

Beyond the Ice: An Exploratory Investigation into Social Responsibility within Major Junior

Hockey

by

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### **Author's Declaration**

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

## **Abstract**

Major Junior hockey organizations are viewed as the rallying point for many small communities throughout North America, and as their presence in society continues to grow as does their increased ability and desire to give back to their community. This study explored the nature of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) use within Major Junior hockey, highlighting the impact on organizational members, and what implications this can have on the field of CSR and sport. The findings from this research revealed that the organization engages in CSR in order to forge connections with their community members, establishing themselves as a community oriented organization, focusing on giving back in order to better themselves as an organization, and society. CSR has not only added value for the organization but also the athletes, as they harness the power of a good reputation, cultivated through their CSR involvement to differentiate themselves, crafting a specific goodwill image. The findings revealed that CSR is integrated through all levels of the organization, although mid-level managers were primarily responsible for planning and players were responsible for the delivery of CSR. The findings suggested that the overall effectiveness of CSR and the impact it could have on staff and players may be limited by these divisions. Lastly, the findings showed that CSR facilitated in the development of positive feelings of association between the organization and the participants, as CSR improved their perception of the organization, creating a sense of belonging that translated into increased commitment and pride. This study provides insight from internal organizational members, enhancing our overall understanding of reasoning behind CSR use in sport, as well as the significant impact it has in the development of the players, showcasing the ability for CSR to foster the success and betterment of their community, as well as their organizational members.

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Oh and yes mother I am aware I could have been a doctor.

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## **Chapter One: Introduction**

### **1.1 Background**

Within sport, opportunities exist to incorporate social responsibility into everyday business operations, enabling organizations not limited to the corporate landscape, to harness organizational resources, to address social problems. The roots of CSR as a tool for change are found in the business sector, referred to as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), a tactic that corporations have employed for the better part of the past century to go beyond profit, to demonstrating concern for society through implementation of social programs, and philanthropic endeavours (Carroll, 1979, 1991, 1999). The general consensus is that CSR is “situations where the firm goes beyond compliance and engages in actions that appear to further some social good, beyond the interests of the firm and that which is required by law” (McWilliams, Siegel, & Wright, 2006, p. 1). CSR in and/or through sport is a complex concept that has received minimal attention in the academic literature until this past decade, as research seeks to examine the use of CSR within various types of organizations (e.g., Babiak & Wolfe, 2009; Walker & Kent, 2009; Godfrey, 2009).

Although insight into CSR within the sport sector has increased significantly in the past decade, many gaps remain. Particularly, little research has been done to enable greater understanding of how CSR is impacting those executing the initiatives as well as the intended beneficiaries (Walker, Heere, & Kim, 2013). In sport, CSR is apparent within many different community-oriented initiatives, and it is being delivered throughout all levels of various organizations, but the professional sport context continues to dominate the academic literature

(Babiak & Wolfe, 2009; Trendafilova & Babiak, 2013; Walker & Kent, 2009; Tainsky & Babiak, 2011). This project will begin by addressing the knowledge gaps that exist, by exploring the impact that hockey clubs hope to create through their use of CSR, in particular the effect on the participants and the consumers. This project will seek to illuminate the existence of CSR not just in professional sport, but rather delve further into a new amateur sport context, gaining insight into the strategic rationale for CSR use, as well as its impact on a focal organization, the individuals involved, and the community purported to be served.

The sport of hockey provides a focal context for my study due to its cultural significance within Canada, in particular Ontario, as it serves as an integral part of the Canadian sport landscape, culture and identity (Blake, 2010; Hockey Canada, 2014). Participation statistics reveal that 624,148 Canadians under the age of 18 are registered with Hockey Canada, the national governing body within the sport, making it the third practiced sport in Canada (“Hockey, Canada’s game, not its most popular,” 2013). Hockey boasts an average annual growth rate of 1.5% for hockey participation in Canada and 48% of Canadians have said hockey is a source of personal or collective pride in Canada (“Hockey, Canada’s game, not its most popular,” 2013). Of those over the age of 15, 1,239,000 identify as hockey players, suggesting that hockey is a large part of an individual’s life, well past childhood, creating a widespread presence of hockey across the urban and rural Canadian landscape (“Hockey, Canada’s game, not its most popular,” 2013; Blake, 2010). Despite the omnipresence of hockey in Canadian culture, and identity, there has been limited research on the management of hockey at a community or grassroots level (Misener & Snelgrove, 2013; Slack, 2014). Further, there is a lack

of understanding with regard to the activities that hockey clubs are undertaking, which go beyond sport and skill development, and impact their communities beyond the ice.

The importance of CSR in sport is acknowledged, yet measuring the impact and reasoning for its existence has been limited (Walker et al., 2013). As the literature review crafted for this thesis proposal will outline, understanding the premise and impact of CSR in this context will help to illuminate the power and ability that CSR can have as an organizational practice designed for social impact and may provide important feedback for the focal organization's strategy. Utilizing the constructs of CSR developed by Carroll (1979, 1999) focusing on the economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic aspects of CSR, this study will help further our understanding of the use of CSR within for profit organizations, with a focus on the experience, and perceptions of key participants. For the purpose of this study CSR will include both a philosophical approach and a set of activities.

This proposal is structured in the following way: Chapter One introduces, as well as provides reasoning for the significance of this research. Chapter Two provides a comprehensive overview of the social responsibility literature in the business and sport contexts. Chapter Three provides an overview of the intended design of this basic interpretive qualitative study, which includes an outline of the research context and my chosen strategy of inquiry for this project. Chapter Four provides an interview of the findings from the research portion of the study, addressing the research questions, illuminating CSR use within the focal organization, and its effects. Chapter Five will discuss these findings, linking these new ideas to the past literature, adding to our understanding of CSR within sport, and the implications of the findings uncovered throughout the research project.

## **1.2 Significance of the Research**

CSR has emerged as an integral part of business operations since its introduction in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (Carroll, 1979; Kitzmueller & Shimshack, 2012). Modern businesses now recognize that their actions must go beyond generating a profit, and appeasing their primary stakeholders. Rather, there is a need to ensure that their business operations are responsible, ethical, and have a positive effect on society around them (Carroll, 1979; Peterson, 2004; McGuire, 1963). CSR enables corporations to go beyond simple existence, to providing, and supporting the community around them, creating positive opportunities for internal and external stakeholders, which includes their employees, clients, shareholders, and members of society-at-large (Carroll, 1979; Kitzmueller & Shimshack, 2012; McWilliams & Siegel, 2001).

Understanding the use of CSR practices is key as it can be a strategic tool for the organization by impacting the perceived reputation of the organizations, as they position themselves to be viewed as environmentally and socially conscious businesses (Kitzmueller & Shimshack, 2012).

The increase in use of CSR among sport organizations has paralleled the development of CSR in the workplace (Paramio-Salcines, Babiak, & Walters, 2013). Implementation of CSR has become commonplace within major organizations, becoming a key managerial trend, highlighting the ability to go beyond sport provision, and skill development, to being able to demonstrate commitment as well as contribute to society with a wide range of social issue initiatives (Babiak & Wolfe, 2009; Paramio-Salcines et al., 2013).

In the sporting context, these efforts are seen at all levels of sport, in particular within professional leagues that use their nationwide exposure to educate others on causes. In the past

twenty years, the NHL has established initiatives such as Hockey Fights Cancer, NHL Green, Hockey is for Everyone and the You Can Play Project, the latter two focused on equality and respect as well as character development through the use of hockey (NHL, 2014). Professional leagues serve as examples for their amateur level constituents, enabling the non-professional leagues to observe these endeavours, and established their own CSR platforms. Amateur sport organizations across North America are also giving back to their community through various events and initiatives. Misener and Babiak (2015) sought to explore the meaning of responsible behaviour for community-based nonprofit sport organizations, and how these organizations are capitalizing on novel practices, going beyond their basic sport delivery mandate. Their findings reveal that CSR in sport can take many forms and that social responsibility platforms exist within non-professional contexts.

The diverse nature of CSR is apparent, as it overlaps and draws from a variety of disciplines, and can be viewed from multiple perspectives. Therefore, conceptualizing CSR in sport, as its own field of scholarship, is necessary (Paramio-Salcines et al., 2013). This project will add to the literature, providing insight into the potential that exists for hockey organizations to harness the power they possess to create ‘little citizens’ (Misener & Doherty, 2012), who are actively engaged in society, even after their time with the hockey club has concluded. This current study represents a unique context of sport, adding to this gap in the research by focusing on amateur sport organizations within the for-profit landscape as it investigates into a new context, adding to our overall understanding of the use of CSR within sport, regardless of level and sector.

### **1.3 Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this investigation is to explore the nature and perceived impact of CSR within the focal organization, a for-profit major junior hockey enterprise.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

The research addressed the following questions:

1. What is the rationale behind the implementation of the CSR platform within the focal organization?
2. How is CSR integrated into the business operations of the focal organization?
3. What role do players and management team members have in the development and delivery of the CSR initiatives?
4. How does CSR and its perceived impact influence the attitudes and commitment of management personnel and players?

## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

This section contains an overview of the available relevant academic literature captured within (3) sections: (1) Hockey related literature; (2) Literature related to the development and components of CSR; and a (3) A review of the literature on CSR related to sport.

### **2.1 Hockey Related Literature**

The hockey-related literature encompasses a wide range of ideas and concepts, as researchers seek to explain the popular cultural phenomenon that is hockey in North America (Blake, 2010). It is seen as an obsession to some, but in Canada, hockey is often viewed as a way of life for participants, parents, fans, media, and industry (Gillmor, 2005). Hockey is not just a sport that Canadians rally around, relate to or play, it is a symbol of Canadian recreation, a cultural phenomenon, and significant contributor to the ideas, values, and representation of Canada (Blake, 2010; NHL, 2014). Jason Blake provides a comprehensive review on the culture and effect that hockey can have on the community, and the participants, as he synthesizes the available academic literature related to hockey, thus filling a gap that exists within the academic writing. One exception might be the marketing aspects of the NHL, which have been examined in the sport management literature, with findings emerging suggesting the unique nature of sport which includes fan identification, the predictability of consumer intentions/motivations, and brand loyalty (Teed, Delpy-Neirotti, Johnson & Seguin, 2009; Rascher, Brown, Nagel & McEvoy, 2009). This is not surprising given that the NHL has revenues well over three billion, with over 68 million spectators in North America (NHL, 2014). With over 160 countries televising NHL games in eight languages, the scope of professional hockey is quite large (NHL, 2014). Given the sheer size of the industry, it is surprising and perhaps worrisome that hockey

has not been the focal context for more research in Canada (Blake, 2010; Gillmor, 2005).

Increased academic insight is needed to understand the roles that this sport plays within society and unpack its influence on Canadian culture (Blake, 2010; Gillmor, 2005). It is also imperative to recognize that any sport does not exist in a bubble, and understanding the social trends that impact the sport's development are critical to understanding its influence on large aspects of Canadian culture (Blake, 2010).

It is also important to note that hockey has received considerable attention from medical and physiological disciplines, in particular within the past decade on concussions, spinal injuries, and mental health issues that can be linked to participation in hockey (Kukawadiah, Warsh, Mihalik & Pickett, 2010; Seppa, 2010; Marchie & Cusimano, 2003). Violence is a concern in hockey due to the nature of the game, with the on-ice violence glorified in the media at the professional level influencing the behaviours of the youth athletes (Blake, 2010; Bloom & Smith, 1996). Topics of interest to social scientists, such as the impacts of hockey at the grassroots and community levels, are less prevalent. Understanding the potential that exists within hockey to go beyond just skill, and sport development is necessary, as hockey is a part of the greater Canadian landscape, and can be utilized to evoke change.

## **2.2 Corporate Social Responsibility Literature**

### **2.2.1 Tracing the origins of CSR**

CSR is recognized as when corporations go past their legal, and economic obligations, beyond compliance, to performing actions that are not just in the best interest of the firm, rather their actions further some form of social good (McWilliams et al., 2006). CSR provides opportunities for corporations to incorporate 'doing good' into their practices, going against the



assumptions of selfishness and greed, to utilizing their presence in society to help, rather than hinder its existence (Campbell, 2007).

CSR was first introduced by Bowen (1953) as a method for business owners to go beyond basic business operations, to making a difference in society. The ideas introduced in the 1970s by Archie Carroll, have served as the groundwork for the overarching idea of CSR, and its incorporation as a fundamental aspect of corporate business practice (Acar, Aupperle, & Lowy, 2001). Carroll (1979) introduced his Corporate Social Performance Model, comprising of three sections, CSR, social responsiveness, and social issues management, in an attempt to clarify what constituted CSR. Wartick and Cochran (1985) formalized these sections into a framework comprising of principles, process, and policies, to better represent the procedures that are required of a corporation. Carroll then developed the renowned CSR pyramid in 1991, establishing the four main tenets of CSR as being economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary, where philanthropic replaced discretionary in subsequent publications (Carroll, 1991, 1999). In other words, it is not enough to just exist, rather corporations “should strive to make a profit, obey the law, be ethical, and be a good corporate citizen” (Carroll, 1999, p. 43). The economics of a corporation are the fundamental responsibility that a corporation has towards society, essential for the corporations’ continual existence, and ability to be socially responsible (Carroll, 1991). While legal responsibility refer to obeying the laws that have been established by society, ethical responsibilities go beyond that to the corporation ensuring their practices are right and fair, avoiding causing any harm (Carroll, 1991). Finally a corporation has philanthropic responsibilities that enable them to be a good citizen, going past survival to giving and being contributing citizens of society.

It is with these obligations that CSR has become a common practice within corporations, creating a new standard of business practices which must be continually upheld to meet the societal objectives in place, and serving as a framework for the social role of business in society (Carey, Mason & Misener, 2011). The later part of the twentieth century saw CSR usage standardized for corporations, as society called for establishment of environmental and societal concerns (Carroll, 1991; Babiak & Trendafilova, 2011).

The practice of CSR remains prevalent today, evolving from a tool used by niche, small scale corporations, to being a dominant strategic tool used by traditional corporate leaders, like Nike or McDonalds, as their good corporate behaviour is showcased in the media, and dissected by the general public (Doane, 2005). Ethical consumerism has led to this demand, as members of society expect more from contemporary corporations, desiring validation that as consumers they are supporting corporations who have demonstrated a concern for the betterment of society, and who are willing to forfeit personal gains for what is best for humanity (Doane, 2005). Demands for fair working conditions, environmental sustainability, best business practices, and social welfare concerns have become imbedded within the concept of CSR (Doane, 2005). In this modern, globalized world, CSR has become a standardized practice, parallel with calls for transparency, as CSR has evolved from being an added piece to being a necessary business function, fully embedded into the corporation, their behaviours, mindset and actions (Doane, 2005; Smith & Ward, 2007). As a corporation's obligation to society continues to evolve, demands and the expectations of society will guide the use of CSR (Smith & Ward, 2007).

Terms like philanthropy, the triple bottom line, corporate citizenship, corporate social performance, social responsiveness, sustainability, and business ethics have been used

interchangeably within the academic literature of CSR, as all of these processes focus on a similar theme, a corporation's obligation to society, the need to do more, and committing to the betterment of society (Elkington, 1999; Garriga & Melé, 2004; McWilliams et al., 2006; Carroll, 1991, 1999). Similar in nature to CSR, these concepts utilize the fundamental beliefs of CSR, in that corporations, should act in a way that benefits society, incorporating social consciousness into their business practices regardless of the resource demands that these initiatives may create (Carroll, 1979, 1991, 1999). Thus, CSR tends to be the most commonly used framework for representing the integration of a social agenda into business practices. The CSR pyramid has prevailed as the overarching framework for the incorporation of social awareness into a corporation's business practices, with its adaptable nature, that can be manipulated to best serve the organization, their needs and the needs of their community (Van der Heijden, Driessen, & Cramer 2009). CSR highlights the responsibility of a business to ensuring their behaviours benefit society, which can be done passively, by avoiding engagement in socially harmful acts, or by actively performing activities that have the ability to advance social goals (Carroll, 1991, 1999; Van der Heijden et al., 2009; McWilliams & Siegel, 2000). While organizations themselves rarely identify their own CSR motives in accordance with a given framework, Carroll's pyramid provides a useful categorization for identify the dominant rationales for undertaking CSR, and challenges researchers to look beyond merely philanthropic/discretionary motives for CSR.

### **2.2.2 Strategic nature of CSR**

Businesses dedicate considerable time, effort and financial resources to their CSR platforms, as strategic CSR requires a synergistic use of organization resources to address key

stakeholders' interests, ensuring both the business and society benefits (Lacey, Kennett-Hensel, & Manolis, 2015; McAllister & Ferrell, 2002). Corporations' engagement with CSR initiatives are motivated by economic and non-economic factors (Friedman, 1970; Lacey et al., 2015; Marquis et al., 2007). Strategic CSR is viewed to be an innovative business strategy that is ingrained within the core objectives of the business and is designed to add value to the business and enact positive social change, embedded within the day-to day business culture and operations (McElhaney, 2008).

Organizational benefits of CSR have been found in the areas of “human resources, reputation and branding, and operational cost savings” (McElhaney, 2009, p. 31). It is clear that CSR activities can be leveraged as strategic tools adding value to a business (Porter & Kramer, 2002, 2006). CSR adds value to a corporation, as CSR is utilized as a key managerial tool, creating strategic opportunities, enabling the corporation to become more competitive, and legitimate within their field (Porter & Kramer, 2002, 2006; Campbell, 2007). Porter and Kramer (2006) recognized the ability to converge the interests of society and the business, to create combined social and economic benefits for both parties, addressing the needs of the stakeholders, while simultaneously ensuring that their behaviours are benefiting society. Prioritizing the social issues is in the best interest of the corporation, as they seek to better understanding the implications of their involvement in society, as they progress from responsive, good citizenship acts to strategic philanthropic activities that they can leverage to make themselves a competitive business entity (Porter & Kramer, 2006).

It is also, however, imperative to be cognizant that it is not possible to just add philanthropy to organizations, but it is necessary for them to truly embody and create a culture

that is philanthropic in nature (Foster, Meinhard, Berger, & Krpan, 2009). This high-level engagement in CSR throughout the organization's mission and practices are what differentiates strategic CSR from other one-time or more capitalistic infused CSR platforms (Foster et al., 2009). Bruch and Walter (2005) highlighted the opportunities for corporations and their beneficiaries to ensure the endeavours are mutually advantageous, aligning with the work of Tainsky and Babiak (2011) who state that corporations implement CSR to benefit themselves, as well as society. These socially-focused activities should link to a corporation's strategy and mission, capitalizing on the power of CSR as an innovative business strategy, justifying resource use, with any purported outcomes, benefiting the image, and purpose of the organization (McElhaney, 2009; Porter & Kramer, 2006; Kitzmueller & Shimshack, 2012).

### **2.2.3 Economic agenda**

Financial gains are necessary for a corporation's success and existence; therefore economics need to be a fundamental aspect of a corporation, and their operations (Friedman, 1970). It is the responsibility of corporations to uphold the shareholders' desire to ensure maximum profit, while still abiding by the basic rules of society (Friedman, 1970). Empirical studies have found that being social conscious is positively associated with the financial performance of the firm, appeasing the fundamental objectives of the corporation, and their shareholders (Glavas & Godwin, 2013; Campbell, 2007; Margolis & Walsh, 2003; Friedman, 1970). Economics remain a part of CSR as corporations are expected to do well, in terms of their own financial success, while still doing good (Doane, 2005). The relationship between CSR implementation and economics is viewed as casual, as a number of factors influence the sustainability of an organization; therefore while CSR may translate into an economic return for

a given organization, it cannot be a guaranteed method of economic success (Porter & Kramer, 1999).

CSR enables corporations to be viewed as a socially better firm, cultivating an image focused on the community, rather than their own personal objectives, providing strategic opportunities for corporations to capitalize on these feelings of goodwill (Baron & Diermeier, 2007; Aupperle, Carroll & Hatfield, 1985). Economics and CSR may be assumed to be synonymous but without a definite link, corporations that are not motivated by the need to be good should not implement CSR with hopes of financial success.

#### **2.2.4 CSR Implementation**

Institutional aspects including organization size, industry, as well as structure of the organization have been found to motivate corporate action, impacting the likelihood that a corporation implements socially responsible behaviours into their practices (Campbell, 2007). Corporation size has been shown to have little direct impact on CSR implementation but size does impact other aspects that are more directly related to CSR application including regulations from governing bodies, and the desire to meet standards, and remain competitive within their field, (Campbell, 2007; Babiak & Trendafilova, 2011; Blombäck & Wigren, 2008). Corporations who have a more democratic, decentralized power structure, seek the input of their employees and other key stakeholders, whose opinions then influence the likelihood of CSR, in comparison to organizations who have a more centralized, top-down structure and whose hierarchical manner may limit input from some stakeholders (Campbell, 2007). Although institutional mechanism can serve as predictors, without some form of internal motivation, corporations that do not

actually behave in socially responsible ways will continue to do so without continual regulation and nurturing (Campbell, 2007).

The ability of a firm to fully integrate social, environmental, and economic concerns into their overall culture, operations, strategy, and values, is necessary in order to establish best practices that are focused on societal improvement (Berger, Cunningham & Drumwright, 2007). Berger et al. (2007) explain that CSR integration encompasses a diverse range of programs, community development, management policies, and overall business practices. For example, this can include clothing or food donation drives, philanthropic endeavours including fundraising for specific local charities, as well as ensuring ethical behaviours occur within the organization's business operations. To ensure that CSR is mainstreamed within an organization, it must be embedded, within everyday practices, as well as part of the firm's identity through strategy as noted above (Berger et al., 2007). Bolton, Chung-hee Kim, and O'Gorman (2011) recognize CSR as a three-stage process of initiation → implementation → maturation (p. 61). Employees are instrumental in this three-stage process, as their continual investment enables the corporation to adapt with any challenges that arise with CSR integration, and continual embodiment within their practices (Bolton et al., 2011). Employees may be faced with uncertainty around how best to implement particular CSR initiatives, yet it is the responsibility of the employers to provide the overall direction and make sense of the new ideas, in order to create a culture that embraces change and development (Van der Heijden et al., 2009). Implementation is indeed a dynamic process, dependent on those within the organizations, who are willing to serve as change agents, invoking continual change through their own behaviour and the overarching organization's behaviour (Bolton et al., 2011; Berger et al., 2007).

There is a lack of theoretically oriented research that focuses on the dynamics involved in implementing CSR (Campbell, 2007). Validation of the implementation of CSR comes from the backing of internal and external stakeholders, who serve as pivotal factors when choosing to integrate CSR into business practices (Swanson, 1999; Campbell, 2007; Berger et al., 2007). Research should consider multiple stakeholder views in order to better understand the growing use of CSR within the business practices of corporations (Campbell, 2007).

### **2.2.5 Critical Considerations of CSR**

The growing phenomenon of CSR has received considerable attention within the corporate landscape throughout the past 50 years, but challenges to construct a definite definition exist due to the overlap with other social issue and sustainable focus process (Broomhill, 2007). The flexible nature of CSR can be advantageous when incorporating it within business practices but critics contest the lack of standardization, suggesting that without an accepted definition, CSR will continue to be a questioned concept (Broomhill, 2007). Henderson (2001) suggest that the adoption of CSR is far from being harmless, as it threatens prosperity, reducing competition, and economic freedom, and undermines the market accountability. Critics have suggested that CSR is flawed as it assumes that corporations have “something to be embarrassed about” and that they must justify their existence through a search of some higher moral purpose (Broomhill, 2007). The accountability of the organizations has come into question, as critics wonder whether their behaviours are a true reflection of the goodwill image that they want to cultivate, as corporations work to go beyond compliance, no standards, or checks exist to ensure there are no irresponsible business practices are occurring (Newell, 2005).



The legitimacy of a corporation's actions has been called into question, as altruistic intentions, viewed as the underpinnings of CSR, do not resonate with the strategic nature that CSR provides for the implementing corporation (Broomhill, 2007; Lantos, 2001; Friedman et al., 2004). CSR can be good for business and society when they are used strategically therefore CSR initiatives by the corporation should only be undertaken when they can enhance the value the firm (Lantos, 2001; Broomhill, 2007). Therefore critics claim that CSR is being done for the strategic benefits incurred by the corporation, rather than the goodwill image that they are attempting to project to society. Strategic benefits can include attracting higher quality staff, risk management, diverting attention, brand differentiation, and enhanced image/reputation, which can translate to increased customer loyalty (Broomhill, 2007; Campbell, 2007). Corporations are utilizing CSR as a method of enhancing their public and private image, which is assumed to help their overall business practices, as the positive feelings of association are creating new beneficial relationships between the corporation and their consumers (Campbell, 2007). A clear link between a corporation's bottom line and their use of CSR has yet to be determined but it is assumed that corporations chose to implement with the intentions that it will be profitable for them in some way (Valor, 2005).

Valor (2005) states that CSR initiatives are little more than PR exercises rather than legitimate attempts to restructure corporate policy, as corporations partially implement, purposefully selecting certain mechanisms to implement CSR platforms, that are viewed as most beneficial to the corporation (Broomhill, 2007; Frankental, 2001). Overlooking certain issues and causes highlights the selective nature of CSR, as insight lacks into the relationships between organizations, and their intended beneficiaries (Newell, 2005). Corporations have been coerced

into implementing these strategies by their governing organizations, society members, and academics but it is wiser for firms to recognize the strategic nature of CSR on their own rather than being mandated into it (Husted & Salazar, 2008).

