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Patrick Bondy, Howard Ramos

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# Arenas of Solitude: Social Forms and Textures of Togetherness in Hockey

PATRICK BONDY and HOWARD RAMOS

**Abstract:** Hockey and hockey arenas are often touted as pillars of Canadian identity and community. However, recent debates over inclusion in the sport question the game's ability to facilitate social and cultural integration. This paper analyzes different forms of social interaction in hockey and hockey arenas in Halifax, Nova Scotia. In doing so, the paper identifies three social forms that hockey players and parents produce and reproduce in arenas. These are "friendliness without friendship," "ritual togetherness," and "transactional relationships." Each form has textures of solitude embedded within the social form and has different social boundaries that separate in-and out-group members. We consider our findings in relation to literature on friendliness, solitude, and socio-cultural integration, as well as Atlantic Canadian and Canadian studies.

**Keywords:** social interaction, hockey, integration, solitudes, multiculturalism, sport

**Résumé :** Le hockey et les arénas sont souvent présentés comme des piliers de l'identité et de la société canadiennes. Toutefois, les récents débats sur l'inclusion dans ce sport remettent en question la capacité du jeu à faciliter l'intégration sociale et culturelle. L'article analyse les différentes formes d'interaction sociale dans le hockey et les arénas de Halifax, en Nouvelle-Écosse. Ce faisant, il détermine trois formes sociales que les joueurs de hockey et leurs parents produisent et reproduisent dans les arénas : la « convivialité sans amitié », la « convivialité rituelle » et les « relations transactionnelles ». Chaque forme comporte des textures de solitude intégrées à la forme sociale et des frontières sociales différentes qui séparent les membres du groupe de ceux qui n'en font pas partie. Les auteurs envisagent leurs résultats par rapport à la littérature sur la convivialité, la solitude et l'intégration socioculturelle, ainsi que par rapport aux études sur le Canada atlantique et le Canada.

**Mots clés :** interaction sociale, hockey, intégration, solitudes, multiculturalisme, sport

According to the 2013 General Social Survey, 77 percent of Canadians felt that hockey was an important national symbol (Sinha 2015). Global Affairs Canada suggests the sport is a good topic for newcomers to make conversation with Canadians (Hristova 2019). The widespread popularity of the game and its central place in Canadian national identity mean the sport, as well as the arenas where it is played and watched, can foster togetherness among Canadians. Hence, hockey and hockey arenas have the potential to be what Dib, Donaldson, and Turcotte (2008, 162) refer to as "multicultural common spaces." These are places and activities that draw a diverse cross-section of people together and which foster common bonds, experiences, and understandings.

Although hockey has national prominence and symbolic importance in Canada, the game's dark side is undeniable. Hockey and hockey arenas have been sites of tension between language groups (Denis and Dallaire 2000), racist taunts (Palmer 2018; CBC News 2019) and other forms of social exclusion (see Ellison and Anderson 2018). Szto (2016, 2018) argues that hockey's social norms and practices may be inconsistent with the value Canada places on multiculturalism. Because both hockey and multiculturalism are entwined with Canadian identity, the disjuncture between the two is important to engage. This is especially true given that, according to the 2016 Census, more than one in five Canadians is racialized and one in five Canadians is a newcomer (Statistics Canada 2017). As a result, the future of the game may rest on its ability to act as a multicultural common space.

Understanding whether hockey and hockey arenas are acting as such spaces requires looking at more than the space itself or the demographics of those present in the space, which were which were largely the focus of Dib, Donaldson, and Turcotte (2008). It is also necessary to understand the types of social interactions fostered by, and manifest in, those spaces. Exploring the prominent social patterns of a particular space and identifying how they promote or inhibit togetherness offers insight into whether spaces can promote inclusion.

For this reason, we explore the social dynamics of hockey and hockey arenas. We draw upon observations of and interviews with hockey players and parents in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and consider the forms of interaction they have in different spaces of the game. We identify three social forms that shape hockey spaces and their potential to promote inclusivity: friendliness without friendship, ritual togetherness, and transactional relationships. Each of these forms allow people to be simultaneously close and distant with each other through the game and in hockey arenas. The intricacies of these forms make hockey and hockey arenas difficult spaces to integrate into for newcomers.

We begin our paper by reviewing literature on social forms and identify solitude, ritual, and transactions as key forms that characterize and shape hockey relations and forms of togetherness. We then describe the research methods used and discuss our field site of Halifax. This is followed by an analysis of our data and discussion of different social forms and the textures of solitude that exist within each of them.

### **Social Forms and Hockey**

The multicultural space literature largely assumes that sharing spaces increases interactions and, in turn, can foster common bonds and degrees of togetherness. Dib, Donaldson, and Turcotte (2008), for instance, consider workplaces, educational institutions, family units, consumer markets, government service outlets, and political parties as multicultural spaces because of the social capital generated by diverse populations in those spaces. They also consider the types of products such spaces produce,

such as common historical narratives or cultural products, and they address some of the challenges different racialized groups and newcomers face when engaging such spaces. However, they spend less time exploring the forms of social interactions people have in these spaces and the forms those interactions take, which shape the spaces and their products. To truly promote inclusive spaces, researchers and policy makers need to also consider the types of interactions people have in shared spaces.

