



Future of Youth Hockey Culture

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Authors Declaration

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Abstract

Ice hockey holds a revered position in Canadian culture, renowned for fostering national pride and camaraderie. However, in recent years, the hockey environment has come under scrutiny due to the resurgence of assault and discrimination cases. These incidents have raised concerns, particularly regarding the psychological and physical well-being of youth involved in the sport. Consequently, parents, administrators, fans, and politicians have begun questioning existing practices and advocating for change.

This study takes a unique approach to address these concerns, using foresight and systems thinking methods in collaboration with youth hockey players and leadership. The aim is to identify strategies that can effectively transform Canadian youth hockey culture, making it more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable. By involving a diverse group of youth hockey players, coaches, administrators, and stakeholders in interviews, the research gives voice to the experiences, challenges, and aspirations of young athletes, empowering them to shape the future of their sport.

A crucial component of the paper leverages foresight and systems thinking methods to visualize the current state of hockey's ecosystem, the various future states plausible within a 10-year horizon, and the highest-yielding interventions to create the most sustainable change.

The findings of this study provide a comprehensive framework for action, offering policymakers, sports organization leaders, parents, and concerned citizens a series of reflection prompts and resources to advance youth hockey culture in their realms of influence. These insights can inform the development of policies, the design of programs, and the decision-making processes, all with the goal of effecting transformative change in the Canadian hockey landscape.

Authors Declaration

Thank you to R for opening countless doors for me to explore hockey culture change using foresight as an outsider to the hockey world.

Thank you to C and A for admitting me into your fellowship and introducing me to many incredible leaders championing inclusion for all in Canadian hockey.

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Thank you to Willa - my inspiration. May you never lose your light and continue to uplift the hockey world around you.

Thank you to Markus and Chenny, for everything else.

Dedication

To all the documented and undocumented cases of youth maltreatment.

To every child who has suffered in silence to play this game and feel accepted.

To every child who didn't have access to the systems to protect them they should have and adults they should have been able to trust to keep them safe.

Wishing you light, peace and healing.

A Note from the Author

As Robin DiAngelo observes in her book *Nice Racism*, language does not neutrally represent what we see in the world; it is subjectively informed by our perceptions, biases, and meaning-making processes (DiAngelo, 2021). Given the political and evolving nature of language, the terms I use today to describe various communities, aspects of identity, and concepts may be accepted differently in the future. Language is not timeless; it is ever-evolving as humans continue to evolve and learn to do better.

As I finalize this paper in 2024, I will be using the following terms deemed most appropriate and empowering when this is written. To refer to individuals and or communities who are "Black," I will be capitalizing the "B"; to refer to individuals and or communities who are white, the "w" will remain lowercase (Columbia et al., 2020). To refer to individuals who do not possess equal access to socio-economic opportunities due to various aspects of identity, I will use "Equity Deserving Populations" (Government of Canada, 2021).

I will use the terms "man" to refer to individuals who identify as male, "woman" to refer to individuals who identify as woman, and "non-binary" for individuals who identify as such. I will only use these terms when describing gender as pertinent to understanding the context of a concept. In cases where gender is irrelevant, I will use terms such as communities, folks, individuals, or research participants when describing findings from primary research.

When describing the findings from primary research, I will use the term "youth" to refer to research participants under the age of 21 and the term "leaders" to refer to anyone above the age of 21. This is not to infer that youth participants cannot be leaders but to categorize the age groups and their relation to organizational power within the hockey system. When otherwise describing concepts such as safeguarding hockey players under the age of 18-years old I will interchangeably use the word "children" or "youth".

This paper aims to shed light on the state of hockey culture for children today to invoke helpful discourse and sustainable actions for long-term change. The information, images, and narratives may disturb those new to this domain. Please prioritize your psychological safety, read at your comfortable pace, and take breaks as needed.

*Call 911 in an emergency, immediate danger, or medical distress. If you or someone you know is thinking about suicide, call or text 988. For other needs, call 211 to be connected to mental health and other social services.

If you or someone you know have experienced maltreatment in hockey, please refer to <https://www.hockeycanada.ca/en-ca/hockey-programs/safety/essentials/speak-out>

More resources are provided in the final conclusion section of this paper for hockey parents, hockey players, coaches, league executives and administrators, and the public.

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Introduction

Overview of Youth Hockey Culture

In Spring 2022, a previously closed sexual assault case against Hockey Canada was reopened, sparking widespread media attention. The reopening of the case triggered a wave of backlash from political figures, sponsors, and fans, leading to the emergence of numerous stories highlighting issues of assault and discrimination within Canadian hockey (Bundale, 2022). As a result, parents, fans, aspiring players, and the government began questioning the psychological safety of the sport (Bielski, 2022), with 50% of Canadians describing the culture as exclusionist and racist (Francis, 2021), leading to a significant decline in youth enrollment (Canadian Press, 2022).

In response to these concerns, the NHL, Hockey Canada, local leagues, and leaders committed to enhancing inclusivity, safety, and equitable practices within the sport (Francis, 2021). Despite this, promised progress has been limited (Wyshynski, 2022) (Barnes, 2022). For example, the inclusion of girls in it remains stunted, with 1 in 3 Canadian girls reporting that coaches and organizations don't adequately address safety issues (Rally Report, 2022).

Numerous cases emerged of dressing rooms for girl hockey players being repurposed broom closets without hooks or benches (Lupton, 2023). With hockey's disproportionately exorbitant entry costs, only 1% of over 130,000 new-to-Canada youth get the chance to play (Hockey 4 Youth, 2022) with 21% reporting this was due to the cost to play (Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, 2022).

The treatment of children remains concerning, as found in Hockey Canada's 2023 "Tracking Maltreatment in Sanctioned Hockey Report." There was a significant jump in discrimination-related penalties and complaints compared to the 2022 season. The report showed a spike of 913 reported maltreatment cases in youth hockey from 512 the previous year under the Hockey Canada Discrimination Rule (Kennedy, 2023) with a total of 1,900 reported maltreatment cases in the first season (Canadian Press, 2023).

So, what is the deal with hockey? Why are cases of youth maltreatment and inclusion so disparately different from other Canadian sports? Hockey culture is earmarked by various values, norms, and behaviors that encourage mentalities, such as always putting the well-being of the team before your own, "winning at all costs," and "an-eye-for-an-eye" (Hockey Alberta, 2023). These attitudes often lead to players, especially youth, feeling unsafe reporting and seeking the help they need without fear of being outed (Hall, 2023), ultimately keeping the problematic culture intact.

Research Objective

This study aims to contribute to fostering positive culture change within Canadian youth hockey by adopting a co-generative approach that directly engages individuals actively inside the hockey ecosystem, employing foresight and systems thinking methods.

The significance of this study lies in its focus on capturing a diverse range of firsthand player experiences of both adults and youth with various pathways into hockey. By engaging directly with hockey players, the research aims to highlight their authentic needs, challenges, and barriers without making assumptions. This approach will provide a comprehensive understanding of the current culture of hockey and uncover potential future tactics from a diverse mix of individuals within hockey of all different levels of authority, age, and positionalities.

Adopting design thinking, systems, and foresight tactics aims to reframe the findings and rhetoric in a universally accessible manner, whittling down cultural nomenclatures and complexities into simplified visual formats and plain language where possible.

The primary research question guiding this study is: "How might we uncover more resilient tactics for increasing psychological safety in youth hockey culture?" This question highlights the focus on utilizing foresight methods and engaging diverse voices within the system to co-generate innovative strategies that prioritize the well-being and inclusivity of young athletes within the sport. Additional research questions explore the following: What are the specific barriers faced by current and aspiring youth hockey players in terms of experiencing inclusion and safety? Additionally, what tactics are currently implemented to address this across different ecosystem levels from recreational leagues to pro?

The paper's intended audience includes policymakers, league organizers, coaches, parents, and players involved in the Canadian hockey ecosystem who have a direct role in promoting the inclusion and safety of youth hockey players.

The paper's ultimate hope, however, is to demonstrate that the state of hockey culture today is not a "hockey problem" but rather a Canadian problem that all individuals, regardless of whether they or their children are in the system, can have a role in solving.

Why This Needs Attention, Now

The following three pages may be especially disturbing to some readers. Please prioritize your well-being and take breaks as needed.

Children who experience abuse or maltreatment before the age of 18 often develop formative mental models to understand relationships based on their traumatic experiences (Perry & Winfrey, 2021). These models can lead to behaviours and attitudes that can perpetuate harm to others. A World Health Organization study on Child Maltreatment found that a child who experiences abuse is more likely to abuse others later when they grow up (WHO, 2022). For example, a child who has been physically abused may come to believe that aggression is a standard way to resolve conflicts. As they age, they may unconsciously replicate these behaviour patterns in their relationships, perpetuating a cycle of harm. Similarly, children who experience emotional or verbal abuse may internalize negative beliefs about themselves, leading to low self-esteem and difficulties in forming healthy relationships (Liese & Beck, 2013). These mental models of understanding, shaped by early experiences of maltreatment, can have lasting effects on a child's behaviour and emotional well-being into adulthood (Holt et al., 2021), influencing how they interact with others and navigate the world around them. With nearly 1,900 reports of child maltreatment in youth hockey in the first season of 2023, not inclusive of those that were not reported, one in every 200 players across the country has reported maltreatment (Sportsnet, 2023).

Hundreds of children across the country may experience detrimental impacts throughout their lives and even perpetuate harm to other youth players in the future.

This notion of the critical need to safeguard children against experiences of maltreatment to prevent cycles of future harm is underscored by the 2020 class action lawsuit filed by three former junior hockey players against Canadian major junior hockey leagues and their team managers. The three former players accused the leagues and leadership of perpetuating a toxic environment and tolerating their youngest players (rookies), being victims of blatant discrimination, homophobic conduct, and verbal, sexual and physical violence. After the launch of the procedures, the three plaintiffs were joined by 16 other young prominent junior athletes detailing the abuse their coaches, teammates and the league had subjected to them, promoting toxic masculinity and silence and even encouraging sexual violence as a part of the game (Leclerc, 2023).

Some of the passages of the children from this case are detailed to convey the critical breach of human rights condoned in this sport and outline the urgent need for systemic culture change. Again, this content may be alarming to readers and is graphic. The court protects the identities of the young plaintiffs of these testimonies. Please note in these testimonies and further in this paper, the use of the term "Veteran" refers to a senior player on the team, "Rookie" refers to a new, younger player and "Hazing" refers to an initiation ritual performed on a Rookie by a Veteran.

Why This Needs Attention, Now

A passage from plaintiff player AA's testimony is as follows; "I remember the veterans taunting me and telling me that I was going to be initiated. I also remember the general manager telling me not to react like a wimp when my initiation got out of hand. [...] The veterans jumped on me in the locker room. They threw me on a table, lying on my back. They wrapped hockey sticks between my legs and arms. They blindfolded me. I felt helpless. I felt them urinating on me and throwing objects at me. They wrapped a rope around my penis. They threw the rope over a bar above me and tied a puck bag to the other end of the rope. They threw pucks into the bag until it got heavier and heavier. It was extremely painful. They wrapped razors on hockey sticks and shaved me from head to toe. They covered me in Vaseline and baby powder. They inserted a hockey stick into my anus. They covered my genitals with warming analgesic cream. I remember my scrotum was purple. It was excruciating." (Perell J, 2023).

According to Perell J's decision in *Carcillo v Canadian Hockey League* (2023), the sworn documents presented in the judgment commonly specify that the abuse occurred in full view of team leaders and persisted even when players were traded to other teams. Furthermore, when players were transferred to different teams, they encountered similar forms of abuse or witnessed younger teammates experiencing the same mistreatment. This is demonstrated in the excerpt from player FF's testimony: "Telling my story is extremely difficult, but I do it because I don't want other kids to have to go through what I went through. Each of the following abuses were inflicted on me on multiple occasions by other players: a) a hockey stick covered in warming painkiller cream was forcibly inserted into my anus; b) my genitals were covered in warming analgesic cream; c) a rod was used to insert warming analgesic cream into my urethra; [...] Depending on the "game", those who had or did not have an erection were severely manhandled as described above; (g) recruits were restrained or tied up, and their hair, eyebrows and genitals were shaved. [...] The following season, I was traded to another team and I was sexually assaulted approximately forty times in the space of nine months. [...] The same types of abuse were perpetrated in my new team." The 16 cases presented by youth male hockey players include everything from gang-raping, forced acts of bestiality, inflicting self-injury, drinking or eating feces, saliva, semen and urine (Leclerc, 2023) (Perell J, 2023).

While one would like to think after the mass media coverage and unprecedented intervention of the Canadian government (Clipperton, 2022), this culture of promoting violent attitudes and behaviours would have ended. Unfortunately, as recently as April 2024, the RCMP arrested three teenage male hockey players for suspectedly sexually assaulting five younger rookie male hockey players (15 and 16 years old) in November 2023 and January 2024 (Schroeder, 2024). A massive problem within this sport is connected to the deep-seated fear of reprisal and promoted attitudes of "taking one for the team," encouraging a cone of silence where otherwise critical interventions for youth players could and should be made. In her study, Crawford from the University of British Columbia (2022) finds that many male players know the resources available but will not access them due to fear that reaching out could be used against them (Britten, 2022).

Why This Needs Attention, Now

Hypermasculinity and “manning up” are commonly perpetrated ideologies by authority figures in the system, from parents to coaches to older players. An educator leading the 2024 initiative aimed at teaching sexual assault prevention to 13-year-old hockey boys found common remarks from “old guard” coaches complaining the training is “making kids soft.” Mr. Stika, one of the program’s educators, states that the work done to educate the youth hockey players on assault and violence prevention is all for naught if the environment they are plugged into of coaches and leaders has not changed (Bielski, 2024).

