

Place Meaning at the 2017 Canadian Championships in Rhythmic Gymnastics

by

Aisulu Abdykadyrova

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Faculty of Kinesiology, Sport, and Recreation

University of Alberta

© Aisulu Abdykadyrova, 2020

Abstract

Space is a defining element of sport (Bale & Vertinsky, 2004). Variations in regulations related to distance, area, location and movement help to distinguish one sport from another. As sporting spaces become infused with meaning they become “places” (Lewicka, 2011). The ways that sport events are produced and consumed, therefore, influences the way participants understand the site of the competition or its “place meaning” (Bale 1994, 2003; Higham & Hinch, 2009; Standeven & De Knop, 1998). It is logical to assume, however, that these meanings may vary between the stakeholder groups depending on the nature of their experience at the event (Hinch, Holt, & Sant, 2015). Such variation would seem to be likely in the case of small-scale elite youth-based sports such as Rhythmic Gymnastics (RG) which features a range of stakeholder groups including: athletes, their parents, and the event organizers. Elite RG athletes tend to be young women who typically begin to compete in national tournaments by the time they are 10 years old (Gymnastics Canada, 2016). Thus, the active support of their parents is critical to their participation (Holt & Knight, 2014). While these young athletes and their parents may form unique connections to competition spaces, venues and host cities, little is known about the meanings that they attach to these sites (Culter & Carmichael, 2010). Nevertheless, organizers of these types of events consciously try to shape the nature of the competitors’ and supporters’ experience so that they leave with a positive opinion of these events and the communities in which they were hosted.

The purpose of this study is to develop understandings of the place meanings that gymnasts, their parents, and event organizers develop in the context of the 2017 Canadian Championships in Rhythmic Gymnastics (2017CCRG). A qualitative interpretative case study methodology was employed. Manuscript one explores the place meaning that rhythmic gymnasts formed for the host competition space. Twelve elite rhythmic gymnasts who participated at the

2017CCRG were interviewed using semi-structured face-to-face and email formats. Place-based themes were identified through categorical aggregation data analysis. The themes that emerged from the analysis included place as function, performance, emotion, and connection. These themes were broadly consistent with Eichberg's (1988) trialectic model of body culture – competition spaces as places of achievement, discipline, and experience.

Manuscript two explores the place meaning that the parents accompanying participating rhythmic gymnasts had for the host competition space, venue, and host city at the 2017CCRG. Fifteen parents of elite rhythmic gymnasts were interviewed using a semi-structured face-to-face data collection format during the event. Findings revealed that they saw the competition space as a place of emotion, connection, performance, and function. The venue was considered a place of supportive function and leisure while the host city was characterized as a place of competitive sport, tourism, and hospitality. More generally, the findings indicated that parents formed understandings of place based on their daughters' performance at the competition space.

The third manuscript uses Morgan's (2007) model of the experience space as a framework for understanding the co-creation of place meaning at the 2017CCRG. The efforts of event organizers (experience managers and marketers) to shape place experiences at the event was considered in conjunction with the visitors' motivations and their interpretation of meanings inclusive of the social and cultural interactions at the event. Five event organizers, twelve competing rhythmic gymnasts, and fifteen parents were interviewed using semi-structured face-to-face and e-mail formats. Five place-based themes emerged as a result of the categorical aggregation data analysis: function, tourist activities, community, performance, and emotion. These findings demonstrated the general relevance of the Morgan's (2007) model of experience space in the context of co-creation of place meaning at this event. However, some modifications

were introduced to the model based on this analysis of a small-scale elite youth-sport event.

While the revised model retains the social identity component of the original, it was modified to combine the achievement, hedonic pleasures and personal meanings components under the label of emotion, and it introduced a new 'performance' component. In conclusion, the 2017CCRG was not just a site of competition; it was a meaningful place for athletes, parents, and organizers.

Preface

This thesis is an original work by Aisulu Abdykadyrova. The research project, of which this thesis is a part, received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, Project Name “Place meaning at the 2017 Canadian Championships in Rhythmic Gymnastics”, (Pro00072648), May 15, 2017.

No part of this thesis has been previously published.

Acknowledgments

My first acknowledgment goes to my supervisor Dr. Tom Hinch. I have been lucky to have his leadership throughout my PhD program with his patient, experienced, and knowledgeable guidance. He supported me not only in my academic life but also helped my family to adjust to new living conditions in Canada. We will always remember how he brought furniture with his wife Lorraine to our residence when we just arrived. And of course, Christmas dinners - new Canadian experiences - will have special places in our memories.

My appreciation is also extended to the members of my dissertation committee, world-class scholars Drs. Pirkko Markula and Gordon Walker for their constructive comments, suggestions, guidance, and advocacy. Pirkko was the first person who supported my idea to focus on the sport of rhythmic gymnastics (RG) in my dissertation. She was particularly sensitive of my status as an international student and was always there to help.

Struggling and flourishing alongside me on my journey were my wonderful colleagues: Dr. S. Kono, Dr. Moghimefar, Dr. Chen, Dr. J. Guy, Dr. R. Priebe, Baiku, CJ, Elaine, Eric, Farshid, Jane, Nanxi, Mohi, Mu, Yumi and other graduate students of the Faculty of Kinesiology, Sport, and Recreation. Thanks for sharing this experience with me. I spent a memorable time being and learning with all of you.

RG takes a special place in my life thanks to many people and organizations. I would like to acknowledge those people, whose expertise and passion grafted unconditional love to this beautiful sport. To Saule's coaches Irina Storchevaia, Judit Berecz, Judy Martens, Regina, and Angelina Miakshevas, thank you for being such enthusiasts of RG and for your support during the very difficult time of Saule's pain/sickness/illness. To the Jashtyk sport club, Edmonton Rhythmic Sportive Gymnastics Association and Rhythmic Gymnastics Alberta, thank you for the opportunity to volunteer with your organizations. I have learned a lot through this experience and

gained a new specialization in the not-for-profits field. I thoroughly enjoyed the amazing RG community and my engagement in: organizing annual events, international exchange programs, and camps, writing grant applications, and bringing new projects and initiatives to ERSGA, I was very happy to think that I could make even a tiny contribution to the development of the sport.

Families are often the backstage heroes in endeavours such as doctoral degrees. Manas, thank you for your continuous support including making the move to Canada. I hope this degree will provide better life opportunities for our family. Saule, you are my hero! I admire your hard work, passion for RG, dedication, and all of your efforts not only in gymnastics but also at school and home. You were my inspiration to write this dissertation. Even during the period of your worst daily migraines, you continue to be a rhythmic gymnast. You are the bravest person that I know. Sultan, you are a kind and loving son. Thank you for being gentle, obedient, and helpful. Your assistance in learning Word while writing my dissertation, washing dishes, cleaning the house, even cooking was really helpful while I had to study. To my mother Damira and father Tynchbek, thank you for raising me, supporting me, and giving me all of your love. Thank you to my mother-in-law Kanyi, who created all the conditions for me to develop after my marriage.

A huge thank you is to the University of Alberta for providing with the Doctoral Recruitment Scholarship and University of Central Asia, whose financial support during my studies made the entire experience possible. And finally, I would like to thank members of Kyrgyz Association in Alberta for their moral and financial support throughout my PhD journey.

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|------|
| Abstract | ii |
| Preface..... | v |
| Acknowledgments..... | vi |
| Table of Contents | viii |
| List of Tables | xi |
| List of Figures..... | xii |
| List of Abbreviations | xiii |
| Chapter One: Introduction | 1 |
| Personal Relevance..... | 2 |
| Sport Tourism Research | 3 |
| An emerging field of study..... | 5 |
| Major research streams..... | 6 |
| Space and place. | 8 |
| Elite youth-based sport events and their participants..... | 10 |
| The Sport of Rhythmic Gymnastics | 11 |
| Technical aspects..... | 11 |
| History..... | 13 |
| Competitive hierarchy..... | 13 |
| The Main Research Question | 16 |
| Dissertation Format | 17 |
| Chapter Two: Athletes' Place Meanings at the 2017 Canadian Championships in Rhythmic Gymnastics: A Socio-cultural Perspective..... | 18 |
| Introduction | 18 |
| Literature Review | 19 |
| Achievement space. | 20 |
| Disciplined space..... | 22 |
| Experiential space. | 24 |
| Methodology | 26 |
| Data collection..... | 28 |
| Participants. | 28 |
| Data analysis. | 29 |
| Results | 30 |

| | |
|--|----|
| Function..... | 30 |
| Performance. | 35 |
| Emotion. | 38 |
| Connection. | 42 |
| Discussion..... | 44 |
| Conclusion..... | 49 |
| Chapter Three: Parents’ Place Meaning at Small-scale Elite Youth-based Sport Events: The Case of the 2017 Canadian Championships in Rhythmic Gymnastics..... | 52 |
| Introduction | 52 |
| Literature Review | 53 |
| Parents at youth sport events..... | 53 |
| Place meaning. | 55 |
| Methodology..... | 59 |
| Data collection..... | 59 |
| Participants. | 61 |
| Data analysis. | 61 |
| Findings | 62 |
| The competition space..... | 62 |
| The venue. | 68 |
| The host city. | 71 |
| Discussion..... | 75 |
| Competition space..... | 75 |
| Venue. | 78 |
| Host city. | 78 |
| Conclusion..... | 80 |
| Chapter Four: The Co-creation of Place Meanings at a Small-scale Elite Youth-based Sport Event..... | 83 |
| Introduction | 83 |
| Literature Review | 85 |
| Event organizers..... | 87 |
| Sport tourists. | 91 |
| Points of interaction and co-creation..... | 93 |
| Methodology..... | 94 |
| Methods..... | 96 |
| Selection of participants. | 97 |
| Data analysis. | 97 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| Findings | 99 |
| Function..... | 99 |
| Tourist activities..... | 101 |
| Community..... | 104 |
| Performance..... | 107 |
| Emotion..... | 108 |
| Discussion..... | 111 |
| Conclusion..... | 117 |
| Chapter Five: Conclusion | 120 |
| Key Findings..... | 120 |
| Theoretical Implications | 122 |
| Methodological Implications..... | 123 |
| Practical Implications | 123 |
| Limitations..... | 125 |
| Future Research | 126 |
| Personal Journey..... | 127 |
| References..... | 131 |
| Appendix A: Interview Guide for Athletes..... | 154 |
| Appendix B: Photo of the Competition Space..... | 157 |
| Appendix C: Photo of the Venue | 158 |
| Appendix D: Photo of the Host City..... | 159 |
| Appendix E: Information Letter for Athletes, Parents and Event Organizers | 160 |
| Appendix F: Interview Guide for Parents..... | 162 |
| Appendix G: Recruiting Poster..... | 165 |
| Appendix H: Interview Guide for Event Organizers (GCG)..... | 166 |
| Appendix I: Interview Guide: Rhythmic Gymnastics Alberta representative(s):..... | 168 |
| Appendix J: Interview Guide: City of Edmonton Representative (Kinsmen Sports Centre) | 170 |
| Appendix K: Interview Guide: City of Edmonton Representative (Edmonton Events)..... | 171 |

List of Tables

| | |
|--|----|
| Table 2.1 Participant characteristics for athlete study..... | 29 |
| Table 3.1 Participant characteristics for parent study..... | 62 |

List of Figures

| | |
|---|-----|
| <i>Figure 2.1</i> Athlete place meanings themes | 31 |
| <i>Figure 2.2</i> Athlete place meanings in comparison with Eichberg's (1998) trialectic model..... | 48 |
| <i>Figure 3.1</i> Place meaning themes associated with the competition space | 64 |
| <i>Figure 3.2</i> Place meaning themes associated with the venue..... | 69 |
| <i>Figure 3.3</i> Place meaning themes associated with the host city..... | 74 |
| <i>Figure 4.1</i> Experience space: Interaction between organizers and sport tourists | 86 |
| <i>Figure 4.2</i> Co-creation of place meanings at small-scale elite youth-based sport event..... | 112 |

List of Abbreviations

| | |
|-----------|--|
| 2017CCRG: | 2017 Canadian Championships in Rhythmic Gymnastics |
| AG: | Artistic gymnastics |
| ERSGA: | Edmonton Rhythmic Sportive Gymnastics Association |
| GCG: | Gymnastics Canada Gymnastique |
| FIG: | International Gymnastics Federation |
| LOC: | Local Organizing Committee |
| PSO: | Provincial Sport Organization |
| NOC: | National Olympic Committee |
| RG: | Rhythmic gymnastics |
| RGA: | Rhythmic Gymnastics Alberta |

Chapter One: Introduction

Certain places and environments matter to people as they seek out personal meaning in their lives (Tuan, 1977). These place-based connections are formed in a large part through human interactions with physical environments (Stewart, 2008) and are embedded in people's feelings, emotions, and thoughts about the place (Kyle & Johnson, 2008). While place meaning is formed at an individual level (Relph, 1976), it can also be found at a collective level. It exists across multiple spatial scales (Bale, 1989; Tuan, 1977) including local, national, and supranational (Saar & Palang, 2009).

Place is distinct from space. While space is a geometric characteristic like area, place is space that has been infused with meaning (Lewicka, 2011). Consequently, people interpret place subjectively and are constantly defining and refining their understandings of particular spaces. Early human geographers like Tuan (1975) and Relph (1976) argued that sense of place and place attachment tended to focus on the link between people and their local environments or homes. However, the scope of meaningful places is recognized more broadly now and includes, for example, sites of sport tourism (Higham & Hinch, 2018).

Sport events are one of the ways that spaces are infused with meaning (Bale, 2003). As such, they can potentially influence the travel patterns and understandings of sport tourists. Travelers to sport events see the host destination from a different perspective than individuals or groups visiting the area for some other reason (e.g., Hinch & Holt, 2017; Hinch & Kono, 2018). It is less clear, however, how different types of participants at different types of sport events understand place. For example, little is known about elite sport tourist for whom travel to competitions is a mandatory part of the competitive hierarchy of their sport (Higham & Hinch, 2009). Moreover, this is especially true for young elite athletes and their parents who often accompany them to these competitions (Scott & Turco, 2007). It is, therefore, important to

examine the nature of place meanings that young elite athletes and their parents form at small-scale sport events.

Personal Relevance

Place matters to me. In Kyrgyzstan, my home and neighbourhood as well as my family, job, relatives, and friends meant a lot to me. I had special feelings and connections with these places and people. I had an established career, social status, and personal interests/hobbies. Almost six years ago I moved to Canada to study in a place where I have never been and where my family and I did not know anyone. The first two years were challenging. It took time for us to adjust to a new environment (e.g., schools, residence, places where we spend our leisure time), people, culture, and language. I almost felt lost – disconnected from the city in which I was now living.

However, one of the meaningful connections that I had to my former home was my daughter Saule's involvement in rhythmic gymnastics (RG). Her passion for the sport and the large amount of time that she spent at the gym training or competing helped her to establish and maintain her identity after our move to Canada. Saule's hard work, enthusiasm, perseverance, and love of RG made me passionate about the sport too. While still living in Kyrgyzstan, I became involved in RG club activities, such as volunteering for events and helping to organize Saule's club travels for international competitions and projects. I realized that my daughter's sport was my connection back to Kyrgyzstan. When we moved to Canada, Saule continued her involvement in RG and I continued my volunteer work as a vice-president, then as president of the Edmonton Rhythmic Sportive Gymnastics Association (ERSGA).

Now looking back, I understand that this sport connection was meaningful for me. During our first year in Canada, I devoted a substantial amount of time taking my daughter to the

gym and back home by public transport. It took half of my workday because her practices were four hours long. I had to stay at her training centre during these sessions and study in the cafeteria because it was not feasible to return to the university and come back to the training centre at the end of her practice. The training centre became an important place for me. Despite these types of challenges for our family, we made sure that Saule could continue her gymnastics. I was so involved and interested in Saule's continuing RG that it helped to shape my research interests.

As a parent of a young elite athlete, I became interested in the relationship of gymnasts and parents to the spaces where they trained and to the host cities where they competed. I felt that by understanding their views of these places, I could help to improve the experiences of the athletes and their parents during the actual competitions. More generally, I was interested to see whether my personal experience reflected the way other parents and their daughters understood the place meanings associated with RG. I wondered whether the sites of RG events were meaningful for participants and, if so, how these meanings were created. All of these questions can be addressed within a sport tourism context¹.

Sport Tourism Research

This dissertation is positioned within the field of sport tourism which Hinch and Higham (2001) defined as “sport-based travel away from the home environment for a limited time, where sport is characterised by unique rule sets, competition related to physical prowess and a playful nature” (p.56). Sport tourists are defined by their travel to engage in these activities. Weed and Bull (2004) further described sport tourism as “a social, economic and cultural phenomenon

¹ My daughter Saule did not compete at the 2017CCRG and was not involved in my study.

arising from the unique interaction of activity, people and place” (p.37). Under these conceptualizations, sport functions as a tourist attraction.

Higham and Hinch (2018) saw the sport tourism attraction system as consisting of three major features: 1) return travel between a generating region and a destination; 2) a range of different types of sport tourists; and, 3) different types of sport attractions in the destination. Sport tourists start their trips at home (origin) and travel to meaningful geographical locations (destinations) motivated by their pursuit of particular types of sport experiences. Once they have finished their sport experience, they return home. Sport tourism shares this return travel characteristic with other types of tourism although different types of tourism may be characterized by unique travel flows.

Higham and Hinch (2018) highlighted four types of sport tourism attractions: spectator-based events (e.g., Olympic Games); participant-based events (e.g., open marathons); active independent sport activity (e.g., downhill skiing); and, heritage sport sites (e.g., sports halls of fame). While most of sport tourism activities can be classified as falling primarily in one category, some are a combination of different types. For example, Lamont (2014) described a commercial cycling tour organized in conjunction with the Tour de France, which featured a combination of all four of the above-mentioned sport tourism attractions. The case study featured in this dissertation is a combination of a spectator and participant-based event. As a high-performance national championship, spectators represented a substantial portion of the sport tourists at the event (Hinch & Higham, 2004). At the same time, however, given the specialized nature of rhythmic gymnastics, it is not a big spectator sport in Canada. Consequently, the athletes also represented a substantial portion of the sport travellers at the event. When the main reason that athletes or spectators visit host cities is to compete or watch the event, it falls under Higham and Hinch’s

(2018) categorization of sport as the primary attraction. While most event focused sport tourism studies examine large-scale events (Weed, 2007), there is a need to study visiting spectators and athletes at small-scale events such as those associated with RG.

An emerging field of study.

Research in sport tourism is comparatively recent. It has attracted the focused attention of scholars for approximately 30 years now. The main scholarly journal for sport tourism, the *Journal of Sport & Tourism*, was established in 1993. Early articles in the journal were either policy oriented or conceptual with a focus on defining the field rather than on empirical research (Gibson, 2006). Empirical articles followed but they initially tended to lack scientific rigour (Gibson, 2017). Nevertheless, the debates that they generated contributed to the methodological and epistemological development of the field (Weed, 2006). Within the last twenty years, the number of empirical articles has increased and now sport tourism research covers a wide breadth of relevant questions and issues with increasing rigour (Weed, 2009). For example, the review of sport tourism research by Hinch, Higham, and Sant (2014) highlighted a shift from descriptions of impacts of sport tourism to more strategic, analytical, and empirical approaches.

The research paradigms that have been guiding sport tourism researchers are consistent with as wide variety of methodological, epistemological, and ontological approaches inclusive of both qualitative and quantitative inquiry. Despite this breadth of approaches, the field is dominated by positivist, post-positivist, and interpretive paradigms. Recently Gibson and Mirehie (2018) raised a question of "...invisibility of women, girls and gender in sport tourism work, let alone feminist approaches" (p. 682) even though there are number of prominent female academics active in the sport tourism field. While this dissertation research does not employ feminist research practices, it is an attempt to hear the voices of young female athletes' in terms of their sport tourism

experiences. An interpretive paradigm was used in this dissertation because the meanings that sport tourists form at different scales of space (e.g., host city, the venue, the competition space) are individual and are constructed through subjective and interactive meaning making processes (Markula & Silk, 2011). Therefore, the employment of an interpretive qualitative research approach was seen as the best way to gain insight into the way that athletes, parents, and event organizers understand small-scale elite youth-based sporting events. Similar to paradigmatic diversity, sport tourism engages with a variety to topics.

Major research streams.

Based on systematic reviews and meta-analyses (Gibson, 1998, 2004, 2006, 2017; Weed, 2004, 2006, 2009), sport tourism research can be classified in three main categories: socio-cultural, economic, and environmental. These streams of scholarship are closely intertwined with studies often addressing two or all three areas.

Research on the social and cultural dimensions of sport tourism is often situated in parent disciplines such as geography (e.g., Gaffney, 2013), history (e.g., Ramshaw & Gammon, 2017), or sociology (e.g., Jarvis & Blank, 2011). A good example of the integration between these areas is the work of Green and Jones (2005) who argued that sport tourism can provide a place to interact with others and share the ethos or subculture of the activity by celebrating a valued social identity. Most of the research in this area examines the social and cultural implications of sport tourists' experiences. Those meaningful experiences are associated with the number of perspectives such as the physical, social, organizational, emotional, and other unique characteristics of sporting events (Kaplanidou & Gibson, 2012).

Another prevalent type of sport tourism study in the social dimension involves nostalgia sport tourism including visiting halls of fame, sport museums, famous sport facilities, and

volunteering at selected sport events (Fairley & Gammon, 2006; Hinch & Ramshaw, 2012; Ramshaw & Gammon, 2006). For example, Ramshaw and Hinch's (2006) research on the Heritage Classic professional hockey game held in Edmonton, Alberta in 2003, focused on how the place was constructed by media sources. They found that the delivery and promotion of this event was a conscious form of place making.

The economic dimension of sport tourism has been widely studied. It includes different aspects of sport tourism including the experience economy (Morgan, 2006, 2007), management of sport tourism events (Buning & Gibson, 2016; Chalip & Green, 2003; Gibson, Kaplanidou, Kang, 2012), and marketing of sport tourism events (Chalip, 2005, 2006; Chalip & McGuirly, 2004; Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2007). Similarly, researchers have examined sport tourism industry policy designed to leverage resources for sport programs and sport events (Chalip, 2006; Chalip & Leyns, 2006; Weed, 2004). The research on leveraging of sport events is designed to help organizers to optimize economic and social benefits. For example, Chalip and Leyns (2002) argued that sport event organizers need to be strategic in leveraging local business in order to gain financial benefit. Chalip (2002; 2006) also studied the effects of marketing, media, and place promotion at sport events. Promoting a destination brand with a sport event was seen to be beneficial in terms of encouraging return visits to the host city (Xing & Chalip, 2006).

Studies related to the environmental dimension of sport tourism research have focused on sustainable development (e.g., Carneiro, Breda & Cordeiro, 2016), seasonality (Hodeck & Hovemann, 2016), climate change (Hopkins, 2014), and sport tourism in peripheral territories (Hinch & de la Barre, 2006). These studies indicate that sport-related travel is tied to the physical geography of destinations including natural and artificial landscapes, resources, and climate (Daniels, 2007). Over the past fifteen years, research on active sport tourism in natural

environmental settings has grown (Halpenny, Kulczyski & Moghimehfar, 2016; Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2007; Lamont, 2014) to demonstrate that landscapes and natural settings are important motivators for sport travel (Kulczyski & Halpenny, 2015).

In terms of future directions, Gibson (2017) has argued that the next era of scholarship in sport tourism should include:

1. Research on the role of place in sport tourism;
2. Research on the role of heritage in the authentication of sport tourism experiences; and,
3. Research on experience management and marketing of sport events that reflect Pine and Gilmore's (1999) concept of "experience economy."

This dissertation addresses two of these suggestions with its focus on place and the experience economy in the context of small-scale elite youth-based sport events. Within the major research streams, this dissertation is located within the socio-cultural dimension of sport tourism because place meanings that were formed at this small-scale elite youth-based sport event are closely related to the subculture of the sport.

Space and place.

Place meaning merits more attention in the study of these sporting events. Indeed, studies examining place meaning at the destination level of sporting events have started to emerge (e.g., Gibson, Kaplanidou, & Kang, 2012; Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2007; Kulczycki & Halpenny, 2015). Most recently, Brown, Smith and Assaker (2016) have examined place meaning at the geographic scale of the venue in a sport tourism context. While there continues to be a need to expand insight into place meaning at the scale of the venue, there is also a need to study place meaning at the scale of the competition spaces within the host venues. This dissertation is meant to address these

needs by examining the place meaning of visiting athletes, their spectator parents, and event organizers across multiple spatial scales at a small-scale elite youth-based sport event.

The concept of place is central in the geography of sport (Bale, 2003) and sport tourism research (Higham & Hinch, 2009). For example, place occupies an integral part of sport tourism definitions. As a case in point, Standeven and De Knop (1998) argued that sport tourism combines two dimensions: describing it as “an experience of physical activity integrally tied to an experience of place” (p. 38). Higham and Hinch (2018) emphasized the importance of place in a sport tourism context given its deep connection with sport and culture. The geographic dimension of sport tourism includes space, place and environment (Hall & Page, 2002). Under this framework, space refers to a specific geographical location such as the host destination (Bale, 1989). For example, Highman and Hinch (2009) argued that sport tourists search for meaningful experience in the destinations to which they travel. Experiences in these destinations influences the way these spaces are perceived and understood, thereby shaping place meaning (Halpenny, Kulczyski & Moghimehfar, 2015; Hinch & Holt, 2017; Wynveen, Kyle & Sutton, 2012). Similarly, researchers have found that sport tourists pursue travel careers that are, at least in part, based on a search for these place experiences (Jones & Green, 2006).

In addition to the scale of the destination as a whole, place meanings at sport events can also be found at the scale of the venue and competition space (e.g., Hinch & Holt, 2016; Hinch & Cameron, 2020) as influenced, in part, by the surrounding environment (Bale, 1989; Bale & Vertinsky, 2004). These environments include both artificial and natural resources that are used to support sport events. Sport and its physical environment/landscape help to determine the meanings of sport places (Bale, 1988) and may even affect sporting outcomes (Bale, 1989). Based on their experience at these sites, sport participants (e.g., athletes or spectators) infuse

space with meanings (Gaffney & Bale, 2004). For example, engaging with physical space during sport events can create meaningful experiences based on various geographical, sensorial, social, emotional, organizational, and interpersonal interactions (Kaplanidou & Gibson, 2012). In addition to this, the meanings that are ascribed to sport spaces are often influenced by the cultural context of sport events (Funk & Bruun, 2007) and the subculture of the sport (Higam & Hinch, 2018). Members of the sport community tend to celebrate their community at these events in a way that contributes to their individual and collective identities (Chalip, 2006).

Elite youth-based sport events and their participants.

This dissertation uses the 2017 Canadian Championships in Rhythmic Gymnastics (2017CCRG) as a case study of a small-scale elite youth-based sporting event. The CCRGs are the highest-level national event for athletes in this sport. Like other high performance events for athletes in their teens and 20s (Strittmatter & Parent, 2020), this event was organized for talented young people to demonstrate their expertise in their sport (Skille & Houlihan, 2014). The organization structure for elite sport events like the 2017CCRG varies from country to country and from sport to sport. Under Canada's federated sports system each sport has its own national sport organization, funding framework, stakeholders, and sports models (Kristiansen, Parent, & Houlihan, 2016). Notwithstanding this diversity, Canadian sport organizations all tend to strategize carefully about the location of their major competitions (Marcotte, 2018). As a consequence, place meanings at events like the 2017CCRG merit careful study in order to develop a better understanding of why place matters at these events.

Three of the key actors at elite youth-based RG competitions are the athletes, their parents, and the event organizers. Elite RG athletes tend to be young and typically begin to compete in national tournaments by the time they are 10 years old (Gymnastics Canada, 2016).

Parental support is critical in youth focused sports (Mirehie, Gibson, Kang, & Bell, 2019) such as RG because parents “play a pivotal role in the development young people in reaching their full potential in sport” (Holt & Knight, 2014, p. i). Consequently, parents are typically highly involved in their children’s elite sporting lives including accompanying them to competitions. Place meanings for each group of stakeholders may vary depending on their role and the nature of their experience at the event (Hinch, Holt, & Sant, 2015).

While it is reasonable to assume that young athletes and their parents may form unique connections to the spaces where events are hosted, little is known about the meanings that they attach to these sites (Culter & Carmichael, 2010). Clearly, however, organizers of events consciously try to shape the nature of the competitors’ and supporters’ experience so that they leave with a positive opinion of the competition and host city. Insight into the parents’ and athletes’ understanding of place at such competitions is, therefore, important for event organizers if they are to provide the best experience possible (Morgan, 2007). By studying the organizers’ intentions for and sport tourists’ interpretation of place, it is possible to gain insight into the co-creation of place meanings at these events.

The Sport of Rhythmic Gymnastics

Rhythmic gymnastics is a good example of an elite youth-based sport. This section of the introduction provides background on the nature of the sport.

Technical aspects.

RG belongs to the larger sporting family of gymnastics consisting of several sub-disciplines. The International Federation of Gymnastics (FIG) currently governs all of these competitive sub-disciplines. Founded in 1881 in Liege, Belgium the FIG is one of the oldest international sport organizations in the world. Its sub-disciplines include: 1) artistic gymnastics

(AG); 2) rhythmic gymnastics (RG); 3) trampolining; 4) acrobatic; and, 5) aerobic gymnastics. They all have unique characteristics but share many technical regulations (International Federation of Gymnastics, 2016) and basic movement skills including: coordination, balance, flexibility, strength, and endurance. One of the key differences between RG and all other gymnastics disciplines is that only females compete in this sport.

RG features five hand apparatuses including: ropes, hoops, balls, clubs, and ribbons. The gymnasts perform choreographed routines accompanied by music to showcase their skills using each of the apparatuses. There are two types of RG competitions: individual and group. Each group consists of five athletes. Four of the possible five apparatuses are assigned to gymnasts for competitions during each Olympic cycle. Each individual routine lasts from 60 to 90 seconds. Groups perform two routines with each of the five members using the same apparatus in the first routine and using two different apparatus in the second routine. The duration of each group routine is from 135 to 150 seconds. The use of these elements, together with music and apparatuses, are designed to demonstrate performance in terms of the sport's fundamental objectives of physical, aesthetic, and emotional training. Moreover, the diversity of elements and apparatus is intended to help athletes to develop flexibility, coordination, balance, and jumping ability. Athletes who master these skills demonstrate outstanding technical achievement, which makes RG a spectacular and popular international sport (Usmanova-Viner, Kruchek, Medvedeva & Terehina, 2015).

RG is considered particularly appealing to spectators (Pelin, 2013) because it combines an artistic component with a skill component. The artistic component is an important dimension in judging performance. It is associated with dance steps and bodily expression (Loquet, 2016) and was formally introduced during the last two Olympic cycles. During their routines, gymnasts

execute leaps, pivots, balance and flexibility. In addition to judging the difficulty of execution, judges assess the artistic components of a gymnast's routine, which makes a substantial contribution to the overall score.

History.

In the late nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, RG emerged as a blend of: 1) the expressive gymnastics of François Delsarte (1811-1871) from France; 2) the eurhythmics of Emile Jacques Dalcroze (1865-1950) from Switzerland; 3) the gymnastics dance of the musician George Demeni (1850-1917) from France; and, 4) the free dance of Isadora Duncan (1877-1929), a US citizen who lived in Soviet Union for 22 years. These traditions of gymnastics and dance laid the foundation for modern RG (Usmanova-Viner et al., 2015; International Federation of Gymnastics, 2014). During the nineteenth century in North America, Dio Lewis introduced a “new gymnastics” of femininity and grace. His gymnastics featured the coordination and aesthetic quality of gymnastics movement accompanied with music and manipulation of hand-held apparatuses (Lewis, 1860; Vertinsky, 1978). More formally, RG was founded in the Soviet Union during the 1920s. The official debut of RG occurred during an artistic gymnastics competition in 1936 in the former USSR (Pelin, 2013). It has grown in popularity since its inception, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe.

Competitive hierarchy.

By the 1970s the popularity of the RG was evident in many countries throughout the world and an international Technical Committee was established within the FIG (Pelin, 2013). This governing body remains responsible for the organization and operation of the technical requirements of RG. It also promotes the development of RG based on FIG statutes and advice from the national RG Federations (International Federation of Gymnastics, 2016).

RG events are organized within a hierarchical framework of sport organizations with the FIG managing the Olympic, world, and continental championships. National gymnastics organizations are responsible for the organization of their own national championships while provincial sport organizations in Canada run regional, provincial, and zones events.

RG was introduced to the Olympics in 1984 (Yastrjembkaya & Titov, 1998) with the first RG Olympic champion being Lori Fung from Canada. Currently the Olympic Games features 24 participants with minimum age of 16 years. The top 15 gymnasts from the most recent World Championship directly qualify for the individual competition. An Olympic Games Test Event is used to qualify six more participants from the best-ranked eligible National Olympic Committees based on the results of the most recent World Championship and rankings in the host country. The final three gymnasts are chosen from countries located in continents whose athletes have not otherwise qualified (International Federation of Gymnastics, 2015).

In non-Olympic years, the RG World Championship is the highest-ranking annual event and follows a series of World Cup events. It features both an individual and a group competition. There are competitions for each of four apparatuses separately and for the all-around performances. The top two athletes from each National RG Federations affiliated with the FIG are eligible to participate.