To this end, Georg Simmel's scholarship on social patterns and spaces is useful in developing an understanding of how togetherness is constructed. The difference between "content" and "form" is fundamental (1950, 21–22). Content refers to the specific social interactions in a given domain or field; form refers to the durable patterns of relations that pervade and persist beyond the specific content. Simmel describes social forms as the "grammar" of social life (22). Simmel theorized humans' experience of early twentieth-century cities using this content-form approach (1950, 409–424). He argued that the city's overwhelming emphasis on wealth generation and breaking up of time into measurable bits inculcated in people a "blasé attitude"—a social pattern or form that rendered citizens uninterested strangers to one another. This links well to Simmel's analysis of the stranger as a social form, which he claims is marked by a combination of social nearness and distance (1971). In using Simmel's work, Horgan (2012, 610–617) underscores the importance of form and relationship by extending the concept of the stranger to analyze "strangerness," which he treats as a range of possible relations that share presence in space and the mutual recognition of each other as strangers. In other words, Horgan encourages thinking about the textures of relationships or forms of togetherness.

One of the quintessential social forms used to describe group relations in Canada is "solitude." It is also a form that has ties to Simmel and can be deployed to discuss different textures of what Horgan defined as strangeness. The idea of solitude entered Canada's public consciousness through Hugh MacLennan's novel, *Two Solitudes* (1945), which documented how francophones and anglophones in Québec lived parallel lives side-by-side without fully engaging the other. The title of MacLennan's work was taken from the Bohemian-Austrian poet Rainer Maria Rilke's observation that a healthy marriage is built upon love that consists in "two solitudes that meet, protect, and greet each other" (Rilke 1962, 60; Cameron 1981). Interestingly, Georg Simmel was a contemporary of Rilke and influenced his thinking on solitude. Rilke then influenced MacLennan, who used the concept of solitude as a social form to understand how the physical proximity and near-absence of social interaction could persist between Québec's anglophone and francophone populations. While solitude, as discussed by Simmel (1950) and extended by Horgan (2012) through strangeness, is a texture of inter-personal relations, the solitude in MacLennan's work is about inter-group solitude that manifests in degrees of inter-personal interactions. For this reason, one might contend that solitude is a quintessential form for multicultural spaces in Canada.

In terms of hockey and hockey scholarship, the conceptual lenses of solitude and two solitudes have provided ways of understanding how Québec and the rest of Canada (hereafter RoC) react differently to the same events. The death of hockey legend Maurice “the Rocket” Richard, for example, had significantly more meaning in Québec, where he was considered a national icon, than in RoC, where he was merely a hockey player (Ramos and Gosine 2002). Similarly, 1990s National Hockey League (NHL) star Eric Lindros’s refusal to play for the Québec Nordiques and the forced trade that followed showed how Québécois and RoC audiences interpret the same hockey events very differently (Turcot 2018). Roch Carrier’s short story *The Hockey Sweater* (Carrier and Cohen 1984) is yet another example of this social form. The classic tale is about a francophone Québécois child who is a loyal fan of the Montréal Canadiens and Maurice Richard. The boy, to his horror, receives a Toronto Maple Leafs sweater instead of a Montréal Canadiens sweater. His mother had mistakenly ordered the wrong sweater, a symbol of English rather than French Canada. The story’s popularity among Canadian audiences (Frederiksen, McLeman, and Elcombe 2018) speaks to the shared experience of solitudes across the country. The linkages between solitude, Canada, and hockey also suggest that solitude, or something like it, may be a social form at play in hockey arenas today and has consequences for social and cultural integration.

Since this original deployment of solitude in reference to Québec-RoC relations, scholars have used the term to think about inter-group relations in Canada more broadly. Donohue (1997) argues that Indigenous peoples constitute a “third solitude,” beyond the understanding and concern of either of Canada’s two founding European peoples (316). Other scholarship, whether endorsing (Pelletier and Cheadle 2007) or critical (Bissoondath 1994), argues Canada is a place of many solitudes by virtue of its multicultural policy and ethno-racial diversity. Savoie (2013) deploys the form of solitude in reference to diverse, sometimes conflicting, economic interests of Canada’s regions.

Solitude in Canada beyond Québec-RoC relations is also visible in hockey scholarship. For example, Indigenous peoples’ experiences with hockey are frequently marginalized (Robidoux 2006) and residential schools used hockey as a tool in their colonizing project (see Wagamese 2012; McKeegney 2018). African Nova Scotians’ achievements in the Coloured Hockey League of the early twentieth century are largely absent from the game’s lore, and African Canadians continue to face discrimination in hockey (see Fosty and Fosty 2008; Harris 2003). More recent immigrant groups, such as Punjabi Canadians, have engaged in hockey despite receiving a mixed welcome from dominant groups in Canada, leading to a paradoxical relationship with the game (Szto 2016, 2018). In each of these cases, subdominant groups play the game and engage it, but they do so with different social or cultural interactions, relations, and understandings of the events and the game.

Likewise, such solitude can be seen with gender as well. Despite growing participation in women’s hockey, it does not have representative power in Canada’s public imagination (Adams 2006). For example, when the women’s hockey team won a gold medal

at the 2002 Winter Olympics, it was only a gold medal, and not a national victory in the way media outlets framed the men's gold medal win (Adams 2006). The experience of women's hockey contrasts sharply as well with the representative power of male Junior hockey as seen in the outpouring of national grief that emerged following the crash and death of over a dozen Humboldt Broncos Junior A (16–20 year old, competitive) players in 2018 (Kennedy et al. 2019). Multiple, overlapping solitudes exist across a broad range of national, ethnic, racial, and gender groups in Canada.