Concerning insights from 2024, Change the Game Report highlighted that a whopping 43% of coaches in Ontario shared concern that their actions could be misinterpreted as harassment or abuse. 82% of coaches were actively aware of problematic hazing activities and thought they were a part of team building (MLSE Foundation, 2024) (Brockbank, 2024). This is reflected by young male athletes taking the pilot culture change training on sexual assault prevention and consent, where in a survey, 84% of the boys identified their intention for taking the training was to prevent wrongful accusation of sexual assault and 90% replied it was to protect their reputation and career. In the same survey, only 64% of the boys identified that it was essential to ensure that anyone partaking in sexual activities was enjoying themselves, with many not understanding what sexual violence is (Beilski, 2024).

Sexual assault and the objectification of women, in particular, are significant concerns behind dressing room doors in youth hockey. One study suggests that the culture of sexual violence and misogynistic attitudes in the Canadian hockey environment is a byproduct of the normalized power of abuse within the hierarchical makeup of the system of the sport (White, 2024). Coaches hold immense power over athletes’ career prospects; hockey organizations hold power over coaching careers; funders have full authority over league CEOs; and system veterans hold power over rookies and men, often over women. The author advises that this cycle of unwieldy levels of power, layered with a lack of accountability processes, contributes to a recursive feedback loop of abuse (White, 2024).

The director general of Global Athlete states that systems actively silence Canadian athletes making them fearful to speak out because sports are swift to name and shame those who do (Hall, 2023). Furthermore, athletes have no power or financial security to support them. In contrast, coaches and sports authorities are backed by legal structures leading to a steep power imbalance (Hall, 2023). Dijkema (2024) shares that any attempt to change hockey culture needs to evaluate the incentive structures that create the conditions where abuse happens and the nature of the type of abuse itself. The power imbalance between male youth athletes and leadership structures is underscored by how boys are removed from their homes and communities at a young age and placed into a high-intensity environment with agents and team officials looking to profit off high-performing potential (Dijkema, 2024).

Changing the hockey system is a critical priority for those in it and for any Canadian who values the protection and rights of children in this country.

Framework & Methods

Introduction to Foresight & Systems Thinking

What is strategic foresight?

Foresight is a strategic practice that involves exploring potential future scenarios and trends to make informed decisions in the present. It goes beyond traditional forecasting by considering a range of possibilities and uncertainties, allowing organizations to anticipate challenges and opportunities before they arise. Strategic foresight is a methodical approach to leveraging future insights, allowing us to foresee potential opportunities and challenges and enhance readiness for forthcoming shifts (OECD, n.d.). It employs various techniques, such as scanning for emerging trends, analyzing overarching trends, and crafting multiple scenarios to unveil and deliberate on valuable future-oriented concepts. These insights inform improved decision-making and proactive actions (Kerr & Smith, n.d.). Foresight involves scanning the external environment for change signals, identifying emerging trends, and analyzing their driving forces (Itonics et al., n.d.). This process helps organizations develop a holistic understanding of the factors shaping their future landscape.

Strategic foresight is not about waiting for the future to happen but shaping it. In strategic planning, organizations use foresight to inform long-term goals and strategies. By anticipating future developments, they can proactively adapt and innovate, staying ahead of the curve (Carvalho & Woeffray, 2023). Strategic foresight is not just about seizing opportunities, it's about mitigating risks (Schwarz & Wach, 2023). In risk management, strategic foresight plays a crucial role. By identifying potential threats and vulnerabilities early on, organizations can take preventive measures to mitigate risks and build resilience. This comprehensive approach to risk management instills a sense of security and confidence in organizations. Foresight is a valuable tool for navigating uncertainty and complexity in an ever-changing world. It empowers organizations to anticipate, adapt, and thrive in tomorrow's landscape, ensuring sustainable success in the long run.

The use of strategic foresight tools to explore and stress-test solutions to improve diversity, inclusion and belonging outcomes in the broader sport of Canadian hockey has been led in the past 2-3 years by a handful of Canadians, including Dr. Richard Norman and the Future of Hockey Lab. Strategic foresight is leveraged as a critical methodology in this study to build upon the body of work exploring inclusive hockey futures in Canada of Dr. Norman and others, but focusing on child safeguarding. This method is critical to this study to highlight the significance of actions taken and not taken today by stakeholders within the ecosystem of hockey to contribute to further cyclical harm to Canadian children who choose to participate in the sport. By leveraging future scenarios that push and pull on various trends and drivers percolating in the Canadian youth hockey culture environment today, readers can connect to an emotional and experiential simulation of what could happen in a horizon as short as even five years from now if systemic culture change is not achieved in the sport.

Introduction to Foresight & Systems Thinking

What is systems thinking?

Systems thinking is a holistic and interdisciplinary approach to understanding complex systems. It emphasizes the interconnectedness of various elements within a system and how they influence each other over time (Morganelli, 2020). Instead of focusing on isolated parts, systems thinking considers the system as a whole, considering feedback loops, interdependencies, and emergent behaviours (Davidoff, 2023).

At the core of systems thinking is the recognition that changes in one part of the system can have ripple effects throughout the system (impassionED Living, 2023). This perspective encourages a deeper understanding of system behaviours, underlying structures and dynamics.

On the other hand, systems design applies systems thinking principles to designing solutions to complex problems. It involves defining goals, identifying stakeholders, analyzing system components and interactions, and developing interventions considering the broader context and potential consequences (Kuznetsov & Eremina, 2020). Systems thinking is a holistic and interdisciplinary approach to understanding complex systems. It emphasizes the interconnectedness of various elements within a system and how they influence each other over time. Instead of focusing on isolated parts, systems thinking considers the system as a whole, considering feedback loops, interdependencies, and emergent behaviours.

Design thinking and human-centred design complement systems thinking by focusing on individual needs, experiences, and perspectives within the system. Design thinking a non-linear process that involves empathizing with users, defining problems, ideating solutions, prototyping, and testing to create innovative and user-friendly solutions (Interaction Design Foundation, 2016). Human-centered design, on the other hand, is a creative problem-solving approach that prioritizes the needs and preferences of the people you are designing for throughout the process, ensuring that the final solutions are intuitive, accessible, and meaningful to the people they serve (IDEO, n.d.). Integrating these approaches with systems thinking can lead to comprehensive and practical solutions that address complex challenges while meeting the diverse needs of stakeholders.

I will use systems and design thinking to synthesize the findings of the primary interviews in this study, identifying patterns and key intervention points within the hockey ecosystem to enact widespread culture change. Ultimately, both foresight tactics alongside systems and design thinking are used to create an urgent call to action for hockey folks and all Canadians to act now.

Research Methods & Terms

This study employed a variety of research methods to gain a comprehensive understanding of youth player experiences within the context of Canadian hockey culture.

Rich Qualitative Data Collection:

The study prioritized gathering rich qualitative data by directly engaging with youth players to capture their experiences in their own words. This was achieved through in-depth interviews, allowing for a nuanced exploration of their experiences within hockey culture. These methods were chosen to account for peer influence, validation, and generative brainstorming, enhancing the authenticity and depth of the data collected.

Demographic Quantitative Data Analysis:

The study analyzed demographic information of participating youth players, including age, gender, ethnicity, and geographic location. This quantitative data provided insights into sample diversity and helped understand how various factors influenced experiences and perspectives within the hockey ecosystem. Where needed, existing data sets from government reports, published studies, or public datasets were utilized as secondary data sources.

Qualitative and Quantitative Data on Inclusivity Efforts:

Expert interviews were conducted with youth sports and hockey professionals, including leaders, advocates, coaches, and administrators. These interviews offered valuable perspectives and expertise on inclusivity efforts within hockey culture. Additionally, secondary research and literature reviews were conducted to understand the existing body of research and findings in this space, providing context to the study's focus on inclusivity and social change in youth sports.

This study employed a mix of quantitative and qualitative research methods to paint an in-depth picture of youth experiences in hockey culture, considering their voices, behaviours, and interactions within the broader ecosystem.

Limitations of Research

I acknowledge several limitations that affect the depth and breadth of this study. One significant limitation is the number of youth hockey players who chose to participate in the research. Despite my efforts to recruit a diverse range of participants, the actual number may only partially represent part of the spectrum of experiences within the youth hockey community. This limitation could introduce bias or restrict the generalizability of the findings.

The study's sample size could also be more extensive due to time constraints. The limited data collection and analysis time resulted in a smaller sample size than desired. Consequently, the findings may need to fully capture the complexity and diversity of youth experiences in hockey culture.

Furthermore, I must acknowledge my biases' potential to influence the research process. My assumptions, perspectives, and biases could have influenced the study's design, data interpretation, and conclusions. It's crucial to transparently address and mitigate these biases to enhance the credibility and validity of the research findings.

I had initially intended to conduct participatory research through a youth foresight workshop in person. However, due to the limited number of youth hockey player subjects and time constraints, this was impossible to include in the study. This limitation highlights the challenges faced in executing comprehensive research within a constrained timeframe and with limited resources.

As with any research endeavour, inherent limitations must be acknowledged to ensure the credibility and reliability of the findings. One limitation is the potential for self-reporting bias among participants, where individuals may provide responses that they believe are socially desirable or align with perceived expectations. Additionally, the study's reliance on retrospective data collection may introduce recall bias, as participants may have difficulty accurately recalling past experiences or events. These limitations highlight the need for caution when interpreting the results and emphasize the importance of triangulating data from multiple sources to validate findings and mitigate potential biases.

This research paper should be viewed as a starting point rather than a definitive conclusion. The highlighted limitations underscore the need for further research and deeper conversations. Future studies can build upon these findings by expanding the sample size, extending data collection duration, exploring additional variables or perspectives, and addressing potential researcher biases. By recognizing these limitations and emphasizing the preliminary nature of the study, I aim to encourage ongoing exploration and dialogue in the field of youth hockey culture.

Positionality & Bias

As the primary researcher, I must address my positionality and potential biases that may influence this paper. I am a white-passing woman that identifies as Queer and cisgender. I am divorced, my parents are divorced, my grandparents are divorced, and my great-grandparents are on my mother's side. My father is a refugee where English is his second language and Ontario his second home. I grew up with English as my first language with an upbringing fluctuating between low to middle income. As a child, I was raised with the influence of Islam and Agnosticism from my parents and attended a Catholic high school, I currently identify as Spiritual. I am the first in my immediate family to hold a post-secondary education and the eldest and only daughter to two younger brothers. I am presently employed full-time, consult part-time and have access to consistent housing. These aspects of my identity shape my perspectives and interactions within various contexts in the world.

I feel it is pertinent to share my lived experience with mental illness; I presently hold diagnoses of General Anxiety Disorder, Low Mood, and Depression. I have close friends who experienced psychological and sexual abuse as teenagers by adults in authority positions. I have experienced psychological trauma from men in authority positions in my career. These experiences may influence how I understand and interpret data related to psychological safety, trauma-informed approaches, and the well-being of youth. It's crucial to acknowledge that my personal experiences may shape my perspectives and responses to certain aspects of the research topic.

My position as a white-passing woman may also impact how I perceive and interpret data related to diversity, inclusion, and belonging within hockey culture. It's essential to recognize that my experiences and privileges as a white individual may influence the way I approach and analyze the research findings, particularly regarding issues of race and ethnicity. Additionally, identifying as Queer, cisgender woman may contribute to my understanding of gender dynamics, sexuality and 2SLGBTQ+ inclusion within the context of youth. Finally, while this study extends across Canada, there may be particular focus on Ontario as that is the location, I am writing this paper from and have had the most access to in my network of hockey professionals.

I engaged in reflexivity throughout the research process to mitigate the potential influence of bias. This involved critically reflecting on my assumptions, perspectives, and interpretations and being transparent about how my identity and lived experiences may impact the study's outcomes. Seeking diverse perspectives, engaging in peer review, and remaining open to feedback from my Advisor were also conducted in efforts to ensure the research maintains a fair and inclusive approach. Overall, by acknowledging my positionality, lived experiences, and potential biases, I aim to conduct ethical, inclusive research that contributes meaningfully to understanding youth hockey culture and promoting diversity and inclusion within the sport.

**Youth
Hockey
Culture
Then, Now &
Tomorrow**

Environmental Scan Overview

Foresight scanning techniques are invaluable for grasping the external factors that could shape the trajectory of youth hockey culture, known as a "Horizon Scan." Utilizing the STEEP+V framework, which delves into social, technological, economic, environmental, political, and Value dimensions, I delved into the realms beyond traditional hockey culture boundaries to forecast its future (Foresight University, n.d.). My focus spanned from 2022 to 2032, keenly observing signals indicating shifts in today's youth hockey culture (Signals), recurring trends in these shifts (Trends), and the driving forces behind these changes (Drivers), offering a nuanced perspective on what lies ahead (IFTF Foresight Essentials, 2021).

Each Driver steering the evolution of youth hockey culture is guided by emerging trends in the broader environment, signifying forthcoming changes. Through meticulously analyzing forums, news outlets, social media platforms, and other sources, I unearthed recurring alterations in behaviour or language within youth hockey culture, serving as early indicators of potential changes. In the following page I will summarize the specific trends I've identified for each Driver, drawing insights from my unique lens and experiences within the youth hockey landscape.

To envision the potential future realities of youth hockey culture over the next decade, I applied a strategic approach of manipulating my drivers in various combinations – amplifying some, diminishing others, or pausing them altogether. By layering trends and signals, I better understood how they might shape the trajectories toward each of these potential realities. This exercise led me to delineate four distinct scenarios, two deemed plausible and two more probable. Through this process, I assessed the potential implications on youth hockey culture, drawing from my lens and experiences within youth sports and inclusivity.

The strategic foresight tool I used to build these potential futures is the 2x2 matrix. The 2x2 matrix is a tool used to draft four potential futures in a scenario based on two key uncertainties exploring the various ways that the future within a specified time horizon might unfold depending on various events (Unglobal Pulse, n.d.). This use of this matrix enabled me to clarify the strategic implications of different trajectories for youth hockey culture, providing a structured framework for decision-making and planning. I used this tool to build potential worlds, contrasting individual versus collective structures against exclusionary and inclusionary behaviours to create distinct quadrants representing plausible future states of youth hockey culture.