In Canada, the national governing body of RG is Gymnastics Canada Gymnastique (GCG), which includes 16 provincial/territorial federations. Since 1969, GCG has sought to promote and develop gymnastics experience from athlete development through to coaching and judging education (Gymnastics Canada, 2016). Rhythmic Gymnastics Alberta has been the governing provincial body in Alberta since 1979 and operates recreational through to elite programs with the intent of increasing participation and developing RG skill levels. There are 15

RG clubs currently operating in the province with 884 active club members (Rhythmic Gymnastics Alberta, 2019).

The Canadian Championships in Rhythmic Gymnastics is the highest-level annual event in the country (Gymnastics Canada, 2018). While the number of participants varies from year to year, typically there are around 100-150 competitors. Under the FIG Technical Regulations (International Federation of Gymnastics, 2016) there are three main divisions: novices (10-12 years old), junior (13-15 years old) and senior (16 years and older). Competing gymnasts are invited based on their Canadian rankings as determined through results of the Elite Canada competition (top 15 athletes in each division); Western and Eastern regional championships (top 10 athletes); and, a minimum of two gymnasts from each province. The purpose of the Canadian RG championship is to identify national individual and group champions and to form a national RG team. Based on the list of the national team members, Gymnastics Canada strategically assigns gymnasts to international competitions (Gymnastics Canada, 2016). Due to the limited number of participants and spectators that traditionally attend the championships, the Canadian Championships in RG is considered a small-scale event.

The Canadian Championships in RG is organized by the GCG in conjunction with a Local Organizing Committee (LOC). Usually the LOC is the hosting Provincial Sport Organization (PSO) or one or more local RG clubs. They work under a Hosting Agreement, which is a contract between the GCG and the LOC (Gymnastics Canada, 2018). The 2017CCRG was a five-day event inclusive of the set-up and tear down of the competition space (four completion days with an additional day for set up and tear down). The LOC dealt with the business and operation dimension of the event with a business director who oversaw finance, marketing, ticketing, and communications. An operations director managed logistics, event

production, volunteers, and technical aspects. Marketing was the responsibility of another manager who created, implemented and executed the marketing plan for the event. This plan covered: event image (e.g., logo); merchandising; ticket sales; and, sponsorship. It is noteworthy that the LOC does not typically have a designated staff member responsible for destination marketing as the host city is usually in charge of this function.

Edmonton, Alberta with a population of approximately 1 million people was the host city for the 2017CCRG. In any given year, Edmonton hosts a broad range of these types of events from amateur small-scale community sport events to large-scale elite world championships. Examples of higher profile events hosted in Edmonton include the Commonwealth Games (1978), Universiade Games (1983), Triathlon World Series (e.g. 2018, 2019, 2020.), FIFA Women's Soccer World Cup (2015), Bull Crashed Ice (2015 & 2018), and the Grey Cup (2018). The City administration believes that these events generate positive economic impacts and bring energy and vibrancy to the community (City of Edmonton, 2018). Given this supportive hosting policy, Edmonton has been a national leader in sport tourism for many years (Global News, 2015).

The Main Research Question

The question guiding this research is “what is the place meaning that gymnasts, their parents, and event organizers developed in the context of a small-scale elite youth-based sport event?” To address this question, three studies were conducted using the 2017RGCC hosted in Edmonton, Alberta as a case study. All three studies were guided by a constructivist interpretive paradigm (Markula & Silk, 2011) featuring a qualitative research approach to gain insights into the athletes, their parents, and event organizers' understanding of event places. An intrinsic case

study methodology (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2014) was employed and categorical data analysis was used to interpret interviews with the study participants.

Study one focused on the way athletes' understood place during the competition. It addressed the question of "what is the place meaning that participating rhythmic gymnasts had for the competition space?" Study two examined the parents' perception of place. The research question for this study was "what is the place meaning that the parents accompanying participating rhythmic gymnasts had for the competition space, venue and host city at the 2017RGCC?" The third study used Morgan's (2007) model of the co-creation of experience space to examine the way place meanings were produced. It was driven by the question of "how were place meanings co-created by organizers and sport tourists at the 2017CCRG?"

Dissertation Format

This dissertation follows the paper-based format as outlined in the requirements of Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research of the University of Alberta. It consists of five chapters, including an introduction, three manuscripts, and a conclusion. Chapter One presented the study rationale including the personal relevance of place to me, an overview of the study of sport tourism, and an overview of the sport of RG. Chapter Two examines athletes' place meaning at the 2017CCRG from a socio-cultural perspective. Chapter Three reports the investigation of the parents' place meaning at the events in terms of the competition space, the venue, and the host city. Chapter Four is an investigation of the co-creation of place meaning at the 2017CCRG. Finally, Chapter Five concludes the dissertation by summarizing key findings, theoretical and practical implications as well as limitations, suggestions for future research, and my personal journey in conducting this research.

Chapter Two: Athletes' Place Meanings at the 2017 Canadian Championships in Rhythmic Gymnastics: A Socio-cultural Perspective

Introduction

Sport space is visual and dynamic (Bale, 1994). It becomes a place when it is infused with meaning (Lewicka, 2011). The unique qualities and ecologies (environments) of sport spaces, combined with athletes' experiences of performing there, contribute to the place meanings ascribed to them (Eichberg, 1998; Gaffney, 2013; Smith, Brown, & Assaker, 2017). Therefore, athletes' performances and sporting outcomes have a clear relationship with place (Bale, 1988). Rhythmic gymnasts' performances are closely related to an indoor environment in which they compete. Insights into athletes' place meanings may help organizers of rhythmic gymnastics (RG) competitions to provide a supportive atmosphere that makes a positive contribution to young athletes' experiences at competitions.

In addition to individual experiences of space, "sport places represent social sites – the meaning, memories, and feelings created by bodily movement" (Crockett & Butryn, 2018, p. 99). The physical body is central to sports both in an individual and social context (Bale, 1996). Through embodied culture, "sport, in order to maintain itself as a social system, within a particular environment, produces its own space, place, and landscape" (Tangen, 2004; p.26). As a part of broader body culture, bodily movements create feelings, memories, and meanings related to the space (Crockett & Butryn, 2018; Eichberg, 2007). These views suggest that the socio-cultural literature on body movement at a sporting event can provide insight into place meaning of the competition space. Locating a moving body, such as a rhythmic gymnast's body, within its performance space can also provide important information about the body culture surrounding it. In their work on the sport of Crossfit, Crockett and Butryn (2018), for example, analyzed users' sociocultural understanding of a CrossFit gym. They argued that space location,

layout perspective, and arrangements of moving bodies disclosed social patterns of the sport. The authors concluded that a CrossFit gym is a functional, “achievement focused, and highly disciplined” (p.106) place – a place for bodily mastery. It is also a place that endorses friendship, cooperation, and communication for all levels of athletes that train in the gym.

While it seems probable that RG athletes develop an understanding of place, based on the aesthetics and physical skills of the performance as well as their social interactions in the competition space, the nature of this process remains unclear. In this study, I examine the place meaning that rhythmic gymnasts formed for the host competition space at the 2017 Canadian Championships in Rhythmic Gymnastics (2017CCRG). This paper draws on Eichberg’s (1998) trialectic model of competition space as achievement, disciplined, and experiential space. To do this, I first review the literature on how the competition space contributes to sport achievements. I then examine how the sport space helps athletes to discipline their bodies. Finally, I consider how sport bodies create place meanings based on the athletes’ emotional and physical experiences at competitions.

Literature Review

As there is no substantial literature on place meaning in rhythmic gymnastics (RG), I draw from the literature on ballet, artistic gymnastics (AG), and figure skating to identify parallels with RG. All of these sports share fundamental elements and movement skills (Law, Côté, & Ericsson, 2007; Mazumdar, 2017). The two forms of gymnastics (AG and RG) feature an important artistic component and are therefore classified as “aesthetic sports”. The artistic component is also a central dimension of ballet and figure skating. In this study, as noted above, I consider space to be an integral aspect of rhythmic gymnasts’ experiences. To examine the role

of space in RG, I have divided, following Eichberg's trialectic model (1998) a competition space into spaces of achievement, discipline, and experience.

Achievement space.

Eichberg (1998) defined achievement space as a framework that measures, structures and standardizes the body by translating its movement into records. The body in achievement space is dominated by mono functional use of standardized space for a single sport. Thus, Eichberg (2009) identified Western body culture as oriented to achievement sport: "Sportive competition follows the logic of productivity by bodily strain and forms of ranking pyramid with elite sports placed at the top and the 'losers' at the bottom" (p. 89). Based on Eichberg's (1998, 2009) framework, I consider RG competition space as an achievement space because it is important for rhythmic gymnasts either to win or improve their own previous rankings at competitions. Winning or losing at competitions depends on what gymnasts can perform on the carpet based on their bodily strain.

Rhythmic gymnasts compete on a special space defined by a 'carpet.' During the routine at competitions, a gymnast has to use all of the perimeters of the carpet, showing her body's technical and artistic execution of required elements (International Federation of Gymnastics, 2016). Rhythmic gymnasts' movements during their routine consist of body difficulty elements and manipulation of apparatus (either rope, hoop, ball, clubs, or ribbon) on the carpet (Loquet, 2016). In addition to these physical elements, I consider this performance space as achievement space for gymnastics from which several cultural meanings stem. Thus, this as an artistic and judged place that is given further meanings through media representations of the performers' bodies.

Gymnasts' media representations contribute to the meanings of achievement space. Because RG tends to appear in the media usually during the Olympic Games for which only the best and strongest athletes typically qualify, the space is generally associated with elite sport. This elite level performance space is the most publicly visible RG space and as such, it constructs powerful social meanings for the athletes. These mediated RG competition/performance spaces display strong feminine bodies that are oriented toward winning and high achievement (Barker-Ruhti, 2009; Eaglemen, Rodenberg, & Lee, 2014). Fabos (2001) compared figure skating competition to a battleground where athletes compete for the crown jewels. Similar to figure skating, rhythmic gymnasts' bodies are the main constituent element in their sport space. These athletes tend to have exceedingly thin and light bodies (Johns, 1998), because such bodies are considered optimal for executing extremely difficult elements: high jumps, pivots and turns, and to maintain balance with more ease. The athlete's body shapes, however, can change when their sport evolves. For example, Barker-Ruhti (2009) also noted that desired body shape for artistic gymnasts has changed from these athletes being described as "ballerinas" at the 1968 Olympics to "pixies" at the 1976 Olympics, because young gymnasts had to use their own body's physical power to execute "acrobatic and risk-driven routines" (p.45).

In aesthetic sports that are dominated by women the media focus can also switch from their performance to their appearance. For instance, during the 2012 London Olympics photographers voyeuristically focused on rhythmic gymnasts' physical appearance rather than their skills and efforts. These actions provided "specific examples of female objectification of rhythmic gymnasts" (giselec93, 2016). Like gymnasts, figure skaters, are often portrayed as thin, tiny and beautiful girls (Fabos, 2001), who are featured performing with "soft-focus lights, stars in the little girls' eyes, glittery costumes, and flowers from adoring crowd" (Feder, 1994, p. 64).

Mishra (2014) observed that sports photography at the Torino Winter Olympics pictured female figure skaters' bodies as delicate, graceful, feminine and vulnerable. At the same time, these figure skaters were infantilized, and their sporting accomplishments were minimized.

In addition to a particular type of media representation, aesthetic sports such as RG, AG, and figure skating are judged subjectively. Thus, judging is a record of results that is a part of achievement space for gymnasts (Kerr, 2009). As most world elite rhythmic gymnasts execute routines at a high technical level, it is often challenging to distinguish between their performances. Consequently, after the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens a new RG Code of Points was created. A new team of judges was introduced to evaluate the artistic component of routines in order to reward and emphasize this dimension of the sport (Kerr & Obel, 2015). The intent was that the gymnasts, who best control their bodies, best manipulate hand apparatuses, and best express a high-level of artistry, would receive the highest scores (Viner-Usmanova, et al., 2015). Under the new rules, if two gymnasts have the same scores, the winner is the gymnast with the higher score in the artistic component (International Federation of Gymnastics, 2016). Therefore, the RG achievement space is shaped through the images created by the media representation of the athletes' bodies and the judging practices in aesthetic sports.

Disciplined space.

Eichberg (1998) argued that sport disciplines bodies in space. He observed that sport space is often a 'panoptical' space dominated by straight lines and open to anyone to survey. Such sport space is three-dimensional with clear borderlines that divide the space into different zones. In those zones, athletes are usually distributed in the space according to their skill and age levels to allow them to train and perform efficiently (Barker-Ruchti & Tinning, 2010).

RG competition space can be considered a similar panoptical space because the

development of “gymnasts’ athletic proficiency is only possible through an extensive and elaborate process of corporeal discipline” (Barker-Ruchti & Tinning, 2010, p. 229). Such corporeal discipline is designed to promote athlete health, coordination, apparatus skills, confidence, elegance, grace, and poise (Bott, 1989). Elite rhythmic gymnasts need extraordinary physical abilities, dedication, patience, perseverance, and industriousness to succeed in their careers (Karpenko, 2007; Oliviera, 2016). In addition to these physical skills, gymnasts have to acquire elite level systematic problem-solving life skills, communication, self-efficacy, self-esteem, and resilience (White & Williams, 2015; Barker-Ruchti, Kerr, Schubring, Cervin, & Nunomura, 2016). In developing physical skills and moral qualities, panoptical corporeal discipline plays an important role. While the disciplined gymnasts’ bodies are efficient technical performers, several researchers have also reported that the panoptic arrangement results in docility: the athletes unquestioningly obey the coaching regimes and ignore injuries and mental and physical exhaustion (e.g., Barker-Ruchti & Tinning, 2010; Kerr, 2014). They further noted that the coaches’ constant gaze is a central aspect of disciplinary training.

The panoptical distribution of bodies in the gym has productive effects by positioning training gymnasts continuously under their coaches’ gaze. Their coaches’ observations can provide insight into spatial and environmental aspects of the study of the RG body. In gymnastics, bodies develop a discipline through training that is designed to secure their own safety and prepare them for competitive judging (Park, 2004). Expanding Eichberg’s work, Barker-Ruchti and Tinning (2010) and Kerr (2014) analyzed the AG training space, the gym, through a Foucauldian perspective (see also Hamera, 2005). In this space, gymnasts become docile bodies through constant repetition of particular exercises and corporeal discipline (Kerr, 2006). They turn into body-machines “capable of articulating technical mastery, virtuosity, and

dominion over difficulty” (Oliviera, 2016, p. 206). Each gymnast’s body needs to be fully seen for coaches to judge the results of corporeal discipline. Disciplinary training in panoptic space, however, can create docile bodies that are successful in competitions.

Experiential space.

Finally, Eichberg (1998) identified that sport takes place in experiential space. Gaffney and Bale (2004) added that “the experience of place will always be compounded of feeling and thought, the essence of being human” (p. 26). Thus, I consider RG as experiential space consisting of emotional and performative aspects.

Emotional experiences in sporting spaces produce cultural and historical place meanings with memories that help to shape the athletes’ personalities (Nikraves & Ghasemi Sichani, 2015). For example, at sporting events young elite athletes are thought to enjoy competitions because their environment and venues provide positive place experience (Parent, Kristiansen, & MacIntosh, 2014). An individual’s unique relationships to her or his environment can also provide an affective attachment to the place (Ram, Bjork, & Weidenfeld, 2016). That attachment creates a sense of physically being and feeling ‘in place’ or ‘at home’ for the individual who establishes an emotional tie to a place (Yuksel, Yuksel, & Bilim, 2009). For example, Oliviera (2016) observed that a gymnasium symbolizes a temple for the preparation and performance of gymnasts. It is a space filled with its own subcultural rituals, for example, geared towards accepting and tolerating pain and other sacrifices.

Rhythmic gymnasts also perform on a type of stage and thus, the physical aspect of RG experiential space of competition/performance space is characterized as theatrical space. For example, Raitz (1995) compared sport event places within a theatre, where the athletes’ performances create an aesthetic spectacle. This is comparable to Hamera’s (2005) description of

the “performative” production of ballet place. She stated that ballerinas create spectacles with their artificial movement, their straight lines, and an illusion of weightlessness. Aalten (2004) further observed that ballet presents a place for stories through which ballerinas’ emotions are embodied. It is a place “where ambitions can be realized, and physical excellence is valued” (p. 274). For figure skaters, similarly, the performance space is an ice rink. The televised competitions then add meanings to this space. For example, Fabos (2001) observed that American television coverage presents figure skating events as dramas, theatricals, and special showings. In these broadcasts, figure skating space is presented as “the space in melodrama, wherein most of us act out our deepest needs and feelings” filled with music and event glamour as performed in the context of figure skating narratives (Fabos, 2001, p. 201). Similar to ballet and figure skating, the expressive component of RG routines is meant to leave a lasting impression on the audience. Thus, 2013-2016 Code of Points introduced off-script judging² that adds an emphasis to the live artistic and aesthetic performance of rhythmic gymnasts (Mazumdar, 2017).

The RG athletes’ outfits and their appearance in the space during competitions are an important aspect of their performances. These outfits are meant to add expression to the performances and enhance the beauty of movements in the sport space. In sports such as RG and figure skating, leotards and costumes are designed to aesthetically emphasize the body’s physical appearance. The main requirement for these outfits is that they should be tight-fitting to enable judges to assess the correct positions of the body. However, variation in the decoration and design of the leotards are allowed as long as they do not jeopardize the safety of the gymnast (International Federation of Gymnastics, 2016). Today, rhythmic gymnasts wear a variety of

² In the previous Olympic cycle judges used scripts of routines/performances to judge. Nowadays judges evaluate gymnasts without scripts.

stunning leotards including ones with Swarovski crystals made by famous designers and priced up to \$2,000. Typically, each gymnast has four such costumes. Mishra (2014), however, added that the tight-fitting outfits in figure skating could also present the athletes as an object of sexual desire. In other words, athletes' costumes are both practical and prepossessing in displaying their bodies fully.

Recently, the “International Gymnastics Federation (FIG) intended to reconcile art and sports” (Loquet, 2016, p. 146) to emphasize the depiction of movement as the most important aspect of AG as well as RG. The artistic category of RG consists of dance steps, choreography, and bodily expression, while the technique is associated with sport and its rules. Therefore, the aesthetic impression of the athletes' performance is essential to these sports. Their experiential space consists of emotional and performative aspects that are intertwined. The purpose of rhythmic gymnastics is to express feelings and thoughts through technical execution. This content is aimed at making gymnastics spectacular and thus, to attract more fans (Usmanova-Viner et al., 2015).

As I demonstrated in this review, Eichberg's (1998) trialectic model with its theorization of space through achievement, experience, and discipline created by human movement applies to the rhythmic gymnastics competition space. Eichberg (2009) argued, however, that there is a need for studies that synthesize the levels of space. Therefore, this study addresses this call by asking: “What are the place meanings that competing RG athletes have for their competition space?”

Methodology

This study was conducted as a part of larger interpretive study into the place meanings that gymnasts, their parents, and event organizers develop in the context of 2017 Canadian

Championships in Rhythmic Gymnastics (2017CCRG). In this study, I specifically, examined the visiting athletes' place meanings found within the rhythmic gymnastics community through their experiences at a national level competition. I further explored these meanings by considering the way the athletes interacted with space, other individuals, and the sport practice following Kulczycki and Halpenny (2015), who suggested the use of interpretive methodologies to collect more detailed information about interactions between landscape and athletes at sporting events. Commonly, interpretive methodologies in qualitative research are used to create knowledge through a subjective meaning-making process, where individuals or groups construct multiple meanings of reality (Markula & Silk, 2011). Therefore, I employed an interpretive qualitative research approach to provide insights into the ways that athletes understand place. Participating athletes were asked to share their own interpretations of the competition space and its components as they perceived and understood them at the 2017CCRG.

An intrinsic case study (Stake, 2005) was employed to understand the unique characteristics, particularity, and ordinariness of the study case in terms of place meaning formed by the athletes at the event. The 2017CCRG provided the boundaries for this case (Stake, 2005). This event was a national competition sanctioned by Gymnastics Canada (GCG). While the number of participants varies from year to year, typically there are 100-150 participants, distributed across senior, junior, and novice classes (Rhythmic Gymnastics Events, 2016). Gymnasts are invited based on their Canadian rankings as determined through results of the Elite Canada competition (top 15 athletes); Western and Eastern regional championships (top 10 athletes); and a minimum of two gymnasts from each province for each class level. The purpose of the CCRG, then, is to identify national senior, junior, novice individual and group champions who will form the national RG team (Gymnastics Canada, 2016). This competition is usually

scheduled for four full days. For example, 2017CCRG took place between May 17 -21, 2017 in Edmonton.

Data collection.

Qualitative researchers studying physical culture “seek to solicit individual’s feelings, experience or knowledge(s) through interviewing” (Markula & Silk, 2011, p. 82). Consequently, I used semi-structured, in depth, face-to-face and email interviews to explore my participants’ understandings, thoughts, ideas, and experiences of place during the event. My interview guide (Appendix A) was based on my literature review, which provided consistency and basic structure (Patton, 2002). However, conversations were free to deviate and explore related topics closely and thoroughly. I asked interview participants about their individual place meanings and thus, the questions were designed to be flexible to adjust to each situation (Markula & Silk, 2011). I audio-recorded interviews with the consent of participants who were 16 and older. For gymnasts younger than 16, their parents were asked to provide their consent.

Photo elicitation was incorporated to analyze the gymnasts’ perceptions of the place (Rakic & Chambers, 2012). Recently Hinch and Holt (2017) highlighted the importance of using photo-elicitation in sporting event research that examines place as this method “showed considerable potential as an alternative to the standard interview approach” (p. 1095). I took pictures of the competition space, venue, and downtown (Appendices B, C, D) beforehand to use during the interviews to prompt interviewees to elicit memories and thus, discuss specific places or meanings (Markula & Silk, 2011) to enrich the data (Rakic & Chambers, 2012).

Participants.

I used purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2007), more specifically, criterion-based sampling (Patton, 2002) to identify potential interviewees. The main criterion was that the interviewees

must be participants of the 2017CCRG. As a result, each participant was 13 years or older and they had qualified for the event through Elite Canada or Regional championships. Information about the study was posted on the admission table and on the board at the entrance to the competition venue. I identified study participants by approaching the gymnasts and their parents at the warm-up area. During the event, three gymnasts, who did not qualify for finals gave face-to-face interviews at the competition space. As it was not possible to interview athletes who were still focused on competing, I asked them to participate via email interviews after the event. Later I received email responses from nine additional athletes. In total, I interviewed 12 athletes aged 13 to 20 year. Sandelowski (1995) and Boddy (2016) suggested that 10-12 interview of this type are sufficient for data saturation for a single case study from a homogeneous population.

Participants' characteristics are reported in the Table 2.1

Table 2.1 Participant Characteristics

| # | Age | Province | Type of interview | Years in RG |
|------------|-----|----------|------------------------|-------------|
| Athlete 1 | 15 | AB | Face-to-face interview | 5 |
| Athlete 2 | 16 | QB | Email | 10 |
| Athlete 3 | 18 | MN | Email | 15 |
| Athlete 4 | 16 | AB | Email | 12 |
| Athlete 5 | 18 | BC | Email | 12 |
| Athlete 6 | 15 | NB | Face-to-face interview | 7 |
| Athlete 7 | 16 | ON | Email | 9 |
| Athlete 8 | 16 | ON | Email | 10 |
| Athlete 9 | 20 | ON | Email | 18 |
| Athlete 10 | 14 | ON | Email | 11 |
| Athlete 11 | 14 | BC | Email | 6 |
| Athlete 12 | 13 | AB | Face-to-face interview | 5 |

Data analysis.

I transcribed the interviews verbatim and reviewed the transcripts for accuracy prior to data analysis. To analyze my data, I used Stake's (1995) categorical aggregation. This method allows the researcher to identify common themes in the data that provide meaningful insights

into the research question. It is a form of thematic inductive analysis of the empirical data, through which key themes are identified based on pattern recognition (Patton, 2002, Yin, 2014) such as how frequently certain topics, or codes, are mentioned. I grouped similar codes across different transcripts and identified the key themes and interpretations in the context of the research questions. All themes, including ones that were infrequently mentioned, were subject to this interpretive process because they could potentially yield valuable insights into the way participants develop place at this type of sport event. Ten major themes were identified through this process.

Results

In general, the competition was seen as a place comprised of multiple meanings for the athletes performing at the 2017CCRG. The 10 themes that emerged from the interview data were: technical requirements for RG, performance settings, physical fitness, competitive apparel, confidence, stress, achievement, joy, community, and passion. I grouped the themes further into four RG place meaning dimensions: function, performance, emotion, and connection (Figure 2.1). These place meaning dimensions encompassed Eichberg's (1998) trialectic model of the competition space inclusive of achievement, discipline, and experience. Study themes will now be discussed under the dimensions of: function, performance, emotion, and connection (Figure 2.1).

Function.

The key themes of this dimension related to the physical elements of the competition space, which included technical requirements for rhythmic gymnastics and the performance settings. These two themes contributed to establishing the functional elements that allow the

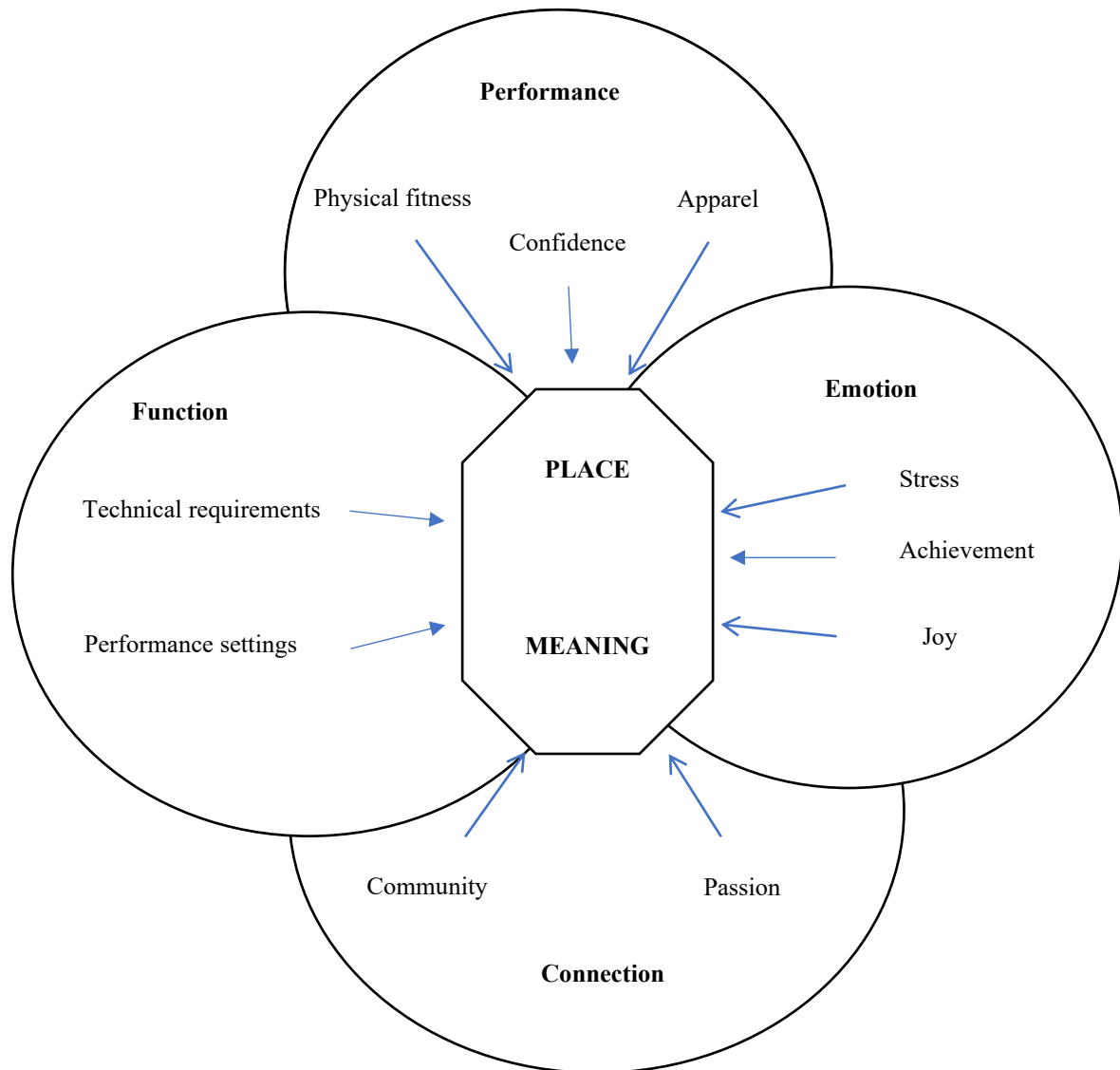


Figure 2.1 Athletes place meaning themes

competition elements that operationalized the event. Interviewees were keenly aware of the functional components of the competition space and were able to describe them in detail.

Technical requirements of the sport.

The competition area was seen to fulfill the technical requirements for this type of sporting contest. Space was arranged based on technical and operational rules (Gymnastics Canada, 2016), so that the set-up appealed to both the audience and the gymnasts (Athlete 8). Athletes emphasized the RG technical rules as obligatory for such national level competitions. For example, they thought that a high ceiling (Athlete 1, 3, 4, 7, 8, 12), a brightly coloured ceiling (Athlete 2, 4, 7), non-glare lighting (Athlete 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 12), nearby change rooms (Athlete 2, 7), and the spaciousness of the venue (Athlete 5, 7) were essential and the most important parts of the set-up at the RG competition. Athlete 2 highlighted that these space arrangements positively affected her performance. From her perspective, the competition area met her expectations that:

The carpets should be beige and the right size, the ceiling should be high and preferably a bright colour. The audience shouldn't sit too close to the carpet. The performance area shouldn't be too different from the warm-up area. And the gym should look bright in total, but the lights shouldn't be blinding.

Athlete 7 explained the importance of bright ceilings: "Darker colors of the gym are more depressing. It should be brighter and lighter. It must also be comfortable to compete at." The participants emphasized that the height and the color of ceiling can impact their performance (Athletes 2, 4). For example, during the execution of throws, the gymnasts have to be able to see and catch a hand apparatus above the carpet (Athlete 2). When the ceilings are too bright, they make it difficult to track throws (Athlete 5, 7).

Interviewees viewed the carpet as a main element of the competition space because it was the stage on which they performed (Athlete 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 10, 11). For example, Athlete 3 noted: “The carpet is the most important to me because different carpets feel different to gymnasts. So, it’s important that you get used to the competition floor for safety reasons and so you can perform your best.” The gymnasts further emphasized the importance of the location of the GCG officials, scoring, and music tables (Athlete 2, 10). The athletes explained that the spatial coordination of these elements made the competition operate effectively and efficiently. As part of the technical requirements, clear and loud music was seen as a strength of the competition space (Athlete 7). Interviewees expressed their wish that “There should be a bit of a breathing space between each component of the set up: the judges’ table, the spectators, the competition floor, and the warm-up area” (Athlete 5). Meeting these requirements resulted in the best possible execution of their routines.

Performance settings.

The interviewees thought that a nicely decorated performance setup was a key component of the competition, not only for the gymnasts but also for the audience (Athlete 2, 10). Decorations at the 2017CCRG competition included a balloon arch entrance into the carpet area, flowers, a thematic photo booth and other attributes such as the flags of the provinces. The gymnasts felt that these features made the competition fun and interesting. A “spacious and open gym” (Athlete 7) was attractive. Athlete 5 observed that usually higher-level competition venues are more decorated than smaller ones. Sponsor banner boards and balloons made the gym at the 2017CCRG more presentable (Athlete 2). In general, the athletes found that the space was decorated “professionally” (Athlete 10).

The decorative theme of this particular venue was devoted to the celebration of the 150th anniversary of Canada; thus, the red and white of the Canadian flag were the prevailing colours of the competition space. Flags of all the Canadian provinces were displayed on the black curtain that separated the performance space from the warm-up/training area. Organizers positioned a thematic photo booth near to the admission table and were positively received by the competitors (Athletes 11). Athletes used the booth to take souvenir photographs of themselves and teammates wearing iconic Canadian national items such as flags, cowboy hats, and glasses with maple leaves. Some interviewees identified the balloon performance setting at the entrance to the carpet – an arch - as an important element of the competition space (Athlete 2, 10). One athlete highlighted the significance of a balloon arch/entrance to the carpet by stating “...when I go through it, I face my fears, and there is no turning back. After I finish my routine, I like to come back through the entrance with a smile” (Athlete 7). The interviewed gymnasts observed that most RG competition decorations and set-ups are similar. For example, Athlete 10 noted:

I do feel a bit more comfortable with competing in a gym that I train at, but at the same time every competition is the same sort of setup. And the idea of the competing can be usually the same for every competition throughout the year. For me it doesn't make a huge difference but can certainly lift a little bit of weight off my shoulders since I know or have an idea of what the atmosphere will be like.