The assumed voluntary nature of CSR is concerning as not all corporations are choosing to implement social issues into their business operations, with feelings of coercion as corporations are forced to integrate CSR by external stakeholders, and there continues to be a lack of regulation, or monitoring mechanisms to ensure genuine integration (Broomhill, 2007). The lack of measurement and sophisticated analysis of CSR, has led to critical concerns arising surrounding the legitimacy of the phenomenon (Broomhill, 2007). Corporate accountability has come into question, as critics wonder whether their behaviours are a true reflection of the goodwill image that they want to cultivate, as corporations work to go beyond compliance, no standards, or checks exist to ensure no irresponsible business practices are occurring (Newell, 2005). As the literature grows surrounding CSR use, critical considerations will help to provide structure, and enhance the development of the phenomenon, as CSR in nature is a dynamic concept, adaptable in nature, continuously contested and challenged.

## **2.3 Social Responsibility in Sport Literature**

### **2.3.1 Introduction to social responsibility in sport**

This section will provide an overview of the available body of literature examining the emerging phenomenon of the use of CSR tactics in sport-based organizations. Sport organizations are increasingly recognizing, and utilizing the ideas of CSR, particularly in the professional sport context (Babiak & Wolfe, 2009; Walker & Kent, 2009). The academic literature in the past decade has begun to explore the phenomenon, gaining insight to the multiple

opportunities that exist to utilize sport to evoke social change (Walker & Kent, 2009; Babiak & Wolfe, 2009). CSR is a dynamic concept that is adaptable and flexible, used within organizations in an assortment of ways, with the research reflecting the unique opportunities, and challenges that exist in the sport context (Babiak & Wolfe, 2009; Walker & Kent, 2009).

Sport is both a social and economic institution with sport organizations differing in target audience, capacity, purpose, and geography, creating a unique environment for CSR integration, capitalizing on CSR as a marketing tool, incorporating it into the organization's business practices (Bradish & Cronin, 2009; Mason, 1999). Smith and Westerbeek (2007) found that sport is appealing because of its mass media distribution, communication power, youth appeal, social interaction, as well as its focus on increasing health and sustainability awareness. "The omnipresence of sport has led to the elevation of sport organizations as influential members of the global community, especially as they have become big businesses themselves" (Walker & Kent, 2009, p. 746). Harnessing the "star power" of the athletes, organizations seek to utilize the connections forged between the athletes and their community, going beyond the primitive nature of sport, utilizing the emotional connections felt by fans (Walker & Kent, 2009, p. 746; Mason, 1999). Fans identify with the teams in a way not typically seen in the corporate landscape, invested in all aspects of the sport, viewing their success as their own, even though they had no hand in it (Cialdini et al., 1976). Increasing brand awareness, while generating revenue, and awareness of the team, suggests the sense of community that can be created by those in society rallying around their team (Mason, 1999; Smith & Ingham, 2003). The ability for fans to identify with the team suggests that sport possess a power of influence, which through proper incorporation of CSR, can be exploited to benefit social issues within the community. The

literature reviewed in the following sections will address why CSR is used within multiple sport contexts, including its strategic nature, societal expectations, as well as shedding light on its use across disciplines, highlighting the unique nature of sport. As the academic literature suggests, the power of sport has begun to be capitalized upon, as sport recognizes their unique characteristics that enable them to implement CSR within their practices, as they seek to evoke change, going beyond skill and sport development, to being advocates for societal good (Smith & Ingham, 2003; Mason, 1999; Walker & Kent, 2009). The review will also identify gaps that exist, leading to the purpose and potential significance of my thesis project.

### **2.3.2 Origins of CSR in sport**

CSR as a concept in the mainstream business literature has remained relatively consistent since its introduction in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (Babiak & Wolfe, 2009). “The intersection between business and society is coming under closer scrutiny given the increasingly sophisticated understanding of ethical issues and changing values and norms of customers and other stakeholders” (Ratten & Babiak, 2010, p. 483). Further, “the growth of CSR within the corporate sector has been paralleled by an increase in CSR behaviour within the sport industry” (Walters & Tacon, 2010, p. 567). CSR is being utilized as a tool of change, as sport businesses are going beyond a narrow focus on profit, to a focus on the community in response to the heightened accountability and increased scrutiny facing sport business practices (Walker & Kent, 2009).

In the past fifteen years, CSR has become increasingly prevalent within the sport industry, highlighted by the increased available academic research into this phenomenon (e.g., Walker & Kent, 2009; Babiak & Wolfe, 2006, 2009; Walters & Tacon, 2010). The phenomenon is seen within all sport organizations regardless of sector, ranging from environmental initiatives,

education and health programs, philanthropy, cause-related support programs, employee well-being, human rights issues, as well as community involvement programs (Walker & Kent, 2009; Mohr & Webb, 2005).

The literature suggests that the sport-CSR connection has primarily been demonstrated in three variations: (1) teams establishing charitable foundations to support their community, (2) teams receiving funding from corporations performing their own CSR agenda through donations and sponsorship, and (3) teams supporting other sport development organizations who are attentive to a social cause as part of their program focus (e.g., addressing inactivity via the Canadian ParticipAction program) (Ratten & Babiak, 2010; Smith & Westerbeek, 2007). Sport is unique due to its versatile nature, and the dual purpose that teams can serve, as they seek to help those around them, while at the same time receiving their own support (Ratten & Babiak, 2010). CSR is not limited to certain sports or specific leagues, rather opportunities exist for all sport organizations to be socially aware, participating in various CSR behaviours, and utilizing sport as a vehicle for change. Additional empirical understanding is needed to allow for further development of the field (Walker & Parent, 2010; Garret, 2004; Babiak & Trendafilova, 2011).

### **2.3.3 Professional and Intercollegiate Sport**

#### ***2.3.3.1 CSR in Professional Sport***

In North America, a professional sport typically refers to one of the four major leagues situated throughout Canada and the United States, with the available CSR literature focused on the National Football League (NFL), National Basketball Association (NBA), Major League Baseball (MLB), and the National Hockey League (NHL), with primary focus on the NFL and NBA (Babiak & Wolfe, 2009; Bradish & Cronin, 2009; Kim & Walker, 2013; Owen & Polley,

2007; Sheth & Babiak, 2010; Babiak et al., 2012). Most of the major professional leagues, their teams, and the athletes are now incorporating CSR as a focal point for their business practices (Babiak & Wolfe, 2009; Walker & Parent, 2010; Bradish & Cronin, 2009). Social consciousness is viewed as an essential “non-product” of sport, with consumers/fans of professional teams looking beyond on-field performance outcomes (Walker & Kent, 2009). CSR is often viewed as an innovative business strategy that works to enhance the sport organization’s reputation, through the creation of a sense of community, which helps to develop positive customer relations, and continued support (Lacey et al., 2015; Walker & Kent, 2009). As such, sport has the potential to be more than just an outcome of a game, rather potential exists through the use of different CSR agendas to evoke change, directly impacting the players, their teams, and the community (Sheth & Babiak, 2010; Edwards, 2015; Chalip, 2006).

The internationalization of sport business has enabled sport organizations to have a wider breadth of influence, allowing for the promotion of global social issues (Holt, 1995). Sport events and teams, with dominating publicity capabilities, have the ability to create greater awareness of social issues and needs in the community (Ratten, 2010). Sport executives also have the ability to use CSR to further the strategic position of the organization (Babiak & Wolfe, 2009). It has become a common expectation that sport organizations will be socially involved, as over a decade ago, “ninety percent of respondents agreed that the local team’s players should support local charities or causes, and 92% agreed that the local team’s organization should do the same” (Roy & Graef, 2003, p. 168). In contemporary society, the demand for CSR has only grown, with sport providing a rich context to be explored, as teams capitalize on the strategic nature of CSR, utilizing their global reach, and leveraging their efforts to promote a positive

image of their team, while simultaneously working towards the betterment of society (Athanasopoulou, Douvis, & Kyriakis, 2011; Edwards, 2015). Amateur athletes have begun to mirror their professional league counterparts, but have received considerable less attention in the literature, in part due to the confusing nature of defining amateur status across sectors and leagues, but as well because of the well documented capacity challenges that have been found within amateur sport organizations (Godfrey, 2009; Doherty, Misener & Cuskelly, 2014).

The use of green initiatives and environmental sustainability practices have become a major focus within the academic literature due to the growing dependency on society and the environment for sport operations (Babiak & Trendafilova, 2011). Building goodwill, offsetting their natural resource usage, improving consumer relations, as well as reputation enhancement are all benefits incurred by sport organizations as they seek to implement sustainability practices into their business operations (Babiak & Trendafilova, 2011). Infrastructure improvements focus on eliminating waste, and increasing effectiveness of the organization, while simultaneously benefit the organization with cost-savings benefits leading to considerable attention within the academic literature (Babiak & Trendafilova, 2011; Chard & Mallen, 2012). A disconnect exists between implementation and practice, as “the social and environmental concerns facing society are so complex and multidimensional that the only solution is for government, non-profits, and businesses to work together” (Babiak & Trendafilova, 2011, p. 21). As the demands of society reach new heights surrounding environmental concerns, professional sport teams capitalize on the strategic nature of being environmentally conscious, but critical concerns can create challenges for this evolving phenomenon.

### ***2.3.3.2 Athlete Philanthropy***

Modern society has produced a celebrity-dominated culture that includes professional athletes, who are viewed as role models, having their every move documented and consumed by the general public (Ilicic & Baxter, 2014). This culture allows the athletes to create consumer awareness of particular causes, and initiatives, providing financial contributions in addition to increasing awareness of causes that may have gone unrecognized (Ilicic & Baxter, 2014; Perskie, 1998). Athlete philanthropy refers to athletes giving back to society, by supporting established charities or in some instances, establishing their own foundations, as they work to establish a legacy that goes beyond the game (Perskie, 1998). Increasingly, high performance athletes have been shaping the policy, structure, and systematic management of sport organizations, enabling them as key stakeholders, to have a larger impact of the development of sport policies, infusing development with their own personal interests (Thibault et al., 2010). This shift is crucial as sport development involving collaboration between management and the athletes, seeks to recognize the substantial role the athlete plays within the sport organization (Thibault et al., 2010). This shift to a more athlete-centered system was the result of external and internal pressures, acknowledging the need for athletes to take on a large role, influencing the structure, and operations of the sport that they are so heavily invested in (Thibault & Babiak, 2005). Collaboration between the organizations and the athletes helps to create unity, as each partner better understands the other, creating an atmosphere of sharing and equality that requires additional academic insight (Thibault, et al., 2010).

Athlete philanthropy has recently drawn attention in the scholarly literature, focused on athlete established charities, as athletes develop transferable business skills, while demonstrating



social consciousness (Ilicic & Baxter, 2014; Tainsky & Babiak, 2011). Supporting specific causes allows for the athletes to choose charities that are meaningful to them, enhancing their overall philanthropic experience (Ilicic & Baxter, 2014). Roy & Graef (2003) found that athletes, in comparison to the teams/leagues, had their image/reputation viewed more favourably when performing philanthropic endeavours. Ilicic and Baxter (2014) established that alignment between the celebrity and the cause is to be termed ‘celanthropy’, which can “promote positive attitudes toward a celebrity and charity brand, as well as donation intention, with these relationships mediated by perceptions of celebrity CSR of philanthropy.” (p. 200) Teams utilizing their athletes as a resource, garner positive associations for the team, while the athletes benefit by being viewed as good citizens, using their fame to bring attention to those in need (Tainsky & Babiak, 2011).

Although intentions are typically ‘good’, not all of these foundations are seen as the best solution for societal problems, as rising administrative costs, and controversial spending can lead to ineffective foundations, which provide minimal help to the causes they are supposed to be supporting (Perskie, 2014; Tainsky & Babiak, 2011). Insight into these controversial charitable endeavours is generally limited to media speculation and investigation into the tax returns of the foundations (Perskie, 1998). The increased concentration on athletes is a welcomed revolution, as it recognizes the significant impact, and role that they have in sport organizations, and the need for them to be treated as such (Thibault & Babiak, 2005). As athletes and teams continue to establish and become involved with philanthropic endeavours, what merit their actions have, needs to be discovered to ensure their behaviours are driven by good intentions, and performed in the most beneficial way for all participants. High-performance sport requires the needs and

challenges of the athletes' to be addressed, understanding the impact of sport on the athletes, and acknowledging that it goes beyond what happens on the field, to being all encompassing, and a significant part of an individual's life, regardless of level, or sport (Thibault & Babiak, 2005).

### ***2.3.3.3 Challenges in professional sport***

Concerns regarding the use of athletes as community ambassadors are realistic because of the high turnover rate that exists in many professional sport organizations due to the culture of sport, which includes free agency, and the potential for trades (Tainsky & Babiak, 2011).

Financial incentives are one concern as they can entice a player to leave a community regardless of the feelings of attachment that they have accumulated through their philanthropic endeavours (Tainsky & Babiak, 2011). The nature of ties to the community have begun to garner academic attention, and identifying the association, whether it be specific players or the team in general, will help to justify the use of CSR in professional sport as a method of community involvement (Tainsky & Babiak, 2011).

Governing leagues, recognizing the importance of CSR initiatives have begun to exert control, mandating the performance of specific community focused initiatives by the professional sport teams, requiring CSR to be implemented in some form within their business practices (Babiak & Wolfe, 2009). Babiak and Wolfe (2009) did not find that these mandated initiatives were viewed differently than those initiatives taken on by choice by the teams, although resource allocation differed team to team. Instigating a culture of CSR into their leagues, the likelihood of CSR within sport increase, as teams meet and exceed the set expectations of the governing bodies, to being civically engaged members through active participation in the community that surrounds them (Babiak & Wolfe, 2009).

### **2.3.4 Student-athletes and CSR**

Intercollegiate sport provides opportunities for student-athletes to continue with sport while gaining a post-secondary degree, in Canada it is referred to as Canadian Interuniversity Sport (CIS), while in the United States, it is the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) (Geiger, 2013). The governing bodies focused on the promotion of sport and educational devilmint at the highest level (Geiger, 2013; Schlereth, Scott & Berman, 2014). NCAA funds their student athletes with scholarships, averaging between \$15,000- \$20,000, while CIS schools typically cover compulsory fees, which is normally funded by the student's Major Junior team (Geiger, 2013; "OHL Prospective Players," 2015). The NCAA and CIS sport programs invest large amounts of money into recruiting, retaining, and nurturing the best possible athletes (Geiger, 2013). The student athletes in the NCAA are not allowed to accept financial retribution for their serves rendered, as to retain their amateur status, which creates controversy as the NCAA generates millions of dollars of revenue every year because of these athletes, who are withheld from any of the benefits that are created through the revenue generating machine that is the NCAA (Peach, 2007; Polite et al., 2011). The NCAA and CIS are both complex business enterprises that have received limited research despite their size, and global brand (Wolfe et al., 2002; Inoue, Plehn-Dujowich, Kent & Swanson, 2012; Peach, 2007; Schlereth et al., 2014).

Seen as sources of revenue and entertainment, the NCAA and CIS are fundament in the promotion of pride, tradition, and inspiration, embodying western values, representing an important part of the sport landscape that has been constantly ignored by the academic world in favour of professional sport (Geiger, 2013; Polite et al., 2011). The NCAA has a significant

place within the commercial marketplace, and increased insight into their business operations as well as their incorporation of CSR into their business practices is needed as “the unique social structure that surrounds sports makes the athletic departments the ideal industry to produce a lasting impact through CSR actions.” (Schlereth et al., 2014, p. 62). There is a lack of empirical evidence regarding the impact and awareness of CSR initiatives that are being done within intercollegiate sport, as well as what place does CSR have within the ‘business’ of intercollegiate sport (Polite et al., 2011).

The NCAA utilizes CSR within their practices, acknowledging the responsibility that they have to provide opportunities for their student athletes to gain life skills that will help them to become good citizens in society upon graduation, utilizing community service, cause-related marketing, and community outreach programs as techniques for the student-athlete to engage with CSR (Schlereth et al., 2014). Research demonstrates that student-athletes performing these community service programs were found to have higher academic success while simultaneously becoming more socially conscious, and civically engaged (Schlereth et al., 2014). This commodification of the student-athlete comes with some concerns, as these elite level athletes are expected to perform CSR activities, without compensation, and without knowing the lasting effects on the participants. Throughout intercollegiate sport and the Canadian Hockey League (CHL) amateur status athletes are being utilized as tools of social change similar to their professional counterparts. These young athletes are in a significant and influential stage of their life, with regard to personal development, therefore supporting evidence showcasing the effects that CSR can have, will help to understand CSR place within these revenue-generating

organizations. Their intentions may be pure but without academic evidence, the continued use of CSR within amateur sport organizations cannot be justified.

### **2.3.5 Strategic nature of sport-based social responsibility**

The lasting effect and reasoning for CSR implementation within organizations have received minimal academic attention but as the use of CSR as a tool continues to grow, understanding the strategic nature of CSR is necessary (Bradish & Cronin, 2009; Babiak & Wolfe, 2009). Professional sport organizations exist in a highly competitive environment, and utilizing CSR as a marketing tool can help provide a critical edge within the marketplace (Babiak & Wolfe, 2009). The adaptable nature of CSR helps organization utilize it within their own business practices as they see fit (Van der Heijden et al., 2009). Community service and community outreach programs are methods of performing CSR that are commonly applied by sport organizations as they enable athletes to become actively engaged with their community, through participation in a variety of activities (Kihl, Babiak & Tainsky & Bang, 2014; Schlereth et al., 2014). These community outreach programs can vary from athlete volunteerism, educational initiatives, community development, fan appreciation, health-related or education initiatives, as well as community-based environment programs (Walker & Kent, 2009). Community-outreach programs can be used as a method for organizations to implement their CSR portfolio, employing their athletes as a tactic to give back to the community, enabling them to become actively engaged through various philanthropic activities. The use of CSR as a strategy enables organizations to benefit when acting socially conscious, as doing good is the right thing to do, but also doing good is good for business (Mintzberg, 1984). As sport organizations continue to implement CSR into their business practices, achieving a full

understanding of the power that exists within CSR is necessary, as organization seek to capitalize on the opportunities that are created when they are socially aware.

#### ***2.3.5.1 Effects of social responsibility in sport***

The use of CSR is not completely altruistic as “CSR also has the potential of offering strategic direction to business leaders who want to enhance their organization’s social and economic performance”. (Bradish & Cronin, 2009, p. 692). As businesses begin to capitalize on the strategic potential that CSR has in sport business, they begin to conceptualize the power that occurs when embedding CSR into their practices. Organizations have found that participation in community focused endeavours assists in branding themselves as good citizens, attracting sponsors, all while showcasing their commitment to the community around them (Babiak & Wolfe, 2009;). Within professional sport, many organizations have found that CSR is a way for them to capitalize on their resources, to be leaders within their field, while utilizing the marketability that being good citizens can have as they “utilize marketing, public relations, event planning and combine it with out philanthropic aims.” (Babiak & Wolfe, 2009, p. 729).

Athletes utilizing CSR for personal branding has been highlighted in the literature as athletes recognize the ability to leverage their community involvement, creating an image focused on community well-being and societal better, that they can then package and communicate to the public, highlighting their own well crafted image of goodness (Hodge & Walker, 2015). Sport organizations are capitalizing upon their players’ profile, enhancing their own reputation as they leverage the positive feelings of association that are cultivated to create a positive image of the team (Walker & Parent, 2010; Ratten, 2010; Armeiy, 2004). CSR allows the player and the organization to effectively communicate a specific image, as they highlight their

community involvement, influencing the overall perception of them in attempts to take advantage of these positive feelings, recognizing the importance of a positive reputation, and brand awareness for their continued success (Walker & Parent, 2010; Ratten, 2010; Armeiy, 2004; Roy & Graff, 2003). As societal members seek validation for their support, CSR aids in forging a connection between the organization and their community members, increasing their willingness to support the organization through financial contributions i.e. ticket sales, merchandise purchases (Roy & Graff, 2003; Walker et al., 2011).

Walker et al., (2013) even suggested that corporate social strategies (CSS) better represents the CSR platforms that many organizations implement, as it acknowledging the social leveraging and strategic nature of CSR within sport business operations. Although economic benefits are not guaranteed, the positive association that can be created through the use of CSR in sport cannot be ignored, therefore as organizations continue to capitalize on the strategic power of CSR, it is necessary that we no longer assume their intentions are purely altruistic in nature, rather acknowledge that there is a shared value that is being created, benefiting the organization and society (Walker et al., 2013).

Depletion of national resources and an increased demand on the environment has led to society developing a greater concern environmental welfare, which has led to sport organizations working to ensure their practices are environmentally responsible and efficient (Babiak & Trendafilova, 2011; Schlereth et al., 2014). This growing demand has led to organizations being increasingly environmentally conscious, with additional benefits being incurred by the organizations, suggesting the strategic power that environmental CSR initiatives can have on business operations (Babiak & Trendafilova, 2011). Marketability, enhanced image/reputation,

financial savings, as well as competitive edge have all been found to be motivators for organizations to implement sustainable practices (Babiak & Trendafilova, 2011; Schlereth et al., 2014). Infrastructure developments have received considerable attention in sport, as many community organizations have begun to build their facilities with a focus on energy efficiency, and sustainability, recognizing cost-saving opportunities in terms of waste reduction, as well as shared purpose opportunities (Schlereth et al., 2014; Babiak & Trendafilova, 2011). Capitalizing on these opportunities has allowed sport organizations to implement environmental responsible behaviours within their practices, meeting the demands of society, while creating a competitive, and socially focused organization (Schlereth et al., 2014; Babiak & Trendafilova, 2011; NHL, 2014).

### **2.3.6 Critical considerations of social responsibility in sport**

#### ***2.3.6.1 Communication of social responsibility***

Organizations that implement CSR within their business practices can be viewed as selfish, exploiting their good behaviour to highlight, and improve their image (Bénabou & Tirole, 2010). Formalized methods of communication include the distribution of executive created transparency reports, which are annual reports highlighting their community involvement, demonstrating their greater concern for societal problems (McWilliams et al., 2006). It has been suggested that more subtle, informal methods of communicating are beneficial when promoting CSR, as these messages help to build credibility, and reduce scepticism that is prevalent in the media (Schmeltz, 2014; Morsing & Schultz, 2006a) These reports are sometimes met with criticism as individuals are weary of their authenticity, and the intentions of the publishing organization (McWilliams et al., 2006). Informal methods of communication are



common within sport organizations as they are easily implemented, and well received by their consumers, as organizations capitalize on their youth appeal, and media presence (Walker & Parent, 2010; Mason, 1999; Smith & Westerbeek, 2007). Social media, word of mouth, website articles, and media reports are all utilized by sport organizations wishing to showcase their CSR initiatives (Walker & Parent, 2007).

These non-traditional methods of communication can be done quickly, and are viewed as inexpensive advertising opportunities for organizations to promote awareness, and highlight their community involvement (Walker & Parent, 2010; Ratten, 2010). The ability to showcase their initiatives are seen as a benefit of incorporation CSR into their business practices, as many organizations seek to capitalize on the profitability these initiatives can have on the consuming public (Ratten, 2010). These casual communication methods are easily implemented into everyday business, utilizing technology to showcase the desires of the organization to combat a social issue, harnessing the strategic power that CSR has (Ratten, 2010; Walker & Parent, 2010). As organizations communicate their CSR initiatives, they can be seen as role models, setting standards within their field, which other organizations use to build their own business practices, as the act of doing good trickles-down throughout the sectors. The communicated message can be packaged to help others better understand the role that CSR can play in sport, while enabling the organizations to capitalize on power that exists through mass communication. Although motivations may be questioned, the communication of CSR is a way for the organizations to distribute their own message, cultivating an image that highlights their societal concern, justifying the use of CSR within their business practices as a mutually beneficial tool for the organization, and the intended beneficiaries (Ratten, 2010; Giulianotti, 2015).

### ***2.3.6.2 Controversy and accountability of sport organizations***

Sport is a socially constructed concept, built on the belief of fair play, teamwork, and inclusion, but it also holds notions of winning over everything and societal inequalities (Walker et al., 2013). As sport organizations increasingly implement CSR tactics into their business operations, critics simultaneously claim that this is merely a tactic for rectifying past corporate misdeeds, enhancing their business operations, or offsetting potential controversy (Godfrey, 2009; Bénabou & Tirole, 2010; Zadek, 2004). Nike exemplifies this, as it has faced significant backlash regarding their employees' working conditions in the early 1990s. Facing extensive criticism, Nike revamped their image, embodying social consciousness into their operations, and attempting to create an image of ethical concern for society (Zadek, 2004). Without the demands for transparency from members of society, critics have wondered if organizations would still chose to implement CSR within their practices (Walker & Parent, 2010). Critics also view CSR as a way to distract from more pressing issues, to appease governors, and starve off additional regulations by shifting the focus to other aspects of their business (Babiak & Wolfe, 2009).

Concern surrounding CSR in sport is centered on the accountability and politics of implementation, as the organizations undertake these social programs (Giulianotti, 2015). These organizations do not have the same level of training nor are they held to the same standard as organizations that are focused on the betterment of society, therefore critics question their ability to properly implement, and execute these programs (Giulianotti, 2015). Concern lies in whether these sporting organizations are fully equipped to engage in the “planning, delivery and evaluation of CSR projects” (Giulianotti, 2015, p. 245). Although the ability for them to perform

these initiatives exists, critics hypothesize whether these organizations are truly the most qualified to execute them (Giulianotti, 2015).