Rituals are also a social form that has consequences for textures of togetherness, social ties, and strangership. The ties between rituals and sport, moreover, are strong. To understand the role of rituals in society, no other scholar is as important as Émile Durkheim. He argued that ritual was essential to the maintenance of early human societies (1995). Group members affirm and re-affirm their collective solidarity, he argued, through elaborate rituals and the worship of agreed-upon symbols. He argued that when societies worship such symbols—what he called “totems”—they worshiped an embodiment of their own society (1995, 100). The totem's efficacy works through powerful social experiences of gathering and affirmation. Durkheim referred to the energy produced by such group-affirming gatherings as “collective effervescence,” “energy,” or “electricity” (208–225). While Durkheim was interested in the origins of religious phenomena, the relationship between group cohesion, symbols, and powerful experiences helps make sense of a wide array of social phenomena. Ritual, however, needs to be problematized as it can also produce boundaries between those participating in the ritual and those not participating in it. It can also produce boundaries among ritual participants if they are participating to unequal degrees. Disagreement about the social boundaries at play can incite conflict or a breakdown of communication. This means that there is a texture of solitude in rituals.

Sporting events function as rituals that affirm and re-affirm identity in the same way that the gatherings Durkheim (1995) studied affirmed people's group identities (Birrell 1981). In Canada, hockey can and has been put to work for the sake of national collective effervescence and the re-affirmation of Canadian national identity. The singing of the Canadian national anthem and frequent references to the Canadian armed forces (Allain 2011) in hockey broadcasts and during events demonstrate this. Elite men's hockey draws symbolic power from likening its players to soldiers: for example, the Canadian Hockey League, Canada's most competitive hockey league for 16–20 year olds, calls its championship tournament the Memorial Cup in honour of fallen soldiers in the First World War. Ritual togetherness is a social form that overcomes gaps created through relations defined by solitude and can create common identity. Nevertheless, the dynamics of ritual in hockey can also exclude groups. At the international level, individuals and institutions affirm hockey as a Canadian national symbol against “others” (Allain 2016, 2019; Bekkering 2015). As can be seen with these examples, rituals create togetherness through shared interactions, experience and feeling, but also have degrees of solitude depending on social position.

Transactionality is yet another social form that characterizes relationships and identity in neoliberal North America. It is based on the exchange of goods and services and the interactions emerging from these exchanges. In such interactions, actors accomplish short-term tasks and do not expand or otherwise modify pre-existing social boundaries (Brainard and McNutt 2010; Enos and Morton 2003). In other words, transactional relationships can be said to be effective and shallow; one might argue that they promote solitude. Scholars such as Bass (1990) and Thompson and Jesiek (2017) claim transactional relationships are inferior to other, deeper forms of engagement. However, Clayton et al. (2010) argue that transactionality can be a meaningful form of social interaction, depending on the circumstances.

In popular discourse, there has been a rise in concern over transactional affiliations and fleeting loyalties, where people show lower levels of attachment to specific teams and sports. Globalization and the flows of global capital have rendered sport a more money-based and arguably transactional affair (Giulianotti and Robertson 2007). With respect to hockey in Canada, the furor created by the trade of Wayne Gretzky to the American-based Los Angeles Kings in the late 1980s vividly illustrates this anger over perceived transactionality in the sport (see Jackson and Ponik 2001; Wong and Trumper 2002). The trade was portrayed by Canadian media as “selling” a national icon (Jackson and Ponik 2001). Similar dynamics were behind the Lindros affair noted earlier, when he was traded from the Québec Nordiques to the Philadelphia Flyers. Moreover, Canadian-born National Hockey League players increasingly come from suburban backgrounds, where they have access to highly specialized physical and mental training and year-round ice, in contrast to previous decades, when many hockey players came from rural backgrounds and did not have for-pay, specialized training (Kaida and Kitchen 2020). In other words, the professionalization of the game has made it more transactional and created greater potential for solitude among those engaging hockey spaces.

In the rest of the paper we examine hockey, hockey arenas, and the textures of solitude and interaction within them. In doing so, we explore friendliness, rituals, and transactional relations as contours of key social forms pertaining to solitudes and togetherness. We examine these forms of relationship to explore whether or not hockey can be a potential multicultural common space and to see how the different forms of interaction work on the ground and through everyday interactions.

### **Exploring Social Forms in Hockey and Arenas**

To explore hockey’s social forms and how people navigate them, we rely on two research methods: semi-structured interviews as well as participant observation in hockey arenas. This paper draws upon 40 interviews conducted in Halifax. The 40 participants we interviewed included 17 players, 12 parents, 6 coaches and other volunteers with minor hockey

associations, who we consider key informants, as well as 5 fans. We considered family members, friends, or acquaintances of players, or people going to the arena as a social outing who lack ties to the players as fans. Many participants had multiple roles. For instance, a parent could be a coach or a player could be a fan for their sibling or friend's game. In these cases, we coded people by their most salient hockey identity. The findings of this paper focus on hockey players and their parents. At certain points in the paper, though, we include fan participant interviews to illustrate when findings are not particular to hockey players and their parents, but are also shared by others involved in the game. Among those interviewed, nine interview participants were immigrants. Six identified as visible minority, and two identified as visible minority immigrants. In our interviews, we asked participants if they enjoyed their time in hockey arenas, and what about hockey arenas made them enjoyable or not. We asked participants whether they had formed friendships through hockey and, if so, what the nature of those friendships were. We likewise asked if participants thought hockey was "Canadian," and why or why not. The interviews generally lasted 40 minutes, and each participant received a small gift card for their participation. We believe our interviews gave us the chance to probe for participants' experiences of hockey and hockey arenas, while following a roughly standardized format that allowed for comparison of interview results.