However, respondents also identified a few limitations to the performance setting at the 2017CCRG. For example, gymnasts would have preferred brighter and lighter colors in the gym (Athlete 7). Other athletes were not satisfied with the decorations and set-up in comparison to European events (Athlete 2, 8) that often featured more expensive, beautiful decorations. In summary, the place meaning attributed to the function of the 2017CCRG was influenced by way

the competition space was set up in terms of the technical requirements of RG and how it was decorated.

Performance.

Physical fitness, competitive apparel, and confidence are the themes that comprise the performance dimension of the 2017CCRG. This dimension also contributed to the way that the athletes understood place.

Physical fitness.

Gymnasts considered themselves strong and physically fit girls (Athlete 11). Athlete 1 described rhythmic gymnasts' as having "...a lot of muscles, because we do the stuff what we do, we need muscles. And we have to keep fit, right?" Their muscle memory was seen to provide "authentic freedom of movement" (Athlete 5) that helped to create a strong performance on the carpet. The physically powerful figure of the gymnast kept the audience and the judges engaged with the athlete's performance. On the other hand, some interviewees highlighted the fact that gymnasts have to look thin (Athlete 7). For example, Athlete 7 said "at the age of 14-15 athletes have to look after their weight, because rhythmic gymnasts have to look thin and elegant ...overweight gymnasts have an unpleasant look for the audience on the floor." Athlete 11 emphasized that a gymnast's body should be fit "because we have to do routines all the time and cardio is very important, we also should look after what we eat, lots of vegetable, meat, fruit and much more healthy choices." Physical fitness and leanness were seen to provide the proper aesthetics for the competition and to be needed in order to perform the elements in routines in a manner that appeals to the judges and the audience.

Apparel.

Gymnasts stressed the importance of the competitive apparel at their performances because “bodysuits must embellish her [rhythmic gymnast’s] performance and help her sparkle” and to do this, the bodysuits “need to be matched with gymnast’s body” (Athlete 5). First of all, performance costumes should reflect the music and the routine. Athlete 1 believed that if a suit does not match with the routine, the audience and the judges would miss the connection. The outfit was seen to, convey the story of her performance and music:

I feel that the leotard can be important for setting the story and the theme of the routine. For example, if the gymnast walks out with a black apparatus and a dark coloured costume you can probably sense that the music will be dark and dramatic, and the routine will be structured to fit that theme. If the apparatus and leotard follow Italian colours, you can probably guess that the music will be Italian, and the routine will have more of a dance style incorporated into the choreography. (Athlete 10)

Second, athletes felt that these bodysuits should provide a visual contrast between the gymnast and her surroundings. Athlete 2 expressed this with her statement that:

A gymnast’s body can’t blend in with the background. For example, if the background is black and the gymnast’s leotard is black as well, it might be hard for the judges to distinguish the gymnast’s figure, which makes it harder to judge.

Third, as RG is an aesthetic sport, the outfits should express its beauty. Rich and well-made costumes make a good impression (Athlete 8, 12). Finally, it is a technical requirement to compete with a specific type of leotard (International Federation of Gymnastics, 2016) as Athlete 3 stated, “you need a leotard to compete, it’s a rule.”

Confidence.

Interviewees found the competition space to be a very focused place. The purpose of the competition is to show the judges and the audience “your abilities and improvements through your performances” (Athlete 8, 10). Athletes have to devote all their mental and physical abilities to accomplish their maximum performance in four routines at the Canadian championships. The athletes indicated that hard work throughout the year results in confidence (Athlete 1, 7, 10, 11). The athletes can then use this confidence on the carpet to enhance their performance (Athlete 7, 8, 12). In a competition, gymnasts can show the results of their training and can achieve their best performances at the competitions (Athlete 2, 12). Athlete 4 described a performance at the competition by suggesting that:

Every routine is a story. Her [the gymnast’s] job is to cover the floor, execute difficulties, and show expression in a minute and a half, to complete the story. Gymnasts who illustrate a well-executed story are rewarded by [high] scores.

A routine lasts for 90 seconds. During the competition, each gymnast has to master four such routines with different apparatus³. As athlete 10 explained:

Each athlete has their own different routine and past experiences in competing, but I personally feel that when I’m doing my routine, I feel concentrated and make sure to focus on exactly where I’m throwing whenever I’m doing a risk or an element involving a throw. ... “I will do this perfectly!” I find that this is a helpful approach to each element because it can give you more confidence and if you think that you can do it, you can end

³ There are five apparatuses in RG— rope, hoop, ball, clubs, and ribbon—but gymnasts perform with four apparatus based on technical regulations for each Olympic cycle. During the routine a gymnast has to execute body and apparatus difficulties with artistry in order to show integrity of movements and music (International Federation of Gymnastics, 2016).

up executing each element as best you can.

Athletes consciously thought about how to handle the apparatus during the routine. They remained focused until the end of their performances (Athlete 4) in order to successfully present the routine to the judges and spectators.

The venue of competition was not important for experienced and focused senior gymnasts who had been training for several years. They had learned to perform under any circumstances (Athlete 9, 11). Athlete 5 described the way that “[s]he will be focused, but not overly ‘in her head’”. There has to be a balance of problem solving, focus, muscle memory [sic], and authentic freedom of movement.” Junior gymnasts are still learning how to perform their routines confidently (Athlete 2). In summary, performance as a dimension of place meaning at the competition space was comprised of a gymnast’s thoughts about her physical fitness, her apparel, and her confidence as a performer.

Emotion.

The third dimension of the place meaning for participating athletes was emotion. Stress, achievement, and joy were the emotions that athletes identified for the competition space at the 2017CCRG. They thought that competing was a test of emotional control and demonstration of efficient training.

Stress.

Several of the interviewed athletes confessed that although they enjoyed performing on the carpet, they felt nervous (Athlete 7, 12). They wanted to be perfect during their performances (Athlete 10). For example, Athlete 2 shared her feelings about performing at the competition: “It’s always stressful to go out on the competition carpet, because you know that you only get one try.”

The gymnasts highlighted two causes of stress in the competition space. The first one related to the actual performance as they felt nervous during the routine (Athlete 4). For example, they were worried about risks⁴ and throws they had to catch (Athlete 10). The second source of stress was performance memory. This occurred after a performance, when athletes, for instance, finished competing, she retrospectively relived all their mistakes and felt disappointed with her performance. Athlete 7 described her worst memory of the event as: “My clubs routine, I didn’t want to finish the end of the competitive season with such an unsuccessful routine.”

At higher-level competitions such as national championships, gymnasts tended to be really nervous (Athlete 4). Some respondents related their stress to the fact that the competition space is a judged place (Athlete 4). Being watched and assessed by judges provided pressure (Athlete 1). Athlete 10 described her way of dealing with this pressure as:

When I’m on the carpet performing, I’m only in contact with the judges and pretend as if nobody else is watching me. I stare only at the judges and don’t get distracted amongst anything else. I don’t think about anything else except my routine, and I always think in my head before each element.

Outside distractions were also stressful for a performing gymnast. For example, at the competition site there was noise coming from a nearby badminton court. This increased the RG athletes’ stress level (Athletes 2, 4). However, gymnasts tried to overcome their stress through a range of techniques. For example, Athlete 2 said:

I tell myself that the key to a good performance is ... turning my worries into the feeling of excitement and adrenaline and then it’s easier for me to do my best. On the carpet I

⁴ Dynamic elements with rotation, while a gymnast throws apparatus.

just try to forget about everything, including the judges, the surroundings and worries, and concentrate on my routine and doing the best I can.

This athlete was able to turn a stressful space into a place of achievement.

Achievement.

Respondents viewed the competition as a place of achievement because they saw their own progress at this site (Athlete 10, 11). For example, Athlete 8 said: “You just feel the sense of achievement when you have a high score. When you have low score, you go through what you did wrong and you can fix it, learn how to improve.” One interviewee found it stimulating to be with the country’s best gymnasts and try to reach her best level (Athlete 1). These athletes were proud of making the national championships given the rigorous qualification process (Athlete 3, 7, 10). Athlete 7 said:

I was very proud that I was able to make it to the National Championships this year, because this year was very tough, nothing came easy for me. This is why, I was very happy when I qualified to the championships.

The gymnasts’ accomplishments at the event made them proud (Athlete 1, 8). Athlete 12 explained: “This is the first time I made it to finals and I am pretty happy about it because it is only my second year ...[of competition at the] national level and my ribbon routine is good but it is not my best routine and I am proud of it.” Such pride was directly connected to the fact that gymnasts were able to represent their provinces at the national event (Athlete 4, 5). However, they would have been even prouder to represent Canada at international events (Athlete 2, 12). The athletes also shared their pride of being able to easily adjust to any competition venue. As Athlete 5 explained: “I pride myself in... being adaptable. I can make anything work.” Finally, the gymnasts were proud of their achievements when they saw their own progress

throughout the year (Athlete 10, 12).

Joy.

Most of the mature athletes in the senior category enjoyed competing both on and off carpet (Athletes 2, 5, 7). They were happy to compete (Athlete 10) with “a big, bright smile” (Athlete 7). Their enjoyment derived from performing their routines full out and with emotion (Athletes 3, 12). Athlete 7 said: “I like competing because you can be more expressive during your routine, and I always enjoy myself on the floor, even after an unsuccessful routine. Also, because that’s the day when I get to wear makeup.” Athlete 5 stated that “I enjoy showing my work and challenging myself to see what the best performance I can produce on that particular day.” Some gymnasts were able to transform their fear into joy while performing: “Judges are judging you, looking at every single movement you make. So, it’s nerve wracking, but...I’ve learnt how to enjoy it. So, I am not as nervous, and instead I feel I am dancing, and no one is there” (Athlete 1).

The athletes also explained that when the audience and the judges perceive the performer’s enjoyment, they also become engaged. Athletes saw their performance as a way to exhibit emotions for the audience (Athlete 3). While performances sometimes made the athletes nervous, they also provided a feeling of excitement and made them “...feel special in a certain way because when you are performing, you are a spotlight of the event, [the] whole audience, including judges, gymnasts, and spectators are watching only you” (Athlete 10). During their performances the athletes were filled with adrenaline as a consequence of being able to showcase the results of their training efforts (Athlete 2). One interviewee shared her very emotional response of her final performance before retiring:

In May, I competed at my 7th and final National Championships. It required more mental preparation than usual, otherwise the weight of my final chance could've caused me to choke. After a beautiful and emotional few weeks of intense preparation, I felt ready. I had decided to enjoy every moment and not hold back. In qualifications I was a bit nervous, and I just snuck into one of the spots for finals. It was then that I really applied the idea of having nothing to lose. No one could take away everything that I had accomplished. And so, after some of the most consistent four routines of my career, I hit the end pose of my last routine. Every part of me felt so alive. I will never forget that day. Presenting to the judges for the last time, having a home crowd to wave to, embracing my coaches with the tears streaming, and walking out into the audience and being shocked at how many people I had impacted. It was the most beautiful ending that I could ever hope for. (Athlete 5)

This quotation is noteworthy because it includes all three types of emotional place meaning that athletes highlighted at the 2017CCRG: stress, achievement, and joy.

Connection.

Two themes comprise the connection dimension of athletes' place meanings: community and passion. Both of these themes reflect place meanings based on the relationships that athletes experienced at the competition site in terms of social environment (Einchberg, 1998).

Community.

For some participants, the 2017CCRG was a place to meet friends and Canadian teammates (Athlete 2, 3, 8, 9). For those who had involved in this sport for many years, the event gave them a chance to meet old friends in the RG community (Athlete 6). For example, Athlete 4 noted that her best memory about the event was "Seeing my fellow Canadian teammates and

friends from other provinces.” Another participant shared her thoughts about the sport community (Athlete 2): “I love being involved in my RG group. RG is a part of my life and my group is like family to me and traveling together is great.” For some interviewees the community included their families (Athlete 4, 7, 9) because their parents usually accompanied them to important events such as the Nationals. In some cases, the athlete’s coaches were their mothers (Athlete 7, 11). In these instances, there was a special connection between a gymnast and her parent-coach especially if the mother was a former gymnast. As Athlete 4 explained: “She understands all of my feelings and fears and knows what to say to help me.” These gymnasts have additional emotional support within the community during competition (Athlete 9).

Interviewees also highlighted the development of connections within their travelling party during this type of trip because it is “a change from daily life” (Athlete 2). Traveling for competitions helped gymnasts to learn new things, explore new places, people, and cultures (Athlete 2, 4, 5). Athlete 7 liked these trips: “Because in every city/country there is something new to try, to discover, to learn, and it’s always exciting”. Even though the travelling can make one nervous, travelling with coaches and teammates is fun (Athlete 10) and makes the athletes happy (Athlete 11).

Passion.

The interviewees saw the competition site as a place where people gather to share their passion and love for the sport (Athlete 5). Athlete 2, for example, said: “Performing gymnastics is my passion and competing is just a way to share this feeling with others,” including gymnasts, fans, and parents. Their passion for RG drives the athletes to work hard with the support of their coaches and parents.

The interviewees believed that their parents' support cemented their passion for the sport. For example, Athlete 5 said that: "[My parents'] main goal has always been for me to do something that I enjoy and can grow character from. RG has satisfied both of these requirements, so as long as I was happy, so were they." All twelve interviewed gymnasts acknowledged the importance of continuous parental support in reaching their goals in RG. Parents provide both emotional and financial resources in order to enable their daughters' involvement in the sport (Athlete 2, 3). They devoted themselves to RG by volunteering, spectating, and providing emotional support (Athlete 1, 2, 3, 5). Athlete 2 described this support with her statement that: "They know how much this sport means for me and are ready to support me with what I need to be able to follow my passion." Due to their parents' support, the girls had opportunities to train, compete, and travel for competitions thereby contributing to their success in RG (Athlete 5). In summary, gymnasts' place meanings at the competition space were realized through the development of connections to the RG community and their passion for the sport.

Discussion

This study examined the place meanings of young elite rhythmic gymnasts at the 2017CCRG. Through their competition space, rhythmic gymnasts are immersed in the cultural environment that was a significant part of their athletic careers (Cavallerio, Wadey, & Wagstaff, 2017). My results illustrated that the gymnasts' place meanings were formed based on the physical settings of the venue, their social environment and emotional engagement with the competition. My findings, thus, align closely with Eichberg's (2009) definition of body culture that includes the bodily, emotional, and social dimensions

Interviewees shared their understanding of the competition space and its components at the 2017CCRG. They found the championship setting to be a meaningful place that was

functional for performance, yet was also filled with emotion, passions and connections to the RG community. Each of these dimensions contained related themes that provided insights into interviewees' understanding of the competition venue. Acknowledging that competition venues are unique to each sport, I now compare and contrast the place meanings in my study to the findings from other studies on related sports. I first discuss how the gymnasts assigned meaning to their competition space based on its functionality for performance.

Athletes highlighted the functionality of the competition site. Their place meanings at the 2017CCRG were formed in part based on the fact that the competition space met the technical rules of the sport thereby facilitating optimal sport performances. The competition was located in a multi-purpose and standardized high-performance sports centre that was designed to accommodate a variety of sports. In addition, there was a technical network that accommodated the gymnasts' ability to perform (Kerr, 2014). At the 2017CCRG this technical network included appropriate scoring, a good music system, and live streaming that directly or indirectly supported gymnasts' performances and, consequently, their perception of the competition space. As there are no specialized RG training and competition centres in Canada, unlike many countries such as in Eastern Europe and Asia, it is common that Canadian rhythmic gymnasts compete in multipurpose sport spaces like the gymnasium in this study. The findings of the study revealed that besides a functional space that accommodated the sport's technical requirements, the set-up and decoration of the competition space were important aspects of participants' place meanings.

In addition to functional space, the competition space became meaningful through the emotions the athletes derived from their performance. Indeed, one of the new insights provided by this study was that the athletes emphasized the emotional aspect of performances such as stress, joy, and achievement. This made the competition space an emotional place (see also Cash

& Damousi, 2009). As Eichberg (2006) explained: an embodied soul expresses its personal experience and actions through human feelings and emotions. The rhythmic gymnasts reported both positive and negative emotions as integral aspects of their participation at the event. It was evident that athletes experienced a high level of stress during the competition while performing in front of judges and waiting for their scores. The gymnasts who managed their emotions successfully during their performances and enjoyed it (Fabos, 2001), were able to deliver consistent programs/routines, and, consequently, were happy with their performances. As such, this emotional dimension of place meaning was a central aspect of the gymnasts' overall impression of competition site.

The third significant dimension of place meaning was associated with the gymnasts' performances in the competition venue. They ascribed meanings to their physical fitness, confidence, and competitive apparel in the competition space. Similar to Barker-Ruchi and Tinning's (2010) findings of artistic gymnastics training, rhythmic gymnasts' athletic proficiency required muscular strength built through disciplinary coaching techniques. The physical strength enabled them to execute difficult routines. Further aligned with Barker-Ruchti and Tinning's (2010) study, the RG athletes, who were able to develop physical and mental control with the support of coaches and parents throughout their athletic careers, were successful performers (Barker-Ruchti et al., 2016). For these young athletes the competition space become a meaningful place when it facilitated the mental and physical focus needed for delivering the best routines that the athletes were capable of at this point in their careers. Similar to many figure skaters (e.g., Fabos, 2001), the athletes in this study highlighted the importance of competitive apparel in embellishing their performances and helping them to tell a story using music and choreography in this particular competition space.

The final dimension of place meaning highlighted in this study was the social connections created at the competition site. Athletes saw this setting as a unique place of community, with a shared a common passion. The competition provided a physical manifestation for this community. Place meaning was formed through socializing, participation, and social networks that were seen to develop membership in the RG community (Tonts & Atherley, 2010). For some interviewees this community included their families because their parents usually accompanied them to important events such as these championships.

The place meanings that emerged from my study aligned with Eichberg's (1998) three interconnected spatial goals in sport: achievement, discipline, and experience (Figure 2.2). First, the 2017CCRG exemplified a place of achievement because gymnasts qualified for the competition through a selection process and saw their performance in this space as a reflection of their own progress in the sport. Second, the physical prowess and hard work exhibited by the athletes in the competition space confirm it as a place of bodily discipline. Finally, the site was a place of experience for these athletes as highlighted by the emotional and social dimensions of the event. They experienced both joy and stress while competing. The 2017CCRG was a place to meet, interact, and enjoy Canadian RG community that was united by the passion for the sport. However, my analysis revealed additional, interrelated themes and dimensions. For example, the disciplined space intersected with the function dimension of a place meaning at the 2017CCRG. In addition, disciplined space intersected with the performance dimension through the theme of physical fitness. The gymnasts' physical strength and prowess together with at the specific technical requirements of RG created a disciplined space. Therefore, several themes and dimensions were interrelated (Figure 2.2).

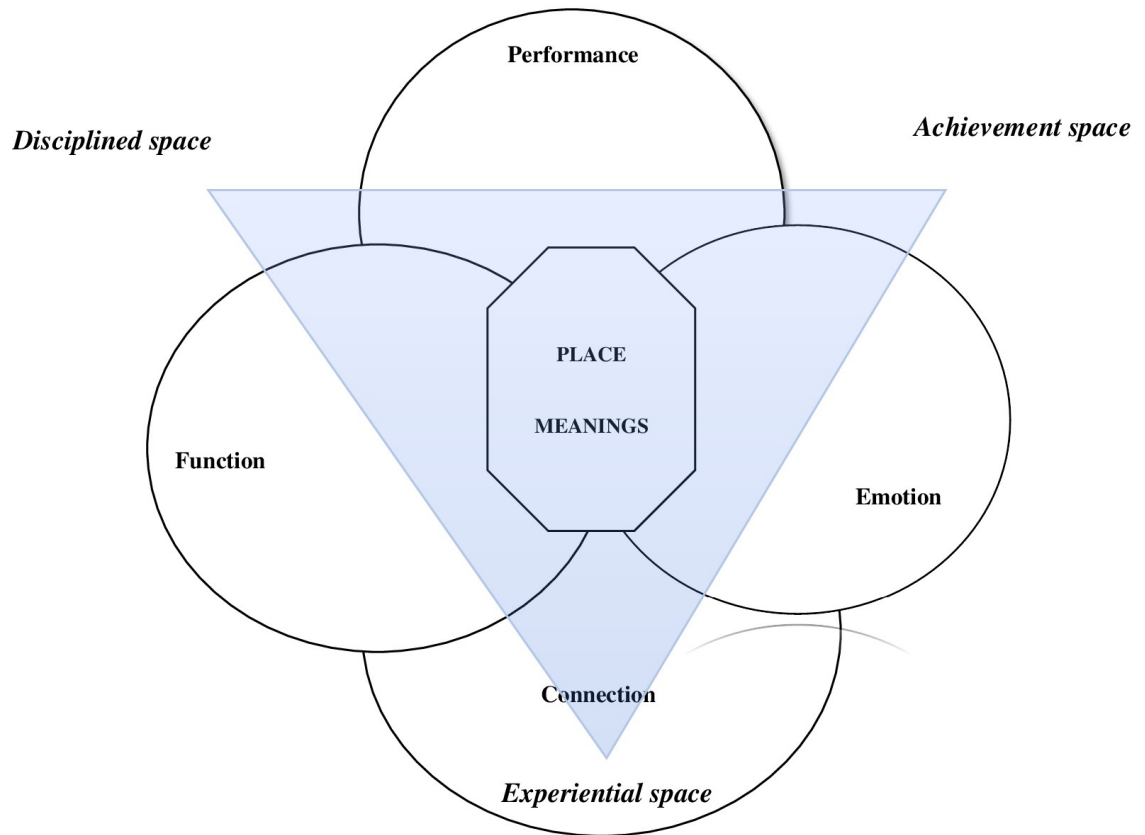


Figure 2.2 Athlete place meanings in comparison with Eichberg's (1998) trialectic model

Conclusion

In this study, I examined the place meanings that rhythmic gymnasts formed about the competition space at the 2017CCRG. Reflecting on Eichberg's (1998) interconnected spatial goals, it became apparent that the competition space became meaningful place for the gymnasts through interrelated dimensions of functional performance space. The competition site was deeply emotional for athletes and it enabled a shared a passion with a likeminded close community. The competition area set up, performances, emotions, and social interactions all contributed to the underlying socio-cultural construction of place meaning that participating rhythmic gymnasts ascribed to the competition space at the 2017CCRG. I therefore conclude, that the competition space was not just "a place to compete." The performing gymnasts' competition space provided meanings, which were manifest in their performances, emotions, and connections, and function. The competition venue provided a space that met the sport's specific technical requirements. In that functional competition space, confident and fit gymnasts delivered aesthetic performances driven by both positive and negative emotions and passion.

In addition to theoretical contribution, I believe that the insight gained in this study can inform the event organizers' decision-making. By reflecting on the place experience of athletes at the 2017CCRG, future organizers (both managers and marketers) will be in a better position to promote, plan, and host sustainable events that enhance the place experience of the competing athletes. Sport organizations, such as National Olympic Committees, national, and provincial gymnastics federations, and community sport clubs that host similar small-scale elite youth-based sport events, would benefit from taking into account the key dimension of place meanings from the perspective of the competing athletes. In this case study, these experiences included the sociological and cultural aspects of rhythmic gymnastics competition in a particular space. For

example, organizers of RG events should take into account that competing rhythmic gymnasts have special relationships and interactions during such events with spectators, parents and coaches. Event managers should know the athletes' team values, attitudes, and beliefs about RG competitions. Understanding the nature of place meaning from an athlete's perspective at these events has practical implications for sport event planners, sport managers, and coaches who can facilitate positive experiences of the place/space. This positive place experiences will likely lead to an increase in the number of participating in this sport.

One of the limitations of the study was connecting with the majority of the participating athletes by e-mail rather than by more in-depth face-to-face interviews. It was not reasonable to conduct face-to-face interviews during the completion with the gymnasts who were still competing as this may have interfered with their performance. Most of the interviewees were young and did not provide in-depth responses for all the interview questions via -email. While this interview method was not ideal it still provided valuable insight. Future studies devoted to the socio-cultural aspects of place meanings at these events can build on this base to provide further insight into the role of performance, emotion, connection, and function of RG. Comparative research on place meaning at the international level in different cultural contexts of RG would provide further insights into this aesthetic sport practiced by young women around the world.

Despite some limitations, my study offers a rare insight into the athletes' place experiences at RG competition. It highlights the interconnected dimensions of social and cultural aspects of RG in shaping place meanings at elite youth-based sporting events. As such, it contributes to the small field of studies on women's lived experiences in aesthetic sports.

Chapter Three: Parents' Place Meaning at Small-scale Elite Youth-based Sport Events: The Case of the 2017 Canadian Championships in Rhythmic Gymnastics

Introduction

Research on place seeks insight into how individuals and groups understand space. Questions about place are especially relevant in a sporting context, as space is a central dimension of sport (Bale & Vertinsky, 2004). For example, spatial characteristics such as boundaries and body movement are usually defining elements of sport. More generally sensorial, social, and interpersonal interactions in physical space contribute to place meaning for a broad range of participants (Lentini & Decortis, 2010). Competitive sport events are likely influence the way sport participants understand the host cities' (Bale 1994, 2003; Higham & Hinch, 2009) inclusive of destination image (Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2007). Furthermore, it is likely that these meanings will vary from one stakeholder group to another depending on the nature of their experience at the event (Hinch, Holt, & Sant, 2015).

One of the key sets of actors at small-scale elite youth-based sporting events includes the parents of the athletes. Holt and Knight (2014) argue that parents “play a pivotal role in the development of young people in reaching their full potential in sport” (p. i). This is especially true in sports like elite rhythmic gymnastics (RG) in which athletes typically begin to compete in national tournaments by the time they are 10 years old (Gymnastics Canada, 2016) and tend to reach their peak performance levels by their early twenties (Cavallerio, Wadey, & Wagstaff, 2017). Parental involvement often includes accompanying their children to competitions (Kaplanidou & Gibson, 2012). Like the young athletes themselves, parents are therefore in a position to form connections to the competition spaces, venues, and communities where elite youth-based competitions take place, but little is known about the meanings visitors of events attach to these settings (Cutler & Carmichael, 2010; Morgan, 2007). Studying the way parent

groups at small-scale elite youth-based sporting events understand place not only offers the potential of practical benefits for the planners and managers of these events but also offers the potential for more advanced theoretical insight into this dimension of sport tourism.

McClinchey and Carmichael (2010) note that space, scale, and time need to be considered when studying the place meaning of community cultural events. Other researchers have used quantitative approaches to demonstrate that destination image and past experiences at the host city influence the intent to participate in similar sporting events and to return to the host city in the future (Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2007). Similarly, Brown, Smith, and Assaker (2016) showed that good experiences at competition venues that led to destination attachment at the 2012 London Olympics had a significant positive effect on event satisfaction. As a complement to these quantitative studies, there is an opportunity to use qualitative methods to examine these complex and personal place experiences at various spatial scales (Smith, Brown, & Assaker, 2017). This study, therefore, explores the place meaning that the parents accompanying participating rhythmic gymnasts have for the host competition space, venue, and host city at the 2017 Canadian Championships in Rhythmic Gymnastics (2017CCRG).

Literature Review

Parents at youth sport events.

Parents of elite RG athletes often play multiple roles at their children's RG events. First, they provide financial and psychological support for their children to participate in the sport (Burgess, Knight, & Mellalieu, 2016). Second, they often serve as volunteers like parents in other competitive youth-based sports (Kristiansen, Roberts, & Lemyre, 2015). Finally, they usually form the majority of the spectators at these competitions (Scott & Turco, 2007). The

place meanings that they form in terms of the competition space, venue, and host city are likely shaped by all these roles.

Parents are the principal supporters of young elite athletes. As such, they “provide emotional, informational, and financial support that enables their children to enjoy and succeed in their sporting endeavours” (Burgess et al., 2016, p. 237). Typically, parents of elite child athletes have been highly supportive of their children throughout their development (Holt & Knight, 2014). Youth sport is estimated to be a \$5.7 billion industry in Canada, with family spending averaging \$1000 annually per child (Solutions Research Group, 2014). The parents of elite athletes are likely to spend much more than this average. Beyond financial support, parents often have a strong commitment to the sport-related subcultural group associated with their child’s sport and often derive an important part of their social identity through this community (Kristiansen, Skirstad, Parent, & Waddington, 2015). This type of parental support is usually a key ingredient for young athletes in their journey to achieving elite status. Finally, like parents of athletes in other youth-oriented sports (Kaplanidou & Gibson, 2012), the parents of RG athletes often travel to training and competition sites to help their child have positive sport experiences. These parents may also engage in other types of tourist activity while in the host city as do entourages supporting athletes at other out-of-town sporting events (Lamont, Kennelly and Moyle, 2015).

RG is highly dependent on volunteers and like many youth-based sports it is the athletes’ parents who tend to fill these roles (Kristiansen et al., 2015; Parent & Chappelet, 2015; Wicker, 2017). In North America, parents are often the ones that organize, administer, and sponsor youth sports (Coakley, 2009). Place is an important dimension of these events (Hinch & Holt, 2016). Hinch and Cameron (2020) found that volunteers at an ultra-marathon event had embodied

experiences of place, which contributed to positive feelings about the host destination. The attractiveness of the host community plays a significant role in recruiting and retaining these volunteers. For example, volunteers at the 2007 World Artistic Gymnastics Championship noted that experiencing the destination was an important secondary motivation in their decision to volunteer for the sporting events (Jarvis & Blank, 2011). Sport tourists often capitalize on their involvement at sport events by taking advantage of the opportunity to experience new landscapes and places (Kulczycki & Halpenny, 2015). For some volunteer tourists, place experience may even be more important than the event itself (Sin, 2009).

Spectating is another one of the main parental roles at their children's competitions (Green & Jones, 2005). It is, in fact, one of the most important ways they experience place during the sport event (Parent & Chappelet, 2015). For example, Scott and Turco (2007) found that parents of competing athletes at the Little League World Series in Baseball stayed longer in the host city than average spectators and as they believed that their attendance at the event was "a once in lifetime experience" (p.49). Jones (2008) noted that "those who watch, rather than participate in sport" (p.161) have seldom been examined in the field of sport tourism, which certainly applies to parents at elite youth-based sport events. Similarly, while Green and Chalip (1998) found that substantial progress had been made in terms of research on children's participation in sport programs, they recommended that studies of parents' satisfaction with and commitment to the sport organizations needed further attention. For these reasons, place meaning is considered an intriguing aspect of parents' involvement in the sport.

Place meaning.

Places and environments matter to people because of personal connections (Relph, 1976). These connections are formed through human interactions with physical environments (Stewart,

2008) and are embedded in people's feelings, emotions, and thoughts about the place (Kyle & Johnson, 2008). Place meaning expresses a notion that builds on the attitude of an individual or a group of people about a space based on their experience (Stedman, 2008). It "exists in the minds of people and in the life of their communities" (Stewart, 2008, p. 84). For example, several sport tourism studies have focused on the strong bonds that participants form with outdoor settings (Kulczycki & Halpenny, 2015; Lamont, 2014; Lamont et al., 2015; Shipway, King, Lee, & Brown, 2016). In other contexts, it has been found that simple urban features such as handrails, steps, and curbs become meaningful to skateboarders through use and media coverage that fosters emotional attachment and veneration of selected skating sites (O'Connor, 2018). Much less work has been published related to the place meaning that users develop for indoor facilities. One exception is a study by Kulczycki and Hinch (2014), which found that indoor climbing facilities are meaningful places for participants. These meanings are embedded in both historical and cultural understandings of such places (Gieryn, 2000).

Sport events infuse spaces with meanings (Bale, 2003) thereby potentially influencing the travel patterns of sport tourists. These travellers understand sport event places in unique ways. They see places from different perspectives than individuals or groups who are not connected to these spaces through sport events (e.g., Hinch & Holt, 2017, Hinch & Kono, 2018). Place also exists at multiple spatial scales (Tuan, 1977). In recognition of these differences, Saar and Palang (2009) categorized place meanings into four interrelated scales – supranational, national, local, and individual. They argued that place meaning of these categories disseminate over the differing scales and expand over the individual or collective level, highlighting the wholeness of place.

The nature and strength of the psychological bonds (Gross & Brown, 2008) that sport tourists form at the different spatial scales found at sport competitions merit further

consideration. Place oriented psychological concepts such as topophilia, topophobia, and genius loci are likely to influence place meanings at sporting events. These psychological dimensions of place are closely tied to the environmental setting of the event. Such settings can provide the basis for a positive relationship with sport involvement (Brown et al., 2016) by creating advantageous conditions and fostering affections for a space or landscape. Tuan (1974) used the term 'topophilia' to reflect a positive connection to space, such as the endearing feelings that athletes and sports fans usually have for their home sport spaces. Conversely, intimidating environmental settings may cause fear or negative response to the place; an emotion known as topophobia (Tuan, 1979). Negative feelings about an archrival's sporting base would be an example of topophobia in a sporting context.