Drivers Taking Shape of the Future

DEI Media Blitz



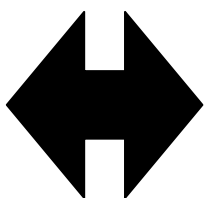
A surge in youth hockey media coverage highlights stories of exclusion, racism, and maltreatment contributing to culture change (Garcia-Roberts & Johnson, 2024). This heightened attention caught fire in 2022 and prevailed through April 2024, shedding light on current cases of allegations, scrutinizing the handling of these incidents, and driving conversations about accountability and reform with ex-federal minister stating it helped the police in bringing justice (Baxter, 2024).

Let's Get Political



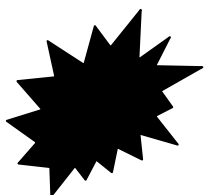
As allegations against Hockey Canada of sexual and racial assault continue to draw widespread criticism and concern, the Canadian government demands hockey for a Cultural Reckoning (Bielski, 2022). Canada's provincial government and Sports Minister strips the organization of its funding and institute requirements for transparent governance models (Bundale, 2022). Canada has had enough of hockey's pervasive culture; systemic culture change is erupting by way of new political governance models.

David Versus Goliath



The David Versus Goliath driver sees grassroots hockey organizations rejecting traditional governance and power structures, taking inspiration from privatized sports in Europe, such as Soccer. Frustrated with Hockey Canada, some junior teams leave the organization to transition to private ownership (Ewen, 2023). This shift offers Black athletes and hockey enthusiasts' opportunities to forge their paths by enacting top-down cultural change rather than waiting for the chance to climb traditional matters of career advancement steeped in white privilege and exclusion (Eghdam, 2024).

Hockey Then & Now



Soccer overtakes the NHL as what North Americans see as the top 4 of major sports (Carroll, 2021). Critics and fans alike debate the decline of the sport, citing the extreme promotion of violence and the cost to access the game (Brandwein, 2022). Gen Z steps into market power with sports organizations desperately trying to win their affections but hockey flounders to capture a generation of gender benders against toxic masculinity (Chamorro-Premuzic, 2020).

Trends Overview

In exploring the dynamic landscape of youth hockey culture, it is crucial to delve into the various "change trajectories" or "Drivers" that shape its evolution. Each Driver is propelled by emerging environmental trends, serving as early indicators of potential shifts and transformations within the sport. To discern these "Trends," an extensive examination of forums, news headlines, social media platforms, and other sources was conducted to detect recurring patterns of change. When a noticeable shift in behavior or language emerges consistently within youth hockey culture, it signifies the emergence of a trend.

Below, we will delve into each Driver within youth hockey culture, accompanied by the specific trends that illuminate the ongoing changes and developments within the sport:

1. DEI Media Blitz Driver:
 - Woke Hockey: Reflects the growing tension of inclusion initiatives and politicization of hockey between the right and left.
 - Growing the Game: Addresses economic aspects and strategies to expand hockey's reach to new demographics and communities.
 - Exclusive Story Here: Highlights the rise of youth maltreatment stories in the media.
2. Let's Get Political Driver:
 - Parental Intervention: Reflects the government's increasing role and influence in shaping youth hockey experiences and how safety is governed through policy.
 - #Surveilled: Indicates the intersection of technology and politics, highlighting concerns and debates around surveillance and privacy in hockey.
3. David Versus Goliath Driver:
 - Hot Potato It: Emphasizes values and political dynamics, showcasing the divide between traditional power structures and grassroots movements.
 - POC Puppeteering: Examines the tokenism of Black and people of color to falsely signal inclusion and diversity within hockey without leagues doing the actual work.
4. Hockey Then and Now Driver:
 - Player Inclusion: Focuses on initiatives to involve youth voices in decision making.
 - Fighting for Relevance: Addresses the social challenges and strategies employed to maintain hockey's relevance amid changing demographics and cultural shifts.
 - Hockey Fights Kick the Grave explores the economic realities and discussions surrounding the financial sustainability and viability of hockey as it relates to allowing fighting in the game.

Understanding these Drivers and Trends offers valuable insights into youth hockey culture's current and future paths, empowering stakeholders to navigate effectively and make informed decisions.

Drivers Taking Shape of the Future:

DEI Media Blitz





A movement toward greater social responsibility in hockey ensues, the right leaning calls pandering.

Woke Hockey [Political Trend]

"Woke hockey" reflects a growing movement within the sport towards awareness, inclusivity, and social responsibility. Traditionalists in hockey, criticize these efforts as pandering to "snowflakes" and undermining the sport's integrity, creating a divide between those embracing change and those defending traditional values.

Signals

- Hockey gets political as conservative fans fight the NHL against efforts to promote diversity and inclusion claiming hockey as racist against white men in the sport and a fascist method of leadership (Smith, 2023).
- Tensions rise as the NHL dispatches a memo to their teams stating they will be banning themed nights to celebrate equity deserving groups, including the use of Pride tape. Both players and fans alike debate whether this rule should be instituted, ultimately forcing the NHL to redact the ban (Chappel, 2023).
- Retired Canadian hockey star Theo Fleury slammed the National Hockey League (NHL) Wednesday on "Tucker Carlson Tonight" for politicizing the sport. Carnahan, 2022).

Considerations

- Implication - Economic: The resistance from conservative factions against hockey's movement towards greater social responsibility threatens to impact Canada's hockey economy by stifling off ticket sales to those who do not align with their politics.
- Implication - Legal: Bans or celebrations of various aspects of identity could lead to potential discrimination lawsuits if players or organizations feel their rights to free expression are infringed.
- Extrapolation: Hockey politics get legal and expensive very fast with numerous figure heads yielding significant status and funds to the ecosystem place threats of lawsuits against leagues DEI decisions.

Related Trends & Frictions

- Related Trend - Fan Code of Conduct: Sports Innovation Lab designs comprehensive code of conduct for fans including security and accessibility (Wyshynski, 2022).
- Friction: Efforts to promote greater diversity fail to embrace intersectionality, in front office hiring practices. Reports indicate more success in hiring women than people of color (Somers, 2021).



Leagues across every level dedicate resources to growing participation in equity deserving youth.

Growing the Game [Economic Trend]

With a massive untapped market of new-comer youth and social pressures from the broader public on the need for inclusion in hockey, leagues from house to pro across the country invest dollars into growing the game. Focus is placed on growing girls and women hockey as well as new-comer youth from both funding and programs.

Signals

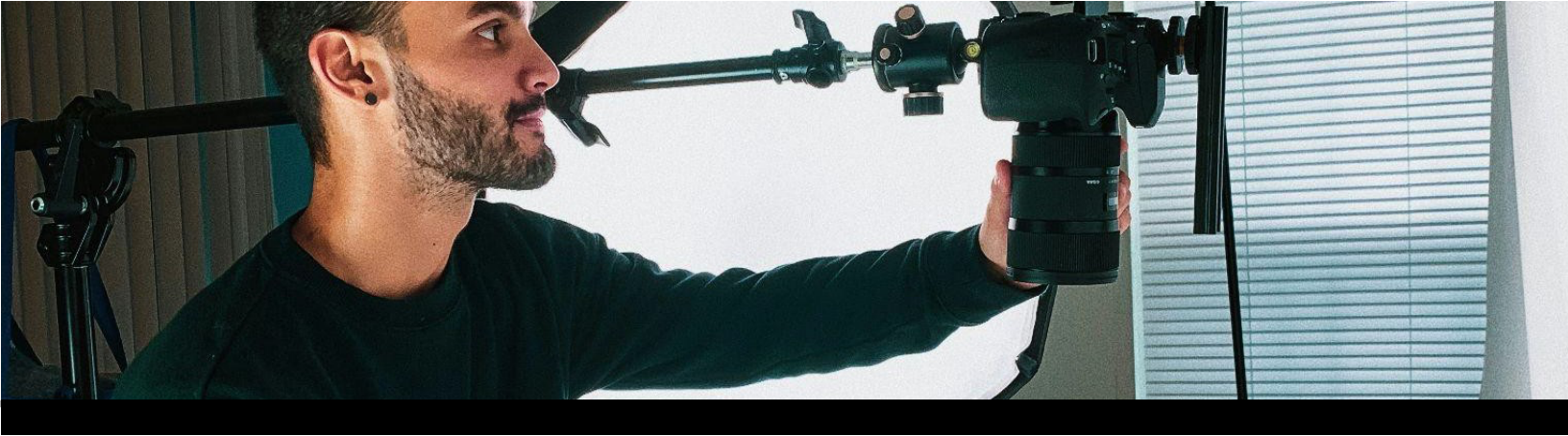
- Hockey Canada hires first ever Vice-President of Diversity and Inclusion that is the founder of “Grow the Game”, an anti-racism education hub for the hockey community. Chaudhry is responsible for enacting a 45-step action plan with timelines into 2025 including equitable pay and indigenous representation (Wells, 2023).
- Ottawa hasn’t had a professional women’s hockey team in more than a decade. The city’s new PWHL franchise is poised to write a new chapter in the city’s long women’s hockey history (Donkin, 2023).
- The MLSE Foundation report highlights a concerning decline in sports access for Ontario’s youth, underscoring the urgent need for increased investment in grassroots sports (Gillespie, 2024).
- Alberta Government invests eight million into the Every Kid Can Play program to knock down financial barriers for youth from equity deserving populations to access and stay in the game of hockey (Quitin, 2024).

Considerations

- Implication - Economic + Political: Governments and local leagues partner to foster opportunities for Indigenous youth, especially girls, to participate in organized hockey (Mertz, 2023).
- Implication - Economic: Regional and provincial leagues dedicate resources to translating campaigns and media into multiple languages in hopes to spread the love for the game to the new-to-Canada population (Cheese, 2023)
- Extrapolation: Hockey Canada are mandated to make substantial strides in creating a more inclusive and diversified environment for youth and parents through tactical recruitment strategies. Canadian Hockey culture’s commitment to diversity and inclusion will be demonstrated by the creation of standardized metrics and indicators that measure systemic change across all levels from the NHL to house leagues.

Related Trends & Frictions

- Related Trend - POC Puppeteering: In the wake of “highlighting marginalized voices”, industries must graduate beyond symbolic gestures of hiring equity deserving people to signal inclusion in place of performing meaningful change (King, 2021).
- Friction: The push for more diversity has failed to be intersectional particularly amongst front office hires where reports have shown so far featured more success with women than people of colour (Somers, 2021).



Media outlets closely track cases of youth hockey maltreatment, highlighting a heightened public interest of these issues.

Exclusive Story Here [Values Trend]

Media outlets in Canada have taken a persistent interest in cases of youth assault and discrimination, with coverage extending over two years. Some outlets have even dedicated sections of their websites specifically to track and report on these ongoing legal matters, reflecting a growing societal focus on addressing such issues.

Signals

- Ex Federal Minister says Hockey Canada scrutiny and constant media coverage likely helped the police in probing and uncovering the case (Baxter, 2024).
- Tim Hortons launches “Let’s Up Our Game” campaign amplifying diversity stories in hockey with players from equity deserving populations overcoming barriers to play the game they love (Tim Hortons, 2022).
- Carnegie Initiative hosts “Beyond Their Years” documentary premiere showcasing stories of hockey legends and social activists Herb Carnegie and Buck O’Neil’s impact on the game and those who can play it (CI, 2023).

Considerations

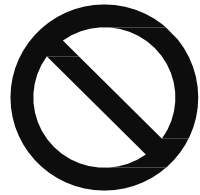
- Implication - Values + Political: Increase of media coverage on showcasing stories of diversity and inclusion using appropriate terminology by hockey leagues sparks outrage by right leaning fans and players (Smith, 2023).
- Implication - Values: Youth athletes see the value in speaking up against the culture of abuse and toxic masculinity understanding that in sharing every story they can prevent future cases of harm for others (Leclerc, 2023).
- Extrapolation- Major sporting organizations including the NHL and Hockey Canada struggle to appease the fan of the past (often right leaning) and fan of the future (left-younger) with neither side content messages appear watered down and ineffective resulting in profit loss on both ends of the fan spectrum.

Related Trends & Frictions

- Related Trend - Not My Kid - Social: In response to the rise of media detailing the abuse in youth hockey, parents begin to pull their kids from the sport - questioning their part in the toxic culture. A decline in participation could have long-term effects on recruitment in the future (Ferreira, 2022).

Drivers Taking Shape of the Future:

Let's Get Political





Sports legacy relies on excuse culture as a coping mechanism to shy away from owning systemic culture change.

Hot Potato It [Political Trend]

A perpetual blame game” across a web of stakeholders dominate hockey as a shorthand coping mechanism to defer accountability toward long term systemic change. Parents stake it ought to be coaches, coaches state it ought to be leagues, youth players ultimately bare the brunt of it.

