

Aboriginal Participation in Sport:
Critical Issues of Race, Culture and Power

by

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Author's Declaration

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

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

Abstract

This study is a qualitative examination of my lived experiences and the lived experiences of my immediate family in sport. Using critical race theory (CRT) as my guiding theoretical framework, this research project answers Denzin's (2003) call to advance "a radical performative social science" that "confront[s] and transcend[s] the problems surrounding the colour line in the 21st century" (p.5). As such, the purpose of this project was to explore issues of race, culture and power within our lived sport experiences and to present these experiences in such way so as to unpack the tensions associated with being an Aboriginal person living in today's Canadian society.

Acknowledgements

This master's thesis is the culmination of a process that started well before I started this degree. For me, it represents both a beginning and end. More specifically, it represents an end to the aimless wondering about my feelings and experiences about being a Mohawk in today's society. I've now gained an understanding of the connections between my experiences and the larger issues of our time. As a beginning, it represents the start of a new direction in my life in which I will continually move forward confidently and unafraid to ask the questions that I previously chose to avoid. I would not be at this point, if it weren't for the people who supported me throughout.

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Dedication

To my family for their love and support, without which, this journey would not have been possible.

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I: INTRODUCTION

My Love of Basketball: A Brief History

I didn't like sport as a little kid. I thought it was confusing, and I lacked confidence in my athletic abilities. But my parents loved sport and believed in the benefits it could provide. They were competitive athletes in their day and they exposed me to a number of different activities with the hope I would find something special for me. After trying soccer, figure skating, softball and hockey, their persistence paid off and I found my passion: basketball. In the beginning, my love for the sport was driven by simple pleasures. I remember laughing hysterically as I tried to play basketball with my childhood best friend and his older brother. They had a little metal hoop attached to a flimsy chipboard backboard behind their house. Every time the ball banked off the backboard and into the net I laughed in amazement. I remember that they wondered aloud why I was laughing so much but for me watching the ball careen off the backboard and through the iron rim again and again was like magic. It was exhilarating just trying to make the ball do the same thing. I fell in love with the game because of that feeling of pure joy I experienced with every bounce of the ball and every swish of the net. I loved the sound of the squeaks and squeals of the basketball shoes on the hardwood courts, the echo of the ball in an empty gym and as every basketball player will tell you, the sweetest sound on earth is the soft swish of a perfect shot as the ball passes perfectly through the rim and into the mesh.

Basketball was something I found I could do with confidence and I was good at it. However, as time passed I grew to enjoy more than just the game; I came to embrace the culture. From the age of ten, my social world revolved around the overlapping schedules of club and school teams, house leagues, summer basketball camps, and of course, the broadcasts of American basketball that aired on television. My friends and I would play basketball on the new Atari and Nintendo video game consoles and pretend we were vying for the NCAA or NBA championship. And whenever we had the chance we played, in all types of conditions: inside freezing cold and stifling hot gymnasiums, outside in the rain, in unbearable heat and even snow. Often on a weekend sleepover we would lower the basket of our adjustable standards and have dunk competitions way past midnight or until we were told to come in. Real practice was spent perfecting fundamentals, but it also involved emulating the best and most celebrated professional players of the time such as Magic, Zeke, Sir Charles and of course Michael Jordan. To us, Michael Jordan was the epitome of basketball and like so many others, I idolized him. His play was exciting and his moves captivated everyone. We wore anything and everything to do with our favourite teams that were made popular by the players themselves and the rap artists of the day; basketball jerseys, ball caps, tear-away pants, hooded sweatshirts and puffy down jackets all with the logos of the Lakers, Pistons or Bulls. And when we played we would wear the baggy shorts and the “Air

Jordan” basketball shoes that denoted that you were a true basketball player. Quite simply, basketball became the place where I felt I fit in. It was the only place I ever felt comfortable to be myself.

My experience playing basketball was in complete contrast with my experiences playing other sports. I remember playing hockey for a local team that consisted of all-Native players. During a game at a visiting arena, I received a penalty and was sent to the box. The taunts and racial insults coming from the white children who gathered at the top of the box were frightening. I had never been yelled at before for being Native and at first I didn’t know what was going on. All I heard were “whoops” and “hollers” and one kid yelling “go home you fucking Indian!”. I looked back and I couldn’t understand why no adult was stopping them. I remember sitting there crying and wishing for my penalty to be over. It was the longest two minutes of my life. I learned very early on that I didn’t like hockey.

From the start, basketball was a place where I felt comfortable. While I played basketball with mostly white children, I never experienced the explicit racism that I experienced while sitting in that penalty box. I realize now that the racism I did experience was more subtle. I remember one parent commenting to me that I wasn’t the ‘stereotypical’ Native and that I was breaking down barriers. At the time it was a great compliment because I felt like I was doing something that not many other Native children were doing and I felt like I must be doing something right. Only

now do I realize the racial undertones of that comment. I was conforming to how she thought a child should act and for her Native children were not acting the way she wanted them to.

Despite the subtle racism I experienced, I loved the game and we all loved the excitement that surrounded basketball in the late years of the eighties and early nineties. Most of the players we saw on television were black and so most of our heroes were black. My friends and I tried very hard, in our youthful way, to identify with the increasing popularity of inner city black culture because that's where many of our heroes were from. I remember watching broadcasts of the NCAA and NBA and thinking what a great sport basketball was because it allowed people of all colours to play. "There were at least people of colour playing basketball" I thought. While this youthful thought may have been naïve, it was nonetheless what I observed. Perhaps it was a justification or a defence mechanism as I was often bullied about playing basketball and not playing hockey. I was consistently taunted for listening to rap music and idolizing my black heroes. However, the more I was chastised the stronger my love with basketball became. While I never experienced the afflictions that seemed to haunt the black communities at the time, I remember feeling profoundly akin to the lyrics of the rap music that rumbled through the headphones of my walkman. Listening to rap music was part of playing basketball and basketball allowed me to be who I wanted to be. In contrast, I developed a profound hatred of hockey and

those who chose to tease me. I realize now that it was the cultures surrounding those sports that ultimately embraced me and drove me away.

* * *

Privileging Aboriginal Voices

This study privileges Aboriginal narratives with the explicit intent to unpack the tensions Aboriginal people face when negotiating their Aboriginal identity with the dominant cultural values of modern western civilization. Accordingly, I will produce a post-colonial, multi-voice text that critically examines the cultural norms and practices prevalent within the discourse of sport in contemporary Aboriginal culture. In so doing, I will explore Aboriginal sport experiences in an effort to expose the normalization of non-Aboriginal values within Aboriginal life.

Traditional Aboriginal culture has experienced profound change and damage through colonial oppression and invasion by foreign cultural influences. To suggest Aboriginal culture has been immune to colonization would be a gross misstatement. Most of our culture, which was deeply rooted in an environmental ethic, has been destroyed. Because of the powerful influences of colonialism, and out of necessity, our lives are no longer lived in a traditional manner. We now live either on lands that were “reserved” for our existence by colonizing governments or within urban centres that render us invisible. For many of our people, the deeply rooted ceremonies and traditions created by our

ancestors have either been forgotten or adapted radically to suit the present circumstances of our existence. The details of our historical existence, prior to and after European engagement, are vague, distorted, have been changed completely or lost altogether. What was once a distinctly lived culture is now mostly known only through oral storytelling and the written accounts of European colonists and non-Aboriginal scholars. The change and damage to our indigenous culture has been so brutal and so extensive that for many us ignorance about our history has become the norm.

This circumstance is perhaps the greatest tragedy and challenge of being an Aboriginal person living in the modern era, for we will never recover the details of our lived past. A comprehensive understanding of the impact of this loss of culture on Aboriginal people is beyond any one academic discipline or research project. Even so, adding Aboriginal voices to help make sense of what it means to be an Aboriginal person in today's society is crucial to avoiding the mistakes of the past and to help others to move beyond the effects of colonialism.

Culture is dynamic, so it is no surprise that Aboriginal culture and practices in North America have changed over time and will continue to do so. Sport, along with its practices and our understandings of its meaning, offers a contemporary window into the tensions Aboriginal people negotiate between their indigenous culture and the dominant cultural influences of modern North America. This thesis, as noted above,

shall explore these tensions so as to forward what Denzin (2000) calls the “politics of hope” whereby texts “criticize how things are and imagine how they can be different” (p. 262) (See Parry, 2003 who extended this call in leisure studies). Doing so is meant to help Aboriginal people create space for their stories and for themselves in a society that has historically denied the value of their existence.

* * *

Lacrosse: Lived Culture and Colonization

When I was a boy, I listened to an elder tell stories of traditional ceremonies and events in which my people participated to celebrate many different occasions. She would come to our classroom and teach us about Haudenosaunee¹ culture in our weekly hour of allotted school time. I vaguely remember the story of Lacrosse, the traditional Aboriginal game perhaps most familiar to non-Aboriginal North Americans. Lacrosse was a momentous event in the lives of the Kanienkahaka² people. It was a game played within the many Haudenosaunee communities and its purpose was to bring the people from these communities together to learn from one another and celebrate their coexistence. The Kanienkahaka believed lacrosse was a sacred game bestowed upon them by “the Creator” to build fellowship among the people. Subsequently, the celebrations that occurred in conjunction with the game were highly

¹ a.k.a. the Iroquois people

² a.k.a. the Mohawk people

social. To play the game, two teams, most often of unequal size, gathered together. The object was to then carry a woven ball with a long stick that had a sinew basket attached to the end over an agreed upon field of play into the opposing team's territory. The size of the playing field was impressive, sometimes spanning a kilometre or more in length. It was a game of demanding physical stamina and would often last for several days. To cope, cooperation and strategy were a crucial part of the game.

* * *

Today, the modern game of lacrosse is quite different from its predecessor. Standardized rules have been created, equipment has advanced and the game is played both indoors and out. Yet, amid much of this change, the fundamentals of the game remain and for many Aboriginal people the game still holds some cultural value. For some, lacrosse is still linked to a sense of cultural identification. For others, it is simply a sport to be played in one's free time. Yet overall, lacrosse does not serve the same role as its historical predecessor. In some instances, lacrosse may even serve as a means to divide Aboriginal communities from the anger that spills over from the competitiveness of today's sport. For other Aboriginal people still, non-participation or a dislike of lacrosse can be viewed as an act of defiance or even treason against Aboriginal culture. In all cases, lacrosse serves as a reminder of how Aboriginal identity and the conflict between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal culture is intimately linked.

* * *

Blanchard (2005) discusses how some anthropologists have argued that sport could be understood from a stage development viewpoint. That is, there are differences in the way supposed “primitive” and “modern” cultures have utilized sport (p.14). For example, sport within “primitive” cultures may have developed out of a utilitarian need to survive a hunter-gatherer lifestyle or to develop military defences against attackers. This explanation is in contrast to supposed “modern” cultures that used sport to “perfect the human body, for competition, and simply for pleasure” (p.14). While this theory is conceivable, it fails to fully capture the cultural meanings of an Aboriginal game such as lacrosse and the many other traditional games in which the Mohawk and numerous other Aboriginal cultures engaged. Such a theory also presupposes different cultures as being primitive or modern. For Aboriginal people, the implications of such thinking assumes our culture can be explained through some logical, and widely accepted, evolutionary progression, thus relegating us as primitive.

Today, the modern game of lacrosse barely resembles the game the Mohawk people played long ago. The traditional game is no longer practiced, and what is known about lacrosse, in its original form, is now only known through stories passed on from generation to generation. These stories demonstrate the many changes that Aboriginal culture has experienced and illustrates the fading details of our history. This level of

awareness (or lack thereof) raises many questions and issues regarding the truth-claims about traditional Aboriginal sport, yet it also serves to illustrate a simple point: Aboriginal people have an understanding of sport shaped by our own unique development of culture and unique perspective of history. We understand best how the mash-up of cultures brought about by the colonization of our societies have affected our everyday lives. Thus, Aboriginal voices need to be heard and given an opportunity to communicate their lived experiences in contemporary society. Lacrosse is perhaps the most obvious example that speaks to the cultural tensions between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultures. For others, cultural tension is manifest in other activities such as basketball or hockey or any other of the myriad of activities in which Aboriginal people participate. For this study, examining the everyday lived experiences of modern Aboriginal people within sport and privileging their voices is therefore a step in the process toward decolonization. At present, these voices in the leisure and sport literature are few and far between, if present at all, making this text a unique effort in understanding culture as it is lived.

* * *

“Here come those little fucking rappers! What? You think you’re black?” The words spewed from the mouth of one of the senior boys as me and my group of friends walked to the gym to shoot hoops over the lunch hour. He was very tall, had long scruffy black hair and glasses. His

face was pale white and pockmarked from the teenaged skin of an eighteen year old boy. Everyone standing within earshot knew who he was. His football jersey stood in stark contrast to my baseball style shirt with “JORDAN” emblazoned across my chest in bright bold letters. I didn’t say a word, pretending not to hear him. He made the same comment many times during the first few months of my grade nine year. I always walked by, seething with anger, yet conscious of how I looked and the persona I projected to everyone else. I became ashamed and embarrassed. “Just walk away,” I thought. “All I want to do is play basketball.” I identified with basketball, and wearing my “JORDAN” shirts and my puffy Chicago Bulls jacket fit with that identity. I never intended to offend anyone. “What’s his problem? I thought I got away from all this crap when I left the rez? All I want to do is play basketball.”

* * *

Purpose and Objectives: Exploring Issues of Race, Culture and Power

The purpose of this research project is to critically explore the intersection of race, culture, and power in the lived sport experiences of my (Aboriginal) family. To do so, I plan to produce a multi-vocal performance text that addresses these issues within the context of our personal sport experiences. Through conversations about sport with my family members, who represent three different generational cohorts, I aim to use their (Aboriginal) voices to speak to being Aboriginal in Canadian

society, a standpoint missing from current leisure scholarship.

Accordingly, the following research questions will guide my research:

- What issues of race, culture and power are present within the lived sport experiences of Aboriginal people.
- How have issues of race, culture and power affected Aboriginal participation in sport?
- How have Aboriginal people negotiated being of Aboriginal descent within contemporary Canadian society through their participation in sport?