Additionally, critics suggest the possibility that organizations are putting their reputation at risk when implementing CSR into their business practices, as there is a potential for the focus to shift to issues like poor working conditions, alleged corruption, greenwashing, or excessive profit-making (Giulianotti, 2015). CSR-lite, a term coined by Giulianotti (2015) describes the low-cost, short term, market friendly initiatives that organizations may attempt with little concern for potential long-term consequences, as they try to superficially imbed CSR into their practices without adequate expertise. Disconnect can be felt by these organizations between themselves and the intended beneficiaries due to a lack of dialogue, highlighting the need for communication between the two parties in order to determine the needed support (Giulianotti, 2015). Undertaking a critical approach to examining CSR in sport can help to correct errors and misunderstandings, as critics of CSR can help enhance the process, providing opportunities to educate the sport organizations, bettering their business operations, and improving the use of CSR in sport. The use of CSR allows organizations to ‘package’ themselves as community-focused but scepticism will remain without evidence showcasing that they have met their aims and objectives (Giulianotti, 2015). Concrete evidence cannot be found without proper monitoring and evaluating; therefore measuring the impact of CSR remains a challenge (Giulianotti, 2015).

### **2.3.7 Measurement tools**

“Although sport teams have been involved in their local communities for decades, we know little about the relevance, importance, and impact of socially responsible practices to the organizations themselves, to the individuals they intend to benefit, and to the league-governing

bodies” (Babiak & Trendafilova, 2011). CSR as a concept in sport is still relatively new, lacking standardization, as organizations utilize its flexible nature, usually without set expectations or measurable criteria (De Colle, Henriques & Sarasvathy, 2014; Sheth & Babiak, 2010). It is this ubiquitous nature of CSR that makes it a concern within business practices, as it can be a taken-for-granted concept (Walters & Panton, 2014). The lack of standardization creates challenges when seeking to create, and implement measurement tools designed to assess the impact of CSR within their business operations.

CSR is done for various reasons and to appeal to a variety of stakeholders. Therefore, when determining if these programs are meeting the needs of the beneficiaries they are trying to help, organizations must first know who these programs are being done for, as well as what they want the programs to accomplish (De Colle et al., 2014; Wolfe, Hoeber & Babiak, 2002). Organizations will undoubtedly have different goals and expectations when implementing CSR into their business practices. Subsequently, expectations and methods of measurement will also vary and there is no single best way to measure the impact of CSR (Walker et al., 2013; Tainsky & Babiak, 2011). Developing context-specific measurement tools is an important step in furthering the knowledge base related to CSR in sport by allowing for some repetition and validation to occur (Walker et al, 2013). Through survey research, Walker and Kent (2009) found that CSR is an important aspect of the business strategy of a sport organization due to the favourable feelings that fans demonstrate for CSR performing corporations. Further, qualitative research methods play an integral role in ensuring that lived experiences, stories, perspectives, and critical views are shared. Using multiple forms of data helps to develop an understanding of

the purpose of CSR, how to best utilize in order to mutually benefit the organization, and the community (Walker et al., 2013; Walker & Kent, 2009).

Challenges that occur that limit the measurement of CSR within sport organizations include access to resources, accurate measurement instruments, as well as the reliance on self-reported data (Porter & Kramer, 2006). It has also been limited due to the myopic view that exists surrounding the purpose of CSR in sport and society (Walker et al., 2013; Pil Lee, Cornwell & Babiak, 2013). It can be a challenge to conceptualize, measure, and explain the use of CSR given the diversity of stakeholders involved (Wolfe et al., 2002). A greater understanding of these multiple perspectives is needed given the heavy reliance on measuring tangible outcomes (e.g., the amount of time invested or money spent, and consumer investment) (Arli & Cadeaux, 2014). A combination of behaviour based measurements and more tangible, measurable outcomes can help improve the overall findings, as suggested by Walker and Heere (2011) who found that behaviour intentions were not adequate ways to measure consumers' behaviours. Rather, utilizing items like merchandise sales, and attendance would provide better measurements of actual behaviour (Walker & Heere, 2011). A constructible scale allows organizations to better gauge the outcomes of their programs, providing justification through concrete evidence, supporting the use of CSR (Walker & Heere, 2011). There has been a rise in the awareness of CSR use within sporting organizations, and although that plays a necessary role in gaging the impact of CSR, more tangible, and measurable aspects must be examined to be able to generate suggestions for improvements to adapt, and change the process of CSR to better suit the needs of the organizations, and their intended beneficiaries (Walker & Heere, 2011; Giulianotti, 2015). Fundamentally, organizations have a social contract that holds them

responsible to fulfill their obligation to society, but without program evaluation or assessment there is a disconnect between doing and achieving (Walker et al., 2013). Identifying the intended beneficiaries, and having tangible outcomes, will help to enhance the use of CSR, as organization synergize the power that exists within the relationship between business and society, suggesting that it is not either or, rather CSR is beneficial for all participants (Walker, et al., 2013).

## **Chapter Three: Methods**

This qualitative study was designed to help better understand the nature of the use of CSR within Major Junior hockey, assisting to illuminate the reasoning and impact that CSR can have on the staff and players of the organization, throughout the integration and implementation process. Through exploration into this phenomenon there is potential to create a deeper understanding of the significant role that social responsibility has within the context of sport and to better understand the impact that the use of CSR can have within for-profit hockey organizations with regards to those involved to ensure that the process remains positive and meaningful.

### **3.1 Methodology and Methods Introduction**

This chapter will consist of an overview of the research context, and research questions. In addition, I will present my methods and methodology for the study, as well as my own positionality as the researcher. This chapter will also outline the relevance of the research and the contributions that I wish to make with this project.

#### **3.1.1 Research Context**

Hockey Canada is the umbrella organization that oversees all amateur hockey organizations within Canada. It is a non-profit organization and a member of the International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF) (Hockey Canada, 2015). According to the Hockey Canada website, they are responsible for selecting the teams for international play, as well as hosting/supporting a number of national and international level competitions, and tournaments. Hockey Canada is responsible for delivering a training program that brings promising athletes

from grassroots, minor hockey associations, to national and international level competitions, as well as comprehensive training and certification programs for coaches and officials (Hockey Canada, 2015). Hockey Canada is responsible for the provision of insurance, redistribution of funds, as well as providing support for all fundraising endeavours (Hockey Canada, 2015). As stated on the Hockey Canada website, their mission is to “lead, develop, and promote positive hockey experiences” as they establish uniform playing rules for all ice and sledge hockey organizations in Canada.

There are 13 regional branches of Hockey Canada, including three that operate within Ontario: Hockey Northwestern Ontario, Hockey Eastern Ontario, and the Ontario Hockey Federation (OHF) (Hockey Canada, 2014). The OHF is the largest regional branch, and all three organizations are responsible for overseeing all hockey operations in Ontario, adhering to strict territorial guidelines (See Appendix A). The OHL is a member of the OHF, with Hockey Canada serving as a governing organization with the establishment of official rules, and guidelines. The CHL is an organizational affiliate of Hockey Canada, that serves as an umbrella organization, dictating certain procedures and expectations, while representing all three major junior teams in Canada, providing high-level playing opportunities for male athletes aged 16 to 21 years old (CHL, 2015; Hockey Canada, 2014). The CHL a for-profit enterprise is comprised of the Western Hockey League (WHL), the OHL, and the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League (QMJHL) with 60 teams located throughout Canada and the northern United States, with the top four teams from each league playing for the Memorial Cup at the end of every season (CHL, 2015) (See Appendix B). Players within the CHL receive a small stipend as reimbursement to covers cost associated with participation in the league, but they are still considered amateur



athletes receiving no payment for their actual play, although the money they do receive renders them ineligible for participation in the NCAA (“OHL Prospective Player Information,” 2015; CHL, 2015). The teams operating within the CHL are for-profit enterprise despite their relationship with Hockey Canada, and their athletes are amateur status despite the revenue generating capacities that exist within the CHL. Typically those that play in the CHL go on to minor professional, Canadian Intercollegiate Sport, or the National Hockey League, the premiere professional hockey league in North America (See Appendix B) (OHL, 2015).

There are 20 OHL teams, 17 located in the province of Ontario, and three in the northern United States, with the OHL viewed as a development league to the NHL, with 25% of all NHL players having come from the OHL (“OHL Prospective Player Information,” 2015). The CHL recognizes that not all athletes will go on to professional hockey therefore in the past few years they have launched their “Champions on Ice, In Life” campaign, highlighting the education opportunities, as well as the transferable life skills that are provided through participation in the CHL (OHL, 2015). According to the OHL website, 98% of OHL players graduate high school, well above the national average. As well, 90% of CIS athletes are from the CHL, as the players utilize the lucrative education packages available for all players of the CHL. These scholarships provide financial compensation for all tuition and compulsory fees that the athlete accumulates at a post-secondary school of their choice (OHL, 2015).

Recognized as the #1 sports/entertainment property in 15 of the 17 Ontario OHL communities, the players, and the team have become an integral part of local communities by going beyond just sport entertainment provision, to integration into the community with CSR focused initiatives (OHL, 2015). The OHL implements CSR into their business practices,

viewing it as a way to strengthen the team, as well as the individual player's connection to the community, providing opportunities for individual, as well as community development (OHL, 2015). Coaches and staff affiliated with the teams recognize the importance that they have on the players as "we try to teach them how to be good citizens and character." (Hofley, 2014).

The focal organization is a well-established Major Junior hockey club, located in a mid-sized community in Canada. Viewed as a 'player's franchise', focused on education and player development, the focal organization acknowledges the significant impact the community has on their success, and gives back through a number of community focused initiatives throughout the year. Healthy lifestyle, education, literacy, cancer research, and helping disadvantaged youth are just some of the many program focuses that the team has undertaken in the past few years.

Although some endeavours have been mandated by the national and provincial governing bodies including the annual food drive, many of these initiatives the organization are executing exceed the everyday business practices of the organization, utilizing their players and place within the community, to give back to those that support them the most (OHL, 2015). Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) refers to the programs and initiatives undertaken by the focal organization that have a social issue focus. In the past this has included Cancer awareness programs, education and health presentations, and food drives, among others. Major Junior Hockey is viewed as the highest level of consumable junior hockey in North America, with all athletes being considered amateur status as they do not receive financial retribution for their play and the focal organization is a for-profit enterprise, with a private ownership group.

### **3.1.2 Research Setting**

All interviews took place at the organization's headquarters, with the organization providing their meeting space for the interviews to be conducted in. By request of the organization, pseudonyms have been used throughout the thesis project, and henceforth the focal organization will be referred to as the Lorisville Giants.

## **3.2 Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this investigation is to explore the nature and perceived impact of CSR within the focal organization, a for-profit major junior hockey enterprise.

### **3.2.1 Research Questions**

The research addresses the following questions:

1. What is the rationale behind the implementation of the CSR platform within the focal organization?
2. How is CSR integrated into the business operations of the focal organization?
3. What role do players and management team members have in the development and delivery of the CSR initiatives?
4. How does CSR and its perceived impact influence the attitudes and commitment of management personnel and players?

## **3.3 Methodology**

This was an exploratory study as I sought to develop a better understanding of the concept of CSR in a new context, Major Junior Hockey. This basic interpretive qualitative study allowed for an in-depth exploration of the concept from multiple perspectives (Merriam, 1991).

This study sought to generate a deeper understanding of CSR and its impact, contributing to the practices of a particular field, as they help to inform policy or actions (Simons, 2009). At its core, qualitative research is an empirical inquiry about a contemporary real-world phenomenon, to help explain the chosen phenomenon, and its place within the academic literature (Merriam, 1991). This study consisted of an in-depth exploration of one team within the greater Major Junior Hockey landscape. The intentions were not to generalize the findings for a larger population, rather, the context was selected to be able to craft a deep understand of a specific phenomenon, as it is better to be able to provide an insightful picture of one specific case rather than a broad and superficial picture of many organizations that may differ by contextual factors (Simons, 2009; Veal, 2011; Bryman, Bell, & Teevan, 2012). The Lorisville Giants have been selected as the focal organization of this study, as they have demonstrated a commitment to community involvement over a number of years and provide a unique context to expand the scholarly knowledge of CSR in sport beyond traditional professional sport contexts.

The ability to study relationships, practices, and experiences are what make basic interpretative qualitative studies a noteworthy tool within social science (Marriam, 2009; Corcoran et al., 2004). Further, studying the actions of practitioners creates opportunities to not only discover, but also evoke change through exposing and engaging with ‘in-field’ knowledge in order to help to understand the ‘how’, as well as the ‘why’ of a leisure phenomenon, to allow for better understanding of the practice, and possibly evoke change (Corcoran et al., 2004).

The significance of basic interpretive qualitative research is that it is able to highlight key actors and their actions, gaining insight into the experience and context of the particular organization and the individuals involved (Misener & Doherty, 2009; Simons, 2009; Merriam,

1991). Together, these reasons provide a foundational backdrop for the selection of a basic interpretive qualitative research approach to the current study, and its ability to illuminate the cultural phenomenon of CSR in hockey. Specifically, this approach will provide an opportunity to better comprehend the experience of key stakeholders within the organization, as the researcher and the participant work to co-construct a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of CSR.

### **3.4 Methods**

In this section I will provide a description of the proposed methods, specifically the study design, sample population, data collection, and data analysis process.

#### **3.4.1 Sample population**

The Media Relations Director served as the gatekeeper for this study, acting as the person of contact for this project. This individual has worked with the team since 2005 and has an in-depth understanding of the implementation of CSR practices within the organization's business practices. This individual helped with recruitment by identifying the staff and athletes that fit the criteria for this study. Following ethics approval, the gatekeeper distributed an information letter to the identified potential participants. Once all participants were determined, an interview schedule was created with a total of 16 participants consenting to taking part in this study.

One of the sample populations for this study is the management/staff team for the focal organization (six individuals), who collectively are responsible for the implementation and organization of the organization's CSR portfolio, in addition one full time coaching staff member was interviewed who was responsible for the delivery of the CSR programs. Although there are

other staff members including coaches and trainers, the senior staff and assistant head coach have been purposely selected based their level of influence within the implementation and delivery of CSR within the business practices of the organization. Seven executive staff members, referred to as the Employed Staff have been identified as fulfilling this criteria and all were invited to participate in this study. One refused an interview due to time commitment.

In addition, the study includes interviews with a sample of players. Those included in this study needed to be over the age of 18 and have participated in a minimum of two CSR initiatives during their tenure with the Lorisville Giants, and have been in the league for at least a year, Those over the age of 18 have only been considered because they perform four times more initiatives than their under aged counterparts due to their more flexible academic schedule. Nine players met the criteria. Utilizing the gatekeeper, all nine players were contacted and interviewed for this study.

#### ***3.4.1.1 Participant Profile***

For this study, I interviewed 16 participants, seven of who were paid staff, six management team personnel, one member of the coaching, and nine players. The staff members had all been a part of the organization in some capacity for a minimum of three years to 12 years, although their roles and responsibility with regards to social responsibility have changed and evolved throughout their time with the organization. All paid staff members played some role in the organization, facilitation, and delivery of the various CSR initiatives, with one staff member having their full time responsibility being directed towards community relations. All the staff participants in this study held different levels of power and experience with regards to the organization's CSR program.

The players interviewed had all been a part of the overarching league for a minimum of two years and a maximum of five. Players ranged in age from 18-21 and had been a part of this particular organization anywhere from two months to three years. All players except one were enrolled in some sort of educational program and had participated in varying amounts and types of initiatives throughout their time in the league. The experiences of these players differed significantly based upon their other commitments (e.g., university classes, physical health).

### **3.4.2 Data Collection**

The methods of data collection for this research project were semi-structured one-on-one interviews with the sampling period being November 2015-February 2016. The management personnel, as well as the players answered questions based on their experiences designing CSR initiatives and interacting with the community through CSR initiatives as I sought to elicit their stories surrounding their involvement with the focal organization and their CSR platform. Within my study, I implemented basic interpretive qualitative analysis techniques (Merriam, 2002) throughout the data collection, analysis, and representation stages. I conducted simultaneous data collection and analysis, moving back and forth through a constant comparative process, advancing understanding of key concepts during each stage.

The use of interviews allowed for the researcher to explore the multiple experiences that the participants have to gain deeper insight into the topic (Charmaz, 2006). These interviews were done in a conversational manner so that I will be able to capture insight and experience of all participants. Conducting a qualitative research project is an extensive, multistage endeavour that requires the researcher to be able to understand, critique, and deconstruct the realities that surround them (Berbary & Boles, 2014). The use of interviews allowed for the stories of the

participant to be illuminated, as they speak openly about their experiences, and the effect of their participation. These interviews allowed individuals within this particular organization to have their stories teased out, allowing for a better understanding of the individual's experience (Stake, 2003).

Interviews had been chosen because of the exploratory nature of the intended research, therefore in-depth interviews allowed for the researcher to question and probe the respondent, enabling for the collection of high quality rich data appropriate for qualitative exploratory research. The athletes were interviewed in order to uncover the nature of their relationship with the CSR initiatives, as they are utilized as a resource, responsible for participating in, while simultaneously performing the activities. Management personnel were interviewed to provide another perspective and because of their high level of autonomy and discretionary ability to implement CSR within the business practices. With the nature of semi-structure interview guides the interviews were open ended, with a list of questions or topics to be explored. This encourages the researcher to interact and respond to any emerging findings, which can allow for unexpected ideas to surface (Merriam, 1991; Charmaz, 2006). The use of prompts and probes are used to allow the researcher to ask the participant to expand or provide additional detail to their responses. This is done in hopes of providing additional depth to their responses as well as increased comprehension (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2007).

Two interview guides (See Appendix C and Appendix D) were used, one for the Major Junior athletes, and one for the organization's management staff. This allows for some structure and can serve as a guide, but this method does not exclude the researcher's reflexivity and active listening, as the use of probing helps to establish new lines of questions in response to the stories



the participant is providing. It is necessary as a researcher to ensure a non-judgemental environment that allows for the development of these stories and subsequent discussion. All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim.

### **3.4.3 Data analysis**

The use of techniques based upon basic interpretive qualitative research allowed me as the researcher to better understand the meaning of the phenomenon for the individuals involved (Merriam, 1991). In attempts to enrich the data and depth of analysis I strived for integration into the process, situating my voice within the analysis and representation stage, being active throughout the entire process (Charmaz, 2011).

Coding is a significant part of the research process, as the researcher applies shorthanded labels they have created to pieces of data to give a definition to what that data means (Charmaz, 2006, 2011). Coding represents the start of the analysis stage, as the researcher stops and begins asking critical questions about the data collected, as the researcher critically analyzes the data, going beyond their own preconceptions, and participants' interpretations, to develop new ways of thinking about the gathered data (Charmaz, 2006). Data was analyzed during a multi-stage process that involved "naming segments of data with a label that simultaneously categorizes, summarizes, and accounts for each piece of data" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 43). Data was categorized based on specific codes the researcher used that make analytic sense when grouping or chunking the data (Charmaz, 2006). Utilizing the three-stage process of initial, axial, and selective coding, this process served as a guiding force as the researcher categorises and interprets the data. I progressed through the research process in a non-linear and ambiguous fashion, coinciding the

data collection and analysis stages, working to refine, and re-evaluate throughout the entire process my categories, themes, and insights (Creswell, 2013; Charmaz, 2006).

The initial coding process consisted of me, as the researcher studying the data line-by-line for analytic importance, as I analyzed each transcript in an attempt to shed my own preconceived notions of the data (Charmaz, 2011). This was followed by the use of incident-by-incident coding to help determine if any further insights could be identified, then focused the code by selecting the most prevalent codes that have initially been identified, and test them across my collective data (Charmaz, 2011). This process is in-depth in nature and enabled me as the researcher to identify the most used and prevalent codes, as well as enabled me to review all transcripts to confirm the dominance of these codes (Charmaz, 2006).

Axial coding was utilized to relate categories to subcategories, to give coherence to the emerging analysis; this process seeks to shape the data into major categories (Charmaz, 2006). Axial coding involved reviewing the categories that have been identified throughout the initial and focused coding processes, and re-building the fractured data to give coherence to the emerging analysis (Charmaz, 2006; Creswell, 2013). Axial coding was used to clarify the themes and analysis surrounding the overall impact of CSR within for-profit hockey clubs.

### **3.5 Role as the Researcher**

Throughout this study I facilitated all interviews, fully responsible for data collection, analysis and representation, as well as contacting participants, and transcribing the interviews. Together with my supervisor, we utilized the gatekeeper that had been established to further my partnership with the organization. Dr. Misener and I met several times in-person with them and

other high level management throughout the research period to discuss and further clarify the intentions of the study. It is necessary to note that all findings are interpretations, representative of myself as the researcher; therefore I must position myself within the research context, to give context to my interpretations, as well as situate myself within the research project, acknowledging that who I am as a person, and my own experiences in sport and passion for hockey, would influence the research. For this particular project I acknowledged my past volunteering experience with the focal organization as well as my previous experience within the hockey context. Although I can be viewed as having a vested interest into the growing development of the sport, with my hockey identity unable to be separated from my research position, I undertook steps to ensure that this project acknowledged my own perspective in relation to those of my participants. This was done through reflexive writing, by keeping a reflexive research journal throughout the study and recording daily entries. This process provided me a space to challenge any assumptions that I have about hockey, CSR, and how I juggle my existence between both the hockey and research worlds. In addition, this journal allowed me to record my thoughts and attitudes about the data I hear, observe, or view throughout the research process, with particular attention being paid to any new ideas or topics that may challenge my thinking. When this situation arose, I utilized reflexive journaling to critically reflect on my research project, my data, and my findings throughout the entire research process. Critical reflection allowed me to better arrange and clarify my thoughts leading to a more thoughtful analysis, enhancing the credibility, and overall research findings.

Additionally, I met regularly with my supervisor to review my progress through discussion of the data collected, and themes that I have discovered to date. This dialogue

provided me with valuable feedback that helped to direct my research as my supervisor provided me with guidance and support as I challenged any assumptions, ensuring a critical reflection focus throughout the study.

Maintaining a critical focus throughout the study was necessary as this exploratory study seeks to add to the literature, rather than just supporting any past assumptions about CSR in the sport context. A critical lens helped support any new findings, leading to a more enriched, and in-depth analysis of the phenomenon as I evolved passed the assumed nature of CSR, to ensuring a critical lens was being applied, enabling me to think critically about the findings, and their implications. Critical considerations that were undertaken include the lack of acknowledgement of key stakeholder groups including players, and beneficiaries, as well as the influence of any power, social class, ethnicity, age, gender, and sexual orientation that could influence the selected case. Ensuring a critical focus throughout the research process, increased my own internal awareness of my existing perspectives and beliefs, which were taken into consideration when interpreting the data, recognizing the potential influence my past can have on how I viewed the data.

### **3.5.1 Ethical considerations**

Ethical considerations were taken into account due to the sensitive environment that I was working in. Although all participants will be over the age of consent and have willingly agreed to participate, as a researcher you must do everything possible to ensure through transparency that it is an ethical, and pleasurable experience for all participants. Introducing myself to all participants, as well as meeting with the General Manager, along with my supervisor, prior to the start of the athlete interviews helped to achieve this goal. This was done

to ensure transparency and provide confirmation regarding the confidentiality and ethical standards that I would be upholding. I ensured I followed all ethical guidelines stipulated to me by the University; distributing ethics forms, and consent forms, as well as providing an information package, containing pertinent information to all participants. I ensured that all participants were aware that participation was not mandatory and they are eligible to leave the study at any time if they do not feel comfortable, and this will have no bearing on their continued role within the organization.

#### ***3.5.1.1 Challenges of the Research Process***

When entering into the research project challenges did arise that caused some disturbances to the research project. In particular, we only communicated with one staff members as a gatekeeper, and we neglected to confirm that we had approval from the top level senior management. This led to a standstill with my project, delaying the interviews and process until the General Manager could be briefed and endorse the project. This was due to the streamlined, central organization structure that existed within this small organization, as all decisions required the approval of the general manager for any project involving the team, and the players. This lack of communication between the staff and myself led to a challenging experience and although delayed, eventual approval was received by the required personnel and the project was able to continue.

It was obvious that some hesitation existed within the organization, as the management staff were concerned and protective of their image and reputation in the community. The high level management staff were very cognizant of how their organization, and their players were perceived by external stakeholders and wanted to ensure that the right message was being

showcased. To avoid any negative association pseudonyms was required to be used for all participants to ensure confidentiality as well as all data was protected through the use of passwords and secure storage of data. The focal organization was not named in any documents to ensure complete confidentiality and the pseudonym Lorisville Giants was utilized throughout all documents to refer to the focal organization to ensure complete anonymity, with no identifying characteristics released, ensuring that nothing would trace the findings back to the organization or any specific participants. In future situations it is necessary to better understand the organization structure prior to starting a research project, and as a researcher it is necessary to be cognizant of the various logistical components and power structure dynamics of an organization and ensure that when entering into a relationship with an organization to follow proper procedures to allow for a more positive and efficient experience. Open and continual communication with the organization aided in my eventual approval, and working to ensure that you are cognizant and able to balance the organization's demands as well as the requirements of being an academic researcher are necessary to conduct an ethical and integral research project.

#### ***3.5.1.2 Ensuring Credibility***

Credibility is a significant part of the qualitative research project (Berbary & Bates, 2014; Creswell, 2013; Veal, 2011). As a researcher I will strive to enhance credibility by ensuring transparency throughout the process. This was done through provision of all relevant documentation, in particular interview guides, ahead of the interviews. I also met with various staff members throughout the research process to better explain the purpose and intentions of the study, addressing any concerns or problems that arose throughout the research period. I provided

extensive overviews of my methods, and reasoning, enabling the reader to better grasp my process.

