistic expectations for their child. However, on a micro scale, certain parents do not support their expectations of their child by providing the necessary tools for their child to succeed. Multiple participants mentioned it is okay for parents to have high expectations and be competitive given the nature of organized rep hockey, but they must be positively supported by the parents. As one participant elaborates:

AAC2: You have parents that think their kids should naturally be the best...When they're not competitive there's a lot of anger in the parent, but yet one of the lines I used to them, I say, "It's how have you assisted in your child reaching his dreams or her dreams are not your dreams," because, the same parents, the ones that are loudest, the ones that cause the most chaos, are also the ones that wouldn't spend a dollar to help improve their kids' skillset. Which again, I've always found interesting because the ones that pay, do private lessons, work hard, try to achieve their goals, they're not the ones with the loud, the bad blood in them. It seems to be the ones that are setting their expectations for the child beyond what they are capable of...and they don't provide the tools. Everybody wants to think that they've got Connor McDavid, and all they just need is a chance, but if you ask them, "What have you done to facilitate that player's growth?" It's nothing, that's the coach's job...I think that the slippery slope is parental expectations, yes, on a macro scale is 100% the biggest problem, but on a micro scale, it's unsupported expectations.

Moreover, participants wished for parents to recognize the intended purpose of minor hockey is not for developing athletes but rather developing people. Although minor hockey can develop players that play at the junior, collegiate, and professional levels, the odds of success are small and even though it is okay to encourage athlete development, the focus should be directed toward developing strong characteristics in individuals:

AAC2: We're not building super athletes. That is what I think parents have a hard time dealing with is, coming to the realization that less than 9,000 people have ever played a single game in the NHL in 106 years of his existence. People need to forget that this is an athletic endeavor and remember this is a human being developing endeavor.

Furthermore, some participants expressed the desire to balance hockey in the lives of their children and understand there are other aspects of life outside of the rink including players personal lives and school activities. One participant explains model hockey parents understand the hockey-life balance and works towards fostering a positive environment where they can grow off the ice as much as on it:

AFC3: A parent who knows boundaries between personal life, work-life, and their kid's social life, and using that to really make hockey not the most important thing in a kid's life, and use hockey to focus more on making their child a better person, making their child understand being in a team, working in a team environment, sportsmanship, and really developing as a person and not focus completely on their hockey skills and being the best hockey player and trying to make the NHL.

Subsequently, when focusing directly on the on-ice component of minor hockey, participants expressed their desire for parents to be able to motivate their child, learn how to

function as a member of a team, and learn discipline and respect to foster a positive team environment. From the perspective of one coach:

HC6: As a coach, all I'm looking for is parents that can motivate the child not only to have fun, but to have respect for both hockey-mates. That's the biggest thing is the respect piece. Hopefully, fun is coming with that. With the older kids, the commitment to a team philosophy and improving as a team. As long as everyone's engaged and on board with that, you're usually going to see a lot of success and a better team environment, both the players and the parents.

Similarly, participants believed a model hockey parent also provides support to the coaching staff, gives them space to complete their role, and aid in the social development of their child opposed to just focusing on skill development. One participant provides a detailed explanation to their idealized parent in minor hockey:

A3: A model hockey parent-- I wouldn't say kowtows or bends down to the coaching staff or kisses up to the coaching staff but supports the coaching staff. A model hockey parent is in it for their kid's enjoyment, not because they think their kid is going to be the next Gretzky, or because they think their kid is the best player on the team. A model hockey parent is in it for their kid's health, their kid's education, and experience on learning how to be a team member and increasing their social capacity as a human being.

From a broader perspective, participants also expressed a desire for parents to understand the imprint and influence they have on their children and how negative behaviour can detract from others involved in minor hockey. As a result, understanding the potential effects of negative behaviour is imperative for trying to maintain a positive environment:

AAC2: I think that parents need to be very aware of the footprint that they leave on their kids...We all make the mistake of getting mad and yelling at our kids now and again because we need to forgive ourselves for being human as well. While it's imperative that organizations have some kind of culture police out there because it really detracts from even other parents' enjoyment of the sport when you've got negative parental behavior in the environment. It detracts from everybody's enjoyment of the game.

Finally, perhaps the most interesting story provided by one coach that can best illustrate a model hockey parent who came into the sport without any knowledge of game but provided support to his son, ensured he was having fun playing the game, and gave his son autonomy over his participation. As the coach explains a parent's role in their child's development who ended up becoming a professional hockey player:

HC1: This guy, his kid got to where he got because his dad just every time, he came off the ice, he just said, "Hey, did you have fun today, yes? Good. Let's go." He never tried to coach his kid. He just wanted to know that the kid was having fun. Every year, he used to always tell him, "Hi, son, are you having fun? Okay, we'll sign you up again then." That was as far as it went with this man. He never tried to coach his kid...He just had the perfect attitude...He learned to love the game even though he knew nothing about it... That to me is the perfect guy. He just wanted his kid to have fun. He signed him up for an activity and he just wanted him to have fun. As he kept getting better, he just kept supporting him. That's it. Nothing changed...He just let him do what he had to do and that's it. Great father.

Perspectives of the Efficacy of Conduct Policies

To answer RQ3, participants provided their perspectives on the effectiveness of conduct policies in minor hockey. Overall, most participants indicated that parental behaviour in minor hockey is being curved in a positive direction and over time, has resulted in fewer negative incidents as associations and governing bodies have become more structured through policies and programs to inform parents of their expected behaviour at the rink. However, as previously mentioned, each participant had witnessed or experienced some form of parental misconduct, and many believe it is still a present issue in minor hockey. As a result, many participants shared their perspective on certain policies they believed to be effective or ineffective in their messaging and provided their own recommendations to help positively curve behaviour and reduce incidents.

The most effective policy brought up by participants in interviews that they believed prevents negative incidents involving parents is the 24-hour rule. This specific policy applies to all participants including parents in minor hockey associations and states that if a participant wants to file a complaint, they must wait 24 hours after a game or practice before officially lodging a complaint as a “cool-off” period to reflect on their experience and reevaluate their decision to lodge a complaint. Each participant that spoke about this policy in their association was adamant of its success to prevent arguments between minor hockey stakeholders and have more productive conversations. One interesting finding previously mentioned is the 24-hour rule is not mandated by any national, provincial, or regional governing body in Ontario. Instead, local associations themselves are implementing this policy without any guidance from governing bodies and indicates their own initiative to address parental misconduct. According to one participant:

HCA1: When you give yourself 24 hours to cool down, you see things in a different light. You start to dissect the situation or whatever you cool down. When emotions are running high, you can say things, or you're not seeing things correctly. There's a lot of times where after the 24-hour allows both coach and parent to go over, recoup, and have a conversation in a calm state of mind, rather than letting emotions take over.

In addition, to the 24-hour rule, many associations use a parent rep or liaison policy as a stop gap for communication between parents and coaches. For this specific policy, parents must go through the parent representative if they have any questions or concerns (e.g., ice time). The parent rep then relays the information to the head coach where they decide on the next step by either using the parent rep to communicate their answer or have a direct conversation with the parent(s) regarding their question or concern, often with the parent representative present as a third party. Many coaches described the policy as successful by giving them space from parents so they can focus on coaching duties without being interrupted. As one participant describes the role of the parent rep:

HC4: It's like putting up a block for the coaching staff, allowing us that separation that we need to do our job. In order to keep the kids happy and the parents be happy, it's like you let that parent vent to the parent rep, then he's going to be...less pissed off at me because he's got it off his chest and it'll be easier to deal with...I think they work, I think they're awesome...I think even if it wasn't mandatory in my association, I think I would still do it anyway.

Moreover, certain associations use a code of conduct section developed either by the association itself or use a version created by a governing body. Certain associations put their code of conduct on the online registration and require parents to check off they have read the

document and understand their expected behaviour. However, certain associations go one step further and have parents and players sign a hardcopy to have on file in case of any incident. This is similar to findings from analyzed code of conducts where some associations mandate parents sign the document before the start of each season. As one administrator describes their association's process:

A4: A lot of associations now have moved it onto the online registration, and they just use it as a waiver and people can just check it. We've kept it as the paper copy, so they actually have to sign it and have the child sign it. I think that's made a difference because we keep those on file and when there's an issue, we show them the paper, what that they signed. That makes them think a little bit.

Moreover, the inclusion of a zero-tolerance policy towards verbal abuse was deemed successful by one administrator. The key according to the participant is through communication with parents to explain the associations position and enforcement to penalize those that break code of conduct policies. As one administrator describes their associations policy:

A2: Everybody is aware that verbal abuse at any level is absolutely not tolerated from the association whatsoever. It's pretty well known from our standpoint that we do have a zero-tolerance and that is basically our policy. Actually, in the last four or five years since we actually started enforcing it with a suspension, it's become very effective.

Additionally, the inclusion of a risk management director to handle incidents and enforce the policy was also labelled as critical from an association standpoint. A risk management director is responsible for handling violations and ensuring the safety and security of all people, assets, and processes to maintain the association's reputation and stability. Many participants described having a dispute resolution committee or a board member responsible for handling

complaints and the policy in place to manage incidents. This specific policy is often drafted from their regional or provincial governing body related to handling complaints, appeals, and additional support from representatives from governing bodies. One administrator who holds the position of risk management director, describes said process and the stance of enforcement and mediation of policies being key for success:

AAC2: I've got the ability to lay out any suspensions that I see fit. I just have to inform the board about it. If the person that is suspended wants to challenge that suspension, then I take it back to the board and I have the board vote on whether the suspension was appropriate or not and if I am in a real tight bind, I'll go to the...OMHA and I'll contact them and say, this is what's transpired, this is my intended course of action and I'll see if that's congruent with what some of the other organizations are doing... We've decided to go very heavy in the association, which I think steers some people away because they're satisfied by what we do as an organization... I think people come to their senses quite readily and we've actually put people in the same room together to mediate the disputes...and we've had good success with that.