We also conducted 43 observations at 8 different hockey arenas in Halifax during the period from November 2018 to September 2019. In arenas we documented the types of interactions people had and noted conversations that could be overheard, as well as the demographics of players, parents, and fans. The majority of people in the arenas were visibly White; however, we did observe racialized people and immigrants in arenas. The games we attended ranged from Peewee-level games (11–12 year olds) to Halifax Mooseheads games, who play in the Québec Major Junior Hockey League which falls under the umbrella Canadian Hockey League. Those games are played by 16–20 year olds, the best of whom will be drafted by teams in the NHL. We attended regular season and playoff games played by the Mooseheads and attended every game of the 2019 Memorial Cup that Halifax hosted. In addition to games, we also attended a variety of hockey events in arenas, including special programs for new hockey players, fundraiser hockey games, and a Learn to Skate program. While attending all hockey-related events, we looked for forms of social life across hockey contexts.

We include a wide range of spaces for several reasons. First, the players and parents we interviewed—many of whom also identify as fans—moved across the range of spaces we observed. Including each of the spaces in the analysis is thus needed to understand our participants' experiences of hockey and social life. Second, the differences between these spaces are not as great as might first appear. Although the Mooseheads are an elite and competitive hockey team that plays in the 10,000 seat Scotiabank Centre in downtown Halifax, several interview participants had personally skated or played hockey on that ice



sheet, or they had family members who had. Some played at that arena through minor hockey or adult hockey, and others played as young ‘Timbit’—six years old or younger events—during the first period intermission of Moosehead games. To hockey parents and fans in Halifax, the Scotiabank Centre can feel impressive in its size but also familiar. It is also a space where people who may not play the game could be potentially first introduced to it. Last, and most importantly, the methodological choice to include a wide range of hockey spaces is an integral part of the Simmelian, form-based approach taken here. By including a wide range of arenas, we aim to see if the social forms play out across spaces whose specific content may vary. We do not, however, make claims about everybody’s experiences within these spaces. For example, we do not explore the perspectives of Mooseheads players, young adult hockey fans, or concession stand and arena workers. These are the limitations of this paper.

### **Hockey in Halifax and Atlantic Canada**

Before presenting our analysis, it is important to describe the field site where this research took place. Halifax is the largest city in Atlantic Canada, and the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) as a whole has a population of over 430,000. Within HRM, there are many communities, most of which are nestled along the Halifax harbour, the Bedford basin, and the Atlantic Ocean. It is also the provincial capital, and it has a strong military and navy presence, five universities, and a growing population. Much of that growth has been driven by immigration through the Atlantic Immigration Pilot program, the Provincial Nominee Program, and the retention of international students. Halifax has long-established racialized communities, including the African Nova Scotian and Lebanese communities. Especially compared to the rest of Atlantic Canada, the city is becoming increasingly culturally and ethnically diverse as a result of immigration.

Halifax has a rich history with sport and the game of hockey. It is located only an hour away from Windsor, Nova Scotia, which claims to be the birthplace of hockey in Canada, though this is disputed and is better thought of as folklore than historical fact (Windsor Hockey Heritage Society, n.d.; Bennett 2018). The Mic-Mac hockey stick, originally used by MiꞤkmaq people and later marketed by Starr Manufacturing Company from Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, dominated the hockey equipment market for much of the late 1800s and early 1900s (Cuthbertson, 2005). By this period, hockey was already extremely popular and linked to notions of Canadianness (Robidoux 2002; Reid and Reid 2015). The Coloured Hockey League had a team in Africville, on the northern tip of the Halifax Peninsula, and the league featured many players from the Halifax area (Fosty and Fosty 2008). In more recent years, Halifax has produced three of the NHL’s biggest stars—Brad Marchand, Sidney Crosby, and Nathan MacKinnon—who are a source of local pride and national identification (Croucher 2019). The city boasts strong university hockey programs and a

reputable Major Junior club, the Halifax Mooseheads, as evidenced by their being selected to host the 2019 Memorial Cup.

Beyond Halifax, it is important to contextualize the paper within the region of Atlantic Canada. Compared to the rest of Canada, the Atlantic provinces—Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick—have smaller populations, lower population densities, larger proportions of rural residents, higher rates of out-migration, lower numbers of newcomers, and less ethno-racial diversity (Gosse et al. 2016). A significant social boundary in Atlantic Canada is between residents with ancestral ties to the region or community and newcomers, or so-called *Come From Aways* or CFAs (Grant and Kronstal 2011). Many newcomers to the region are greeted with friendliness and expect it to translate into friendship, but instead share strangership (Horgan 2012) with long-time residents rather than deep relationships. The boundary-marking tied to the notion of CFAs is deployed across the region, and its strength varies depending on place. Wilson-Forsberg (2013) and Hanson and Gardiner-Barber (2011) note that newcomers to smaller communities consider themselves more welcomed than they would be in larger centres in Atlantic Canada. Residents in smaller communities with fewer resources may feel more personal responsibility or motivation to engage newcomers than those in larger communities that offer more governmental or bureaucratic support (Wilson-Forsberg 2013).