Signals

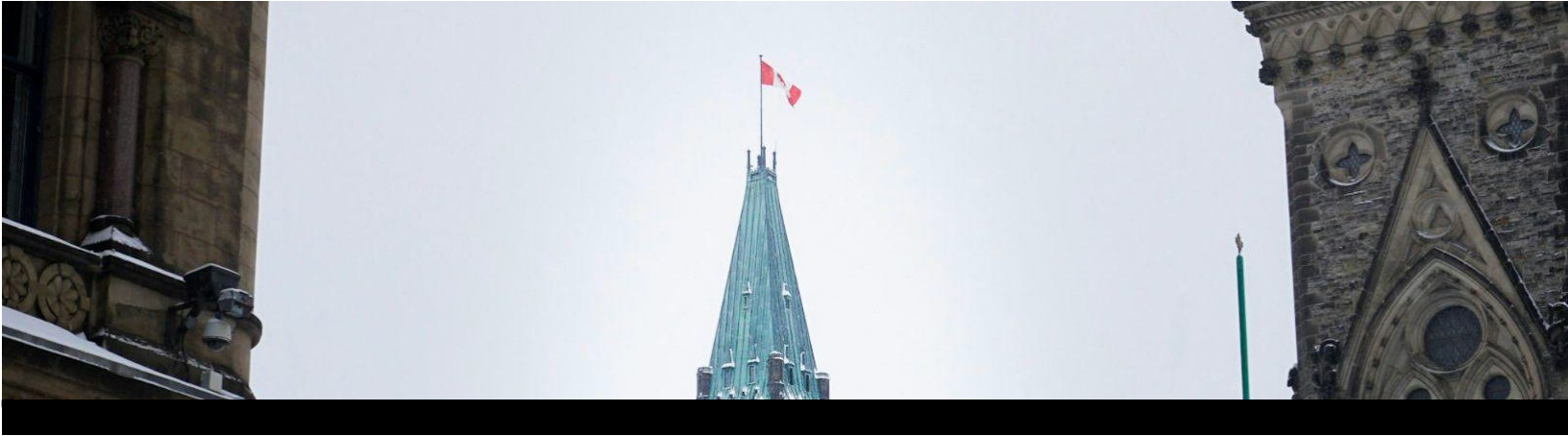
- Hockey Canada ‘s unclear governance model perpetuated an excuse culture enabling the environment that abuse could occur - failing to protect athletes (Hamilton Spec, 2022)
- Grassroots organizations such as Hockey for Equality begin releasing “Accountability Projects” wherein they outline their responsibility to safe sport as well as parents of the children in programs (Hockey Equality, 2022).
- Sport Canada, the government agency that develops federal sport policy, was informed of the 2018 allegations, and failed to act. (McKee.2022)

Considerations

- Implication - Legal As many as 40 more teams looking at joining the BCHL in leaving Hockey Canada and moving to a private ownership model to regain control over their game (The Junior Hockey News, 2024).
- Implication - Political: Government institutions forced to heavily surveil and restructure Hockey Canada governance reconsidering position with hockey beyond funding (Clipperton, 2022).
- Extrapolation: In a power struggle for governance and inclusion, the Canadian government, institutions and hockey owners go to war. Hockey experiences a tipping point in the future of the game’s structure with leagues leaving hockey institutions and going private. As assault cases continue and media coverage dials up it becomes confusing of who hold accountable when no one is really quite in charge.

Related Trends & Frictions

- Friction: Accountability culture is being misconstrued with “cancel culture” that ostracizes institutions and forces them to take immediate actions to address social issues, however often the actions taken are not done in a meaningful way (Chin, 2020).
- Friction: Sporting bodies around the world have created a system largely free of government oversight and interference. However, that autonomy often leads to a lack of accountability (Gauthier, 2022).



Canadian federal and provincial government steps in to redact league abilities to govern to protect youth.

Parental Intervention [Political Trend]

In 2022, a reopened sexual assault scandal took the country by storm, federal funding bodies step in with financial penalties mandating systemic change and redacting Hockey Canada's ability to self-govern. A series of political events issue restructuring how children are safeguarded and adults are held accountable

Signals

- Ottawa freezes Hockey Canada's federal funding in response to the institution's poor handling of its 2018 sexual assault case. Sports Minister states that Hockey Canada "will be held accountable" to change its organizational "culture of silence" (Connolly, 2022).
- Hockey Canada became a full signatory of the government-backed Abuse-Free Sport program in October 2022 (Clipperton, 2023).
- The Government of Canada's Minister Qualtrough announces the creation of an independent and impartial Future of Sport in Canada Commission to address hockey maltreatment issues among other sports (Canadian Heritage, n.d.).

Considerations

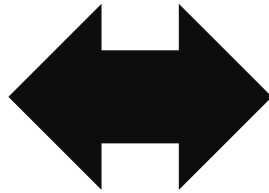
- Implication - Legal: If regulatory bodies do not continue to penalize players to the extent the government did in the 2022 sexual assault case, it will set a problematic precedent for the future of hockey - enacting players being above the law we otherwise hold society to (Ross, 2022).
- Extrapolation: Hockey loses its rights to self manage its culture, becoming Canada's most policed sport. Any cases of harassment are publicized in their annual audit. All cases have a mandated regulation for how and when they are dealt with. Severe consequences for players of all ages - sparking debate on youth prosecution.

Related Trends & Frictions

- Friction: Critics slam Hockey Canada's culture plan - claiming hormones, alcohol and silence didn't make monsters but rather celebrity culture. Journalist compares international laws failing to curb Putin to predicted impact on hockey 'mini gods' above assault laws (Maddeaux, 2022).
- Related Trend - Fighting for Relevance: Gen Z is ushered into their new position of consumer power. What does this mean for hockey, well, they hate it - nearly more than any other sport - and about to hit its bottom line (Silverman, 2020).

Drivers Taking Shape of the Future:

David Versus Goliath





Government and sports bodies explore leveraging invasive surveillance technologies to monitor misconduct

#Surveilled [Tech + Political Trend]

Boundaries between on ice and off ice conduct policing blur lines after bombshell sexual misconduct cases with Hockey Canada continue to add up. Government and sports officials deem if intentions are for protecting the psychological and physical safety of all, further surveillance is appropriate.

Signals

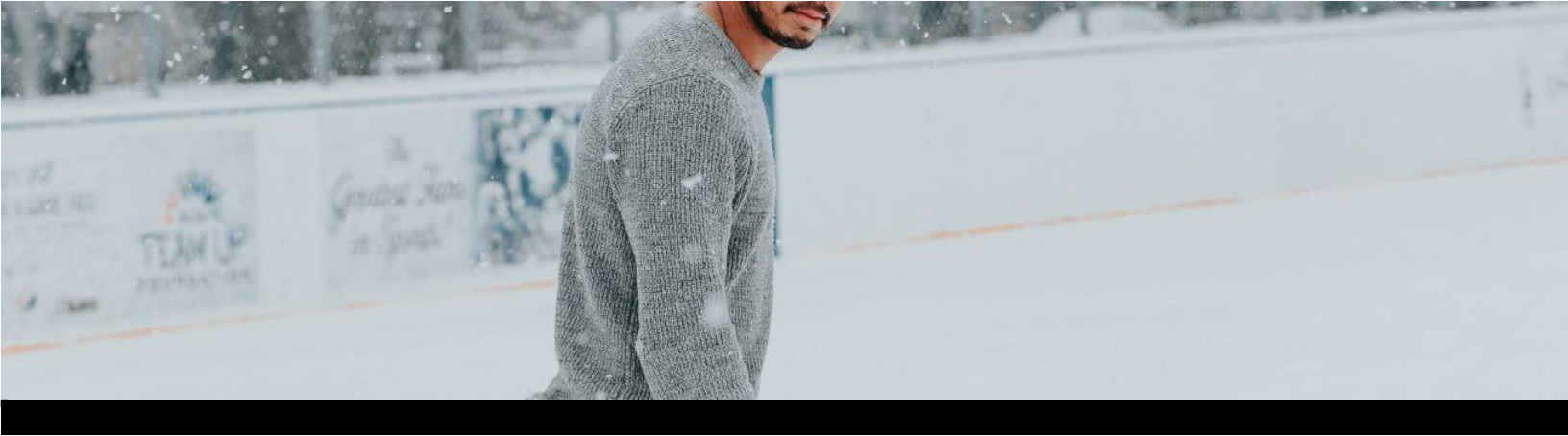
- 2020 COVID-19 pandemic triggers sports organizations and governing bodies to explore AI for facilitating safe arena experiences (Scylla, 2022).
- Adoption of leveraging wearables for real time access to performance data in elite organizations opens doors for misuse and wellbeing contingent on who is in power of the data (Jones, et. al, 2022).
- Big brother surveillance software and data collection methodologies criticized for pushing performance culture propaganda furthering toxic-masculinity paradigms (Powell & Walsh, 2022).

Considerations

- Implication - Values: As access to performance data early on and often is explored by major league institutions, the hunger for more information faster outweighs players right to personal privacy creating implications for data/privacy rights are viewed in society (Metrific, 2022).
- Implication - Economic: As access to data proves access to increased profits, critics accuse sport of the inequities between athlete gains versus team rewards (Western University of Australia, 2022).
- Extrapolation: A lack of government instituted governance policies to protect the safe usage of elite athlete sports data results in dystopian big brother hockey system wherein every action, on or off ice is monitored and assessed.

Related Trends

- Related Trend - Rise of Performance Monitoring Tech: As paradigms surrounding the machine-like performance culture of elite sport continue to dominate, a rise of hyper targeted performance analytics technologies takes over the mainstream (Catapult, 2022).



Commodification of elite POC (People of Colour) athletes put racism risk mitigation over human identities.

POC Puppeteering [Social + Economic]

The George Floyd protests and mass media coverage of racism in hockey triggers discourses surrounding the commodification of professional athletes from equity deserving populations and a means to combatting accusations of exclusion. Concerns around Black body politics and tokenism arise with many grassroots pulling their affiliations.

Signals

- Hockey Diversity Alliance separates from the NHL and operates independently HDA accuses NHL of performative greenwashing and decides more impact can be made on their own (HDA, 2020).
- NHL counters the accusations of reinforcing racism in sport through the new podcast, Soul on Ice (SOIP). The podcast uses Black NHL athletes to give a platform to Black voices while problematically enmeshing the NHL within the commodification of Black culture and hardship (Burroughs & Cummings, 2023).
- Student athletes are used produce profits for college level sports without compensation particularly of economically disadvantaged youth (Black, 2021).

Considerations

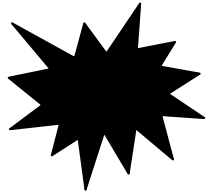
- Implication - Health: As the commodification of elite athlete bodies reins in society, players are pressured to push their health to impossible limits, increasing legal and illegal performance drug markets to survive sport (Connor, 2009).
- Implication - Values: Oversubscription to pumping out elite athletes over sport as a vehicle for health and communion lead to 'invisibly understood' permissions of coaches and leaders to exact abusive measures to yield performance results (Prakash, 2020).
- Extrapolation: Growing media and legal pressures to decenter the culture of whiteness and abuse in hockey without power or systems change result in large sporting entities using Black and bodies of colour to enact false appearances of inclusion. A new form of scandalizing lawsuit emerges taking down hockey all together.

Related Trends & Frictions

- Related Trend - Exploitation of Children through Sport: Hunger for profit and medals, facilitates unsafe environment for youth - promoting abusive paradigms against body image and mental health with lasting impacts on future generations (Thompson-Wells, 2022).

Drivers Taking Shape of the Future:

Hockey Then and Now





Businesses and leagues partner with youth hockey players to find new ways to grow the game

Youth Player Inclusion [Social Trend]

Businesses and leagues involve youth hockey players to uncover ways to enhance inclusivity within the game, leveraging their perspectives to identify new strategies to grow the game and reduce exclusion. Most notably, the NHL launches a Player Coalition geared toward engaging youth hockey players.

Signals

- The NHL and NHLPA completed a league-wide educational tour led by the NHL Player Inclusion Coalition, featuring guided conversations on diversity and inclusion with youth players and NHL alumni (NHLPA, 2024).
- Government of Canada launches Future of Sport Commission that will directly engage survivors and victims of maltreatment in the sport to define recommendations to improve safety (Canadian Heritage, n.d.).
- Future of Hockey lab, a social innovation lab to test new ideas to increase belonging in the sport launches their 2023 cohort focus on growing the game for girls and non-binary players. Youth players as young as 18 participate in the cohort. One solution focuses on representation in female coaches (Withers, 2023).

Considerations

- Implication - Health: As the commodification of elite athlete bodies reins in society, players are pressured to push their health to impossible limits, increasing legal and illegal performance drug markets to survive sport (Connor, 2009)
- Implication - Values: Oversubscription to pumping out elite athletes over sport as a vehicle for health and communion lead to 'invisibly understood' permissions of coaches and leaders to exact abusive measures to yield performance results (Prakash, 2020)
- Extrapolation - Without adequately addressing the hierarchical power struggle of the old guard of hockey against new youth innovations, efforts to engage youth from diverse backgrounds and experiences fall flat with the public calling greenwashing to major leagues involved.

Related Trends & Frictions

- Related Trend - Exploitation of Youth through Sport: Hunger for profit and medals, facilitates unsafe environment for youth - promoting abusive paradigms against body image and mental health with lasting impacts on future generations (Thompson-Wells, 2022)
- Friction - Political Exclusion: A father in the West Island speaks out after he says his child was unfairly banned from playing hockey because he didn't sign a waiver (Henriquez, 2023).



Studies find younger generations have an all-time low interest in sport. New gender values challenge hockey's bottom line.

Fighting for Relevance [Social Trend]

As Gen Z steps into market power, sporting organizations like hockey bleed profits in attempts to win them back. One generational value is dangerous for the future profits of North American hockey: a hatred for hypermasculinity.

Signals

- New research signals that Gen Z does not share the same sports-crazed value set as the generations before them, putting major league sports institutions at financial risk to recapture market share (Silverman, 2020).
- Survey shows that Gen Z are not only disinterested in sports but actively “hate” them due to their propagated cultures of toxic masculinity and exclusionary practices separating men, women, and non-binary (Stahl, 2021)
- As the NHL continues to exclude diverse players from the elite citing cost to play and affordances - Gen Z, a generation valuing diversity and inclusion - is disinterested in supporting archaic sports (Maese, 2020).

Considerations

- Implication - Values: Gen Z isn't just unsubscribing to sports culture of toxic masculinity but any institutional experiences of performance management as seen by their behaviors in the workplace (Kelly, 2022).
- Implication—Economic: As the cost to play and watch minor league hockey becomes inaccessible, fans would rather spend their time and money elsewhere (Drinnan, 2022).
- Extrapolation: Hockey Canada and the NHL at large continue to focus dollars on fan engagement innovation (Burns, 2022) to dazzle younger generations rather than systemic culture change addressing the values clash. Hockey loses its status as Canada's Sport, Gen Z and Gen Alpha are unbothered.

Related Trends & Frictions

- Related Trend - Gender Bending - Gen Z is stepping into consumer spending power and they are not bought on traditional heteronormative behaviors and archetypes (Lieber, 2021),
- Related Trend - The Future of Media - Gen Z can't afford to watch sports In a recent survey of 2,500 sports fans, 59% said they can't afford sports content; 35% said accessing all the content they want from their favourite sports teams is too expensive (Williams, 2024).