Subsequently, participants indicated that other policies not directly related to parents can have a positive impact on parental behaviour. Ice time is a primary concern for many parents. To address this issue, certain associations have implemented an ice time policy that explains how ice time will be distributed throughout the season. One coach explains a three-phase policy used at the AAA level:

HC1: Often, in the AAA environment that I coach in...[team name], they have a policy, a three-phase policy. Phase one is early in the year. September, October, everybody's on the power play and penalty kill. Everybody gets to experience it and learn it. Phase two is

really November until the playoffs. It's you have a power play and a penalty kill. I got two power-play units, two penalty-killing units, and everybody's on one or the other...Then phase three is the playoffs. It's all bets off. You do what you got to do to win

Additionally, another successful policy that participants indicated could positively influence parental behaviour is the expansion of mandated requirements for coach certification and training. These include the clinics, certifications, and training programs that have drastically shifted the number of qualifications needed for coaches in minor hockey. As one participant explains, this has created a positive effect by having qualified individuals instruct players and reduce parental frustrations:

HC1: Hockey Canada over the last 25 years has done an absolutely amazing job in putting in all kinds of different structures for coaches. When I was a kid, I was taught very little by my coach, because he was just crossing down the ice, "Don't get hurt. Hurry up. Get off." Really, there's no teaching. These kids get so much teaching and that's because the coaches have been really, really well-trained and are forced to take all kinds of different levels. Now, you have to keep your certification up to date. You have to constantly be taking seminars.

However, despite certain policies garnering praise from participants, they were not unanimous in believing every policy in place was effective. Many participants highlighted inefficiencies within associations or policies that did not properly address parental behaviour in minor hockey. One interesting policy/program discussed by many participants was the Respect in Sport program, an online training course created by Respect Group Inc. that communicates with parents about their expected behaviour in a youth sport setting (Strashin, 2016). The course

was mandated by Hockey Canada that at least one parent must take the course for their child to participate in minor hockey (Strashin, 2016). However, many participants discussed that although the course has the right idea and information, there are certain inefficiencies that need to be improved upon. As one participant discusses, only one parent needs to take the course and presents the opportunity for the other parent to create issues:

A5: It's just a one-hour program, and only one parent has to take it, so 50/50 chance of whether or not the right parent is even taking the course. It could be the mom who never goes to hockey. There's no way to police that, but that to me has just been an administrative addition, and I don't really think it's done anything. I can say that right across all the board. I mean, kids in all kinds of rep sports, and I don't really see that it makes much of a difference.

In addition to only one parent having to take the course, it's completion only needs to be done once, for one child, and can be used for other sports that have mandated the course into their association. As a result, some participants noted many parents could forget the information presented after a few years of their child's participation in minor hockey, rendering the course mute:

A5: One time, and you can use it for all of your children, across all of their sports. I took it when it first came out six or seven years ago, and have used it, across baseball, and volleyball, and hockey, and soccer. It doesn't matter, and my husband's never taken it.

Moreover, some participants expressed hesitancy with the course attempting to tell adults how to behave and be successful in reaching “problem parents.” As one participant explains, an important aspect is accountability for parents involved in parental misconduct by properly enforcing policies in place through mediation or suspension:

AFC2: The individuals who need to take that course, this course will not help them. If you need to take a respect in sport course to teach you how to be a well-behaved adult, that course is not going turn you into a well-behaved adult. The individuals and the parent group that I'm familiar with, every parent rolls their eyes and is frustrated that they have to do a three-hour course online or an hour-course online...They're all frustrated, and here's what you'll hear: 95% of parents will say they're frustrated because this is common sense, this is how they behave. 5% are frustrated about taking the course because who the heck do they think they are to tell them how to behave? That's where I think there's a gap and it really comes back to accountability.

Curiously, despite policies and procedures in place in many minor hockey associations to handle incidents, some participants explained a lack of following through with procedures to hand out suspensions. As a result, parental misconduct incidents can go unpunished and create a volatile environment for participants and open the opportunity for repeat offenders. One reason given by some participants is the social interactions that could occur following a suspension with members of the community that know each other and create a difficult environment to operate in. In addition, each minor hockey association operates differently and despite procedures in place to handle incidents, each association can vary in their handling of incidents with one association taking a sterner approach with parental misconduct incidents and another being more lenient:

AAC2: I think there is, at a lot of local-level athletic organizations, there's a fear of enforcing those policies because these a lot of these communities...I live in [town name], it's a very small community. I think there's a fear that, "Oh, you discipline somebody, then all of a sudden you got to see them at the grocery store" ...They're also parents within the organization. I think everything is positively in place. I think the messaging is

clear. I think just the only thing that would improve it is enforcement... There's no written stone, you do this, you're going to get this. It's really left up to each individual association.

In addition, another policy issue reported by participants is that many associations do not have or communicate code of conduct policies with key stakeholders or use a parent rep to create a stopgap between coaches. As one coach describes their experiences with associations with a lack of policies it opens the possibility for associations to lose coaches and move to another association or stop coaching altogether:

HC4: Some of the associations don't have anything. It blows my mind, and I don't know that I could set foot on a bench for an association that didn't have that kind of protective policy to the coaches in place. There's a reason I left the association I was with at first. There was no support for the coaches... every time there was an issue it was the coach's fault. There was no support. There was no barrier between the parent group and the coaching staff.

In addition, certain participants expressed hesitancy about the use of code of conduct policies in affecting parental behaviour. Instead, their inclusion is a form of risk management to guide parents and be used as a way for associations to cover themselves if an incident were to occur. As one participant illustrates, there is a minority of parents in minor hockey that are frustrated regardless and have issues controlling their emotions and a document will be difficult to affect their behaviour:

HC6: These parents are signing these waivers and this code of conduct... but at the end of the day, it's basically a reminder, and it's basically the association covering their butts because if something does stem and turn into something bigger, they've got that in place

to say to Hockey Canada, "Look, we've warned them. These are the steps that we've put in place. We've gone through all the proper channeling, and they've continued to disobey them or be disobedient"... Those handouts are great and it's a nice little reminder, but is it doing something to some of those parents that just can't control their emotions? No, it's not doing anything. There's just some people that are just never happy.

Overall, while the participants in this study reported some positive aspects of conduct policies and the importance of having them, they also noted that existing policies are often ineffective at changing the behaviours of problematic parents, not well communicated to parents, and inconsistent across various associations.

Parental Adherence to Conduct Policies

To answer RQ4, participants in the study noted that there is often a gap between their expectations for parental behaviour, which are relatively consistent with requirements of code of conduct policies, and the actual behaviour of some parents. That is, while many parents are positive members of minor hockey associations, some are not. The negative behaviours that some parents engaged in as described by participants include: 1) verbal abuse, 2) physical abuse, 3) cyber abuse, and 4) parental overinvolvement. Participants identified certain forms of problematic hockey parenting as common occurrences during minor hockey games, while other forms were viewed as rare with certain participants in their experiences.

From the perspectives of participants, the most common form of problematic parenting was verbal abuse that often occurs in the stands during minor hockey games. Participants explained these types of incidents can be common occurrences with more serious incidents of yelling matches or ejections of parents in the stands less common. In addition, over emphatic

positive cheering can be viewed as potentially problematic from parents that can create issues for multiple stakeholders in minor hockey. As one administrator puts it:

AAC2: If I was to look at the last five years and all the issues I've had to deal with parents, it's parental behavior in the stands...I'm shocked at how loud parents can be in the stands, even when they're trying to be positive. There are parents that cross over the line from being enthusiastic fans to abusive parents. I will often get phone calls from parents on that team or coaches to say this parent is inappropriate in the stands, using foul language or directing specific negative comments to specific kids or even their own kids. I'd say the most common breach is verbal abuse for sure.

An interesting finding by some participants is that parental misconduct incidents can occur outside the arena and in the parking lot after games have concluded. One participant details an incident after the conclusion of a game involving an aggressive parent yelling obscenities towards a coach who was walking back to their vehicle after the game in the arena parking lot. This example demonstrates incidents involving parental misconduct does not always occur when players are on the ice. In the participants own words:

AAC2: We have had somebody threatened to beat up a coach, told the coach to meet him in the parking lot but unfortunately for him, I showed up in the parking lot instead of the coach and he was properly counseled and received a warning.

More serious incidents involving verbal abuse can result in the involvement of law enforcement being called in to thwart a potential incident that could elevate to a physical altercation. Some participants explained police have been involved in their association on multiple occasions to deescalate situations where parents broke their association code of conduct

and were behaving in an unorderly manner. As one participant explains an incident involving law enforcement:

AFC2: During the playoffs, the police had to be there because the fans or the parents of our team and the team that the group was playing against, I think it was a peewee team at the time. Yes, the parents of both groups, they just hated each other and there were threats made and acts of violence threatened...I think the police were called as a preventative measure...and they just stood in between both groups on the home side and visitor side and just tried to keep the peace.

In addition, some participants explained that verbal abuse in the stands is not always emphatic or egregiously loud from parents yelling, swearing, or cheering during a game but can occur in more subtle forms from conversations with parents that can spark issues and create disagreements and arguments. These comments can create tension with the possibility for heated exchanges between spectators. One participant explains certain parent groups can be divided into “cliques” with a small minority able to create issues for the rest of the team:

HC6: There's parents-- Like high school, it gets cliquy. There's little groups that start to form and there's drama up in the stands within parents. That's something that you don't want to see either because it just makes it uncomfortable for everyone...It doesn't have to be yelling. It's little off-the-cuff, under-their-breath comments that can potentially gravitate the situation for whatever reason.

Some participants explained they had never personally seen a physical altercation involving parents during their minor hockey experience, but some had heard stories of incidents in other associations through word of mouth or through media reports. In addition, participants that had witnessed incidents of physical abuse were adamant that such acts were far less frequent

and have become less prevalent compared to other forms of parental misconduct but ultimately expressed their frustrations and disappointment that such incidents occur in a youth sport setting. As one participant describes the frequency of physical altercations and recounts an incident in their association involving a parent who argued with a referee regarding a penalty called against their child and proceeded to be involved in a physical altercation:

AAC2: Only one actual violent act had been committed, but there has been threats of violence. This is insanity to me. I can't tell you those stories without telling you how disappointed I am as a parent and a coach at the insanity that people would be like that... We have had one major incidence of violence, where a player in the last couple of minutes of the game committed an on ice infraction... The parent threw a coffee on the ice and then went down to the penalty box area and opened the penalty box and started getting in the face and trying to push the referee, so we happened to have two board members that were present at the time, and they physically restrained him and physically removed him from the property, and he was suspended for 18 months, which effectively ended his participation in minor hockey.