I ensured credibility of my data by having a feedback session to discuss preliminary findings, where all management staff who had participated in an interview were invited to attend. Due to time restrictions players were unavailable to participate in their own feedback session as their season concluded earlier than anticipated. Dr. Misener and I met with available management personnel to present the initial findings, gathering their feedback and gain insight into the accuracy of my perceived themes and categories, as well as any potential implications that these findings can have for the focal organization. The findings were subsequently analyzed and integrated into the findings, informing the insights and ideas outlined in the findings section of my thesis. The intent of the feedback session was to help enrich the findings with additional insight that may be gained from the reflection process based on the initial interview data. This was done by encouraging the participants to actively respond, and engage with the data, seeking their feedback, and reaction to what I have deduced from the data collected. The session served as an alternative to typical member checks, commonly utilized throughout qualitative research, inviting greater participation in the analytic process, while providing additional insight into the phenomenon, providing easily understood and usable data for the participants and organization. The meeting was conversational in nature as we worked through a document I prepared in advance which served to frame the conversation, but elicited further feedback and idea generation. This session was well-received and provided a platform for further ideas and practical suggestions that the organization felt they could take on once their research project comes to an end. Overall, I found this meeting to be very rewarding as it helped me clarify some

ideas and themes, and represented a way for me to give back to the organization and encourage greater reflection on several aspects of their CSR platform and its impact.



## **Chapter Four: Findings**

The overarching purpose of the study was to explore the nature and perceived impact of CSR in Major Junior hockey. The research questions pertinent to this purpose included:

1. What is the rationale behind the implementation of the CSR platform within the focal organization?
2. How is CSR integrated into the business operations of the focal organization?
3. What role do players and management team members have in the development and delivery of CSR initiatives?
4. How does CSR and its perceived impact influence the attitudes and commitment of management personnel and players?

To address the overarching purpose and research questions, the findings are organized in the following way: Section 4.1 addresses the rationale behind the use of CSR within the focal context (research question 1). Section 4.2 outlines the contributing factors that have influenced the development, implementation, and delivery of CSR within the organization (research question 2). Sections 4.3 explores the role of the players and management team personnel with regards to CSR development and delivery (research question 3). The final sections 4.4 and 4.5 focus on the impact that these CSR can have on the management team and the players (research question 4).

The focal organization (referred to in this thesis as the Lorisville Giants) undertook a wide spectrum of CSR-related initiatives, with a considerable focus on youth within the local community, under the age of 14. Initiatives included school and library visits, where players read

to the students as well as performing a Healthy Active Living presentation. The organization also undertook a number of initiatives with community partners that capitalized upon on the players to promote and interact with community members to promote socially-driven issues or causes such as health, sport participation promotion, helping low income at risk youth, mental health awareness, etc. These included mouth guard clinics, minor hockey practices to engage youth, and ‘celebrity serves’, among others. The Giants also utilized the on-ice game experience to raise money for charities, including the Cancer society of Canada, Special Olympics, and SickKids Foundation. They also collected teddy bears and canned food for underprivileged families in the community.

Some of the initiatives were recurring, while others were single events, but regardless of the timeframe, the focus remained the same - to promote social awareness and/or help those in need within their local community. Although some of the causes they worked with were nation wide, it was important to the Giants that the money and support generated from any of their initiatives remained within their local community whenever possible. Throughout the interviews it was found that other than the formalized, mandatory initiatives required by the governing body (e.g., themed games for the cancer society and Mental Health awareness, food and toy drives), all other initiatives were undertaken by the organization on their own accord, working with community partners, and sponsoring organizations to be able to incorporate CSR into their organizational practices.

## **4.1 Rationale for CSR platform**

The findings of this study revealed a strong focus on CSR efforts and purposeful integration of CSR into the business operations of the hockey enterprise. The findings in this section address the first research question and highlight multiple reasons for engaging in CSR.

### **4.1.1 Strengthening the organization's connection to the community**

Staff and players vocalized a sense of obligation to the community in which the team is located, influencing their desire to undertake a CSR focus, as they felt that CSR initiatives would enable them to have a stronger connection to the community and resist being an isolated commercial enterprise. As a community-based organization that primarily draws its fan base from a close geographic area, the hockey club recognized that it was imperative that they support the community. One staff member explained; “When you are in a community you’ve got to be a part of that community and you’ve got to, you know work to make that community better” (Steve/Staff). Steve (Staff) went on to further explain that working together is imperative to the success of the organization and the community and he noted, “Together when everybody works together everybody achieves more and ultimately Lorisville and the greater community is, is better for it.” The Lorisville Giants felt that they had established a foundation, leading to continued support from their fans as Jared (Staff) noted, “If they hadn’t done so much in the community unsure if they would have continued to support them in such a poor year.” This did not go unnoticed by the athletes as they welcomed the reciprocal nature of the relationship with their fans “We give a lot of our time like back to the community and I think it shows with the way that our fan base...[we have] like the most loyal fans” (Joel/ Player).

Jared (Staff) further explained:

There are always going to be people that come to the hockey game regardless of what the team is doing in the community but we know that there are families, and groups and organizations with the community of Lorisville that really do respond to our community initiatives and are aware of us because of those and I think that what we have created we don't want to see waiver in anyway because it has become, we have become part of the fabric of the community.

The findings highlighted the notion that sport can be utilized as a rallying point for the community, as Steve (Staff) stated:

Sport is a rallying point for the community and that any of us who have the opportunity to work in this industry are fairly fortunate but we also have a responsibility to give back and that giving can be with youth hockey, it could be through schools through reading programs, it could be through visits to hospitals, it might be in cooperation with the Lorisville police, it could be any number of the charities and organizations here in Lorisville that do an awful lot of good work. We are basically open, okay, to partner with anybody and if there is not a partnership there to take initiatives to do good things in the community.

Jared (Staff) also explained:

I think that, we need it for, the community needs it . . . so I think any good community needs this type of thing, there is a reason why cities with sport franchises are kind on the map almost, it provides a sense of pride.

The data highlighted the organization's desire to build a meaningful connection to their local community, and how this influenced the development of their CSR platform, as they sought to address the needs of their community through their social issue focus. Rather than investing in causes that might be of interest strictly to the hockey organization, there was a notable desire evident among staff and players to contribute to areas and causes perceived to be important within the city, even if seemingly unrelated to hockey. As Jessica (Staff) explained, "If we are doing something in the community it is because there is a need." The representatives of the

organization also recognized that this was particularly important because the team ‘means a lot’ to the community, and the city. Nick, a two-year veteran player of the team noted:

We are out in the community all the time ... so I think the community is a huge part of who we are ... it's not the biggest city but I mean we are pretty well known and there is lots of stuff for us to do and help out with.

Jamie (Staff) explained that connecting with the community through CSR is not perceived as an ‘added piece’ to the organization, rather it is an expectation, that they modify in order to stay relevant, explaining:

I think we are at the point now where I think people expect it so rather than it being a special, unique thing. I think it is just, it's an expectation that our fans have which is why if we can tweak it a little make it a little more exciting.

When prompted, Jamie (Staff) explained why she felt the need to ‘tweak’ the initiatives, noting, “I definitely want our events to be fabulous and great. I don’t want people to be like disappointed or to think that we’re a second rated organization” (Jamie/Staff).

A desire to connect with the community enabled the Giants to meet the needs of the community, fulfilling their perceived responsibility to their community partners, positively impacting their community members. Reflecting on past experiences, a staff member noted “When you get that note back it totally makes up for any of the B.S. that you are dealing with” (Jessica/Staff). Several participants noted that being able to benefit those in need helps to combat the more difficult aspects of the job.

The staff also spoke of the ways that the players demonstrated an understanding of their role as contributing community members, welcoming the opportunity to participate in CSR initiatives in order to connect them as individuals to the community. One staff member

explained, "They [the players] actually understand the importance of everything that they are doing and they don't think that it is like, an annoyance or an additional thing" (Jane/Staff). CSR was perceived by staff members to be an accepted part of the organization, a necessary part of the business operations, which will only continue to grow due to the responsibility they have to their community as a sport organization. When interviewed, the players reiterated the importance of CSR as a way to connect with the community. For example, Nick (Player) spoke of the continued relationships that they have created with the fans:

Interacting with kids like that there it's, you build relationships with them and you know to this day even when you go back all these kids they remember you so they know exactly who you are and you know it's cool to go back and see those kids or to see them at the games and stuff like that. . . everything that you've ever said to them, so yeah it's great to, to have kids like that and to be able to have obviously such a good impact on them.

The findings highlighted the altruistic underpinnings of the Lorisville Giants' CSR platform as participants viewed it as the 'right thing to do', recognizing themselves as a "Community First Team" acknowledging their sense of responsibility to the community as Jane (Staff) noted:

It is definitely a Community First Team and I think it just goes back that, we are in this community, like we are a part of the community, and if we have the ability to give back, then why not.

As members of the community, participants recognized that they could not be isolated, rather they must interact and support their community. Steve (Staff) noted, "The real owners are our season ticket holders and our sponsors because they really control our, our destiny so there is certainly a great sense of responsibility there". Steve (Staff) further explained that "the moment that the community does not feel it's their team, okay, it's, it's not a successful business model."

#### **4.1.2 The Tradition of giving back**

Participants viewed CSR as a tradition, embedded within the practices of the organization, the league, and the sport of hockey more broadly. There was a notable tradition of CSR efforts within Major Junior Hockey. This responsibility was articulated well by Jamie, one of the management staff, who emphasized:

I just know how important it is to the community... we still have that small town feel. I think with that in mind, the importance of giving back to the community and having the organization, the players, our office staff all being socially accountable for such things is huge, and important.

Participants spoke of the expectations throughout the sport of hockey, as players progressed through the ranks of hockey, with the understanding that giving back to the community was a part of their role as young elite hockey players. "I just think as you grow in the hockey environment ... we are expected to do a little bit more" (Josh/Player). Speaking on the expectations, Daniel (Player) highlighted that his role in the initiatives helped him to better understand the expectations of being in a leadership role within the community, stating "It has showed me the way of actually how you have to be when you are a certain person in the community." Charlie (Staff) explained this expectation, noting:

I think the practice, it's, it's something that needs to be done for me ... You know you need to be in the community, you need to help with charities. If any of you, if you have the time and we do have the time, and the organization sees that we do have the time, it is going to make the community better. I think it is definitely a good thing.

The data highlighted that the Giants were not just undertaking initiatives that were mandatory, either by the governing body or their sponsors, rather many of their initiatives were done because they viewed themselves as having the 'ability' to do so voluntarily, and the team had developed a tradition of CSR as the 'right thing to do'. Nick (Player) noted the staff's

eagerness to give back, reflecting on a past experience during one of the public school visits where a staff member gave free tickets to a child who could not otherwise afford to go to a game after the teacher mentioned that it was his dream to see the team at a live game. Jessica (Staff) reflected on an informal CSR opportunity that presented itself:

Last year, we had a game on St. Patrick's Day ... so we had to have pant shells to cover the red stripe on our, on our actual hockey pants instead of just buying new ones, we just got the pant shell, right and then the green and white socks, obviously we are never going to wear them again so I was kind of just talking to 'Jared and like, what are we going to do with this? ... if you can donate them, great so the, the socks and pant shells went to [a local high school] for their hockey program.

They recognized that these little things could have a large impact therefore "Why wouldn't they?" Jessica (Staff) commented, "I think the question should really be for teams who aren't doing it, like why aren't you?" Jane (Staff) reiterated this claim noting:

I don't think we do it necessarily so that people to come to our games, so that we make money off of them. I don't think that is why we do it; I think we do it because it is the right thing to do.

Being involved in the community was viewed as something they just do as Jessica (Staff) explained, "Something simple that nobody, I mean we didn't, nobody knows about it and there is a ton of things like that that happen all the time. You know that's just if we can help, we will."

The organization was viewed as having a large public profile, with this organization being the highest level of sport available for consumption by the local community or within an hour's drive. This was acknowledged in the interviews by both staff and players, as one staff member stated that "Obviously we are the only show in town when it comes to hockey and I think that you know it goes hand in hand with, with being looked up to as an organization" (Charlie/Staff). As a 'role model' organization, expectations exist surrounding what they do in



the community, and since they are able to give back, participants felt it was necessary that they did so.

Both staff and players were cognizant of the tradition of CSR and discussed examples of former players who have graduated through the system and were involved in the same types of CSR activities. In particular, they talked about how this created a sense of admiration among the players beyond their on-ice performance and leadership. One player explained, “It is pretty cool to think of, you know how many guys have come through the system and taken part in these things and are playing now or have played... I think that’s the biggest part, it’s just an honour” (Nick/Player). The influence of former players on the perspective of current players was evident, as one player noted “You are representing you know not just your team but any guys that have come through the organization. So I mean it’s just tradition here I guess, that’s kind of the biggest thing” (Nick/Player). He further explained:

A lot of the guys learn about the relationships that we have with you know certain guys at school or in the community and stuff like that and I think that's something that is just kind of carried on and as new guys come in and you know they meet these fans and they build relationships with them too so I think it is kind of an ongoing thing and you know you are only here for a short four or five years so you try to build as many relationships as you can but you know when you are gone other guys will be there to pick it up so it's, it's nice to have, nice to know that that's going to happen.

The tradition of CSR was also evident as a few interviewees discussed the positive experience that the current players had during their adolescence influenced their perspective, as the process came “full circle” especially for Tyler, a player who grew up a fan of the Lorisville Giants, noting:

Yeah, in a way, I don't know I guess I was a fan. I looked up to these guys and I just, I went to the, you know their community events; I was that little kid right up front with the jersey on.

The team was also cognizant of the significance placed on CSR by their provincial and national governing bodies and the resulting traditions and values that developed from these efforts. Steve (Staff) explained:

Some of the yearly awards are for citizenship and volunteer work, and those are some of the more prestigious awards to win within the [provincial league] and then there is the [national governing body] so I think just the fact that there is awards at both levels, you know shows the emphasis and importance of it.

Players spoke of the tradition of CSR as they reflected on their own past experiences with the league, as Joel (Player) noted:

I always wanted to be like [player x]. He was the goalie in [his hometown] at the time, some of the community involvement things that he did in that community really helped me and there is kids now that, that I meet when I am out there and I hope that I can be like their [player x].

Joel (Player) went on to explain, “I remember being a kid and the [hometown team] come to your school and you are like ‘I want to be like those kids one day’. Now that you are doing it yourself it feels really rewarding”. Participants maintained the CSR focus, identifying it as a league wide process, as Luke (Player) a five-year veteran of the league described:

Well I think the [league] have done a great ... I think they've done a, done a great job of implementing that players get out in the community and, and just really do anything. I mean a lot of teams have, have different, like different things they do in the community and stuff.

The CSR efforts that the Giants were involved in were also viewed as positive training for further involvement in hockey at other levels, as CSR is often integrated within the many levels of hockey organizations, from minor hockey associations to professional leagues. The process of giving back during their junior career was viewed as a “Learning experience” for the

players, to help provide structure, and to prepare them for the future, as Charlie a former professional hockey player, and coach for the team explained:

As a player when you get higher up in, in the leagues there is more of your time taken, in that, in that regard and some guys have charities that are near and dear to their hearts and you know, now for us here it is more of a learning process for a lot of the guys.

CSR is a requirement of playing hockey at a high level, as Joel (Player) noted:

I think it's part of the, the job I guess, I don't want to call it a job because it doesn't feel like a job but I think it's yeah, part of the territory for sure like you got to get used to it.

Charlie (Staff) highlighted the newfound focus of community involvement throughout the sport of hockey, stating:

I think it's more community now, twenty something years later there is a lot more of this stuff that's community driven and I think the team does a really good job at making sure they are kind of trying to touch every base.

The interviewees felt that undertaking a community focus has become an important part of the sport of hockey, utilizing it as a tool for social change, which participants recognized and welcomed. Although not all participants knew of the community mindedness of the Giants prior to joining, they were supportive of this overall direction and wanted to be part of the tradition. One player described, “I didn't really know what it meant to be in the league like all the things that you do for people ... for Lorisville” (Brandon/Player). The findings suggested they welcomed this contemporary understanding of what it meant to be a Junior hockey player.

#### **4.1.3 CSR as a strategic tool**

In addition to claims of CSR being the ‘right thing to do,’ there was a notable theme throughout the data related to CSR also being a strategic benefit to the organization, while

benefiting the community. The players and staff were asked, “Why do you think the Giants (as a hockey organization) gets involved in these particular activities?” The findings clearly demonstrated that the strategic benefits of CSR also played a major role in the reasoning behind CSR development.

The players and management/staff all acknowledged that the inclusion of CSR in the organization’s business practices helped to benefit the Giants through enhancing its reputation, establishing successful relationships with their community members, and utilizing the process of CSR to add value to the organization. Athlete participants spoke of the process of capitalizing upon the players’ public presence in hopes of increasing consumer patronage as one player noted “Once they see you and you are talking to them they’ll want to come out to the games more, so it is a promotion for our team.” (Brandon/ Player). Another player reiterated these initiatives were “Trying to get the players out there and you know show support for your community and trying to get people to come to games as much as possible” (Luke/Player).

The findings suggested the Giants have established criteria for the types of initiatives they undertake, including being ‘local’ and ‘aligning’ with their overall mission and mandate. The focus on being local was highlighted by one staff member who stated, “When we select a local charity we get more money from fans. They are more willing to donate to that to that charity” (Jane/Staff). Although the Giants worked hard to ensure they were not placing too many demands on their fans as Jillian (Staff) noted, “Ensure that you are not always after something from people because people are already spending money to be here.”

The particular benefits incurred by undertaking a social issue focused agenda, which complemented their primary mandate of delivering a high performance hockey program, are addressed in the following sections.

#### ***4.1.3.1 Brand Image Enhancement***

The internal stakeholders were clearly cognizant of their brand's image and reputation in the community. They described how CSR enabled the Giants to cultivate a specific image, that was positively reflected upon by community members, as the Giants sought to create a reputation of 'goodness' and 'goodwill' that consumers/fans would want to be associated with. The findings suggested that the image that the Giants wanted to have is one that is 'community minded' and focused on the betterment of society, and their players, as they seek to address the needs in their community. As noted by one staff member, "[We] want Lorisville to be seen as, like a giving organization, a charitable organization, a friendly organization, approachable and all of those things" (Jane/Staff). Steve (Staff) noted the significance of image enhancement created through CSR integration as:

The resulting benefit is the team and the players are seen in a more positive, you know manner in the community and ultimately there seems to be a desire to support organizations and players who are seen as being socially responsible and caring about the community.

Staff spoke of the development of 'brand equity' and the importance of their logo, and linking the existing reputation within the community with the integration of CSR into their business practices. As one staff member acknowledged, "It is not just about charity, it is about just being responsible for the brand and presenting the brand in the way you want it to be seen" (Jane/Staff). Steve (Staff) also explained, "We are only as good as our reputation and our

reputation is only as good as our, you know, as our willingness to be involved and to give back to the, to the community.” Nathan (Player) reiterated, “People look strongly on you if you are going out, out of your way and doing something for them.” Tyler (Player) reiterated “If you have a bad reputation we are not going to get the fans that come out and support us.”

As an organization that operates within a particular local community, how they are viewed by that community is critical to their success as a for-profit enterprise. This responsibility was also perceived by interviewees to extend to their own behaviour and how they conduct themselves in public, as staff members reiterated that they are not just representing themselves, they are representing the organization, as they are themselves part of the brand, and they need to ensure they are being role models, to align with the perception that this organization is a leader in the community. Joseph (Player) highlighted the players’ awareness of this association stating:

What the people see in us is what they see in the organization. So if we’re you know acting like idiots than they are going to... they won’t think highly of [the organization] and if we are acting like good people, good normal people, they are going to see us as wow those are actually great people, great organization.

Steve (Staff) noted “I am highly sensitive to you know how we are perceived in the community and doing the right things.” This heightened awareness of how their image is being consumed by the public was a focus within the organization, and a definite influencing factor towards their CSR involvement.

While staff discussed the strategic rationale and benefits of CSR, it was clearly a secondary focus when compared with the altruistic reasons described previously. For example, staff cautioned that despite any possible profitability or reputational enhancements gained through CSR, it must always be done in a way that was genuine and sincerely incorporated:

You know, the social responsibility [activities] enhance our reputation if we are doing them well and doing them you know with conviction but I guess I have got to indicate you know we are not just doing them because of expected payback we are doing them because it's the right thing to do.

Further expanding on this notion of sincere CSR integration, he noted:

If people notice, that's great, but you know to be doing it just for the purpose of trying to increase the Giant's profile or whatever then you are doing it for the wrong reasons, okay. You do it for the right reasons and you know if the impact is the Giants are looked upon more favourable so be it.

The strategic rationale for CSR was also discussed as secondary and less of a priority because of the Giants' primary focus on their 'on-ice business'. As one staff member clarified, "Honestly it [social responsibility] doesn't really get that much attention from the media because the general public aren't reading or caring about that" (Jared/Staff). The governing body did help to promote the Giants, and what they have done, as Jane (Staff) explained:

They do try to promote what we do and what all the teams do, for the kind of the greater good for them too because it gets it out there, that the [governing body] is supportive of all these charities.

As a whole, the league seeks to utilize CSR to cultivate an image of goodwill, communicating it to the general public, to better market and showcase the community focus that the Major Junior hockey league has.

#### ***4.1.3.2 Player Image and Marketability***

The influence of social responsibility for brand image enhancement was also an underlying rationale for player involvement in the particular CSR initiatives. Throughout the interviews it was found that the players were aware of the benefits that being involved in the community initiatives can have on their own image, as one player noted, "I did a lot of that

community service stuff to kind of stand out on my own and like get my own name out there” (Luke/Player). The players believed that the more you did in the community, the more recognizable your personal brand was, helping to enhance your marketability as a player. Further, the ability to promote and market themselves was found to be a by-product of their CSR involvement, as players sought to differentiate themselves from other players as they sought the attention of professional scouts. Players utilized social media to showcase their community involvement, recognizing that it could help to highlight who they are away from the rink, which can factor into the way others view them. As noted by Daniel (Player) noted:

When you are going to sign a contract with a NHL team they don’t look at just the play, they look at the type of person you are off the ice and how you handle people... the way you want to portray yourself away from the rink is huge and NHL scouts look at that a lot.

Only a small percentage of players progress to professional hockey but being involved in the community was found to enhance their public profile, as noted by many of the players, as it helped them to be more ‘recognizable’ and ‘known’ by community members, fans, and hockey scouts. The findings suggest that these initiatives helped players to demonstrate community mindedness, to craft their own image differentiating themselves in hopes of catching the attention of hockey scouts. As Nathan (Player) explained:

Scouts will see you in the community doing something like that and they’ll be like okay, they are not just selfish about themselves, they don’t just stay home and isolate themselves, they’ll actually go out in the community and do things for the community. That’s definitely a good reputation for the organization and for yourself.

The data revealed that the players recognize that these initiatives can be helpful in distinguishing them from other players, making them more visible, and stand out from the others, going beyond



just being hockey players, or ‘jocks’ to creating an good image of themselves, focused on community involvement. Josh (Player) detailed this phenomenon:

If you have the same skill level as someone who is kind of more reckless and doesn’t care about the community. I think that it can make you know a little bit of a difference when you are looking at it as a person, you know, it’s a business.

Another player noted, “That is what social media is for, people want to know what you are doing away from the rink and how you are [as a person]” (Daniel/Player). Brandon (Player) also explained:

I mean the more you go out in the community, the more fans kind of... you can kind of see like people with, like jerseys of guys on the team and the more you are kind of out in the community and more kind of, more of a known player you are, like you become more of a fan favourite... I think going out and doing community involvement you kind of make those, kind of get more fans for yourself and just kind of get more support for yourself and it, it is really cool seeing people with your jersey on that you’ve never really met before in your life. It’s just like oh wow you went out and actually spent money on my jersey, it’s pretty cool.

The players also acknowledged how their personal reputations were linked to the organization’s reputation and brand and they generally desired to ensure that this was positive and reflected a desire to give back to the community. One player noted, “I think you are going there [to schools] to represent the Giants so expectations are pretty high. You don't want anything bad said about you know the Giants, you only want good feedback” (Josh/Player).

Similar to the perspectives of the staff, players recognized that the reputation and brand that is being projected to the community is instrumental in their continual success, although the explicit link with business development or ticket sales was not mentioned as a focal reason for these initiatives. As Jared (Staff) explained:

People associate it with goodness, and, and quality and culture and winning so I think anytime you can associate your logo with something that people are passionate about aside from your, the hockey that they are passionate about it is a good thing.

It is this focus on the Giant's image that influenced the players behaviour especially on social media as the findings highlighted that the players are cognizant of the increased focus on them as individuals due to their role model status within the community, Nathan (Player) explained that "You got to keep like your head on a swivel, like people are always watching you and it's important that you don't do anything stupid to mess that up." Brandon (Player) noted this increased focus on them as players, stating:

When we are out in the community we're, we're under the microscope so obviously any action we make is, is going to, you know it's going to be good or bad and most of the time it is going to be blown out of proportion so it's really important for us to just act properly in the community and when we are in the public.

Josh (Player) further explained, "Watch what you post on you know social media that kind of thing you know, everyone is kind of looking silently, so I think you, it's in the back of your mind."