II: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter seeks to convey the current literature related to sport, race and racism in sport and how theory is used to inform our understanding of sport. First, I will address the definition of sport and the different theories that are used to inform the study of sport. I will then turn to a discussion of race and ethnicity in sport and present the idea of ‘race logic’ and its centrality to informing this study. From there I will discuss some of the research that has examined Aboriginal experiences in sport and address how this literature has motivated this study. I will then conclude with Critical Race Theory (CRT) and my preference for using it as the theoretical underpinning for this research.

Sport

Sport is a social phenomenon whose meanings vary from one social context to another, for people create and define sport in ways that suit their values and beliefs (Coakley, 2004). Accordingly, research into sport touches upon every major sphere of social life. In short, sport’s impact on our lives is undeniable. Even so, defining sport is challenging, in large part because conventional definitions fail to account for cultural difference. As Coakley (2004) suggests, sport sociologists should be concerned with what constitutes sport in “different cultures at different points in time” (p.27). By doing so, he argues scholars can begin to think of sport in relation to issues such as power, culture, race, and ethnicity.

This thesis takes on this challenge and specifically endeavours to examine the interplay of race, culture, and sport in the context of Aboriginal life in Canada.

How scholars understand the importance of these concepts in relation to sport depends on how they study it and what theoretical perspective they apply to it. Along these lines, Coakley (2004) identifies five major theoretical perspectives that have informed the study of sport: (1) functionalist theory, (2) conflict theory, (3) interactionist theory, (4) figural theory, and (5) critical theory. These frameworks have all been used within the sociology of sport literature, yet they utilize different conceptualizations of what purpose sport serves in society.

The first theoretical perspective, functionalist theory, views society “as an organized system of interrelated parts held together by shared values and social processes that minimize difference and promote consensus among people” (Coakley, 2004, p. 33). In effect, functionalists are concerned with whether sport socializes people to learn and accept important values, promotes social connections, motivates people to achieve goals through accepted methods, and/or protects the system from disruptive outside influences. These functions presumably contribute to the social stability of society. Thus, sport is viewed positively as an important sphere of social life that benefits society and inspires people to develop personally. At issue with this perspective is its failure to consider the possibility that sport can be controlled and serve the interests of those

with power in society.

The second theoretical perspective, conflict theory, posits society is shaped by economic forces, which are used to coerce and manipulate others. In short, conflict theorists are concerned with “who has economic power, how economic power is used, and who is advantaged or disadvantaged by economic organization and economic forces in society (Coakley, 2004, p. 37). For conflict theorists, sport keeps those without economic power subdued and advances the interests of those with the financial means and power within society. The potential of this perspective is its ability to recognize and address economic inequality within sport and society and to value intrinsically rewarding participation over business interests. Its flaws, however, are related to its narrow purview of economic forces acting upon society, its lack of recognition of gender, race, ethnicity, age and sexual orientation, and its lack of recognition of sport as a positive force for empowering people in capitalist society (Coakley, 2004).

The third theoretical perspective, interactionist theory, concentrates on meaning, identity, social relationships, and subcultures in sport. It assumes social realities are (re)produced through social interaction. In this way, self-identities are developed that presumably inform behaviour. Ultimately, interactionist theory is concerned with how human beings create meaning in their lives. Sport is thus a form of meaning-making. Major drawbacks of this perspective include a heavy focus on

relationships and personal definitions of reality without understanding how sport is related to the major social structures of society.

Interactionist research, Coakley argues, “has generally ignored connections between sport and sport subcultures, on the one hand, and the systems of power and inequality that exist in societies, communities, organizations, families, and small groups, on the other hand” (p. 42). In short, interactionist theory lacks a critical lens to examine issues of power.

The fourth theoretical perspective, figural theory, is concerned with the historical process through which interdependent networks of people emerge and change over time in the social, economic, and political spheres of life. It views power as shifting and changing over time and does not believe that people are in control of these changes. In essence, figural theory is concerned with the “long-term processes through which the relatively autonomous actions of many individuals and collections of people influence and constrain each other” (p.49). It approaches sport as a product of society that privileges men with forms of sport that limits violence. Moreover, it is helpful in understanding the complexity of economics, politics and social processes at the global level. In short, figural theory helps us to answer questions surrounding sport and the historical and social processes that have informed the development of sport, the abatement of violence and the globalization of today’s capitalist society. A major drawback of this theory is that it views

the outcomes of social processes as constantly in flux and never consistent from one group of people to another.

The fifth theoretical perspective, critical theory, is concerned with issues related to culture, power and social relations. In Coakley's (2004, p. 42) words it is "designed to understand where power comes from, how it operates in social life, and how it shifts and changes as people struggle over the many issues that affect their lives and their relationships with each other." To address societal issues, critical theorists see action and political involvement as crucial to the examination of sport. Accordingly, critical theory demands action to change society for the better, to make things such as sports more equitable and to put "into action practical programmes and processes that eliminate oppression and exploitation and promote equity, fairness, and openness" (Coakley, 2004, p.43). This element of action draws me to critical theory as a theoretical framework for my own research.

Race and Ethnicity in Sport

Race logic is an important concept within the sociology of sport literature. It refers to "a complex set of beliefs shared by many people and used to describe and interpret people, behaviours, and events in racial terms" (Coakley, 2004, p. 261). As Coakley explains, race classification systems were borne out of the European colonization of the past centuries. In his words, "Europeans started with the assumption that they

were normal, and that anyone who did not look and behave as they did was ‘deviant’ and inferior” (p. 261). This assumption has proven to be a crucial point in the history of sport as it has affected the development of sport, the development of meanings associated with sport and our understanding of participation in sport by people of different races and ethnicities. Not only has race logic been used by colonizers to justify negative and often violent treatment of non-white racial and ethnic groups, but, more disturbingly, it has become *normalized* in our society. As Coakley states, “race logic eventually became institutionalized in the form of a complex racial ideology about skin colour, intelligence, character, and physical characteristics and skills” (p.261). This institutionalization informed early anthropological theories of stage development in sport (see Blanchard, 2005). Thus, it is no surprise that race logic has affected major spheres of social life, including relations between white and non-white people, ideas surrounding what sports are and its importance to non-white cultures, ideas about the development of sport including programmes and policies implemented by governing authorities. My research is aimed at troubling “race logic” and the normalization of white privilege in sport by examining the complexity of Aboriginal experiences in sport in Canada.

Historical Context and Race

Forsyth (2007) wrote, “If the present historical moment is informed by the past, then we must take into account how we, as a society, arrived at this particular moment in time” (p.157). To understand racism in sport, then, we must understand its historical development in today’s society. Traditional Indigenous cultures in North America were premised upon ecological values that positioned Aboriginal people as stewards of the environment. Aboriginal peoples who subscribed to this orientation regarded themselves as part of the land, for they recognized any misuse of their surroundings could influence their ability to survive. This fundamental belief affected everything they did and was the fundamental ideological difference that separated Aboriginal culture from the European colonists. As a result of this difference and the European belief of race superiority, Aboriginal people were removed from their homelands in what has become know as the Removal era.

To make sense of the Removal era of Aboriginal people from what is now the Eastern United States, Williams (2000) studied the narrative traditions of the legal discourse in United States Federal Indian law. He found many of the legal discourses, in response to Aboriginal assertions of tribalism and sovereignty, framed Aboriginal culture as inferior and Aboriginal claims as illegitimate. He cited Supreme Court decisions and the writings of people of considerable influence, such as former U.S. President John Quincy Adams and Philosopher John Locke, as examples

of literary attempts to reaffirm white hegemony over Aboriginal people. Specifically, arguments were made by these authors within a discourse that placed Aboriginal people and their culture outside of white society. Aboriginals were characterized as unwilling to be civilized by white standards and lacked sophistication to use land for the purpose of cultivation and permanent settlement. As a result of such influential discourse and a European belief of superiority, Aboriginal people were forced to relocate from their traditional homelands under the threat that any resistance would lead to their destruction. In short, the colonization of North America and the removal of many Aboriginal people from their homelands had profound implications for Aboriginal people, their cultures and their lived experiences within North America's new society.

Historical Aboriginal Sport Participation

Paraschak (1989) found the historical record regarding the “evolution of contemporary native culture” to be lacking. After an extensive review the literature related to Aboriginal sport history, she found most of the literature focused on pre-contact and the early period of contact between Aboriginals and European colonists. She notes much of this historical record dealt more with various Aboriginal athlete's participation in ‘mainstream’ sport but did not specifically examine the actual evolution of sport within the context of sweeping colonial changes to Aboriginal culture during the 19th and 20th centuries. In light this

absence, Paraschak suggests relationships between Europeans and Aboriginal people could be characterized by racism, exploitation, ethnocentric distortion, while Coakley (2004) adds that assimilation and resistance could also be added to this evaluation.

In a follow-up examination, Paraschak (1998) reveals the existence of racist practices in the regulation and provision of Aboriginal physical leisure practices by showing how the idea of the racialized ‘other’ (also see Edwards, 1979; Hall, 2003) was used to label Aboriginal leisure practices as inferior by European colonists. In so doing, she discusses how colonists viewed Aboriginal cultural activities as primitive and immoral, while privileging European culture and leisure practices as “natural” and “superior” (p.122). Often, Aboriginal expressions of their cultural beliefs were viewed as recreation. As a result, Europeans sought to change the “immorality” of Aboriginal people and to “civilize” them into North America’s new society in accordance with their “race logic”. To do this, Paraschak (1998) explained how American and Canadian governments deliberately worked to change Aboriginal culture through the implementation of policies that outlawed Aboriginal leisure practices.

Euro-centric policies were implemented with the reasoning that Aboriginal people could be modernized and civilized through the participation in “reasonable amusements” deemed to be more appropriate as compared to those Aboriginal practices that Europeans deemed “senseless” (Paraschak, 1998, p. 123). As Paraschak aptly stated:

Histories of Native involvement in sporting practices, traditional games, ceremonials, powwows, and rodeos all help illuminate an ongoing process wherein Euro-Americans have largely determined which physical leisure practices will be considered "legitimate" for Native participants. These histories also demonstrate the contested nature of such practices, as Native participants have at times acquiesced to, resisted, or accommodated the imposed expectations. (p. 122).

Such practices have, as Paraschak argues, affected Aboriginal people's understandings and preferences of leisure regardless of what response Aboriginal people have had. In other words, racism built upon a European race logic impacted upon Aboriginal people's understandings of their culture and the subsequent development of Aboriginal sport and leisure. I argue this historical evolution of Aboriginal culture has created conflicts with profound ramifications for Aboriginal people and their lived cultures today.

While racism worked to profoundly change Aboriginal culture, Europeans also benefitted through the exploitation of Aboriginal culture. Paraschak (1989) suggests exploitation occurred by "Europeanizing" Aboriginal games such as lacrosse. Lacrosse is perhaps one of the best examples of a traditional Aboriginal game altered to fit European conceptualizations of how sport should be performed. Aboriginal people were often used on the basis of their "Indianness" to promote the game in live demonstrations of the new Europeanized version of lacrosse. Europeans often benefitted financially from these ventures by selling tickets and using Aboriginal people as the attraction to would-be

spectators (Paraschak 1987, 1997). And so, while Aboriginal people were barred from participating in the newly established amateur leagues due to racist policies, they were at the same time exploited for their skills and talents for profit.

Ethnocentric distortion is the idea that our conceptualizations of people of particular races can be misleading due to our viewing them within our own cultural lens and perhaps our own race logic. For Aboriginal people, certain ethnocentric assumptions have been made against their culture and leisure practices. These assumptions have led to their cultural practices being banned or condemned on the basis that their practices were viewed to not only be inferior, but also immoral (Paraschak 1987). For example, gambling which was a popular leisure activity within Aboriginal culture was viewed as immoral by European standards. Such Euro-centric perceptions of Aboriginal peoples and their cultures contributed greatly to the destruction of their culture and to the distortion of written history that has often characterized Aboriginal people as inferior.

Coakley (2004) goes on to note that relations between Aboriginal and Europeans could also be characterized by assimilation and resistance. He suggests legal action engaged by colonists to ban Aboriginal activities, activities of Christian missionaries to replace Aboriginal culture and government actions in mandating education in residential schools all worked to assimilate Aboriginal people into Canadian society.

He also notes assimilation could have also taken place through the exposure to European culture through media such as the example of Inuit youth being exposed to television from the southern parts of Canada. However, in light of these assimilative examples, Coakley also notes Aboriginal people engaged in forms of resistance in their attempts to revive traditional games and to establishment of “native-only” sporting events such as the Northern Games, the Dene Games and the North American Indigenous Games.

Contemporary Aboriginal Sport Participation

The study of contemporary Aboriginal sport participation has been, for the most part, a relatively recent activity. Karlis (2004) supplies a succinct, albeit brief, discussion of recent historical developments and research that provides some insight into Aboriginal people and their current leisure and recreation participation. He reinforces that Aboriginal cultures in Canada are diverse and calls for the recognition that Aboriginal recreation and leisure needs and participation patterns should reflect this diversity. He then moves on to discuss the relationship between the Canadian government and Aboriginal people. In doing so, he discusses the passing of the 1982 Canadian Constitution Act wherein Aboriginal treaty and land claim rights were legitimized, thus opening up the recognition that these rights needed to be guaranteed and extended to both genders in the Aboriginal population. This pivotal moment in

Canadian history had important ramifications on the recognition and management of Aboriginal land rights within national parks. Karlis (2004) goes on to make the connection that the passing of this legislation also opened up the authority of Aboriginal people to “undertake certain decisions and to partake in the decision-making process with various levels of government on issues of direct concern” (p.181). He notes Canada has had an “active role in assisting in the establishment and development of recreation program for Canada’s Aboriginal Peoples” (p.181), but that its role has often come only after Aboriginal leaders call for help from governing authorities. This discussion focuses on government involvement after the Canadian Constitution Act was passed, yet it fails to touch upon the relationship between government and Aboriginal recreation programs prior to 1980 (see below).