Although participants reported physical incidents being less common in minor hockey, their overall severity cannot be understated. As one participant explained their own personal story of being physically assaulted by another parent from a discussion regarding association decisions led to a physical altercation in a dressing room and resulted in a police investigation and report being filed. In a retelling of the incident from the participant:

AAC1: As I got into the room, the door didn't close behind me and he turned around and grabbed onto my collar on both sides and slammed me into the door... The first response I had was to grab him with my left hand. I knew, in that instance, I was like "Man, he's

assaulted me, but I've got my hand on him." He might actually have permission here to feel he's under threat and so I just said, "What are you doing?" and there is not much going on. The eyes are black at this point, the pupils are fully dilated. He's in another world. He slams me again and then pushes me down into the corner.

Participants also noted the growing use of social media for parents to vent their frustrations with certain members of their respective minor hockey association resulting in cyber abuse. Some participants discuss how certain parents will spread false rumors, make accusations, or specifically belittle members in the association online. Although this category was discussed less frequently by participants, some noted it is a growing concern within their association with the rise of internet access and prominence of social media used by parents to share their personal lives in an online sphere. As one participant points out, it is difficult for associations to monitor statements made by parents that can be misleading and quickly spread online:

HC6: We have had one or two instances where parents are going off on social media because they're unhappy... Whether a kid's amount of ice time, maybe they don't agree with the coaching philosophy, whatever it is. Basically, that's not fair game to be throwing that out on social and then having hundreds of people potentially commenting on it... It's defamation of character in a lot of regards. Whether it's the coach or another player or a parent, you just can't start slandering people online. It just creates too much negativity.

In addition, more traditional methods of online communication such as emails can be used by parents to spread disinformation and create arguments and division online. The use of social media and other forms of online communication offer the ability for people to communicate anonymously and potentially not face repercussions for spreading false

information. As one coach retells a situation involving a parent who used a ghost email account to spread false accusations to the rest of the team's parents:

HC1: I get an email and the whole team is CCed. This mother just rips me apart. I've been yelling at the kids. "I took my son to his physiotherapist. He can't believe how much they're on the ice and how hard this coach making them skate and blah, blah, blah." All of a sudden it blew up. She rolled in there, "I talked up all the other parents that we all feel the same." All of a sudden, emails start going around...Every single parent, except for that one parent is calling me going, "I don't know who wrote this. We are not part of this. We love you as a coach so far. My kid is enjoying himself." More emails went out...and she was using a ghost email address...They did an investigation on me, all this stuff. The end result was the findings were none of this is true.

Participants also noted that parents commonly break code of conduct policies by becoming significantly overinvolved. Participants described this form of behaviour as common in their experiences and manifests in different ways from parents trying to question or manipulate decisions made by coaches or administrators in minor hockey. Participants explained some forms of overinvolvement were intentional by parents but could also be unintentional through general curiosity. According to one minor hockey coach:

HC8: A lot of it if, like for lack of a better term, with unwritten rules that, obviously, parents will cut the line just to get knowledge. I think a lot of it is unintentional, but they just want to know what's going on with their kid and how they can help. A lot of parents also want their kids to do the best they can so part of bylaws, giving the coaches space, not going in the dressing rooms, and not being involved in pre-or post-game conversations, that kind of thing just to give us space.

In addition, participants explained this form of behaviour does not always occur through anger or hostility like verbal, physical, or cyber abuse. Many participants discussed ice time concerns as being extremely common form of parental overinvolvement because they view their child as deserving of more ice time given their skill level. As one participant explains:

A4: There is instance where a lot of times people think that other players get more ice time than they can get. That seems to build quite a bit. When you think your child is better than somebody else, and they're not getting enough ice time. Sometimes where there's rules around, or we try to have rules around fair play. Everyone gets to play, and we really push that. That theme comes up a lot.

Moreover, many overinvolvement incidents involving parents involve coaching their own child or going against the instructions of their own minor hockey coach. Participants explained this often occurs on the car ride to and from games or practices and can involve harsh criticism or pressure placed by the parent on their child. Although every conversation between parents and their child are not negative, this can create confusion for the player. As discussed by one participant:

AFC1: There's a lot of coaching that goes on in the car on the way home from the arena. Unfortunately, what it does, it just creates an opportunity for our young people to hate the game, and sadly enough, to hate their parents just because they're pushed so hard.

Furthermore, administrators also noted that they are often badgered with an excessive number of urgent and sometimes hostile questions from parents. In a participant's own words:

A6: It's amazing the different forms of inquiries that I give some parents. One parent sent me 20 emails demanding that I get my act together and because her son needs to play hockey, and from another parent saying, "I know you guys must be really busy right now

and all these vaccination policies, but if you could get back to me sometime, I'd appreciate it.”

Similarly, some administrators discussed how certain parents attempt to circumvent the minor hockey league system and progress their child to a higher level of competition because they feel their child is not being challenged at a current level. Despite rules and regulations in place from both local, regional, provincial, and national governing bodies regarding age categories and policies in place regarding movement between different minor hockey centers, some parents will try to overstep their boundaries to have their child play at a higher competitive level. According to one administrator:

A6: I've got a lot of inquiries as registrar, for example, from people whose sons and daughters are outside the age division that they're in, but they tell me that their child is so good, they should be bumped up a division. We just can't do that. Hockey Canada and OMHA, they've got their rules. It has to be about fair play...It's unfortunate that some of the rules and some of the bureaucracy is in place because some parents try to circumvent the system...and get their children to play in centers outside their home center so they could play for a more competitive team or, in a double league division or something so that they think they've got a better opportunity of getting to the NHL.

Some participants also noted overinvolvement from parents who joined their minor hockey associations board of directors with the goal of manipulating policy or drastically changing the direction of the association. These positions are usually occupied by members who are also parents and typically have a one-to-two-year contract. As one participant notes, the goal of the board of directors is to oversee the entire association and its operations ranging from registration, risk management, equipment, ice scheduling, coach selection, sponsorship, website

administration, and treasury and goes far beyond one parent's specific child involved in the association. Therefore, the requirement of the position is to look beyond their own child's involvement and provide adequate services for the entire minor hockey association. According to one administrator who serves on the board of directors:

AAC1: I try to remind them each and every one of them, particularly the new ones that, when you come into these meetings, you take your parent hat off and you put your executive hat on because you're no longer making decisions solely for your child, you're making decisions for 400 different families here, 400 different children. That's the perspective we have to take when we're in that spot because too often, I've spoken to parents that, I'm going to join the executive next year. I'm going to be like a bull in a China shop... Within three months of their time there, they're gone because they can't manipulate policy and they can't manipulate other executive members in the way that they thought they would. A lot of these people, like I said, I give them credit because in some respects they played guardian to the good as it were. They don't want people to come in and strong-arm others and change policy in their favor. There always seems to be a case where someone is trying to do that.

Receivers of Abuse

In association with RQ4, participants identified five different members within minor hockey as groups who commonly receive verbal, physical, and cyber abuse, or deal with the ramifications of overinvolved parents. The five groups identified include: 1) referees, 2) other parents, 3) coaches, 4) players, and 5) rink staff. In addition, the degree of abuse minor hockey stakeholders receives varies according to participants. This theme also aids in the answering of RQ4 by providing a more thorough understanding of how parents violate code of conduct

policies. One of the most notable members identified by participants were referees who often receive verbal abuse from parents in the stands and was corroborated by many participants. From the perspective of one participant:

AFC2: Sadly, there are still tremendous abuse of officials. It's extremely unfortunate. It's something that needs to be addressed by parent groups that are stepping out of the line, whether it's volume, whether it's what's being expressed at officials. In some cases, we're talking about officials who were 14 or under, which is highly inappropriate. Basically, they might raise their voices at the official in a very uncomfortable situation.

Moreover, another common receiver of parental misbehaviour incidents is other parents that often occurs while watching games in the stands. This often escalates to verbal shouting matches and potentially physical altercations between parents in the stands who voice their displeasure with the handling of an event or result of a game. Interestingly, multiple participants explained male parents are often more likely to be the perpetrators compared to female parents.

According to one participant:

HC1: It's usually during a game with the other parents. It's usually yelling from men there back and forth and the game starts to get physical, one can be a little dirty. One of the parents says something, next thing you know everybody's trying to wind up the other by yelling, "Come over"...It just takes one guy that's a little too overzealous to get things going.

Additionally, participants identified this can also occur with members of their own parent group and incidents are not isolated to opposing teams' parents. Instead, in-fighting within parent groups can occur based on the decisions made by a coach or the actions of a specific players. As mentioned by one participant:

A6: A couple of dads started chirping at each other about, "Why did your son miss that shot?" "It wasn't my son that missed that shot. If your son had been better on defense, then we wouldn't have got that last shot scored against us." It just escalates and then they just go at each other.

A third common receiver of incidents from parents was coaches. As mentioned earlier, police involvement can occur to either break up altercations at arenas or be used as a precaution to deescalate situations and prevent altercations from boiling over. Coaches themselves are susceptible to incidents from parents that can be more subtle or less chaotic from parents in the form of parental overinvolvement (e.g., ice time concerns) to receiving verbal or potentially physical attacks. As one administrator discusses her experiences related to her son who is a minor hockey coach:

A6: Oh my god, poor coaches. I wouldn't want to be a coach for the life of me. My son's a coach, the one that won the provincial championship. He's coached for a couple of years now... The parents are always coming, "My kid didn't get enough ice time," or "Why did you let that other kid play that position?" They're never happy.

As mentioned, more serious incidents can occur with coaches and parents to the extent where police involvement can occur. One participant described an incident where police involvement was needed to deescalate a situation where parents were verbally threatening a coaching group:

A6: There was an incident last year in one of our games where the parents were attacking the coaches. The association asked the OPP to come and just park the car at the rink. I think that sometimes it's really necessary. I don't know in larger centers, maybe the rinks have their own security. Here where we are, we don't even have a local police force.

The fourth identified member from participants is youth hockey players that can be subjected to parental incidents for a variety of reasons including their on-ice performance to the social characteristics and expectations from their own mother or father. As mentioned earlier, incidents can occur both in the stands during a practice or game but also outside of the arena and on the ride to or from the arena for games or practices. From the perspective of one participant:

A1: The sad reality is kids are playing hockey, and yet parents or whoever is in the stand, presumably parents, can get upset with the kids on the ice even though they're children. They're from the ages of eight and nine, right on up to midget and juvenile. The parents will get upset with and voice their displeasure in various ways.