Genius loci represent another type of psychological connection with a place (Vertinsky, 2004). It concerns the unique combination of cultural and physical characteristics that determine the distinctive character (Norberg-Schulz, 1980) or distinctive atmosphere in a place (Gregory, Jonston, Pratt, Watts, & Whatmore, 2009). Often, tourist places such as towns, mountains, lakes, or stadiums seem to be possessed by their own sacred spirit that gives a distinct atmosphere to that place (Relph, 2008). The genius loci of sport places can evoke strong emotions and feelings (Gordon, 2013). For example, Gaffney and Bale (2004) explored the essence of a football stadium in terms of the way it influenced spectators' sense of place. Study results showed that sensory experiences (sound, smell, touch, sight, and sometimes taste) embodying the stadium can trigger a unique set of emotions and memories. In combination, these emotions produced a collective energy that tapped into the genius loci associated with the stadium. In another example, Lamont's (2014) study of the place experiences of participants on a cycle tour that followed the 2011 Tour de France suggests that genius loci was fostered in the Tour's animated

atmosphere as generated by crowds of partisan spectators. Finally, a recent study of spectators at the Ultimate Fighting Championships (UFC) suggested that competing athletes had a deeper sense of *genius loci* than the spectators who were less familiar with the sport and its rules (MacDonald, Lamont & Jenkins, 2017).

Unlike the distinct places shaped by *topophilia*, *topophobia*, and *genius loci*, Bale (2003) has described sportsapes as “monocultural sites given over solely to sport, rather than multifunctional landscapes” (p.131). The homogeneous nature of these facilities can suppress unique place meanings leading to a sense of placelessness (Relph, 1976) or sterile space (Bale & Vertinsky, 2004). The relationship of sportscape dimensions such as aesthetics, space allocation, accessibility, seating comfort, and stadium cleanliness impact on the desire to stay or return to a host facility in the future (O’Reilly, Berger, Hernandez, Parent, & Seguin, 2015). Dhurup, Mofoka and Surujlal (2010) recommended that the managers of such events, and owners of sport facilities need to appreciate the way that sportsapes shape spectators’ experiences so that they can manage these experiences more effectively. For example, to help foster meaningful places at youth-based events, Kristiansen et al. (2015) suggested that organizers should plan special parent friendly zones that allow young athletes to meet with their parents. They suggested that this type of accommodation would have a positive impact on the experience of parents as well as their children.

No published studies were found that directly explored parents’ place meaning during sport events in which their children were competing. However, there were studies that indirectly addressed this subject. While parents were not the central focus of Hinch and Holt’s (2016) exploration of the place experience of participating athletes’ support crews during an ultra-marathon event, study participants did incidentally include parents. The study found that the

sport event helped to shape supporters' understanding of place based on their dependence on the host community to operationalize the event. Given these characteristics of the literature and the lack of sport tourism studies devoted to the sport of RG, this study is designed to examine the place meanings that the parents accompanying participating rhythmic gymnasts have for the competition space, venue, and host city at the 2017CCRG.

Methodology

A qualitative research approach was employed in this study based on interpretive/social constructivist inquiry (Creswell, 2007). More specifically, an intrinsic case study method (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2014) was used, treating the 2017CCRG as the target setting (Jennings, 2010) with three spatial scales of interest: the competition setting, the venue, and the host city. The CCRG is a national competition sanctioned by Gymnastics Canada (GCG). While the number of participants varies from year to year, typically there are 100-150 participants, distributed across novice, junior, and senior divisions (Rhythmic Gymnastics Events, 2016). Gymnasts are invited based on their national rankings as determined through results of the Elite Canada competition (top 15 athletes) and the Western and Eastern regional championships (top 10 athletes). In addition, at least two gymnasts from each province in each class level are eligible to compete. The purpose of the CCRG is to determine the membership of the junior and senior national RG teams (Gymnastics Canada, 2016).

Data collection.

The data were collected by: (a) interviewing parents about the place meanings they formed related to the competition space, the venue and the host city, and (b) through direct observation of how parents use these spaces (Jennings, 2010). Fifteen parents participated in semi-structured, in-depth, face-to-face interviews conducted on-site during the event (Markula &

Silk, 2011). They were briefed about the nature of the study (Appendix E) and provided their signed consent to participate in the study. The interview questions were articulated based on the research purpose, the literature review and the identified gaps in the literature (Appendix F). While these interviews shared the same basic structure, the interviewees were free to deviate and explore related topics in more depth depending on each unique situation (Markula & Silk, 2011). Each interview began with general questions about the participants' background: socio-demographics, occupation, residence, ages of children involved in RG, and the nature of their involvement with their child's RG career. These were followed by questions focused on the parent's perceptions of the competition space, the venue, and the host city. In terms of the competition space, parents were asked about the performance space, competing gymnasts, important physical elements, the social atmosphere, and recommendations for improvement. Questions related to the venue asked about its internal and external physical and social elements. Questions about the host city focused on the participants' travel experiences in the broader destination while at the event. The interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed verbatim. Researcher-selected photographs were used in the interview process as a prompt (Anderson, 2012; Rakic & Chambers, 2012). Pictures of the competition space, the host facility, and host city were meant to elicit memories and to focus the discussion on specific spaces (Appendices B, C, D).

Observational data collection in the form of field notes was used to complement the interview data (Patton, 2002, Stake, 2005). These notes were both descriptive and reflective in that they included researcher experiences, hunches, and insights (Yin, 2014). Observations focused on each of the three spatial scales, and general information that afforded the context for interpreting the interview data. For example, parent behaviours and informal comments that

provided insights into their experiences and understandings of the sporting event as place were included as observations. Similarly, descriptions of the physical settings and activities of the event, and observable reactions and feelings of parents were included in the field notes.

Participants.

Purposeful snowball sampling (Creswell, 2007) was used to identify potential interviewees through informational posters (Appendix G) and personal contacts in the spectators' area at the 2017CCRG. Fifteen parents aged between 39 and 54 years consented to be interviewed. This quantity of participants is consistent with the view that 10-12 interviews are sufficient for a single case study featuring a relatively homogeneous population (Sandelowski, 1995). Moreover, given the methodological approach of this study, even "a single case study that involves a single research participant can be of importance and can generate great insight" (Boddy, 2016; p. 430). Participants consisted of 13 females and two males (Table 1). Four parents had two daughters involved in RG and the average length of parental involvement in RG was 8.5 years (Table 3.1).

Data analysis.

The interview transcripts were reviewed for clarity and accuracy prior to data analysis. Stake (1995) recommends using categorical aggregation for qualitative case study data analysis. Common themes were identified based on inductive analysis associated with pattern recognition (Patton, 2002, Yin, 2014). All themes, including ones that were infrequently mentioned, were subject to this interpretive process if they were judged to provide valuable insights into the participants' place meanings at three spatial scales of interest in this study. The thick description (Patton, 2002) resulting from the observations provided rich, in-depth accounts of the participants' experiences, perspectives and physical settings in which they occurred (Lodico, Spaulding, &

Voeggtle, 2010). Relevant observational data (i.e., field notes) were used to complement and build on the themes/codes identified in interviews. They served as a check on the interview findings.

Table 3.1 Participant Characteristics

| Participant | Age | Province | Daughter's age | Daughter's years in RG |
|-------------|-----|----------|----------------|------------------------|
| 1 | 48 | BC | 11 | 5 |
| 2 | 40 | MN | 16 | 10 |
| 3 | 46 | MN | 12 | 8 |
| 4 | 56 | AB | 12; 14 | 3 |
| 5 | 42 | ON | 15 | 10 |
| 6 | | ON | 18 | 10 |
| 7 | 45 | BC | 13 | 9 |
| 8 | 42 | MN | 10; 9 | 4; 3 |
| 9 | 39 | NB | 10 | 4 |
| 10 | 54 | MN | 19 | 13 |
| 11 | 53 | ON | 13; 17 | 6 |
| 12 | 48 | NB | 15 | 7 |
| 13 | 42 | BC | 15:12 | 9; 7 |
| 14 | 53 | ON | 18 | 12 |
| 15 | 52 | ON | 22 | 13 |

Findings

The interviews and observations demonstrate that parents developed a range of place meanings associated with the competition space, the venue, and the host city.

The competition space.

Parents described the competition space as a place of emotion, connection, performance, and function (Figure 3.1). Together these themes comprise the place meaning of the most intimate of the three scales of space under study.

Emotion.

Parents saw the competition space as a place of emotion – both positive and negative. Respondents reported positive emotions associated with this space including pride, accomplishment, inspiration, and honour. They saw the competition space as a happy and

exciting place. Observations indicated that parents in the viewing area of the competition generally exhibited welcoming, happy, and joyful behaviours. The interview responses were consistent with these observations (Participants 13, 15). For example, one father described his emotions in the spectator area at the competition site in this way:

It's really exciting, you know. It gives them [the athletes] a lot of opportunity to really kind of put a nice end on the year. It's an opportunity for them to get extra training ... they wouldn't otherwise have. And you know, if they make nationals great, it's nice add-on bonus. If not, that is okay too. My youngest did not make it last year but came down and supported the oldest and had a lot of fun and I think they have to experience that too.
(Participant 13)

The fact that their daughters had qualified for the 2017CCRG was seen as a major achievement and was very emotional for parents (Participant 12). Watching their daughters perform in the official competition space was a poignant and exciting experience. One parent said he was happy to be involved in the national championships in this space, "because as much [as this is] my daughters' life experience, this is my experience to be the part of a national competition. How often do you get to ...be part of the organizing committee? So, I am pleased" (Participant 4). For parents of these athletes, positive feelings often were tied to their daughters' successful performances in this space. Under such circumstances, even a "terrible" gym would feel perfect (Participant 15).

Even though parents expressed feelings of happiness and pride in relation to the competition space, one third of interviewees found it stressful. Observations made during the competition showed that most gymnasts were nervous before going to present their routines to the public and judges. Those athletes who were not successful at managing this stress tended to

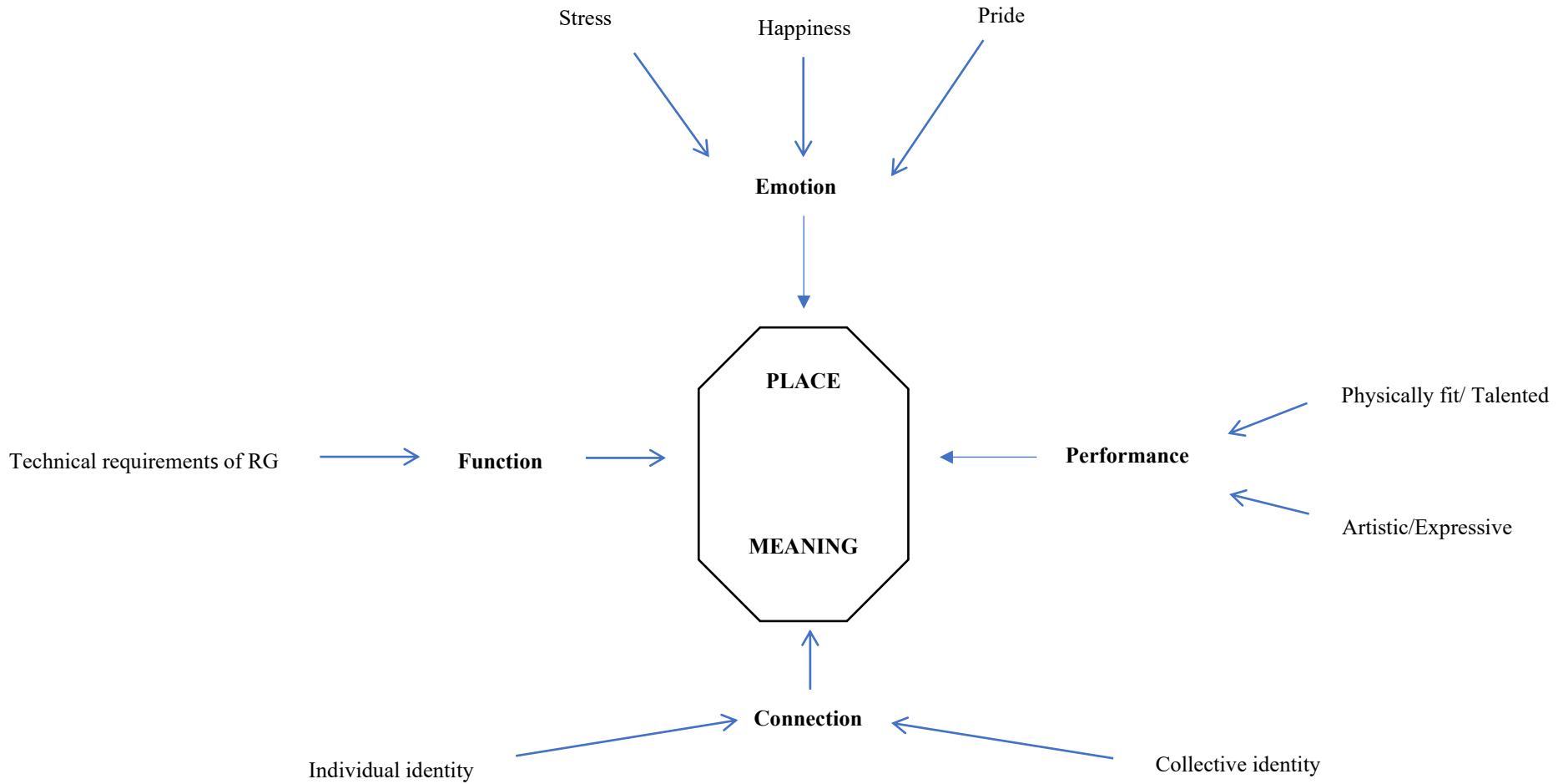


Figure 3.1 Place meaning themes associated with the competition space

underperform. Parents were unable to intervene during the competition and watched anxiously hoping for the best. One parent described this emotional turbulence during her daughter's performance by noting:

I pretty much don't breathe for whole minute and a half. And I do feel anxious for her. I feel nervous for her, but I very much try being calm, because she and I have a very ... close relationship and I feel that my emotion will project on her. If I am stressed, or I am calm, I don't need to say a word to her, she just feels it. (Participant 1)

Other interviewees suggested similar feelings stating that they were nervous at the competition space during their daughters' performance, but they tried not to show those feelings to anyone, especially the gymnasts. One respondent felt that the competition space created even more performance pressure for top gymnasts and their parents (Participant 15) because, when these gymnasts perform, the members of the audience have higher expectations.

Connection.

The competition space was also seen as a place of connection. Almost all parents expressed a strong sense of belonging to the Canadian RG community while at the competition space during the 2017CCRG because it united the country's elite RG athletes, judges, coaches, family, and friends. Some parents regularly travelled with their daughters to out-of-town competitions because they identified with the RG community in these settings (Participant 14). For example, one parent travelled to and volunteered for the event even though her daughter had not qualified for the Nationals (Participant 12).

The personal and family lives of several respondents were directly connected to the RG community through their profession (Participant 5,7,13,14,15). It was observed that parents that coach their own daughters tended to be more stressed around the competition space. In addition

to the other athletes they coached, they had to accompany their own daughters to the carpet. In fact, there were cases when parent-coaches were physically mimicking the routine elements on the sidelines during their daughter's routine.

The competition setting acted as the epicentre of many of the parents' social worlds. RG impacted their whole family and was a key part of their social life (Participants 2, 9).

Respondents (e.g. Participant 11) expressed their family's passion and commitment to the sport as reflected in the substantial financial support that they provided to enable their daughters to perform in this particular space. For other parents (Participants 5, 7, 14, 15), RG was closely associated with their professional careers as coaches, ballet teachers, or RG program directors. For these parents, the RG community was their "soul and body!" (Participants 7,15). As such, the competition space was a focal point. It was a place to meet and engage with the RG community. One parent (Participant 13) captured this idea by highlighting the manifestation of community at the competition site:

Oh, I love it! You know it's a very small community. The more competitions you go to, you really start to see the same faces. The parents are generally very fantastic. Even some of the coaches I have got to know ... are very supportive parents. To the highest degree in every sport that I have been a part of, they are just really committed to their kids, supporting them and... it's kinda neat. You just get ... to know them and you begin cheering for those other kids [at the competition space] because you know their parents.

Observations at the spectator's area confirmed these claims. A warm social atmosphere characterized the spectator area. Parents were chatting, sharing their thoughts, giving feedback, and discussing the performances of athletes. For many parents, the sense of community fostered at the competition site spread beyond that particular setting. For example, one respondent said,

“It’s changed my family’s social life. We go camping together (with other members of the RG community) or other activities in the community, because our town is a small town. We know each other [well]” (Participant 9).

Performance.

The competition space was also seen as a place of elite athletic performance. It was viewed as: “a place where technical skills and physical prowess are displayed”, and a place where a “less tangible artistic side” was on display (Participant 6). In the first instance, parents emphasized the physical prowess and muscular strength of talented gymnasts (Participants 4, 6, 8, 9):

They are one of the strongest athletes, I think. They have to be strong from head to toe to execute all of those moves, because they make them look deceptively easy. So, they have incredibly strong core, and they have strong backs in order to stabilize their bodies...

(Participant 8)

At the same time, parents highlighted the artistic execution and expressiveness of routines through the combination of skills and artistry. To be artistic, rhythmic gymnasts need to be mobile, flexible, creative, graceful (Participant 10), long, lean (Participant 9) and to exhibit beautiful postures that are associated with each type of apparatus (Participant 14). Parents noted that people come to the competition to see amazing performances, not to see the performing space (Participant 7). In this regard, an interviewee described athletes executing their routines as “...light on their feet, graceful or expressive, or very tight and sharp, very theatrical with their faces” (Participant 1). Another parent emphasized attention to form and personal characteristics such as confidence. She said, “[The athletic routines need to be characterized by] nice lines...

strong finish, just very expressive, very confident” (Participant 3). In summary, this theme was characterized by athletic/artistic performances at the competition space.

Observations indicated that the parents appreciated the athletes’ performances. This confirmed the interviewees’ perspectives that gymnasts execute their routines with high levels of artistry and expression in time with the music. Music, costumes, and movement were coordinated in the routines with each gymnast presenting short spectacles/theatrical shows for the audience and judges.

Function.

The fourth theme featured the competition space as a place of function. Essentially, parents saw the space as meeting the practical requirements of hosting a national level RG championship. Though several parents expressed concerns about uncomfortable spectator seating and substandard lighting, other RG requirements such as high ceilings and spatial relationships, were perceived as strengths of the competition space. In general, parents evaluated the event as well organized (on time, smooth flow) with “attentions to details” (Participant 9). The competition space was seen as “large, inviting, with easy access, and very well laid out” (Participant 14).

The venue.

Parents tended to be less focused on the venue in which the competition space was located. When asked directly about the space, they saw it as a place of functional support and a place of leisure (Figure 3.2)

Functional support.

The venue was seen as a place of functional support. The terms of reference for the bid identified specific technical requirements for the venue (Gymnastics Canada, 2016) and

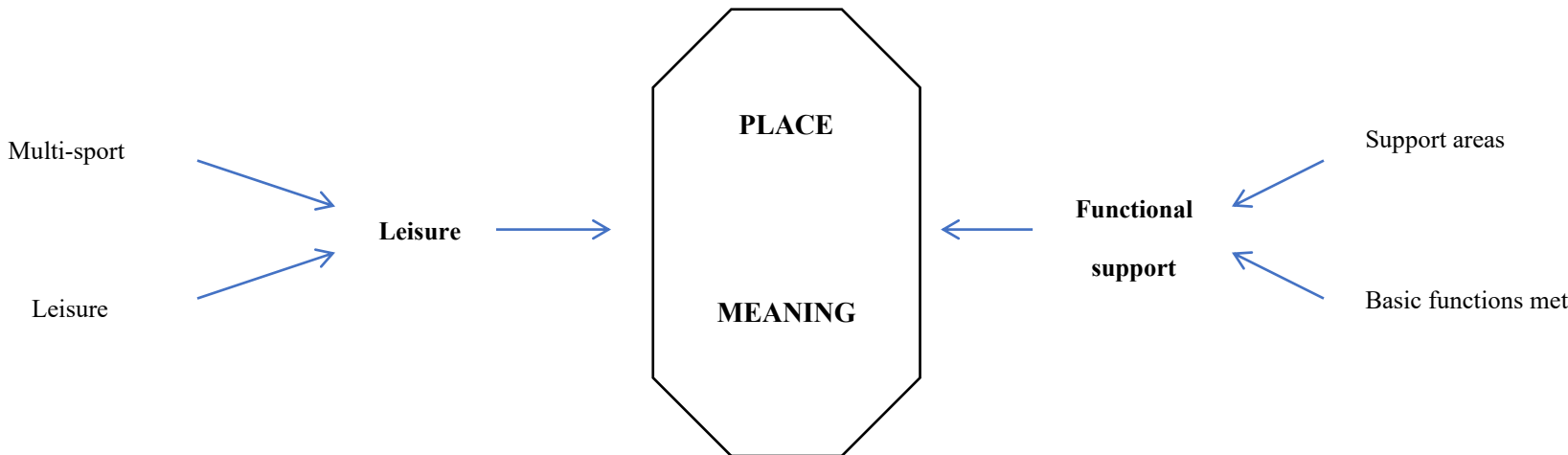


Figure 3.2 Place meaning themes associated with the venue.

observations confirmed that the venue met all of these GCG requirements for national championships. Fundamentally, the venue was seen to provide an appropriate competition space that met national RG standards for ceiling height, seating, floor surface, power, lighting, and sound systems. Beyond these technical requirements, the venue provided supporting amenities, such as: internet access, meeting rooms, parking, lockers, food services, storage, accessibility, and a loading dock.

Parents acknowledged the convenient location of support spaces relative to the competition space and expressed their opinion that the venue was well maintained (Participants 13, 14). One third of respondents agreed that even though the venue was aging, it was still is a very good place to host a national level RG event (Figure 3.2). For example, one parent said:

It's a best place to host Nationals, I mean... keeping in mind that this is my second time, but so far, I mean ... it's fabulous! It's easy to get around. It's not confusing. Parking is great! (Participant 12)

Parents were pleased with the availability of healthy food in the canteen. Free parking was also seen as a venue strength with one third of the respondents suggesting that they had already made substantial expenditures to attend the event and therefore felt that parking should be included in the price of admission (Participant 13). The food concessions were the most visited places in the venue after the competition/training space.

Leisure.

The venue was also seen as a place of leisure both for event participants and the general public. It was recognized as a municipally operated facility and home to many different high performance and recreational sports. It was appreciated for meeting the international standards

for several sports and for providing an attractive spectrum of support services and spaces. One parent described the host venue as:

... an amazing sport facility. I spent a few hours the other day going for a walk all around the trails. As a whole sport centre, it's really impressive. I wondered, how many different sports you have here; outside things and inside things. I know we have been here for a long weekend, and I know it's beautiful weather. But I was so impressed with how many people were out using the facility and bringing kids, running and biking, and doing so many things. (Participant 12)

In addition to the indoor amenities, 11 of 15 interviewees highlighted the venue's beautiful park setting in the river valley. Parents expressed pleasure with venue's proximity to green space and the river valley because this gave them an opportunity enjoy the sunny weather and provided a place of relaxation away from the stress of the competition (Participant 8).

Observations confirmed that public access to the facility was open throughout the event. Aquatic programs were running in the swimming pools. People were exercising in the fitness areas and playing badminton in close proximity to the competition space. During the course of the competition several parents were observed walking, chatting, and sitting on benches in the adjacent river valley park area.

The host city.

Parents of athletes at the 2017 CCRG saw the host city as a place of competitive sport, tourism, and hospitality (Figure 3.3).

Competitive sport.

Given that parents were in Edmonton to support their daughters at the 2017CCRG, it is not particularly surprising that they saw the host city as a place of competitive sport. For most of

their visit, they were very focused on attending training sessions and the competition (Participants 6, 9, 10). Parents believed that their daughters needed to focus on the competition because, as one parent said, “it is not a holiday” (Participant 10). Another parent, who was also a team manager, described the typical routine of the athletes and their parents as revolving around the competition:

You have to get everything right for [the] girls and yourself. Preparation. There are schedules; everything that you would normally consider with travelling, except it’s not leisure. You have to adhere by very strict schedule. That means how to feed the athlete with the best food, where to go, is it accessible? (Participant 14)

Observation showed that parents typically stayed close to the venue, even when their daughters had finished competing. During the last day of the competition, the spectator’s area was full even though only eight gymnasts qualified for apparatus finals and fifteen for all-around finals from the senior and junior categories. Most of the competing athletes had qualified for both apparatus and all-around finals so there were not many individual athletes in the finals. Nevertheless, most of the parents stayed to watch even if their own daughter did not make finals. They stayed to support the finalist in general as well as other provincial team members who qualified for the final stage of the competition (Participant 6, 9). The 2017RGCC was thus viewed as a chance for parents to support (Participants 8, 9) and evaluate (Participant 7) high performance RG athletes from across the country.

Tourism.

Parents also saw the host city as a place of tourism even though this was secondary to the view that it was a place of competition. All respondents answered positively when asked, “Do you like to travel to other cities/countries for the competitions?” In expanding on this response,

they reported that they liked to explore new cities (Participants 7, 12), go sightseeing (Participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 12, 14, 15), and try local food (Participants 7, 13, 15). Eight out of the 15 parents interviewed expressed interest in, or had already visited, other tourist attractions in Edmonton with West Edmonton Mall being the most frequently mentioned. Several parents said that they made an effort to explore host cities during their travels to other competitions (Participants 1, 5, 15). For example, one parent stated that she used this visit to explore Edmonton because she had never been here before (Participant 9). Over the years, as parents became more experienced with the competitions, they tended to visit as many attractions in the host city as possible (Participant 12). One parent described her touristic behaviour in a host city this way:

“It depends how many kids I have to look after. But we try always to go somewhere in a new city. We always try to do some sightseeing. See something else. Maybe stay one day more. Go to the restaurant; eat their food” (Participant 15).

While the athletic competition was the central focus of these parents, they definitely saw the host city as also being a leisure destination. By way of illustration, one father expressed excitement that the visit to the host city provided by giving him a break from his regular work routine (Participant 4). Two thirds of respondents described Edmonton with adjectives like: beautiful, nice, and attractive. They found it to be quiet (Participant 6), clean (Participants 5, 9, 11), green (Participants 2, 9), Western/historical (Participants 4, 14), safe (Participants 9), and characterized by a good quality of life for families (Participant 1).

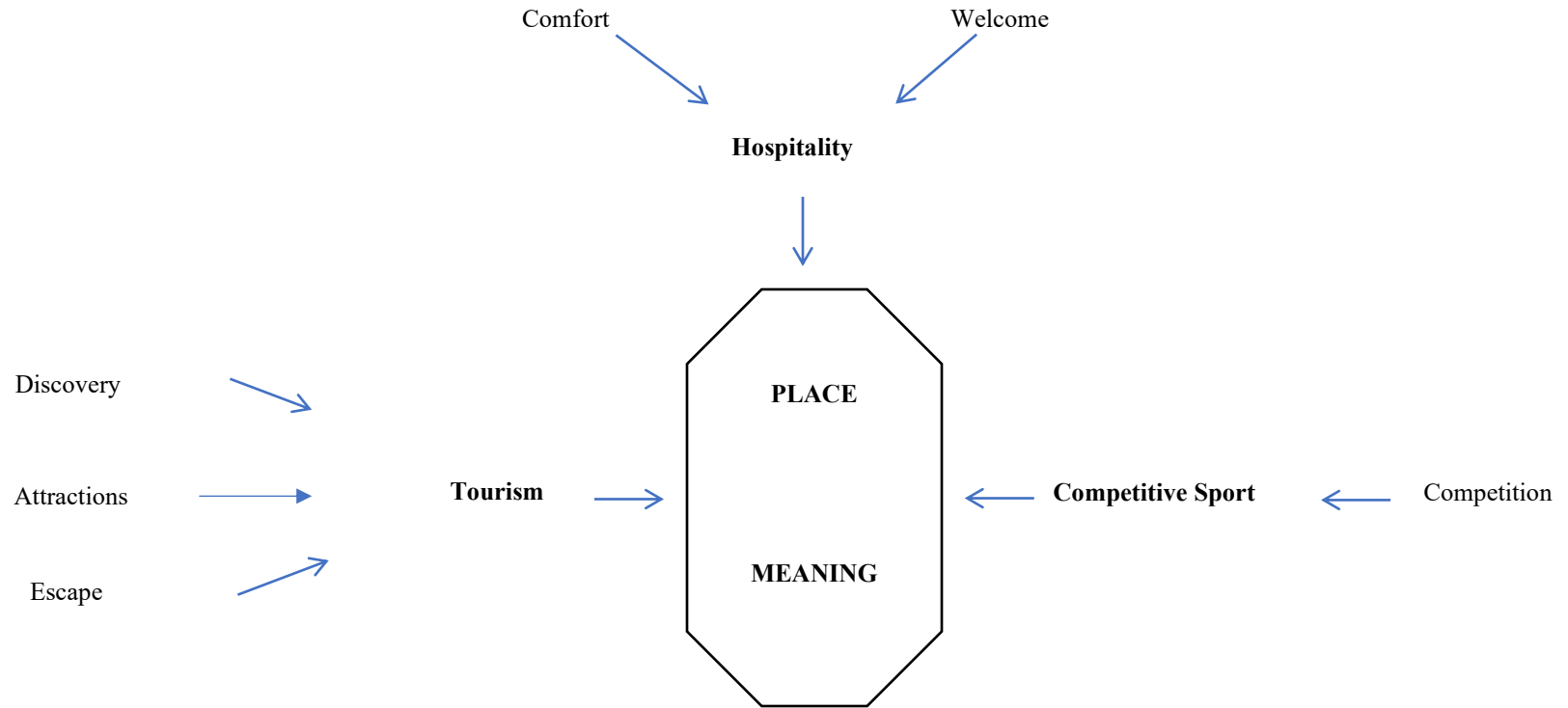


Figure 3.3 Place meaning themes associated with the host city

Hospitality.

The host city was also seen as a place of welcome and hospitality. In addition to its physical attractions, parents found the city to be friendly (Participants 8,13) and welcoming (Participant 14). One parent stated:

We were walking on Jasper Avenue the other night and I told a friend of mine, [a] fellow parent, it's weird, you feel kinda safe, and not kinda vague. You are in a city, you don't know people and so on, but I find people very friendly. I just... felt [it was a] very positive experience... Overall, it's been a very pleasant, positive experience (Participant 12).

These positive views of the host city hospitality were a key aspect of the place meaning expressed by about three-quarters of parents. While all of these dimensions of the city were significant, the way in which parents ultimately felt about Edmonton was anchored in the performance of their children (Participants 7, 15). For example, Participant 7 was clear that she was fond of the city because her daughter had a successful competition.

Discussion

This study examined the place meaning that parents accompanying participating rhythmic gymnasts had for the competition space, venue, and, host city at the 2017CCRG. The experiences of parents at the event helped to shape their understandings of place.

Competition space.

Four themes – emotion, connection, performance, and function - characterized the way parents understood the competition space. As Bale and Gaffney (2004) suggested, sportscapes contain sensory geographies characterized by feelings, emotions, and memories that produce meanings about place. This study supports this view. The emotional experience of parents was

substantial. Parents who were happy with the space expressed place meanings that were consistent with the concept of topophilia (i.e., affection for a place) (Tuan, 1974). In this vein, Bale (1989) suggested that fans in spectator areas at sporting events develop a sense of achievement and togetherness as they united to cheer on selected athletes and teams. A similar finding in this study suggested that the parents' positive association with the competition space was based on their celebration of their daughters' successful performances. On the other hand, parents were likely to express negative feelings in relation to the competition space if their daughters experienced injury or delivered disappointing performances. This negative emotional connection to space is consistent with Tuan's (1979) concept of topophobia. The competition space was also a place of pride where parents celebrated their daughters' achievement suggesting that parental bonds with the athletes add another level to the emotional connection that Bale (1994) identified for spectators in general. The experience of parents was especially poignant as their emotional attachment to the athletes was stronger than typical connection that spectators form with non-related athletes. This parent to daughter relationship appeared to magnify the parents' emotional connection to space.

Parents were also connected to the competition space through authenticity, collective identity, and the multiple roles they had in this space. Firstly, parents saw the competition space as place that provided them with authentic experience. As Fairley and O'Brien (2017) found in the case International Cup of Australian Football League, study parents' felt that the 2017CCRG competition space was authentic. It was built on the idea that people traveling for sport often feel that sport makes these places real (Lamont, 2014). Secondly, the authentic tie between people and place (Altman & Low, 1992) provided a space for subcultural interaction (Evans & Norcliffe, 2016; Fairley & O'Brien, 2017; Jones & Green, 2006). It fostered a collective form of

place identity similar to that described by Hinch and Kono (2018) in their study of the place meaning that ultra-marathon runners formed for the host destination. In the case of the competition space at the 2017CCRG, parents were connected to space through the special atmosphere and meaningful experience that they were having as parents of a competing athlete. During sporting events, members of a sport subculture form a community and often celebrate a valued collective identity as athletes (Green & Chalip, 1998) or as fans (Evans & Norcliffe, 2016). This study revealed a similar collective bond to competitive spaces in the context of parental supporters of elite RG athletes. Beyond these connections to the competition space that support and build on those discussed in the literature, this study suggested that the multiple roles that parents played at the 2017CCRG intensified parental bonds with this sporting place. This was especially true for parent-coaches but also applied to parent-volunteers and other multiple role participants.

Competition space was also seen as a place of performance. While Lamont (2014) described performance in the context of the embodied experience of serious recreational athletes, this study suggests that the parents experienced a vicarious form of embodied experience. The RG competition space was not only a place for parents to view their daughters' prowess, artistry, and talent but was also a place for them to vicariously share the embodied experience of their daughters' performance.