Texts written about Aboriginal people and their leisure participation have, for the most part, focussed their efforts in explaining the current state of Aboriginal people’s health with little to no analysis of historical context. For example Dawson et al. (1998) drew attention to the absence of Aboriginal leisure research in their examination of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People’s report in 1990. The researchers noted recreation and leisure issues were not “accorded a separate heading” (p. 1). The Royal Commission on Aboriginal People’s mandate was to identify the issues that affected Aboriginal people in present-day Canada. It notes in regard to physical health, that Aboriginal people were

experiencing “intractable problems in four major categories: infant and child health, infectious disease, chronic disease, and disability” (p. 26 ci3a). The commission also noted that Aboriginal people were experiencing a multitude of issues such as alcohol and drug abuse, domestic violence, and high suicide rates (p. 26 ci3a). In light of the information in this report, Dawson et al. (1998) identified the issues they deemed to be the most predominant. Issues of tourism, substance abuse and crime, cultural maintenance, education and land use planning and wildlife management, were identified as the core recreation and leisure related issues within the Aboriginal context.

While these issues are certainly major challenges, they might actually be symptoms of a larger problem rooted in underlying socio-cultural phenomenon occurring through the broader Aboriginal psyche. Government involvement has been identified as a major contributor to the course that Aboriginal recreation and leisure has taken. For instance, Paraschak (1995) explored the Native Sport and Recreation Program (NSRP), which was a Federal government initiative for Aboriginal recreation in the late sixties and early seventies. She studied the patterns of reproduction and resistance that Aboriginal people demonstrated throughout the programs’ existence. She found the Federal Government’s focus was aimed at “raising performance levels to the point where Native athletes could compete alongside other Canadians in elite competitions, while also providing services to a “disadvantaged” population”

(Paraschak, 1995, p. 1). Of note here is the fact that the NSRP was created during a time when the Canadian government was concerned about the physical fitness of its general population and its international failures at competitions such as the Olympic Games.

In a separate exploration of high performance sport versus grass roots initiatives, Green (2007) showed that Federal interventions linked to the physical activity of Canadians that occurred after Bill C-131, An Act to Encourage Fitness and Amateur Sport, revolved around the theme of sport as an instrument to promote a “Canadian” identity (p.930). Paraschak (1998) reveals the same theme throughout the government discourse regarding the NSRP and the attempts of the program to integrate Aboriginal athletes into mainstream sport. In essence, Government officials “maintained certain ethnocentric assumptions...about the legitimate nature of sport, the rationale for providing government-funded sport opportunities, and the relationship between sport and Native politics” (p.4). Ultimately, Aboriginal attempts to tailor the Canadian sports system with their desire to be distinct from Canadian society was met by resistance by government officials who felt that Aboriginal people should participate within the structure of Canadian Sport System. When Aboriginal people began to create “All-Native Championships” and requested to enter “All-Native” teams into different Canadian championships, the political support for the program eventually came to an end even though the types of activities funded through the

NSRP were mostly of Euro-Canadian origin, such as hockey, fastball, etc. Traditional activities such as powwows and cultural workshops were initiated by Aboriginal communities, but without financial support from the NSRP. Ultimately, the conflict, which was the culmination of predominant ethnocentric government policies and the resistance of Aboriginals to adhere to such policies, was too great an obstacle to be overcome and the program was dismantled after nine years.

After the NSRP was discontinued, the gap between government policy and Aboriginal concerns continued. For example, in Ontario, Aboriginal groups have continually tried to address the recreation and sport issue with the creation of a non-profit organization mandated to provide recreation and sport development. This organization has gone through many transformations and several name changes (Henhawk, 1993) from the All Ontario Indian Sports and Recreation Committee to the Ontario Aboriginal Sport Circle, to name but a few. In a discussion paper, Henhawk (1993) pointed out the significant challenge of the then Ontario Aboriginal Recreation Council to meet its mandate of recreation development given the lack of financial resources for Aboriginal communities to provide facilities, hire recreation professionals and to educate the public about the benefits of recreation. Reid (1993) comes to the same conclusions, noting that “these difficulties will not likely to be overcome, however, until the priority for recreation services is increased from its present low status and seen as a vital part of the basic social

development goals of the community” (p.101). Social development, as defined by the Aboriginal people surveyed in this case, being the ability to create leadership opportunities, a sense of community and cultural awareness.

Reid (1993) gathered information regarding Aboriginal insights of the meaning, function and benefit of recreation provision at a provincial workshop of Aboriginal leaders. He reported the “consensus” made at the workshop was “the idea that people in First Nation communities could actually build a self-identity and sense of self-worth through the creative use of recreation, and that this should be the goal of recreation development in these communities” (p. 95). This finding is profound insofar as it raises many questions regarding the definitions of self-identity and self-worth given the context of being Aboriginal and living in a dominant Eurocentric culture. As Reid (1993) points out, Aboriginal people, in particular Aboriginal youth, “are caught between two cultures, struggling to develop a Native identity while living in a predominantly non-Native world” (p. 94). Youth were identified by the participants in the study as being of primary concern because they represented 50% of the Aboriginal population at the time. He reiterates this point in a discussion of leisure and traditional Aboriginal culture when he postulates, “without a healthy perspective of one’s own culture and traditions, some members of a minority culture may attempt assimilation into the dominant tradition, to escape this schizophrenic existence” (p.1).

Indeed, Reid is amongst a handful of other researchers (Forsyth, 2007; Henhawk, 1993; Karlis, 2004; Paraschak, 1998; Reid, 1998; Smith, 2006; Williams Jr., 2000) who have drawn upon issues of colonialism and racism to explain the current lived experience of Aboriginal people in modern society. In almost all cases, these researchers have advocated for the support of traditional activity development as a means to help Aboriginal people to overcome the many social and health problems in their communities.

In 2009, the general consensus remains that lifestyle related diseases and afflictions are still on the rise in Aboriginal communities. While some Aboriginal communities have made some progress in terms of developing basic infrastructure to support recreation in their communities (e.g. Six Nations of the Grand River), there continues to be a frustrating lack of research that addresses the current status of Aboriginal recreation and leisure development and the current evolution of Aboriginal culture in light of the recognition of the impact of European colonization. Given the continued concern regarding Aboriginal health issues, recreation and leisure research has generally not kept pace with the rise of health and social challenges. The research outlined above identifies many challenges and issues that have arisen in Aboriginal communities. It also raises many questions that need to be addressed. For example, what has been the contemporary lived experience of an Aboriginal person's participation in sport? What effect does living your

life “caught between two cultures” have on one’s participation in sport, recreation and leisure? How has colonialism affected contemporary Aboriginal lived experiences? Where is colonialism present within the lived sport experiences of Aboriginal people? These are some of the questions I aim to address as I explore my experiences and those experiences of my family, from a lifetime participating in sport and recreation.

Critical Race Theory

Given the historical and institutional racism that exists within Canadian society, I entered into this project with *critical race theory* (CRT) as my guiding theoretical and analytic framework for this study.

CRT is defined as

a theoretical and methodological framework with roots in legal studies, political theory, philosophy, anthropology, and sociology connecting research, policy, and race. It begins from the assumption that race and racism are at the very center of social and institutional life and uses stories, narrative inquiries, and other forms of both quantitative and qualitative study, to challenge existing assumptions about the social construction of race in society (Schwandt, 2007, p.53)

Crenshaw et al. (1995) note that CRT seeks “to understand how a regime of white supremacy and its subordination of people of colour have been created and maintained in America, and, in particular, to examine the relationship between that social structure and professed ideals such as ‘the rule of law’ and ‘equal protection’” (p.xiii). They add that CRT aims

to not only understand these relationships, but to promote change. Delgado and Stefancic (2000) argue CRT is premised upon the notion that racism is a normal part of our lives. Critical race theorists, then, challenge the ingrained racism within society by proposing alternative realities that challenge the status quo and much of our traditional understandings of life. Accordingly, CRT, with its particular emphasis on race and racism, complements the purpose of this study, which is aimed at examining the tensions Aboriginal people face between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultures within the context of sport participation.

In short, Glover (2007) argues CRT has three major tenets. First, it assumes race is a social construction. That is, CRT is premised upon the notion that race is (re)produced in social behavior and interaction, as opposed being a legitimate or real biological construct. Second, CRT advances a racial epistemology that aims to refute colour-blindness and uncover white privilege. Colour-blindness implies objectivity and merit, thereby dismissing race or racism as possible outcomes because everyone under these policies or laws are presumably treated equally. CRT scholars refute the notion of colour-blindness by exposing how it reproduces a system of privilege for white people who fail to recognize their race. CRT is intended to assist white people in confronting their privilege. Doing so forces white people to reconsider the idea of merit and the privilege they hold in society. Third, CRT privileges storytelling. As Glover, (2007) asserts, “critical race theorists believe that there is no neutral theory of

knowledge” (p. 197). He suggests, “dominant cultural narratives...construct reality in ways that maintain hegemonic order...” (p. 197). Critical race theorists, then, argue that counter-stories are needed in order to fight the oppressiveness of the dominant discourse to “build a common culture of shared understanding among minority communities whose voices are missing from scientific discourse...” (p.197). Glover furthers this argument by suggesting that such counter-stories can be used to refute dominant discourses by depicting injustice. Counter-stories then have the possibility to transform society and address the oppression of minority groups by the majority. All of these elements were utilized in my thesis research.

Sport offers an excellent context in which to apply CRT given the “colour-blind” notion of sport as the ultimate meritocracy. This notion portrays sport as a realm in which outcomes are presumably associated with individual skill and ability, not one’s race or ethnicity. In other words, “if you’re good, you’ll play.” Class, gender, and race are ostensibly “checked at the door”, as it were. Sport serves as a social leveler. Of course, this dominant discourse, by focusing on merit, skill, and social leveling, distracts people from discussions of race and racism, thereby perpetuating inequalities that warrant attention. To claim race is rendered invisible by sport is simply absurd.

Under this premise, Hylton (2005) calls for sport and leisure studies to adopt a CRT framework. He urges sport and leisure scholars to use

CRT because of its ability to “critically reexamine how ‘race’, and racialized processes and formations are incorporated in their theory and practice” (p.94). He argues, “a CRT lens turned upon the mainstream writing of sport and leisure studies throws light upon a domain that traditionally reflects the power and knowledge interests of white social science” (p.85). Fox (2006) makes a similar call as she argues for leisure studies to make connections to indigenous scholarship. In so doing, she proposes that an “essential element of rethinking leisure studies and its relevance to Indigenous scholars is rethinking how we approach the study of leisure” (p. 405). To this end, she offers four areas upon which to focus: (1) leisure studies need for more descriptive studies and thus moving beyond the large categorizations of modern Eurocentric definitions of leisure; (2) the need for our conceptualizations of leisure to be problematized and open to theorizing and critique; (3) the need to recognize the Indigenous critique of inherent hegemony within western intellectual traditions with Indigenous epistemologies and praxis; and (4) the need for postcolonial analysis and decolonization of leisure research. These needs describe “symbolic strategies for shaping desirable futures through understanding the harms of the past, shifting power relations, and rejecting simplistic choices” (p. 406). Thus, Fox argues the way forward for leisure scholarship is to connect to an Indigenous scholarship that “suggests that there must be an Indigenous critiques of existing Eurocentric scholarship and a decolonization of scholarship (p. 407).

Glover (2007) answers this call with his examination of First String, an independent co-ed youth baseball league for African American children in the United States. By applying a CRT lens, he looked at the “facets of racism entrenched within the ostensibly ‘colour-blind’ policies of youth baseball”(p. 2). Through a fictional narrative about the African-American participant’s experiences, he sought to expose the “veiled subtext of race in popular children’s sport in America” (p. 2).

Consequently, he exposed integration policies in youth baseball that privileged white children and at the same time disadvantaged the African American children and their parents who wanted to start their own league. Glover’s use of narrative inquiry as a means of representing his findings is a good example of the implementation of CRT. CRT seeks to challenge traditional mindsets in research and in this case, Glover accomplishes this through his narrative.

While CRT has been applied to sport, (Birrell, 1989; Carrington, 1998; Gardiner & Welch, 2001; Garland & Rowe, 2001; Long et al, 2005, Scraton, 2001), to my knowledge, it has not been used as a framework to examine Aboriginal people and their participation in sport. Of course, Paraschak (1989, 1995, 1997, 1998), Forsyth (2007), and Reid & Welke (1998) clearly draw upon *elements* of CRT in their critical approaches to Aboriginal sport histories and the issues facing Aboriginal people in relation to modern sport participation, but none mention CRT as an explicit framework. As such, there appears to be a legitimate gap in

the literature. This study aims to address this gap with the intent to encourage further research in this area.

III: METHODS

The history of research from many indigenous perspectives is so deeply embedded in colonization that it has been regarded as a tool only of colonization and not as a potential tool for self-determination and development. For indigenous peoples, research has a significance that is embedded in our history as natives under the gaze of Western science and colonialism. It is framed by the indigenous attempts to escape the penetration and surveillance of that gaze while simultaneously reordering, reconstituting, and redefining ourselves as peoples and communities in a state of ongoing crisis. Research is a site of contestation not simply at the level of epistemology or methodology but also in its broadest sense as an organized scholarly activity that is deeply connected to power.

--Smith (2003, p. 87)

Spoken Indigenous Epistemology

My Mohawk culture was oral. Accordingly, our practical and historical knowledge – the very way we came to know as a people – was expressed through stories. Storytelling was a disciplined practice, whereby those who taught and learned our stories engaged in the process seriously to ensure the accuracy of our knowledge and the continuity of our culture. These stories breathed life into our everyday lived experiences. Story-telling has always played a crucial role in Aboriginal cultures (Benham, 2007; Denzin, 2003; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002; Struthers & Peden-McAlpine, 2005), for a spoken indigenous epistemology, our system of knowledge creation and maintenance, has always driven our culture. Benham (2007) argues story-telling is even

more crucial today in light of the prolonged oppression Aboriginal people have faced. She stresses that, “because narrative recognizes the value of indigenous knowledge and its connection with other forms of knowledge (e.g. scientific), it has a place in research and policy arenas” (p.513). She goes on to note indigenous narrative is crucial for the recounting of memories because: (1) it recognizes a collective memory differs from the dominant texts insofar as it “presents a political discourse that asserts alternative realities and advocates for native/indigenous sovereignty...” (p. 529); (2) it focuses on personal/family and societal healing, which “makes possible recovery from the effects of generations of oppression and systemic racism” (p. 529); and (3) it can have a powerful impact on the notions of pedagogy and policy. Story-telling is thus a means of maintaining culture that is not only relevant historically, but also critically important for Aboriginal people in the here and now, for, as Glover (2007) noted, it can help (re)build a common culture, while taking on dominant cultural influences.