Similarly, as some participants explained certain parents can engage in parental misconduct by yelling at other players on their own team as well during games by voicing their displeasure through verbal abuse regarding their on-ice performance:

AFC1: Unfortunately, there's those parents out there that not only will yell at their child, but they will yell at other children on the team. That poses a big problem. As a parent, it's always okay for me to yell at my child, but be in a protective mode, it's not okay for somebody else to yell at my child.

A final and unique finding regarding receivers of parental misconduct brought up by one participant was rink staff members. Despite not being as frequently targeted by not being directly involved in a game compared to players and referees on the ice, coaches on the bench, and parents in the stands, rink staff are frequently present at hockey arenas preparing and maintaining facilities, responsible for ice flooding, setting up hockey nets, cleaning and preparing dressing rooms, and supervising behaviour inside the arena. As a result, with rink staff frequently present with parents at arenas, the opportunity for arguments to arise from overinvolved parents presents

itself. According to one participant who brought up rink staff as an unrecognized group that can receive abuse:

AAC1: There is one other group, and that other group is rink attendants. They take an incredible amount of abuse from parents. These parents can be coaches or team officials making demands on rink staff... They think that because these guys' jobs are provided by the taxpayer that then the taxpayer can say whatever they want, can make any demands that, "I want a double flood," or "I want this room at this time," and just barking orders at them. I've seen them get into shouting matches where it's like, if you understand these guys and the pressure that they're under, the safety protocols that they have to follow, you would understand that taking that position, screaming at people that are just doing their jobs, it's just abhorrent behavior.

Discussion

As discussed in the literature review, research regarding parental behaviour in youth sports offers more insight into how and why parental misconduct incidents occur with some research already conducted in a Canadian minor hockey setting. As a result, findings from this study can be corroborated in various youth sport contexts. However, the focus of this research on policy evaluation contributes to a gap in sport management research. Many existing studies encouraged future research to be directed towards the creation, implementation, and evaluation of parental education programs and policies. On the surface, findings from the document analysis on parental code of conduct documents in Ontario minor hockey associations suggests certain associations and additional governing bodies have put an increased emphasis on parental behaviour in minor hockey. However, findings from semi-structured interviews dive deeper into the phenomenon of policy evaluation by understanding stakeholder perspectives on implemented

policies by analyzing their strengths and weaknesses to improve the way associations attempt to provide an inclusive and safe environment for their stakeholders.

RQ2 was designed to understand “what behaviour expectations do rep Ontario minor hockey coaches and administrators have for parents?” Coaches and administrators interviewed in this study expected parents to engage in displaying positive support, having realistic expectations, giving space to the coach, respecting officials, and following implemented behavioural policies and procedures. These were identified as key tenets to being a model hockey parent and shared similarities to the thematic analysis of code of conduct documents. Existing research corroborates these findings as Dorsch and co-authors (2019) found youth sport stakeholders believed creating a parenting guide that dedicated a section to tempering expectations is important. Similarly, Witt and Dangi’s (2018) systematic review of youth sport dropout suggestions to minimize athlete dropout included balancing parental involvement, providing support through allowing child autonomy, decreasing parental pressure, and avoiding parents living through sports dreams through their children are important areas of focus. Finally, Ross, Mallett, and Parkes (2015) offer a similar perspective on the positive and negative effects parents can have on their children’s youth sport participation in Australia. The researchers found positive experiences for youth athletes can occur when parents show appreciation for coaches/administrators and develop positive working relationships, provide unconditional support to their child, and allow them to have their own autonomy (Ross et al., 2015). This study, along with existing studies, identify the importance of positive parenting in youth sports, and the significance of effective policies as one aspect of creating a culture of positive sport parenting. RQ3 examined “what are Ontario rep minor hockey coaches’ and administrators’ perspectives on the effectiveness of conduct policies?” The inclusion of this question is of great importance to

the research study as the simple inclusion of a code of conduct does not guarantee ethical behaviour (Waegeneer et al., 2017). Instead, codes of conduct need to be effectively communicated with parents to understand their expected behaviour and enforced to prevent unethical behaviour becoming normalized in the association and deemed acceptable from others (Elliott & Drummond, 2014; Sims, 1991; Weaver et al., 1999). As discussed, the area of policy effectiveness in youth sports is understudied with most existing research recommending the implementation of behavioural policies and parental education programs designed to improve behaviour. Therefore, findings are exploratory and offer insights into the perspectives of stakeholders on the positive and negative policies in place by minor hockey associations. It was identified that minor hockey associations have various policies and procedures in place that influence parental behaviour as opposed to simply having a parental code of conduct. For example, the inclusion of the Respect in Sport Program, 24-hour rule, parent liaison, and procedures to handle incidents suggest a broader emphasis to monitor parental behaviour in Ontario minor hockey associations.

One significant finding in this study that links to existing research relates to the inclusion of the 24-hour rule. As discussed, Wiersma and Sherman (2005) included this recommendation in their study indicating that it can reduce potential verbal arguments or even physical altercations. Like the inclusion of the policy in many parental code of conduct documents, every participant who discussed the policy in their association was adamant on its importance to relieving emotional tensions between stakeholders, reducing the number of complaints and incidents, and providing more constructive conversations if a disagreement were to be discussed. More local associations should look to implement the policy themselves or have provincial or national governing bodies mandate the policy to minimize incidents.

In addition, the inclusion of roles like the Director of Risk Management and Parent Liaison and other policies including coaching qualifications and ice time policies were also identified by participants as important in reducing parental misconduct. These appear to be new findings that have not been reported in academic literature on policy effectiveness in youth sports. These positions and policies suggest there are multiple strategies in place from minor hockey associations to effect parental behaviour directly and indirectly. For example, established coaching qualifications can help set a high standard for minor hockey coaches and reduce parent frustrations and concerns. Likewise, equal ice time opportunities established by associations can reduce the number of ice time complaint lodged by parents. Meanwhile, distinct positions within associations can aid in the following of procedures and enforcement of policies to handle transgressions amongst minor hockey parents.

Participants also noted that not every implemented policy is perceived as being successful. One notable program of debate was the mandated Respect in Sport program where many participants believed that although in theory its inclusion is a good idea, its contents and implementation need modifications to successfully reach its intended audience of parents and other minor hockey stakeholders. The current format was contested with only one parent or guardian needing to take the program and only once throughout their minor hockey involvement. In addition, completion of the course can be used in other sports if their child is a multi-sport athletes and association uses the program. This current format can create issues of not reaching the right parent involved in minor hockey as previous research suggests different parents involved in youth sports have varying levels of involvement and one program cannot be a one-size-fits-all program for parents (Knight et al., 2016). For example, certain participants explained the program could have been taken by the mother while the father is more actively involved in

their child's minor hockey participation but would have no knowledge of the program's contents. In addition, with the program only needed to be taken once for the entirety of a parent's involvement in minor hockey, it is possible for a lack of information retention over time. Only one study has examined the perceived effectiveness of the Respect in Sport program (Tamminen et al., 2020). However, the study analyzed the player perspectives of the policy and did not seek the perspectives of other stakeholders in minor hockey (Tamminen et al., 2020). Their findings revealed small improvements in player satisfaction over the course of the longitudinal study but found no significant changes in negative experiences or reduced parental pressure (Tamminen et al., 2020). Therefore, the overall understanding of the Respect in Sport program's effectiveness is still innocuous and additional research should be dedicated to understanding the programs content and effectiveness.

Similarly, the overall success of code of conduct documents was disputed amongst participants. The documents are perceived as a cog in the machine with additional policies and procedures used to strengthen the associations stance on parental behaviour. The use of signed contracts at the start of each season indicates a level of dedication from some associations to constantly remind parents of their expected behaviours and act as a mechanism to support any disciplinary actions taken by the association against a parent regarding an incident. A single document is not only line of defence for associations and, as pointed out by some participants, is used as a reminder for participants as opposed to attempting to educate or correct behaviour like the Respect in Sport Program. Regardless the inclusion of a code of conduct document should be mandated by associations to communicate expected behaviour with parents to reduce the likelihood of an incident and act as a yearly refresher for parents to understand the goals of the

association which is instrumental to improve the chances of a code of conduct document being successful (Sims, 1991; Weaver & Trevino, 1999).

RQ4 asked “to what extent do rep Ontario minor hockey coaches and administrators perceive that hockey parents adhere to and violate code of conduct policies?” It was found that while most parents do adhere to policies for the most part, some parents do violate them. Four main types of violations including verbal abuse, physical abuse, cyber abuse, and parental overinvolvement. The frequency of each violation varied with verbal abuse and general parental overinvolvement perceived as commonplace from participants with physical and cyber abuse less frequent. Incidents in minor hockey are not homogenous and can take various forms and fluctuate based on the amount of aggressiveness and seriousness of different incidents. As discussed, parental overinvolvement can include ice time inquiries that do not go through proper channels, offhand comments in the stands made between parents, parents coaching their child in the car, attempts to bend association rules, or even attempts to manipulate board members. These types of incidents would be perceived as less severe compared to verbal abuse involving yelling obscenities towards another minor hockey stakeholder or being involved in a physical altercation that could result in suspension from the association or even involvement of law enforcement.

Previous research from LaVoi and Stellino (2008) found similar common forms of misconduct such as what they described as “play and talk tough” which consisted of trash talking, arguing, and fighting, and “complain and whine” regarding penalties, playing time, and poor sportsmanship. Findings from this study share similarities as trash talking and arguing can be synonymous with the verbal abuse category while fighting would fall under the physical abuse category. Similarly, the “complain and whine” theme would most likely fall under the parental overinvolvement theme with less aggressive and severe behaviour from parents which

can include issues of playing time, poor sportsmanship, and complaints regarding penalties which can also be categorized under verbal abuse if a parent were to yell at an official, parent, player, or coach (LaVoi & Stellino, 2008). These types of examples were routinely pointed out by participants in this study. For example, complaints over ice time were a common occurrence according to participants and an on-going issue many minor hockey coaches deal with throughout a season. Similarly, trash talking and arguing were also frequently discussed by participants reacting to events on the ice or with other parents in the stands.