The competition space was seen as being functional in that it conformed to the rules of the sport thereby facilitating the delivery of the competition. This finding aligned with the idea of place dependence as discussed in the sport tourism literature. In contrast to Hinch and Holt's (2017) conclusion that athletes are often "dependent" on competition places in outdoor settings, this study indicates that parents as well as the athletes were dependent on the competition space

in a sportscape (Bale, 2003) type of indoor setting that met the technical and functional aspect of the competition.

Venue.

The place meanings that parents articulated for the venue hosting the 2017CCRG were that it was functional for hosting national level sporting events and that it was a place of active leisure. Parents saw the supportive function as a modern, albeit generic multipurpose sport facility characterized by mass consumption and standardized design much like Bale's (2003) concept of a sportscape. Kyle and Chick (2007) argued that landscapes and settings are important factors in choosing to attend an event with Kulczycki and Halpenny (2015) making a similar point in the context of participant-based sporting events. This study confirms the importance of the functionality of physical settings at sporting events that fulfil technical requirements of the sport. Others, such as Higham (2005) and Gibson, Kaplanidou, and Kang (2012) note that sport depends on specific resources and infrastructure found in these types of sportscares. The venue for the 2017CCRG was consistent with the dependence on place that these types of facilities provide for the parents as well as the athletes themselves. Bale and Vertinsky (2004) compared sportscares with concepts of placelessness (Relph, 1976). Building on the findings of O'Reilly et al. (2015), this study supported the notion that the capacity and functionality of these types of venues are instrumental in the formation of the positive place meaning that parents had for the facility.

Host city.

The place meaning that parents expressed in terms of the host city during the 2017CCRG was that it as a place of hospitality, sport, and tourism. Parents saw the city as a place of comfort and welcome which is consistent with Tuan's (1974) place concept of topophilia – affection with

place. The competitive sport theme was based on the finding that the parents of elite rhythmic gymnasts saw Edmonton as a place of elite sport. This is consistent with the conclusions of Chen and Funk (2010) who found that the primary travel purpose of sport tourists is usually to attend the sport event. This is especially true of the parents of young athletes as they fulfill their parental roles along with their interest as spectators. Moreover, this study confirmed that place experience extended beyond the competition space and venues to the greater destination (Kaplanidou, Jordan, Funk, & Rindinger, 2012). Host city and sport event attributes converge to shape a destination image in association with the sporting event (Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2007). Parents formed general place meaning about the host city based on its physical characteristics and their feelings about the event. Their understanding of the host city as a place was dominated by the sport event rather than the other tourism resources found in the city. Not only was their perception of the city influenced by their experience at the event, it was fundamentally impacted by their perception of the performance of their daughter.

Notwithstanding their focus on their daughters' performances, parents also saw the city as a place for complementary tourist activities. When parents had free time, they explored new areas and visited other attractions in the city. By doing so, they formed richer understandings of place similar to the insights reported by Kaplanidou and Gibson (2012). As Halpenny, Kulczycki, and Moghimehfar (2016) found in the context of an annual small-scale running race, an attractive touristic setting led to positive types of destination attachment. Although Walker et al. (2010) found that place was less important than the activity and social modes for athletes in the 2006 World Masters Games held in Edmonton, the results of this study indicate that place mode remains important. This finding is similar to Moulrade and Weaver' (2017) results that

indicated that New Zealand mountain bikers ascribed positive meanings to the broader destinations in which their competitions occurred.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore the place meaning that the parents accompanying participating rhythmic gymnasts had for the competition space, venue, and host city at the 2017 Canadian Championships in Rhythmic Gymnastics (2017CCRG). Parents' place meanings were constructed through their subjective, contextual, and emotional experiences at the event (Shipway, et al., 2016). Findings showed that parents were particularly focused on competition setting scale, but distinct place-based themes also emerged at the venue and host city scales. In terms of the competition space, parents saw it as a place to enjoy performances of physically fit and talented gymnasts and to celebrate the athletic achievements of their daughters within the RG community. Place meaning at the scale of the host venue was described in terms of leisure and functionality. At a city scale, parents described the host community as a place of elite sport, hospitality, and tourism.

This study contributed to the literature on place and elite youth sport tourism by providing insight into the way parents understood three nested scales of space associated with this event. Results showed that each spatial scale was characterized by distinctive place-based themes, while at the same time place meanings were interrelated and interdependent. In particular, the place meanings that parents formed in relation to the host city and venue were influenced by their views of the competition space. For example, if their daughter performed well, parents not only had positive feelings about the competition space, they tended to have good memories about the venue and the host city as well.

Practical implications drawn from this study include those related to the planning and management of these types of events. Because family and friends are the main spectators at RG events, it is important to foster a positive place experience for the parents of competing athletes. While organizers cannot guarantee that an athlete will produce a successful performance thereby positively influencing their parents' understanding of event space, they can provide all of the technical requirements needed for the competition. They can also ensure that the parents are comfortable in the viewing areas and have access to their daughters within the constraints of effective competition management and coaching philosophies. As respondents revealed, RG competition space is specialized and nuanced. Further insights into a broader range of elite-based youth sports would be beneficial for organizers who want to provide the best possible place experience for parents at these types of competitions.

In addition to the need to consider the way parents understand place at other types of elite youth-based competitions, there is still a gap in the literature on the functionality of venues of sporting events. Other dimensions of place attachment such as place identity need to be explored at this scale in more depth (Hinch & Kono, 2018). This is especially true in the context of multipurpose facilities that tend to resemble the generic sportscares that Bale (2003) warned about. Further insights into relations between host city and venue place meanings would also be beneficial for event organizers. By identifying connections between these scales of place meanings, organizers will have opportunities to increase the more general tourism activity of parents at this type of event and to foster positive images of the host community. Moreover, learning more about how to foster positive place-based experiences may help to popularize sports such as rhythmic gymnastics, which have relatively low participation rates in Canada. Examining place meanings of different sports would also have practical benefits for organizers.

Investigating the place meaning of other spectator categories, such as fans who are not so closely related to the athletes, would be useful for event organizers as they try to generate more spectators for these types of events.

There were some limitations of the study that that should also be considered. First, it should be noted that while convenient in terms of access, the competition setting proved challenging as an interview site. Even though parents had the time and were interested in sharing their knowledge and place experience, the setting proved to be crowded and noisy. It is, therefore, recommended that interviews should be conducted in quieter locations (e.g., host hotel foyer or venue's cafeteria). Second, often two parents accompany their daughters for competitions. However, only two fathers were interviewed. A more balanced distribution of mothers and fathers would be beneficial. Comparisons of the ways that male and female parents of a gymnast understand space would provide further insight into the study question. Third, parent-coaches are common in RG. Given that they experience travel to these competitions differently than other parents, they might form different types of place meanings. Insights into the place meaning of different types of parents such as parent-coaches and parents in single versus two-parent families would be valuable for event organizers.

Chapter Four: The Co-creation of Place Meanings at a Small-scale Elite Youth-based Sport Event

Introduction

Place is space that is infused with meaning (Lewicka, 2011), and sport events are one of the sites where place meaning is produced and consumed (Higham, 2005). The experiences that participants have at these events influence the way they construct their understandings of the host destination (Getz, 2012). Traditionally, event organizers were seen as the “producers” of place-based experiences while the participants were the “consumers” (Woratschek, Horbel, & Popp, 2014). More recently, Morgan (2007) has argued that “experience space” at these events is co-created through the combination of the actions of event organizers in conjunction with visitors’ motivations for and interpretations of their experience. This paper examines the process of the co-creation of place at a small-scale elite youth-based sport event.

The managers and staff of the sport organizations responsible for the competition and the tourism marketers who promote the host community are typically seen as the producers of these events. This is particularly the case at elite competitions, as planned and overseen by national sports organizations that operate under specific technical regulations (Higham & Hinch, 2009). Designated personnel within these institutions are often responsible for planning and delivering these events (Kaplanidou, Kervin, & Karadakis, 2013) inclusive of promotion (Weed & Bull, 2009). As producers, one of their roles is to manage sport tourists’ experiences and provide the best possible products and services at a destination (Higham, 2005). They also serve as place experience marketers as they construct, promote and sell tourist experiences and destination images (Morgan, 2006). Event organizers aim to offer unique experiences and create a favourable environment for the delivery of successful events. Pine and Gilmore (1999) see this “business stage” as part of an experience economy in which producers offer memorable service.

Morgan (2007) argued a shift is needed from the traditional approach of viewing event organizers as the producers of place meanings and sport tourists as the consumers. The alternative perspective is one of value co-creation (Woratschek et al., 2014) where value is seen to be created through a collaborative process between what were traditionally considered to be the independent actions of producers and consumers (e.g. organizers and sport tourists) (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). From the perspective of value co-creation, an experience environment is staged in the form of a space that allows organizers to facilitate a variety of co-creation experiences with consumers (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). This experience space appears to exist at sport events although the co-creation dimension of this space merits more in-depth investigation (e.g. Morgan, 2007).

Traditional perspectives on event planning, managing, and marketing are not sufficient to understand the way place meanings are created at sport events. There is, therefore, a need to explore “the concept of co-creation analyzing the complementary approaches in organization and destination, on one side, and the tourist, on the other” (Campos, Mendes, Oom do Valle, & Scott, 2018, p. 394). Kennelly, Lamont, Hillman, and Moyle (2018) also suggest exploring participant experiences at sporting events by: “[c]ombining the perspectives of athletes, their non-participating entourage [including family] and event organisers in one study...” (p.19). Binkhorst and Den Dekker (2009) support the study of co-creation as a key item on the research agenda for the design of meaningful tourism experience environments. The purpose of this study is, therefore, to develop an understanding of how place meanings are co-created by event organizers and sport tourists at small-scale elite youth-based sport events using the 2017 Canadian Championships in Rhythmic Gymnastics (2017CCRG) as a case study.

The paper proceeds with a more detailed review of the literature using Morgan’s (2007)

model of the co-creation of experience space as an organizational framework. Next, the methodological base of the study is described followed by findings and a discussion of their relevance in terms of the literature. Finally, practical implications, limitations and future research directions conclude the paper.

Literature Review

Morgan's (2007) model of "experience space" serves as the underlying organizational framework for this review (Figure 4.1). Under this model, experience spaces (e.g. competition space, venue, host city) are co-created where sporting events are held. These spaces become infused with place meaning "when they engage customers [including sport tourists] in a memorable way" (Pine & Gilmore, 1999, p. 4).

Under Morgan's model, the roles of sport event organizers include experience management and experience marketing. In fulfilling these roles, organizers have traditionally been thought of as the "producers" of the experience space. In contrast, sport tourists have been seen as the "consumers" of these spaces. For these consumers, meaningful place experiences (Higham & Hinch, 2006) are influenced by their social identities, hedonic experience, and personal interpretations of their engagement. Beyond these traditional views of event organizers as experience space producers and sports tourists as experience space consumers, Morgan's model includes elements that highlight interactions between and within these groups thereby capturing the co-creative nature of place experience. For example, the model suggests that these spaces can become meaningful sites of friendship and social engagement, thereby contributing to the development of a sense of place (Crouch, 2010). The unique and memorable experiences

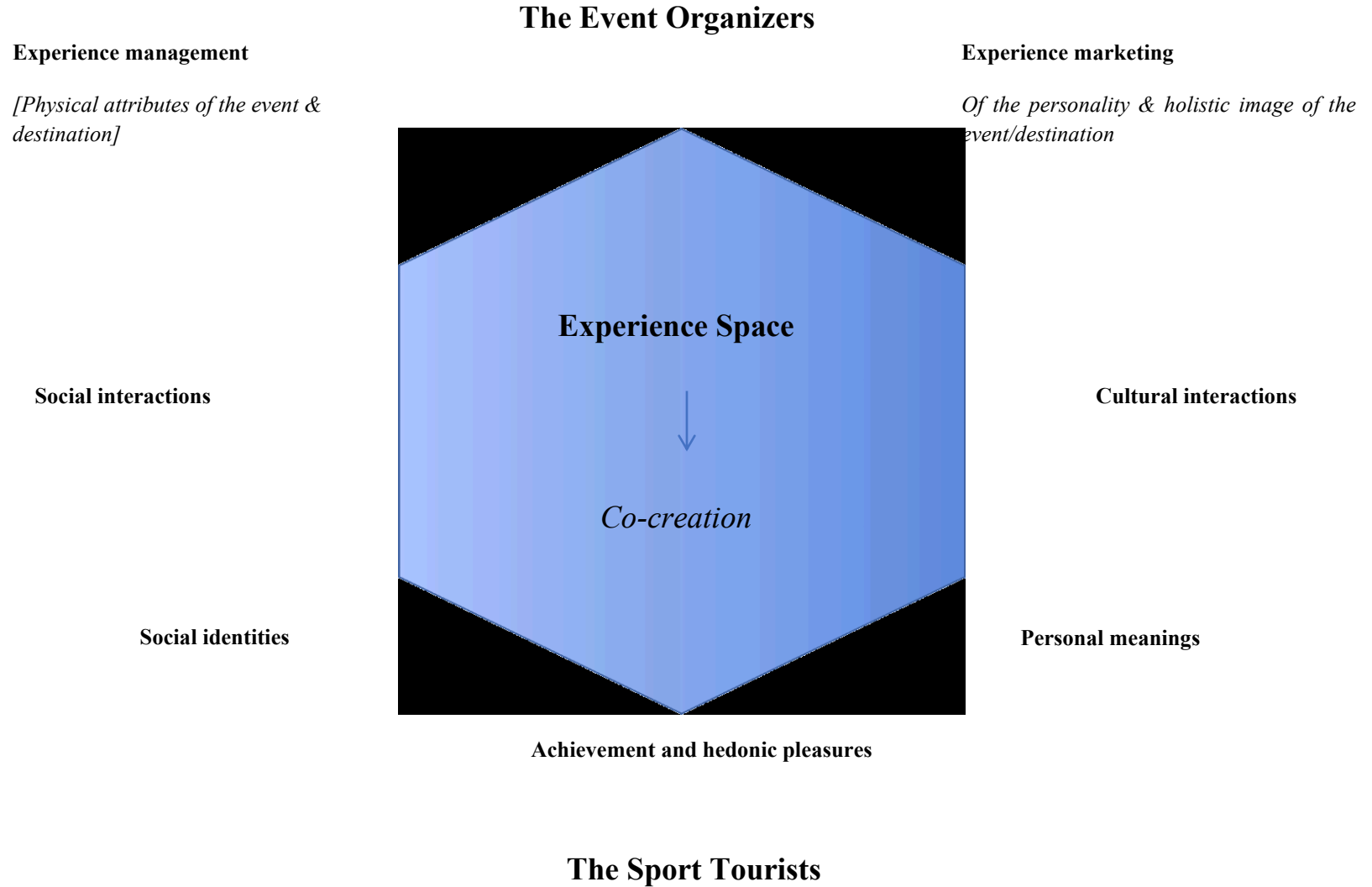


Figure 4.1 Experience of space: interaction between organizers and sport tourists. (Based on Kapferer (1997) and Morgan (2006))

co-created by organizers and visitors through cultural and social interactions serves to shape the place meanings in the host destination. The following review is, therefore, organized around the three major elements of the model: 1) the event organizers; 2) the sport tourists; and, 3) the interactions between these groups.

Event organizers.

Event organizers shape space experience in two main ways. First, from a managerial perspective, they control the event operations. Second, they actively engage in experience marketing. In doing so, they attempt to influence the consumers' holistic impression of a destination before, during and after the event. Pine and Gilmore (1999) describe this metaphorically as setting the "stage" while Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) refer to this as co-creating the space/environment for experiences.

Experience management.

Experience management involves the manipulation of the physical and operational attributes of the event and destination (Morgan, 2007). In the case of national championships like the 2017 Canadian Championships in Rhythmic Gymnastics (2017CCRG), this is done by managers who typically include a local organizing committee (LOC) and the national sport federation. These sport management organizations usually focus on ensuring that the technical requirements and regulations guiding the competition are met (Higham & Hinch, 2009). As sports tend to be characterized by highly prescribed spatial rules and standards (Higham & Hinch, 2018), sport events must draw on the hosting community's infrastructure to meet these (e.g., appropriate facilities) requirements. They also require human and cultural capital (Gibson, Kaplanidou, & Kang, 2012). Thus, experience management from the sport organizers' perspective tends to focus on the technical set up and physical attributes of the competition.

Experience managers obtain, distribute and manipulate the specific resources required for the competition (Morgan, 2007).

Beyond the technical requirements of the sport, organizers need to consider safety, the cognitive and educational nature of the visit, and enjoyment during free time away from the competition (Buning & Gibson, 2016). Organizers often try to create and design unique settings and tourist experiences that contrast the participants' daily life (Shipway, King, Sunny Lee, & Brown, 2016). They actively consider participant needs in terms of: access, accommodation, venue, tourist experiences and most importantly, a successful contest or competition (Shonk & Chelladurai, 2008). By using existing physical settings, small-scale sport events can serve as tourist attractions for domestic and sometimes even international sport tourists (Higham, 1999).

In organizing elite sport events for young athletes, managers have to consider a broad range of potential visitors. Parents of the athletes are one of the most important groups as they are often the main travel companions of young competitors (Buning & Coble, 2018; Scott & Turco, 2007). Buning and Gibson (2016) have argued that the needs of these parents should be actively considered along with those of the athletes, coaches, and officials. To this point, the literature on experience management at these types of events has been narrowly focused with the limited insight being provided into the ways that organizers influence place experience or meaning (Buning & Gibson, 2016; Gibson et al., 2012). It is, therefore, important to develop a more in-depth understanding of experience management as it relates to "place meaning" across a broader range of stakeholders including participating young elite athletes and their accompanying parents.

Experience Marketing.

Small-scale youth sporting events are important from a tourism industry prospective because at an aggregated level, the economic impact of the visitors to these events is substantial (Scott & Turco, 2007). Experience marketers (e.g., tourism destination marketers) therefore strive to foster strong positive images of the competition site, venue and host city (Morgan, 2006). In Morgan's (2007) model, experience marketers create positive holistic impressions of the destination and use marketing techniques to influence the way that visitors see the space (stage) where the event occurs.

Experience marketers promote the consumption of local services, products, and facilities (Fotiadis, Vassiliadis, & Yeh, 2016). Those cities that wish to host sporting events such as national championships often compete for this right through competitive bid processes with the attractiveness of the destination being a key consideration. Potential host communities, therefore, try to foster a positive destination image in their bid and to deliver high-quality visitor experiences during the event (Yamaguchi, Akioshi, Yamaguchi, & Nogawa, 2015). Despite their relatively small-scale, these types of sport attractions contribute to a host city's reputation as an attractive tourist destination (Kurtzman & Zauhar, 2003). Hosting small-scale sport events can therefore be used as a strategy to position the host city as an attractive destination (Higham, 1999). Small-scale sport events are, however, specific to space and time as well as being characterized by unique interactions between the settings, people, and management systems (Getz, 2008). Cities that position themselves as sport event destinations make strategic use of these elements to build meaningful places and events which visitors and residents enjoy (Lentini & Decortis, 2010).

Sport tourists form their understanding of place based on their sport event experiences (Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2010). This is consistent with Weed and Bull's (2004) conceptualization of sport tourism as a unique interaction of people, places, and activities. One of the reasons that there is a direct relationship between sporting events and the promotion of a host destination (Chalip, 2005) is because sport events can offer authentic insights into a place shaped by the passion and emotion of the event (Gammon, 2011). For popular sports and mega-events, traditional and social media both play a significant role in the production of place meaning and destination image (Hinch & Higham, 2011). But for place experience marketers of smaller scale events, the level of community support and involvement is likely to be more important than mass media coverage (Jago, Chalip, Brown, Mules, & Shameem, 2003). Participation in such events can provide visitors with authentic experiences of place (Hinch & de la Barre, 2005; Lamont, 2014; Shipway et al., 2016) based on their engagement in the local sport culture (Higham, 2005). For those tourists who are searching for authenticity – the real nature of a place – watching or participating in sports is one of the ways that this connection can be made (Higham & Hinch, 2018). Therefore, experience marketers can foster positive place meanings for visitors by capitalizing on the authenticity and sport culture at host destinations. Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) tend to play a bigger role in experience marketing than sport managers. While they often focus on larger-scale events, they recognize that the aggregated impact of small-scale events is substantial and can also influence the image of the destination. The roles and interests of sport managers and experience marketers are often distinct but both groups shape the experience (and place meaning) of participants at events. There is, therefore, a need to develop a better understanding of how their roles as place makers intersect, especially at small-scale elite youth-based sport events.

Sport tourists.

According to Morgan (2007), social identity, achievement and hedonic pleasure, and personal meanings shape sport tourists' space experiences at events. They form the basis for the way that sport tourists process the event's organizational, environmental, physical, social, and emotional aspects (Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2010). However, sport tourists are not passive consumers. They experience events and develop place meaning through their own lens.

Social identities.

During sport events, members of the sport subculture form a focused spatial community and celebrate a valued social identity that provides a sense of belonging and strengthens their social connections (Green & Chalip, 1998). For example, Shipway and colleagues (2016) found that an international professional cycling event called the Tour Down Under in South Australia provided tourists space and time to interact with others who were also members of the cycling community. The social dimension of events and the affective bond among the various actors (including organizers) can contribute to a positive destination image (Mikalauskas, Strunz, & Afifi, 2014). Managers and planners try to foster these and plan spaces to facilitate positive social interactions during such events (Moularde & Weaver, 2016). There has, however, been little attention paid to the way that sport groups/subcultures impact place meaning at small-scale elite youth-based events.

Achievement and hedonic pleasures.

Parent, Kristiansen, and MacIntosh (2014) have argued that positive place experiences at venues and in surrounding environments are important to elite young athletes. A constructive connection to the environment helps to determine whether these young athletes have an experience that contributes to a positive affective attachment to the place (Ram, Bjork, &

Weidenfeld, 2016). Such attachments can create a sense of physically being and feeling “in place” or “at home” (Yuksel, Yuksel, & Bilim, 2009). At sporting events, an affective dimension of experience is manifested in positive feelings and emotions (Getz, 2012). In such instances, sport tourism has strong emotional and hedonic components that are consistent with what Pine and Gilmore (1999) described as the desired “experience economy” and an experiential view of consumption (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). For example, Morgan (2007) noted the positive emotions that sport tourists at the 2005 British and Irish Lions rugby tour of New Zealand experienced as a result of their sense of achievement (e.g., independent travel) and hedonic pleasure (e.g., novelty or escape). For participating athletes, personal achievements were seen as the most important factor (Walker, Hinch, & Higham, 2010), while for sport spectators, emotional excitement has been identified as a particularly vital aspect of the experience (Getz, 2012). However, it is also important to study the emotional aspects of place meanings at elite youth-based sport events. Given the limited number of participants and spectators and given differences in the organization processes of such events, participating sport tourists may have different types of emotional experiences that impact the meaning that these places have for them.

Personal meanings.

Getz (2012) argued that people will not attend events “if they have little or no meanings of importance” (p. 197). Support for this claim is reflected in research efforts focused on understanding sport tourists’ destination experiences that create different place meanings (Hinch & Holt, 2016; Gibson, Kaplanidou, & Kang, 2012; Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2007, 2015; Lamont, 2014; Lamont, Kennelly, & Moyle, 2015; Shipway et al., 2016). For example, Lamont (2014), in a study of a commercial tour operated in conjunction with the Tour de France cycling race, found that encountering recognized sport places at sport tourism events resulted in a sense of authentic

experience in the destination. Similarly, Hinch and Holt (2016) concluded that the place meaning of sport tourists at an ultra-marathon event was shaped by their sense of a positive community dynamic, support of the event, and natural settings.

Similar to this view, Kaplanidou and Vogt (2010) found that active sport tourists formed meanings based on the organizational, environmental, physical, social, and emotional aspects of their event experiences. On the basis of these findings, they recommended the further examination of both spectators' and athletes' perception of event and destination image. The personal meanings that sport tourist form at competitions were seen as important for strategic planning given the co-creative nature of such events.

Points of interaction and co-creation.

Morgan's (2007) model indicates that cultural and social interactions among and between participants and organizers of the event co-create experience space. This view is consistent with that of Weed and Bull (2004) who argued that sport tourists shape place experience through social interactions thereby contributing to a sense of belonging to a sport community. The cultural interaction dimension of the framework suggests that meanings are created through the interaction between the visitors' own cultural background and their understanding of the cultural significance of the event and of their hosts. Thus, social and cultural interactions are components of the model that connect organizers and sport tourists.

Sport events represent opportunities for sport tourists (e.g., athletes and supporters) to experience a host community and in doing so these visitors can gain deeper insight into cultural nuances and traditions of a host community (Higham & Hinch, 2009). Consequently, these sporting events serve as a medium for and a message about local culture and the subculture of the sport thereby infusing meaning into the spaces associated with the event (Higham & Hinch,

2018). Young competitors and their parents form an important subcultural dimension of these events (Green, 2001). Green and Jones (2005) argued that sport tourism events can provide a 'place' to interact with others who share a particular sporting ethos or subculture. At small-scale elite youth-based events, it is logical for organizers and destination managers to try to foster positive social and cultural interactions for visiting parents because they are the main spectators and are likely to be key influencers of their childrens' experience. Creating a positive social environment for parents would increase the likelihood that they would attend similar events in the future (Kaplanidou & Gibson, 2012). In this social environment, there is a need to explore "... 'sports event space' and the embodied way in which space and place is encountered as a part of the experience of sport events" (King, 2012, p. 192). However, points of social and cultural interactions at elite youth events have not been explored in-depth and little is known about the nature of these interactions which Morgan's (2007) framework suggests may be the nexus of the co-creation of place meaning at events. The purpose of this study is, therefore, to develop an understanding of how place meanings are co-created by event organizers and sport tourists at small-scale elite youth-based sport events using the 2017 Canadian Championships in Rhythmic Gymnastics (2017CCRG) as a case study.

Methodology

This study followed a qualitative research approach in the form of an interview-based case study (Markula & Silk, 2011). The case study method employed (Yin, 2014; Jennings, 2004) was consistent with an interpretive/constructivist paradigm as it facilitated insight into the "meanings imputed to landscape and its social and cultural content" (Bale, 1994, p. 10). More specifically, an intrinsic case study methodology (Stake, 2005) was employed to develop an

understanding of the unique characteristics (particularity and ordinariness) of the way that organizers and sport tourists co-created place meaning at this event.

The Canadian Championship in Rhythmic Gymnastics is an annual competition of the best rhythmic gymnasts from each province and territory in Canada (Gymnastics Canada, 2018). While the number of competing athletes varies from year to year, typically there are around 100-150 competitors across the novice, junior and senior categories. Competing athletes must be 10 years or older with the vast majority being under 18. Top gymnasts are invited based on their Canadian rankings as determined through results of the Elite Canada competition (top 15 athletes); Western and Eastern regional championships (top 10 athletes); and a minimum of two gymnasts from each province. The purpose of the Canadian RG championship is to identify national individual and group champions and to form a national RG team.

Several event organizers were involved in the 2017CCRG. Rhythmic Gymnastics Alberta (RGA) served as a local organizing committee (LOC) and the host provincial RG organization. Gymnastics Canada (GCG) was the sponsoring national federation for the event. These two organizations were responsible for planning and delivering the competition. From a tourism perspective, Edmonton Events, a strategic partnership between the City of Edmonton and Edmonton Tourism, helped to prepare the bid and to promote the event.

The 2017CCRG was held in Edmonton, a city with a strong record of hosting high-quality sporting events ranging from smaller-scale amateur competitions to large-scale elite world-class events. Examples of events in the latter category include: the Commonwealth Games (1978), Universiade Games (1983), and FIFA Women's Soccer World Cup (2015). The city values these sporting events as economic impact generators and as vehicles for creating energy and vibrancy in the community (City of Edmonton, 2018).

Methods.

One of the primary ways that qualitative researchers study physical culture is “to solicit individual’s feelings, experience or knowledge(s) through interviewing” (Markula & Silk, 2011, p. 82). In this study, a combination of semi-structured, in-depth face-to-face and e-mail interviews were employed to explore the interviewees’ understanding of place meaning. This approach was considered to be the best way to gain an understanding of the co-creation of place meanings given the accessibility of organizers and parents during the event (face-to-face interviews) and the preference of athletes to engage in the study after they had finished the competition (e-mail interviews).

Interview guides were developed following Patton’s (2002) recommendations (Appendices H, I, J, K). They were designed to be flexible to allow for adjustment based on each interviewee’s unique situation and emerging research findings (Markula & Silk, 2011). The wording of interview questions was kept simple, and the participants were encouraged to address the questions based on their personal experiences, knowledge and opinions. The interviews with event organizers and visiting parents were audio-recorded and transcribed. Two athletes were interviewed on-site during the event with one athlete being interviewed via Skype after the event and the balance being interviewed by e-mail after they had returned home. The e-mail interviews with athletes followed the same structure as the interview guides used for their parents.

Photo-elicitation was integrated into face-to-face and e-mail interviews as a way to enhance conventional verbal and written questions (Anderson, 2012; Cederholm, 2004; Harper, 2002). Photos of the competition space, the venue, and downtown Edmonton were taken by the author before the event and used as visual prompts during the interview (Appendices B, C, D). These visual prompts served to focus the interviewees on the appropriate space and to provide

information on a social world that otherwise might have been ignored or taken for granted (Clark-Ibáñez, 2013). Kyle and Chick (2007) recommended the use of photo-elicitation in place-focused research as it provides an additional sensory prompt directly related to place. They argued that photographs help interviewees to better connect to and express their feelings about places. Hinch and Holt (2017) also contend that the addition of photo-elicitation component has “considerable potential as an alternative to the standard interview approach” (p.1095).

Selection of participants.

Criterion-based purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002) was used to identify potential interviewees from the event organizer group. The selection criteria for members of this group were:

1. Representation from each major group responsible for the planning and/or delivery of the 2017CCRG (Local Organizing Committee [LOC], Gymnastics Canada [GCG], and the City of Edmonton/Events Edmonton).
2. That the representatives of these groups should possess direct insight into the bid, preparation and/or the delivery of the event.

A total of five interviews with event organizers were completed based on these criteria and the availability of the potential interviewees. Fifteen interviews with visiting parents of athletes at the event were also completed along with 12 interviewees with visiting gymnasts.

Data analysis.

Categorical aggregation (Stake, 1995) was used to analyze the interview data. Markula and Silk (2011, p. 159) described this form of analysis as the “collection of instances from the empirical material through which issue-relevant meanings emerge”. This is a form of inductive, and in this case, thematic analysis of the empirical data, through which key themes were

identified based on pattern recognition. A process of identifying patterns in the data was employed without trying to fit them into a pre-existing theoretical framework (Patton, 2015; Shipway et.al., 2016). More specifically, the process of qualitative data analysis outlined by Maxwell (2013) was followed. First, the sole interviewer and transcriber (i.e., the author) began to consider patterns during the actual interview and subsequent transcription processes. Second, each transcript was read and re-read several times. During this process, thematic patterns relevant to the research purpose were consciously considered (Maxwell, 2013). As a third step, a table was constructed highlighting representative quotes based on thematic similarity and difference (Maxwell, 2013). The table included quotations from organizers and sport tourists that had relevance to the co-creation of place meaning. As such, it served to visually draw attention to emerging patterns. Fourth, patterns that emerged within the groupings were colour coded in the table (i.e., subthemes). Then related codes/subthemes were grouped into major themes that reflected the total data set thereby highlighting the central themes of the co-creation of place meanings (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004; Campos et.al., 2018). Fifth, as the manuscript was developed, the essence of each theme was summarized and illustrated with selected quotes. All themes, including ones that were infrequently mentioned, were subject to this interpretive process because it was recognized that they might provide valuable insights into the way participants developed place meaning (Patton, 2015).

Parallel trustworthiness criteria were used to validate the case study findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). These criteria included: credibility, dependability, and confirmability. In terms of the credibility criterion, Markula and Silk (2011) argued that a researcher's past involvement and familiarity with a sport sub-culture contribute credibility to the analysis. This criterion was met in this study to the extent that the author had been involved in rhythmic gymnastics for eight

years as a parent of an elite rhythmic gymnast and as a volunteer. Dependability was enhanced by a research design that provided consistency in the method and a logical process of analysis (Shenton, 2004). Finally, the inductive process of analysis helped to reduce researcher bias thereby contributing to the confirmability criterion of the case study.

Findings

Based on a categorical aggregation approach to data analysis, five place-based themes emerged: function, tourist activities, community, performance, and emotion.

Function.

The competition site and venue were seen as places of function. Interviewees noted a good alignment between the facility and the sport's technical requirements as well as the fulfilment of visitor needs both on the competition site and in the broader host community. Organizer 1 felt that the competition space was well laid out to fulfill the technical requirements of the RG competition:

If I am looking for different events, any RG event, minimum 40 ft. ceiling ...[but] ideally with ten metres [height] so that there is a sufficient space for throwing apparatus. Ideally there is an indirect light ... so there is no time during the competition ... [when there] will there be glare that will interfere... [The] music system has to be at the certain number of decibels. Electricity has to be functioning, so that we can provide food. So, it's not just about what spectators and volunteers see. It's food preparation, food safety, and quiet areas in case of disagreement. (Organizer 1)

These technical requirements are outlined in the Hosting Manual of Gymnastics Canada (GCG). In addition to the layout of the competition area, the manual describes: 1) the setup and dismantling of the required equipment; 2) security, medical, and doping control obligations; and,

3) additional supports such as signage (Gymnastics Canada, 2016). The National Team director and RG program coordinator of the GCG helped the local organizing committee (LOC) to successfully address these technical components (Organizer 3). Events Edmonton submitted a bid to the GCG that outlined how this extensive list of technical requirements for the competition would be met (Organizer 3), however, the more specific technical requirements associated with the competition space were arranged by RGA and overseen by GCG.