This research project answers Denzin’s (2003) call to advance “a radical performative social science” that “confront[s] and transcend[s] the problems surrounding the color line in the 21st century” (p.5). In embracing this approach, I followed Denzin’s lead and drew upon reflexive autoethnography, critical pedagogy, and critical race theory, making connections among the three, to create space for “acts that create critical race consciousness” (p.5). Accordingly, the research presented in

this thesis is aimed at forwarding a new “red pedagogy”, a social movement of anti-colonialist discourse. Underpinned by a spoken indigenous epistemology, red pedagogy “privileges personal-identity performance narratives – that is stories and poetry that emphasize self-determination and indigenous theory” (p.7) (see also Brayboy, 2000). To this end, my thesis represents research that deliberately confronts colonialism and makes the reader (re)consider the complexity of being an Aboriginal person in the early 21st century.

Performance Ethnography

To describe what it means to be an Aboriginal person in today’s society is no easy task. Smith (2005, p. 86) shares this perspective when she writes:

the identity of ‘the native’ is regarded as complicated, ambiguous, and therefore troubling even for those who live the realities and contradictions of being native and of being a member of a colonized and minority community that still remembers other ways of being, of knowing, and of relating to the world.

This study represented an opportunity to engage in a process that provided a forum for *my* Aboriginal voice – a forum in which I could attempt to articulate the complexity of being Aboriginal, of living in contemporary Canadian society, while at the same time struggling to engage in research that captured the essence of my perspective and my experiences. I understood that, in aiming to achieve these goals, I would

be forwarding the idea that Aboriginal scholarship can and should live outside of the dominant cultural norm.

Methodologically, this aim led me to performance ethnography. Performance ethnography provided a “perfect fit” for me to move forward in critical race scholarship as an Aboriginal person. As Denzin (2003) wrote, “Performance ethnography represents and performs rituals from everyday life, using performing as a method of representation and a method of understanding” (p.33). By employing this understanding of performance ethnography, I intended to develop a multi-voice performance text that reflected the stories and meanings of my self-reflexive examination of my participation in sport and the sport experiences of my immediate family members. With this in mind, I sought to achieve two outcomes: (1) to “de-colonize” the research process and privilege Aboriginal voices; and (2) to challenge researchers and Aboriginal people alike in regard to what type of research would be most useful as a means to bring forth positive change.

Denzin (2003) describes performance ethnography as a move to performance in the social science accompanied by a shift in how we understand ethnography and ethnographic writing. He suggests researchers involved in critical race theory should seek to “craft an emancipatory discourse that speaks to issues of racial inequality under neoliberal forms of democracy and capitalism” (p. 24). As Alexander, (2005) suggests, performance ethnography is an approach to studying and

staging culture that “works towards lessening the gap between a perceived and actualized sense of self and the other” (p. 411). He suggests this method opens up spaces for critical reflexivity about the self and society, spaces that exist “in that tensive space of being radical and risky – radical in the sense that they strip away notions of a given human condition, and risky in that our sense of conform in knowing the world is made bare” (p. 425). Thus, a move to performance and subsequent emancipatory discourses requires researchers to “turn to a performance-based approach to culture, politics and pedagogy” (p.24). Practically, this shift includes the use of:

reflexive performance narrative forms, which includes not only performance autoethnography but also short stories, conversations, fiction, creative nonfiction, photographic essays, personal essays, personal narratives of the self, writing-stories, self-stories, fragmented or layered texts, critical autobiography, memoirs, personal histories, cultural criticism, co-constructed performance narratives, and performance writing, which blurs the boundaries separating texts, representation, and criticism (Denzin, 2003, p.14)

Richardson (2000) labels these approaches *creative analytic practice*, a term, she explained, that “displays the writing process and the writing product as deeply intertwined; both are privileged” (p. 930). With this recognition, I sought to create a *performance text*, a specific form of creative analytic practice consistent with performance ethnography that resonated with my heritage as an Aboriginal person and my ambition to advance a red-pedagogy. More specifically, I created what Denzin (2003) refers to as a *personal performance narrative*, “a radically contextualized

self-story or personal story (mystory) about something that happened to the storyteller or to a group to which the storyteller belongs”(p.38). In this sense, my performance text, or “mystory” privileges my Aboriginal voice and point of view, thereby staying true to my goal to de-colonize the research process. Moreover, it enabled me to frame colonialism within the analysis of my own experiences and still engage in the research process. All told, then, the performance text I developed is meant to honour the Aboriginal tradition of story-telling and push other Aboriginals to (re)consider and (re)articulate what it means to be an Aboriginal person in today’s society.

The Researcher’s Role

Within any type of reflexive form of inquiry, the researcher ought to provide an outline of personal values, assumptions and biases at the outset of the study. In this spirit, I wish to reiterate that I am Aboriginal. Both my parents are Aboriginal, and I was raised on an “Indian Reserve”. I have spent the majority of my life involved with sport as a participant, coach, volunteer, organizer and spectator. Sport participation has been a major part of my life, having participated in many sports, but particularly organized basketball and rugby. I have coached grassroots basketball on and off the reserve since I was thirteen years old and have been a volunteer in numerous capacities for different tournaments and conferences. In 1994, I participated in the inaugural Ontario Olympic

Youth Festival, and since 1997, I have volunteered on the organizing committee for this conference. In 1996, I was selected to be a youth delegate for Canada at the Olympic Youth Camp held at the Centennial Olympic Games in Atlanta, Georgia. I have also been a participant at the Canadian Olympic Academy.

I have held numerous summer positions at our community's recreation department, worked for the Coaches Association of Ontario and for the Ontario Aboriginal Sport Circle, the latter of which was dedicated to the promotion of sport in Aboriginal communities. My experience with sport also goes beyond my direct participation insofar as I was raised in a family whose members have been active participants in sport both on and off reserve. In short, I believe my experiences have positioned me in such a way to add a unique understanding to the issues and challenges of being an Aboriginal person who has experienced many different contexts of sport.

My heritage, relationships with sport and the participants of this study, and membership in the community at the centre of this inquiry unquestionably influenced my understanding and interpretation of the data I collected. I embrace these biases and am confident they will serve as a strength as I aim to privilege the Aboriginal voice in this research. I fully acknowledge I commenced this study with the perspective that Aboriginal people have profound experiences in sport that stem from a fundamental clash between their culture and that of the larger society.

Based upon my personal experiences, I questioned whether contemporary wisdom regarding sport can be a means to positively enhance Aboriginal people's lives given Aboriginal people's current recognition (or lack thereof) of the fundamental conflict between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal (Euro-Canadian) culture as created by issues of race, culture and power. Readers should appreciate these perspectives as they attempt to interpret the findings from this research.

Research Participants

The participants in this study consisted of my immediate family: my mother, father, brother, sister and me. We have three distinct age cohorts represented in our family with my mother and father having been born in 1937 and 1940, my sister and brother in 1960 and 1962, and myself in 1978 respectively. In short, there are three distinct generational cohorts within our family, each having experienced great cultural change, both outside of and within our community and within our personal lives. This study attempts to highlight these differences.

Mother: My mother has spent the majority of her life playing and coaching softball. She, along with my father, was instrumental in establishing Six Nations Minor Softball. She also coached off-reserve for three different teams and was selected as a manager/coach for Team Ontario's women softball team at the 1985 and 1989 Canada Summer

Games. Currently, she is an avid golfer and participates yearly in the winter and summer Ontario Senior Games. She was employed as a school teacher and taught for 32 years on the Six Nations reserve.

Father: My father has spent the majority of his youth playing organized football and softball. He, along with my mother, was instrumental in establishing Six Nations Minor Softball. He has held positions on our community recreation committees and was part of the committee that built our local arena. Currently, he is also an avid golfer and also participates in the winter and summer Ontario Senior Games. He was employed as an ironworker at Stelco Steel – Hilton Works in Hamilton, Ontario.

Sister: My sister spent the majority of her life playing softball and had a long career playing senior women's softball in Ontario. She is currently the Director of the Six Nations Parks and Recreation Department and has held that position for 25 years.

Brother: My brother has played hockey at both the junior and university levels. He has also been an avid basketball coach for more than half of his life. His experience includes coaching at the provincial club and provincial elite levels. He is also active with Canada Basketball within their elite development program and has been a university coach for several years. He has been asked to give his insights to Provincial committees on sport and has completed training for high performance

coaching. He is employed as the Head of Physical Education at Hagersville Secondary School and has been a teacher for 24 years.

Ethical Considerations

This study ultimately was a way for me to express my feelings about the complexity of being Aboriginal, and it raised many issues in regard to how to “do” research in an Aboriginal context with Aboriginal people. This dilemma became a paradox when I considered the challenge of being Aboriginal and wanting to conduct research into Aboriginal issues. Bishop (2005) notes, concern about the “Locus of Power” in research (p.112) is of primary concern to Aboriginal people. In particular, Aboriginal concerns relate to issues of initiation, benefits, representation, legitimacy and accountability (p.112). These issues speak to the concerns regarding who controls the research process, who benefits from the research process, whose concerns are represented and legitimized by the research process and what accountability the researcher has when he or she enters into an Aboriginal community to conduct research. These issues are poignant for any person who has been subjected to colonial rule and they help contextualize the problems that Aboriginal people have in regard to research.

In this study, I collected stories from my parents and siblings with the intent to craft a performance text that reflected my interpretation of their stories, my feelings about being Aboriginal, and my understanding

of the information that I learned about racism and colonialism throughout the research process. Initially, I wanted to understand Aboriginal issues related to sport participation, but recognized throughout this process that such an approach would lead to issues of generalizability I thought inappropriate. Once I came to understand this dilemma of generalizability, I focused my performance text to be the reflection of my personal experience and feelings about being Aboriginal in today's society. Ultimately, I take ownership over the authority of the text; the result is my interpretation of my experiences and understandings.

Even though I did my utmost to capture the essence of my family members' stories, I was faced with a unique set of ethical challenges while I crafted the text. Critical Race Theory emphasizes that one should understand historical information to understand the present context. Staying true to this approach created ethical questions for me as I used direct quotations from my family members to craft a story about a fictional community meeting in a post-racism world. In this meeting, anonymous voices express their concerns, questions, and insights about what should be included in a story told to the children of the community about being Aboriginal during a time of racism, colonialism, and unequal relationships of power. In other words, to communicate my understanding of my own experiences, I realized I had to include the stories of my family because their historical experiences have ultimately informed my life, my feelings, and my experiences. In short, their story is my story,

and my story is their story. This perspective fits best with Ellis's (2007) notion of "relational ethics". Relational ethics asks a question most poignant for this study: What are our ethical responsibilities toward intimate others who are implicated in the stories we write about ourselves? This question introduced many ethical issues regarding how I could "stay true" to my family's stories and maintain the anonymity of their identities.

The main ethical dilemma with this project has been maintaining the anonymity of my family members. To address this issue, I made sure to withhold their names from the body of the performance text. Maintaining complete anonymity, however, was difficult because some of the personal stories and quotations I used can, without much difficulty (for those who know them) be associated with my family members. Even those who do not know my family will be able to recognize the story about the Mohawk haircut is explicitly about my brother's experience as a male coach in women's sport. My failure to maintain anonymity raised many ethical questions I pondered throughout my analysis. Should I use these stories? What will be the ramifications if I do? In the end, I decided to include quotations and stories I thought could potentially be used to identify my family members because, after weighing the risks, I viewed their inclusion was important to fulfilling the purpose of the study.

Ellis (2007) states, "autoethnographies show people in the process of figuring out what to do, how to live and what their struggles mean"

(p.26). She also states, “we constantly have to consider which questions to ask, which secrets to keep, and which truths are worth telling” (p.26). In the case of this research project, I struggled constantly with what to do? I struggled with knowing what I should reveal about my family’s experiences in sport. I struggled with what information to use to express the steep curve of learning I did throughout the research process. The purpose of this research project however, was to explore the issues of race, culture and power. To not include the actual stories and quotations of my family members who deal directly with these issues of colonialism and racism, would have been a great disservice to the study. In the end, I was pleased my family agreed to participate in my research, and I felt a tremendous amount of support from them as I engaged in this research process. Though my analysis forced them to reconsider their experiences critically and perhaps challenge their perspectives, it has also generated a healthy dialogue about race and racism, one that is not all that unfamiliar to us.

Data Collection

To begin, I provided a detailed information letter to each family member to explain the purpose and objectives of the study. Once they received the information and consent form, I allowed a few days before following up with them to ensure they had ample opportunity to provide an informed written consent prior to the initialization of interviews (see

appendix A for the letter of informed consent). Once consent was granted, we coordinated formal meetings times and dates that were mutually agreeable. Data collection occurred during the month of June in 2009.

Like a bricoleur, I “deploy[ed] whatever strategies, methods, and empirical materials [were] at hand” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 4). Accordingly, I conducted one face-to-face interview with each of my family members, each lasting approximately ninety minutes. Our conversations were recorded using a digital audio recorder and transcribed into text as a source of data for this study. The recordings were used to ensure accuracy of the participant’s statements when transcribing and analyzing the data.

The interviews were conversational in nature. They began with a brief overview of the study and then with an casual conversation about sport experiences. I began each interview asking my family members to simply tell me about an experience they had in sport. My method was to allow my family members to lead the discussion from the start – allowing them to discuss what they felt to be most relevant to what they understood the objectives of the study to be. After this initial question, I had a list of follow-up and probing questions to ensure that the discussion moved forward to the issues in which I was interested. For the most part, I followed the order of questions outlined in Appendix A to assist the interview process. For example, I asked what their perception or thoughts

were on Aboriginal people and their participation (or lack thereof) in sport? In all cases, these questions led to very rich discussions surrounding their experience in sport and their thoughts about Aboriginal issues in sport.