Similarly, Bean, Jeffery-Tosoni, Baker, and Fraser-Thomas (2016) constructed a similar typology for incidents that could be considered parental misconduct. The researchers' participants revealed stakeholder abuse, excessive investment, over-stepping coaching lines, and encouragement of aggressive behaviour were the most common actions of parents breaking behavioural expectations. Parental overinvolvement was frequently mentioned by participants and could manifest through ice time concerns, attempts to influence specific positions of players, and their role on special teams which oversteps their expected behaviour and affects coaches' ability to make their decisions. In contrast to Bean et al.'s (2016) findings, parental encouragement of aggressive behaviour was not identified in this study's findings. Likewise, while excessive investment was found to be an issue on a macro level among minor hockey parents, some participants indicated that parents making additional investments for their child in hockey (e.g., specialized sessions, hockey camps, etc.) do not necessarily present a problem if the parent does not have unrealistic expectations but is supportive of their child through additional investments because their child seeks additional involvement in minor hockey.

Findings from this study and in existing research suggest a shift in parental attitudes towards being more involved in their child's youth sport development. As discussed, parents are

not a homogenous group and each set of parents can vary in their role and level of involvement for their child (Knight et al., 2016). For example, one parent could be a member of the coaching staff, while another acts only as a spectator. As pointed out in the findings section, most participants believed that although parental misconduct incidents still occur, the number of incidents based on participant observations and experiences appear to be on the decline through cultural awareness, rise of incidents being reported through social media, and parental education programs. Alongside these trends, the amount of involvement from parents has increased and is now commonplace in minor hockey. This finding is consistent with research from Stefansen, Smette, and Strandbu (2018) who found today's generation of parents seek increased involvement to connect with their child and further their development, which they termed "deep involvement," and was defined as an intensified form of parental engagement, mostly by fathers. Therefore, this change in cultural attitudes and beliefs presents challenges on how to address parental behaviour as cultural attitudes shift over time.

While parental involvement can be seen as a positive, it was also identified by participants in this study as having the potential to become problematic when parents become overinvolved. Parental overinvolvement occurs when parents overstep their expected behaviour sometimes unbeknownst to them (Kanters et al., 2008). The effects of overinvolvement could harm participation and lead to youth sport dropout (Kanters et al., 2008; Witt & Dangi, 2018). As discussed earlier, parents must understand the level of involvement based on their child's needs and allow their child to have some autonomy in minor hockey to prevent unnecessary pressure or overinvolvement. Parents should understand how much involvement their child wants from their participation in minor hockey, along with expectations from coaches and administrators in their

association, to provide adequate support without overstepping boundaries that harm their experience of others.

Participants also noted the potential positive aspects of increases in technology an online communication with parents and other minor hockey stakeholders. However, they also noted the potential for cyber abuse incidents that could occur outside the arena where traditional parental misconduct incidents occur. Findings are limited in existing academic research and this current study explains this can take place through social media with parents publicly venting their frustrations, which can shed a negative light on certain members in the association or the association itself. Likewise, parents can engage in angry and abusive communications through other online communication like email. Participants indicated that cyber incidents are a newer form of violations and present challenges on tracking comments due to the amount of minor hockey stakeholders involved in an association and the ability of anonymous accounts to hide perpetrators identities. As a result, parental misconduct incidents can take shape in various forms and is not isolated to one specific type of behaviour and can evolve over time making it necessary to update existing policy to address new areas of concern for minor hockey associations.

Participants also identified that parental misconduct can be directed towards different groups including referees, other parents, players, coaches, administrators, and rink staff. In addition, certain members appear to receive abuse more frequently with many participants explaining referees and coaches are often the target from parents. Other parents, players, and administrators can also receive abuse while one participant mentioned rink staff who are often a forgotten stakeholder in minor hockey. Existing research mentions many of these stakeholders and suggests these similarities present an accurate understanding of the various receivers of

abuse in youth sports settings. For example, multiple studies have detailed how overinvolved parents pressure their children involved in youth sports (Dorsch et al., 2019; Kanters et al., 2008; Ross et al., 2015; Turman, 2007; Witt & Dangi 2018; Wuerth et al., 2004). Referees (Ackery, Tator, & Snider, 2012; Omli & LaVoi, 2011) coaches (Bean et al., 2016; Wiersma & Sherman, 2005), and administrators (Engelberg et al., 2013) were also mentioned as receivers of abuse in youth sports. Analyzed existing research also does not mention rink staff or other facility maintenance employees as a receiver of abuse. As such, this appears to be a new finding in this research study. Rink staff are an unheralded group that can be targeted by parents in various ways (e.g., wanting a double flood, wanting a specific dressing room, etc.). Future research on parental misconduct should consider exploring the experiences of rink staff or facility maintenance employee in more detail.

Limitations

While yielding many important and interesting findings, the semi-structured interview phase of this study is not without limitations. One limitation is the generalizability of findings. The sample size consisting of 21 coaches and administrators were interviewed among thousands of minor hockey coaches and administrators in Ontario. Using a qualitative, cross-sectional, interview-based approach does not allow all voices, perspectives, and experiences to be captured. Although the goal of this study was to accurately portray the perspectives and experiences of minor hockey stakeholders and not be generalizable across all youth sports, the potential for differences to exist based on geographic location and youth sport exists and future research should explore various youth sport contexts to compare findings.

Similarly, because the study only analyzed minor hockey it is possible the findings may not be transferable to girls' minor hockey or other playing levels like junior or house league

hockey. The same could apply to other youth sport contexts that could potentially have differences compared to minor hockey. Future research should analyze parental misconduct and girls' youth sports and other hockey and youth sport contexts to identify similarities and differences related to gender and sport culture surrounding parental policies and behaviour.

Another potential limitation is my role as an insider and experiences playing and working in minor hockey associations. While potential benefits existed such as reducing issues related to gatekeepers, understanding language used in Canadian hockey culture, and providing personal contacts, being an insider can also create gaps in judgement where I have similar experiences to participants leading to struggles to separate myself from the subject matter being studied. The use of reflexive processes including member checking with each participant and using grounded constructivist theory by establishing a mutual and collaborative relationship with participants to understand their perspective and experiences was essential to accurately represent their findings.

Conclusion

The findings and discussion derived from semi-structured interviews provides an exploratory analysis from minor hockey stakeholders perspectives on policy and parental behaviour. Although certain limitations prevent the study from potentially reaching large segments of various youth sport contexts, the findings provide a representation of participants lived experiences and perspectives on parental behaviour and code of conduct policy effectiveness in Ontario minor hockey associations. Many similarities were identified with existing research, strengthening the reliability of findings. New findings unique to minor hockey were also identified related to the perceived success of policies like the 24-hour rule, parent representative, Director of Risk Management, the need for additional social media policies, and rink staff being a minor hockey stakeholder that can receive abuse from parents. These findings

contribute to academic literature by analyzing policy effectiveness, an understudied area of sport management research and a point of emphasis by previous studies that have analyzed how and why negative parental behaviour occurs in a variety of different youth sports. As a result, by analyzing what is currently in place in Ontario minor hockey associations, a more comprehensive understanding of the successes and failures of current policies can be used to make informed decisions in future policy decisions to address parental behaviour through code of conduct documents and parental education programs.

Chapter 6: Implications, Recommendations, and Conclusion

Many participants in the study indicated that parental misconduct could have significant negative impacts on the experiences of youth athletes and others involved in Ontario minor hockey associations. Beyond dropping enjoyment levels, negative parental behaviours were also linked to athletes, coaches, administrators, and referees either moving to different associations, leagues, levels of completion, or leaving the sport altogether.

Some participants noted that the amount of pressure and intensity radiated from parents outside the rink can have a negative effect on a child and result in them dropping out of the sport. Describing this one participant stated:

HC4: I've seen kids just shut off. I've seen super talented kids who had a chance of doing something in hockey who just-- their dad was just too intense, had them on the ice too much, caused all the problems...I've seen kids walk away from the game for no reason, in the middle of the season.

Regarding incidents that occur when players are on the ice, some participants explained that incidents often go unnoticed by players and coaches because of the divide between the ice, glass, and stands:

AFC4: Kids on the ice can't hear a single thing that parents are yelling from the stands. That's the thing that drives me crazy. I've been a coach for a few years now and my wife she'll bring the rest of the kids and they'll come and watch my son's games and stuff. After the game, my wife will tell me, "Oh my God, you sure heard this parent yelling and screaming? They were yelling and screaming at this one particular kid." I say to my wife I'm like, "That's great that they feel that they need to yell and scream so much because on the ice you can't hear anything from the stands."

In addition, participants noted that parental misconduct may not be the only factor that affects player participation. Instead, age and personal factors can contribute to dropout amongst many minor hockey players. As one administrator discusses:

A1: It's in the range of about 12 to 15-year-old where you start seeing it drop off. I believe it's totally their own decisions in terms of other aspects of their life are taking over, they're not maybe as good as their counterparts. I know of three kids who did that in this past year. Now, COVID was part of it, but their love for the game had waned. That's what happened. That's the age where it starts happening.

Interestingly, a few participants noted how parental anger could potentially increase player participation by the child interpreting their parent's anger as support and being stood up for. As an administrator points out:

A6: The kids see the parents. You take this again, from a kids' perspective. "My dad's standing up for me. He knows the coach is wrong. I shouldn't have been benched." I think that's the way kids think. As a mother of several children, that's what I think they think, that they're being stood up for it. I don't think they're going to say, "Oh, I don't want to be a part of this." I think they like that.

In addition, some coaches explained player participation at certain rep levels can be affected based on parental behaviour. Coaches explained sometimes a player during tryouts will not be selected for a team because of the behaviour of their parents opposed to their skill level. The explanation given by coaches is to avoid issues and complaints over the course of a season. As one coach explains:

HC2: There are some kids that are there that are good players, but his parents... They're impossible to deal with. If I'm coaching a team and the kid is good, but I have to deal

with the parents all year, I don't necessarily want to take that on either. I'd rather let the kid go play for somebody else.

Moreover, parent participation in minor hockey can also be affected due to parental misconduct incidents where parents elect to pull their child and themselves out of minor hockey.