Organizers were particularly satisfied with the spaciousness of the venue (Organizer 3) and the music quality while they felt that the spectator seating met the standard for Canadian Championships. However, they noted challenges in term of the layout of the facility such as the long distance from the competition space to the bathrooms and the judges' meeting rooms, limited changing facilities for athletes near the competition space, and some problems with electricity (Organizers 1, 2, 3). Overall, the organizers assessed the facility as "technically sound" for the competition (Organizer 3).

Athletes also acknowledged the functionality of the competition space and the venue. They focused on the competition space's: high ceilings (Athletes 1, 3, 4, 7, 8,1 2); appropriate lighting (Athletes1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 12); and adequate safety features (Athletes 3). Athletes felt comfortable competing in what they saw as a familiar environment (Athlete 3) given that the competition set-up was similar to that found in other venues that host this type of championship (Athlete 1). Parents, unlike competing athletes, paid more attention to the venue features beyond the competition site. For example, they acknowledged accessibility (Parent 12) and the supportive function of the venue as a whole. More generally, parents expressed satisfaction with the venue and its location in a park setting close to the downtown (Parent 15). However, some parents did not like the venue's restaurant:

We usually come [to] these venues expect[ing] just to train or just to do a performance, then we leave. Really these types of venues are not set up for good food. You know, I think the last time ... we came was four year ago and the café was quite good actually. But I went [this year] and it is very different now. (Parent 14)

Event organizers and sport tourists saw the competition area and venue as functional space that met the technical requirements of RG. Given this focus, the organizers played a substantial role in the co-creation of the competition space and venue as places of function. They ensured that the technical requirements of the competition and venue spaces were met. Sport tourists' interpretations and perception of organizers' efforts contributed to the co-creation of this form of place meaning. The elite nature of the event demanded that technical requirements of the competition met the standards of the national sport federation. Athletes and their parents attending the 2017CCRG were familiar with these requirements of RG competition sites because they had trained and qualified for the championships in similar types of spaces.

Tourist activities.

The host city of the 2017CCRG was seen as a place of non-sport and well as sport-focused tourism. For purpose of this study, non-sport focused tourism is considered "a social, cultural and economic phenomenon related to the movement of people to places outside their usual place of residence, pleasure being the usual motivation" (United Nations, 2010, p. 1). In addition to the attraction of the elite competition, the event was seen as an opportunity to tour the host city and pursue a range of tourist activities. Event organizers promoted the host city as a place worth visiting. Place marketing for the event was led by Edmonton Events in conjunction with Tourism Edmonton. These organizations promoted a positive destination image in keeping with their mandate "to drive outside visitation into the city" (Organizer 4). Their promotions

included highlighting the championship in the city's calendar of tourist events and announcements on social media platforms. An experience marketing team also helped the LOC to secure the venue and hotels, as well as supporting the event financially (Organizer 2). Even though RG was not recognized internally as a core sport for targeted funding, Events Edmonton provided support because previous RG events had attracted visitors to the city (Organizer 4). More specifically, the role of Events Edmonton was summarized as being focused on the planning phase for the event:

...we would've put a package together. We actually work with RGA and basically try and bid on the events. So, we take on that role as coordinating all of those efforts. Then the hotel coordination, ...helping with the venue, funding, ...[and the] "destination sell"... Once the event has been confirmed, ... we don't organize, but we do leverage the marketing support... If the event wants to be promoted to drive spectators, ...we can put it on our Explore Edmonton website ...[and] social media channel. (Organizer 4)

The GCG built on Events Edmonton's promotional efforts for the event. As an example, their media and communication team ran a live feed and broadcasted interviews with officials and athletes during the event (Organizer 2). They tried to create an atmosphere that celebrated the host city's sport culture following Events Edmonton's lead in positioning the destination as a "...friendly, authentic city that has ... ruggedness ... we don't take ourselves too seriously, but we're very much ... a sport city ... [Edmonton's] really got a charm and character" (Organizers 4).

In the case of the 2017CCRG, destination marketers focused on the event image over the destination image, because they felt that selling the city to this market as a site for a particular sport experience would be more effective than promoting the destination more generally.

Moreover, Edmonton was seen to have a strong sporting foundation on which to build with its rich history of professional sport teams (e.g., NHL's Edmonton Oilers), modern venues, and major sport events (Organizer 4). In shaping a destination image for the 2017CCRG, the LOC highlighted the celebration of Canada's 150th anniversary and the host city's links to that history. One of the organizers stated that "I felt it was really important to mention at the opening ceremonies and the photo booth, you know, just ... [the] white and red thing [as a] reminder that it was Canada's 150th". The LOC also highlighted Fort Edmonton Park as a historic meeting place of the indigenous people and fur traders (Organizer 1). They incorporated the host city's historic narrative and chose a venue located in the river valley, which was a central part of that story. In addition, they highlighted the fact that the event venue was centrally located with easy access to downtown hotels and parks for spectators and athletes to enjoy (Organizers 1 & 2). The LOC and Events Edmonton considered the competition to be a tourist attraction because it provided visitors with an incentive to discover the host city (Organizer 2).

Sport tourists played a substantial role in the co-creation of Edmonton as place of traditional tourism. Even though the competition was the central focus for both athletes and parents, they found time before, during and after the event to visit the host city's other tourist attractions. More generally, they indicated that they liked to travel to competitions because they enjoy exploring new cities and cultures (Parents 1, 5, 7, 12 and 15; Athletes 1, 2, 4, 7, 8, 9, and 10), trying local food (Parents 7 & 12), and visiting local attractions (Parents 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 12, 14, and 15; Athletes 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5). For example, one parent stated: "I've never been to Edmonton. First time for me ... [as]... I am not necessarily a big traveller. So, it's nice ... [to] use this experience to see ... other places" (Parent 9). Tourist attractions were seen as an integral part of the 2017CCRG. Beyond being the host of this elite competition, parents saw Edmonton

as a leisure destination. One parent expressed excitement that the visit to the host city provided him with a break from his regular work routine (Participant 4).

The perception of the host city as a touristic place was co-created by organizers and sport tourists. This was possible given the host city's tourist resources including its heritage and the desire of visiting parents and athletes to take advantage of the tourism opportunities that the host city offered. Event organizers positioned the host city as place to explore while sport tourists reported that it was a place worth visiting.

Community.

Interviewees saw the competition venue and host city as a place of community. This sense of community emerged through the social and cultural interactions co-created by event organizers, participating athletes and their accompanying parents. Event organizers actively tried to foster a sense of community that was being sought by athletes and their parents.

Even though there was little time in the Canadian Championships program for social activities (Organizer 1), the event organizers "tried to create an atmosphere of getting people to celebrate the sport" (Organizer 4). They created conditions for sport tourists' cultural and social interactions both at the competition venue and in other parts of the host city (Organizer 1). The LOC recognized that they needed to rely on and appeal to the RG community to make the experience valuable for athletes, volunteers, and spectators. This was also true for the coaches and the judges with one organizer observing that: "Many of them [coaches and judges] are good friends, who found this opportunity to come together and celebrate the good work that they've done to get their athletes to this position" (Organizer 1). Fostering a sense of community within the sport is a critical, if unofficial, goal of Gymnastics Canada:

Inter-community, whenever it gets together, becomes more vibrant because of the interactions from the different people, the different provinces, the different clubs. The coaches learn from each other; the judges tend to learn from each other. ... They [parents] went to lunch, they went outside, [they went out to] supper, spent some time for team building. That's the most important part - ... [a] sense of ... community. (Organizer 1)

Without this celebration of the RG community, the event would be seen as a failure. The organizers, therefore, made efforts to make the event enjoyable and memorable for athletes and volunteers through social and cultural interactions.

The organizers, athletes and their parents sought not just a virtual community during the championship, but one rooted in place – the competition space, the venue, and the host city. For example, Organizer 2 explained that there were special places at the event, where parents could interact:

We had an area that was a bit like a market area where there were vendors ... because we used the entire field house. The end of the field house was fairly open, so it turned out to be a gathering space for spectators and parents and kids to just sort of stand and mingle with each other. And then, of course, the spectator seating and ... the cafe area, [where] people did tend to gab and talk...

While waiting for their daughters' and her teammates' performances, the spectator space was a place for parents to connect and communicate because it "is as important as anything else in a sport. You know you need to feel like you have a community" (Organizer 2). Another dedicated social space in the venue was the "Kinettes room" that had a beautiful view of a River Valley. It served as a place for presentations with seating for approximately 150 people. Judges and

officials used this lounge several times for meetings (Organizer 5). The competition space was thematically decorated for the celebration of Canada's 150th anniversary thereby highlighting the national dimension of the community. This space was enhanced by a photo booth where athletes could take pictures and socialize thereby fostering positive memories of 2017CCRG (Organizers 1, 2, 3). In addition to the venue, the LOC noted there was an opportunity for parents to socialize at the event hotel (Organizer 1). These accommodations were conveniently located close to the competition venue, restaurants, and downtown vibrancy.

Athletes and parents identified themselves as members of RG community during the event. Parents noted that travelling with their daughters to these types of competition was an important part of their social life (Parents 9 & 13). They indicated that they devoted much of their free time to watching and cheering their daughters and their teammates (Parent 10) and volunteering at events. This demonstrated that a sense of community was important to them (Parent 4).

Parents highlighted the value of knowing other parents and athletes in the community because they supported each other and the sport:

I introduced myself the other day and [I had to] stand a moment and ...[think] you are not just a mom if you are a rhythmic gymnastics mom, because you do a lot of driving. So, we carpool a lot and we help each other a lot. So, the RG community is important, and we do support each other ... we are carpooling, we are helping take care of others ... kids who came here without their parents. (Parent 8)

Parents were delighted to be part of the RG community: "I do enjoy coming here, [and] interacting a lot with other moms from different clubs, from different provinces ... we all have that communality and we all feel the pain of athletes, or each other" (Parent 1). Like their

parents, athletes enjoyed being part of the RG community (Athletes 2 & 7). They considered their RG group to be like family (Athlete 2). Some athletes were thrilled to meet their Canadian national teammates from other provinces (Athletes 3 & 6). One athlete mentioned that the best memory of the event for her was “seeing my gymnastics friends from all around Canada.”

The response to organizers’ efforts to offer conditions for social and cultural interactions was positively perceived by athletes and their parents. Mutual understandings and appreciation of the cultural and social interactions by both organizers and sport tourists (parents and athletes) served to co-create a place of community where the sport’s subculture and identity were celebrated.

Performance.

Athletes, parents and organizers considered the competition space to be a place of athletic and artistic performance. The organizers indicated that they meant to foster special experiences for participants at the event. They tried to position it as a spectacle of performance for families and supporters (Organizer 3). Parents also, viewed the competition space as a place of athletic performance (Parents 4, 6, 8, 9) where athletes with “technical skills and physical prowess” (Parent 6) executed their routines (Athletes 5 & 11). Parent 14 described the performance of a rhythmic gymnast in terms of the sport’s technical requirements:

... they have elements of many other athletes, you know, they have [the] svelteness ... [and the] physique of [a] dancer with a lot of mobility and flexibility. But it’s a lot of ... tumbling, the artistic aspect of gymnastics, where the body is constantly moving on a floor... [is] very similar to artistic gymnastics. They have the same sort of creativity and choreography that you might see... with Cirque de Soleil. ...[The] rhythmic gymnast’s body is exactly how you would imagine a beautiful dancer, who normally has that kind of a length and tonus, but ...[a gymnast] is very familiar working with apparatus.

This quote articulates how the technical aspects of the sport combine with other elements to create unique performances on the carpet. Spectators at RG events see not only an athletic

competition, but also an artistic performance, similar, for example to figure skating. The judges evaluate gymnasts based both on their execution of specific physical elements and also the artistic dimension of their routines.

Athletes also viewed the competition place as a stage on which to perform. They saw themselves as strong and fit girls (Athletes 5 & 11), who execute extremely difficult elements in beautiful outfits (Athletes 2, 5, 10). They also acknowledged that an appropriate functional set up (Athletes 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 12) was conducive to good performances. For example, Athlete 2 said: “when I compete it shows what I was training for and [that I] can perform ...[well when] competing.” Gymnasts are trying to produce an artistic spectacle on the carpet (Athletes 1, 7, 8, 10). For example, Athlete 4 stated: “Every routine is a story. Her [the gymnast’s] job is to cover the floor, execute difficulties [i.e., difficult elements of her routine], and show expression in a minute and half, [in order] to complete the story. Gymnasts, who illustrate a well-executed story are rewarded by their scores.” Thus, gymnasts highlighted their own physical prowess in delivering artistic spectacles. Even while the GCG consciously aimed to foster the event as a place of performance, parents and athletes played an even larger role. The combination of the event organizers’ efforts and sport tourists’ expectations contributed to the co-creation of the competition space as a place of performance.

Emotion.

The final theme to emerge from the data was that the competition site, venue and host city were places of emotion. Organizers tried to provide a positive emotional experience by delivering a rigorous competition experience that was fun and exciting for athletes (Organizer 2).

I wanted [the championship] to be fun for the gymnasts and even though [it is a] big deal – [i.e.] Canadian Championships to form the National Team, we are still dealing with children. I think that’s [often] forgotten. No matter, how incredible these children are [as elite athletes], they are just children. (Organizer1)

Parents were filled with positive emotions of pride and honour based on their daughters’ accomplishments. Their daughters’ qualification to compete in the national championship was already seen as a major achievement (Parents 1, 9, 12). One parent indicated that she was particularly impressed with the level of maturity and emotional control that her daughter displayed at the competition despite her young age. Parents tended to be emotional about their daughters’ performances, scores, and the ways they dealt with these outcomes (Parent 8). Ideally the emotional outcome is one of joy (Parents 13 & 15; Athletes 5 & 7):

I think the most important feeling is joy. [The emotion] I really want to be trying to focus on my girls is joy. You know, leave enough room for joy, cause it’s a sport where you really lose your perspective quickly. You can’t get focused on wrong things. (Parent 13)

In actual fact, the 2017CCRG was characterized by a range of intense emotions; both positive and negative. Parents and athletes felt happiness, a sense of achievement, pride, but also stress. While place meanings were often connected with a sense of achievement and joy, the venue was also seen as a place of nervousness and intense stress.

Event organizers emphasized that even though they tried to foster fun as much as possible, there is naturally a place for negative emotions in a national championship competition. For example, there was a tendency for parents to disagree with judges and the judges may not understand the concerns of parents. Organizer 1 explained “No matter [what] space you put them

in, there is going to be a disconnect between what they see on the carpet as spectators and what they see coming out of us – the screen or the tablet for scores”.

Parents and athletes also expressed nervousness and stress during their daughter’s performances on the carpet (Parents 1, 5 & 15). For example, Parent 6 suggested that:

... every parent that [is] sitting in there is very nervous for his or her own child...because there is nothing that you can do to help the outcome. You just have to... watch and trust that... they’ve got that. And so, it is almost like you are doing it yourself. Almost like you putting yourself into that nervous situation. But I am not, so [during] the actual experience of coming and watching, I feel nervous probably the same way she feels nervous, but that’s not something that I show. (Parent 6)

Athletes felt stress at the competition space because they were being judged and were afraid of making mistakes during their routines (Athletes 2, 6, 7, 10, 13, 12). They also experienced other types of stress at the competition such as being disappointed and depressed because they felt they deserved better scores than they received (Athlete 4). Athlete 10 added that she felt stressed while preparing for her performance.

In summary, event organizers, athletes and parents co-created the site as a place of powerful emotion. Even though organizers tried to offer positive emotional experiences, they recognized that negative emotions are likely to arise due to the subjective nature of judging as well as the unavoidability of performance issues. These negative emotions are prominent at small-scale elite youth-based sport events because of the young age of the athletes and the intimate relationship they have with their parents who often make up the majority of the audience. While the place meaning expressed by athletes and their parents reflected positive

feelings such as pride, accomplishment, enjoyment, and excitement, it also reflected negative emotions such as anxiety and frustration.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to develop an understanding of how place meanings were co-created by event organizers and sport tourists at small-scale elite youth-based sport events using the 2017 Canadian Championships in Rhythmic Gymnastics (2017CCRG) as a case study. Study findings were generally consistent with Morgan's (2007) model of experience space in that place meaning was co-produced by interactions between event organizers (sport and tourism managers/marketers) and sport tourists (young elite athletes and their parents). However, the results of this study suggest that modifications to Morgan's model are warranted. These modifications are illustrated in Figure 4.2 and will be discussed in the context of the three major dimensions of the original model: 1) the event organizers; 2) the sport tourists; and, 3) the interactions between key stakeholders.

In Morgan's (2007) original experience space model (Figure 4.1) experience management and marketing were presented as relatively equal parts in the way that event organizers tried to shape experience space. In the case of the 2005 British and Irish Lions rugby tour of New Zealand, Morgan noted that organizers sought to attract large numbers of sport tourists from distant markets. Consequently, the role of experience marketers (i.e., tourism marketers) was emphasized. But in the case of the 2017CCRG, experience marketers like Edmonton Events played a limited role in the co-creation of place meaning. Unlike the substantial investments often made for major sport events (e.g., Kaplanidou, 2006; Morgan, 2007), marketers chose not to invest heavily in the promotion of place at this relatively small-scale event. In fact, the experience marketers' job at the 2017CCRG was essentially finished

before the event officially opened as their involvement was largely restricted to providing assistance with the bid. During this process, the experience marketers were guided by bid criteria that had a functional orientation based on the technical foundation/requirements of the sport.

The influence of sport managers in the co-creation of place meaning was also relatively stronger at this event than in Morgan's case study of the 2005 British and Irish Lions rugby tour. The emergence of the competition site as a place of function at the 2017CCRG reflected the natural bias of experience managers (sport managers) toward the athletic competition over destination marketing. This view supports the conclusions of Hinch and Kono (2018) that organizers of competitive sporting events need to recognize that participants are first and foremost interested in the host site as a place of competition. It is, therefore, natural for sport events experience managers to try to create functional places to fulfil the technical requirements of the sport. Event organizers recognized that athletes and their parents at the 2017CCRG were place dependent on the specialized competition settings that were needed to run the event. This makes intuitive sense as elite athletes and their entourages are focused on performance and function. It is also consistent with Brown, Smith and Assaker's (2016) findings that spectators at the London Olympics prioritized event experiences at the venue over their attachment to the destination as a whole.

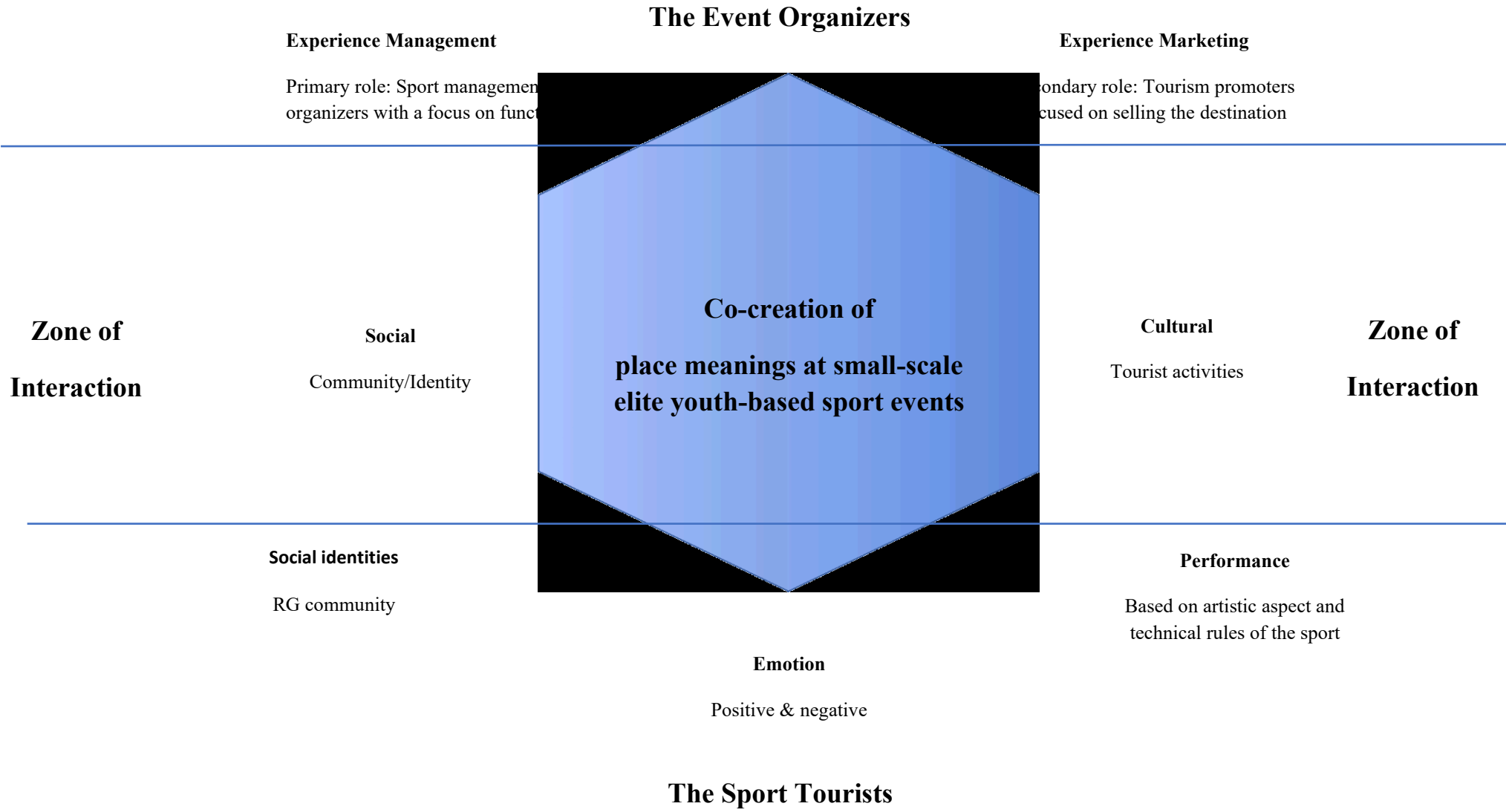


Figure 4.2 Co-creation of place meanings at small-scale elite youth-based sport event

Given the relatively small scale of the 2017CCRG, sport tourists at the event were dominated by the young elite athletes and their parents. The spectators, therefore, often had an intimate link to the athletes unlike general fans at large-scale events such as the 2005 British and Irish Lions tour of New Zealand. This personal link to participating athletes and the relatively small number of spectators at the event meant that there was a different dynamic for the co-creation of experience space and consequently, place meaning at the 2017CCRG. Morgan's (2007) original model of experience space identified three elements associated with sport tourists: 1) social identity; 2) achievements and hedonic pleasure; and, 3) personal meanings. While the revised model retains the social identity component, it combines the 2nd and 3rd components under the label of emotion and introduces a new performance component.

One of the key themes to emerge in this study was place as emotion. This theme encompassed both the achievement and hedonic pleasure element and the personal meaning element highlighted in Morgan's (2007) original version. Unlike the hedonic feelings such as relaxation and pleasure (Ryan & Edward, 2001) that were emphasized in Morgan's (2007) model, athletes at the 2017CCRG expressed deep feelings of dedication (Ryan & Edward, 2001) as they pursue excellence based on their unique potential (Ryff & Singer, 2008). This led to self-realization, self-fulfillment, and stress-related growth (Matteucci & Sebastian, 2017) resulting in "eudaimonic happiness" (Hall, 2018, p. 26). The athletes' eudaimonic experiences at the 2017CCRG can be explained in three ways. First, they were intrinsically motivated (i.e. interesting, enjoyable, and done for its own sake (Ryan & Deci, 2017)). Second, unlike hedonistic aspirations of spectators at mass sport events, the eudaimonic experiences of the elite rhythmic gymnasts stem from long-term personal goals (Huta & Ryan, 2010). Despite their young age, most of the athlete respondents had been working on their rhythmic gymnastics skills for several

years giving them a sense of purpose – an important facet of life meaning (Martela & Steger, 2016). Finally, eudaimonic experiences involve overcoming pressure through stress-related growth and challenges (Matteucci & Sebastian, 2017). Parents also experienced eudaimonic happiness, albeit in their cases it was because of the joy they felt as a result of their children's successful participation in sport. As athletes and parents noted, these athletes had qualified for 2017CCRG as a result of successes at many earlier stressful competitions. In summary, the place meanings associated with this event were characterized by eudaimonic happiness as opposed to hedonic happiness.

In addition to many positive emotions that parents and athletes expressed, they also saw the event as a place of stress and disappointment. These findings were consistent with the results of the study of a non-participating entourage of Australian amateur athletes (Kennelly et al., 2018), where supporters experienced joy, excitement, inspiration, pride, and gratification as well as anxiety, frustration, and resentment during the event. Therefore, both positive and negative emotions were part of the place meanings that event organizers and sport tourists co-created at the 2017CCRG. This was distinct from Morgan's (2007) model of experience space at the 2005 World Cup rugby event, which emphasized only positive emotional experiences at sporting events.

Performance is also a new component to the model. Organizers tried to position the championships as a spectacle with the competition space and facility seen as a sport tourism stage (Shipway et al., 2016) where the rhythmic gymnastics performed. Athletes and their parents had similar perspectives. The 2017CCRG could be considered a participation-based sport event (Higham & Hinch, 2018) because athletes and their families and friends represented a major portion of the attendees. During such events, athletes have to be “in the right physical and

emotional state required to attain the highest level of competitive performance” (Higham & Hinch, 2018, p. 166). As a result, elite athletic performances at this scale of event tend to be powerful acts of authentication (Lamont, 2014). Sport tourists at the 2017CCRG witnessed impressive combinations of athletic prowess and artistic expression executed by exceptional rhythmic gymnasts in colourful outfits. Such spectacles of elite performance were instrumental in co-creating place meaning.

The third major dimension of Morgan’s model encompassed the interactions between stakeholders. Social and cultural interactions are retained in the revised model. However, study findings suggest that each of these categories have important sub-elements in terms of how place meaning is co-created at small-scale elite youth-based events.

The finding that the 2017CCRG was seen as a place of community supports the continued relevance of social identity in the model. Co-created interactions at the competition site fostered a celebration of the sport and a shared subculture. Experience managers created special spaces where parents and athletes were able to socialize as recommended by Shipway et al. (2016) in their study of cycling events. Similar to the conclusions of Bunning and Gibson (2016) and of Gibson and Mirehie (2019), this study indicates that social activities run in conjunction with the competition are an important part of these sport tourists’ event experience. As such, they have a significant impact on the co-creation of place meanings. During this type of event, social interaction fosters a collective social identity that is aligned with a specific place at a particular point in time. This social interaction, then, fosters community-based place meanings for participants.

The inclusion of additional tourism elements to the model is significant because it indicates that sport tourists at these types of events are interested in place beyond the confines of the

competition site and venue. For example, experience managers highlighted the historical background of the host city and encouraged visiting athletes and their parents to interact with this dimension of local culture. In doing so, they were leveraging destination related heritage resources, similar to what Derom and Ramshaw (2016) reported at the Tour of Flanders Cyclo in Belgium. In a similar action, the selection of a downtown hotel and a multi-purpose venue enhanced the touristic nature of the sport tourists' visit to Edmonton. While in the host city, athletes and parents visited tourist attractions, went to restaurants, and explored local culture and people. In doing so, they formed rich understandings of place that went beyond the competition. The event experience provided a cross-cultural connection between the sport culture and the culture of the host city. This is consistent with the findings of Gibson and Mirehie (2019), who argued that the quality family time that parents seek while travelling with their children to sport events includes tourist activities and the trip may even be seen as a "tourn-acation" (tournament vacation). As Halpenny, Kulczycki, and Moghimehfar (2016) found in the context of an annual small-scale running event held in a national park, an attractive tourist setting leads to positive types of destination attachment that include cultural interactions between visitors and locals.

Conclusion

This study provided a fuller understanding of the way place meanings were co-created by event organizers and sport tourists at a small-scale elite youth-based sport event. The fact that 2017CCRG was a place of function, community, performance, emotion, and tourist activities indicates that this national level competition was a meaningful place for both organizers and sport tourists. As highlighted in the discussion section, the major theoretical contributions of the study were: 1) the demonstrated relevance of Morgan's experience space model in the context of the co-creation of place meaning at this type of sport event; 2) the proposed modifications to this

model; and, 3) the recognition that at least three levels of spatial scale (competition site, venue, and host community) were relevant to place meaning at this type of event.

This study also provided practical insights for event managers and destination marketers in terms of the way they plan for and manage small-scale elite youth-oriented events. Even though event organizers planned and coordinated the event in the context of the development goals of the destination (Maier & Weber, 1993), the influence of the sport managers was greater than that of the destination marketers primarily due to the small-scale of the event. This bias should be recognized by organizers who can then take action to strengthen the collaboration and to actively bundle the competition related event elements with additional touristic elements within the host destination (Chalip & McGuirly, 2004; Myburgh, Kruger, & Saayman, 2018). The incorporation of other tourist activities into the championship's program would be beneficial for both organizers and sport tourists. This is especially true in the context of a pressure packed competition dominated by young athletes. While the focus of the event should remain on function and performance at the competition site, an expansion of activities throughout the destination would provide an opportunity for stress release and community building.

Understanding the emotional experience of sport tourists at these events will help marketers to design appropriate opportunities in the future (Wood & Kenyon, 2018). This study showed that elite youth-based sport events produce negative as well as positive emotions. Organizers can reduce negative emotions such as stress by strategically offering social events and destination tours for participating athletes and their families. This is particularly important given the young age of these athletes. For example, banquets or city tours could be used to mitigate negative emotions such as the disappointment that a young athlete may feel if they were unhappy with their performance. Given these additional activities, more athletes and parents

could return home with a positive impression of the host city and their experience at the competition. Event organizers (experience managers and marketers) need to collaborate with each other more rather than assuming that they have separate roles related to the delivery of a sport competition versus the promotion of a positive place experience. The reality is that both of these dimensions of the event should be actively considered to serve the best interests of the young athletes, their families, the sport, and the community hosting the event.

Notwithstanding its contributions, the study also had some limitations. One of these was the limited representation from Gymnastics Canada. While four event organizers at the provincial and city levels were interviewed only one representative, a member of the technical division, from Gymnastics Canada participated in the interviews. The perspectives of the other members of the national organizing team such as the events directors and media personnel would have been valuable. The other limitation involved the collection of data from athletes. It was not possible to interview all the gymnasts during the event due to their focus on the competition. Even when contacted by email after they returned home, they were busy catching up on their schoolwork, training and carrying on active social lives making it challenging to get detailed responses.

While this study has provided some additional insight into the co-creation of place meaning at elite small-scale events like the 2017CCRG, more work on this topic is needed. Researchers who take up this challenge should build on the insights of this study. In terms of methods, visual techniques like photo-elicitation proved to be a useful tool during interviews as it helped respondents to focus on and refresh their memories related to specific spaces. Given that participating athletes in this study were found to have experienced eudaimonic feelings, more research is warranted in this area. It would also be useful to explore what kind of place

meanings (hedonic versus eudaimonic) parents have at small-scale elite youth-based sporting events given the close personal relationships they have with the athletes. As the parents of athletes are usually involved in competitions as spectators and volunteers, further research on their involvement in organizing and participating at elite youth sport events would be helpful in sport tourism field.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

The research question driving this dissertation asked: “what is the place meaning that gymnasts, their parents, and event organizers developed in the context of a small-scale elite youth-based sport event?” In order to answer this question, three manuscripts were prepared based on studies of the way stakeholder groups understood and tried to influence place meaning via a case study of the 2017 Canadian Championships in Rhythmic Gymnastics. The first manuscript (Chapter Two) investigated athletes’ place meanings in terms of the competition space. The second manuscript (Chapter Three) focused on the way parents of participating athletes perceived the competition space, venue, and host city. The third manuscript (Chapter Four) examined the way place meanings were co-created by event organizers and sport tourists. This last chapter summarises the key findings of the three resulting manuscripts, highlights the theoretical and practical implications of the research, recognizes the limitations of these studies, and suggests a future research agenda in this area. The chapter closes with a statement about my personal journey during this research.

Key Findings

The place meanings that athletes formed at the 2017CCRG were focused on the competition space rather than the venue or host city. These young female athletes understood this space as a place of performance, emotion, community connection, and functionality. The competition space was not just a physical area, it was part of their cultural environment. As such, these findings were broadly consistent with Eichberg’s (1988) trialectic model of body culture, which frames competition space as a place of achievement, discipline, and experience.