New research disproves fight economics and off-rink violence prevention, challenging the ritual's value to hockey

Hockey Fights Kick the Grave [Economic]

Hockey old guards have claimed for decades the strong correlation between hockey fights and ticket sales, stating that people come to live games for the action otherwise not available in other sports. As regulations for fighting have increased over the years with concussion awareness rising, new research proves fans, in fact, do not come for the fights. Armed with data and opinions, purists, traditionalists, and regulators battle whether fights are to stay.

Signals

- Bruin's Lauko goes on the record to state putting a ban on hockey fighting puts the game on a slippery slope of relevance, saying it is a big part of hockey, always was, still is, and hopefully always will be (Ryan, 2023).
- New research disproves the correlation between ticket sales and hockey fights - finding fans are predicted to prefer "higher scoring, less violent" games, consequently improving player safety (Fortney et al., 2022).
- QMJHL bans hockey fighting in a historic rule change for the 2023-2024 season. Any player who engages in a fight will be removed from the game and, if found, instigating a one-game suspension (Thomas, 2023).

Considerations

- Implication—Values: By retiring the role of fighting in the NHL, young players aren't incentivized to start fights in games to increase their perceived 'value' (Reppuci, 2021). This may lead to a reduction of youth assault cases and hyper-masculinity in hockey culture.
- Extrapolation: Hockey divorces fighting once and for all, prioritizing dollars toward capturing Gen Z market share through investments in technological innovation. Hockey fighting becomes its own subculture where cult fans can attend live retired players fisticuff or stream online.

Related Trends & Frictions

- Friction: Despite research disproving the correlation between off-ice violence and regulated fights, retired players and traditionalists argue Enforcers keep the game safe - calling for their return (Jakubowicz, 2021).
- Related Trend—Ice Wars, the New Combat Sport: Hockey meets boxing. Enforcers begin participating in pay-per-view hockey fighting events, pledging to use cash prizes toward community causes (Corbett, 2022).

Trends Conclusion

In conclusion, the future of youth hockey is not just a product of these four key drivers: DEI Media Blitz, Let's Get Political, David Versus Goliath, and Hockey Then & Now. It is a canvas on which we can paint a more inclusive, accountable, and equitable sport. The surge in media coverage highlighting exclusion and maltreatment, coupled with political pressure for cultural reckoning, sets the stage for a potential paradigm shift in hockey's governance and societal impact. Grassroots movements challenging traditional power structures and the evolving landscape of sports preferences also contribute to shaping a future where equity, accountability, and inclusivity are central themes.

As we delve into the future worlds generated by these drivers, it becomes clear that the choices and actions taken today by stakeholders in the hockey ecosystem are not just influential, but pivotal.

The narratives unfolding within DEI media coverage and political arenas underscore the urgent need for transparency, reform, and proactive measures to address systemic issues. Moreover, the emergence of alternative governance models and shifting sports landscapes signals a potential turning point where hockey's relevance and cultural standing may undergo profound transformations. Meanwhile, the Let's Get Political driver, characterized by trends such as Player Inclusion highlighting social dynamics, and Hot Potato It reflecting political sensitivities and challenges, signals a shift towards greater accountability and transparency in hockey governance, driven by external pressures and advocacy movements. The David Versus Goliath driver, shaped by trends like It is Us Or Them emphasizing values and political dynamics, and POC Puppeteering highlighting social and economic shifts in representation, heralds a grassroots movement challenging traditional power structures and advocating for diverse leadership and agency within hockey. Lastly, the hockey Then and Now driver, grappling with trends like Fighting for Relevance amid changing demographics and cultural shifts, and Hockey Fights Kick the Grave addressing economic realities, paints a picture of a sport at a crossroads, navigating challenges while seeking to redefine its identity and appeal in a rapidly evolving sports landscape.

Understanding and responding to these trends within the broader context of hockey's future drivers is crucial for stakeholders in the system to proactively shape a more inclusive, sustainable, and responsive future for youth hockey that aligns with evolving societal values and expectations.

Futures of Youth Hockey Culture

World Generation - 2x2 Matrix

At the outset of this paper, I introduced a powerful tool, the 2x2 Matrix, which I employed to convert trends and drivers into potential futures. This Matrix, a key to our understanding, allowed me to delve into the intersection of two pivotal axes: collective institutional power versus decentralized individual power, and cultural inclusion versus cultural exclusion. These axes were selected based on primary research interviews that identified the struggle for power between organizations and grassroots and old and new models as a crucial tipping point in 2023-2024, with significant implications for youth hockey culture.

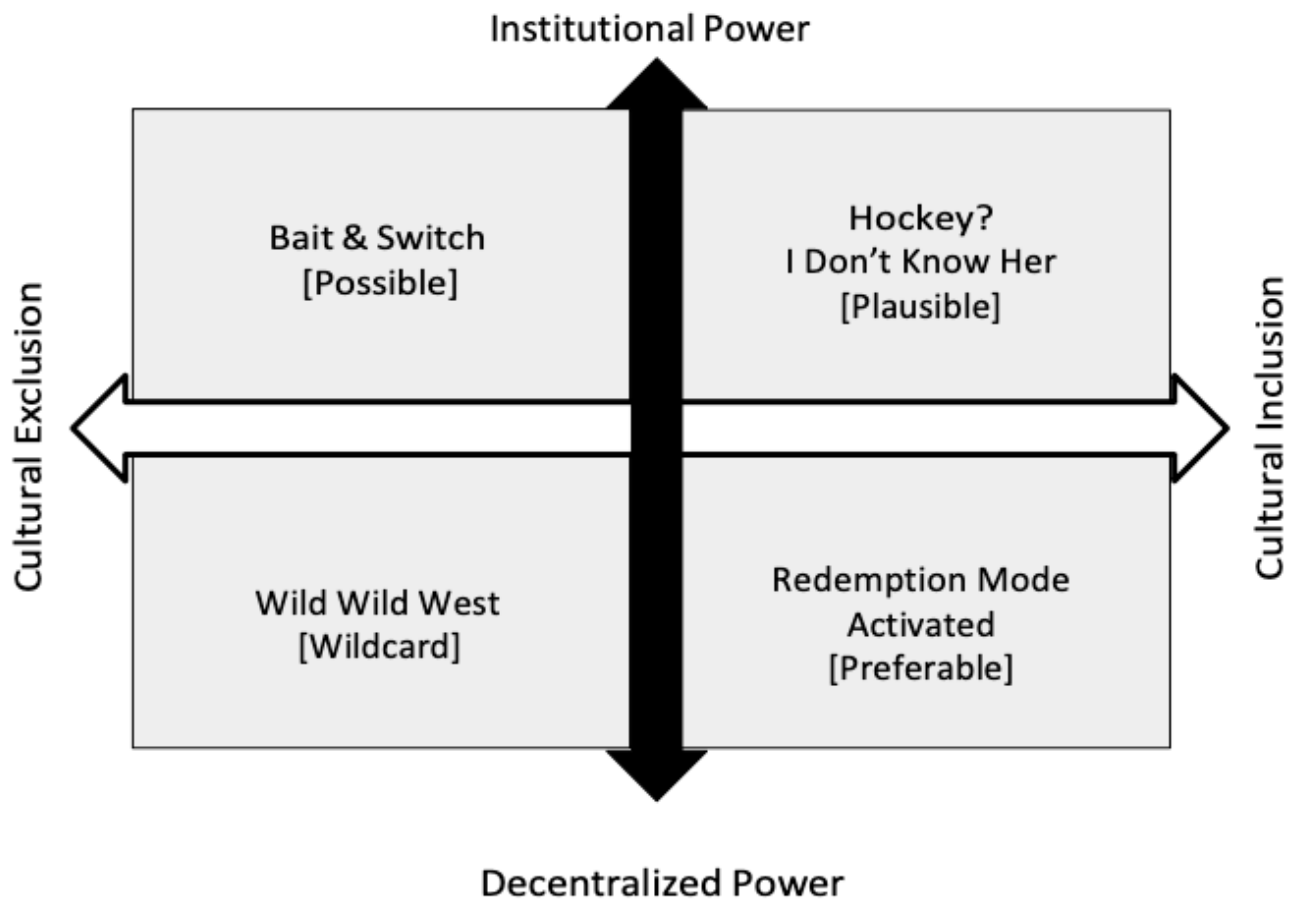
The collective institutional power axis represents the influence and control established hockey organizations and governing bodies exert. In contrast, the individual power axis reflects the autonomy and influence of players, coaches, and grassroots organizations. On the cultural inclusion axis, we consider the extent to which hockey embraces diversity, equity, and inclusivity, whereas culture exclusion represents the perpetuation of exclusive norms and barriers.

Each quadrant of the 2x2 Matrix represents a distinct potential future:

- 1. Possible Future:** This quadrant outlines plausible scenarios based on current trends and trajectories. It represents foreseeable futures, given the existing dynamics in hockey culture.
- 2. Plausible Future:** Given emerging trends and shifts in power dynamics, these scenarios are not only possible but also likely. They represent futures that stakeholders, including players, coaches, and governing bodies, should actively anticipate and play a significant role in shaping.
- 3. Preferable Future:** This quadrant envisions desirable futures aligned with values such as diversity, inclusion, and fairness. It serves as an aspirational guide for shaping positive changes in hockey culture.
- 4. Wildcard Future:** This quadrant explores unexpected and disruptive scenarios that could emerge due to unforeseen events or radical shifts in power dynamics. It encourages preparedness for unpredictable changes.

Considering a 10-year horizon was essential, as secondary, and primary research indicated that significant changes in hockey culture would come to a head within the next 5 to 10 years. The current fragile culture and multiple pressures on hockey today suggest that transformative shifts are on the horizon, making strategic foresight and scenario planning crucial for navigating the evolving landscape of youth hockey.

Futures of Youth Hockey Culture



The 2x2 Matrix described above visualizes four distinct potential worlds that could shape the future of youth hockey culture from 2022-2032. In the Plausible Future quadrant, we find "Hockey, I Don't Know Her," characterized by a balance between cultural inclusion and institutional power. Moving to the Preferable Future quadrant, we encounter "Redemption Mode Activated," a world marked by individual power and cultural inclusion. In the Wildcard Future quadrant, represented by "Wild Wild West," hockey confronts unforeseen challenges and disruptions stemming from cultural exclusion and individual power, highlighting a scenario marked by exclusionary practices and individualistic power struggles. Finally, in the Possible Future quadrant, we encounter "Bait and Switch," where cultural exclusion and institutional power intersect.

These foresight scenarios seek to provide leaders in the sport with a roadmap to anticipate potential futures to identify critical intervention points that can be enacted to safeguard and empower children in hockey today. These scenarios also act as an experiential method to understand how the impact of your actions today can steer the future of youth hockey into problematic timelines.

Future Worlds

Bait & Switch [Possible Future]



Hockey Canada and other governing institutional bodies of organized hockey win the war and maintain their power over the system. Media pressures from the outside maintain their fixation on culture change; institutions perform a song and dance of inclusion to appease while secretly maintaining the systems of oppression to wait them out. Drivers: DEI Media Blitz [improves], Let's Get Political [worsens], David Versus Goliath [worsens], Hockey Then & Now [stagnant].

Hockey? I Don't Know Her [Plausible Future]



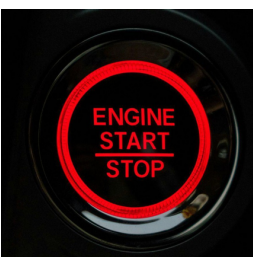
Hockey's relevance to Canadian culture is diminishing swiftly because of a failure to anticipate strategic challenges. This results in significant blind spots in the macroeconomic landscape that leave little room for timely action. This is worsened by increasing public skepticism and differences between generations. Drivers: DEI Media Blitz [worsens], Let's Get Political [worsens], David Versus Goliath [worsens], Hockey Then & Now [worsens].

Wild Wild West [Wildcard Future]



Individual power triumphs over institutional control in the privatized landscape of hockey. However, amidst this power shift, external pressures from the public and government intensify, demanding accountability and consistent regulation. This chaotic ecosystem results in an unregulated environment with no standardized enforcement of care policies, making large-scale change a daunting and disorganized endeavour without a clear starting point. Drivers: DEI Media Blitz [worsens], Let's Get Political [worsens], David Versus Goliath [improves], Hockey Then & Now [worsens].

Redemption Mode Activated [Preferred Future]



The liberation of equity-deserving groups becomes a cornerstone of the hockey landscape. Ownership, coaches, and leaders who reflect their diverse identities inspire children to join the sport. The transition to decentralized ownership paves the way for more affordable access to hockey, ensuring that players can thrive and remain engaged in the sport for years to come. Drivers: DEI Media Blitz [improves], Let's Get Political [improves], David Versus Goliath [improves], Hockey Then & Now [improves].

Bait & Switch



Trends: #Surveilled, Player Inclusion, Woke Hockey, POC Puppeteering

Glimpse to this world in 2032: Under the reign of Hockey Canada and other governing bodies, the status quo remains intact as institutional powers successfully defend their dominance within the hockey ecosystem. Despite external pressures from media advocating for cultural transformation, institutions strategically navigate this landscape by showcasing superficial gestures of inclusivity while preserving the underlying systems of oppression. This delicate balancing act aims at appeasing public scrutiny while maintaining the grip on power.

Who holds the power? In this scenario, Hockey Canada and allied institutional bodies firmly control the narrative and direction of organized hockey. They leverage their influence to dictate policies and decisions that perpetuate the existing power structures, managing to navigate external pressures while safeguarding their authority.

Implications for hockey:

- The emphasis on maintaining institutional power results in limited progress toward genuine cultural change within hockey.
- While the DEI Media Blitz driver shows improvements in highlighting inclusivity efforts, it is overshadowed by the worsening Let's Get Political and David Versus Goliath drivers, which exacerbate power struggles and divisions.
- The stagnant state of Hockey Then & Now reflects a reluctance to embrace transformative shifts, hindering the potential for meaningful evolution in the sport's governance and culture.