According to one coach:

HC6: I know that there's parents that have pulled their kids out of hockey because it's just too much to deal with. You don't have to be a yeller to promote a bad, negative attitude within the team. A lot of people remove themselves and unfortunately, remove their son or daughter out of minor hockey because it's just something that is a continuing negative effect on them.

In addition, multiple participants noted potential parents interested in minor hockey could have their decision to enroll their child affected based on hearing about parental misconduct incidents. As one coach explains, despite most parents involved in minor hockey being model parents, the minority that create problems are amplified and create a narrative that spreads to parents not involved in minor hockey:

HC1: I've had people with young kids because they know I'm involved in hockey and they'll say, "Oh, I'm never putting my kid in hockey. The stories I hear," and everything. I always try and convince them that they always hear the negative. That's what I was telling you at the start when I put that narrative in there is we tend to talk about the negatives.

Additionally, coach participation in minor hockey can also be affected by incidents with parents. Some coaches explained negative parental behaviour does not influence them while others said it influences them or other coaches they know. Multiple participants explained their

association is struggling to find coaches through a combination of factors including commitment and parental behaviour. As one participant explains, some coaches in their association have gone from coaching the rep level and transitioned to house league because of less parental pressure:

A4: We've had a lot of coaches that have dropped from coaching rep and they go to the House League because it takes the pressure off them... You get the odd one that still wants to think that their kid is going to the NHL and they're playing House League, but for the most part, the parents gather it as a social event, and they have fun... We've had parents resign as coaches and just say, I can't deal with this parent group... So I couldn't be any stronger in my answer to that, but I think that is directly the reason why we lose most volunteers.

Subsequently, some coaches explained that although parental behavior can influence them, they understand problem parents are in the minority and remember their purpose and enjoyment of being a coach is working with kids and having a positive impact on their development:

HC7: It definitely makes you think twice... I just go back to the fact that I'm not coaching for the parents... I'm not here because I'm getting rich off it, and I'm not here because I'm looking for the gratification of parents. The kids are why I'm doing it, and it's 100% worth it because of the kids.

In addition, some participants described parental misconduct as having an adverse effect on them as motivation to make a positive impact in the association and correct behaviour. Although this response was far less common among coaches, it explains the willingness of some participants to be involved in minor hockey as a volunteer. As one participant describes their personal motivations:

AAC2: It does not detract from me wanting to be involved. It only enhances my desire to be involved. I'm not sure it would be a common answer, but, yes, I want it to be great for my kids and every other kid, so I have no problem dealing with people like that. I think somebody needs to, so...it absolutely enhances my involvement. The negative parent interaction, the negative parental environment makes me want to be a positive influence, when necessary, eviscerate it from the situation.

However, not all coaches believed parental behaviour influenced their willingness to coach. As one participant elaborates, many coaches are also parents and understand the frustrations of parents and attempt to take a proactive approach by toning down certain types of behaviour:

HC2: Not necessarily because I understand. I am a parent too I understand parents getting upset in stands. We just going to them and say, "Look, just tone it down just a little bit" or whatever. I understand it, I do. We all want to see the best for our kids. I understand it.

Similarly, administrators can also have their participation affected in certain situations. One participant describes an incident where a parent who became a member of the board of directors drove others away from the association because of their decisions and behaviour. When discussing the incident, the participant describes an argument between two different administrators that ended with one volunteer leaving the board of directors:

AAC1: He just comes bombing at me and right past me. I was like, "Is everything all right?" He's like, "I'm sorry, man...I am not risking my mental health to do it either. I'm sorry." He's like, "I don't mean to leave you hanging high and dry here, but I'm done." I was just like, "Okay. I'm sorry. Take care. I'll talk to you later"...At this point, the

volunteer count that had been chased by this individual was up to four. Four really good-- Not just hockey people, but really good people. People that cared about their community...and knew that the job they had to do was important for that reason.

Negative parental behaviour can also impact referee's willingness to continue to participate. Most participants agreed parental misconduct incidents could negatively affect referee participation, especially in youth referees and noted their associations had been seeing a decline in referee numbers, are struggling to increase participation of younger referees, and even having difficulties scheduling games to run a season with dwindling referee participation numbers. One participant stated:

AFC3: It impacts referees 100%. There's a reason why we have the lowest number of referees signing up now. We're at a point where we might not have enough referees to run a season. A lot of the older referees are retiring now and we're not back-filling with younger referees to come in and take their spot. They're taking the big hit, and I think a lot of that is from spectator's misconduct.

This finding is consistent with Ridinger, Warner, Tingle, and Kim (2017) who explains that abuse is the most problematic issue referees face and a contributor to decreasing participation rates. Therefore, incidents of parental misconduct that occur in minor hockey can have an adverse effect on stakeholders and be detrimental to the participation rates of players, coaches, administrators, and referees. Therefore, prioritizing ethical behaviour from parents should be at the forefront for minor hockey associations to ensure their members are having a positive experience thus reducing the risk of dwindling participation numbers that can create numerous scheduling and quality issues for minor hockey associations across Ontario.

Strategies for Positive Change

RQ5 was the final research question that guided the study and asked: What recommendations do Ontario rep minor hockey coaches and administrators have to improve parental conduct policies? To answer this question, participants were asked to share their views on strategies that could be implemented to create positive change in Ontario minor hockey associations. The consensus amongst participants was that parental behaviour in minor hockey has seen improvement in recent decades and progress has been made to implement policies and procedures to provide education and handle parental misconduct incidents. However, many participants provided their perspectives on potential areas of improvement to make a meaningful impact to improve minor hockey culture.

Based on the explanations provided by participants regarding the success of the 24-hour rule to deescalate potential conflicts between minor hockey stakeholders, one recommendation for minor hockey governing bodies is to mandate the policy across all local associations. By providing a buffer period for discussing complaints, parental misconduct incidents can potentially be reduced by promoting more constructive conversations regarding disagreements in associations that have not implemented the policy. As one participant explains the policy should not only be applied to minor hockey, but other sport contexts as well:

A3: It should be mandatory that anybody wait 24 hours. That's just something that is applicable...You see it in every single sport...Whether it's seniors playing slo-pitch or three-year-old's playing tee-ball, you get that confrontational person that doesn't like an umpire's call or a ref's call or think somebody's out to get their kid.

Another participant's recommendation was to include code of conduct policies on team websites given the extensive use of websites and social media by modern society and include

videos of parental misconduct incidents to deter parents from potentially conducting themselves in a similar manner:

A6: Maybe organizations...should be putting this stuff up on the website. Everybody's got a phone these days. Everybody's got a camera. Maybe sometimes when some of these incidences occur, they should go up on their website to show people how ridiculous they look and what they're really doing to their children.

Another recommendation corroborated by multiple participants was the use of a Respect in Sport official. This position was described as being similar to a parent rep position where a member of the parent group would oversee monitoring behaviour in the stands from their respective team and act as a mediator and diffuser to potential situations by reminding parents of the expected behaviour outlined in the Respect in Sport program. As one participant explains:

AFC2: I think if each team had a respect in support officer...I think if the parents knew that there was someone there, then they'll think twice...If things start to escalate, that person could really nip it in the bud before it escalates. Like if a parent says something at an official, they, "Hey, John, hey Nancy, come on. Remember. Come on, we're not supposed to say anything to the officials." If the other parents and the other team get rowdy, "Hey, everybody, we're not to engage. I'll talk to their respect in sport officer."

Similarly, some participants believed having an executive member attend all rep games would also improve behaviour by offering a sign of support to members such as parents and coaches and be a roadblock or deterrent to behaving inappropriately during games:

HC4: I really truly believe that there should be someone from the association at every rep game. Not because I want them to watch the game, just because if the associations have a presence in the rink, one, people respect it because they see they're taking an interest,

two, coaches feel like they're being supported, and I think the parents feel like they're being supported, they know someone's there and has their back during situations.

Interestingly, many participants provided potential updates for the Respect in Sport program to improve its effectiveness. Multiple participants recommended a refresher course to be taken by parents to retain information related to behavioural expectations before each upcoming season:

AFC4: It needs to have a quick little refresher either yearly or every other year because you take this course when your kid is in preschool for example. Then...they go through all the IP programs; they go through Novice and Atom. Then now they're into Pee-wee where they're older, they're bigger, and the games might mean a little more to them because they've been playing for six or seven years. The parents you could ask them, "Oh, do you remember signing off on this when you did the Respect in Sport?" They wouldn't remember.

One administrator explained they are currently involved with Respect in Sport Inc. to make improvements to the program. This indicates to some extent an inclusion of stakeholder perspective in the creation of policies which in previous research is key to the development of code of conduct documents or parental education components considering stakeholders are involved in the day-to-day activities of their association and can provide useful firsthand information on the behaviour of parents on how to address parental misconduct incidents (Jordan et al., 2004; Waegeneer et al., 2017):

AFC3: I am actually working with OMHA, and Respect Group Inc. Respect Group Inc actually runs the Respect in Sport courses that are mandated by OMHA and Hockey Canada and working with them on the potential of making a mandatory four-year

program where parents have to re-take the parent course for Respect in Sport every three to four years just so it is at top of mind. We even did look into the potential of requiring both parents to do the program as well.

Many participants reiterated the need for board members and associations to properly enforce policies. However, an issue brought up frequently was the organizational capacity of local associations with volunteer boards made up of members who have full-time jobs and a child playing, in addition to their executive board duties. Despite this, having a strong-willed board was viewed as a key to success from a local association standpoint:

AFC2: To me, the policies and the procedures of the associations, be it Hockey Canada through the association, that's your first line of defense. The issue like I was saying earlier about accountability and enforcement of that, that tends to be a challenge. You have a volunteer board, you have volunteer coaches and for the most part, and now you're trying to use your volunteers to have someone respect the behavior. They could choose or not choose to do it, but you need a very strong board that is willing to walk the walk and hold that person accountable to say, "Unfortunately, you're just not going to be permitted to participate unless you alter this behavior."