Overall, the data demonstrated that players had a high level of awareness of the ways that CSR can influence the image that is being projected of them as elite athletes and community leaders. The players sought to leverage the CSR efforts of the organization in order to enhance their individual profiles and showcase their desire to give back and be contributing members of the community.

#### *4.1.3.3 Overcoming the Dark Side of Sport*

Related to image enhancement, CSR was also utilized to depict a more positive image of the players that what may be created with their on ice performance. On-ice fighting is a controversial aspect of hockey that the Giants sought to overcome with the use of CSR. Participants spoke about fighting as part of the sport but also an element that is frowned upon outside of the game, as noted by one player: “When kids ask about fighting, it's, the big thing is you know you don't want to tell these kids that you go out and fight, and stuff like that, you don't want to set a bad example” (Nick/Player). Several of the players interviewed wanted to ensure that the youth are aware it is a part of the sport but not something they encourage off the ice, and that they recognized the many negative consequences of fighting. The players viewed CSR activities such as reading in schools and discussing sport with youth as opportunities for communicating the risks of violence in sport and overcoming any negative assumptions about the players based on their on-ice behaviour. Luke (Player) spoke of this phenomenon in professional hockey:

I mean I know some of the meanest guys on the ice are some of the best guys off [ice]. Like you see that a lot in the NHL especially with enforcers and guys like that, I mean like real, real bad guys on the ice but they're for some reason they're loved in their community ... I mean like they see you on the ice and, and they know you are doing that [fighting] for your team. . . I think when they see you off the ice they have a whole different perspective on you.

Luke (Player), reiterated that the CSR activities provided the ability for the players to show that off the ice they are not the ‘fighters’ that the fans see on the ice, as the initiatives allow them an opportunity to convey who they are as people, and overcome any potentially damaging choices they might make in the heat of a game.

When you see a guy that's kind of mean and everything on the ice and then he comes off the ice and he is completely different person from what you are used to seeing I think it kind of makes, makes a whole situation a lot better especially I think from a parents' perspective. I know the kids love fighting and everything so and that's, that's probably never going to change but especially from a parents' perspective, seeing how you are like on the ice and then how you are like off the ice it kind of opens their eyes up to, to kind of who you are and not what you do.

Players and staff felt that as community members were able to interact and familiarize themselves with the players, it was possible to see that they were more than their on ice personas, leading to greater support from community members as they saw that the players were caring members of the community.

#### **4.2 Incorporation of CSR into organizational practices**

The findings noted in this section primarily address the second research question, “How is CSR integrated into the business operations of the Lorisville Giants “ by illustrating the different ways that CSR is integrated into organizational structure, culture, and processes. The diverse range of programs and initiatives undertaken required the Giants to capitalize on a wide range of resources in order to integrate CSR successfully into their business operations. The organizational capacity to fulfill their mandate of CSR integration into their business practices required primarily human resources, as well as the establishment of relationships with external partners, which were both considered capacity strengths of the organization and available for CSR implementation. Partnership development with community partners, including non-profit community groups, and sponsoring organizations resulted in the ability for the Lorisville Giants to incorporate a social issue focus into their business practices.

### **4.2.1 Organizational Structure**

During the interviews, the management team participants were asked to describe the structure of the organization, in order to better understand how the business is organized and how CSR fits into the overall structure. The findings clearly demonstrated that the organizational structure had a significant impact on the integration of CSR. By adopting a ‘top-down’ centralized hierarchy, the ‘upper management’ personnel were able to make the final decisions on CSR integration, including the selection of specific initiatives, and causes they championed as an organization as well as the specific ways that the initiatives were put into practice. This created a distinct hierarchy as the mid-level staff perceived a division of roles, responsibilities, and authority between themselves and the staff at higher levels, even when their role may have had a significant community-focus (e.g., public relations, community partnerships). This centralized role-based structure was somewhat expected given the nature of the business and relatively small staff structure, however, some of the participants noted that their ability to make decisions, and take on a larger role in the CSR integration process was limited and they would have preferred a more significant role in the planning and implementation of CSR, rather than deferring to higher levels of authority for significant decision making. Jane (Staff) explained:

James, makes the final decision but everybody has the chance to offer suggestions, and to offer ideas, and we kind of go from there and they build on that, and then James will make the final decision as to what we do.

At the ‘middle management’ level, staff worked as a collective to establish, integrate, and deliver their selected programs. Due to the nature of task distribution, there was found to be a lot of overlap between the positions, as CSR was not perceived to be the sole responsibility of one staff member, rather they were all invested in and shared responsibility for CSR. As one staff

member noted, “Everybody in our office... we all kind of contribute to our, to our, to whatever causes we, we are undertaking so we are all kind of managers in that sense” (Jared/Staff). This allows for the ‘middle-management’ staff to work collaboratively together, combining together the community aspect, with the necessary components from retail/brand management, and their promotional department. As each ‘middle-management’ staff member was responsible for a different aspect of their business operations, it was necessary for them to work together in order to integrate CSR, something that the staff demonstrated with their weekly meetings. However, the lack of role division related to CSR also created some confusion about how the costs were distributed or absorbed. Mid-level staff were not always clear on exact details of certain aspects of the undertaken initiatives. Several of the staff expressed a desire for greater role clarity related to CSR in order to improve communication and ultimately the impact of the initiatives.

The players also viewed themselves to be outside the critical decision-making structure related to CSR. Despite the extensive involvement that they had in the implementation of most CSR initiatives, players noted that they were rarely involved in the planning or idea generation phases of CSR development. Players felt their ideas would be welcomed due to the overarching community minded attitude of the organization, established by the general manager, but that their ideas were rarely explicitly invited. Brandon (Player) highlighted the community mindedness stating:

I think they are very open to kind of like being involved in the community. Steve, he really pushes up for us and if did and if there was something that I said hey like can we kind of do this I have no doubt in my mind that he would say okay, yeah we can kind of talk to our like our promoting team and just kind of get like something like a community event going now.

Throughout the interviews, several players highlighted particular causes that resonated with them due to their own personal interests. However, these players recognized that resource related constraints made some of these initiatives too costly or inconvenient for the organization.

Daniel (Player) highlighted:

I think you know just putting, putting a smile on their face right now is, is good enough for right now ... It takes effort and like money to get out there and actually contact the people and you know I don't think anyone right now wants to take ... three weeks of their summer just to, just to help out that much.

Further, many players were unsure of the causes that were the recipient of their goodwill, explaining that they typically just received a schedule, and went out and did them. It was clear from the data that the relatively simple, centralized structure related to CSR involved mid-level staff developing and cultivating the initiatives, higher management approving the initiatives, and players executing the initiatives. While this structure was viewed by staff and players as moderately effective given the success of many of the CSR initiatives, it was clear that the full potential of the platform was not being reached given the limitations of this structure including inefficiencies and role overlap noted by staff, and lack of player integration in the planning and development phases.

#### **4.2.2 Building a CSR Culture**

The organization's culture related to CSR was established and modeled from the senior management and then integrated and cultivated by all staff personnel. Jared (Staff) commented on the influence the higher-level management staff members have, and the owners of the team, explaining:

Partly it is a responsibility and we have, it comes from the top, we have an ownership that wants to be involved in the community because they are good people and they want to, they want to support, and I mean and there is a side of it that this is a business and we want to create awareness of our team, and we want to create a nice feeling of goodwill for... the community.

Specific cultural manifestations were attributed to particular staff members over the history of the organization, and those in high level leadership positions felt that they played a critical role in establishing a “tone for the organization in the community” (Steve/staff).

Reflecting on his time with the organization, Steve (Staff) commented that “As the first person hired here twenty-five years ago, I think I was much more hands on and I think we helped develop the culture and I think the culture is still, is still there.” He noted that the particular altruistic values of the initial management team have remained central through the organization’s history, highlighting that the team “started as a community owned team and continues to be basically seen as the community’s team” (Steve/Staff). This broad depiction of the culture of the organization is now manifested in several ways. For example, staff discussed how the organization is focused on developing community leaders, and those within the organization frequently share stories about former leaders. These stories often turned somewhat legendary as players and staff talked about wanting to continue to pass the values and culture down throughout the generations of players, to ‘breed’ through continual CSR integration. Josh (Player) highlighted the significance of the team’s community focused culture, noting:

Culture - we are really big on that. But the start of this year we kind of got away from that, people were skipping you know, stuff that we don't typically do, and I think just getting the culture back you know playing for the logo and playing for the community is what brought the culture back.



Another manifestation of culture which CSR was attributed to was the nature of collaboration among the players and how they sought to achieve specific goals and expectations together, working as a team to ensure success. Joseph (Player) described:

Everything we do around here is as a team and if we are going to support one group. If one of us is going to support a group we are going to support it as a team, as an organization.

Those within the organization also noted that there was a strong culture of open communication and respect between player and staff. Jamie (Staff) stated “I like to think that there is that respect and relationship that they know to come to us if there was anything that wanted or needed.” One player showcased the respect he felt from the organization: “I think our general manager is very open and he is a very caring person and he would, he would do anything for this community and if we were passionate about it, I think that would [be respected]” (Josh/Player). One staff member spoke of an instance where a player did have a cause close to them that they wanted to support, showcasing their desire to give back, noting their increased dedication and commitment to the cause; “When it is a cause that is close to them then they definitely step up and help with things” (Jamie/Staff) although that had not happened with this current roster of players. This culture of open communication related to the socially-minded initiatives seemed to develop further trust, as staff members utilized their time spent with the players when they were performing the initiatives to build their relationships with them, seek feedback, and gather their perspective, which they hoped would translate into a more positive experience for the players and build trust between these two internal stakeholder groups.

#### ***4.2.2.1 Locker Room Culture***

This thematic section highlights the influencing nature of veteran and alumni players on the behaviours and attitudes of the young players entering the league and what impact this has on the culture of the Giants related to CSR. The players who were interviewed noted that the older players lead by example, as participants reflected on observing the older, more experienced players and looking to them to develop a better understanding of the organizations expectations with regards to the CSR events. Current players described how veteran players served as role models to them and their peers, showcasing the right way to act, influencing their behaviours and attitudes, and ensuring a continual trend of community mindedness within the team. In order to do this, the Giants did not rely on a formal teaching process, rather, they viewed the locker room as a place for building culture. Brandon (Player) noted:

I think right when you come into Lorisville, you look at the older players who have been there before and now I think like we have kind of shown the younger players, it's kind of like you just kind of see people lead by example and you kind of see okay, when you are walking around this is how you act, this is what you do and you see like all the other older players and stuff that do go out and do all these kind of community events and they do all these things and it's just of like okay this is kind of what you do and it's just like I don't know I, I mean it's just, you are not really told to, like that you have to do this, you don't have to do like if you really don't want to but I think it's just a respect thing, it's just kind of something like you've kind of been taught, you watch and you kind of know what to do, just by kind of watching.

Players acknowledged the influence that the older players had on their own development as community leaders, helping them to better understand the expectations of them, as well as influencing their attitudes and perspectives as the players became more socially aware, and conscious. Joel (Player) explained:

I think the big help was with some of the guys, some of the older guys who have been doing it for four years before you and you were just a rookie and to see the way that they handle themselves around people and that and you just learn from them, you pick it up from them and I think, I hope that the rookies pick it up from me now.

Continuous knowledge transfer through observation enabled players to set a precedent, and ensure a continue transfer of the CSR expectations. Nick (Player) reiterated the informal process, stating:

I think you know just leading by example was the biggest thing for me when I was, when I was younger and for me now. You know showing the young guys like what to do, how to act around these kids and how to treat everyone when you're, when you are out in public representing the Giants.

Brandon (Player) highlighted the importance of having fun, and doing what it takes to be a community leader:

There was some guys who had been here a long time so just watching them with the fans and how they acted definitely helped I feel like I kind of took some stuff that they've done and I don't know just kind of got some, not confidence but just kind of learned from them and watched how they handled the community and fans and stuff and kind of just used that and now that it's my third year I just go out there and have fun with it and just doing whatever else and just having fun.

The younger players emulate what they have seen, in order to continue the honour tradition of the Lorisville Giants, which the participants enjoyed. They felt it was nice to see their influence as veterans, as one player explained “It’s nice to see them become more comfortable and mature as community, yeah mature as community leaders and see them take, take command themselves” (Joseph/Player).

Learning how to be a part of the community was a lesson required of the players, and the alumnus severed as educators, showcasing the behaviours and expectations, to ensure a continued tradition of success and giving back. The participants showcased the full-circle nature

of this phenomenon, as they have evolved from learners to educators, ensuring the continued community focused culture of the organization, leading by example, showcasing the necessary requirements of being a part of this socially minded organization.

#### **4.2.3 Capacity Considerations**

When asked how CSR was integrated into the business operations, staff noted the CSR platform was fairly widespread throughout many aspects of the operations. All hired staff were also asked, “What organizational resources are required and used to deliver your CSR platform?” in order to better understand what organizational resources were required.

In terms of budget, the cost of integrating CSR into the organization was estimated at about 7-8% of the organization’s total budget, mainly attributed to the cost to employ one full time individual specifically responsible for community relations, as well as merchandise donations. The financial capacity required to deliver the CSR platform was not perceived by staff or players to be a significant consideration or determinant for involvement. When prompted as to why finances were not more of a consideration for CSR, one staff member explained, “[CSR initiatives] don’t usually cost a lot of money... obviously there are costs associated with it... but I think a lot of the stuff you can do without it being expensive” (Jillian/Staff). Capitalizing upon their available resources enabled the organization to deploy their CSR initiatives with minimal drain on organizational resources, limiting any capacity concerns, helping to justifying the continuation of CSR.

The addition of CSR was seen as something done that would not be an inconvenience to the organization, done in alignment with the best interest of the organization and building specifically on several organizational partnerships.

The Giants recognized that their positive reputation in the community was beneficial, as sponsoring organizations sought to leverage the reputation of the sporting organization, to enhance their own brand as Jared (Staff) explained:

Businesses want to get associated with us because of [our reputation] so our reputation has helped us with the cultivation of further sponsorships, ticket sales, whatever you want to, any of our revenue stream.

Staff entered into formal agreements with community sponsors, who worked with the Giants due to the benefits and increased exposure received through association, with the participants recognizing that it is beneficial for all invested parties as Brandon (Player) explained, “It gets people, like when we do them there will be a bunch of people going and bringing their kids, and it brings them business it promotes Lorisville; It’s just a big, it’s just good for everything.”

The findings highlighted that working with sponsors enabled the organization to conduct and provide various CSR focused events to their community members, capitalizing upon the strengths and resources of the other organization, as Jane (Staff) explained, “I don’t think that it is money form our pocket per say, like if we wanted to do a game, we would get a sponsor to come in and help us do it.” As Jillian (Staff) explained, “It is kind of just a matching things up with what we are doing, with charities that kind of go together [with the sponsor].” Jessica (Staff) stated, “Why wouldn't you do that with the platform that we have?”

Regarding the special interest groups in the community, the findings highlighted that the Giants is considered a ‘beacon’ or ‘platform’ for these community groups, explaining “If another organization has an initiative or if it is a pure charity they often look to us to help make people aware of that... Organizations come to us when they want publicity about their cause” (Jared/Staff) as these community partners seek to capitalize on the Giants’ large public profile in order to reach a ‘broader’ and ‘larger’ target market. As a ‘beacon,’ the organization takes on a facilitator role, instrumental in the success of the organization, but not always a contributing factor to the economic success of the philanthropic endeavours, as one staff member explained, “A lot of the times when we raise a whole bunch of money yeah we helped with it, we facilitated it but it is coming from the fans.” (Jared/Staff)

As facilitators, the Giants is leveraging their own brand to increase awareness for the special interest groups within the community, viewing their involvement as essential for the success of these small community groups as “They wouldn’t probably be around if it wasn’t for our ability to promote CSR and, and have that ability to reach the community.” (Jared/Staff) Jared (Staff) further explained that they are “Creating awareness about initiatives that other organizations have taken or have championed and that comes as a result of our organization being highly public, having a big public profile.” Community organizations are motivated to enter into these relationships due to the increased visibility, as one staff member noted “You know that they are going to come and they are going to get a lot of eyes on them, and people talking and I think that is probably more important to them” (Jillian/Staff). Leveraging the public presence of the Giants enables these special interest groups to become more known and increasing their ability to succeed with their own mission.

Jillian (Staff) noted that linking with these community partners can help to benefit the Giants, as individuals may be supporting the cause rather than the organization, as CSR exposed them to a market that may not be their typical 'hockey fan' explaining:

They do come and they do enjoy the game it kind of works for us too because it is sometimes people that wouldn't normally think to come to a game and then they think oh well that was fun I will go to another one.

Due to the collaborative nature of many of the CSR programs, the Giants noted that they needed to ensure their programs align with the ideas and values of the sponsoring organization, avoiding any controversial organizations, with a strict, or ostracizing mandate, that have the potential to 'upset people' within the sponsoring organization or the community. As one staff member noted "Yeah, you just have to be very careful when somebody is giving you lots of money that you keep them happy" (Jane/Staff).

As a small organization a lot of demand was on 'manpower', or human resource capacity, in order to develop and perform these initiatives. This will be discussed in the next section in greater depth.

### **4.3 Co-Delivery of CSR**

This section addresses the third research question, "What role do players and management team members have in the development and delivery of CSR initiatives?" The informal and formal roles that have been undertaken by the organizational members have led to a continued tradition of community conscious behaviour within the organization, and the findings highlighted here showcase the responsibilities and functions that the participants have with regards to the CSR initiatives undertaken by the Giants.

### **4.3.1 The Responsibility of the Players**

As noted earlier, the data highlights the significant role the players have in the deployment of the CSR initiatives. Jane (Staff) noted: “We use and abuse our players a lot but I think it kind of comes with the territory but yes it doesn’t cost us anything, right?” This was justified due to the public profile of the players, as one staff member explained “The players because they are the face of the organization we definitely use them as much as we can.” (Jessica/Staff) Therefore, the players’ main responsibilities were performing the initiatives, while simultaneously promoting the Giants.

As a promotional tool, the players were utilized to increase awareness of the organization, as one staff member noted “We use them more for community initiatives that are focused on them, that they can kind of go out and do” (Jessica/Staff). The Giants capitalized upon the players ‘minor celebrity’ status, recognizing the fan’s desires to interact with their players. Jared (Staff) noted:

We are a really unique situation, where we are able to give back to the community in a very, I don’t want to say easy way, but with our players not everyone gets that opportunity or chance to meet them.

The organization leveraged the public profile of their athletes, utilizing them for personal appearances, which have the potential to attract spectators and fans to the events.

The players themselves viewed their role in the deployment and delivery of CSR as an expectation of being a part of the organization, something they just do: “This is something we have to do and, and as a player in [the league] or the [National governing body] and I think that you know after you get to do a couple of them you start getting involved and more involved and start liking them.” (Daniel/Player)



Players' responsibilities were restricted to the delegated duties provided to them from management staff, delivering the initiatives, noted by Charlie (Staff) "We don't run the programs, we are part of the program." He further noted, "For us, we go and do what we need to do and make, make the best of it." Although a lot was being asked of them players felt it was worth investing in and being 'tired', as Joel explained:

You get back too late that night and you got to, you got to go do a PR in the morning and it is kind of like, I don't want to say it's hard to get out of bed because it's not really that hard but like you're kind of like, oh I have to go do a PR but once you get there and you are doing it, it's like you don't understand why you were like that in the morning, just because you were tired or whatever but I think it's worth it no matter what time of the day.

The findings highlighted discrepancy between different staff members' perspectives when asked about the role of the players in CSR, as some staff felt that the players could take on more, while other staff felt that the players would not be suitable for additional roles as "You don't want to overwhelm them with too much stuff, you want them to be good at the stuff they are good at" (Jillian/Staff). Those staff felt that they were already asking enough of the players as "They give us a schedule and the guys take the time to do it and I think that's a lot, they ask a lot of them you know three, four days a week" (Charlie/Staff).

#### **4.3.2 The Logistical Aspects**

The primary role that staff undertook related to CSR was the planning and development of the initiatives and they spoke of a desire to be involved with a lot of different charities, seeking various opportunities to work with the community of Lorisville. Staff welcomed the opportunity to plan these initiatives as they allowed for them to be involved with the community,

as Jane (Staff) noted “You get to see the results of them immediately in the kids’ faces. You get to experience Christmas morning all of the time.” The Giants conducted weekly meetings with all management staff, as well attending an annual general meeting with fellow league staff, soliciting ideas, helping the organizations see what the other teams are doing, and how they can adapt or modify these ideas to suit their market.

Great attention was placed on ensuring they were helping as many individuals as possible, consistently establishing new relationships with different community partners, “diversifying” themselves, while simultaneously ensuring they were cultivating successful, long-term relationships. Participants spoke of the importance of open communication with their community partners, seeking feedback following the events, to attempts to understand the strengths and weaknesses of their programs in order to be able to improve, although no formal evaluation procedures existed rather the organization was dependent on informal methods of communication as Jamie (Staff) noted:

My role, what I try to do and I am very grateful that I have been here for so long that I can talk to people and get feedback and again be in tuned with the city and see what works, what doesn’t and really listen to what, who am I to say what they need, I would rather them tell us what they need, and adjust, and shake things up.

Jamie (Staff) highlighted that as staff they served as a contact person for their community members, highlighting the importance of listening, and communicating to their fans stating, “They know they can come and talk to us and know that their voice is going to get heard and that there will be changes.”

Over 100 different organization are associated with the Giants in some capacity, staff viewed the typical relationship being proactive, with organizations approaching them to help

‘champion’ a cause, although the Giants also sought out specific partnerships, focused on finding the right fit as Jared (Staff) noted:

We had a certain thing where we went this is a great fit, it is going to give, it is going to give the organization some excellent publicity and we are going to raise a lot of money for them, it was just a good fit all around.

The staff were also responsible for balancing the demands on players when scheduling the initiatives, taking into consideration all other requirements of the players. When speaking about on-ice commitments, the staff perceived themselves to be at the ‘mercy’ of the governing body, restricted to the schedule requirements with regards to time allotted to games, practices, and educational commitments. Players felt their personal and professional commitments were being taken into consideration when scheduling the initiatives, highlighting the fluid and flexible nature of the events, able to adapt to their own schedule, showcasing a welcomed desire to do more if available as they were not over demanding. Time was a resource capitalized upon by the organization ensuring a ‘give and take’ relationship between the organization and their players as Luke (Player) noted:

Yeah I think they do because they, they never really tell you that like you have to it's always more of a question like to see if you are available or no so I mean they always take into consideration what you are doing and kind of like your life first so I mean, but I mean no one really says no but it is just kind of, kind of a thing that you do, you get asked and you say yeah, but they, I think they always take like your time and what you are doing into consideration for sure.

Charlie (Staff) further explained his perspective towards being used to deliver the organization’s CSR, stating:

There is a schedule and a plan I think in place with our staff upstairs and that, that are out in the community and the, the public relations kind of thing and they have it and there is no questions asked and we do that and you know I think most of our guys here, you

know, enjoy doing it and you know if you can take some time out of your day to, to make someone else's day better than you know, that's what we do.

The staff work hard to establish key relationships with their community partners and fans, recognizing that the rewarding experience and interactions is worth the effort and time demands that are required as Jessica (Staff) explains:

I think people saying they don't have the time to do it is B.S. because it's, it does take a lot of work to build relationships with community groups but it is so rewarding... I mean obviously I can't control what happens on the ice but to me, you get the fans, even just the relationships, having our players out in the community builds relationships with the fans, makes it worth it.

#### **4.4 Development League**

Renowned for their ability to develop the on-ice skill of their players, the findings showcased the potential long-term effects the organization can have on furthering the overall development of the players. The following section addresses the fourth research question "How does CSR and its perceived impact influence the attitudes and commitment of management personnel and players?" Overall, it was evident throughout the findings that all individuals involved felt a sense of responsibility for the CSR platform, cognizant of the lasting effect they can have, and striving to ensure successful growth. Steve (Staff) noted "When you get sixteen year old kids who come in here and you have twenty year old men going out the door, okay, that's really is the best, best measuring stick."

##### **4.4.1 Personal Development**

CSR was viewed as an approach to positively developing the players, to shape their values, and behaviours, to better themselves and the community as a whole. Steve (Staff) explained "We understand that are players are often seen as, as role models. We certainly feel

that we have the unique opportunity here to shape some, some values.” A sense of obligation to the players was showcased, as Steve (Staff) noted:

We first and foremost understand that we are dealing with teenage kids, we feel that you know we want to treat kids the way we would want our own kids treated.”

Players recognize the organization’s desire to provide them with these meaningful experiences as Luke (Player) highlighted “I think they are really, really trying to look after their players and trying to find the best for the player.” Jessica (Staff) highlighted that these intentions are embedded within the organization, set forth by the GM noting:

Our GM always says when they leave, when the players leave here we want them to be better people, we want them to be better hockey players but we want them to be better people and more well rounded people, and I think that is important too.

Although intended to benefit the players, it is not guaranteed that they will incur the benefits, but it is the responsibility to provide these unique opportunities, as Jared (Staff) noted:

Our ownership does, does encourage our players to do these types of things, they encourage them to communicate with one another, they encourage them to be good people. So you know without that, you can put them at a school but it doesn't mean that they are going to be getting anything from it.

Participants highlighted the ability of community involvement as it is “ A big part of you know developing us into, into people who we are too” (Brandon/Player) as it enabled them to become better members of society, facilitating their growth and development as a person within society, as “I think makes you a better person and a better community member” (Joseph/Player).