### **Friendliness without Friendship**

The first social form we observed in Halifax hockey and hockey arenas was friendliness without friendship. It shares the textures of friendliness or mutual recognition theorized by Horgan's notion of strangership and is a form of light solitude, but the term itself emerged from one of the interview participants we spoke with. Thirty-eight of 40 interview participants—14 parents, 16 players, 4 fans, and 4 key informants—noted that hockey and hockey arenas were friendly spaces, or places where people are friendly. As one new hockey parent, a White immigrant mother from the UK, noted, after feeling initially “intimidated ... I've felt we've been welcomed with open arms, wholeheartedly.” Our observations of hockey arenas confirm interview participants' sentiments—from minor hockey to Mooseheads games, we observed people interacting in friendly ways. This accords well with the literature on friendliness and sociability in Atlantic Canada (Grant and Kronstal 2011).

Hockey and minor hockey organizations provide common language and experiences that hockey players and parents use to be friendly. As one parent, husband to the British immigrant quoted in the previous paragraph, explained, “There's a conversation that we understand what people are talking about when they say ‘oh the kids are goin’ through tryouts.’” Conversations in hockey arenas among parents and fans revolve around topics related to the game: concussion protocol, travel schedules, game results, kids' health, the

state of various arenas, and more. In higher level, more competitive settings, the same types of conversations were overheard as well as more evaluative conversations about how certain players and teams are performing and about upcoming top prospects. Before and after games, we observed that parents freely converse with each other.

Despite such friendliness, however, participants were also quick to note that they weren't "friends" with many of the people they interacted with in hockey rinks. Twelve interview participants—eight parents, two players, two fans, and two key informants—noted the limits of "friendliness" in hockey space. There was a significant gap between being "friendly" and being "friends." That is, although they knew people in the rink, they did not socialize with them in a meaningful way outside of the game or the rink. An interview we conducted with a Canadian-born hockey parent who we call Carl further clarifies what we mean. When asked whether he had made any friendships through his time as a hockey parent—about four years at the time of the interview—he replied that "you end up by default knowing these [hockey] people, developing a relationship with them. Would I go out for dinner with them? No... It's by default." The participant drew a sharp distinction between being on friendly terms with people he had met through hockey and having friendships in the rink. The participant had a firm boundary around socializing with people outside of hockey-related events. As he expressed, "[I] ... would see them in hockey, get along good, but ...wouldn't hang out outside of hockey with them." When asked for clarification, he added, "Right. It's a Canadian way, good citizenship." For this parent, *not* pursuing friendship was the laudable course of action and not engaging deeply was what created and maintained community.

This parent's words are particularly interesting because he presented himself as being highly engaged in his son's hockey team and career. He had served as treasurer for one of his son's teams and displayed all the marks of arena friendliness when we met for an interview. His initiative in contacting us to be interviewed for this project is further testament to his friendliness. Interestingly, Carl's son was surprised by the remarks, and twice pointed out hockey parents whom his father *did* hang out with outside hockey. Carl parried this argument by saying he already knew those parents before being in hockey arenas together, and they would have maintained their friendship even apart from hockey. Hockey arenas, according to this parent, can be places for friendliness and the maintenance of existing friendships, but not for the formation of new friendships.

People seeking to integrate into hockey have a difficult time learning and navigating friendliness without friendship. A Turkish immigrant hockey parent who we call Elif, for example, described her experiences integrating into the social life of minor hockey as follows:

*[F]or years and years and years I thought all these people knew each other when they came to the hockey arena, and so I was like, 'everyone knows each other, and I don't know anyone,' and so I sit separately, you know what I mean?... But it's not that.*

She has since learned that hockey parents, fans, coaches, and other minor hockey association volunteers can “jump into conversation, and carry on like they’ve known each other for years.” While she acknowledges uncertainty about this, she recounts that people certainly appear friendly *without* seeming to be friends. Though they appear friendly, the questions they ask are basic ones, implying that the two people involved do not know each other that well.

International immigrants are not the only ones who have a difficult time navigating friendliness without friendship. Participants who had moved to Halifax from rural parts of Atlantic Canada expressed frustration about friendliness without friendship. One female parent from rural Nova Scotia who we call Diane, when asked about her son’s minor hockey team bonding events, said:

*I bring [my children] with their teams to Moosehead games.... I don't enjoy those as much, but ... I would still go [to] a team game in my town because it's very social, and ... I've known these people my entire life, and I would go to see these people so ... I definitely can see it builds community, it's just th[at]it's a city, and it's harder to build close bonds as opposed to rural ... Canada... cities are harder to make connections.*

This adds some depth and nuance to conversations around retention and social integration in Atlantic Canada. Even a multi-generational Nova Scotian can feel distant or excluded from the in-groups formed among minor hockey families in Halifax. This is a social boundary that can get hidden under discussions of “locals” and “CFAs” (Grant and Kronstal 2011, 8).

For hockey people in Halifax, then, friendliness and friendship are decoupled: one does not lead to the other, and a significant boundary divides them. A dominant social norm in hockey spaces is to practice friendliness without friendship. This form is one kind of strangership, to use Horgan’s language (2012), and contains within it the physical proximity and social distance that Simmel (1950) considered essential to the role of the stranger. It is also similar to Simmel’s discussion of an urban blasé attitude, in which people resist intimacy with those they encounter as they go about life in the city (1950, 409–424). Even though Halifax is not a very large city, newcomers from abroad and from rural backgrounds in the region find it a difficult city in which to “make connections.” The social distance in friendliness without friendship is a form of solitude. On the one hand, hockey people consider small talk to be a good and important part of being in the hockey community. On the other, most hockey people do not seek deep friendships with other hockey people, and they may even uphold this lack of interest as a good. While newcomers to hockey in Halifax can feel excluded from what may appear to be friendships around them, some of this is in fact performed friendliness. Integrating into this community, then, is less about making deep friendships and more about learning to perform friendliness like a hockey person.