Hockey? I Don't Know Her



Trends: Player Inclusion, Woke Hockey, Fighting for Relevance, Hot Potato It, Exclusive Story Here

Glimpse to this world in 2032: institutional power remains entrenched while cultural inclusion advances, yet the sport's relevance in Canadian culture is rapidly eroding due to strategic oversights. Macroeconomic blind spots hinder timely responses, exacerbated by growing public skepticism and intergenerational divides. Despite efforts to address diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) through media campaigns, political engagement, and grassroots movements, the overall trajectory of hockey's evolution is on a downward trend.

Who holds the power? Institutional bodies like Hockey Canada and other governing entities maintain significant control over hockey's structures and operations, although their influence is weakening in the face of mounting challenges. The media, political forces, and grassroots movements exert pressure for change, resulting in a scenario where too many cooks in the kitchen struggle to make substantial changes while appeasing various stakeholders. This dynamic hinders meaningful progress and contributes to a sense of stagnation and irrelevance in hockey's cultural impact.

Implications for hockey:

- The ongoing struggle between institutional power and external pressures hinders meaningful progress.
- Erosion of hockey's cultural significance due to systemic failures to adapt and respond effectively.
- Dwindling enrolment numbers underscore an urgent need for comprehensive, forward-thinking strategies to revitalize hockey's relevance in Canadian society.

Wild Wild West



Trends: Woke Hockey, Parental Intervention, Hot Potato It, Exclusive Story Here, Taking Back the Power, It's Us or Them

Glimpse to this world in 2032: Imagine a hockey world where every team is now a private entity owned by many companies and individuals, each with eccentric motives and strategies. The once-unified governance resembles a chaotic carnival, with the government trying to wrangle the unruly circus. Nevertheless, in this frenzy of competing interests and wild power plays, effecting meaningful change feels like trying to tame a stampeding herd of untamed beasts. In this tumultuous landscape, youth maltreatment cases have skyrocketed to unprecedented levels, exacerbated by the lack of universal reporting structures and clear accountability pipelines. This alarming trend has ignited a loud public outcry, demanding swift justice and prompting the government to tighten its grip on the chaotic hockey world, attempting to rein in the rampant disorder and ensure accountability for all stakeholders involved.

Who holds the power? Individual stakeholders and private entities wield significant influence and control within the privatized hockey landscape. This wildy power dynamic has further complicated efforts to address systemic issues and implement meaningful reforms within the hockey ecosystem.

Implications for hockey:

- Lack of standardized enforcement of care policies leads to record-high cases of youth maltreatment instigating national protests
- Difficulty in initiating large-scale change due to disorganization and conflicting interests

Redemption Mode Activated



Trends: Commodification of Players, 24/7 Conduct Policing, Diversity Recruitment, Fan Engagement Innovation

Glimpse to this world in 2023: The hockey world in 2023 is a vibrant tapestry of diversity and inclusion, where the voices of equity-deserving groups echo loudly across arenas. Ownership, coaching staff, and leadership positions are now occupied by individuals who authentically represent hockey's rich mosaic of identities. This transformative shift has sparked a renewed passion for the sport, attracting new talent and fostering a sense of belonging previously unseen in hockey culture.

Who holds the power? In this reimagined hockey landscape, the power is decentralized and shared among diverse stakeholders. Ownership structures have evolved, with community-driven initiatives and grassroots organizations playing a pivotal role in shaping the direction of the sport. Rather than a top-down approach, decision-making is collaborative, with input from players, fans, and community leaders driving meaningful change.

Implications for hockey:

- Increased participation and retention of youth players from equity-deserving populations.
- Reduced financial and accessibility barriers supported by innovative pathway programs prioritizing youth development.
- Hockey becomes a vehicle for social change and community development that is applied to other sports as a gold standard.

Youth Hockey Futures

Conclusion

As we conclude this chapter on the future scenarios of youth hockey culture, it is crucial to emphasize the significant role that everyone in the hockey community plays in shaping these futures. Reflecting on why we engage in this practice and how it can inform our thinking moving forward, these scenarios offer glimpses into possible trajectories for youth hockey, each with its unique set of trends, power dynamics, and implications. By understanding and contemplating these futures, hockey as a community, are better equipped to navigate the complexities of the hockey system and make informed decisions that align with desired outcomes of safe sport.

The purpose of exploring these scenarios is not just to speculate about what may come but to provoke critical thinking and strategic planning within the hockey community. Each scenario represents a plausible path based on current trends and potential shifts in the socio-political landscape surrounding hockey. By examining these futures, we challenge ourselves to consider the consequences of our actions and the dynamics that shape the hockey ecosystem. This exploration also presents opportunities for positive change, inspiring hope and motivation for a better future.

As you read the next chapter, which examines the emotional landscape within the hockey system, pay attention to the beliefs, mental models, and stories that underpin how individuals perceive and navigate their roles. Emotions play a crucial role in shaping behaviours and decisions, and understanding these emotional currents is essential for fostering a positive and inclusive hockey culture.

Remember the sentiments expressed by players, coaches, leaders, and stakeholders as they envision the future of hockey. Their hopes, fears, and aspirations provide valuable insights into the possibilities and challenges ahead. By integrating the insights from the future scenarios with the emotional narratives within the hockey system, we can better understand the forces at play and work towards a future that prioritizes equity, inclusion, and sustainability in youth hockey culture.

**Youth
Hockey
Culture
Stories,
Beliefs &
Mindsets**

Stories, Beliefs & Mindsets

Overview

My research methodology involved primary interviews with various hockey stakeholders, including youth and adult players, coaches, executive leaders, and league owners. A total of 7 interviews were able to be conducted for this study using a recruitment screener that prioritized diversity by way of ability, race, socio-economic status, gender, and access to authority. The screener results were immediately disposed of after qualifying the participant, and no question outside of recent exposure to hockey was mandated to be answered regarding one's individual aspects of identity. No players under the age of 18 were interviewed despite rigorous recruitment efforts and careful parental consent forms provided. Due to limitations in participant recruitment, I strategically layered these interviews against an extensive literature review to provide depth and context to my findings.

The interviews, which lasted approximately 30-45 minutes, were structured around three key categories. These categories focused on the participants' past experiences of hockey, their views on the current state of hockey, and their beliefs about the future of youth hockey culture. Through this approach, I aimed to not only gather factual data but also delve into the emotional landscape of the hockey system, capturing the feelings and sentiments of stakeholders from different vantage points.

To ensure the privacy and confidentiality of all participants, strict measures were taken to scrub all information that could potentially identify individuals. Therefore, details regarding participants' age, gender, race, and other personal information are not described on an individual level but are aggregated for analysis purposes.

Given the topic's sensitive nature and potential impact on participants, I implemented stringent protocols to ensure ethical conduct throughout the interviews. Participants were fully informed of their rights, including the option to leave the interview at any point, decline to answer specific questions, and access local reporting and mental health resources. These measures were taken to ensure the privacy, confidentiality, and well-being of all participants.

This integrated approach combines primary interviews with a literature review to enrich the study's findings and provide a nuanced understanding of the complexities within Canadian hockey culture.

Where We Came From

The history of hockey reveals a stark reality of exclusion, where systemic barriers and biases have shaped the game's landscape. Understanding this past is crucial in addressing present-day inequities and working towards a more inclusive future for all hockey participants.

Hockey's historical narrative is deeply rooted in a predominantly white environment, reflecting systemic barriers that limit diversity and inclusion. The sport's early start ages and high costs often deterred individuals from diverse backgrounds, contributing to a legacy of exclusivity and inequality, with 35% of Canadian parents in 2019 having to take on a second job or additional debt for their kids to play (Flipgive, 2019).

For many players, especially those from equity-deserving communities, entry into hockey often relied heavily on parental connections. This perpetuates a feedback loop where access to the sport was primarily reserved for those with familial ties or financial means as registration fees continue to skyrocket (Shelleau, 2022). For instance, 83% of subjects interviewed across both Youth and Leader groups in this study stated they started playing hockey because a parent of theirs did.

As many know, this stunt lack of diversity has led to historical cases of racism and maltreatment, particularly at a youth level, all the way back to the 1950s. Willie O'Ree made history as the NHL's first Black player in 1958, but it was not until 1980 that Tony McKegney became the first Black player to be featured prominently on the cover of THN. McKegney, aged 22, was among the fourth Black players to enter the NHL, following in the footsteps of O'Ree, Mike Marson, and Bill Riley (who played from 1974 to 1979). However, McKegney is the first Black player to achieve stardom in the NHL (Augello, 2023). In the study, more than 50% of participants interviewed either experienced firsthand or witnessed a case of child maltreatment, most often through the form of discrimination due to race or sexual orientation and bullying. Recalls of experiences were often between two teammates; however, two stories included cases of an inappropriate display of anger between a coach and a youth player.

Despite milestones like Willie O'Ree's historic debut, hockey has struggled to shed its exclusionary past. In as recent as 2020, a 16-year-old Mark Connors, who is Black and plays with the Halifax Hawks, during a hockey tournament in Charlottetown, was called the N-word and told by White spectators, "This is a White man's sport." By all accounts, the espoused myth is erroneous. It implies, on the one hand, that Blacks and other people of colour have no place in hockey and should stick to playing basketball, baseball and football and on the other, they do not have the athletic ability and intelligence to play hockey (Deer, 2020).

Where We Came From

Like many other sports, hockey has long been associated with a culture of hypermasculinity that discourages talking about emotions and personal needs. This culture fosters repressed anger and hurt among male players, often leading to inappropriate expressions of these emotions. In one example, male hockey players were asked if they were aware of resources available to them, and many said yes; however, they admitted being afraid to access them due to fear of reprisal (Britten, 2022).

In another research study, it was found that 82% of respondents, particularly those from equity-seeking populations like Black, Indigenous, and people of colour (BIPOC), reported not having anyone they could confide in about experiences of racism or discrimination in hockey. This number increased by 7% for Latinx women and girls, 12% for youth with a visible disability, and 11% for youth from Northern Ontario (Heal et al., 2023).

This lack of trust in the system to address issues and protect privacy was echoed in primary research, where participants expressed doubts about the effectiveness of reporting processes and corrective actions. The 2022 Rally report highlighted a significant issue of trust within the hockey community, with one in three Canadian girl hockey players stating they did not trust their leaders and coaches to address safety incidents adequately (Women In Sport, 2022).

The concept of favoritism and social dynamics between coaches and players also emerged as a significant concern in primary research. Players and parents were reluctant to report issues involving favoured players for fear of losing their or their child's spot on the team. This is commonly referred to in the primary interviews and secondary research as a "culture of silence" when describing hockey culture. This notion of the "culture of silence" surrounds access to safe spaces for children in hockey, where often speaking up or seeking support feels too risky and potentially detrimental compared to silence or quitting the game (MLSE Foundation, 2023). 89% of participants interviewed stated they experienced or witnessed at least one case of maltreatment and described the significant psychological cost of speaking up, with many sharing that and the social dynamics of the game being the only reason they had considered quitting.

Overall, addressing the culture of hypermasculinity, fostering safe communication about emotions and needs, and building trust within the hockey community are critical steps to creating a safer and more inclusive environment for players of all backgrounds.

Where We Are

This subsection delves into the state of hockey today, placing a spotlight on the findings gathered from interviews with players, executives, coaches, and parents in 2023 to 2024.

Hockey Pathways:

86% of subjects identifying from equity-deserving populations had self-described non-traditional pathways in hockey. Commonly using slang, the sport "found them" or "chose them". Interestingly, for women participants, it was often their children who introduced them to hockey. The semi-pro-athlete interviewed stated they got involved at three years old due to their parent's involvement in the sport. This is commonly described as around the age of any youth athlete interested in the sport needing to start, and it often creates issues for parents who need access to the same resources and understanding of the hockey culture to start their children. Although all interview subjects played other sports at a youth level, all described something intangibly special about hockey that stood out from other sports.

Perception of Children on the Ice:

A significant interview finding highlighted a concerning trend in how authority figures perceive children's rights and behaviours within the hockey environment. It became apparent that coaches and parents often overlook age-appropriate conduct on the ice, treating young players more like professionals and adults rather than acknowledging their age, maturity level, and developmental needs. This perspective creates a disconnect where the hockey rink is seen as a space with its own set of standards, often diverging from what is deemed acceptable in other environments like classrooms. This inconsistency in standards raises important questions about the expectations and treatment of young athletes in the sport.

Influence of Authority Figures:

The influence wielded by parents, coaches, and other authority figures in shaping young players' behaviour and attitudes cannot be overstated. Disturbing accounts surfaced, such as a coach berating and physically intimidating sixth-grade players, leading to emotional distress and even dangerous on-ice incidents. This power dynamic, where adults' actions dictate players' destinies, creates an environment of fear and silence among youth, inhibiting their ability to speak out against mistreatment. One story in particular highlights this well where Subject C describes an incident where an adult male coach screamed at a group of 6 grader children for "shitting the bed", kicking a trash can in their direction, causing the children to begin crying, one of them the team captain. Another coach goes into console the captain and his teammate and the male coach "grabs both kids by the back of their jerseys" and tells them to "toughen up" putting his hand on the kids in a "dangerous" way. Later in the game, the team captain cross-checks a very "tiny kid" in the back and gets called on an A5 game misconduct, getting "booted out" for the game, a move which "could have killed" the other child all stemming from the coaches behaviour.

Where We Are

Underreporting of Maltreatment:

Interviews shed light on the prevalence of unreported cases of youth maltreatment, with estimates as high as 89% in some circles. The reluctance to report stems from the high personal cost and perceived risks, illustrating the entrenched power dynamics within hockey. Players and coaches alike navigate a landscape where speaking out against misconduct or abuse carries severe consequences, further perpetuating a culture of silence and fear. One subject at an executive level for pro hockey describes youth players as "deathly afraid to cause a rift at all because they believe if they were to cause a rift, be a snitch or tattletale, that would look more poorly on them than the person who engaged them". When asked if anonymous reporting portals would help this, many respondents stated yes, and it was the appropriate step in the right direction. However, work must be done to address the underlying beliefs and fears of players of reprisal and distrust in the system to take corrective action; otherwise, youth players will continue to not report.