The players spoke highly of participating in these initiatives as Brandon (Player) explained:

It makes me feel like I am contributing. Like it's kind of tough I guess like I don't know I feel like when you are just playing hockey, that is all I kind of really do... like people just come to watch your games but when you do this it kind of makes you really feel community involved and you actually are giving back to the community.

#### ***4.4.1.1 Entering as boys; Leaving as men***

Increased demands on the athletes led to them feeling that they were required to mature faster than their peers, cognizant of the role the league played as Daniel (Player) explained “You just have a lot of commitments and a lot on your plate so I think it's good for people to grow in this league than others.” Exposure to fundamental life experiences led to this perceived sense of increased maturity as Tyler (Player) noted:

I can see the difference from my friends back at home that aren't really playing hockey or kind of doing anything and I am not saying that it's hockey that's doing this because I have friends that are on other teams. I think that it is Lorisville; I do think that they do help out a lot.

Brandon (Player) viewed his tenure with the club as a growing experience noting:

I think it's definitely you know taught me more about you know being a man obviously and I think you know, just growing up the past three years in Lorisville has definitely shaped the person who I am today so it's, it's a big part of you know developing us into, into people who we are too and I think there is no better organization to come up in than Lorisville and to learn about you know how to act properly and how to be a man.

#### ***4.4.1.2 Social Consciousness***

CSR involvement helped the participants become more cognizant of the needs and awareness of the special interest groups within the city. As one player explained, “It's the first time you see things like that, I don't know it definitely changed my perspective.”

(Nathan/Player) Luke (Player) echoed these sentiments, noting:

It's definitely opened my eyes to some of the stuff that's out there. I mean on my worst days I mean that's someone else's best possible so I mean, like just, just going out there and kind of seeing a lot of different situations that other are in and it gives me, like it lets me respect and know that I actually don't have it that bad.

The increased awareness enlightened the participants as “It kind of opens my eyes up to see that there are people out there that need help, need our support and we try to support them as much as we can.” (Joseph/Player)

Through participation in CSR programs, the findings highlighted the increased desire showcased by the participants to give back, past their tenure with the club, as participants became involved on their own time. Brandon (Player) explained:

I think it is something that is like, now hey like I think kind of before I wouldn't have wanted to [do them] but now when I go back home and if there are community things that aren't just for hockey like I might want to do more kind of because I see that I enjoy doing it.

Tyler (Player) further explained:

I don't know now that I've got a taste of, of that, going to schools and stuff I don't know it kind of makes me want more and makes me want to be more a part of Lorisville so it's nice.

As members of this organization, players became more socially conscious individuals, with a continued desire for community involvement implanted into them by the league. Luke (Player) reflected on the overall experience:

That's when it really started, you know meeting the fans and getting to know them and I met, met a couple of people that you know I made really happy by just hanging out with them and, and just like cracking jokes and stuff like that and after that that it when it just pretty much started and then ever since I just wanted to you know, make people happy and stuff so I tried to get more out in the community and do stuff.

Luke (Player) further reiterated his newfound social consciousness identity stating “I have been doing it for so long now that I think it’s just a part of who I am and what I am going to do so I mean of course after hockey I am still going to be involved.”

Staff spoke of increased social awareness as Jessica (Staff) highlighted “There has been thing that we’ve done that I’ve decided in my own personal life to do more in the community so it’s definitely been a positive impact” (Jessica/Staff). Not limited to the youth athletes, rather the capability of CSR to develop all participants was supported by the findings, creating more aware and socially conscious organizational members, as the CSR events instilled values and a desire to give back.

#### **4.4.2 Professional Development**

The CSR initiatives provided opportunities for the athletes to develop transferable skills, applicable to future career opportunities as the athletes built relationships through fan interactions, developed interpersonal skills and public speaking abilities. Brandon (Player) noted the unique opportunities that these community outreach programs provided stating:

I think that by being in the community and have seen like obviously promoting myself and sort of like what it kind of can do for my future, say if hockey were not to work out but I am going out to all these community events, building relationships like with say the owners of whatever, the people that we are doing the events for if you build a relationship it can help you out that way and you can kind of see how like going out and doing community work helps you just in that and I mean it helps me too because you are giving back.

The organization was cognizant of the unrealistic nature of professional hockey, seeking to ensure a supportive environment, focused on personal growth and development, to help them transition into their next stage of their life as Steve highlighted, “We want to prepare them the



best we can to, to being able to, to go out and, and into the real world and be successful”

(Steve/Staff). Charlie (Staff) further explained the significance placed on the transition period that many of the players would be entering and the role stating:

I think it is good for them. It gets them out there it gets them, you know public speaking, a lot of them aren't probably used to being in front of crowds and speaking and it takes a lot of practice if you say... just gets them ready for life in general and you know they might not play hockey and they may and if they don't, they are going to go to school and move on and get a job and have a family and we want to prepare them the best we can to, to being able to go out and, and into the real world and be successful.

The players were also cognizant of the impending transition period, recognizing the need to prepare themselves for their future, taking advantage of the opportunities the organization provided to them, as Brandon (Player) noted:

You come to the [league] your dream is to go to the NHL but I mean they want you to know too like the percentage of players that actually do go and you can't just be so focused on one thing. You always have to have another kind of plan another kind of something to strive and kind of work for.”

Players noted the need to prepare themselves for other future aspirations, bursting the ‘hockey bubble’, as Joseph (Player) noted:

It just shows you that hockey is not always going to be there and you need to have some sort of backup plan and that’s what I think it does for me, it shows me that here is a life outside of hockey, it’s not just all hockey forever.

The CSR events provided a definite time for spectators to interact with the players, humanizing the players, removing the notion that they are ‘special’ due to their elite hockey ability. Daniel (Player) welcomed these opportunities as “We are just an average person like everyone else, we're not something special or put on a pedestal.” Brandon (Player) highlighted this phenomenon of being more than just hockey players noting:

I think that for sure they really want you to go out and be involved in the community. I mean Steve always says here you are a hockey player for the four, five hours a day that you are at the rink, the rest the other twenty hours you are a normal person, living out in the community. So just kind of going out there, being involved in the community.

#### **4.5 Influencing the attitudes**

The perceptions of the individuals were contingent on their personal perspective and feelings towards CSR, influencing their desire to be associated and their continued involvement with the Giants. Minimal turnover within the organization led to a tight knit core group of management staff all involved in the CSR process, with all participants ‘buying in’ to this overarching culture of giving.

The findings showcased the participants were passionate to be involved in a socially conscious organization, going beyond the typical employee experience. Steve (Staff) highlighted on his passion for the Giants, noting “This is much more than a job for me quite frankly okay, you know this is a passion and I see the team as being much more than a business.” Participants were passionate about the organization, directly attributing that passion to the Giants’s community involvement, increasing their loyalty, and attitude towards the organization welcoming the opportunity to be a part of a giving organization as Jamie (Staff) illuminated; “It makes me love my job that much more because I am able to know about these [programs] and to help any which way possible.” Jared (Staff) echoed this passion, noting:

I think I am a pretty loyal person anyways, I think that it increases your passion for your workplace ... it builds passion, what we are trying to do with the fans is building their brand equity, and it also happens with the staff so it has been good.

Capitalizing upon these feelings of goodwill and positive association can be beneficial to the organization, as their employees value their employment with the Giants, prideful of their

work in the community, showcasing their desire to be a part of a socially conscious firm as Jared

(Staff) noted:

You can talk about things with people in your own personal life or it, it allows you to, to chose what you want to be associated with outside of work as well so that has been pretty good, and it gives you a source of pride.

Jessica (Staff) explained:

It's definitely, it gives you that, sense of pride in saying you work for the Lorisville Giants because people, a lot of people know what we do in the community...it is something that just makes you feel good about yourself.

Due to the nature of the context, player loyalty is an assumed aspect as Luke (Player) a player on the team noted, "I mean the hockey way, is, just kind of whatever team you are on, you are loyal to." Although challenging due to the dynamic relationship that players and the team can have, participants spoke of being gracious, recognizing the opportunities the organization provides them beyond playing hockey, playing for the logo, proudly representing the team, the city, and themselves.

The incorporation of a social issue focus into their business operations correlated into a positive affect on the attitudes and team loyalty, as Joel (Player) noted "I'm proud to be part of the Giants because of our involvement and the organization that we have." (Joel/Player) Brandon (Player) further explained:

Once you kind of get out in the community and doing as many things as Lorisville does I think it gives you a lot more appreciation for the Giants and just kind of everything that they do.

This pride translated into a sense of belonging as Nick (Player) explained: "You go out and you do these things as the Lorisville Giants ... I think it just makes you feel good and you feel a part of the Giants. Nick (Player) further explained, "It's just an honour and you know anyone that

comes to Lorisville from anywhere else they, they love it and it's definitely an organization that you know you want to stay for, for your whole career.” Brandon (Player) reiterated, “I think there is no better organization to come up in.”

As citizens who have moved to this particular city just for the sport of hockey, the players have ‘adopted’ the city as their own, forging a sense of belonging through their involvement in the community, building relationships with their peers, and community members, as CSR allowed for the development of strong, intimate relationships. Joel (Player) explained:

I think so for sure I think doing it you get a lot of team bonding when you are out, when it is you and another guy in front of a couple hundred kids trying to teach them how to workout like it's, you bond with that person for sure, even when you go to a library and you read with another person and it is just you and that other person I think like it also, like I said I asked to do it now because I like that, like I like being part of the organization, I like being a part of this team and, and the community involvement.

Through incorporation of CSR, the Lorisville Giants have infused a social issue focused into their business operations that has had a direct influence on the participants’ attitudes, perspectives, and behaviours, as the Giants went beyond a narrow hockey mandate to ensuring that their organization members were contributing and engaged community members.

## **Chapter Five: Discussion**

Interviews were facilitated with staff and players of the Lorisville Giants in order to explore their perspectives surrounding the nature and impact of CSR to better understand the effect that integrating a social focus can have on a sport organization. This research aids in our understanding of the added value that CSR has, and in particular, the potential for positive development that the community interactions and involvement in CSR can have for participants.

In this chapter, I explore the incorporation of CSR into the focal organization, the perceived reasoning, and the extent to which certain CSR programs have been integrated, and the affects they have on the business operations of the organization, their stakeholders, and the consuming public. The first part addresses the rationale behind the Giants' CSR platform, as well as the contributing factors to development, implementation, and deployment of the platform. Subsequently the next section will address the roles undertaken by the participants throughout the CSR process and the third part will examine the impact CSR has had on the participants. This chapter will conclude with a presentation of potential practical implications that this research can have on Major Junior Hockey business, as well as add to the literature surrounding the phenomenon of sport and CSR use.

### **5.1 Rationalization of CSR**

#### **5.1.1 This is 'their team'**

Within the sport context, consumers perceive their relationship with the team to go beyond the typical consumer-client interaction, as they take on a vital role supporting the athletes, becoming honorary members of the team themselves (Schinke, Hancock, & Dubuc, 2007; Mitrano, 1999; Lacey et al., 2015). In other research, Major Junior hockey has been cited

as the “lifeblood that feeds and sustains the town” (Paul & Weinback, 2011, p. 309). Similarly, the findings of the current study suggest that social support is felt by the players from the community due to the team being perceived to be the highest standard of consumable sport available, due to the geographical location of the team leading to a strengthened sense of connection to the community (Dubé et al., 2007). The interviewed participants spoke of strong degrees of affective and emotional attachment from their community members and consumers/fans, as CSR events provide positive opportunities to create these connections, cultivating atypical relationships to the team (McPherson, 1975; Grossberg, 1992; Tainsky & Babiak, 2011).

The perceived sense of attachment that staff and players felt with their fans is showcased in the findings when players and staff discussed feeling a sense of accountability to the community (Dubé et al., 2007). Similarly, within professional sport, Walker et al., (2011) found that causes that resonate and are supported by their consumers positively influence fans’ assessment of the organization, and willingness to support the organization (e.g., Ticket sales, merchandise purchases, etc) therefore integrating specific causes that resonate with these stakeholder groups will lead to a more vested interest as the organization establishes strong connections to their community (Campbell, 2007). The literature suggests that sport can act as a rallying point and a unifying tie, as fans feel connected to the team and the players, viewing their successes as their own even though they did not have a direct hand in them (Cialdini et al., 1976). These feelings of attachment are capitalized upon by organizations as they seek to be advocates for change, utilizing their unique nature and focus on sport to bring together the community (Smith & Ingham, 2003; Mason, 1999; Walker & Kent, 2009). The current study found that sport unified the team around the idea of ‘giving back’ and created a perceived sense

of connection to their community through various CSR initiatives, establishing a foundation of support, as their fans bought into to all aspects of the organization (Mason, 1999; Smith & Ingham, 2003).

### **5.1.2 Charity, it is part of the game**

CSR has evolved from an added piece to an expected and required business practice, continuously modified, as ethical consumerism drives the behaviours of the focal organization, requiring them to meet the growing demands of their consuming public, who seek validation for their support (Roy & Graef, 2003; Smith & Ward, 2007; Ratten, 2010; Doane, 2005). This study showcases that CSR integration has enabled the organization to capitalize upon sport as a tool of change, in order to remain competitive and relevant within their field (Doane, 2005; Smith & Ward, 2007; Babiak & Wolfe, 2009; Walker & Parent, 2010).

The Giants undertook a social issue focus within their business practices due to the expectations created by their provincial, and national governing body, as well as motivated by their professional counterparts, who have highlighted the power of sport business to go beyond their own personal business interests to being social change agents, furthering some form of social good (Walker & Kent, 2009; Babiak & Wolfe, 2009; McWilliams et al., 2006). The Giants showcased a concern for meeting their basic economic and legal requirements, by ensuring their behaviours are ethical and are not intended to harm any of their stakeholders. They also have a community focus and take seriously their obligations as an employer and franchise member of the league (Carroll, 1991, 1999; Carey et al., 2011). Through their CSR efforts, they were perceiving themselves to go beyond the minimum requirements of this league, ingraining the Giants within the fabric of the community. They did, however, also acknowledge there is a

preconceived notion that CSR is a ‘non-product’ of sport, and a necessary business function for sport organizations (Walker & Kent, 2009; Kihl et al., 2014; Schlereth et al., 2014).

The NHL, the premiere professional hockey league in North America, serves as a role model organization, influencing the attitudes, behaviours, and actions of their for-profit amateur counterparts. The focal organization was found to be mirroring the behaviours of NHL teams, just on a smaller and more localized scale, suggesting that the increased focus on CSR within the professional sport landscape had translated to the amateur sport context. The findings aid in our ability to understand the role of non-professional sport teams in going beyond their basic sport delivery mandate, showcasing the ability for sport organizations to incorporate and integrate CSR in a variety of forms outside of the professional sport contexts (Misener & Babiak, 2015). The tradition of giving back has become embedded within the sport context, with for-profit enterprises serving as role models for their amateur counterparts. As the expectations surrounding CSR continue to evolve, so will the standard of CSR delivery as organizations seek to utilize CSR to remain relevant, and competitive within their field.

### **5.1.3 Adding value to the organization**

Sport organizations are going beyond the altruistic underpinnings of CSR, capitalizing upon the strategic benefits incurred within human resources, reputation and branding, and utilizing CSR to add value to the organization and their community (Porter & Kramer, 2002, 2006; Campbell, 2007; McElhaney, 2009; Bradish & Cronin, 2009; Broomhill, 2007). As an innovative business strategy, CSR aids in the development of the overall business practise of the organization, as they capitalize upon the value that CSR can possess in an effective manner to



provide themselves a competitive advantage within their organizational field (Porter & Kramer, 2006).

The findings highlight that strategic philanthropy consisted of synergized use of the organization's resources, ensuring both the organization and society benefits, as they seek to integrate initiatives with a definite link to their mission and mandate (Porter & Kramer, 2002, 2006). The focal organization perceived CSR to legitimize their practices, as it enables them to justify any resource use as long as it was linked to the purported outcomes, as they market themselves as a leader in the community, showcasing their commitment to the community as they combine their marketing, PR, and event planning with philanthropic desires (McElhaney, 2009; Kitzmueller & Shimshack, 2012; Babiak & Wolfe, 2009). As noted in the literature, in order to perform CSR, a synergistic use of organizational resources was necessary, capitalizing upon their available resources to integrate CSR to address key stakeholders' interests ensuring the organization and society benefits (McAllister & Ferrell, 2002).

The Giants acknowledged that some of the aspects of philanthropy are embedded within strategic marketing aspects, as their good corporate behaviour is highlighted and dissected by the media, and general public. Organizations are utilizing their presence to help rather than hinder the community within, as they increase awareness of social issue groups within their community (Ricks, 2005; Walker et al., 2011; Doanne, 2005; Campbell, 2007). As organizations seek to integrate CSR into their practices, image and brand enhancement are subsequent benefits to CSR as organizations cultivate images of goodwill, and community mindedness utilizing marketing methods to promote and communicate their CSR, creating feelings of positive association, benefiting the organization (Broomhill, 2007; Campbell, 2007).

The internationalization and global reach of sport enables organization to have a wide breadth of influence, capitalizing upon their large public profile, to create greater awareness and knowledge surrounding societal issues in hopes of addressing the needs of the community (Holt, 1995; Babiak & Wolfe, 2009; Ratten, 2010). Research shows that CSR has been utilized to add credibility to a sport organization's operations, addressing scepticism, and ensuring transparency (Walker & Parent, 2007; Smith & Westerbeek, 2007; Mason, 1999; Edwards, 2015; Chalip, 2006). It was evident in the current study that CSR primarily helped to cultivate a specific community oriented image that the Giants can leverage for their own success, aiding in the development of partnerships, and relationships with the community, creating brand equity, dependent on their reputation and perceived image. The added value of image enhancement is not new to the CSR literature as research has demonstrated that organizations seek to promote their good behaviour and view CSR as a way to offset or distract from any corporate misdoings, seen as a way to address the heightened scrutiny many sport organizations face (Bénabou & Tirole, 2010; Zadek, 2004; Walker & Parent, 2010). Within the professional hockey landscape, CSR has been utilized as a tool to ensure transparency and legitimacy, ensuring proper operations, and behaviours due to growing demands, and expectations of their global public (Babiak & Wolfe, 2009; NHL, 2014).

As a sporting organization, Lorisville leverages their goodwill image to garner support from the community, improving their off ice reputation, and highlighting their positive contributions to society, thus distracting critics from the more negative aspects of hockey (cf. Babiak et al., 2012; Athanasopoulou, et al., 2011). Specifically, the players and staff discussed fighting as a 'dark side' to the sport of hockey, noting the aggressive nature and subculture of

violence that has been created within the sport (Vaz, 1982). They hoped that CSR would override any negative image associated with fighting (Broomhill, 2007).

Relatedly, professional athletes are increasingly recognizing the strategic nature of CSR as an influencing factor on their own brand and image that they are packaging to the consuming public (Roy & Graef, 2003). Past literature highlights the insurgence of athletes seeking to integrate themselves into their adopted communities, crafting a specific image, utilizing their desire to be in the community to increase awareness about their personal brand, marketing themselves to further their hockey career, and capitalizing upon the good natured intentions of CSR (Babiak et al., 2012; Roy & Graef, 2003). The findings showcased that CSR was perceived to enable the participants to go beyond the assumed nature of hockey players, to being viewed as contributing members of society, adding value to their own personal reputations and marketability. CSR was used to craft and package a specific image of themselves in order reach members of the community they operate within (Walker & Parent, 2010; Ratten, 2010; Armeiy, 2004).

Players acknowledged that CSR was a tool that they could capitalize upon for their own image enhancement, and consciously tried to blur the lines of 'hockey player' with their own personal life off the ice. Personal branding has been shown to be important for athletes as they seek to differentiate themselves, building relationships with sponsors, building off of their success to cultivate a sellable image of themselves (Hodge & Walker, 2015). The findings suggest that the focal organization can utilize their CSR platform to entice higher quality players to their team, as they seek the opportunity to capitalize on the strategic nature of CSR for themselves.

In addition to ethical, legal, and philanthropic/discretionary considerations, Carroll's (1991, 1999) framework of social responsibility also includes economic considerations of CSR, which were evident in the current study. Beyond the fundamental economic requirements of a business to ensure continued existence, profitability of CSR was not perceived to be a contributing factor to CSR development, with the focal organization showcasing sincerity within their CSR platform (Carroll, 1991; Aupperle et al., 1985). The focal organization believed that CSR implementation and economics is a casual relationship, as economic return is not a guarantee (Kaplan & Norton, 1991; Porter & Kramer, 1999), therefore, CSR was not undertaken by the focal organization for the intentions of profitability as a definite link did not exist between incurred revenue and CSR.

Valor (2005) highlighted the disconnect between economic performance and CSR, although it is assumed that generating a positive image focused on goodwill will have some positive affect, as the underlying goal of a business is to be profitable, therefore CSR is being undertaken due to the perceivable benefits that will be incurred. Aligning with Valor (2005), the current study found that perceived benefits such as brand equity and increased awareness of the team that were being incurred with their CSR incorporation, justified the resource use and the continued CSR involvement although no formal mechanisms were in place to measure this return.

Relocation of a sport franchise can lead to economic and social challenges therefore the community and the team sought to establish a strong and continued relationship to restrict these negative implications, as both parties viewed themselves as dependent on one another (Mitrano, 1999). Continued co-existence was an explicit goal of the organization, as they forged strong

connections to their community, aiming to add economic value to the community (e.g., through employment, tourism, hospitality), recognizing the contributing aspects that their business operations had to the communities' overall success.

## **5.2 Integration of CSR**

This chapter addresses the process of integrating CSR into the focal organization, highlighting the types and methods of integration, as well as challenges that arose throughout deployment. The organization accepted the potential drain CSR can have, viewing it as a necessary business function, but sought to integrate CSR in a cost effective, and reasonable manner in order to limit any of the possible negative consequences of CSR integration (Carroll, 1991; 1999). The ambiguous and flexible nature of CSR has allowed for unrestricted implementation as organization capitalize upon the lack of standardization, to incorporate CSR as they see fit. This is consistent with other research on CSR which suggests that it is a malleable practice which is adaptable in nature, as the organization recognized that the integration of their CSR initiatives can be manipulated to ensure alignment with the organization's best interests while simultaneously meeting the community's needs (Carroll, 1979, 1991; Van der Heijden et al., 2009; Broomhill, 2007).

### **5.2.1 High-level engagement**

Coercion into CSR development limits the success of the organization's CSR platform, for themselves and their intended beneficiaries. Organizations' CSR platforms must be internally motivated, with constant nurturing from all organizational members, ensuring sincerity, investment, and high-level engagement from all organizational members, to increase the

likelihood of incurring the added value associated with CSR (Husted & Salazar, 2008; Campbell, 2007; Foster et al., 2009; Broomhill, 2007). The focal organization demonstrated a desire for high-level engagement, as it sought to sincerely incorporate CSR into their business practices, incurring the strategic benefits that exist with this engagement, and genuine CSR incorporation (Foster et al., 2009). The current study adds to the CSR and sport literature by providing an understanding of the role that employees and athletes themselves have in CSR implementation, as they are imperative to the process, serving as change agents, invoking change in their own behaviour as well as in the organization itself (Bolton et al., 2011; Berger et al., 2007).

Best practices are focused on societal improvement through establishment of programs that require full integration of social, environmental, and economic concerns into a corporation's culture, operations, strategic, and values (Berger et al., 2007). CSR integration can encompass a wide variety of initiatives and the Giants made necessary considerations to purposefully select mechanisms to implement their platforms based on the beneficial potential for the organization, capitalizing upon the flexible nature of CSR to suit their needs, and ensuring the process of CSR aligns with the organization's best interest, while simultaneously bettering society (Berger et al., 2007; Broomhill, 2007; Valor, 2005). Organizations must consider the audience and demographic when developing their platform as organizations should not expect their consumers to react to the CSR initiatives in a uniform "one size fits all" manner (Walker et al., 2011, p. 11). Rather, CSR success is reliant on differentiation, and ensuring the causes resonate and are well supported by organizational members, and the organization's target market.

The organization demonstrated sincerity when implementing and developing their CSR platforms, as they recognized that a high level engagement was necessary to ensure successful

CSR integration, going beyond short low cost market friendly initiatives, to ensuring genuine CSR incorporation (Giulianotti, 2015). It is this high level of engagement that the organization had that differentiated their CSR platform from more superficial or one-time capitalistic infused platforms (Foster et al., 2009). The organization recognized that it was not possible to simply add a philanthropic element to their practices. Rather, they truly had to embed and cultivate an organizational culture and tradition of ‘giving back’ in order to benefit from any positive outcomes of CSR (Foster et al., 2009).

Concerns have been raised as individuals worry that corporate sponsored social responsibility will take away from the hockey identity and integrity of the organization (Giulianotti, 2015). Therefore, it is necessary that organizations do not go overboard with their charity focus as it must remain oriented to the mission and mandate of the organization. The findings suggested that participants were cognizant of ensuring that hockey was always the number one priority throughout the entire process of CSR, and that CSR was an added piece, rather than the principle focus.

### **5.2.2 Organizational Structure and Institutional Mechanisms**

Employees within a decentralized, democratic power structure organization are expected to undertake a leadership role with the CSR process. They can face uncertainty, therefore it is necessary for high level employees to provide direction, to ensure understanding, and to cultivate an overarching culture of giving, that embraces change, and development (Campbell, 2007; Tumay, 2009; Van der Heijden et al., 2009). The findings highlighted that the participants viewed CSR as a collaborative process, influenced by the overarching organizational culture and tradition of giving back, with employees responsibilities including initiation, implementation and

maturation of the CSR programs (Bolton et al., 2011). The multi-level managerial system of the organization led to collaboration between the hired staff and the higher-management, throughout the CSR process but final approval was limited to high-level management, which restricted the collaborative nature of CSR.