To assist with the data collection, I made use of a written diary. It was used to record notes, ideas and perceptions throughout the interview process. It was also used to record my personal thoughts, feelings, experiences and perceptions throughout the research process. I made entries throughout the interview and transcription process. Essentially, I made entries whenever I felt I had to, to ensure my thoughts were recorded. These entries often occurred while transcribing, while reading and synthesizing information and cross-referencing what I had learned about their experiences with that of my own. In the end, I used four entries of my writing in the final performance text. Other portions of the text, such as three voices representing my voice, were representative of my experiences that I have had, discussions that have taken place with family members and friends and personal reflections about trying to make sense of being a colonized Aboriginal person in today's society.

Data Analysis Procedures

Though fictional, the creation of the performance text was a process that effectively doubled as my analysis for the study. To be clear, I wrote. I wrote down direct quotations from my family members. I read and re-

read the transcripts of our conversations and highlighted certain examples and comments that reproduced, confronted or resisted the colonization of Aboriginal people. I wrote about my personal thoughts, and I wrote about insights I had about articles and experiences. I examined old photographs of my family and reflected on what their lives must have been like in the face of so much overt and subtle racism. I listened to music to jog my memories of what it was like being a young basketball player in love with its culture and its music. It was the only way I knew in keeping with the critical race theoretical framework for an Aboriginal person. Richardson (2000) wrote, "Writing is also a way of "knowing" – a method of discovery and analysis. By writing in different ways, we discover new aspects of our topic and our relationship to it" (p.923). She advocates for writing as a methodology, whereby scholars must learn to locate ourselves in multiple discourses and communities, develop critical literacy, find ways to write, present and teach, to increase diversity and to be self-reflexive (p.939).

My challenge in crafting the performance text was to create a story that used the comments of my family members and my personal thoughts and experiences in such a way as to illustrate the challenges of being Aboriginal in today's society and the experiences of racism that are sometimes clouded by a colonized perspective. My performance text is truly meant to challenge the conceptualization of racism and to present it from a colonized point of view. The intent upon which I used the

performance text as a means to represent my findings was meant to provide the Aboriginal perspective on what counts as knowledge and to stimulate critical reflection of the traditionally held perspectives of the research process.

Criteria for Judgment

Richardson (2000) discusses the difficulties that arise when researchers stretch the boundaries of ethnographic research that blurs the lines between traditional scientific and literary writing. Judgment of such work raises many ethical issues that speak to the accuracy of ethnographic accounts of people's lived experiences. Richardson points out that while postmodernism allows researchers to represent their findings in non-traditional ways, it also "constrains them asking them to be more self-conscious about claims to authorship, authority, truth, validity and reliability. Self-reflexivity brings to consciousness some of the complex political/ideological agendas hidden in our writing. Truth claims are less easily validated; speaking for "others" is wholly suspect." (p. 254). This study, however, does not view self-reflexivity as a constraint, but rather as an ally to better understanding Aboriginal lived-experiences.

In actuality, the fundamental criteria for evaluating this study lies within the idea of authority as it relates to the cultural tensions Aboriginal people experience. For example, this study seeks to better understand

how colonialism has affected Aboriginal experience. At such a late stage of colonialism, how can Aboriginal people be sure that their perspective on life is authentically their own? In understanding my lived experience and those of my family, the question of authority is a major issue that I wanted to bring into focus and allow others to be critical of as well.

The question of how to evaluate performance ethnography is answered by Richardson (2000) who advocates that all ethnography be held to high and difficult standards. It is recognized that postmodernism presents problems for ethnographers for the collection and reporting of “data”. Questions abound regarding claims to authorship, authority, truth, validity and reliability. Research brings them into the research process, as a consequence of self reflective practice. To address these issues, Richardson (2000) suggests five criteria for evaluating ethnographic work: (1) Substantive Contribution – does the work contribute to our understanding of social? How has the researcher’s grounding informed the text?; (2) Aesthetic Merit – does the piece aesthetically engage the reader to ask questions about the text?; (3) Reflexivity – did the writer hold him/herself accountable for ensuring his or her own ethical self-awareness?; (4) Impact – How does the work affect its audience?; and (5) Expression of Reality – does the text embody a real, plausible and credible account of lived experience? While each criteria has numerous questions that relates to its category the underlying point of emphasis to remember is that ethnographic research must be held accountable to the

highest critical scrutiny of ethical consideration. For this study, such criterion for judgment is not only welcomed, but needed to ensure the purpose of such research is fulfilled

IV: PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

Morpheus: I imagine that right now you're feeling a bit like Alice, tumbling down the rabbit hole?

Neo: You could say that.

Morpheus: I can see it in your eyes. You have the look of a man who accepts what he sees because he is expecting to wake up. Ironically this is not far from the truth.

Do you believe in fate Neo?

Neo: No.

Morpheus: Why not?

Neo: Because I don't like the idea that I'm not in control of my life.

Morpheus: I know exactly what you mean.

Let me tell you why you're here. You're here because you know something. What you know you can't explain but you feel it. You've felt it your entire life. That there's something wrong with the world. You don't know what it is but it's there like a splinter in your mind driving you mad. It is this feeling that has brought you to me. Do you know what I'm talking about?

Neo: The Matrix?

Morpheus: Do you want to know what it is?

The Matrix is everywhere. It is all around us. Even now in this very room. You can see it when you look out your window or when you turn on your television. You can feel it when you go to work, when you go to church, when you pay your taxes. It is the world that has been pulled over your eyes to blind you from the truth.

Neo: What truth?

Morpheus: That you are a slave Neo. Like everyone else you were born into bondage. Born into a prison that you cannot smell or taste or touch.

A prison for your mind.

* * *

“One of the ways in which Canada demarcates itself from other countries is through the expression of multiculturalism. However, while Canada considers itself a multicultural society, there is a dominant Eurocentric culture which forms the basis for interaction in the larger society. As soon as someone steps out of their subcultural group, they are forced to engage the larger society on its terms. Without a healthy perspective of one’s own culture and traditions, some members of a minority culture may attempt assimilation into the dominant tradition, to escape this schizophrenic existence. This is particularly problematic for Canadian First Nations people, many of whom continue to suffer from the cultural genocidal practice of earlier governments and missionaries who attempted to extinguish aboriginal culture, thinking it paganistic.” (Reid, p. 1, 1998)

* * *

Setting: Six Nations Community meeting. Six Nations Reserve

Date: Near future.

The Six Nations of the Grand River or as more commonly known The Six Nations Reserve is located within an hour and a half drive of all major cities in Southwestern Ontario. It is situated along the Grand River and is 30 minutes south of Brantford, and 30 minutes west of Hamilton. It is the most populated reserve in Canada with over 11 000 registered people living on the reserve. There is also another 11 000 registered Six Nations Band Members who live off reserve in the surrounding communities, across the province and across Canada. This reserve is unique given its proximity to the largest urban area in Canada and its historical political relationship with the Government of Canada and the British Monarchy. The ancestors of the Six Nations people are originally from the area that is now known as New York State.

Moderator: I often wondered what it would be like when this was all over. What story would we tell to our children that they would be able to understand and remember? We haven’t created any new stories for a long time. For that matter we haven’t told any of our old stories either. It is time for us to tell a new story before we forget how. Only the oldest of us now remembers what that was like. We will need their wisdom and guidance.

I thought perhaps we could start with sport. Are there any suggestions for a beginning?

Voice 1: There was a time when lacrosse almost went out down here. We need to tell them how it happened.

* * *

Inquisitive Self (1): How could it have gotten to that point? How could we have let it get that far? How could we have almost lost lacrosse?

Colonized Self (2): Maybe because lacrosse lost its meaning. They were a hunter-gatherer society and maybe they had no use for lacrosse once they started to progress. In any case they had their chance. It's not like anyone was telling them that they couldn't play lacrosse.

Rebellious Self (3): Are you kidding me? Lacrosse meant more than just training for survival. The reality is we almost lost it because of the white man's influence. Because they imposed their culture on us! Now the only thing we have left is this bastardized version of it.

Inquisitive Self (1): But that's a good point, though. No one told us that we couldn't play and keep our traditions alive.

Colonized Self (2): That's right. They've always had the freedom to choose. It's obvious now that they chose not to keep what was supposedly so important.

Rebellious Self (3): Seems pretty hard to choose when you've got their culture surrounding you and forced into your lives.

Inquisitive Self (1): But we've been living on reserves. Was their culture really forced upon us?

* * *

Storyteller: He doesn't play lacrosse competitively. Probably because he never really played any lacrosse growing up. The reserve schools didn't have the money to buy lacrosse sticks and most kids couldn't afford their own. He gained an interest too late to start playing for a team on the rez but that's ok. He's already picked his sports. Basketball and rugby are his favourites. But he likes to handle the stick. He likes to toss the ball against a wall. He likes the feeling it brings to him as the stick twirls in his hands. "This was our game", he thinks, "This was the game of my ancestors." If he could be proud of one thing, it's that lacrosse was created by his people. He thinks, "White people can't take that away from us."

The boy attends a high school whose students are predominantly white. Hardly any of them have ever played lacrosse either. One day, the phys-

ed teacher announces they would be playing lacrosse throughout the week. The young boy gets excited. He's not very good, but he's better than most. He has fun. The other boys like the game too! He feels as if he's sharing some of his culture. He's proud.

After the game, he walks back into the school. Another Native boy stops him in the hall. "What? You think you can play lacrosse now don't you? You think you're some big lacrosse player, eh? You think you're really good don't you?"

* * *

Voice 2: But what about hockey, softball or basketball? These sports should be included. They're just as much a part of this community as lacrosse.

Voice 3: I for one don't want our children exposed to their games. Their games are what started all the confusion in the first place. We should not include them in our story.

Voice 4: But those sports are now part of this community. We can't go backwards now. Our children have a right to know the truth of what took place here.

Moderator: I agree. Our children deserve to know the truth. They have a right to know that despite our best efforts to keep our oldest traditions alive, we created new ones in the process.

Voice 5: But that doesn't tell the whole story. We still need to tell the story of how we almost lost lacrosse. We need to tell them how they forced change through their racist policies and supremacist attitudes.

* * *

Colonized Self: There was nothing forced upon them. They've been on their reserves and have been free to do what they want. They could have kept playing their traditional lacrosse.

Inquisitive Self: That's a good point. We've been segregated in that respect. We should have been able to keep up a lot of our traditions. It's our own fault that we didn't keep traditional lacrosse alive.

Rebellious Self: That's the stupidest thing I've ever heard. How are you supposed to keep your traditions alive when you've been moved from your original homes and forced into a lifestyle that's completely foreign to you? How are you supposed to keep traditional lacrosse alive when they came along and changed it?

Inquisitive Self: But we weren't forced to change lacrosse. We weren't forced onto the reserves...were we?

Colonized Self: As far as I know they asked to be put on the reserves. They wanted to be segregated.

Rebellious Self: Why would we want that? Why would we choose to be put onto reserves when we were the first people here? Why would we make that decision?

Inquisitive Self: Maybe so that we could protect ourselves and our culture from the colonizers?

Colonized Self: A lot of good that did them. Oh well. No sense in crying about the past. What's been done is done and there's nothing that can be done about it now.

* * *

Storyteller: For a couple of hours each week in school he learns about his culture. An elder comes in and teaches the children their history and their stories. She tells them of the sky woman falling and landing on the back of the turtle. She tells them the story of grandmother moon and that we should always respect our mother earth. His, is a matriarchal culture. Husbands live with the wife's family after marriage. Children are given clans and clans are always passed by way of the mother's side. His culture had a deep respect for women.

He starts to play sports off the reserve because that's the only place to play basketball. He's never experienced jokes like that before on the rez. Guys teasing each other with wisecracks and over-exaggerations. Guys making jokes about women. He doesn't know how to act or react, but he wants to play, he wants to fit in. He laughs but it's not comfortable. What can he do except quit?

The years fly by. It's natural now, the jokes and stories about men and women. It's what he must endure to keep playing. He leaves for university. There's still a chance to keep playing but he's hesitant. He's tired of the wisecracks. He's tired of all the jokes. He doesn't want to endure the teasing and over-exaggerations of their masculinity any longer. "Why can't they grow up?" he thinks. But he stops playing and blames himself for not being good enough or strong enough. He questions himself for not being able to take the chance and endure. But he can't and he doesn't fully understand why.

* * *

Moderator: Yes, we should talk about their sports that have also become ours. We should talk about their racist policies and supremacist attitudes that brought about those sports. What else?

Voice 6: Schools. We should tell them how the schools have influenced us. We should tell them what the teachers taught us and how the teachers organized sports for us.

Voice 7: If you're going to tell them that, then you should tell them about the RCMP. They organized things, too.

Voice 8: But the schools and the RCMP are part of their culture. I don't want our children exposed to their systems of control.

* * *

Inquisitive Self: We've experienced a lot of things...almost every form of racism there is. But a lot of it is in the past, isn't it? Our kids can go and play any kind of sport they want. They can go to the highest levels of sport, if they want to. There's nothing stopping them except themselves.

Colonized Self: That's right. Nothing is stopping them except themselves. Some of them think there's racism everywhere. They think that everywhere they turn they're being discriminated against because they're Native. They think their failures are because people are being racist against them. But they've got the freedom to do what they want. No one is discriminating against them in this day and age. If they work hard they can achieve anything.

Rebellious Self: You're blind if you can't see the discrimination that existed and still exists today. It's all around you if you open your eyes. There was discrimination against who we were. There's discrimination against who we still are.

Colonized Self: That's ridiculous. The only thing that is stopping them from achieving success in sport is themselves. Ultimately, if they don't succeed, it's because they're the ones who don't want to join the rest of society. They're the ones who don't want to accept certain things. The only discrimination that is left is the discrimination that they have within themselves.

Rebellious Self: And why do you think that is?

* * *

Moderator: Yes, we need to include something about the structures of their culture and how they have influenced us. Is there anything else we need to include?

Voice 9: We need to tell them about technology, like radio, television, music, and the internet.

Voice 10: I don't see how that has anything to do with sport?

Voice 11: Well, we used to listen to the big leagues on the radio cause that's all we had back then. My favourite team was the Brooklyn Dodgers, and being a catcher, I just zeroed in on Roy Campanello. And then, when we got to be about 14 years old, that's when television came out, and my cousin's father went and bought one. I used to go over to their place on Saturday afternoons. We'd play shinny hockey and then we'd watch the Maple Leafs play the Detroit Red Wings.