The perception of a lack of organizational capacity was also discussed in relation to needing additional involvement from governing bodies to standardize documents and reduce the burden of local association administrators when attempting to implement policies and procedures. According to one administrator, the need for more streamlined processes could improve communication with parents to understand their expected behaviour across all local minor hockey associations:

AFC3: If you can get OMHA, OHF, or Hockey Canada...to implement this stuff and get it out to the parents and not rely on the minor hockey associations to do so, that'll make sure that the parents get it...versus, "Hey, we need this done, go do it", and then I interpret that differently than [town name] Minor Hockey and they interpret that differently than [town name] Minor Hockey, and then not all the parents are receiving the same information in the same way. It's all based on the interpretation of that one individual who has to implement it...I just don't think there's enough expertise involved in minor sport associations as a whole to come up with what is needed in every aspect, so talking specifically to trying to come up with a parent code of conduct, it's me going, "Okay, well, the parents shouldn't curse, parents should be respectful of others, they should just be nice." How do you put that on a code of conduct? "Okay, I'm going to copy OMHA's recommendation, but I'm not putting in the effort to go out and communicate that and make sure that people read it because I've got 100 other jobs to do at a certain season.

In addition to increased governing body involvement, local associations were also recommended to help reduce the burden for coaches when discussing expected parental behaviour. Many coaches explained they hold a team meeting at the start of the season to establish team rules and expectations. One participant discussed their local association stepping in to help facilitate the team meeting alongside coaches:

HC6: I was thinking about bringing in my own code of conduct handouts, but then I found out [town name] Minor Hockey...ran the meeting...They took it out of the coach's hands, right? Which it supports the coaches, which I think is a big deal because if the executive and the associations don't support their own coaches, you're going to start

losing more coaches...They've taken it out of the coach's hands and said, "Listen, as an association, these are the expectations you need to abide by." It takes that role and expectation out of the coach's hands, which I like. I can say, "Well, these aren't my rules and regulations. These are the association's code of conduct and ethics, so if you've got a problem with it, go to the executive and take it up with them." As a coach, I prefer that.

Another interesting recommendation discussed by one participant related to an increased emphasis on including social media into code of conduct documents to communicate with parents about how they should, and should not, utilize social media platforms to discuss minor hockey activities. Despite some governing bodies having a social media policy, few local associations have incorporated the policy as highlighted by one participant:

HC6: I think that needs to be a wider-spread message to parents about positive and negative effects on players, associations, coaches, refereeing, whatever it is. I think social media needs to start becoming a little bit more of a platform for associations to take and hopefully, we find a little bit more respect in that avenue as well.

Moreover, some participants provided additional policy recommendations outside of parental code of conduct documents that they believed could positively impact parental behaviour. One notable recommendation included more emphasis on how to interact with parents, handle issues, and set up team meetings in coaching certification clinics operated by Hockey Canada:

HC8: A lot of the coaching clinics are really focused around how to run drills and practice, and how to set up a practice plan...It's not around how to deal with the parents or player issues, things like that. It's a lot more around how to train, which is what a coach is there for. There's definitely a whole other side of it, which is the parent business

aspect of making sure people are happy and confident, that kind of thing. That's not really covered when it comes to coaches' training, which I know that it's covered a lot more in some other sports.

The use of fair play policies regarding ice time was also brought up by multiple participants to address coaches who shorten the bench regardless of the type of game, even for lower age groups and lower-level rep hockey. As a result, adopting policies for each level of rep hockey could potentially reduce parent frustrations regarding the amount of ice time their child is receiving:

AFC2: We need to mandate fair play. We need to take the control. I'm a coach and I don't want the control taken away from me. The fact of the matter is, I'm not the one that needs help, so I don't mind it. Take the control away from the coaches. Fair play.

Another external policy discussed by one administrator was mandating coaches to give parents practice formats and skill instructions to aid in the development of their child. This in the hopes to reduce parental overinvolvement issues were parents and coaches are offering conflicting advice or strategies to a player. As a result, including parents in the process eliminates a barrier and potentially reduce the number of inquiries from parents to coaches. The administrator stated: **A2:** "We make sure our coaches send out their practice formats and instructions to parents so that if you're going to car coach, this is what you can car coach."

A final external policy recommendation that could affect parental behaviour is the use of additional resources for young referees to improve their understanding of hockey and be more confident and competent in their role. Some participants explained the use of a referee mentor who attends games and offers advice and support for young officials to improve and learn from their mistakes and know someone is at the rink to support them:

A2: We have a referee mentor that goes to various games and listens to parents that heckle our young officials. They're reminded that they're being watched. Like a hockey player, these young officials are learning as well, and they will make mistakes. The only way they're going to get better is by making mistakes... It also gives the new officials some sense of security that, "Hey, I've got somebody that's out there watching me, and he's got my back."

Overall, parental misconduct is a complicated problem without a single, simple solution. However, coaches and administrators who participated in this study offered several strategies that, when used together, could help promote positive parenting behavior in Ontario minor hockey association.

Practical Implications

Findings from the study offer numerous practical implications to potentially create a positive effect on parental behaviour in minor hockey associations. For example, findings and recommendations from minor hockey coaches and administrators on parental behaviour and policy effectiveness can be used by local associations and governing bodies to implement. Existing research explains using stakeholder perspectives in the decision-making process of an organization can have a positive effect (Jordan et al., 2004). Therefore, using the findings from this study can have practical implications for minor hockey associations and other youth sport leagues.

Specifically, findings from the document analysis and participant perspectives around an athlete centered focus in minor hockey offer insight for associations to structure their code of conduct documents and create consistency across associations. Similar implications can apply to additional themes in the document analysis that link with existing research including dispute

prevention and resolution, spectator behaviour, culture and integrity of minor hockey, and social relations with key stakeholders to be used by local associations to create or modify existing code of conduct documents or for a regional, provincial, or national governing body to create a code of conduct document to be used across all affiliated associations. This would establish clear behavioural guidelines for parents across regions, provinces, or the entire country if properly communicated with parents and ensure no variations regarding expected behaviour were to occur.

In addition, the inclusion of positive policy components, explanations on how parental misconduct occurs, receivers of abuse, and recommendations made by coaches and administrators offers strategies for minor hockey associations to implement. For example, policies including the 24-hour rule, parent rep, signed code of conduct documents, and fair play ice time policies were deemed to have a positive effect while recommendations including modifications to the Respect in Sport program, increased governing body involvement, and an increased emphasis on social media provide the opportunity for minor hockey associations to implement policy components deemed a strength, and address weaknesses to better improve their organizational culture, making minor hockey a more safe and inclusive place for stakeholders. Like code of conduct documents, these policy components and recommendations can be implemented from the local association level to the national governing body to establish consistent policies and procedures across minor hockey.

Finally, the findings and recommendations can also have an impact on individuals involved in minor hockey associations. This includes coaches and administrators who can analyze, reflect, relate, and learn from their peers that participated in the study to gain a more comprehensive understanding of parental behaviour and policy effectiveness in minor hockey. In

addition, findings can be used locally to potentially improve participant experiences. This can include creating or updating existing policies to effectively communicate expected behaviour with parents and manage incidents if they were to occur. The effects of such policies could be beneficial for coaches, administrators, players, and referees if an association effectively communicates with stakeholders by implementing policies. Consequently, the study also has practical implications for parents to understand their expected behaviour from existing code of conduct policies, and from coaches and administrators who are essential members in the day-to-day operations of local minor hockey associations.

Future Research

The findings and discussion illustrate the complexity and scope of parental behaviour in both minor hockey and youth sport. As previously mentioned, Cunningham (2014) urged fellow sport management researchers to find solution-based approaches to issues within sport while Love et al., (2020) urged peers to address social issues beyond collegiate and professional sporting contexts and to target public/youth sport, physical activity, and recreation components. Findings from this study address these desires but are only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to addressing parental behaviour in minor hockey, youth sports, and evaluating policy effectiveness. Future research should address potential differences based on gender in girls' hockey leagues to identify similarities or differences in behaviour and policy content. For example, the Ontario Women's Hockey Association (OWHA) is the regional governing body operating under the OHF.

Furthermore, future research should also address potential differences based on geographic location. Findings from this study analyzed a single province in Canada and the potential for different behaviour and policies exist based on various demographics and

governance structures. As mentioned, Hockey Canada has 13 member branches that govern minor hockey across all provinces and territories with Ontario having three (OHF, HEO, HNO). Therefore, findings from any other of the 10 member branches could vary compared to Ontario and should be explored to identify potential consistencies or differences across various member branches that report to Hockey Canada. The same potentially applies to other countries and their governing bodies (ex: USA Hockey) or countries that use the club model where professional clubs develop their own players compared to the pay-to-play model used by Canada (Sapurji, 2017). For example, the Swedish Ice Hockey Federation uses a club model and has recently revamped their programming to focus on skill development opposed to tracking standings and statistics for players under the U13 age group (Sapurji, 2017). Future research should analyze the complexities of the different cultures within minor hockey in different countries.

Additionally, future research should also be directed at analyzing behaviour of parents based on the age and playing level of their child. Although not linked towards any of the study's research questions, participants provided their perspectives on potential differences of parental behaviour where expectations of their child appeared to be higher when they were younger and the intricacies of the rep system in minor hockey with certain parents explaining higher levels like AA and AAA are more prone to parental misconduct while others believed lower rep divisions like A or even house league presented more issues. Multiple participants explained the uniqueness of the U15 AAA level because of the annual OHL Priority Selection Draft which could result in additional pressure from parents directed at coaches and various minor hockey stakeholders because they want their child to reach the next echelon of Junior A hockey. Future research should further explore these observations to gain a better understanding of where

parental misconduct occurs and tailor organization communication and policies to address these levels.

Subsequently, one area related to negative parental behaviour not found within the study is racism and discrimination in minor hockey associations. Despite the sample of participants not providing any examples of racial or discriminatory incidents in their experiences, such incidents must be acknowledged as media reports have documented incidents in Ontario and other locations across Canada. Players have reported incidents of being called racial slurs including the ‘n-word,’ have been referred to as an African animal, and received various racist gestures (Brock, 2022; Kaiser, 2022; Van Rooy, 2022). Recently, a 131-page report on discrimination in the GTHL from independent committee called ‘Roadmap for Change’ discovered that racism, sex, and gender-based discrimination, and inequality exist within all levels of the league (Leathong, 2022). The committee provided 44 solution-based recommendations for the league that included hiring staff with experience in equity, diversity, and inclusion initiatives, mandating board of directors’ positions to include BIPOC and females, anonymous hotlines to report discrimination, and eliminating ethnic or stereotypical mascots or imagery from teams (Leathong, 2022). As a result, future research should analyze this type of behavioural misconduct in minor hockey associations.