Players and non-managerial staff were instrumental in the deployment of CSR but the organizational structure led to the relationship between them and the management staff to be decentralized, with a restriction placed on their involvement in the planning and decision making process, limiting their understanding of the CSR portfolio of the Giants. Incorporating them into the decision making process of CSR may enable them to infuse their own interests into the organization's portfolio, allowing them to take a more active and contributing role with regards to the organization's CSR platform, leading to increased investment and engagement (Thibault et al., 2010).

Alumni/veteran players had a direct influence on the development of the athletes within this study, as they acquired the necessary knowledge from observing the older players. The informal knowledge transfer ensured continued tradition of an organization comprising of socially conscious athlete leaders, as the participants spoke of taking on a leadership role, influencing their younger peers. Proper leadership central to the success of the team, as the Giants used CSR as a tool to develop leaders on and off the ice, to allow for continued success of the organization, utilizing the admiration to inform the participants of the expectations and requirements of them as organizational members (Price & Weiss, 2011; Bucci, Bloom, Loughead, & Caron, 2012).



### **5.2.3 Initiatives Development**

Prior research has suggested that sport organizations incorporate CSR in three main ways: (1) teams establishing charitable foundations to support their community, (2) teams receiving funding from corporations performing their own CSR agenda through donations and sponsorship, and (3) teams supporting other sport development organizations who are attentive to a social cause as part of their program focus (e.g., addressing inactivity via the Canadian ParticipAction program) (Ratten & Babiak, 2010; Smith & Westerbeek, 2007). It is through these methods of deployment that the organization was able to integrate a wide range of initiatives, from environmental to education and health programs, to philanthropic endeavours to cause related support programs (Walker & Kent, 2009; Mohr & Webb, 2005).

Capacity challenges that exist for amateur sport organizations have been well documented, as organizations seek to capitalize upon on their available resources in order to integrate CSR into their business operations (Doherty, Misener, & Cuskelly, 2014). Human resources and their time were highlighted as a main resource capitalized upon for CSR within the Lorisville Giants as they performed well-planned programs, engaging in a thoughtful decision-making process to limit additional costs and offset any supplementary drain on resources.

The findings showcased the focal organization's alignment with the past literature as their initiatives were focused on education and health programs, cause-related support programs, employee well-being and philanthropy, with an importance placed on at risk youth, as athlete volunteerism was utilized to deploy the organization's CSR programs (Walker & Kent, 2009; Mohr & Webb, 2005; Kihl et al., 2014). Throughout the integration process, critical considerations were taken to ensure the success of their CSR platform including the importance

of remaining local, as these were perceived to resonate more closely with their consumers’ interests, and ensuring that the initiatives chosen were not ‘controversial’ in nature as they do not want to offend or upset their sponsors or their fans.

A fundamental focus on youth and local causes was perceived to aid in the past success of the Giant’s CSR platform. These issues were perceived to connect with their community members, leading to an increased investment. The athletes spoke of causes that resonated with them that they had incorporated into their own personal life, showcasing their own community mindedness. Participants spoke of hockey has a unifying context, as they noted their preference to get involved in hockey related initiatives rather than other non-hockey related initiatives . The unique nature of sport provides the opportunity to bring together people through activity and this study aids in our understanding of the role of the particular sport itself in improving the experience of those who are actually delivering the CSR initiatives (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Hockey Focused Initiatives**

Hockey Involvement (Low-High)	Minor Hockey Coaches/Reward/prizes	In Game Experience/Speciality Games
	‘Shinny’	Equipment Donation/Celebrity Serves
	Organizational Resource Use (Low-High)	

Due to their low cost and ability to resonate with the organizational members and their consumer, hockey focused initiatives need to be utilized more within the organization’s CSR

platform, leading to higher engagement from the participants, feelings of positive association, and overall enhancement of the experience (and potential outcomes).

### **5.3 The role of the participants**

In sport, athletes are viewed as role models, with every move documented and consumed by the general public, as the ‘star power’ of the athletes is harnessed and organizations seek to utilize the forged emotional connections between their athletes and fans (Hamilton, 2004; Babiak et al., 2012; Ilicic & Baxter, 2014; Mason, 1999). Organizations seek to leverage the publicity the athletes receive, utilizing them as a resource to conduct and promote their CSR platform, enabling them to forge connections with the community members (Babiak et al., 2012). Due to the public profile of the players, their presence in the community was capitalized upon by the organization, as the players served as necessary components on the promotion and deployment of CSR.

#### **5.3.1 Co-delivery of CSR**

The behaviours of the focal organization showcase the social leveraging ability and strategic nature of CSR as it is capitalized upon to provide a shared value for the organization and their community members, sponsors, and intended beneficiaries, going beyond the altruistic underpinnings of CSR, to acknowledging the strategic and beneficial nature that social issue focus can have for a sporting organization and their partners (Walker et al., 2013; Bruch & Walter, 2005). The findings illustrated that CSR provides an opportunity for the corporation and their beneficiaries to work collaboratively, to ensure that the incorporation of CSR is benefiting their own business practices as well as society (Tainsky & Babiak, 2011; Bruch & Walter, 2005).

This is consistent with Babiak and Wolf (2009) who highlighted that CSR enables them to brand themselves as good citizens, attracting sponsors, while showcasing their continued commitment to their community. The community-focused reputation of the Giants has been leveraged by other special interest community groups, and sponsors to increase exposure and awareness of their own personal businesses within the local community (Ilicic & Baxter, 2014).

The focal organization highlighted the importance of continued and positive relationships with their community partners, utilizing sponsorship and special interests groups to deliver a plethora of community focused initiatives. The establishment of successful interorganizational relationships is dependent on the development of trustworthy, consistent, and balanced relationships, which results in the improvement of program delivery and enhanced community presence. Building these cross-sector relationships through sport is one way to address complex social and environmental concerns (Misener & Doherty, 2009; Babiak & Trendafilova, 2011).

The focal organization capitalized on community partners for support, to help those in need around them as they shared resources, and knowledge, in order to delivery a successful and beneficial CSR programs (Ratten & Babiak, 2010; Misener & Doherty, 2013). The use of partnerships enables organizations to capitalize upon one another's strengths to be able to successfully accomplish the mission of the club, as they utilize one another's resource and capacity (Misener & Doherty, 2013). Developing clear and concise measures of efficiency to measure the effectiveness of the CSR initiatives, as feelings of goodwill and association are hard to quantify, can help to justify the CSR integration, as they can clearly showcase the alignment with their mission and mandate, as well as collaborating with their various co-delivers to understand their goals and intentions with the initiatives (Taylor, Doherty, & McGraw, 2015).

## **5.4 The impact of CSR integration**

This chapter captures the implications association with CSR development focused on the experience of the participants and its perceived impact. Organizations seek validation from their internal and external stakeholder groups, who are play a pivotal role to the justification of CSR integration, utilizing their perceptions to adapt and modify their CSR platform (Swanson, 1999; Campbell, 2007; Berger et al., 2007). Fan reaction and consumer intentions have received considerable attention in the literature, as authors highlight the influencing nature of CSR initiatives on the perception and behaviour of the consuming public; This study aids in bettering our understanding of the implications CSR has on internal organizational members, and the purported outcomes (Walker, Kent, & Jordan, 2011; Walker & Kent, 2009; Walker & Heere, 2011).

### **5.4.1 Transitioning – Professional development of the athletes**

The player participants are immersed in the sport of hockey, unwavering in their desire to achieve success in the pinnacle of professional sport organizations, the NHL. The team and league recognized the unrealistic nature of this goal by providing CSR as a method of development for the players to develop skills beyond hockey ability. Players were beginning their transition into other identities outside of hockey, as they recognize the probability of a professional hockey career was unlikely, this was shown with participants speaking of future careers, and a newfound focus on academics. In alignment with past literature, the organization recognized their role in the transition to retirement, as players can leave the sport at any time, and an increased focus is needed on preparing them for a life after sport (Baillie & Danish, 1992).

The transitional period to retirement from elite sport has been viewed as being plagued with serious difficulties for the athletes including isolation, loss of identity, and prestige, with individuals having an increased likelihood of depression, and diminished life satisfaction (e.g. Boulton, 1970; Kramer, 1969). As athletes lose their primary identity, they become disengaged therefore organizations are undertaking the responsibility to provide positive development opportunities to their athletes that go beyond sport in order to ease the transition, limiting the sense of loss (Boulton, 1970; Ogilvie, 1984; Ogilvie & Howe, 1982; Curtis & Ennis, 1988).

#### **5.4.2 You CAN get that here**

Authority figures within elite level sport have a role that extends beyond athlete's performance, influencing the task, social, and emotional development of the players, capitalizing upon the ability of physical activity to aid in the moral and ethical development of individuals, as sport can be utilized to instil values and enhance the behaviour of the participants (Thibault & Babiak, 2005; Parker & Stiehl, 2014; Chelladurai & Riemer, 1998). The ability for hockey organizations to utilize CSR as a tool of change exists, as they have the ability to influence the behaviours and attitudes of their organization members, to influence the development and behaviours of their participants (Misener & Doherty, 2015; Soberlak & Côté, 2003).

The CSR events served as definite time for the players to meet and interact with their community, humanizing the players, making them more approachable to the consumer and increasing their own awareness of community need. Participants strengthened their understanding and knowledge of philanthropy through involvement in the organization's CSR platform, becoming more aware of the needs that existed, developing into socially conscious individuals, going beyond the monochromatic hockey identify. These activities created more

socially aware organizational members, focused on the betterment of society, attributing the CSR initiatives to developing them as the individuals that they are now, recognizing the role of CSR in their personal growth into mature, contributing societal members.

These initiatives have future implications for the participants as they recognized the role that CSR had in facilitating their development of key transferable skills, applicable in a future professional context. As players became more comfortable in social settings, establishing key relationships, and interpersonal skills, participants recognized the leveraging ability of CSR to market themselves, aiding in their development as individuals, seeking to capitalize upon these newfound skills to aid in their future successes. The focal organization was instrumental in this development, providing the opportunities for this growth and development, going beyond hockey to create these well rounded individuals.

#### **5.4.3 “They are like my family”**

CSR events served as opportunities for players to be taken outside of their comfort zone, bonding with their teammates, increasing group cohesiveness, and cultivating feelings of belonging. The development of cultural norms with regards to the CSR events was obvious, as participants spoke of knowledge development, and the central role the veteran players had in establishing a mindset focused on community consciousness, as participants sought to accomplish CSR focused goals together, rather than individual successes, wanting a positive CSR experiences for all participants (Salminen & Luhtanen, 1998). The poor on ice performance did not impact the positive attitudes towards the CSR programs, as a collective, the participants positively reflected on the CSR initiatives, welcoming the opportunity to be a part of the organization, bettering themselves and the community (Campbell, 2007; Salminen & Luhtanen,

1998). Rather, CSR provides opportunities to go beyond the outcome of the game, to focusing on the bigger picture.

CSR integration has been linked to attracting higher quality staff to corporations as individuals aspire to link themselves to community minded, role model organizations, as individuals perceive themselves to be involved in socially conscious organizations, increasing pride and commitment (Campbell, 2007; Glavas & Godwin, 2012). Generating feelings of positive association, influenced the overall perception of the organization from the members within, as the players and staff spoke highly of the organization due to their significant knowledge of their community involvement, showcasing their desire to continue to be a part of a community minded organization (Campbell, 2007; Baron et al., 1985). CSR provided opportunities away from the rink for participants to become unified, creating a sense of belonging, going beyond individual hockey successes to demonstrating a concern for the greater good of the team, and society. As the participants became more involved with the team, a greater sense of belonging was created as they showcased pride and commitment, welcoming the opportunity to represent and be a part of the Lorisville Giants.

## **5.5 Future Areas for Research**

This study generated interesting insights into the reasoning and implications of CSR integration, in particular the impact on their players and what it means to be socially responsible. It adds to our understanding the role of sport as a tool of change, as well as provides much needed insight into elite level hockey. However, more empirical insight is needed to provide a greater understanding of the precise impact that CSR has had on participants, and the overall business operations of the organization, adding to our understanding the role that CSR has within



for-profit sport, in particular within the amateur sport context, helping to support any potential costs that CSR can cause the organization. Further research into measuring CSR impact will help to justify the continued use of CSR within the sport landscape, going beyond the good natured intentions of CSR to showcasing the positive implications that can be incurred through well-planned, sincere CSR integration. Developing a better understanding of the impact of CSR will ensure longevity of CSR as a business practice as well it can help to shape and mould CSR into a sustainable and beneficial tool of change within the sport industry because as the use of CSR within sport continues to grow as should our understanding of the logistical aspects of CSR integration.

Further research is also needed to examine and confirm the long-term effects that the players' involvement in CSR initiatives have on their personal and professional development, preparing them for future careers, as well as the role that the organization plays in this transition. This theme was not expected at the outset of the current study and was uncovered as an identified theme, therefore further evidence is needed to understand the role CSR has in providing experiences, and opportunities for player growth, and how the players in their future careers, outside of professional hockey, can capitalize upon these learning opportunities. Due to the nature of this current study, the long-term effects on the participating athletes is unknown, although many hypothesized that the CSR initiatives were positively impacting their development, as they viewed them as opportunities to better themselves as individuals, preparing them for future endeavours. Therefore further insight, through interviews with alumni players, is needed to better understand the role the organizations are playing in developing their athletes is necessary, as well developing a better understanding of what potential long-term effects of CSR

involvement can have on the athletes. By having a more in-depth understanding of the implications, sport enterprises will be able to harness the influencing power that they have to ensure they are providing positive experiences, contributing to the development of their athletes beyond the field of play.

In addition, future research is needed into the informal nature of Major Junior Hockey, in particular the process of knowledge transfer between players, as they learn by observing the behaviours of the older players, directly influenced by their actions and attitudes. This theme was identified throughout the findings and it suggests a potential opportunity for sporting organization to utilize the admiration that the younger players have for their older counterparts, to instil values and attitudes, to ensure their expectations and intentions are being met properly. Better understanding this informal relationship and the implications that it can have will aid in our understanding of the influencing nature of athletes, and the potential they have to undertake leadership roles, serving as role models within the organization.

These suggestions for future research may help overcome some of the limitations of the current study. As limitations do exist with the current study, as youth participants on the team were not included in the study, this was due to age, as participants under the age of 18 were not utilized as much as their adult counterparts, therefore those over the age of 18 had a more diverse and in-depth understanding and experience of the CSR platform. In addition due to access restrictions alumni players were unable to be included in this study, this limits our understanding of the long-term effects of CSR, and would have added to our understanding of the implications that CSR has on the future developments of the players, past their tenure with the team. Acknowledging these limitations will allow for a better understanding of the themes that were

identified and will aid in future applications of the findings, and add to the existing CSR literature.

## **5.6 Practice-based Implications and Recommendations**

Due to the structure of this study, the findings are not generalizable to all Major Junior hockey clubs. However, there may be some themes and considerations that could be applicable to other similar organizations, which could use this as an introductory platform to open dialogue about CSR, adapting it as seen fit for their particular market and intentions. The results highlight the strategic nature of CSR, and the added value that has been created through CSR incorporation, aiding in our understanding in the field of sport the role that individuals and organizations have, to go beyond sport skill development to being advocates for change and development. The following recommendations and areas for future research are offered for the current organization on the topics of player involvement, communication, and measurement tools.

### **5.6.1 Player Involvement**

The feedback sessions provided valuable insight into the potential that these findings had in the development, and growth of the focal organization's CSR platform. Management personnel confirmed that a disengagement between staff and the athletes in terms of seeking feedback and utilizing them as resource beyond their promotional ability. As the findings suggested, a possible option to strengthen the CSR platform would be to collaborate with the players, seeking their input regarding the types of initiatives undertaken, as well as receiving any feedback, soliciting their perspective and experience with the events. Involving the players in the

development of the CSR programs will help to increase engagement and investment, improving the overall experience and success of the programs, as well as helping to create a sense of belonging, as the players will feel like they are more part of the organization, rather than just tools that are just utilized by the organization to progress their specific agenda, increasing investment and engagement with the CSR platform.

As the findings suggest, the informal nature of CSR is capitalized upon within the organization as they utilize it as a method of knowledge transfer as players look to their older peers to mould their behaviours and attitudes, with a dependency on the veteran players to set the tone of the organization with regards to incorporating a social issue focus. The implications of this influencing nature of the veteran and alumni players is imperative to recognize and capitalize upon, as the 'buying in' to the mindset of being socially responsible will help to ensure that the overall culture of the organization remains community focus regardless of the staff or athletes that remain.

As it is with for-profit sport business a continual turnover will occur therefore being cognizant of that, finding leaders who exemplify what the mission of the organization is in terms of being socially responsible will aid in the success of their CSR platforms. The findings highlighted that this can also lead to group cohesiveness and group think which can translate to on ice success, as the CSR initiatives provide opportunities for the players to work together towards a common goal, pushing them outside their comfort levels and bringing them together closer as teammates, as they become a part of something much bigger. Therefore as an organization, they should seek to work together, as an organization focused on group success through societal betterment will achieve cohesiveness, as they become intertwined, focused on

the improvement of themselves, with the potential to translate this success oriented mindset to on ice endeavours.

Recommendations:

- Continue to work together collaboratively, include the players and non-managerial staff, ensure that you are valuing any feedback and listening to their ideas
- Identify one or two players who can help to lead the programs, seek their ideas on what types of initiatives may resonate with the players, try to incorporate their ideas in any way possible throughout the season
- Observe and evaluate the players throughout the initiatives, figure out their strengths and what they are best at, use this when scheduling them for future events

### **5.6.2 Communication**

Improved communication was needed throughout all levels of the organization with an need to increase communication to all organizational members, in particular players and non-managerial staff to ensure understanding surrounding all aspects of the CSR decision making process. The establishment of stronger relationships built on trust, communication, and respect, ensuring all stakeholders feel comfortable in interacting and working collaboratively with one another will aid in improving the communication as successful CSR is dependent on the communication between the organization and their intended beneficiaries (Giulianotti, 2015).

Recommendations:

- Continuous feedback sessions with the players, seeking their opinions and perspectives of the activities. This can be done anonymously to ensure credible responses
- When asking for feedback ensure it is met with respect, that participants know their feedback is valued
- Establish clear and specific goals with the partnering organizations to ensure all parties are aware of the intentions and expectations that exist for the CSR events
- Continuously seek input and feedback following events. Find out what is working and what they did not like. Use this to improve the next event

- Ask the players what initiatives they prefer to participate in, rotate the players so they are able to experience and benefit from a varied experience
- Eliminate any stereotypes of preconceived notions that exist, recognize that the players are more than just hockey players, establishing thoughtful and strong relationships can help to improve trust and respect

### **5.6.3 Measurement Tools**

The informal nature of CSR allows for flexibility and adaptability, as organization implements aspects of being socially conscious into their business practices as they see fit, as it meets the demands of their specific market, and their overall mission and mandate. The findings highlighted the unknown impact of CSR, as well as the lack of empirical support for the continuation of the CSR initiatives. More formalized methods of measuring would help to determine whether the initiatives are accomplishing the goals of the organization and their community partners, as well as provide a more in-depth understanding of the implications of undertaking a social issue focus as a sport business. Hosting continues feedback sessions, soliciting ideas from all stakeholders throughout the season will aid in the success of as it helps to ensure goal-directed behaviour, and help to improve the development of the sport organization, done in the form of formalized methods of inquiry, surveys, evaluations, or informal discussion (Taylor et al., 2015).

The lack of formalized measurement tools is consistent with past findings, as organizations lack resources and ability to measure the effectiveness of their programs, which can lead to a lack of credibility as critics disregard the goodwill intentions of CSR (Campbell, 2007). Therefore, a conscious effort must be undertaken by organizations with a CSR platform to create and measure their CSR programs, following a mature-decision making process as this

will aid in the improvement of their programs as they will have a justified sense of success, and a more in-depth understanding of their programs and their impacts (Ratten, 2010).

Recommendations:

- Establish goals for each event, and what the organization seeks to accomplish i.e. increase attendance, raise x amount of dollars, developing season ticket holders, etc
- Take into consideration the perspective of all stakeholder groups, determine what you wish to accomplish with regards to each of them (i.e., increase commitment, continued attendance, etc). Focus groups, surveys, and interviews may be useful tools to generate feedback.

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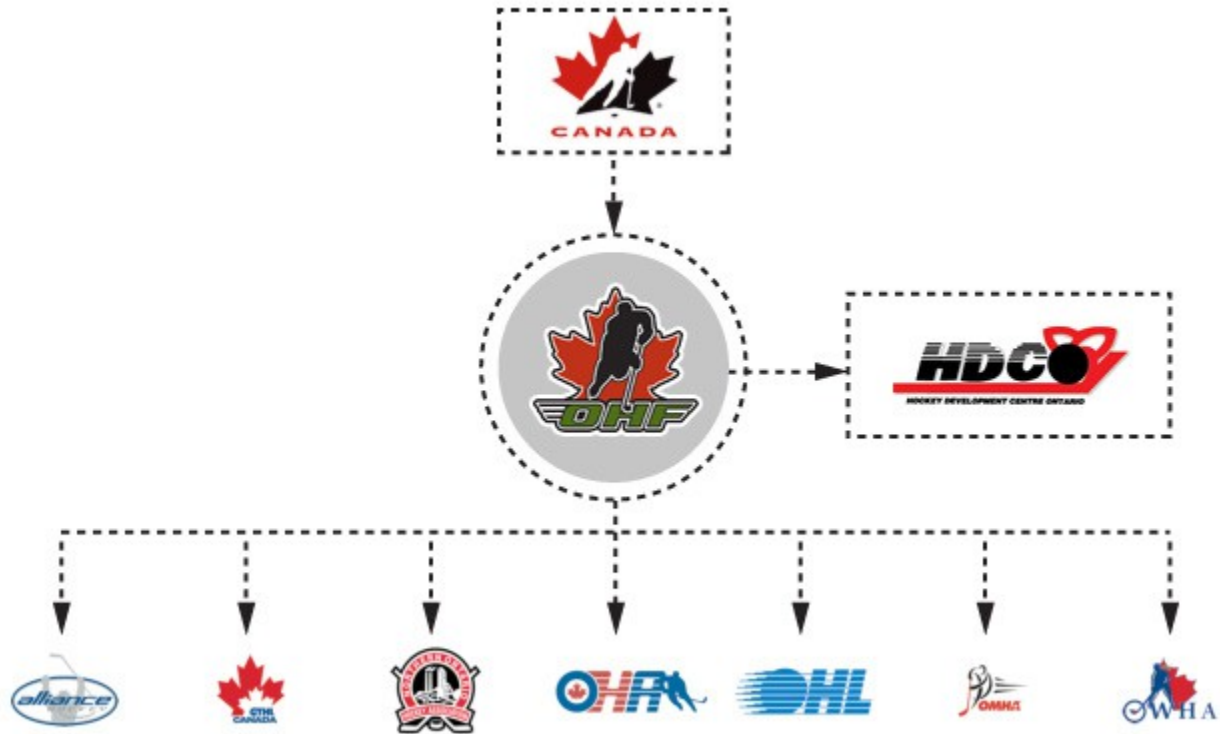
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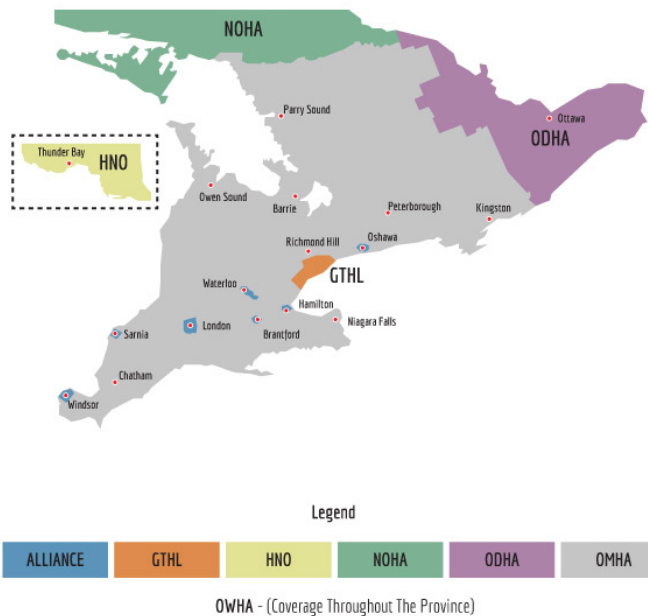
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## Appendix A: Hockey Canada Organizational Structure