Need for Accountability and Transparency:

85% of interviews state that the code of conduct and policies are all there, and that's great. The problem is that they are not enforced. We don't need more policies or statements; we need accountability and transparency regarding how breaches of them are handled appropriately.

Power of Stories & George Floyd Movement:

Several interviewees cite the George Floyd protest as a tipping point in the diversification of hockey and the original call for reckoning. Several highlight the impact of stories of abuse, racism, and maltreatment as pivotal to the changes that have occurred so far—storytelling is described as a lucrative strategy for enacting systemic culture change.

Bullying and Racism Remarks Outsmart System:

Incidents of racism, bullying and discrimination in youth hockey are noted by 80% of respondents occurring today. Subjects share that methods of bullying and racism have become more covert to bypass the system. For example, one subject notes players "being called a monkey or making monkey sounds when certain players hit the ice so then it's left to the interpretation of the referee, making it much more covert. but it's equally as damaging if not worse. Because now this person has internalized what am I hearing? Why am I hearing? And it goes on and on... and typically, shoots players into a flight as opposed to a fight mode because they have to internalize so much more when it's covertly addressed to them and because then they're even their fellow teammates, can't pick those cues up they don't even have their support". 50% of respondents also cited bullying and discrimination events related to youth players' gender identification or sexuality recalling, recent events of homophobic slurs and coordinated discrimination of youth players against other youth players.

Where We Are Going [Probable Future]

In the forthcoming years, according to the primary research interviews, the landscape of youth hockey will undergo seismic shifts, driven by prevailing trends and anticipations over the next five to ten-year horizon:

Financial Accessibility Challenges Continue:

The prevalent concern regarding the affordability of youth hockey is set to escalate, with mounting upfront costs and registration fees likely leading to a noticeable decline in participation, especially among socio-economically challenged families.

Emphasis on Mentorship and Structural Revisions:

The need for robust coaching mentorship programs and organizational restructuring to reduce volunteer entry barriers will become increasingly apparent. At a recreation league level, organizations are already experiencing this as inflation pressures stack, and the average parent needs access to seven to ten hours of onboarding and administration to coach their kids' league. This will especially hit women and others from equity-deserving populations who may have been interested in coaching, resulting in less programming available for kids to play because no coaches supervise them.

Strong Demand for Accountability and Fairness:

The call for greater accountability and transparency within hockey organizations will grow louder. Issues such as favouritism, political influences, and a culture of entitlement are set to ignite demands for fairer decision-making processes and clear avenues for redress from growing pressures from the media and parents who take matters into their own hands.

Focus on Empathy and Psychological Safety:

Recognizing the detrimental effects of bullying, mistreatment, and harmful coaching practices, there will be a pronounced shift towards cultivating empathy, psychological safety, and inclusive environments to nurture players' well-being and foster a positive hockey culture in training. Nearly all subjects discuss the need for and evolution of an empathy-based approach to training youth hockey players on misconduct, maltreatment and consent. Subject D states, "...Now it's woke hockey, and we get this thrown in our face all the time. So, in order to combat that, I'm trying to express to people to look at it with an empathic view. It will draw out the lines that you won't think about race. You don't have to worry about gender identity because the bottom line is to put your shoes in their shoes. Imagine if you were gay, and someone said that to you how you would feel."

The Implosion of Traditional Structures:

Many participants' stark prediction of a potential implosion within governing bodies like Hockey Canada suggests a seismic upheaval. This forecasted collapse is rooted in observations of systemic issues and growing tensions between the government, public and hockey institutions' governance models.

Where We Are Going

[Probable Future]

Erosion of Traditional Authority:

Traditional authorities like Hockey Canada may see a reduction in their influence and power dynamics. This erosion of authority could stem from evolving trends in ownership models, the privatization of youth leagues as seen by the BCHL and the emergence of alternative leagues that challenge the established hierarchy.

Rise of Privatization and Alternative Leagues:

The envisioned future sees a significant trend towards privatization, where entrepreneurial ventures and independent leagues gain prominence. Subject C's reference to the United States Professional Hockey League (USPHL) expanding into Canada reflects this shift towards alternative structures that circumvent traditional governing bodies.

Diversified Ownership and Governance:

With the potential decline of centralized bodies like Hockey Canada, diversified ownership and governance models are expected to take root. This could entail a more decentralized approach, where ownership and decision-making are distributed across stakeholders, including community-driven initiatives and private entities.

Entrepreneurial Opportunities:

The anticipated structural changes also point towards increased opportunities for entrepreneurs and individuals with a passion for hockey to enter the landscape. Subject C's mention of the USPHL's expansion and the potential for more accessible ownership suggests a democratization of hockey's organizational structures and opens doors for innovative business ventures.

Governmental and Regulatory Response:

Respondents identify potential governmental responses to the predicted structural governance shifts, highlighting the delicate balance between supporting innovation and safeguarding the sport's integrity. Government interventions, regulations, and negotiations with emerging leagues could significantly shape the future landscape.

Impact on Player Development and Pathways:

The evolution of hockey's structural dynamics will inevitably impact player development pathways. Changes in ownership, league structures, and governance could significantly alter how young players progress through the ranks, access training, and pursue professional opportunities, a crucial aspect for all stakeholders to consider.

Cultural and Identity Shifts:

Beyond the logistical and organizational aspects, these structural changes may also catalyze cultural and identity shifts within the hockey community. Diversifying ownership, leadership, and playing demographics could lead to a more inclusive and representative sport, mirroring broader societal trends.

This predictive outlook underscores the trajectory towards a future where financial barriers, organizational reforms, accountability, empathy-driven cultures, diversification, privatization, and potential structural shake-ups are likely to define the evolving landscape of youth hockey over the next ten years.

Where Needs to Happen For Preferred Future

In envisioning a preferred future for hockey, the discussions emphasized the need for a more diverse and inclusive sport, particularly focusing on gender representation and opportunities for Black individuals in ownership and executive roles. Strategies for achieving this future include implementing equitable hiring processes, mentorship programs for parents and coaches, and holding accountable those who abuse their power. Additionally, there's a call for increased funding in grassroots programs and the creation of anonymous, protected reporting tools, although concerns persist about systemic issues hindering meaningful change. Training parents and establishing clear codes of conduct are also seen as crucial steps in fostering a positive youth culture within hockey.

The preferred futures explored during discussions center around a vision of a more diverse and inclusive hockey landscape, with particular attention to gender representation and opportunities for Black individuals in ownership and executive roles. One major strategy involves implementing equitable hiring processes and mentorship programs for parents and coaches, along with holding accountable those who abuse their power. Increased funding in grassroots programs and the creation of anonymous, protected reporting tools are also advocated for, although concerns remain about systemic barriers to change. Training parents and establishing clear codes of conduct are seen as essential in shaping a positive youth culture within the sport.

To delve deeper into these strategies, there is a recognition that diversity and inclusivity must be integrated into hockey organizations' very structure and culture. This involves token gestures or superficial changes and a fundamental shift in mindset and practices. It means addressing systemic barriers that prevent individuals from equity-deserving populations from accessing coaching opportunities and leadership roles. It also means rethinking traditional registration and funding allocation models to ensure that grassroots programs, often the entry point for many young athletes, receive adequate support and resources. Moreover, building trust and accountability mechanisms within the sport is essential; having reporting tools is one thing, but creating an environment where individuals feel safe and empowered to use them is equally crucial.

Next, I will explore applying a foresight technique known as wind tunnelling. This method allows me to simulate how the strategies discussed fare in my outlined diverse worlds. By projecting these strategies into different scenarios and examining their potential impact, I aim to understand if they align with the anticipated outcomes of the interview respondents. This approach enables me to explore potential challenges, opportunities, and unintended consequences that may arise, providing valuable insights for shaping a more inclusive and equitable future for hockey.

Proposed Strategies

	Financial	Risk	Strategic Fit	Cultural Fit	Financial	Risk	Strategic Fit	Cultural Fit	Financial	Risk	Strategic Fit	Cultural Fit	Financial	Risk	Strategic Fit	Cultural Fit
Trauma-informed training for parents and kids.	L	L	L	H	L	L	M	M	L	L	M	M	L	L	H	H
Lower barriers for volunteer coaches	L	M	H	H	L	L	L	L	M	M	H	H	L	L	H	H
New funding model aligned with grassroots structures	M	M	H	H	M	M	H	H	L	M	H	H	M	H	H	H
Anti-racism informed, standardized coach recruitment	M	L	M	M	M	L	H	H	M	L	H	H	M	H	H	H
Black owned youth teams	H	L	H	H	H	M	H	H	H	L	H	H	M	L	H	H
Hockey I Don't Know Her (Possible)				Bait & Switch (Probable)				Wild Wild West (Wildcard)				Redemption Mode Activated (Preferred)				

Wind Tunneling, also known as Stress Testing, is a method used in strategic foresight to assess the resilience of strategic options across various future scenarios (Government of Alberta, 2022). To conduct this assessment, I used a grid that includes four strategic options and four scenarios, using a set of business criteria to evaluate their effectiveness in different potential futures of youth hockey culture. I employed Kees van der Heijden's Scenarios, Strategy, and Strategy Process criteria, which include Financial Performance, Risk Performance, Strategic Fit, and Cultural Fit (Kees van der Heijden, 2018). Financial Performance evaluates an initiative's feasibility and impact. Risk Performance measures the level of risk associated with an initiative within a particular future scenario; High-Risk Performance indicates healthy to low-risk exposure. Strategic Fit assesses the alignment between current strategic plans, capabilities, and market positioning. Cultural Fit examines how well the strategic options align with the values and environmental factors of the respective future scenario.

Proposed Strategies

Conclusion

The proposed strategies synthesized from the most prevalent themes and insights of the research highlight several critical areas for advancing the culture of hockey toward a more inclusive and equitable future. These strategies include implementing training programs for parents focused on psychological safety and modelling appropriate behaviour on the ice, as well as trauma-informed empathy training for youth players that focuses on consent, sexual assault prevention and bullying. Another is to reduce the administrative barriers to entry and create new pathways for volunteer coaches, especially from equity-deserving populations. Additionally, redesigning funding models to better align with grassroots hockey registration timelines and structures, establishing anti-racism-informed coach recruitment with clear penalization structures for abuses of power, and enabling more Black people and people of colour to assume executive positions and ownership of youth teams are essential steps.

Through the wind tunnelling activity that stress-tested the impact and feasibility of these initiatives across four defined future worlds, it became evident that strategies facilitating increased representation of Black and people of colour in ownership positions demonstrated the most resilience. Following closely behind were new funding structures for grassroots organizations dedicated to expanding the game. Tied for third place were initiatives focusing on volunteer pathways and anti-racism-informed coach recruitment and penalization policies. While important, parent training showed a lesser impact than the other strategies when tested across the future worlds.

Looking ahead, the next section of this work presents curated resource guides tailored to each stakeholder in the hockey system. These resources aim to equip individuals with the tools and insights needed to contribute actively to advancing hockey toward the preferred future outlined. Every individual within the hockey community has a role to play, and these reflections serve as a practical starting point for anyone looking to engage in meaningful change while larger-scale initiatives are being planned and implemented.

Recommended Activities

Reflection Prompts

Overview

As this paper delves into the complex ecosystem of youth hockey culture, it is vital to present findings and insights and encourage deep introspection and critical thinking among the stakeholders involved.

Therefore, I have concluded this paper with reflection prompts tailored for each major stakeholder group identified within the youth hockey system, including parents, coaches, executives, players, and civilians.

The rationale behind this decision is multifaceted. Firstly, reflection prompts allow individuals from diverse backgrounds and roles within hockey culture to examine their positionalities and experiences. Parents, as primary influencers and supporters of youth players, can reflect on their role in shaping their children's experiences and attitudes towards the game. Coaches, who play a pivotal role in player development and team dynamics, can consider their coaching philosophies and practices in light of inclusivity and equity.

Executives and administrators responsible for governance and decision-making can reflect on policies and initiatives that promote a positive and inclusive hockey culture. As central actors in the hockey ecosystem, players can reflect on their experiences, challenges, and aspirations within the sport. Lastly, civilians and external observers can reflect on their roles as advocates, supporters, or critics of youth hockey, contributing to broader conversations about the sport's impact and future direction.

It's worth noting that I prioritized a diverse recruitment sample for this study, recognizing the importance of including voices from various backgrounds, identities, and experiences within the youth hockey community. This approach ensures that the reflection prompts resonate with various stakeholders, promoting inclusivity and equity in the research process.

By engaging in thoughtful reflection, stakeholders can better understand their roles, responsibilities, biases, and privileges within the system. This introspection is crucial for fostering self-awareness and promoting accountability in decision-making processes. It also emphasizes the importance of inclusivity, diversity, and equity in shaping the future of youth hockey.

Moreover, these reflection prompts are designed to prompt individuals to apply their learnings from this paper to their daily lives and decision-making processes. The goal is to bridge the gap between theory and practice, ensuring that insights from this research translate into tangible actions and positive changes within the youth hockey community.

Ultimately, by encouraging stakeholders to reflect on their roles, biases, and actions and amplifying diverse voices and experiences, we strive to create a more inclusive, equitable, and empowered youth hockey culture where everyone has a seat at the table and the opportunity to be heard.

Reflection Prompts: Coach

Think about how you have handled challenges and conflicts. How can you create a positive atmosphere where everyone feels safe to speak up without fear of reprisal?

Have you ever played favourites? How can you adapt your coaching to help everyone improve and equally enjoy the game?

How can you make it easier for youth hockey players to come to you for support in case they experience exclusion or maltreatment? Do you know who to go to for guidance and support personally? If not, what is one step you can take to make this more clear?

Resources: Coach

Coaches hold a tremendous responsibility in shaping the experiences of young athletes, both on and off the field. Creating a safe sports environment is paramount, and here are some resources to assist coaches in fostering a culture of respect, inclusivity, and protection for youth athletes:

Respect Hub by Ontario Minor Hockey Association (OMHA): [Respect Hub](#)
Comprehensive education on respect, inclusion, and prevention of maltreatment in hockey.

Hockey Canada Maltreatment Resources: [Hockey Canada Resources](#)
Guidelines and resources to prevent and address maltreatment in hockey.