While the parents shared an interest in the place meanings of the competition space, they also recognized place meanings at the scales of the venue and host city. Similar to the athletes,

their parents saw the completion area as a place of emotion, connection, performance, and function. In contrast to the athletes, they also saw the venue as a place of supportive function and leisure and characterized the host city as a place of competitive sport, tourism, and hospitality. The parents' perception of place meaning encompassed a broader range of spatial scales. Nevertheless, the competition space remained prominent, as the parents' place meanings of the venue and the host city were generally dependent on their perceptions of their daughters' performances in the competition space.

Morgan's (2007) model of the co-creation of experience space was used to gain insight into the place meanings that event organizers developed at the 2017CCRG. Using this model, the efforts of organizers (experience managers and marketers) to shape place experiences at the event were considered in conjunction with the visitors' (athletes and parents) motivations and their interpretation of meanings as a way of considering the co-creation of place meanings. The results of the study demonstrated the general relevance of Morgan's (2007) model of experience space in the context of the co-creation of place meaning. The dominant role of experience managers (sport managers) over event marketers (tourism managers) was attributed to the small-scale of the sporting event with its limited tourism profile. Notwithstanding the usefulness of Morgan's model, some modifications were introduced as a result of the research. While the revised model retained the social identity component of the sport tourist dimension of Morgan's version, it combined the achievement, hedonic pleasures and personal meanings components under the label of emotion and introduced a new performance component.

More broadly, this research demonstrated that the spaces associated with the 2017CCRG were not just places to compete; they were meaningful places for key stakeholders in a range of other ways. Four of the place meaning themes that emerged in this study (function, community,

performance, and emotion) were similar to those found in studies one and two, while the fifth theme of tourist activity was new. In general, the place meanings of three groups of stakeholders were similar. The socio-cultural and subcultural aspects of the sport played an important role in shaping place meanings reported in this study.

Theoretical Implications

This study contributes to the literature on place and small-scale elite youth-based sport events by providing insight into the way sport tourists (athletes and their parents) and event organizers understood and co-created place meaning at the 2017CCRG. Study one demonstrated the relevance of Eichberg's (1998) trialectic model of body culture, which suggests that the competition space is a place of achievement, discipline and experience. Study two suggested that the intimate connection between parents as spectators and their daughters as high-performance athletes influenced the way parents understood place. Parents tend to be more emotionally connected to the athletes and their performances than typical fans at sport events. Their understanding of place was, therefore, closely tied to their daughters' performances at the competition space. Study three confirmed the relevance of Morgan's (2007) experience space model with some modifications. Amendments to the Morgan's (2007) experience space model included the need for more emphasis on the role of experience marketers at this scale of event. The revised model also recognized the existence of negative emotions along with positive emotions and introduced performance as a new component in co-creating place meanings at small-scale elite youth-based sporting events.

Variations between the way parents and young athletes understood place at different scales also have theoretical implications. Given their youth, the high-performance nature of the event, and dedication of the athletes during the tournament, their place meaning focus was on the

scale of the competition space. Even though parents were emotionally involved and were physically present during the competition, they had time, opportunity and interest to develop place meaning at the venue and host city scales.

Methodological Implications

The findings from this study explained the social construction of place meaning of the understudied case of an elite youth-based sport event. A qualitative research approach was suitable given the small-scale nature of the event. The use of an interpretive constructivist approach in this study was appropriate because place meanings were created through the subjective experiences of the study participants. It was an advantage to use 2017CCRG as a case study because the event provided insights into targeted settings in real-time thereby facilitating in-depth insights into place meanings. The use of photo-elicitation as part of the interviews also proved to be a useful tool as it helped participants to focus on the competition space, the venue, and the host city. It also was especially helpful for those athletes who were interviewed by email after the event.

Practical Implications

Understanding place meaning is important for sport tourism managers in order to foster positive tourist experiences for participants (Kulczycki & Hinch, 2014) and to foster the sustainability of sporting events (Hinch & Holt, 2017). Study findings can help organizers of these types of events to work effectively with young athletes and their parents to create positive place meanings. For example, parents saw the competition space as a functional place. Addressing their wishes for enhanced comfort in the spectator area would provide them with a more satisfying experience. Such place experiences would potentially increase the number of visitors to the host city and encourage return visits. Positive place experiences would also benefit

the development of young athletes during this critical stage of their growth as well as positively impacting their parents' opinions and support for the sport.

The competition space dominated place meaning as the most important spatial scale at the 2017CCRG. Therefore, organizers of small-scale elite youth-based sport events should give priority to this area (e.g. comfortable seating, healthy food options, special places for communication between athletes and their parents). While this space must meet the functional and performance standards necessary to deliver a high-quality competition with fair judging, further consideration should be given to the young age of the competitors and to their unique link to their parents in the stands. One way of doing this is to provide parental access to their daughters near the competition space at appropriate times during the competition. This type of space is especially important at developmental level competitions and with less experienced athletes (e.g., novice category).

Taking into account the negative emotions (e.g., stress) typically found at these types of competitions, an expansion of activities beyond the competition space and the venue would provide an opportunity for stress release while the athletes and their parents are in the host city. This could be accomplished by bundling the event program with sightseeing and providing social events in coordination with the competition. Visiting athletes and their parents could then have balanced positive place experiences, even if they were disappointed in their athletic performance.

Athletes are usually very absorbed in the competition and their results. Parents tend to have a similar focus as they devote most of their time and energy while in the host city to the event and to assisting their daughters. Given the fleeting nature of these types of sport careers, enjoying this time is recommended so that it becomes a special lifetime memory for athletes and

their parents. Exploring the host city would not only facilitate emotional release, it would also provide educational benefits.

Destination marketers should play a more active role at these types of events. This study showed that the influence of sport managers was greater than destination marketers. However, these managers tended to focus on the competition rather than the place even though these elements are related. Sport managers need to appreciate that while the competition is the central focus of the young athletes and their parents, their overall event experience includes the way that these groups connect to place while at the event. Complementing the competition with other tourism activities in the host destination would help coaches and parents plan their stay in the host city. Event managers can help by providing more detailed information about the venue resources and host city attractions.

Limitations

Like all research, this study had some limitations. In the first instance, the on-site interview setting for parents was convenient but also challenging. The noisy and crowded spectator area in the competition space made it difficult to hear and record the interviews. While this space proved productive in terms of the recruitment of parents, it is recommended that once these parents have been recruited, the interview should be shifted to a quieter nearby space. Another limitation was the lack of gender balance in terms of parent interviewees. While both male and female parents were observed and recruited at the event, mothers more readily agreed to participate in the interviews. It is, therefore, recommended that interviews should be scheduled in advance if possible. At this stage, the fathers of athletes may be more receptive to agreeing to an interview and more time could be taken to obtain an equally weighted number of fathers and mothers. Finally, the email interviews with athletes tended to be shorter and less informative than

the on-site interviews with their parents. This could be explained by the gymnists' young ages and focus on the sport or it may have been a function of the online format. Using semi-structured, face-to-face interviews in future studies would likely enhance the quality of data collected from these young athletes.

Future Research

Further research is needed to more fully understand the way small-scale elite youth-based sport events impact participants' understandings of event places. Additional insights into place meanings can improve the well-being of athletes and their parents as well as efforts of event organizers. Further research on athletes and parents' place experiences may also improve the athletes' performances and their parents' experiences during such competitions. Additional insights are also likely to help organizers and participants to co-create better strategies to attract more spectators.

It would be interesting to compare the results of this study of a small-scale event to a similar study of a larger-scale sport event such as the Olympics. For example, it would be useful to find out whether sport tourists at large-scale events form place meanings at the scale of the host country, regional, and global levels or whether the meaning continues to be focused on the competition area.

This study found that the 2017CCRG was a place of function. However, there is still a gap in the literature on the functionality of different types of venues in terms of place identity or place dependence. As there are few special venues devoted to single sports (e.g., RG), studies that examine place meanings related to place identity and place dependence of multipurpose venues or sportsapes would be beneficial for event organizers.

RG is a niche sport in Canada with participation levels that are relatively low compared to those for many other sports. Research that enables organizers to better co-create positive place-based experiences may help to popularize the sport. Event organizers would be in a position to use positive place experiences as marketing features to attract more athletes, spectators and media to the sport.

There are gaps in the literature related to the socio-cultural aspects of sporting events like the 2017CCRG. Further studies that consider meanings at RG events in terms of performance, emotion, connection, and function could potentially contribute to the popularization of the sport. Insights gained through this type of research may help to foster the healthy development of the next generation of athletes and the engagement of their parents in this sport.

Given that RG is one of the women-only sports in the Olympics, it would benefit from feminist approaches to research. This would fit nicely with Gibson's (2017) and Gibson and Mirehie's (2018) call for research to theorize sport tourism from a feminist perspective. The CCRG2017 case study suggested that the sport is focused on women sport tourists (e.g. young female athletes and their mothers). It also highlighted women's travel experiences in relation to women's participation in sport. Future research should build on this base by exploring female sports fans and supporters, rhythmic gymnasts' travel experiences, place meanings, and power relations during sport-related travels.

Personal Journey

I initiated this dissertation in part because of my personal interest in the sport of RG. In addition to the rationale for the research that I presented in Chapter One, I now realize that I was drawn to this research as part of my own search for place meaning in my new home.

Retrospectively, I realize that many of the place meanings that emerged in this study are

consistent with my experiences as a parent and an event organizer. For example, I travelled to two major international events in which my daughter was competing: the 2017 and 2018 Asian Championships. While sitting in the spectators' area during the 2017 Asian Championships, I asked myself "How do I understand the competition space and the venue? Is it an important place for me?" It was the first time that I had attended such an important FIG event. I felt incredibly happy just being a part of it. I was a proud parent of a talented young athlete. It was a moment of celebration for her passion, dedication, and hard work including 5-8 hours of daily training an over six years without any summer breaks and vacations. My daughter performed very well receiving her personal best score for her routine. We were happy. It was such a meaningful lifetime experience for me, and I left with a positive feeling about the competition venue and the host city. But for my daughter Saule it was her usual competition. She told me later that she appreciated the importance and the high level of the competition only after it was finished. The awards ceremony clearly demonstrated the international significance of the event for her as it featured the national anthems of the winners' countries of origin. Moreover, during the 2017 Asian Championships in Astana, Kazakhstan, an International Exposition (world fair) called *Future Energy* was taking place attracting 4 million visitors (Expo 2017 Astana, 2017). While attending the competition I visited the Exposition, which created more place meanings for me. I was able to not only support my daughter at the competition but also to explore a new city with her.

This visit to the Asian Championships in Astana, Kazakhstan, changed my understanding of RG places. I began to look at the competition spaces, the venues, and the host cities as a sport tourist because I realized the importance of meanings that I ascribed to visited places. I found that being a sport tourist and accompanying my daughter to such a high-level competition was

not only emotional (e.g., feelings of pride, success, nervousness), but it also had practical benefits for me. For example, I was able to observe the functional set up of the competition space and the venue's possibilities as an organizer of future RG events. I asked myself what I could learn and apply in a Canadian context in order to provide the best place experiences for our athletes and spectators at this type of event.

I was more conscious of place meaning during my visit to the 2018 Asian Championships in Kuala-Lumpur because by that time, I had passed my candidacy exam and had conducted my study interviews. During this trip, I again asked myself "How do I understand place at this event?" The competition was held in a venue that had been built for gymnastics disciplines during the 1998 Commonwealth Games, so, it was large, modern and impressive. Kuala-Lumpur also had many places to visit and explore. However, the official results of the competition were disappointing for my daughter, even though she performed well. As a result, I was not as excited about my visit to Kuala-Lumpur as I had been to 2017 championships in Astana.

Retrospectively, I suspect that this was because I had more negative emotions connected with my daughter's disappointment even though Kuala-Lumpur was a place that prior to the competitions, I was more attracted to than I had been to the 2017 competition in Astana. This personal experience was consistent with the place meaning formed by parents in my study in that it was influenced by their daughters' athletic experience at the event.

My travel to the 2018 Asian Championships opened my eyes to the sport as a parent of a high-performance athlete, as a board member of the RG club, and as a researcher. I was able to appreciate at a personal level, the way that psychological, socio-cultural, economical, geographical aspects of the sport impact place meanings. I also realized that these dimensions of

an event can be managed to influence the ways that athletes, officials, organizers, and spectators (including parents) understand place meaning.

In Chapter One I wrote that my connection with RG in Kyrgyzstan had helped to shape my research interest. Now, in concluding my dissertation, I recognize that after living in Canada for almost 6 years, my connection to RG has helped me identify with this place. Edmonton has become my new home due in a large part to my involvement in RG. Thanks to this involvement, I have connected with many people and have become a valued member of the RG community in addition to completing this dissertation on this topic. All these factors were helpful for me in connecting to this new place that I now identify as my home.

References

- Aalten, A. (2004). The moment when it all comes together: Embodied experiences in ballet. *European Journal of Women Studies*, 11 (3), 263-276.
- Altman, I., & Low, S. (1992). *Place attachment*. NY: Plenum Press.
- Anderson, C. (2012). Photo-elicitation and the construction of tourist experience; photographs and mediators in interviews. In D. C. T. Raking (Ed.). *Introduction to visual research methods in tourism* (pp. 92-107). London: Routledge.
- Bale, J. (1988). The place of “place” in cultural studies of sport. *Progress in Human Geography*, 12 (4), 507-524.
- Bale, J. (1994). *Landscapes of modern sport*. Leicester: University Press.
- Bale, J. (1996). Space, place, and body culture: Yu-Fu Tuan and geography of sport. *Geografiska Annaler. Human Geography*, 78 (3), 163-171.
- Bale, J. (1989). *Sports geography*. London: E. & F.N. Spon.
- Bale, J. (2003). *Sports geography*. London: Routledge.
- Bale, J., & Vertinsky, P. (2004). Introduction. In P. Vertinsky, & J. Bale (Eds.), *Sites of sport: Space, place, experience* (pp. 1-7). NY: Routledge.
- Barker-Ruchti, N., & Tinning, R. (2010). Foucault in leotards: Corporeal discipline in women’s artistic gymnastics. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 2, 229-250.
- Barker-Ruchti, N., Kerr, R., Schubring, A., Cervin, G., & Nunomura, M. (2016). "Gymnasts like wine, they get better with age". Becoming and developing adult women's artistic gymnastics. *Quest*, 69 (3), 348-365.
- Barker-Ruhti, N. (2009). Ballerinas and pixies: A genealogy of the changing female gymnastics body. *The International Journal of the History of Sports*, 26 (1), 45-62.
- Besnier, N., & Brownell, S. (2012). Sport, modernity, and the body. *The Annual Review*

of Anthropology, 41, 443-459.

Binkhorst, E., & Den Dekker, T. (2009). Agenda for co-creation tourism experience research.

Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management, 18(2-3), 311-327.

Boddy, C. (2016). Sample size for qualitative research. *Qualitative Market Research: An*

International Journal, 19 (4), 426-432.

Bott, J. (1989). *Rhythmic gymnastics*. Wiltshire: The Crowood Press.

Brown, G., Smith, A., & Assaker, G. (2016). Revisiting the host city: An empirical examination

of sport involvement, place attachment, event satisfaction and spectator intentions

at the London Olympics. *Tourism Management*, 55, 160-172.

Buning, R., & Coble, C. (2018). "I mean you don't really have a choice:" The youth sport

travel experience. *2018 North American Society for Sport Management Conference*,

<https://nassm.org/Archive/Year/2018>). Halifax.

Buning, R., & Gibson, H. (2016). The role of travel conditions in cycling tourism: Implications

for destination and event management. *Journal of Sport & Tourism*, 20 (3-4), 175-193.

Burgess, N., Knight, C., & Mellalieu, S. (2016). Parental stress and coping in elite youth

gymnastics: An interpretative phenomenological analysis. *Qualitative Research in*

Sport, Exercise and Health, 8(3), 237-256.

Campos, A., Mendes, J., Oom do Valle, P., & Scott, N. (2018). Co-creation of tourist

experiences: A literature review. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 21(4), 368-400.

Carneiro, M., Breda, Z., & Cordeiro, C. (2016) Sports tourism development and destination

sustainability: the case of the coastal area of the Aveiro region, Portugal. *Journal of*

Sport & Tourism, 20:3-4, 305-334.

Cavallerio, F., Wadey, R., & Wagstaff, C. (2017). Adjusting to retirement from sport:

- Narratives of former competitive rhythmic gymnasts. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*. 9(5), 533-545.
- Cederholm, E. (2004). The use of photo-elicitation in tourism research – Framing the backpacker experience. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 4(3), 225-241.
- Chalip, L. (2005). Marketing, media and place promotion. In J. Higham (Ed.), *Sport tourism destinations: Issues, opportunities and analysis* (pp. 162-177). Oxford, UK: Elsevier Butterworth Heinemann.
- Chalip, L. (2006). Towards social leverage of sport events. *Journal of Sport & Tourism*. 11(2) 109-127.
- Chalip, L., & Green, C. (2003). Effects of sport event media on destination image and intention to visit. *Journal of Sport Management*, 17, 214-234.
- Chalip, L., & McGuirly, J. (2004). Bundling sport events with the host destination. *Journal of Sport and Tourism*, 9(3), 267-282.
- Chen, N., & Funk, D. (2010). Exploring destination image, experience and revisit intention: A comparison of sport and non-sport tourist perceptions. *Journal of Sport & Tourism*, 15 (3).
- City of Edmonton. (2018). *Edmonton event growth and attraction strategy*. Retrieved from SCRIBD: <https://www.scribd.com/document/390150225/Edmonton-Event-Growth-and-Attraction-Strategy>
- Clark-Ibáñez, M. (2013). Framing the social world with photo-elicitation interviews. In J. Hughes (Ed.), *Sage visual methods*. London: Sage.
- Coakley, J. (2009). *Sports in society: Issues and controversies*. NY: McGraw Hill.
- Creswell, J. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design. Choosing among five approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage.

- Crockett, M., & Butryn, T. (2018). Chasing Rx: A spatial ethnography of the CrossFit gym. *Sociology of Sport*, 35 (2), 98-107.
- Crouch, D. (2010). Flirting with space: thinking landscape relationally. *Cultural Geographies*, 17(1), 5–18. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1474474009349996>
- Cutler, S., & Carmichael, B. (2010). The dimensions of the tourist experience. In M. Morgan, P. Lugosi, & B. Ritchie (Eds.), *The tourism and leisure experience: Consumer and managerial perspectives* (pp. 3-27). North York: Channel View
- Daniels, M. (2007). Central place theory and sport tourism impacts. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 34(2), 332-347.
- Denzin, N., & Lincoln, Y. (2005). Introduction: The discipline and practise of qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 1-21). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Derom, I., & Ramshaw, G. (2016). Leveraging sport heritage to promote tourism destinations: the case of the Tour of Flanders Cyclo event. *Journal of Sport & Tourism*, 20, (3-4), 263-283.
- Dhurup, M., Mofoka, M., & Surujlal, J. (2010). The relationship between stadium sportscapes dimensions, desire to stay and future attendance. *African Journal for Physical, Health Education, Recreation and Dance*, 16(3), 475-490.
- Eaglemen, A., Rodenberg, R., & Lee, S. (2014). From "hollow-eyed pixies" to 'team of adults': Media portrayals of Olympic women's artistic gymnastics before and after an increased minimum age policy. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 6 (3), 401-421.
- Eichberg, H. (1989). Body culture as paradigm: The Danish sociology of sport. *Review*

- for Sociology of Sport*, 24 (1), 43-62.
- Eichberg, H. (1998). The enclosure of the body. The historical relativity of 'health', 'nature' and the environment of sport. In J. Bale, & C. Philo (Eds.), *Body cultures. Essays on sports, space, and identity*. London: Routledge.
- Eichberg, H. (2006). The study of body culture: Observing practise. *Ido_Ruch dlia Kultuy: Rocznik naukowy*, 6, 194-200.
- Eichberg, H. (2007, June 6). *How to study body culture: Observing human practice*. Retrieved January 1, 2019, from Idrottsforum:
<http://www.idrottsforum.org/articles/eichberg/eichberg070606.pdf>
- Eichberg, H. (2009). Body culture. *Physical Culture and Sport Studies and Research*, XLVI, 79-98.
- Evans, D., & Norcliffe, G. (2016). Local identities in a global game: The social production of football space in Liverpool. *Journal of Sport & Tourism*, 20(3), 217-232.
- Fabos, B. (2001). Forcing the fairytale: Narrative strategies in figure skating competition coverage. In S. Wieting, *Sport and memory in North America*. London: Frank Cass.
- Fairley, S., & O'Brien, D. (2017). Accumulating subcultural capital through sport event participation: The AFL International Cup. *Sport Management Review*.
- Feder, A. (1994). A radiant smile from the lovely lady: Overdetermined femininity in "ladies" figure skating. *The Drama Review*, 38 (1), 62-78.
- Fotiadis, A., Vassiliadis, C., & Yeh, S.-P. (2016). Participant's preferences for small-scale sporting events. *EuroMed Journal of Business*, 11 (1), 232-247.
- Funk, D. C., & Bruun, T. J. (2007). The role of socio-psychological and culture-education

- motives in marketing international sport tourism: A cross-cultural perspective. *Tourism Management*, 28(3), 806–819.
- Gaffney, C. (2013). Geography of sport. In J. Maguire (Ed.), *Social Sciences in Sport*. Human Kinetics.
- Gaffney, C., & Bale, J. (2004). Sensing the stadium. In P. Vertinsky, & J. Bale (Eds.), *Sites of sport. Space, place, experience* (pp. 25-38). London: Routledge.
- Gammon, S. (2011). Sports events. In S. Page, & J. Connel (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of events* (pp. 104-118). London, UK: Routledge.
- Getz, D. (2008). Event tourism: Definition, evolution, and research. *Tourism Management*, 29, 403 - 428.
- Getz, D. (2012). *Event studies: Theory, research, and policy for planned events*. Oxford: Elsevier.
- Gibson, H. (1998). Sport tourism: A critical analysis of research. *Sport Management Review*, 1, 45-76.
- Gibson, H. (2004). Moving beyond the “what is and who” of sport tourism and understanding “why”. *Journal of Sport Tourism*, 9(3), 247–265.
- Gibson, H. (2006). Introduction. In H. Gibson (Ed.). *Sport tourism: Concepts and theories* (pp.1-9). London: Routledge.
- Gibson, H. (2017) Sport tourism and theory and other developments: some reflections, *Journal of Sport & Tourism*, 21:2, 153-158
- Gibson, H., Kaplanidou, K., & Kang, S. J. (2012). Small-scale event sport tourism: A case study in sustainable tourism. *Sport Management Review*, 152, 160-170.
- Gibson H.J., Mirehie M. (2018) Sport tourism and feminism. In L.Mansfield, J. Caudwell,

- B. Wheaton, B. Watson (eds) *The Palgrave handbook of feminism and sport, leisure and physical education*. London: Palgrave Macmillan
- Gibson, H., & Mirehie, M. (2019). Youth sport-event tourism: Logistics, resources, and “tournaments”. *Connecting sport practice and science*, (pp. 122-124). Seville.
- Gieryn, T. (2000). A space for place in Sociology. *Annual Review of Sociology* (26), 463-496.
- giselec93. (2016, December 2). Rhythmic gymnasts: Female body objectification of the media. [Blog. post] <https://cmns324.wordpress.com/2016/12/02/rhythmic-gymnasts-female-body-objectification-of-the-media/>
- Gordon, K. (2013). Emotion and memory in nostalgia sport tourism: Examining the attraction to postmodern ballparks through an interdisciplinary lens. *Journal of Sport & Tourism*, 18(3), 219-237.
- Gratton, C., Dobson, N., & Shibli, S. (2000). The economic importance of major sports events: A case-study of six events. *Managing Leisure*, 5, 17-28.
- Green, C., & Chalip, L. (1997). Enduring involvement in youth soccer: The socialization of parent and child. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 29(1), 61-77.
- Green, C., & Chalip, L. (1998). Sport tourism as the celebration of subculture. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 25 (2), 275-291.
- Green, C., & Jones, I. (2005). Serious leisure, social identity and sport tourism. *Sport in Society*, 8(2), 164-181.
- Gregory, D., Jonston, R., Pratt, G., Watts, M., & Whatmore, S. (Eds.). (2009). *The dictionary of human geography* (5th ed.). Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Grenfell, C., & Rinehart, R. (2003). Skating on thin ice: Human rights in youth figure

- skating. *International Review for the Sociology of Sports*, 38 (1), 79-97.
- Gross, M., & Brown, G. (2008). An empirical structural model of tourists and places: Progressing involvement and place attachment into tourism. *Tourism Management*, 29, 1141-1151.
- Guest, G., MacQueen, K., & Namey, E. (2012). *Applied Thematic Analysis*. Retrieved March 24, 2016, from Sage Research Methods: DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781483384436>
- Gymnastics Canada. (2016). *2017 Canadian Gymnastics Championships in Rhythmic Gymnastics Directives*. Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.
- Gymnastics Canada. (2016, March). *Hosting documents*. Retrieved February 21, 2019, from Gymnastics Canada: http://www.gymcan.org/uploads/events/hosting-manual_final.pdf
- Gymnastics Canada. (2018, October). *Gymnastics Canada*. Retrieved October 2019, from Gymnastics Canada: http://gymcan.org/uploads/events/gcg_event-hosting-manual_en_2019-2020_final.pdf
- Hall, E. (2018). *Aristotle's way: How ancient wisdom can change your life*. New York: Penguin random House.
- Hall, M.C., Page, S.J. (2002). *The geography of tourism and recreation: Environment, place, and space*. New York: Routledge.
- Halpenny, E., Kulczycki, C., & Moghimehfar, F. (2016). Factors effecting destination and event loyalty: Examining the sustainability of a recurrent small-scale running event at Banff National Park. *Journal of Sport & Tourism*, 20, (3-4), 233-262.
- Hamera, J. (2005). All the (dis) comforts of home: Place, gendered self-fashioning, and

- solidarity in a ballet studio. *Text and Performance Quarterly*, 25 (2).
- Harper, D. (2002). Talking about pictures: A case for photo elicitation. *Visual Studies*, 17 (1), 13-26.
- Higham, J. (1999). Commentary-sport as an avenue of tourism development: An analysis of positive and negative impacts of sport tourism. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 2 (1), 82-90.
- Higham, J. (2005). Introduction to sport tourism destination marketing and management. In J. Higham (Ed.). *Sport tourism destinations: Issues, opportunities and analysis* (pp. 153-162). Oxford, UK: Elsevier Butterworth Heinemann.
- Higham, J., & Hinch, T. (2006). Sport and tourism research: A geographic approach. *Journal of Sport & Tourism*, 11 (1), 31-49.
- Higham, J., & Hinch, T. (2009). *Sport and tourism: Globalization, mobility and identity*. Oxford: Routledge.
- Higham, J., & Hinch, T. (2018). *Sport tourism development (3rd ed.)*. Bristol: Channel View Publications.
- Hinch, T., de la Barre, S., (2006). Sporting event as attractions in Canada's Northern periphery. In D. Muller, & B. Jansson (Eds.), *Tourism in peripheries: Perspectives from the far North and South* (pp.190-202). London, UK: Athenaeum Press.
- Hinch, T., Cameron, C. (2020). Volunteers, place, and ultramarathons: Addressing the challenge of recruitment and retention. *Event Management*, 24 (1), 17-32
- Hinch, T., & Higham, J. (2001). Sport tourism: A framework for research. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 3, 45-58.
- Hinch, T., & Higham, J. (2011). *Sport Tourism Development* (Vol. 13). Bristol: Channel View publications.

- Hinch, T., & Holt, N. (2016). Ultra-marathons and place meaning for visiting support crews. In C. Howley, & S. Dun (Eds.), *The playing field: Making sense of spaces and places in sporting cultures* (pp. 117-227). Oxford, UK: Inter-disciplinary press.
- Hinch, T., Holt, N. (2017). Sustaining places and participatory sport tourism events. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 25(8), 1084-1099.
- Hinch, T., Higham, J., & Sant, S.-L. (2014). Taking stock of sport tourism research. In A. Lew, C.M. Hall, and A.M. Williams (eds) *The Willey Blackwell Companion to Tourism* (pp. 414-424). Chichester: John Willey.
- Hinch, T., Higham, J., & Moyle, B. D. (2016). Sport tourism and sustainable destinations: Foundations and pathways. *Journal of Sport & Tourism*, 20 (3-4), 163-173.
- Hinch, T., Holt, N., & Sant, S.-L. (2015). Making places through sport tourism events: The case of the Canadian Death Race. *CAUTHE 2015: Rising tides and sea changes: Adaptation and innovation in tourism and hospitality* (pp. 522-524). Gold Coast, Australia: School of Business and Tourism, Southern Cross University.
- Hinch, T., & Kono, S. (2018). Ultramarathon runners' perception of place: A photo-based analysis. *Journal of Sport & Tourism*, 22 (2), 109-130.
- Hodeck, A., & Hovemann, G. (2016). Motivations of active sport tourists in German highland destinations – a cross-seasonal comparison. *Journal of Sport & Tourism*, 20 (3-4), 335-348.
- Holbrook, M., & Hirschman, E. (1982). The experiential aspects of consumption: Consumer fantasies, feelings, and fun. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 9(2), 132-140.
- Holt, N., & Knight, C. (2014). *Parenting in youth sport: From research to practice*. Hoboken, USA: Routledge.

- Hopkins, D. (2014). The sustainability of climate change adaptation strategies in New Zealand's ski industry: A range of stakeholder perceptions. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 22 (1), 107-121.
- Huta, R., & Ryan, R. (2010). Pursuing pleasure or virtue: The differential and overlapping well-being benefits of hedonic and eudaimonic motives. *Journal Of Happiness Studies*, 11, 735-762.
- International Federation of Gymnastics. (2014, January). *History of Rhythmic Gymnastics*. Retrieved January 23, 2017 from <http://www.fig-gymnastics.com/site/page/view?id=423>
- International Federation of Gymnastics. (2016, September 15). *Technical Regulations 2017*.
- International Federation of Gymnastics. (2016, October). *Competition description*. Retrieved January 23, 2017, from <http://www.fig-gymnastics.com/site/page/view?id=424>
- International Federation of Gymnastics. (2015, October 22). *Qualification System – Games of the XXXI Olympiad – Rio 2016*. Retrieved January 27, 2017, from http://www.fig-gymnastics.com/publicdir/rules/files/olympic/GR_OG_Rio_2016_Qualification_System-e.pdf
- International Federation of Gymnastics. (2016, November 28). *Statutes*. Retrieved from http://www.fig-gymnastics.com/publicdir/rules/files/main/20161025_Statutes%202017_E.pdf
- International Federation of Gymnastics. (2016, September 15). *Technical Regulations 2017*. Retrieved from http://www.turnier-der-meister.de/download/doc/2017/en_Technical_Regulations_2017.pdf

- Jago, L., Chalip, L., Brown, G., Mules, T., & Shameem, A. (2003). Building events into destination branding: Insights from experts. *Event Management*, 8 (1), 3-14.
- Jarvis, N., & Blank, C. (2011). The importance of tourism motivations among sport event volunteers of the 2007 World Artistic Gymnastics Championship, Stuttgart, Germany. *Journal of Sport and Tourism*, 16 (2), 129-147.
- Jennings, G. (2010). *Tourism research*. Milton, Australia: John Willey & Sons Australia.
- Johns, D. (1998). Fasting or feasting; Paradoxes of sport ethics. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 15, 41-63.
- Jones, I. (2008). Sport fans and spectators as sport tourists. *Sport & Tourism*, 13 (3), 161-164.
- Jones, I., & Green, C. (2006). Serious leisure, social identity and sport tourism. In H. Gibson (Ed.), *Sport tourism: Concepts and theories* (pp. 32-49). London: Routledge.
- Kaplanidou, K. (2006). Affective event and destination image: Their influence on Olympic travelers' behavioral intentions. *Event Management*, 10 (2-3), 159-173.
- Kaplanidou, K., & Gibson, H. (2012). Event image and traveling parents' intentions to attend youth sport events: A test of the reasoned action model. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 12(1), 3-18.
- Kaplanidou, K., Jordan, J., Funk, D., & Rindinger, L. L. (2012). Recurring sport events and destination image perceptions: Impact on active sport tourist behavioral intentions and place attachment. *Journal of Sport Management*, 26 (3), 237-248.
- Kaplanidou, K., & Vogt, C. (2007). The interrelationship between sport event and destination image and sport tourists' behaviours. *Journal of Sport and Tourism*, 12 (3-4), 183-206.

- Kaplanidou, K., & Vogt, C. (2010). The meaning and measurement of a sport event experience among active sport tourists. *Journal of Sport Management*, 544-566.
- Kaplanidou, K., Kervin, S., & Karadakis, C. (2013). Understanding sport event success: Exploring perceptions of sport event consumers and event providers. *Journal of Sport and Tourism*, 18 (3), 137-159.
- Karpenko, L. (2007). Organizatsia mnogourovnevo funkcionirovaniya sovremennoy khudozhestvennoi gimnastiki [Organization of the multi-level system of the contemporary rhythmic gymnastics]. *Uchenye zapiski (Scientific Proceedings)*, 8 (30), 46-49.
- Kennelly, M., Lamont, M., Hillman, P., & Moyle, B. (2018). Experiences of amateur athletes' non-participating entourage at participatory sport events. *Journal of Sport & Tourism*, doi.org/10.1080/14775085.2018.1559079
- Kerr, R. (2014). From Foucault to Latour: Gymnastics training as a socio-cultural network. *Sociology of sport journal*, 31, 85-101.
- Kerr, R. (2006). The impact of Nadia Comaneci on the sport of women's artistic gymnastics. *Sporting Traditions*, 23 (1), 87-102.
- Kerr, G., & Dacyshyn, A. (2000). The retirement experiences of elite, female gymnasts. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 12 (2), 115-133.
- Kerr, R., & Obel, C. (2015). The disappearance of the perfect 10: Evaluating rule changes in women's artistic gymnastics. *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 32 (2), 318-331.
- King, K. (2012). Encouraging active identities and lifestyles: the spatialities of youth mountain biking. In R. Shipway, & A. Fyall (Eds.), *International sports events: Impacts, experiences and identities* (pp. 181-195). London: Routledge.