**FIGURE 1: THE BRANCH ORGANIZATIONS OF THE ONTARIO HOCKEY FEDERATION (HOCKEY CANADA, 2015)**



**FIGURE 2: GEOGRAPHICAL BREAKDOWN OF ONTARIO HOCKEY CLUBS (HOCKEY CANADA, 2015)**

Appendix B: Canadian Hockey League Structure and Development

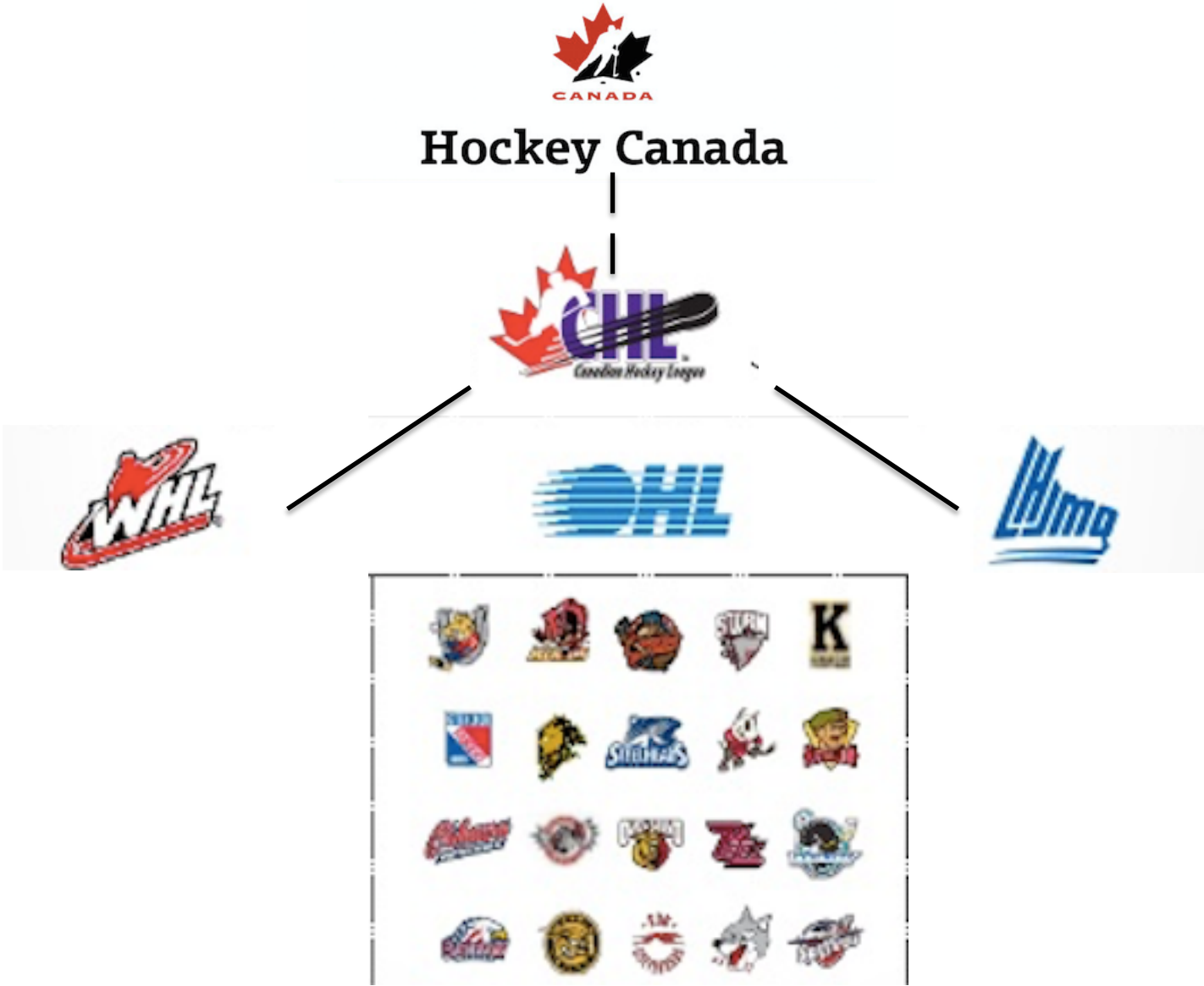


FIGURE 3: CANADIAN HOCKEY LEAGUE DIVISIONS (HOCKEY CANADA, 2015)

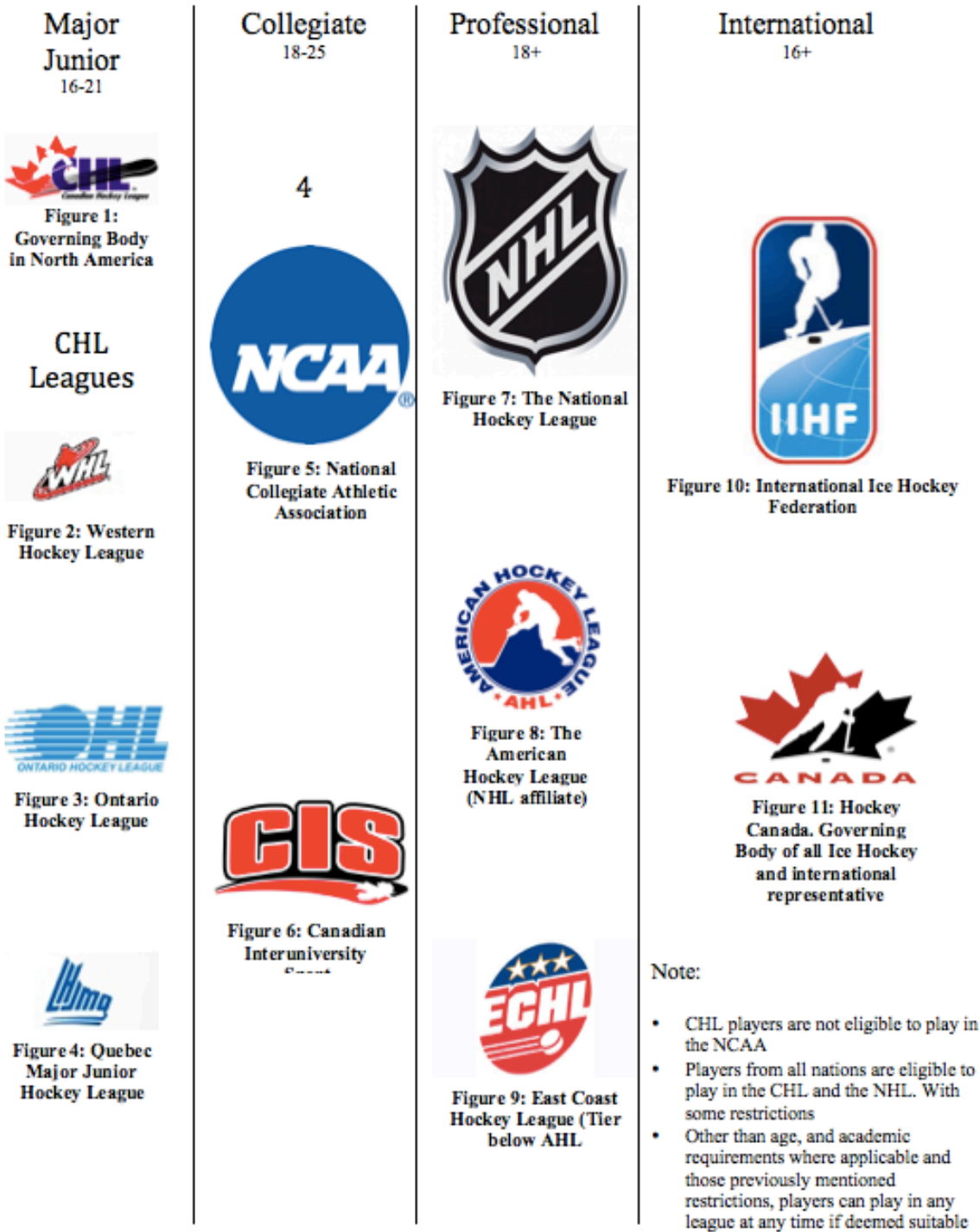


FIGURE 4: HOCKEY CLUB OPPORTUNITIES FOR MEN 16+

## Appendix C: Players Interview Guide

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) refers to the programs and initiatives undertaken by the focal organization that have a social issue focus. In the past this has included Cancer awareness programs, education and health presentations, and food drives, among others. As a member of the organization who has participated in these initiatives, I am interested in your perspective. The purpose of this exploratory study is to explore the nature and perceived impact of CSR within the focal organization, a for-profit, Major Junior enterprise.

1. To get us started, what types of community volunteer activities or initiatives have you been a part of as a representative of the organization?
2. Do you think these initiatives are an important aspect of your role as a player for the organization? How so?
3. Can you tell me about a particularly meaningful experience or a time when you were volunteering in the community as a member of the organization that really stands out to you? What made this experience meaningful?
  - a. Have there been any experiences that were less meaningful or caused any problems?
4. Have there been any difficult aspects of your involvement in the community?
5. Why do you think the team (as a hockey organization) gets involved in these particular activities?
  - a. What impact do these activities have on the team? (e.g., image, reputation, access to fans)
  - b. What impact do these activities have on the community or the particular causes the team is involved in?

- c. Are there particular initiatives or causes that the team is involved in that are also personally important to you as a player? (is there a connection)
6. How have these initiatives impacted your awareness of different community causes? (e.g., are you aware of a particular need in the community because of this experience that you may not have known about before?)
7. How has volunteering for the focal organization influenced the way you think about the team or your commitment to the team and/or organization?
8. Do you feel that the team takes into consideration your other commitments i.e. practice, education, family, when asking you to be part of these initiatives that go above and beyond your role as a player on the ice?
9. Are there any additional comments or insights that you would like to share at this time?

## Appendix D: Staff Interview Guide

Corporate Social Responsibility refers to the programs and initiatives undertaken by the focal organization that have a social issue focus. In the past this has included Cancer awareness programs, education and health presentations, and food drives, among others. The purpose of this exploratory study is to explore the nature and perceived impact of CSR within the focal organization, a for-profit major junior hockey club.. Will you please state your role with the organization, including your length of employment/association with the organization, what your job entails, and the role you play with regards to the team's CSR platform.

1. In the context of your hockey organization, what does it mean to be “socially responsible”?
  - a. Probe for who they feel they are ‘responsible to’ and what are they ‘responsible for’
2. Can you tell me a little about what the team does in the community related to social responsibility? (e.g., identify initiatives)

If can't identify, give probes to gauge awareness: “Champions for Education,” “Champions on ice, for life,” “Hockey Stories Events,” “Pink in the Rink,” “Christmas Food Drive,” “50/50 Tickets,” and “Fun Fit”.
3. Why do you think the organization (as a hockey organization) gets involved in these particular activities? (motive)
  - a. Are there any requirements or pressure from your governing body to get involved?
4. What impact do these activities have on the team, in other words, what does CSR achieve? (e.g., image, reputation, access to fans)
5. What impact do these activities have on the community or the particular causes the team is involved in?

6. How is the CSR portfolio integrated into the business operations of the organization? Is it part of the organization's strategy? (is this formalized eg., written down)
7. What considerations are taken when choosing the types of activities to perform? Why is this the case?
8. What organizational resources are required and used to deliver your CSR platform? (e.g., Do you view it as only economic resources being utilized or are other resources being used to help implement these initiatives?)
  - a. What percent of your budget is dedicated to your CSR platform?
9. What role do you have in the development and/or implementation of the organization's CSR portfolio?
10. How have these initiatives impacted your awareness of different community causes? (e.g., are you aware of a particular need in the community because of this experience that you may not have known about before?)
11. How has volunteering for the organization influenced the way you think about the team or your commitment to the team and/or organization?
  - a. Are there particular initiatives or causes that the team is involved in that are also personally important to you as an employee? (is there a connection)
12. Thinking ahead, do you believe that CSR is an aspect that is going to continue to be a part of the organization's business practices? Do you view it as an embedded or accepted practice?
13. Are there any additional comments or insights that you would like to offer at this time?

## **Appendix E: Recruitment Letter: Jane (Gatekeeper)**

Hello Jane,

My name is Lynne Gulliver and I am a MA student working under the supervision of Dr. Katie Misener in the Recreation and Leisure Department at the University of Waterloo. I am contacting you because in previous discussion you have expressed interesting in working with me as part of a study on CSR within your organization. The reason that I am contacting you is that we would like to conduct a study that explore the nature and perceived impact of CSR within the organization, a for-profit enterprise on the Organization's management personnel and players. I am wondering if you would be willing to act as a 'gatekeeper' for the study, where you would forward on my invitation to participate to the management team (6 individuals) and a sample of the players (9). The players and management personnel interested participants will be asked to respond directly to me electronically via the email provided in the recruitment letter. I would like to conduct individual interviews with those who are willing to participate in the study in hopes of gaining a better understanding and awareness of the nature and impact of CSR within the Organization.

Participation in this study involves one interview per participant, for a maximum of 45 minutes, and one feedback session (maximum 30 minutes) conducted at the Organization's Head Office. The feedback sessions will bring together the management team members who have participated in the individual interviews in order to discuss the preliminary findings. The interviews and feedback sessions will be audio recorded and transcribed verbatim, with the use of pseudonyms and secure data storage to ensure confidentiality and credibility of the findings. I will refrain from publishing the organization name in any subsequent documents to ensure complete anonymity. I would like to assure you that the study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Committee.

If you are willing to help in this role, I would like to speak with you further about the study and potential timelines.

If you are interested in participating, please contact me at [lgullive@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:lgullive@uwaterloo.ca)

Sincerely,

Lynne Gulliver

M.A. Candidate

University of Waterloo

Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies



## Appendix F: Recruitment Letter: Management Personnel

This email is being sent on behalf of the researcher,

Hello <*Participant Name*>,

My name is Lynne Gulliver and I am a MA student working under the supervision of Dr. Katie Misener in the Recreation and Leisure Department at the University of Waterloo. I am contacting you because I have been given your name by Jane flagging you as a potential interested party in working with me as part of a study on CSR within your organization. The reason that I am contacting you is that we are conducting a study that focuses on exploring the nature and perceived impact of CSR within the Organization, a for-profit enterprise. I would like to invite you to participate in a brief interview one on one interview in order to hear your perspective on how the efforts of the team make a difference in the community and impact you as a management team member.

Participation in this study involves one interview per participant, for a maximum of 45 minutes, and one feedback session (maximum 30 minutes) conducted at the Organization's Head Office. The feedback session will bring together the management team members who have participated in the individual interviews in order to discuss the preliminary findings. I will be doing a similar feedback session with the players who have participated in individual interviews. The interviews and feedback sessions will be audio recorded and transcribed verbatim, with the use of pseudonyms and secure data storage to ensure confidentiality and credibility of the findings. I will refrain from publishing the organization name in any subsequent documents to ensure complete anonymity. I would like to assure you that the study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Committee. Should you have any comments or concerns resulting from your participation in this study, please contact Dr. Maureen Nummelin, the Director, Office of Research Ethics, at 1-519-888-4567, Ext. 36005 or [maureen.nummelin@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:maureen.nummelin@uwaterloo.ca).

However, the final decision about participation is yours.

The following time slots are available to participate in this study.

December 1<sup>st</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup>/7<sup>th</sup>/9<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> 10:00AM, 11:00AM, 12:00PM, 1:00PM, 5:00PM, or 6:00PM

If you are interested in participating, please contact me at [lgullive@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:lgullive@uwaterloo.ca) and list your top three choices for when you would like to participate from the list above. I will then send a confirmation email indicating that you have been signed up for one of those times, and provide you with further information concerning the location of the study. If you have to cancel your appointment, please email me at [lgullive@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:lgullive@uwaterloo.ca)

Sincerely,

Lynne Gulliver

M.A. Candidate

University of Waterloo

Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies

## Appendix G: Recruitment Letter: Player Participants

This email is being sent on behalf of the researcher,

Hello <*Participant Name*>,

My name is Lynne Gulliver and I am a MA student working under the supervision of Dr. Katie Misener in the Recreation and Leisure Department at the University of Waterloo. I am contacting you because I have been given your name by Jane, flagging you as a potential interested party in working with me as part of a study on CSR within your organization. The reason that I am contacting you is that we are conducting a study that focuses on exploring the nature and perceived impact CSR within the Organization, a for-profit enterprise. I would like to invite you to participate in a brief one on one interview in order to hear your perspective on how the efforts of the team make a difference in the community, and impact you as a player.

Participation in this study involves one interview per participant, for a maximum of 45 minutes, and one feedback session (maximum 30 minutes) conducted at the Organization's Head Office. The feedback session will bring together the players who have participated in the individual interviews in order to discuss the preliminary findings. I will be doing a similar feedback session with the management personal who have participated in individual interviews. The interviews and feedback sessions will be audio recorded and transcribed verbatim, with the use of pseudonyms and secure data storage to ensure confidentiality and credibility of the findings. I will refrain from publishing the organization name in any subsequent documents to ensure complete anonymity. I would like to assure you that the study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Committee. Should you have any comments or concerns resulting from your participation in this study, please contact Dr. Maureen Nummelin, the Director, Office of Research Ethics, at 1-519-888-4567, Ext. 36005 or [maureen.nummelin@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:maureen.nummelin@uwaterloo.ca).

However, the final decision about participation is yours.

The following time slots are available to participate in this study.

November 30<sup>th</sup> 9:00AM, 10:00AM, 5:30PM or 6:30PM

December 1<sup>st</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup>/7<sup>th</sup>/9<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> 10:00AM, 11:00AM, 12:00PM, 1:00PM, 5:00PM, or 6:00PM

If you are interested in participating, please contact me at [lgullive@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:lgullive@uwaterloo.ca) and list your top three choices for when you would like to participate from the list above. I will then send a confirmation email indicating that you have been signed up for one of those times, and provide you with further information concerning the location of the study. If you have to cancel your appointment, please email me at [lgullive@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:lgullive@uwaterloo.ca)

Sincerely,

Lynne Gulliver

M.A. Candidate

University of Waterloo

Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies

## **Appendix H: Information Letter: Management Personnel/Players**

November 2015

Dear *(Insert Name of Participant)*,

This letter is an invitation to consider participating in a study we are conducting as part of Lynne's Master's thesis in the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies at the University of Waterloo. We would like to provide you with more information about this project and what your involvement would entail if you decide to take part.

The main purpose of this study is to explore the nature and perceived impact of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) within the organization, a for-profit enterprise. Implementation of CSR initiatives within sport organizations has become prevalent, with increased use throughout the sport context, with the organization utilizing it within various aspects within their business practices. As a growing phenomenon, understanding, and raising awareness about CSR is necessary, as organizations continue to go beyond skill development to being social change agents.

Given the dominating role that the management personal and athletes undertake throughout CSR implementation, interviews will be conducted with all qualifying participants. These interviews will explore the CSR platform of the focal organization through examination into the experiences, perspectives, and impact of their CSR initiatives.

We would like to include you as one of the interview participants to be involved in this study, taking place in Southwestern Ontario. We believe that because you are actively involved in the implementation of the CSR initiatives, you are best suited to speak to the various issues, such as the potential that exist through increased awareness of CSR use.

Participation in this study is voluntary. It will involve a one on one interview of approximately 45 minutes in length. You may decline to answer any of the interview questions if you so wish. Further, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences by advising the researcher. Choosing whether or not to participate in the study will not affect the individual's relationship with the organization, their coaches or the management personnel. Participation in this study involves one interview per participant, for a maximum of 45 minutes, and one feedback session (maximum 30 minutes) conducted at the Organization's Head Office. The feedback session will bring together the management personal who have participated in the individual interviews in order to discuss the preliminary findings. I will be doing a similar feedback session with the players will be audio recorded and transcribed verbatim, with the use of pseudonyms and secure data storage to ensure confidentiality and credibility of the findings. All information you provide is considered completely confidential. Your city, name and your organization's name will not appear in any report resulting from this study; however, with your permission anonymous quotations may be used. Only researchers associated with this project will have access to the study data. All data will be safely secured

through the use of password and encryption software. It will not be linked with any other data set, nor will it be sent outside of the institution where it is collected, it will be destroyed after five years. Any raw data (interview notes, transcripts, surveys) will be kept in the locked office of the principal investigator for a period of five years, and after that time it will all be destroyed.

There are no known or anticipated risks to you as a participant associated with this study. I would like to assure you that the study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Committee. Should you have any comments or concerns resulting from your participation in this study, please contact Dr. Maureen Nummelin, the Director, Office of Research Ethics, at 1-519-888-4567, Ext. 36005 or [maureen.nummelin@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:maureen.nummelin@uwaterloo.ca).

If you are interested in participating in this study, please reply to this email or contact Lynne Gulliver at 226-929-3020. We would be pleased to answer any questions you might have and can provide you with additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation.

We hope that the results of the study will be of benefit to the organization, directly involved in the study, as well as to the broader private sport sector. We very much look forward to speaking with you and thank you in advance for your assistance in this project.

Yours Sincerely,

Lynne Gulliver  
M.A. Candidate  
Recreation and Leisure Studies  
University of Waterloo  
[lgullive@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:lgullive@uwaterloo.ca)  
226-929-3020

Dr. Katie Misener  
Assistant Professor  
Recreation and Leisure Studies  
University of Waterloo  
[k.misener@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:k.misener@uwaterloo.ca)  
519-888-4567x37098

## Appendix I: Consent Form- Management Personnel and Players

### CONSENT FORM

By signing this consent form, you are not waiving your legal rights or releasing the investigator(s) or involved institution(s) from their legal and professional responsibilities.

---

I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Lynne Gulliver of the Department of Recreation and Leisure at the University of Waterloo. I have had the opportunity to ask any questions related to this study, to receive satisfactory answers to my questions, and any additional details I wanted.

I am aware that I have the option of allowing my interview to be audio recorded to ensure an accurate recording of my responses.

I am also aware that excerpts from the interview may be included in the thesis and/or publications to come from this research, with the understanding that the quotations will be anonymous.

I was informed that I may withdraw my consent at any time without penalty by advising the researcher.

This project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Committee. I was informed that if I have any comments or concerns resulting from my participation in this study, I may contact the Director, Office of Research Ethics at 519-888-4567 ext. 36005.

With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this study.

YES  NO

I agree to have my interview audio recorded.

YES  NO

I agree to the use of anonymous quotations in any thesis or publication that comes of this research.

YES  NO

Participant Name: \_\_\_\_\_ (Please print)

Participant Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness Name: \_\_\_\_\_ (Please print)

Witness Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix J: Feedback Letter

February 2016

Dear *(Insert Name of Participant)*,

I would like to thank you for your participation in this study entitled Beyond the Ice: An Exploratory Investigation into CSR within Major Junior Hockey. As a reminder, the purpose of this exploratory study is to explore the nature and perceived impact of social responsibility within the organization, a for-profit enterprise that is part of the Ontario Hockey League.

The data collected during the interviews will contribute to a better understanding of the nature and impact of CSR within the organization. Through exploration of this phenomenon, this study aims to raise awareness, while pursuing the ability to add to our understanding of CSR, its use, and its impact within the Major Junior hockey context.

Please remember that any data pertaining to you as an individual participant will be kept confidential and your name will not be used in any reports or presentations of the findings. Once all the data are collected and analyzed for this project, I plan on sharing this information with the research community through seminars, conferences, presentations, and journal articles. When sharing this information the organization I will refrain from specifically identifying the organization or any of the participants. If you are interested in receiving more information regarding the results of this study, or would like a summary of the results, please provide your email address, and when the study is completed, anticipated by April 1, 2015. I will send you the information. In the meantime, if you have any questions about the study, please do not hesitate to contact me by email or telephone as noted below. You can also contact Dr. Katie Misener, my faculty supervisor, if you have any subsequent questions about the study or findings, electronically at [k.misener@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:k.misener@uwaterloo.ca) or by phone at 519-888-4567, Ext. 37098.

As with all University of Waterloo projects involving human participants, this project was reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Committee. Should you have any comments or concerns resulting from your participation in this study, please contact Dr. Maureen Nummelin, the Director, Office of Research Ethics, at 1-519-888-4567, Ext. 36005 or [maureen.nummelin@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:maureen.nummelin@uwaterloo.ca).

Lynne Gulliver


University of Waterloo

Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies

226 929 3020

[lgullive@uwaterloo](mailto:lgullive@uwaterloo)

## Appendix K: Organization's Principles to Success



The [Redacted] Principles to Success

There are common threads that tie championship teams, successful businesses and productive families together. We need all six principles to get where we want to get to. Not only will they help us this season, but in all our futures in or out of hockey. We will be striving for excellence in these areas:

1. **Work Ethic:** We will be the hardest working team in the [Redacted]. We can't accept anything less from our teammates or ourselves. We must be ready to accept this challenge every day. We need our 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> effort from everyone. When you're tired or think that you've gone hard enough, this when we go harder. We will demoralize and wear teases out.
2. **Discipline:** There are different levels of Discipline, but only teams that are totally committed on and off the ice to it, will have a chance to win. On the ice discipline consists of factors such as not taking bad penalties, bad line changes, not playing the system, etc. These and other examples can't and will not be tolerated. Off the ice discipline is equally important. Being disciplined means being responsible. Responsible means "able to respond" in the right manner on and off the ice. We will be very demanding of this.
3. **Team First Attitude:** Everyone will have more success if we all adopt this attitude. Actually, we can't win without it. No one is bigger than the team. This will show in our on ice play, and also in the way we treat each other off the ice. There is a lot more reward in achieving goals together than trying to do it yourself. Besides, it's a whole lot easier and more fun achieving together.
4. **Conditioning:** Conditioning is an extension of the first 3 principles. You need work ethic to be in top condition, you need discipline to be in top condition, and we will do it together. We want to be the best conditioned team in the League.
5. **Enthusiasm for the Game "Love to Compete":** Hockey is a game, the greatest game there is. We must remember this. Winning and having fun go hand in hand.
6. **Respect:** Respect for yourself, respect for your family, your teammates, fellow students, members of the community, your team and your City. As elite athletes you have been given a wonderful gift that makes you no more or less important than other members of Society. If you want respect, give respect!

We will be teaching and demanding of these principles. The excellence that we achieve in these principles will show in the amount of success we have. There will be responsibilities on and off the ice that we will go through however they are all based on these six principles.