Voice 12: I remember that when we became aware of the Olympics, that we would do stuff for the Olympics, we had our own marathon, we ran across the concession from corner to corner, we did sprints, we did races with our bikes, so I think as we got exposed to things we'd pick up those games. You know I think that's how you got started. You got started because that's what everybody else was doing. You know you go to school and everybody plays lacrosse or softball or hockey. You know you either get left behind or you get involved and I chose to get involved.

Voice 13: For me, music was always a part of playing basketball. It was part of the culture. I'd listen to music before the game. We'd listen to it in the locker room and for warm-ups. Hip-hop and rap was just part of being a basketball player.

* * *

So many of us in limbo
How to get it on, it's quite simple
3 stones from the sun
We need a piece of this rock
Our goal indestructible soul
Answers to this quizzin'
To the Brothers in the street, schools and the prisons

History shouldn't be a mystery
Our stories real history
Not His story
We gonna work out one day
Till we all get paid
The right way in full, no bull
Talkin', no walkin', drivin', arrivin' in style
Soon you'll see what I'm talkin' 'bout
'Cause one day
The brothers gonna work it out

Brothers Gonna Work It Out - Chuck D – Public Enemy

* * *

Moderator: Yes, I think that we need to include those influences. There can be no doubt that in some shape or form, we've been influenced through these media. Is there anything else?

Voice 14: We need to talk about racism. To let our children know what it is.

* * *

Inquisitive Self: Racism? Is there really racism against Natives anymore?

Colonial Self: Racism is an overt act of hatred against someone because of his or her race.

Rebellious Self: NO! Racism is not that simple. It includes prejudices, generalizations, the normalization of behaviour, colour-blind behaviour that masks privilege.

Inquisitive Self: So there really isn't any racism against Natives anymore, is there?

* * *

Voice 15: I've never experienced any racism or prejudice in sport. I've heard stories about it, though. People have said to me, "Yeah, I've felt racism." You know they've said, "People are downgrading me because

I'm Native" but no one's ever given me a specific situation. I've never ever heard of anything specific. Give me something specific!

Voice 16: I remember one night at a ball game, people were yelling things at us...to this day I don't know what exactly was said, but the Convenor heard them and he made them leave the park.

Voice 17: I remember when I had to go to an annual meeting because we were moving up into a different league because we were beating the teams in our league very badly. We got to this meeting, and I've never been so angry. I've never walked out of a meeting before, but I did that night. There was this woman and she said, "Well I'm not going to go, I don't think the league should let them in...we're not going to go down there and play..." And I think all at once she figured out what she was saying, she didn't outright say it, but the innuendo was that she didn't want to play against the Indians, and all at once she realized what she was saying and she got very apologetic, "Oh I'm sorry I didn't mean it like that...it's just that it's such a long way to go." But by this time I was angry. I walked out. When I came back she tried to apologize again, but, by this time the other teams had voted and they voted to let us in. But then a little bit later in the meeting she said something about driving, "You know it's gonna take us a long time to get down here and go to these other places." she said, "Oh you know, we might be late a lot of times getting there" And so I said to her, "Well, maybe we could send a bunch of Indians and chase you and maybe you'd get there on time!" I was rude. I know I was rude. She hung her head and turned six different shades of red, 'cause she knew she was wrong. But that's about the only time I remember there being anything racial.

Voice 18: Back in the 40s and 50s when we played against the white teams...we heard the slurs and the catcalls about Natives and stuff like that, especially when we were beating them, but I never let it bother me and I don't think too many of the others cared either. I know one game we were beating the other team so badly they started to try and body check us more or less on the bases. We ended up having a little brawl there and our guys weren't afraid to fight, but we had umpires that broke everything up... Really, it was just part of sport back then...it was just part of being rough and tumble with the opposition which a lot of our guys were. No I don't think there was, I can't remember anything that was prejudiced, I mean, being 14 and 15 years old we were just kids trying to have fun, it was just part of the competition, it was just part of sport.

Voice 19: My sport experiences were always good, always positive. There were always good memories, you make a lot of friends, and I think if you talk to a lot of athletes they'll remember the off-ice or off-ball diamond situations more than they'd actually remember playing the game

because of the social interaction. There was only one experience. I remember being at a party with the girls and something was brought up about a Native protest and I remember one of the girls saying, “What do those Natives want now?” and I was right there when she said it. I think she was trying to edge me on even though she would probably deny it now. And when I saw her last summer at the reunion it was just like I was her old buddy. You know, so maybe it was just something said that she didn’t think through. I’ll give her the benefit of the doubt that she talked before she thought. I just never thought that I would get upset about it but it did upset me a little bit. But I’m not going to hold a grudge against her about it. But you know, I don’t recall anything ever really being said to me as to being Native on an all non-Native team.

Voice 20: I remember having a conversation with an umpire friend. I was chitchatting with him and I could tell he was upset about something. But anyway, I had talked about something and he said, “Well, you Natives think you know it all, anyway?” and to me that was uncalled for. It wasn’t really necessary, so I just left. I just didn’t want to get into an argument with the guy and I thought well I’m never really going to respect what you say anymore either and I still don’t. He umpired a lot of our games after that and I don’t think he ever did anything against me in the game because I was Native.”

Voice 21: “Sports wise, yeah, there were several times when we had a lot of racial slurs thrown at us. One night I got beer poured on me when I was playing hockey. I think the discrimination, in some cases, came from the local communities more than from some of the far away communities, because I think the local people had in their minds the negative interactions that they had with some of the people on the reserve, because there were some people who did have alcohol problems. So their experience was one where they stereotyped some of the people on the reserve and made it out that we were all like that. So there was probably some uneasiness. There was probably, in some cases, ignorance rather than total discrimination in that they would probably treat you differently or say dumb things to you out of ignorance. I don’t think it was necessarily rooted in a hatred completely, it wasn’t rooted in trying to put you down. They didn’t just realize what they were doing...”

* * *

Storyteller: “Here come those little fucking rappers! What? You think you’re black?” The words spewed from the mouth of one of the senior boys as me and my group of friends walked to the gym to shoot hoops over the lunch hour. He was very tall, had long scruffy black hair and glasses. His face was pale white and pockmarked from the teenaged skin of an eighteen year old boy. Everyone standing within earshot knew who

he was. His football jersey stood in stark contrast to my red baseball style shirt emblazoned with “JORDAN” across the chest in bright bold letters. I didn’t say a word, pretending not to hear him. He made the same comment many times during the first few months of my grade nine year. I always walked by, seething with anger, yet conscious of how I looked and the persona I projected to everyone else. I became ashamed and embarrassed. “Just walk away,” I thought. “All I want to do is play basketball.” I identified with basketball, and wearing my “JORDAN” shirts and my puffy Chicago Bulls jacket fit with that identity. I never intended to offend anyone. “What’s his problem? I thought I got away from all this crap when I left the rez? All I want to do is play basketball.”

* * *

Storyteller: He hasn’t gone to many lacrosse games. His sports have always taken precedence. But he loves the sport. He feels like he’s been isolating himself...or that perhaps his choices have isolated him from his people. He plans to go to the next game he can.

He can’t wait to marvel at the skill of his people. He arrives at the game, excitement rising in his chest. He buys his ticket and walks into the arena. He sees a girl he hasn’t seen for years.

“What are you doing here.” she says sternly and with disgust. It was not a question.

* * *

Voice 22: I can’t remember anything that was prejudiced. There was prejudice more or less of Natives against Natives. I never got asked to play on the Native teams. I don’t think I was good enough and I think that’s why I never got asked to play. Plus I wasn’t in the “in” crowd but the team where I knew a lot of guys from highschool, they asked me to come and play for them. So I played for them but everytime we played the Native teams, I would get booed and swung at, or they’d drive slapshots right at me. One night I got hit with a boot. This girl took her boot off and when I was skating along the boards, she hit me over the head with her boot.

Voice 23: Like if you’re not asked to play for the team here, and you get asked by somebody else and you go play for them, people get mad at you, I never really figured it out. I guess because I was the only Native playing on a white team and they figured I should be playing for their team and not the white team. Maybe they didn’t like the people. Maybe they thought I was too good to play for the team down here, I don’t know, that’s how to me a lot of people thought, that if you went and did things with white people well it meant that you like the white people better than your own people. I think that was the attitude that a lot of people had

down here, because the community seemed to be closed that way and I think a lot of it goes on today.

Voice 24: I remember stuff happening here, of Native against Native, you know, Sheila said she really hated school here, she said ‘cause she had blonde hair kids were constantly on her, teasing her that she was white. She hated school here and she did well in school too so that didn’t help matters either. She said she could hardly wait to get away and go somewhere else.

Voice 25: I think one of the reasons why I got involved in sport was because I was never discouraged to not get involved by our parents, or my friends. You know because I think that there’s a certain philosophy on the reserve that, “oh well, you don’t want to do that sport because that’s not what Natives do or that’s more like white games or whatever”. You know, “that’s not the sport that we play.” Like golf wasn’t something that our people played, although we now have a lot of golfers. You know like there was a lot of Indians that wanted to get involved in golf but back when the golf course first started there weren’t a lot of Native people that played golf even though it was right there off the reserve. So I think there was this stigmatism. I think that there was only certain things that you were to do and you know I think that, that was because you start having people who had a chip on their shoulder saying “oh well, if you go do that that’s not one of our games that’s one of the white people’s games.”

* * *

Storyteller: “How come you don’t play hockey? Can’t you skate? You think you’re too good to play hockey down here or are you chicken shit? Dan’s a nigger lover with all his rapper clothes. Basketball is a pussy sport!” Those were the taunts. All throughout grade seven and eight he heard the same insults. He was good at playing basketball, but didn’t live up to what his peers thought he should be. But he was good enough at basketball that whenever any of those idiots wanted to challenge him, he could use his body to knock them around. A well placed shoulder in the chest, an elbow in the back, a hip check on the box out, a hard foul across the wrist that he knew would sting for hours. He was very good at making basketball a physical game. And he usually won or at least the team that he was on, won. It made those who bullied him even angrier. They were rough when they played against him at lunch hours on the playground, but they didn’t have the skill to win. They would hit and taunt him while he beat them in points. But when you had the skill and the size to do both, those idiots were easy to beat. He enjoyed beating them even if it meant more taunts and threats of getting beat up. He loved basketball.”

* * *

Inquisitive Self: I can't understand why Indians don't want to participate in sport? They have so much athletic ability.

Rebellious Self: First of all don't call us Indians. Secondly, you're generalizing. Don't generalize! There are many of us participating in sport.

Inquisitive Self: Ok, but if we are participating in sport than how come more of us don't go onto the higher levels of sport?

Colonized Self: Well, because they're lazy. They don't have the motivation to practice hard and they have no desire to excel at anything they do.

Rebellious Self: That's ludicrous! If our people were lazy, didn't know the value of hard work and had no desire to excel at things, then they wouldn't have survived on this continent. We wouldn't have developed the knowledge we did – like knowing how to use plants for medicines or how to grow the Three Sisters³ or how to hunt and use every piece of the animal for some purpose. There was no waste in our culture and we worked extremely hard at our lives, to be who we were and to live the way we believed.

Colonized Self: Don't idealize them. They had as many problems as any people, and besides, who cares about the past. In today's world, they're lazy, unwilling to join the rest of society, unwilling to work hard for a living and find their own employment. They don't want to pay taxes and most of them live off welfare. So you want to know why they don't participate in sport? There's your reasons.

Rebellious Self: That's idiotic. The majority of our people have jobs and work very hard for their living. We pay most taxes, too. If you work off-reserve you have to pay the same taxes as everyone else. We get a break on other taxes, and if you took the time to understand why we do then perhaps you might not be so quick to judge.

Are there people who don't have a proper education for a job? Yes. Are there people who are living off of welfare? Yes. There are also some people who are taking advantage of the system, but I would like to know what percentage of people do and compare that to white statistics. I would bet that they're not that different.

³ The Three Sisters were the traditional vegetables grown by the Haudenosaunee prior to European contact. They consisted of beans, corn and squash.

Inquisitive Self: But this has nothing to do with their sport participation. What does this have to do with their sport participation?

* * *

Storyteller: He's coached for over 25 years and loves it. He loves the game and he loves helping youth reach their potential. He's coached everything. High school kids, club teams, minor and junior development teams. He's worked hard to move through the ranks. His dream is to get a shot at a national coaching job.

He gets all of the needed certification. He enrolls in the National Coaching Institute and goes one step beyond what most do. Two years of his life are dedicated to learning more theory, understanding more science, integrating and challenging existing methodologies to become the best coach he can. He graduates and becomes a Master course conductor. He then teaches others how to become better coaches.

He accepts an assistant coaching position at a good university and continues to build his knowledge and his reputation. He is still working towards his dream but it's been tough over the years. Politics and different agendas always make it tough to get a head-coaching job. And it's become more and more difficult to get a head coaching position for a women's team. But he continues because he loves to coach. He continues on with the hope that one day they'll see his worth and select him on his merit. He loves to help the kids reach their dreams. He loves to see them succeed.

Finally, things are looking up. He gets invited as a guest coach to the national try-outs. He's there. He's helping. This is his opportunity. This is his shot to prove himself. The players like him. They listen to him. They get along and they joke. They like his hair.

After the first day, the female head coach approaches cautiously.

"It's a distraction to have you on the floor with your hair cut like that. If you want to come back tomorrow and work out on the floor, it would probably be better if you had your hair cut."

Voice 26: "I think, if I had got the feeling that it was just because I was Native wearing a Mohawk haircut I would have probably stood up and said no, if you're going to require me to cut it that's not going to happen.

But, I think it was, at least, I'd like to think it was, anyway, I'm not sure whether, I guess I'd never really know unless I ask, and even if I ask I don't know if I'd get the straight answer now, but a lot of other people

were more upset than I was, that they would intimate that I should be cutting my hair and not be a distraction. I mean I can see it yes and I can see it no from that standpoint. But it wasn't a big enough issue for me to want to make a big deal out of it.