## Ritual Togetherness

Another form of sociality described in our literature review, and one that we noticed in hockey arenas, was ritual togetherness. In this social form, people not only share the same space, but also particular words and actions. Like friendliness without friendship, ritual togetherness neither requires nor facilitates deep friendships or ties beyond the space and actions. Data on rituals comes primarily from observations of Québec Major Junior Hockey League games played by the Halifax Mooseheads in the regular season, playoffs, and 2019 Memorial Cup tournament, which they hosted. Mooseheads games, which drew between 6,000 and 10,000 spectators per game, also shared some elements with other hockey games that drew 200–400 fans in Halifax, such as university and Junior B or Junior C games. Though not in our interview guide, we asked nineteen interview participants—ten players, six parents, and three fans—whether they went to Mooseheads games. Every parent and player we asked said they went to Moosehead games at least occasionally, and a few of them had partial or full season tickets. Moreover, during observations we regularly bumped into interview participants. Interview participants involved in minor hockey frequently reported going to games as a team, and we observed minor hockey teams attending games together. For these reasons, we believe that, in order to understand hockey community in Halifax, it is necessary to look at what social forms persist at and around Mooseheads games. However, our focus here is on hockey parents and players' experiences of ritual togetherness at Mooseheads games. We also note our analysis is in no way exhaustive of hockey's many rituals; rather, we focus on chanting specifically, as it is the hockey ritual that most clearly produces collective effervescence. When interview participants discussed their experiences at Mooseheads games, some explicitly praised the "energy" or "atmosphere" of the games.

The most common chants used at Mooseheads games are simple and positive. Either at the provocation of the in-game hype person or self-generated, spectators' two most frequent chants are "Go, Moose, go!" and "Let's go Mooseheads, let's go!" These are quick, rhythmic chants similar to those that can be heard for other teams in other rinks. And while the chanting is only heard in arenas with a critical mass of fans, we observed people yelling similarly structured phrases at minor hockey games. Here the chants are quick; each word is its own syllable, while "Moose-heads" is split into two syllables. While spectators chanted at every Mooseheads game, they chanted more in the playoffs, and then even more at Memorial Cup games. Spectators chanted at the start of each period, at critical moments during games, and as games were ending. The chanting creates a social electricity and energy that interview participants found difficult to put into words. During the playoffs, this social electricity grows as the chants are more consistent and louder. One season ticket member who we call Tom—who intended to put his pre-school age child in minor hockey in the coming fall—attempted to describe what he felt was the most exciting

part of the Mooseheads' 2018–2019 playoff run, saying, “Agh, I don’t know it’s a feeling, right? It’s just a [laughs a bit], it’s just a feeling ya, you know I get it just thinking about it you know....” Ritual chanting etched a memory and feeling in Tom’s mind that, though difficult to express, was clearly significant for him.

This positive chanting is simple to learn, and there is no immediate or obvious social boundary at play in the stands of a Mooseheads game when people are chanting. However, the chanting will have significantly more meaning for people who are more connected to and have experience with hockey. Since fans primarily chant during key moments when the game can be won or lost, a person must have hockey knowledge in order to know the flows of a hockey game and when chanting makes sense. Anyone can chant, but it takes hockey knowledge to know why people chant when they do.

Negative chants are less commonly heard, and they require more hockey knowledge to participate in and enjoy than the simple, positive chants already discussed. The simplest negative chant is a “boo” with the vowel sound drawn out for a long time. As spectators sometimes link on-ice problems to poor refereeing, the “boo” may turn into a “Ref, you suck!” chant at Mooseheads games, which follows the same rhythm as positive chants like “Go, Moose, go!” While anyone can “boo,” it often requires a lot of hockey knowledge to understand the meaning of a “boo” or “Ref, you suck” chant. A person must know what is typically considered a penalty, the referees’ signs for each penalty, and what a hockey player “selling” a penalty can look like.

“Boo” is also deployed when Mooseheads fans taunt a star player or coach on the opposing team by chanting their name in a long whine. For example, during a playoff game, Mooseheads fans taunted the Québec Remparts’ coach, former NHL player Patrick Roy. They mockingly yelled his name, “Paaaa-Triiick.” Roy became visibly and vociferously upset on the bench, gesturing wildly and shouting as spectators mocked him. Sensing the efficacy of their mockery, the fans continued into a fever pitch with their droning, “Paaaa-Triiick.” Halifax went on to win the game and the series. Tom, mentioned above, found the Halifax-Québec series to be “the most intense it’s ever been, ...that I’ve felt, in that stadium,” even though it was only the first round of the playoffs. While deployed more rarely, negative chanting can produce a social energy that is at least as memorable as positive chanting.

Negative chanting, or at least its meaning, is even less accessible to all spectators than positive chanting. Chanting as ritual togetherness, then, has a different set of social boundaries, or textures of solitude, than the first social form we discussed, friendliness without friendship. Whereas immigrants as well as those who moved from rural Atlantic Canada found rituals difficult to adapt to, here the key dividing factor is hockey knowledge. In order to meaningfully participate in booing Patrick Roy, for example, a person would have to know the Québec Major Junior Hockey League playoff structures, Patrick Roy’s status as an ex-player, and his reputation for losing his temper. Moreover, a person would

not know how to understand and interpret this incident without knowledge of Patrick Roy. While anyone can “boo,” it takes hockey knowledge to know what the “boo” means in any given context, and to be able to talk about the “boo”-ing afterwards.