- Kristiansen, E., Roberts, G. L.-N., & P.N. Lemyre (2015). The sport parents' and entourage's perspective. In M. Parent & J.L. Chappelet (Eds.), *Routledge handbook of sports event management* (pp. 183-202). London: Routledge.
- Kristiansen, E., Skirstad, B., Parent, M., & Waddington, I. (2015). 'We can do it': Community, resistance, social solidarity, and long-term volunteering at a sport event. *Sport Management Review*, 18, 256-267.
- Kulczycki, C., & Halpenny, E. (2015). Sport cycling tourists' setting preferences, appraisals and attachments. *Journal of Sport and Tourism*, 19(2), 169-197.
- Kulczycki, C., & Hinch, T. (2014). "It's a place to climb": Place meanings of indoor rock climbing. *Leisure/Loisir*, 3(3-4), 271-293.
- Kurtzman, J., & Zauhar, J. (2003). A wave in time - The sports tourism phenomena. *Journal of Sport & Tourism*, 8 (1), 35-47.
- Kyle, G., & Chick, G. (2007). The social construction of a sense of place. *Leisure Sciences*, 29, 209-225.
- Kyle, G. T., & Johnson, C. Y. (2008). Understanding cultural variation in place meaning. In L. E. Kruger, T. E. Hall, & M. C. Stiefel (Tech. Eds.), *Understanding concepts of place in recreation research and management* (pp. 109–134). Gen. Tech. Rep. PNW-GTR-744. Portland, OR: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Pacific Northwest Research Station.
- Lamont, M. (2014). Authentication in sports tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 45, 1-17.
- Lamont, M., Kennelly, M., & Moyle, B. (2015). Non-participating entourage: The

- forgotten crowd in event management research? In E. Wilson, & M. Witsel (Eds.), *Rising Tides and Sea Changes: Adaptation and Innovation in Tourism and Hospitality* (pp. 580-581). Gold Coast, QLD, Australia: Southern Cross University.
- Law, M., Côté, J., & Ericsson, A. (2007). Characteristics of expert development in rhythmic gymnastics: A retrospective study. *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 5 (1), 82-103.
- Lentini, L., & Decortis, F. (2010). Space and places: When interacting with and in physical space becomes a meaningful experience. *Pers Ubiquit Comput*, 14, 407-415.
- Lewicka, M. (2011). Place attachment: How far have we come in the last 40 years? *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 31(3), 201-230.
- Lewis, D. (1860, November 1). New gymnastics for ladies, gentlemen and children. *Boston Journal of Physical Culture*, 8.
- Lodico, M., Spaulding, D., & Voegtgle, K. (Eds.). (2010). *Methods in educational research: From theory to practice*. San-Francisco: A Wiley Imprint.
- Loquet, M. (2016). Promoting artistic quality in rhythmic gymnastics: A didactic analysis from high performance to school practice. *Revista Brasileira de Educação Física e Esporte*, 30 (1), 145-158.
- MacDonald, K., Lamont, M., & Jenkins, J. M. (201). Ultimate fighting championship fans: Foundations of subcultural stratification. *Leisure Sciences*, 2(19).
- Marcotte, N. (2018) National-level governance of elite sport events in Canada: A sport development perspective. Master's Thesis, University of Ottawa, Ottawa, Canada.
- Retrieved from
<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/18aa/8be7260d5489e833ce642b7b00eb02c4df4b.pdf>

- Maier, J., & Weber, W. (1993). Sport tourism in local and regional planning. *Tourism Recreation Research*, 18 (2), 33-43.
- Markula, P., & Silk, M. (2011). *Qualitative research for physical culture*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Martela, F., & Steger, M. F. (2016). The three meanings of the meaning of life: Distinguishing coherence, purpose, and significance. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 11, 531-545.
- Matteucci, X., & Sebastian, F. (2017). Eudaimonic tourist experiences: The case of flamenco. *Leisure Studies*, 36 (1), 39-52.
- Maxwell, J. (2013). *Qualitative research design*. Los Angeles: Sage.
- Mazumdar, C. (2017). Off-script: A formulaic “freedom” in rhythmic gymnastics’ code of points. *Canadian Theatre Review*, 169, 15-19.
- McClinchey, K., & Carmichael, M. (2010). The role and meaning of place in cultural festival experiences. In M. Morgan, P. Lugoci, & J. Ritchie (Eds.), *The tourism and leisure experiences* (pp. 59-77). Bristol: Channel View.
- Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to a design and implementation*. San-Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Mikalauskas, R., Strunz, H., & Afifi, G. (2014). Relationship between sport events and destination image: Some theoretical approaches. *Transformation in Business and Economics*, 13 (2(A)), 297-310.
- Mirehie, M., Gibson, H., Kang, S., & Bell, H. (2019). Parental insights from three elite-level youth sports: Implications for family life. *World Leisure Journal*, 61(2), 98-112.
- Mishra, S. (2014). Nationality and gender in sports photography: A case study of portrayals of figure skaters at Torino Winter Olympics. *Qualitative Research in*

- Sport, Exercise and Health*, 6 (3), 382-400.
- Morgan, M. (2006). Making space for experiences. *Journal of Retail and Leisure Property*, 5(4), 305-313.
- Morgan, M. (2007). "We're not the Barmy Army!: Reflections of the sport tourist experience. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 9, 361-372.
- Moularde, J., & Weaver, A. (2016). Serious about leisure, serious about destinations: Mountain bikers and destination attractiveness. *Journal of Sport & Tourism*, 20 (3-4), 285-303.
- Myburgh, E., Kruger, M., & Saayman, M. (2018). Aspects influencing the commitment of endurance athletes: A tourism perspective. *Journal of Sport & Tourism*, 275-301.
- Nikravesh, R., & Ghasemi Sichani, M. (2015). Recognizing genius loci in designing children's spaces, due to the phenomenological ideas of Norberg-Schulz. *Interdisciplinary Studies in the Humanities*, 7 (1), 145-172.
- Norberg-Schulz, C. (1980). *Genius loci: Towards a phenomenology of architecture*. NY: Rizzoli.
- Oliviera, M. S. (2016). Unveiling the microculture of a high-performance women's artistic gymnastics gymnasium. *Sport Coaching Review*, 5, 205-207.
- O'Connor, P. (2018). Handrails, steps and curbs: Sacred places and secular pilgrimage in skateboarding. *Sport in Society*, 21 (11), 1651-1668.
- O'Reilly, N., Berger, I., Hernandez, T., Parent, M., & Seguin, B. (2015). Urban sportsapes: An environmental deterministic perspective on the management of youth sport participation. *Sport Management Review*, 18, 291-307.
- Parent, M., & Chappellet, J.-L. (2015). Conclusions and future directions for sport event management scholarship. In *Routledge handbook of sports event management*. London: Routledge

- Parent, M., Kristiansen, E., & MacIntosh, E. (2014). Athletes' experiences at the youth Olympic games: Perception, stressors, and discourse paradox. *Event Management, 18*, 303-324.
- Park, R. (2004). For pleasure? Or profit? Or personal health? College gymnasias as contested terrain. In J. Bale, & P. Vertinsky (Eds.), *Sites of sports: Space, place, experience*. London: Routledge.
- Patton, M. (2002). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods*. (3rd, Ed.) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Patton, M. (2015). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods*. (4th, Ed.) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- Pelin, R. (2013). Studies regarding in the rhythmic gymnastics from the Olympic games. *Sport si Societate: Revista de Educatie Fizica, Sport si Stiinte Conexa* (special), 61-65.
- Pine, B. J., & Gilmore, J. H. (1999). *The experience economy: Work is theatre & every business a stage*. Boston, Massachusetts: Harvard Business School Press.
- Prahalad, C., & Ramaswamy, V. (2004). *The future of competitions: Co-creating unique value with customers*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.
- Proshansky, H. (1978). The city and self-identity. *Environment and Behavior, 10* (2), 147-169.
- Ram, Y., Bjork, P., & Weidenfeld, A. (2016). Authenticity and place attachment of major visitor attractions. *Tourism Management, 52*, 110-122.
- Ramshaw, G., & Gammon, S. (2017). Towards a critical sport heritage: Implications for sport tourism. *Journal of Sport & Tourism, 21*(2), 115-131.
- Raitz, K. (1995). *The theatre of sport*. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press.

- Rakic, T., & Chambers, D. (2012). Introducing visual methods to tourism studies. In T. Rakic, & D. Chambers (Eds.), *An introduction to visual research methods in tourism* (pp. 3-15). NY: Routledge.
- Ram, Y., Bjork, P., & Weidenfeld, A. (2016). Authenticity and place attachment of major visitor attractions. *Tourism Management*, 52, 110-122.
- Relph, E. (1976). *Place and placelessness*. London: Pion Limited.
- Relph, E. (2008). A pragmatic sense of place: Exploring concepts and expressions of place through different senses and lenses. In F. Vanclay, M. Higgins, & B. Adam (Eds.), *Making sense of place* (pp. 311-325). Canberra: National Museum of Australia.
- Rhythmic Gymnastics Alberta. (2019, November 25). *Rhythmic Gymnastics Alberta*. Retrieved from <https://rgalberta.com/Results/?q=>
- Rhythmic Gymnastics Events. (2016, May). *2016 Canadian National Championship*. Retrieved October 18, 2017, from Rhythmic Gymnastics Events: <http://www.score2u.com/default.aspx>
- Ryan, R., Deci, E. (2017). *Self-determination theory: Basic psychological needs in motivation, Development, and wellness*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Ryan, R., & Edward, D. (2001). On happiness and human potentials: A review of research on hedonic and eudaimonic well-being. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 52, 141-166.
- Ryff, C., & Singer, B. (2008). Know thyself and become what you are: A eudaimonic approach to psychological well-being. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 9, 13-39.
- Sandelowski, M. (1995). Sample size in qualitative research. *Research in Nursing and Health*, 18 (2), 179-183.
- Saar, M., & Palang, H. (2009). The dimensions of place meanings. *Living Reviews in Landscape*

Research, 3.

<http://lrlr.landscapeonline.de/Articles/lrlr-2009-3/download/lrlr-2009-3Color.pdf>

- Scannell, L., & Gifford, R. (2010). Defining place attachment: A tripartite organizing framework. *Journal of Environmental Psychology, 30* (1), 1-10.
- Scott, A., & Turco, D. (2007). VFRs as a segment of the sport event tourist market. *Journal of Sport Tourism, 12*(1), 41-52.
- Shenton, A. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for Information 22, 22*, 63-75.
- Shipway, R., King, K., Lee, I. S., & Brown, G. (2016). Understanding cycle tourism experiences at the Tour Down Under. *Journal of Sport & Tourism, 20*(1), 21-39.
- Shonk, D., & Chelladurai, P. (2008). Service quality, satisfaction, and intent to return in event sport tourism. *Journal of Sport Management, 22*, 587-602.
- Sin, H. L. (2009). Volunteer tourism: "Involve me and I will learn". *Annals of Tourism, 36*(3), 480-501.
- Skille, E., & Houlihan, B. (2014). The contemporary context of elite youth sport: The role of national sport organisations in the UK and Norway . In D. V. Hanstad, B. Houlihan, & M. M. Parent (Eds.), *The Youth Olympic Games* (pp. 34-51). London: Routledge.
- Smith, A., Brown, G., & Assaker, G. (2017). Olympic experiences: The significance of place. *Event Management, 21*, 281-299.
- Solutions Research Group. (2014, June 10). *Massive competition in pursuit of the \$5.7 billion Canadian youth sports market*. Retrieved August 28, 2017, from Solutions Research Group: <http://www.srgnet.com/2014/06/10/massive-competition-in-pursuit-of-the-5-7-billion-canadian-youth-sports-market/>

- Stake, R. (1995). *The art of case study research*. London, UK: Sage publications.
- Standeven, J., & Knop, P. D. (1998). *Sport Tourism*. Champaign, USA: Human Kinetics.
- Stebbins, R. (1992). *Amateurs, professionals, and serious leisure*. Montreal, Canada: McGill Queen's University Press.
- Stedman, R. (2003). It is really just a social construction?: The contribution of the physical environment to sense of place. *Society and Natural Resources*, 16(8), 671-685.
- Stewart, W. (2008). Place meaning in stories of lived experience. In L. Kruger, T. Hall, & M. Stiefel (Eds.), *Understanding concept of place in recreation research and management* (pp. 83-108). Portland: The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service.
- Strittmatter, A.-M., & Parent, M. (2020). Youth sport events and festivals. In E. MacIntosh, G. Bravo, & M. Li (Eds.), *International Sport Management* (pp. 227-247). Champaign, Illinois, Human Kinetics.
- Tangen, J. (2004). 'Making the space': A sociological perspective on sport and its facilities. *Sport in Society*, 7 (1), 25-48.
- Tuan, Y.-F. (1979). *Landscapes of fear*. Blackwell: Oxford.
- Tuan, Y.-F. (1974). *Topophilia. A study of environmental perception, attitudes, and values*. Englewood Cliffs, USA: Prentice-Hall.
- Tuan, Y. F. (1977). *Space and place: The perspective of experience*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Twigger-Ross, C., & Uzzell, D. (1996). Place and identity processes. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 16, 205-220.

- United Nations. (2010). *International Recommendations for Tourism Statistics 2008*. Retrieved from United Nations Statistics: https://unstats.un.org/unsd/tradeserv/tourism/08-40120%20IRTS%202008_WEB_final%20version%20_22%20February%202010.pdf
- Usmanova-Viner, I., Kruchek, E., Medvedeva, E., & Terehina, R. (2015). *Teoria i metodika khudojestvennoi gimnastiki. Artistichnost' i puti ee formirovania*. Moscow: Sport.
- Vargo, S., & Lusch, R. (2004). Evolving to new dominant logic for marketing. *Journal of Marketing*, 68(1), 1-17.
- Vertinsky, P. (1978). Rhythmic - a sort of physical jubilee: A new look at the contribution of Dio Lewis. *Canadian Journal of History of Sport & Physical Education*, 9(1), 31-42.
- Walker, G., Hinch, T., & Higham, J. (2010). Athletes as tourists: The roles of mode of experience and achievement orientation. *Journal of Sport & Tourism*, 15 (4), 287-305.
- Weed, M. (2006). Sport tourism research 2000-2004: A systematic review of knowledge and a meta-evaluation of method. *Journal of Sport & Tourism*, 11, 5-30.
- Weed, M. (2007). *Olympic tourism*. London: Routledge.
- Weed, M. (2009). Progress in sports tourism research? A meta-review and exploration of futures. *Tourism Management*, 30, 615-628.
- Weed, M., & Bull, C. (2004). *Sport tourism: Participants, policy, and providers*. Oxford: Elsevier.
- Weed, M., & Bull, C. (2009). *Sports tourism: Participants, policy and providers*. Oxford: Elsevier.
- White, R., & Williams, A. (2015). Resilience in youth sport: A qualitative investigation

- of gymnastics coach and athlete perception. *International Journal of Sport Science and Coaching*, 10, 379-374.
- Wicker, P. (2017). Volunteerism and volunteer management in sport. *Sport Management Review*, 20, 325-337.
- Wood, E., & Kenyon, A. (2018). Remembering together: The importance of shared emotional memory in event experiences. *Event Management*, 163-181.
- Woratschek, H., Horbel, C., & Popp, B. (2014). Value co-creation in sport management. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 14(1), 1-5.
- Wynveen, C., Kyle, G., & Sutton, S. (2012). Natural area visitors' place meaning and place attachment ascribed to a marine setting. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 32(4), 287-296
- Yastrjembaskaya, N., & Titov, Y. (1998). *Rhythmic Gymnastics*. Champaign, IL, USA: Human Kinetics.
- Yin, R. (2014). *Case study research*. Los Angeles: Sage.
- Yuksel, A., Yuksel, F., & Bilim, Y. (2009). Destination attachment: Effects on customer satisfaction and cognitive, affective and conative loyalty. *Tourism Management*, 31, 274-284.

Appendix A: Interview Guide for Athletes

Introductions/Background:

- Introduce myself,
- Share my rhythmic gymnastics (RG) story,
- Explain the essence of this component of my PhD research project (e.g., to find out what the spatial settings of this rhythmic gymnastics championship mean to you). I am trying to understand more about the ways that athletes experience place during the 2017 CCRG sport event.
- Structure: this interview will be structured around four different aspects of space: 1) training and performing space; 2) emotional aspects of performing space; 3) parents' support, 4) RG competition as a travel destination.

Place experience of gymnasts

A. Training and performing space

- a. What do you like more: training or competing/performing? Why?
- b. What do you see as the differences between spaces for training and spaces for performing/competing?
- c. How would you describe your training space to a friend, who has never seen it?
- d. How would you describe the typical spaces that you compete to a friend who has never been to a rhythmic gymnastics event?
- e. How would you describe an athlete (yourself) who is executing her routine?
- f. What can you tell me about a gymnast's body and how it relates to the competition space?

Show Photo A: Competition space

- a. What do you see as the most important elements of this picture of the competition space? Why?
- b. Do you think that gymnast's leotard/costume is important in the competition space? Why?
- c. Does the shape and arrangement of the gym impact your performance? What do you need for the perfect execution of your routine(s)?

Show Photo B: Kinsmen Sport Centre

- a. How would you describe Kinsmen Sports Centre to a friend who never been there?

- b. What changes would you recommend for organizers of the event that would improve the overall venue from your perspective as an athlete and why?
- c. What other areas of the venue beyond the gym do you use? How important are they to your experience?
- d. What do you really like about the venue? Why?
- e. What don't you like about the venue? Why?
- f. Describe an ideal facility to host this type of competition.

B. Emotional aspects of performing space

- a. Do you like to compete? Why?
- b. Did you enjoy this event? What feelings or emotions did you have in terms of this competition space?
- c. The event in Edmonton was a national championship. Did you feel pride for the country when you competed? Why?

C. Parents

- a. Do you need your parent's support in terms of travel to competitions? Why?
- b. Do your parents support you in other aspects of your RG involvement? If yes, why and how do they support you?

D. RG competition as a travel destination

- a. Do you like to travel to other cities/countries for competitions? Why?
- b. What has been your favourite city to compete in and why?
- c. What was your least favourite city and why?
- d. How do you feel when you travel to competitions? Why?
- e. Describe any activities that you typically do in these host cities away from the competition venue.

Show photo C: Edmonton

- a. How would you describe the city of Edmonton to a friend who never has been here?
- b. Would you come back to Edmonton for purposes not related to RG? Why?
- c. What did you like about the city of Edmonton during your visit for the 2017 CCRG?
- d. What didn't you like about the city during your visit for the 2017 CCRG?
- e. What is your strongest memory of Edmonton other than your participation in the 2017 CCRG?

- a. What was your strongest memory of the 2017 CCRG event?
- b. Do you feel emotional engagement in RG community involvement? If yes, what kind of feeling is that?
 - a. As an athlete, did you like how the 2017 CCRG was organized? Why?
 - b. What would you suggest changing in organization of the event in order to be successful?

Appendix B: Photo of the Competition Space



Appendix C: Photo of the Venue



Appendix D: Photo of the Host City



Appendix E: Information Letter for Athletes, Parents and Event Organizers

April 13, 2017

I am a PhD student in the Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation at the University of Alberta, and I am inviting you to take part in a research study.

What is the purpose of the study?

I would like to ask you about the way you experienced rhythmic gymnastics settings as an athlete at the 2017 Canadian Championships in Rhythmic Gymnastics in terms of: 1) the competition space (gym), 2) the venue more generally (Kinsmen Sport Centre) and 3) the host city of Edmonton. Your perspective of these spaces is important for planning future competitions.

What are you being asked to do?

You are being asked to participate in an interview two to three weeks after the 2017 Canadian Championships in Rhythmic Gymnastics. The interview will be conducted via Skype or another communication program such as Facebook, Face Time, WhatsApp, or by telephone while you are at home. It will take about 30 to 60 minutes.

What are the risks for you?

There are no significant risks related to your participation in the study.

What are the benefits?

There are no direct benefits for participants. However, an indirect benefit is that study results will be shared with decision makers who can use this information to plan future events.

Do you have to take part in the study?

No, the study is voluntary, and you may withdraw and have your data removed up to 30 days after your interview.

Will my information be kept confidential?

Yes, we will not use your name in any reports or publications related to this study. We will attribute direct quotes to one of the following groups: athletes, parents of athletes, and event organizers.

Other Important Information

We will keep all raw data private. Data will be kept locked in an office. Only the research team will have access to the data. We are required to keep the data for five years after the study has been completed at which time the data will be destroyed. We will present the results at conferences and in academic journals.

This study has been approved by the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board. Any questions you may have about this study may be directed to Aisulu Abdykadyrova at 587-335-7348. Questions about your rights as a research participant may be directed to the University of Alberta Research Ethics Office at 780-492-2615.

Sincerely,
Aisulu Abdykadyrova

Appendix F: Interview Guide for Parents

Introductions/Background:

- Introduce myself,
- Share my rhythmic gymnastics (RG) story,
- Explain the essence of this component of my PhD research project (e.g., to find out what the spatial settings of this rhythmic gymnastics championship mean to you). I am trying to understand more about the ways that parents experience place during the 2017 CCRG sport event.
- Structure: this interview will be structured around three different scales of space: 1) the competition area; 2) the larger venue (i.e. Kinsmen Sports Centre); and 3) the host city (i.e., Edmonton)

Place experience of parents

A. General

- a. Do you think that the spaces that your daughter competes in make a difference to her performance? Why?
- b. Is there a difference between training and performing/competing space? In what way?

B. Nature of parental involvement with RG

- a. What kind of support do you provide to your daughter in terms of the involvement to RG.?
- b. Do you often travel with your daughter to competitions? Why?
- c. How often do you travel?
- d. Why do you accompany your daughter to the 2017 CCRG?

C. Emotional aspects of performing space

- a. What is the most important feeling about 2017 RG CC for you?
- b. Do you feel that you are emotionally engaged in the competition? If yes, in what way?
- c. Are you enjoying this event? What feelings or emotions do you have in terms of this competition space?
- d. What did you feel when your daughter performed today?

- e. What does it mean to you to have your daughter competing in a national championship? How is that feeling connected with place?

D. Competition/Performing Space

- a. How would you describe the competing space at this championship to a friend who has never seen a rhythmic gymnastics event?
- b. How would you describe today's competing space to a friend who is familiar with rhythmic gymnastics but who is not at this competition?
- c. How would you describe an athlete who is executing her routine? What can you say about gymnast's body and her movement in the competition space?
- d. Is gymnast's outfit, leotard important when she is competing? Why do you think so?

Show Photo A: Competition Space

- e. What do you see as the most important elements of this picture of the competition space? Why?
- f. During the competition you are in RG community. Did you experience it at the 2017 RG CC? How did you experience?
- g. What changes would you recommend that would improve the competition space from your perspective as a parent? Why?

E. The Venue – Kinsmen Sports Centre

Show Photo B: Venue

- a. How would you describe this photo of Kinsmen Sports Centre to a friend who has never been there?
- b. What changes would you recommend that would improve the overall venue from your perspective as a parent? Why?
- c. What other areas of the venue beyond the gym do you use? How important are they to your experience?

D. The City – Edmonton

- a. Do you like to travel to other cities/countries for competitions? Why?
- b. How do you feel when you travel for competitions? Why?
- c. Describe any activities that you typically do in these host cities away from the competition venue.

- d. What changes would you recommend for future RGCC to improve the experience of parents? Why?
- e. What changes would you recommend for future RGCC to improve the experience of athletes? Why?
- f. How does this event compare to other competitions that your daughter has participated in that were away from your home city?
- g. What recommendations would you make to Gymnastics Canada in terms of the criteria that they use to select host cities from your perspective as a parent of one of the competing gymnasts?
- h. What has been your favourite city that your daughter has competed in and why?
- i. What was your least favourite city and why?
- j. Do you generally like or dislike travelling to these competitions? Why?

Show Photo C: City of Edmonton

- k. How would you describe the city of Edmonton to a friend who has never been here?
- l. What kind of other activities in addition to attending the competition have you done or do you plan on doing in Edmonton during the competition weekend?
- m. Was the fact that Edmonton was the host city for the event a factor in your decision to come to the event? Why?
- n. Would you come back to Edmonton for purposes not related to RG? Why?
- o. What have you liked or not liked Edmonton and the 2017 RG CC?
- p. What is your strongest memory of Edmonton other than your participation in the 2017 CCRG?

Appendix G: Recruiting Poster

Dear parents and competing athletes

You are invited to participate in a study on

**PLACE MEANINGS AT THE 2017 CANADIAN
CHAMPIONSHIPS IN RHYTHMIC GYMNASTICS**

May 18-21, 2017, Kinsmen Sports Centre

Edmonton, Alberta

Purpose of the study is gain insight into the way that gymnasts, their parents, and organizers understand the competition space, venue and host city at the 2017 Canadian Championships in Rhythmic Gymnastics.

Interviews will be conducted with parents during the event and with athletes via Skype or telephone after the event.

Please contact Aisulu Abdykadyrova for further information a
Phone: +1 (587)335-7348



Appendix H: Interview Guide for Event Organizers (GCG)

Background:

- Introduce myself
- Share my rhythmic gymnastics (RG) story
- The essence of this component of my PhD research project is to find out how you or your organization tried to shape the settings of the 2017 CCRG sport event.
- This study is structured around three different scales of space: 1) the competition area; 2) the larger competition venue (i.e. Kinsmen Sports Centre); and 3) the host city (i.e., Edmonton). However, in this interview we'll focus on the areas that are most relevant to you and your organization.

Interview Questions

Gymnastic Canada Gymnastique representative(s):

A. Competition space

- a. How would you describe competition/performance space for this event?
- b. What specific components does it contain and what is the function of each component? How do they relate to each other? Why did you structure the competition space in this way?
- c. Do the configurations of these spaces vary from competition to competition? Have the regulations governing the configuration of this space changed over time?
- d. What kind of experiences was this space meant to foster for: 1) the gymnasts, 2) the judges, 3) the coaches, 4) spectators, 5) parents and family of gymnasts, etc?
- e. What do you see as the strength of this space?
What do you see as the challenges of the space?

B. The venue

- f. How would you describe the Kinsmen Sports Centre?
- g. Is the venue well suited to host an event like the 2017 RGCC? Did it have to meet specific criteria to host this event?
- h. Do you provide space/conditions for athletes and spectators that facilitate social interaction beyond the actual competition? If yes, what kind of space/place or

conditions?

- i. Are there other aspects of the venue (e.g. food concessions, additional functional areas, location, park land etc.) that make it attractive to host such events?
- C. The host city as a travel destination
- j. Why did your organization support the bid to host this event in Edmonton? Why did you choose Edmonton to host 2017 RGCC?
 - k. What criteria were used to determine the host city beyond the technical requirements of the competition space?
 - l. Does location play an important role when you choose host city for such sport events? Why?
 - m. What kind of working relationship did you have with Rhythmic Gymnastics Alberta and City of Edmonton (Events Edmonton)?
 - n. When you planned 2017 RGCC did you consider it as a tourist attraction? Why?
 - o. Do you think that 2017 RGCC functioned as a tourist attraction?
 - p. What kind of image of Edmonton as a host city do you think that visiting athletes, parents, coaches, officials, etc had before they came to the 2017 RGCC? Why?
 - q. What kind of image of Edmonton as a host city do you think that they left with after their experience with the 2017 RGCC? Why?
 - r. Did you try to foster a positive place experience in Edmonton? Do you think it is good idea to collaborate with destination marketers in order to advertise and promote this event? Or it is not necessary for your organization?
 - s. You have your own media. What is the main purpose of the media - promote the event or the community? Why?
 - t. As an event organizer did you feel special atmosphere connected with the competition space, a venue or host city of the event at the event? How or why?
 - u. How would you describe a social and cultural environment of the event?
Can you name unique characteristics of the 2017 RGCC?
 - v. Do you think that 2017 RGCC is a place to share a subculture? Why? What kind of conditions did you create for the community?
 - w. What would you do differently in terms of similar events in the future?

Appendix I: Interview Guide: Rhythmic Gymnastics Alberta representative(s):

A. Competition space

- a. How would you describe competition/performance space for this event?
- b. What specific components does it contain and what is the function of each component? How do they relate to each other? Why did you structure the competition space in this way?
- c. Do the configurations of these spaces vary from competition to competition?
- d. Have the regulations governing the configuration of this space changed over time?
- e. What kind of experiences was this space meant to foster for: 1) the gymnasts, 2) the judges, 3) the coaches, 4) spectators, 5) parents and family of gymnasts, etc?
- f. What do you see as the strength of this space?
- g. What do you see as the challenges of the space?

B. The venue

- a. How would you describe the Kinsmen Sports Centre?
- b. Is the venue well suited to host an event like the 2017 RGCC? Did it have to meet specific criteria to host this event?
- c. Do you provide space/conditions for athletes and spectators that facilitate social interaction beyond the actual competition? If yes, what kind of space/place or conditions?
- d. Are there other aspects of the venue (e.g. food concessions, additional functional areas, location, park land etc.) that make it attractive to host such events?

C. The host city as a travel destination

- a. Why did you choose Edmonton to host 2017 RGCC? What criteria were used to determine the host city beyond the technical requirements of the competition space?
- b. Does location play an important role when you choose host city for such sport events?
- c. When you planned 2017 RGCC did you consider it as a tourist attraction? Why?
- d. Do you think that 2017 RGCC functioned as a tourist attraction?
- e. What kind of image of Edmonton as a host city do you think that visiting athletes, parents, coaches, officials, etc had before they came to the 2017 RGCC? Why?
- f. What kind of image of Edmonton as a host city do you think that they left with after their experience with the 2017 RGCC? Why?

- g. How was your organization involved in shaping this image of the host community?
- h. What are the opportunities and what are the challenges from the perspective of your organization in terms of fostering a positive experience in Edmonton?
- i. Do you think it is good idea to collaborate with destination marketers in order to advertise and promote this event? Or it is not necessary?
- j. Did you invite media to the event? What do you think, did media promote the event more than community? Why?
- k. As an event organizer did you feel special atmosphere connected with the competition space, a venue or host city of the event at the event? How or why?
- l. How would you describe a social and cultural environment of the event?
- m. Can you name unique characteristics of the 2017 RGCC?
- n. Do you think that 2017 RGCC is a place to share a subculture? Why? What kind of conditions did you create for the community?
- o. What would you do differently in terms of similar events in the future?

Appendix J: Interview Guide: City of Edmonton Representative (Kinsmen Sports Centre)

Competition space

- How would you describe competition/performance space for this event?
- What specific components does it contain and what is the function of each component? How do they relate to each other? Why did you structure the competition space in this way?
- Do the configurations of these spaces vary from competition to competition?
- Have the regulations governing the configuration of this space changed over time?
- What kind of experiences was this space meant to foster for: 1) the gymnasts, 2) the judges, 3) the coaches, 4) spectators, 5) parents and family of gymnasts, etc?
- What do you see as the strength of this space?
- What do you see as the challenges of the space?

B. The venue

- a. How would you describe the Kinsmen Sports Centre?
- b. Is the venue well suited to host an event like the 2017 RGCC? Did it have to meet specific criteria to host this event?
- c. Do you provide space/conditions for athletes and spectators that facilitate social interaction beyond the actual competition? If yes, what kind of space/place or conditions?
- d. Are there other aspects of the venue (e.g. food concessions, additional functional areas, location, park land etc.) that make it attractive to host such events? How?

Appendix K: Interview Guide: City of Edmonton Representative (Edmonton Events)

A. Sport events as tourist attractions

- a. Why did you decide to fund this event?
- b. Did you participate in organization of 2017 RGCC? What kind of working relationship did you have with Gymnastics Canada Gymnastique and Rhythmic Gymnastic Alberta?
- c. When you planned 2017 RGCC did you consider it as a tourist attraction? Why?
- d. How did 2017 RGCC function as a tourist attraction?
- e. Do you think sport events like the 2017 RGCC shape destination image? Why? Why not?
- f. As an agency with a tourism mandate, what do you see as the challenges and what do you see as the primary benefits of collaborating with sport organizations like Gymnastics Canada/Rhythmic Gymnastics Alberta to host this type of event?
- g. What kind of place experience (in the city of Edmonton) did you want visitors involved in the 2017 RGCC to have?
- h. What actions did you or the other organizations involved in promoting and staging the event do to foster this type of experience?
- i. What would you do differently in terms of similar events in the future?
- j. What kind of city image your organization tries to create with such sport events?
- k. What are the opportunities and what are the challenges from the perspective of your organization in terms of fostering a positive experience in Edmonton?