You know anytime you're trying to climb up in an organization you're going to jump through certain hoops for a while. I wasn't willing to rock the boat at that point. I wanted to be a little more under the radar rather than being front and centre and have something that could possibly keep me out of the running.

Now in hindsight it seems sometimes that you know, that probably I should have made a bigger deal out of it, maybe. Maybe I would have got further ahead. (laughs)

But a lot of people were shocked about that. But I don't think that the comment was based against Natives. I think it was against "the look", so, it's back to almost ignorance and I don't even think she even put it together that I was wearing a Mohawk and that I am a Mohawk. I don't think she did. Maybe I'm wrong but I don't think that was the motivation at that time."

* * *

I Love My People.

I Love Canada.

I Love Myself.

I Hate my people. I Love Canada.

I Love Myself.

I Hate canada. I Love My People.

I Love Myself.

I Hate Myself.

I Am a Human Being.

I Love Myself.

I Hate natives. I am a Human Being.

I Love Myself.

I hate canadians. I am a Human Being.

I Love Myself.

I Hate natives. I am Canadian.

I am a Human Being first. I am Canadian second. I am Native third.

I Hate canadians. I am Native.

I am a Human Being first. I am Native second. I am Canadian third.

I hate myself.

I am a human being? I am native? I am canadian?

I just want to be...

Please just let me be...

how can i be?

* * *

Emancipate yourselves from mental slavery;
None but ourselves can free our minds.
Have no fear for atomic energy,
'Cause none of them can stop the time.
How long shall they kill our prophets,
While we stand aside and look?
Some say it's just a part of it:
We've got to fulfil de book.

Redemption Song - Bob Marley

V: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study is to explore the intersections of race, culture and power in the lived sport experiences of my (Aboriginal) family. More specifically, it is a study that has focused on exploring three main questions:

- What issues of race, culture and power are present within the lived sport experiences of Aboriginal people.
- How have issues of race, culture and power affected Aboriginal participation in sport? and;
- How have Aboriginal people negotiated being of Aboriginal descent within contemporary Canadian society through their participation in sport?

As I start this discussion, I find myself uncomfortable with the simplicity of the stated purpose and research objectives of this study. Understanding that I am the one who came up with this study's stated purpose and research objectives, I can not help but feel uncomfortable for a number of reasons.

While being engaged in this research process, I have become acutely cognizant of the larger ethical dilemma that faces this study. Perhaps the reader has interpreted the purpose statement and research objectives to mean that the study will provide insight, not only into my family's experience, but also that of the larger Aboriginal population. Herein lies the ethical dilemma of generalization that I believe to be the

critical issue in this discussion. To be clear, this thesis is not an attempt to generalize my experiences or those of my family to the entire Aboriginal population to which we belong. It is absurd to think that our experiences are typical of an entire population of people who consider themselves to be Aboriginal. If I were to generalize my experiences and the experiences of my family to others, I would be guilty of the very colonizing behaviour for which I criticize others. Instead, I hope readers will struggle, as I have, to see where the issues of colonialism are present in the many facets of our lived sport experiences and to question where other subtleties of colonialism exist in our other every day lived experiences.

When I was planning this research, my committee argued this study was more about me than it was about the experiences of my family. I believe this to be an accurate assessment that is not reflected in the statement of purpose for this study. The statement of purpose is simplistic and does not accurately reflect what has been, for me, a complicated life long quest for a resolution to the feelings of conflict and frustration I have experienced in attempting to reconcile my self-identity as an Aboriginal person living in Canadian society.

This study began with my interest in societal issues that I initially perceived to be related, but not necessarily specific, to Aboriginal issues. Before drafting my thesis proposal, I was interested in how people were using current sustainability thinking to create healthier and more active

communities. Understanding that Aboriginal people have been engaged in environmental conflicts and politics for decades, I was intrigued by the idea of sustainable living and the opportunities for Aboriginal people to improve the health of their communities through application of the ideas of modern sustainability. The exploration of these issues then provided me with a greater understanding of the conflict that demarcates the modern environmental movement. However, it wasn't until I started searching for a topic area that I fully understood how closely related the environmental conflict was to the conflict I was experiencing as a person who identified himself as Aboriginal.

Initially, I was reluctant to engage in research that dealt directly with Aboriginal people and Aboriginal issues. It was not an enticing prospect because I understood very well the challenges I would face in researching my own people. This reluctance should not be confused with reticence to engage in research that would ultimately help Aboriginal people. Indeed, my motivation for entering into graduate work was to gain a greater understanding of our society so as to be able to give “something” back to the Aboriginal community. However, the thought of researching Aboriginal people and their issues was unappealing for several reasons that I could not, at the time, clearly articulate. As I started to move through the thesis process, I began to recognize that the answers I sought were actually located within the conflict that I was personally experiencing. The act of being engaged, of locating myself

within this research, thus helped me to recognize that my hesitancy to engage in Aboriginal research was in and of itself indicative of the conflict I was seeking to understand.

This study is then most certainly about me. Its purpose was to help me search for an understanding of who I am as an Aboriginal person and confront the confusing issues of race, culture and power and to find a voice for the muted struggle within myself. As such, sport has offered a window through which to contextualize the issues at hand, while my family's experiences have allowed me to connect certain ideas about colonialism, generalization, and normalization that I believe to be the central issues of this study. The performance text is thus a vehicle through which to report the results of this study and convey my struggle to reconcile my self-identity as an Aboriginal person with that of the hegemonic influences of race, culture and power. My identity is not only derived from my experiences, but also intimately tied to those of my family – the people who have had the most influence on my life. This study's purpose was thus to privilege my Aboriginal voice and my perspective regarding the conflict and contradictions of race, culture and power that I see clearly reflected in my sport experiences and those of my family. The performance text is a representation of my struggle with this conflict. It attempts to provide my perspective of identity conflict and to engage others to struggle, as I have, to see where the issues of colonial normalization are present in the many facets of, not only our lived sport

experiences, but in everyday life as well. Doing so will hopefully help one contextualize colonialism from an Aboriginal perspective.

* * *

In 1996 I was selected to represent Canada as a youth delegate at the Olympic Youth Camp (OYC) for the Centennial Olympic Games in Atlanta, Georgia. I was eighteen years old and proud to consider myself Canadian. It was thrilling to be there with five hundred other youth who represented approximately one hundred fifty nations from around the world. We were all there because of our common love of sport. The sense of camaraderie and joy that we shared was the most powerful and profound experience of my life.

Sport was the binding factor for all of us at the OYC. We played sports daily, and when language barriers and cultural differences were apparent, our shared understandings of sport allowed us to interact with each other when we could not do so through words. Every night there was a “cultural café” where each delegation had the opportunity to showcase their culture through the performance of some type of cultural dance or ritual. I remember that our delegation had a difficult time deciding what we could showcase as uniquely Canadian. I remember the frustration of trying to think of something that could represent Canada and feeling grossly inadequate compared to the rich cultural displays of so many of the other delegations. In the end, all we could think of was to

have one of our female delegates perform a traditional Irish dance followed by a “fashion show” of our uniquely Canadian Olympic outfits.

For the application process to attend the OYC, we had to answer the question of what we thought it meant to be Canadian. My essay was about how Canadians had an ability to come together when “Canadian values” were threatened. I wrote about how the 1972 Summit Series in hockey between Canada and Russia represented more than just a hockey game. I used it as an example of how Canadians showed solidarity for democracy through their support of the national hockey team. Even though I had not been alive to experience it, the stories that had been told me made me understand that the hockey summit represented a conflict between ideologies that pitted good versus evil, democracy versus communism, Canadians versus Russians. I compared that moment in history with the example of the Quebec Referendum. In 1995, Canadian values were threatened again and those who believed in Canadian nationalism banded together to “save” the country from Quebec’s separation. I wrote how these examples in our history defined what it meant to be Canadian. I wrote how when Canadians feel their way of life threatened they have a way of banding together to preserve Canada and all that it stands for. I was proud to be Canadian, even though this affinity was taboo in my community.

I understood my people’s anger as I too had experienced feelings of quiet rage towards Canada and its historic treatment of my people. I

justified to myself that I was angry at the past and that it was not healthy to be angry in the present. I told myself (or I was told) that, in the present, there was nothing that could be done about the past and that it was up to me to make the best of my situation in today's society. I believed I wasn't being oppressed. I was angry with those people who thought they were. I could not understand why they couldn't move beyond the past. I felt I could be different. Because of these feelings, I was chosen to attend the OYC. I was chosen because I understood "Canadian values." I had the perception that, even though I was Aboriginal, I could be Canadian, too.

Ironically, I was selected to attend the OYC based upon my pride in Canada, yet my participation in the OYC and interaction with the other delegates exposed me to the multitude of issues and conflicts associated with oppression and nationalistic attitudes that existed in the world. For the first time in my life, I started to critically evaluate my Canadian identity. When I reflect upon my experience now, I remember how wonderful it was to be able to interact with so many different people from different parts of the world. I remember mixed emotions of excitement and disappointment upon meeting people who spoke perfect English, but were clearly from different cultural and racial backgrounds. At the time, it was wonderful to be able to speak to these people and to know that we could discuss the same interests such as movies, television and music. However, beyond our shared interests in globalized pop culture, we had

nothing else to offer. Like the cultural café, we had nothing unique to perform to really showcase our Canadian identity. We had only the idea that our ability to stand united was what made us unique.

* * *

The Conflict of Identity: Many Questions, Many Answers, No Truth.

The conflict of identity I've experienced is rife with complicated and contradictory viewpoints of Aboriginal culture, history and what it means to be Aboriginal in today's society. Often times it's like an ongoing debate between different voices fraught with lingering questions, ambiguous answers and no discernible truth. Were we nothing but a group of hunter-gatherers? Were our games such as lacrosse simply tools to teach survival skills? Were our values and beliefs primitive? Are we simply unwillingly to join the rest of society? Am I Canadian? The colonized voice within me often answers with a measured and stern, "Yes!" and a hesitant, "probably", followed with subsequent feelings of guilt for even thinking such things and then shame for not having a clearer sense of identity. Yet the inquisitive voice within me, the one trained by modern education to think analytically and objectively, incessantly asks the same questions. A third voice. A resistant voice. A voice of conflict and anger seethes and scolds, "We were not just hunters and gatherers. Lacrosse meant more than just survival. Our values and beliefs were not and never have been primitive. We should not have to join the rest of society and no, you are not Canadian".

These voices support what Smith (2005) wrote:

The identity of “the native” is regarded as complicated, ambiguous, and therefore troubling even for those who live the realities and contradictions of being native and of being a member of a colonized and minority community that still remembers other ways of being, of knowing, and of relating to the world. What is troubling to the dominant cultural group about the definition of “native” is not what necessarily troubles the “native” community. The desire for “pure, uncontaminated, and simple definitions of the native by the settler is often a desire to continue to know and define the Other, whereas the desire by the native to be self-defining and self-naming can be read as a desire to be free, to escape definition, to be complicated, to develop and change, and to be regarded as fully human. In between such desires are multiple and shifting identities and hybridities with much more nuanced positions about what constitutes native identities, native communities, and native knowledge in anti/postcolonial times.” (p.86)

The most difficult part of this research, for me, has been making sense of the intersection between colonialism and the freedom to choose. I have found it difficult to discern any kind of truth because of the conflicting perspectives I have as an Aboriginal person living in today’s Canadian society. What is colonialism? Has my family been colonized? Am I colonized?

Colonialism has taken on many forms. For Aboriginal people, it started with the degrading of our culture with the idea that we were primitive and paganistic with the application of such labels as savage and uncivilized. Over time, racist governmental policies and acts of oppression coupled with modern anthropologic thinking, worked to inscribe colonial thinking into Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals alike.

Today, colonialism is still at work, legitimizing certain values and perspectives about the purpose and meaning of life, work, religion, and economics and for the purposes of this study, sport. It continues because there are no lived contradictions that define an opposite perspective or viewpoint.

Simply put, my participation in sport and the sport experiences of my family raise many questions regarding the conceptualizations of race, culture and power. My family has been involved in sport in many capacities as participants, coaches, organizers and spectators etc. These experiences lead to many discussions about the participation (or lack thereof) of our (Aboriginal) people in sport. As such, these discussions in our household have at times quickly deteriorated into gross generalizations about the supposed character of our people. They were my first exposure to the confusing and conflicting perspectives of Aboriginal people in Canadian society. At times, it has been difficult to know where to begin a critical analysis of these experiences because the contradictions are numerous and often blur the truth. In conceptualizing resistance in women's leisure practices, Shaw (2001) suggests that leisure can be a form of resistance. This viewpoint assumes that leisure is inextricably linked to power and power relations in society. As such, one's leisure has the ability to reproduce dominant cultural ideologies and it has the potential to offer up ways in which to resist dominant cultural discourses about race, gender and class. The idea of resistance, thus

opens up many questions for me regarding the resistance and reproduction of my participation in sport and that of my family. It also raises questions about power and how power is conceptualized within society. As Shaw (2001) notes, resistance in the feminist conceptualization is based upon Foucault's rejection of power being tied to structural analysis of society. Foucault sees power as constantly moving back and forth between the discourses of society. (Markula & Pringle, 2006; Shaw, 2001) As such, power does not come from a dominant group's action over a minority group but rather, constantly changes with the dominant discourses held between the two. Given our discussions of Aboriginal participation in sport the subsequent generalizations of it, it raises questions for me as to whether Aboriginal participation is tied to the ideas of resistance and reproduction and whether their participation is tied to Foucault's notion of power. This discussion has only just begun.