Even in the verbal union of chanting as a form of ritual togetherness, there is solitude. While spectators’ voices mingle into a single chanting voice, each remains bodily fixed and disengaged with each other. Each spectator sits and occasionally stands in their seat, and from that position airs their voice in support of the team. Consider Mooseheads fans’ disengagement during a playoff game television timeout. The arena hype man from a local radio station gave fans the following instruction: “I want you to fist-bump everyone around you, because tonight you’re not alone.” Even as people listened, and images were projected on the rink’s jumbotron, hardly anyone fist-bumped. The hype man continued, “Tonight we’re one big family.... Carry this team to round two with some Halifax noise!” At this point, the fans cheered. The failure to fist-bump speaks volumes about the implicit solitude in successful forms of ritual togetherness at Mooseheads games. Fans desire collective effervescence, but not at the expense of their personal space. Similar to friendliness without friendship, the kind of togetherness ritual chanting affords is audial togetherness without physical contact. This call to fist-bump might separate hockey people from out-group, non-hockey people, because non-hockey people might take the hype man at his word. Hockey people, at least at Mooseheads games, are significantly more willing to chant than they are to make physical contact with strangers.

### **Transactional Relationships**

The third social form we observed in hockey and hockey arenas in Halifax is transactional togetherness. This social form emerges from the labour involved in making hockey, and particularly minor hockey, happen. Transactional relations precede and create opportunities for friendliness without friendship and ritual togetherness to emerge. Fundraising and team events are key sites of transactional togetherness.

The most ubiquitous form of fundraising in hockey is the 50/50 draw, which takes place across all levels of hockey. In such draws, participants purchase tickets for a draw and the winner takes home 50 percent of the proceeds collected. A designated charity or other group receives the other 50 percent. 50/50 draws took place across all the hockey arenas we observed, and, though the amount of money raised varied greatly, the sociality of the draws did not. A Pee wee-level 50/50 draw might generate \$400 total, while a 50/50 draw at a Mooseheads home game could total around \$25,000 per game in the 2018–19 season, and increase to around \$45,000 per game in the playoffs. The proceeds from the 50/50 draw usually support organizations that help youth participate in sport. While the money raised can help a variety of causes, participating in the 50/50 draw does not generate identity.

There is transactional sociality not only in the money a 50/50 draw raises, but also in the work hockey people do to carry out the draw. While the Halifax Mooseheads currently use an automated electronic system, the vast majority of 50/50 draws use paper tickets. One participant we spoke with recalled a memory from the years before the Mooseheads used an automated system, saying, “We would go [to Mooseheads games] as a whole team, and how that worked was, ... we had to literally do all the 50/50, that was our volunteerism, and then we got ... 20 tickets, and we all sat ... in a row and ... that was important, it was fun.” While the amounts raised at other games would not be nearly as much as at Mooseheads games, any 50/50 draw requires coordination for selling tickets, keeping the money safe, picking a ticket, and giving the winner their prize. People are forced to interact through this coordination—in doing so, they may get to know each other and even break the solitude of watching or sharing participation in a hockey ritual.

Other forms of fundraising are important for minor hockey parents and players. While fundraising was not part of our initial interview guide, eight participant—three parents, four players, and one key informant—we spoke with talked about fundraising and described it as an important part of integrating into a team and broader community. One parent brought up fundraising of her own accord, describing it as “fun” and as something that “brings everyone together.” Elif, who we quoted earlier, contrasted youth soccer and hockey through the lens of fundraising, saying, “[in soccer] you don’t have to pull together to fundraise.... [In hockey] you put in so much effort.... Fundraising is a big thing.” One Midget-level (15–16 year old) hockey player described a recent fundraiser his team did where they carried Christmas trees to people’s cars. He said of the event, “I mean, obviously, it’s obviously work but it’s also pretty fun, do it with your friends ... as opposed to someone that you don’t know.... I would rather do it with them, obviously.” Again, the fundraising forced people to interact and exchange with others they would not normally engage with.

Transactional togetherness can be an in-road for newcomers to hockey to have interactions with people and learn friendliness without friendship through exposure. Elif, the female Turkish immigrant quoted previously, had this to say:

*One of the things that I was warned when I came to Halifax was you know that Halifax has cliques.... They would never involve you in anything, I mean they will be nice to you, polite, but they will not socialize, like they would not invite you to their homes for kitchen party or anything like that, right? ... Perhaps [minor hockey] is one of the places where I have to be included [laughs], you know? And where I have more access ... to this kind of socialization. But it's not by invitation ... it's ... by structure that I'm plugged in and have access to ... more Canadian-born individuals.*

For this hockey parent, then, transactional sociality makes hockey and hockey arenas an exception to the normative social forms of Atlantic Canada, where people are friendly



but do not seek to increase their engagement in other peoples' lives. Since she is a co-parent on the hockey team, the other parents have to include her and her son. The parents need to coordinate drives, agree to attend tournaments or not, buy snacks, and plan parties. They cannot just chit-chat.