Moreover, future research should also seek to identify potential similarities or differences in parental behaviour and code of conduct policy content in team sports (i.e., hockey, baseball, basketball, soccer) compared to individual sports (i.e., tennis, golf, gymnastics, swimming). The unique differences between the amount of attention an athlete receives, focus on player performance, and lack of team environment could result in various parents existing in youth sport settings. Existing research has found a significant psychological difference between

players in individual and team sports (Kajbafnezhad et al., 2011). Team players were able to moderate stress through support of their peers while individual athletes found it more difficult to overcome their anxieties (Kajbafnezhad et al., 2011). Based on differences in player behaviour, it is possible for parents to exhibit different patterns of behaviour that could have both positive and negative effects on their child's participation in an individual sport. Future research should seek to understand these potential differences and tailor future code of conduct policies to individual sport settings.

Finally, future research should seek to further address policy effectiveness by implementing policy components deemed successful in this study into minor hockey associations or other youth sport contexts without code of conduct policies to potentially see measurable success of specific policies and continue to find solution-based approaches that address parental misconduct. This could include implementing the 24-hour rule, a procedural document for handling complaints and conducting investigations into parental misconduct, developing an increased focus on social media use, and implementing a parent rep for each rep team in the association. As a result, furthering the development of understanding policy effectiveness in minor hockey creates the opportunity to strengthen findings from this study and further explore an understudied area of sport management research.

Conclusion

The goal of this study was never to vilify or portray minor hockey in a negative light but rather, to highlight and address the issue of parental misconduct that has been identified by media and academic scholars (Gillis, 2014; Monette, 2017; Robidoux & Bocksnick, 2010; Thompson, 2010). Minor hockey is important in the lives of many young Ontarian athletes' and is vital to ensure that their expectations in the sport is not negatively impacted by problematic

parents. The goal of this research was to explore the current culture of parental behaviour in minor hockey, understand its successes and failures, and attempt to develop potential recommendations that can be implemented to provide a safe place for participants to enjoy the benefits of minor hockey through exercise, comradery with teammates, and most importantly, have fun playing a sport with a deep-rooted history in Canada. The importance of minor hockey to many Canadians cannot be understated. While it might not be possible to prevent all parental misconduct in the competitive world of minor hockey where tempers can flare in the heat of competition, much can be done to mitigate the risks of parental misconduct and to appropriately respond when incidents occur. Hockey is a game. For most people, and young athletes, it is meant to be fun. In the words of former NHL goaltender Ilya Bryzgalov, “It’s only game, why you *heff* [have] to be mad?” (Clarke, 2017). Although the infamous quote was in response to media criticism and negative fan reaction to Chris Pronger’s return to Edmonton after joining the Anaheim Ducks, the sentiment can represent a larger scope of hockey related to parental misconduct in minor hockey and demonstrates that despite the fierce competitiveness and high-pressure environment that can exist in minor hockey, in the end, it is still a game.

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Appendix A

INTERVIEW RECRUITMENT EMAIL

Dear [Potential Participant],

We are conducting a research study on parental behaviour in minor hockey in Canada conducted by Mr. Zachary Heipel and Dr. Curtis Fogel at Brock University. The purpose of this research is to examine parental behaviour and conduct policies in minor hockey in Canada. I would like to invite you to participate in a confidential 20-minute telephone interview related to your involvement in minor hockey in Canada. The findings of this research will be used in the writing of a Master's thesis and academic publications.

This research project has been approved by the Brock University Research Ethics Board. If you have any questions related to the ethics of the research and would like to speak to someone outside of the research team, please feel free to contact the Research Ethics Office at (905) 688-5550 ext. 3035, or reb@brocku.ca.

If you would like to participate in this research study, or have any further questions, please let us know.

In appreciation,

Zachary Heipel
MA Candidate
Department of Sport Management
Brock University
1812 Sir Isaac Brock Way
St. Catharines, ON
L2S 3A1
zh14hw@brocku.ca

Curtis Fogel, Ph.D., LL.M.
Associate Professor
Department of Sport Management
Brock University
1812 Sir Isaac Brock Way
St. Catharines, ON
L2S 3A1
cfogel@brocku.ca
(905) 688-5550 ext. 4617

Appendix B

VERBAL CONSENT SCRIPT

Thank you for agreeing to participate in our research study on parental behaviour in minor hockey in Canada conducted by Mr. Zachary Heipel and Dr. Curtis Fogel at Brock University. This research study has been approved by the Brock University Research Ethics Board. The purpose of this research is to examine parental behaviour and conduct policies in minor hockey in Canada.

Your participation in this study will involve a 20-minute telephone interview related to your involvement in youth hockey in Canada. With your consent, the interview will be audiotaped with a digital recorder. You may request that this audiotaping be stopped at any point during the interview. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. The researcher will do everything possible to ensure confidentiality. No personal, identifying information will be required for the purposes of this study or will be included in the subsequent dissemination of its findings. We request that no identifying information be revealed about a specific person or situation.

The findings of this research will be used in the writing of a Master's thesis as well as academic publications.

There is a minimal risk to participants involved in this study related to the potential psychological or emotional impact of speaking about spectator violence and harassment. If you feel any distress during the course of the interview, please let the interviewer know and the interview will stop. If you feel as though you might require counselling services, the following Niagara distress line can provide free guidance and support: 1-866-550-5205.

The primary researchers and a professional transcriber will have access to the audiotaped data. The transcriber will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement. The audiotape will be deleted after transcription, and the transcribed notes will be stored on the password-protected computers of the primary researchers for five years. The transcriptions will be deleted after five years.

To better ensure the confidentiality of your participation in this interview, you will not be asked to sign this informed consent form. I will ask for your verbal consent to participate in the interview. You may choose to withdraw at any point during the interview or in the two weeks that follow and decline to answer any questions that you do not feel comfortable answering. If you choose to withdraw from the study within two weeks after the interview, the decision will be yours as to whether or not the interview data already collected will be used in the study. No transcripts will be sent to you following the interview unless requested at the time of the interview.

By providing verbal consent, you are indicating that you understand the purpose of this study and the risks and benefits involved in participating, and that you agree to participate in a 20-minute

interview on parental behaviour and conduct policies in minor hockey in Canada. I will also ask for your verbal consent to have the interview audiotaped.

If you have any further questions or require clarification on any aspects of the research and/or your participation, please contact Dr. Curtis Fogel at cfogel@brocku.ca.

If you have any questions related to the ethics of the research and would like to speak to someone outside of the research team, please feel free to contact the Brock University Research Ethics Office at (905) 688-5550 ext. 3035, or reb@brocku.ca.

Appendix C

Coaches Interview Guide

Interview Questions

1. What is your current position within minor hockey?
2. What levels of minor hockey are you currently involved in?
3. How long have you been coaching?
4. What motivates you to be involved in coaching?
5. Do you have a process to set standards of behaviour with parents? What does that look like?
6. From your experiences, what makes a model hockey parent?
7. What types of policies currently exist in minor hockey to manage parental behaviour?
8. From your experiences, how do parents break code of conduct policies?
9. Can you provide examples of parents displaying anger or aggression?
10. Have you seen parents engage in any physical violence?
11. Who do parents typically direct their anger towards?
12. Are there any common characteristics of parents who commit acts of spectator misconduct in minor hockey?
13. In your estimation, how common are acts of parental anger or aggression in your organization? In minor hockey in general?
14. Does it change by playing level or level of competition?
15. To what extent does parental behaviour influence your interest and willingness to continue coaching minor hockey?
16. Are there any internal disciplinary processes in place to manage incidents?
17. How common are disciplinary proceedings for spectator misconduct in your organization?
18. What have been the outcomes of behavioural policies in minor hockey organizations? Have they been positive or negative?
19. Do you have your own parental conduct policies in place? If so, can you describe? How do they compare to league policies?
20. Do you have any recommendations to reduce or effectively handle incidents of spectator misconduct?
21. What impact, if any, do you think spectator misconduct has on participation rates of players in minor hockey?
22. What impact does it have on the participation of coaches, referees, and others involved in the sport?
23. Are you involved in any other sports? Do similar policies and behaviour exist?

Closing

1. Do you have any further comments on policy and parental behaviour in minor hockey?
2. Do you have any feedback on the interview process?
3. Would it be acceptable if I followed up with you in the future if I have any further questions?

Administrator Interview Guide

Interview Questions

1. What is your current position within minor hockey?
2. What levels of minor hockey are you currently involved in?
3. How long have you been involved in hockey administration?
4. What motivates you to be involved in hockey administration?
5. Do you have a process to set standards of behaviour with parents? What does that look like?
6. From your experiences, what makes a model hockey parent?
7. What types of policies currently exist in minor hockey to manage parental behaviour?
8. From your experiences, how do parents break code of conduct policies?
9. Can you provide examples of parents displaying anger or aggression?
10. Have you seen parents engage in any physical violence?
11. Who do parents typically direct their anger towards?
12. In your estimation, how common are acts of parental anger or aggression in your organization? In minor hockey in general?
13. Does it change by playing level or level of competition?
14. Have law enforcement officials ever become involved in responding to spectator misconduct in your organization?
15. From your perspective, when should law enforcement officials become involved in incidents of spectator misconduct?
16. Are there any common characteristics of parents who commit acts of spectator misconduct in minor hockey?
17. Are there any internal disciplinary processes in place to manage incidents?
18. How common are disciplinary proceedings for spectator misconduct in your organization?
19. What is your role, if any, in those proceedings?
20. What have been the outcomes of behavioural policies in minor hockey organizations? Have they been positive or negative?
21. Do you have your own parental conduct policies in place? If so, can you describe? How do they compare to league policies?
22. Do you have any recommendations to reduce or effectively handle incidents of spectator misconduct?
23. What impact, if any, do you think spectator misconduct has on participation rates of players in minor hockey?
24. What impact does it have on the participation of coaches, referees, and others involved in the sport?
25. Are you involved in any other sports? Do similar policies and behaviour exist?

Closing

26. Do you have any further comments on parental behaviour in minor hockey?
27. Do you have any feedback on the interview process?
28. Would it be acceptable if I followed up with you in the future if I have any further questions?