Commit 2 Kids Guidelines: [Commit 2 Kids Guidelines](#)
Guidance on maintaining appropriate boundaries and behaviours with young athletes.

Age-Appropriate Conversations: [Kids in the Know Safety Sheets](#)
Tips for discussing personal safety and healthy relationships with young athletes.

Safeguarding Youth Athletes 365 Course: [Safeguarding Athletes Course](#)
Online course led by experts in safeguarding athletes' well-being.

2SLGBTQ+ Coach Guide: [2SLGBTQ+ Coach Guide](#)
Resources for creating inclusive spaces for 2SLGBTQ+ players.

Canadian Centre for Gender & Sexual Diversity: [CCGSD Sports Inclusion Program](#)
Free training to increase awareness of 2SLGBTQ+ issues in sports.

Disability Tip Sheets and Coaching Guide: [Coaching Athletes with a Disability Guide](#)
Resources for inclusive coaching practices for athletes with disabilities.

Canadian Centre for Mental Health and Sport (CCMHS) [CCMHS Services](#)
Services and resources for preserving mental health in high-performance sports.

NCCP Creating a Positive Sport Environment Module [Positive Sport Environment Module](#): eLearning module on positive sports environments.

Your coach role goes beyond teaching skills; it extends to creating a safe and supportive environment where all athletes can thrive. Let us utilize these resources to empower and protect the next generation of athletes.

Reflection Prompts: Parent

Consider how you talk about hockey at home. How can you show that everyone is valued and included in the game, especially players with different lived experiences than your child?

Reflect, how do you model the behaviour you'd expect of your child when on the benches? Have you ever spoken to another child player on the ice in a way you would not condone in any other setting? Have you ever found yourself forgetting a player is a child when providing feedback?

What is one step you can take to apply the findings from this paper into being a part of positive, inclusive behaviour for children (anyone under 18) on and off the ice within hockey activities? When will you make that step, how will you hold yourself and those around you accountable?

Resources: Parent

As parents, your role extends beyond cheering from the sidelines. You are also advocates for your child's safety and well-being in sports. Recognizing inappropriate behaviour and taking action when necessary to ensure a safe environment for all young athletes is crucial. Reporting concerns, having age-appropriate conversations with your children about personal safety, and understanding the resources available are essential steps in fostering a positive and respectful atmosphere in youth hockey. This is a list to get you started; it is highly recommended to continue your research and learn to ensure this game is safe for everyone.

3 Steps for Choosing a Child Safe Organization: [3 Steps for Choosing a Child Safe Organization](#): By following these steps and staying informed about child safety protocols, you can play a proactive role in safeguarding your child's well-being,

RCMP: [RCMP](#)

The RCMP, as well as many local police services offer programs and resources officers to the community

Respect Hub by Ontario Minor Hockey Association for Hockey Canada

Parents: [Respect Hub for Hockey Parents](#) Visit the Respect Hub to access resources and programs to promote respect, inclusivity, and safety in youth hockey geared to parents of Ontarian children in hockey.

Commit 2 Kids: [Commit 2 Kids Guidelines](#)

Guidelines for Interacting with Children in Sport: Learn about appropriate behaviours, setting boundaries, and understanding age-specific protections for children in sports.

Canadian Centre for Mental Health and Sport (CCMHS): [CCMHS Services](#), 613-454-1409 Support mental health and performance of athletes and coaches with collaborative sport-focused mental health care services.

Downloads and resources to help keep hockey safe: [Hockey Canada Resources](#)

Resources for parents to support them in keeping hockey safe for all those involved.

Parents play a vital role in shaping youth hockey culture by advocating for safety, promoting respect, and fostering open communication. Everyone involved is responsible for creating a safe and inclusive environment, and by staying informed and proactive, parents can contribute significantly to ensuring that youth sports are a positive experience for all children involved. Together, we can make youth hockey a place where every child can thrive and enjoy the game they love.

Reflection Prompts: Executive/Owner

Think about the rules and policies in youth hockey to safeguard children and promote inclusion. How can you make sure they're explicit and followed by everyone at all levels of administration?

Consider who gets to make decisions in hockey organizations. Do you have representation of individuals from diverse backgrounds including but not limited to gender, race, and disability status? How can you make sure all voices are included in decision making processes?

Reflect, what is the role you as an individual and as a leader hold within the ecosystem of youth hockey culture? What changes have you actively made to contribute to positive culture change and child safeguarding? What is one step you can take to start or continue this journey? How will you hold yourself and those around you accountable?

Resources: Executive/ Owner

As an executive or owner in the sports industry, you play a crucial role in ensuring the safety and well-being of young athletes. Clear structures in place to safeguard children, including robust reporting mechanisms for youth who experience or witness harm, are imperative. Objective standards in recruitment and managing coaches are essential to ensure they understand their responsibility in safeguarding children, with clear consequences for those who breach these standards.

Respect Hub (OMHA): [Respect Hub](#) The Respect in Sport program is essential for all involved in youth hockey, promoting a safe, respectful environment:

Canadian Centre for Mental Health and Sport (CCMHS): [CCMHS Services:](#) Access collaborative mental health services for athletes and coaches to promote well-being and performance:

Next Gen Men: [Next Gen Men:](#) Explore resources and initiatives dedicated to changing perceptions and behaviors around masculinity:

Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport (CCES): [Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport \(CCES\):](#) Utilize the Risk Management Project and Canadian Sport Risk Registry to enhance decision-making and address common risks in sports leadership,

Educational Resources – Anti-Racism: [AthletesCAN Resources:](#) Engage in anti-racism education and initiatives to promote inclusivity and diversity in sports:

Canadian Human Rights Act: [Canadian Human Rights Act:](#) Familiarize yourself with legal frameworks such as the Canadian Human Rights Act to ensure compliance and protection of rights:

Canadian Centre for Childhood Protection: [Childhood Protection Guide:](#) Follow guidelines for safe recruitment, screening, and interview processes to create a secure environment for young athletes:

By implementing clear reporting structures and objective standards and utilizing available resources, we can protect the well-being of young athletes and foster a culture of respect, inclusivity, and safety in sports. If you witness or experience any harm or misconduct, speak up and utilize these resources to ensure a safer environment for everyone involved.

Reflection Prompts: Player

Think about how you treat teammates and opponents. How can you show kindness and stand up against unfairness while also taking care of your own wellbeing?

Reflect on your own beliefs about hockey. How can you learn from different experiences and be a positive role model even if those around you do not?

Imagine one of your teammates comes to you seeking help for something that has happened to them. How could you make them feel supported? Do you feel clear who to go to for help? If you feel unclear what is one step you could take to change that?

Resources: Player

As a young athlete, your well-being and safety are critical. If you ever find yourself in a situation where you need support, remember that help is available. Here are some resources that you can reach out to for help in addition to your parents, coaches and leadership should you feel safe to do so.

Remember, always, if in emergencies contact 911 or 211 for non-emergency mental health support.

LGBT YouthLine: [LGBT YouthLine](#)

A community of supporters to speak to about experiences of 2SLGBTQ+ youth (29 and under).

Canadian Centre for Mental Health and Sport (CCMHS): [CCMHS Services](#)

The CCMHS offers collaborative sport-focused mental health care services designed for competitive and high-performance athletes. They aim to help athletes achieve their performance goals while preserving mental well-being. Phone: 613-454-1409 | Email: info@ccmhs-ccsms.ca

TELUS My Care – Mental Health Support: [Telus My Care Website](#)

TELUS My Care provides access to mental health professionals via video chat, along with resources on various mental health topics such as anxiety, depression, grief, stress, substance use, and eating disorders. Crisis Text Line: 641-641 | Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-833-456-4566 | Emergencies: 911

AthleteZone: [AthleteZone](#): A hub for resources and information tailored to athletes and their support networks. Explore this resource for guidance on various aspects of athletic well-being.

Abuse-Free Sport Helpline: [Abuse-Free Sport Helpline](#)

If you are a victim of abuse, harassment, or discrimination in a sports environment or have witnessed such incidents, the Abuse-Free Sport Helpline offers a free, anonymous, confidential, and independent service in both official languages. Contact them by phone, text, or email:

1-888-837-7678 and info@abuse-free-sport.ca

Abuse-Free Sport Mental Health Support Program: [Abuse-Free Sport Mental Health Support Program](#) We recognize that the Complaint Management or the Sport Environment Assessment processes can relate to unpleasant, upsetting, and/or disturbing experiences or events, which may cause emotional distress. The Abuse-Free Sport Mental Health Support Program was developed in order to support individuals before, during, and beyond OSIC processes.

Remember, if you ever feel uncomfortable or face challenges you're unsure how to handle, don't hesitate to ask for help. Your well-being matters, and people and organizations are ready to support you. Stay safe, stay supported, and prioritize your mental and physical health as a young athlete.

Reflection Prompts: General Citizen

How did the stories and findings of this report make you feel? Was this information the first time you were hearing it?

What is one step you could take to be a part of positive culture change within Canadian youth hockey culture?

Resources: General

You don't need to be a hockey enthusiast to recognize the importance of child safeguarding and positive change in sports. This guide is for those who want to be part of a movement towards creating a safer, more inclusive sporting environment, regardless of their hockey background. Raising awareness and advocating for change can shift the narrative from a hockey problem to a Canadian concern, ensuring that children's well-being remains a top priority.

Canadian Human Rights Act: [Canadian Human Rights Act](#): Familiarize yourself with legal frameworks to understand rights and responsibilities in safeguarding children.

TELUS My Care – Mental Health Support: [Telus My Care Website](#): Access mental health services and crisis support to promote well-being and resilience.

Kids Help Phone Resources: [Youth Outreach Resources](#): Connect with resources like Kids Help Phone for immediate support and guidance for youth.

Cyberbullying Prevention Steps: [Cyberbullying Prevention Steps](#) Learn steps and resources to prevent cyberbullying in sports and online environments.

Canadian Child Welfare Research Portal: [Child Welfare Research Portal](#): Access provincial and territorial assistance for reporting child maltreatment and promoting child safety.

Ontario.ca Report Child Abuse and Neglect: [Report Child Abuse and Neglect](#): Learn how to identify and report child abuse or neglect, ensuring a safer environment for children.

Government of Canada Child Abuse Resources: [Child Abuse Information](#): Access information and resources on different types of child abuse to stay informed and take action.

Report a News Story: [Report a News Story CBC](#), [Report a News Story CTV](#), [Report a News Story Global News](#).

As individuals united by a common goal of safeguarding children and fostering positive change, we have the power to make a difference. By utilizing the resources available, sharing knowledge with our networks, and advocating for accountability in sports and beyond, we can create a safer and more inclusive environment for all children. Remember, your voice matters; together, we can create lasting change.

Resources: How to be Supportive (All)

Hope for the Day, a nonprofit dedicated toward mental health and proactive suicide prevention details the below guide for “how to be supportive when someone experiences a mental health challenge”.

“LISTEN: Let the person really express their experiences. Avoid interrupting or talking about yourself. Being someone they can talk to is essential when giving support!

BE NON-JUDGEMENTAL: Don’t criticize or minimize the way they feel. Set aside your own biases. You may not be able to understand exactly what they’re going through, and that’s OK.

ASK WHAT, NOT WHY: When asking questions, avoid asking ‘why’ questions, and instead ask ‘what’ questions. For example: “What happened?” “What’s going on?” Asking “why” can have a judgemental tone even if you don’t mean it that way.

GIVE INFORMATION - DON’T DIAGNOSE: Don’t assume they have an illness or condition. Provide direction to resources that can identify and assist with mental health challenges.

ACT AS A BRIDGE: Connect them to mental health resources. Resources include family, school guidance, mental health professionals, and organizations like H.F.T.D. Understand who you are helping and how their intersectional experiences may play into the resources available to them.

TEAMMATE IN SUPPORT: Being supportive doesn’t mean it is your duty to “fix” someone. Be clear about and communicate your own limits and limitations. Avoid making promises like, “I’m available to your 24 hours a day. Call me any time, and I’ll be there for you,” because there are times when you are not available (and that’s okay), just be clear in your communication and be able to offer alternatives, like another friend, or a lifeline.

BE YOURSELF!: While keeping everything else in mind - the most important thing is that you be natural. You don’t want to estrange the other people by seeming rigid or like you’re going through a list. As long as you avoid stigmatizing or judgemental phrasing, engage in the conversation the way that feels right.

HELPFUL PHRASES: “It sounds like what you were experiencing felt intolerable and overwhelming.” “I want to understand what you were experiencing/feeling.” “I want to help you. Tell me what I can do to help.” “You don’t have to talk if you don’t want to, but I can, and want to listen.” “I can tell something is wrong and that you are hurting. I am here for you.”

LEARN EVEN MORE: [HFTD.ORG/GETEDUCATED](https://www.hftd.org/geteducated)” (HFTD, n.d.).

About the Author



Bridgette is a passionate educator and design thinker with a blended background in learning experience design, research, facilitation, and strategy. She is an Master of Design graduate from OCAD-U's Strategic Foresight and Innovation program. Her graduate school research focus was on inclusion, belonging, equity, and foresight in Canadian youth hockey.

Bridgette currently contracts as a Disability Awareness Trainer with an Ontarian non-profit. She also consults with a local college to build and instruct courses. Before working in the non-profit sector, Bridgette worked for several years in higher education as a Work Integrated Learning Program Manager with a team of 12 and as an Instructional Designer in the private sector. Bridgette started her career in digital strategy, working with startups in the Greater Toronto Region and Waterloo Ontario. She holds an honours Bachelor of Arts in Global Business and Digital Arts from the University of Waterloo.

Bridgette's passion for diversity, equity, and inclusion led her to embark on a new journey in 2022, when she was hired as a Research Consultant on various projects in Canadian sport. In 2023, she completed a Research Fellowship with the Future of Hockey Lab, focused on improving mental health outcomes for youth athletes.

In her spare time Bridgette works with charities and organizations to advance youth employment and wellbeing. As someone with lived experience, Bridgette is a passionate advocate for mental health and suicide prevention, a cause she holds close to her heart.

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