Apart from fundraising, youth hockey teams also hold special functions or events that are neither games, practices, nor fundraisers. Here we focus on team meetings and parties. Like fundraising, these types of interactions can be understood as part of transactional togetherness. While any team can have team meetings, they are more common among the competitive tiers of youth hockey. More competitive tiers of hockey require greater financial and social buy-in from players and parents, and, as a result of this competitiveness, there is a greater need for team solidarity. Team meetings are usually held at the start of the year and on an as-needed basis. These meetings typically have at least one parent of each player present, as well as the coaching staff, while the players themselves are not present. Conversations at these meetings can become intense. As one parent, whose son played on an AAA team—the most competitive bracket—said, team meetings were the only alternative to “a fight in the parking lot.” At meetings, parents discuss financial concerns, including problems regarding parents unable to pay their league fees and whether or not teams wanted to incur large expenses, such as hosting tournaments.

Unlike team meetings, team parties are bonding events that usually involve the players and often take place a couple of times in a season. Players and parents thought of these events as being fun; they served mainly as a time to celebrate the accomplishments of the year. Sometimes these events had a cultural component; one hockey fan, an immigrant who grew up playing hockey in Montreal, described how his team participated in the “cabane à sucre” tradition, going into the woods and rolling maple syrup with snow. Looking back, he described the experience as “pretty cool.”

For younger age groups, birthday parties can function as an extension of hockey team sociality. We consider these events an extension of transactional togetherness, and one that overlaps with friendliness without friendship. Diane, the parent from rural Atlantic Canada quoted earlier, described how she had not made good friendships through hockey. She was already friends with parents from her child's school, and her hockey-playing son was “year after year after year ... put on different teams.” Hearing her mother's views, Diane's daughter protested, “For [my brother's] birthday and stuff his friends come over and you talk with their parents.” The mother clarified that this, to her, did not constitute “hanging out.” Given that it was a set period of interaction and one which happens only once a year, these events are forms of transactional togetherness. The mother stipulated that, although she would “hang out” with these hockey parents if they invited her to something, for the time being, she says, “we become Facebook friends.” And, she implied, nothing more. It is worth noting the parallel between Diane's conversation with her daughter and Carl's conversation with his son in unpacking friendliness without friendship. In both cases, the

parents were attuned to the presence of solitude in interactions, while their children were disbelieving. Transactional togetherness is a potential in-road not towards friendship, but towards friendliness without friendship. This is surprising for children in hockey, and people new to hockey, but not for those with a lot of hockey experience in Halifax.

### **Hockey Arenas and Textures of Solitude**

We observed three social forms in Halifax hockey and hockey arenas: friendliness without friendship, ritual togetherness, and transactional relationships. Each have textures of solitude embedded within them. Hockey people easily and earnestly make conversation with each other, but they do not want to become close friends. They engage in rituals together, but not in ways that violate their norms of personal space. They work together to achieve common goals, but do not see themselves as forging lasting bonds. In their practicing of these social forms, hockey people simultaneously enact solitude *and* togetherness.

If hockey and hockey arenas aim to be true multicultural common spaces or shared social fields, it is important to understand the social forms that animate them as social spaces (Dib, Donaldson, and Turcotte 2008). The game of hockey offers opportunities for interaction, but the game's opportunities alone are not sufficient to promote understanding and social-cultural integration. Instead, inclusion occurs through forms of interaction and the textures of the interactions. This means that integration to hockey culture, and the "Canadian" identity linked to it, can only occur once people learn different forms. One way of creating shared cultural spaces, then, is ensuring that the forms that animate them are more inclusive.

Among the forms we observed, transactional relationships underpin the other two forms and may be more socially valuable than the existing academic literature suggests. Exchanging goods and services together can be a starting point for engaging in the playful conversation that constitutes friendliness without friendship, and the powerful experiences provided by ritual togetherness. Transactional relationships are weak on the surface, but they seed opportunities for closer, more satisfying social interactions in hockey. These interactions, though, do not overcome the solitude present in the social forms explored here.

Our findings provoke critical thinking about social forms and boundaries in Atlantic Canada and their generalizability to the country as a whole. Thinking about friendliness without friendship in Atlantic Canada adds nuance to scholarly understanding of social boundaries between CFAs and residents with multi-generational ties to the community. Our research suggests both international and regional newcomers experience social difficulties integrating to Atlantic Canadian cities and to hockey in the region. They both experience the solitude of Halifax hockey and arenas in similar ways.

Our findings also offer insights for individuals and organizations involved in hockey, particularly minor hockey, to help make the game and arenas into truly multicultural

common spaces—that is, spaces where diverse groups of people can share time and experiences to create common understandings, identity, and integration into communities. Rather than assuming that the game or arenas are shared spaces in which people will learn the culture of the game through osmosis, it is important to recognize that most people enter spaces without deep knowledge of them, and the forms of interaction, in turn, shape whether people feel attached to or turn away from the game. As a result, hockey people, teams, and associations need to be more up-front about the social forms that are part of the game and arenas. Recognizing these forms creates the possibility of adjusting the forms or building new ones, but it also offers transparency for those who may be unfamiliar with them. Minor hockey associations can help both immigrant and regional newcomers by communicating that hockey people work together, share rituals, and are friendly toward one another, even if they do not intend to become close friends. That is, degrees and textures of solitude are part of the game, for both insiders and outsiders.

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**PATRICK BONDY** is an anthropologist and researcher. His scholarship focuses on morality, identity, Christianity and hockey, particularly in Canada. His Master's thesis, *Hockey Talk: A Textured Description of Morality and Ethics in a Sporting Context*, was completed at Dalhousie University

**HOWARD RAMOS** is Professor and Chair of the Department of Sociology at Western University. His work focuses on issues of social justice. He has published in race, ethnicity, immigration, human rights, social movements, Indigenous mobilization, and environmental advocacy.

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