Hall (1997) posited that difference is necessary in the production of stereotypes and for racializing the 'other' (p. 239). Difference, he wrote, "can be both positive and negative. It is both necessary for the production of meaning, the formation of language and culture, for social identities and a subjective sense of the self as a sexed subject – and at the same time, it is threatening, a site of danger, of negative feelings, of splitting, hostility and aggression towards the 'Other'" (p. 238). Accordingly, I find it disturbing that some, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal alike, would deny

that anything beyond overt examples of racism is an overly critical analysis of Canadian society. This simplistic view, to me, is the epitome of a colonized way of thinking. I would challenge that when one considers the history between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultures, particularly in North America, that we live in a society that was founded on difference, as exemplified in a leisure context through the implementation of racist governmental policies to replace Aboriginal culture with “reasonable amusements” (Paraschak, 1998, p.3) and to bring them to a level so as to be able to “participate in broader competitive events with other Canadians” (Paraschak, 1998, p.5), when I look at the history of my community and wonder about the effect of the school system and the RCMP, which introduced and promoted modern sports, when I see the technological changes of the past century and wonder about the impact of broadcast sports, through various media, on the popularity and demise of certain sports, when I question how it came to be that hockey, softball and other sports effectively replaced our traditional game of lacrosse, when I struggle to understand why Aboriginal people would bully others for not playing hockey when it is hockey, and our participation in it, that reinforces white male patriarchy, and when I hear people focus on the overt, but fail to recognize that this focus is itself part of what it means to be colonized.

In challenging the Canadian model of multiculturalism, Reid & Welke (1998, p. 1) wrote:

One of the ways in which Canada demarcates itself from other countries is through the expression of multiculturalism. However, while Canada considers itself a multicultural society, there is a dominant Eurocentric culture which forms the basis for interaction in the larger society. As soon as someone steps out of their subcultural group, they are forced to engage the larger society on its terms. Without a healthy perspective of one's own culture and traditions, some members of a minority culture may attempt assimilation into the dominant tradition, to escape this schizophrenic existence. This is particularly problematic for Canadian First Nations people, many of whom continue to suffer from the cultural genocidal practice of earlier governments and missionaries who attempted to extinguish aboriginal culture, thinking it paganistic.

With only a colonial view of ourselves and no lived contradictions of who we were as Aboriginal people, I believe that we have been engaged in the othering of ourselves, a by-product of colonization, a process that normalizes Eurocentric beliefs, perspectives and ideologies and has produced frustratingly difficult conflicts of self-identity.

The struggle to understand colonialism is thus intertwined with my sport associations and experiences. However, the question of oppression having occurred is a point of contention because of the ability of people to choose. Hall (1997) summarizes that Gramsci and Foucault, "would have agreed that power cannot be captured by thinking exclusively in terms of force or coercion: power also seduces, solicits, induces, wins consent. It cannot be thought of in terms of one group having a monopoly of power, simply radiating power downwards (original emphasis) on a subordinate group by an exercise of simple domination from above...power is to be found everywhere...power circulates. (pg.

261) If this conceptualization of power is true, the question of whether Aboriginal people were overtly oppressed or whether we had the ability to choose between cultures has no easy answer. Did we, as Reid (1998) suggests, “attempt assimilation into the dominant tradition”? Or did our change in cultural identity occur because of systematic colonization? As I examine my family’s sport experiences, I see clear examples that speak to the many issues of colonialism and the normalization of Eurocentric characterizations of race and culture. Yet there is a multitude of nagging questions related to what really happened through the course of my ancestor’s history that I will never definitively understand. Why couldn’t we have kept playing lacrosse? How did softball and hockey become so popular in our community? Were our traditional sports just utilitarian exercises that we cast aside when newer, modern ways of living appeared? Was it that we chose to engage in new sports as we became exposed to them or were we systematically oppressed with the introduction of new systems of governance and education? What was our choice or did we have one? These are questions with no definitive answers. Yet, it is the ambiguity of this history that is so central to my identity. It has created an almost claustrophobic awareness of a society that constantly contradicts my understanding of what it means to be Aboriginal.

Not surprisingly, our discussions of sport brought forth examples of blatant acts of racism that happened during our participation in sport.

But other more subtle acts of racism occurred outside of sport in the social spaces of pre and post game rituals. The most disturbing examples, for me, are those where racism and colonialism is blurred because of the created doubt that questions the reality of what is occurring. For example, did those children during the softball game become rougher because of the intense nature of competition or were their actions based on their racist attitudes towards Aboriginal people? Why is the Mohawk haircut so stigmatized to warrant people to label it a distraction? Was the haircut considered a distraction because the players diverted attention to it instead of focusing on practice or was it because the haircut has become stigmatized by popular culture to be synonymous with rebelliousness or perhaps even violence? In either case, the stigmatization of the Mohawk haircut is, to me, indicative of a colonial perspective that put it and “Aboriginal-ness” outside of the “norm” of what is acceptable. What is alarming, though, is the doubt that is created when one tries to answer the question of whether these are experiences of racism or whether they are simply overly critical vagaries of our imagination. The triumph of colonialism is not that it civilized Aboriginal people or that it erased a large portion of Aboriginal lived culture that was deemed a threat, but that it has placed uncertainty into the minds of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people alike. The real tragedy of normalized racism is that it hinders all people in distinguishing between the affects of colonization and one’s freedom of choice.

My parents used to say that we've been able to create a life that has taken the best of both worlds. The problem that I struggle with is that I don't see much of our Aboriginal culture in our lives. I don't see that we actually had our freedom to choose.

Performing my conflict

Like Denzin (2003, p.xiii) I also want to 'advance a critical performative pedagogy that turns the ethnographic into the performative and the performative into the political.' I wanted to answer Denzin's (2003, p. 5) call for 'acts that create critical race consciousness', with a political act of my own; a performance text that consciously confronts the audience with the difficulty of defining what it means to be Aboriginal in today's society. This text is a presentation of the conflict as I have experienced it. It is a representation of my reflexive analysis of my sport experiences and those of my family. It is an attempt to show the often-contradictory issues of race, culture and power that have bullied their way into my consciousness through different episodes and experiences in my life. Through the usage of multiple voices to represent conflicting perspectives I have created what Denzin (2003) refers to as a mystory whereby the "writer of a mystory seeks a form of writing and performing that opens new ways of presenting the plural self in its multiple situations" (p. 42). I wanted to show the contradictions and confusions that have been and are present in our participation in and associations with sport; and to show how the truth of our history is often muddled in

hearsay in the spaces where fact and fiction meet and how the truth of our history is often obscured from view because of the things we have come to accept as real. The fact of the matter is our history matters because it is the foundation upon which Aboriginal identity rests. Yet the reconciliation of what to do with that history is then often turned into a never-ending cycle of conflict and contradictions. This text is a presentation of my Aboriginal paradox.

* * *

Conclusions

My experiences in sport and my family's experiences in sport have provided a window through which to look at issues of race, culture and power. This study has provided me with the means through which to explore my conflict of self-identity and to comprehend the feelings of awareness I have had my whole life; that there was and is something wrong with the world – with my world – something that I can only now begin to articulate. Our experiences in sport speak to a colonial racism (Memmi, 1965) that has been present throughout the history of relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. It is a racism that has been maintained, as Memmi (as cited in Denzin et al. 2008) suggests, through “(1) stressing real or imaginary differences between the racist and the victims; by (2) assigning values to these differences to the advantage of the racist and to the detriment of the victim; by (3) trying to make these values absolutes by generalizing from them and claiming that

they are final; and (4) using these values to justify any present or possible aggression or privileges.” (as cited in Denzin et al., 2008, p. 504) These strategies can be observed through the many examples provided throughout this paper. However, the real tragedy of this colonial racism is that it can be observed in situations where we, as Aboriginal people, engaged in it and perpetuated it, consciously or not, to the detriment of ourselves. As such, our sport experiences speak not only to this embedded racism and normalization of Euro-centric values, but also to the paradox that is sport. Sport has compounded colonial racism because of its universality. Engagement in it, or any type of physical activity for that matter is universally human. It is as universal to human beings as is speaking or laughing. But it is implicated in the perpetuation of colonial racism because the cultural meanings and associated benefits of participating in it, have left Aboriginal people in limbo because they have come to understand sport to be the creation of Euro-centric superiority and thus beyond anything meaningfully Aboriginal.

I hope this thesis will provide hope to those struggling with the same conflicts of identity. I hope it provides, as Denzin (2003) hopes, a ‘politics of possibility’ for those struggling with these conflicts to be able to confront the racism in their lives and find their own voice. I hope this thesis will raise awareness to this type of racism and help Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals to accept and confront the normalized racism within their lived experiences, sport and otherwise.

Implications

Denzin et al. (2008) believe that there is a “great need for a dialogue between critical theorists and indigenous scholars and indigenous peoples” (p.x). I believe this study answers this call to action and provides a critical analysis that moves towards “a progressive politics of performative inquiry” (p.x). I believe this in turn has implications for how research is viewed and provides Indigenous people with the opportunity to challenge existing pedagogies and to add their voice, not only to issues of racism, but also to the debate of what constitutes knowledge in today’s society.

This also has implication for how research into Aboriginal participation in leisure progresses. There are unexplored questions related to Aboriginal people’s resistance and reproduction of dominant societal norms through sport and other areas of leisure. And there are questions in relation to Foucault’s notion of power (Markula, P., & Pringle, R., 2006) which I believe are tied to broader Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies. Moving forward with more Indigenous scholarship might open up understandings of Foucault’s notions of power that have previously remained unanswered because of the privileging of Indigenous and other cultural discourses.

This research also has practical implications for our educational institutions and the curriculums that we choose to teach to our children, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal alike, about racism,

beginning with the idea that racism is not simply overt acts of hatred, but are also acts of embedded and normalized values in our everyday lives that we perform through our participation in sport and other activities. In essence, this study has the responsibility to, as Bob Marley sings, “emancipate ourselves from mental slavery” and to move forward with the hope that we can all be free of colonial rule.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Interview Guide

Preamble: The purpose of this study is to explore the tensions of being Aboriginal in a predominantly non-Aboriginal society. To explore this, I have chosen to focus on sport participation. Sport is a great vehicle that can allow us to understand issues related to race, power and culture.

Question 1: Can you tell me a story regarding your own experience of being Aboriginal and participating in sport?

Follow-up/Probing Questions

- What is your perception of/ thoughts on Aboriginal people and their participation or lack thereof in sport?
- Why do you think Aboriginal people do not participate in sport at a high level?
- Have you personally experienced racism during your sport experiences?
- Do you know of any others who have experienced racism in sport?
- How would you define racism?
- Can you tell me why you started sport?
- Can you explain to me why sport is meaningful to you?
- As an Aboriginal person what are the issues related to Aboriginal sport participation?

Appendix B

Letter of introduction

Dear (insert participant's name):

This letter is an invitation to consider participating in a study I am conducting as part of my Master's degree in the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies at the University of Waterloo under the supervision of Professor Dr. Troy Glover. I would like to provide you with more information about this project and what your involvement would entail if you decide to take part.

Past studies that have focused on Aboriginal participation in sport and recreation have indicated that Aboriginal people face many barriers to participation. For example, many Aboriginal communities lack the resources necessary to provide facilities, programs and administrative support. As a result, there is a lack of participation in sport and recreation that is contributing to the many problems affecting Aboriginal health and well-being. There are also socio-cultural issues of race, culture and power that have affected the development of Aboriginal culture, including their participation in sport and recreation. However, the discussions of these issues in the leisure scholarship are few. The purpose of this study, therefore, is to discuss and explore the intersection of race, power, and culture in the lived sport experiences of Aboriginal people.

This study will focus on Aboriginal people's lived experiences. While there has been much study on the problems affecting Aboriginal people one thing that is missing from the scholarship are Aboriginal voices themselves. For this study, I plan to produce a multi-vocal fictional text that addresses this issue within the context of Aboriginal personal sport experiences. Through conversations about sport I aim to use Aboriginal voices to speak to being Aboriginal in Canadian society. I believe that because you have been actively involved in sport and recreation, you are best suited to speak to the various issues of race, power and culture in Aboriginal sport participation.

Participation in this study is voluntary. It will involve a one-on-one interview. Each interview will be approximately 90 minutes in length. The interview will take place in a mutually agreed upon location. You may decline to answer any of the interview questions if you so wish. Further, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences by advising the researcher. With your permission, the interview will be audio recorded to facilitate collection of information, and later transcribed for analysis. Shortly after the

interviews have been completed, I will send you a copy of the transcript to give you an opportunity to confirm the accuracy of our conversation and to add or clarify any points that you wish. All information you provide is considered completely confidential. Your name and any other identifying information will not appear in any thesis or report resulting from this study, however, with your permission anonymous quotations may be used. Data collected during this study will be retained for a period of seven years in a locked office that only I will have access to. There are no known or anticipated risks to you as a participant in this study.

If you have any questions regarding this study, or would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please contact me at (519) 570-6918 or by email at da2henha@mailservices.uwaterloo.ca. Also, if you are interested in receiving a copy of the executive summary of the session outcomes, please contact me. You can also contact my supervisor, Professor Troy D. Glover at 519-888-4567 ext. 33097 or email tdglover@healthy.uwaterloo.ca.

I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo. However, the final decision about participation is yours. If you have any comments or concerns resulting from your participation in this study, please contact Dr. Susan Sykes of this office at 519-888-4567 Ext. 36005 or ssykes@uwaterloo.ca.

I hope that the results of my study will be of benefit to you and other Aboriginal people who are directly involved in sport and recreation, as well as to the broader research community.

I very much look forward to speaking with you and thank you in advance for your assistance in this project.

Yours Sincerely,

Daniel Henhawk

Appendix C

Consent Form

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

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

I am also aware that excerpts from the interview may be included in the thesis and/or publications to come from this research, with the understanding that the quotations will be anonymous. I was informed that I may withdraw my consent at any time without penalty by advising the researcher.

This project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo. I was informed that if I have any comments or concerns resulting from my participation in this study, I may contact the Director, Office of Research Ethics at 519-888-4567 ext. 36005 or ssykes@uwaterloo.ca. With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this study.

YES NO

I agree to have my interview audio recorded. YES NO

I agree to the use of anonymous quotations in any thesis or publication that comes of this research. YES NO

Participant Name: _____ (Please print)

Participant Signature: _____

Witness Name: _____ (Please print)

Witness Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix D

Agreement to Participate

I have read the information presented in the information letter about the session being facilitated by Daniel A. Henhawk. I have had the opportunity to ask the facilitator any questions related to this session, to receive satisfactory answers to my questions, and any additional details I wanted. I am aware that I may withdraw from the session without penalty at any time by advising the facilitator of this decision.

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

With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this session and to keep in confidence information that could identify specific participants and/or the information they provided.

Print Name

Signature

Date

Witness

Appendix E

Participant Feedback Letter

Dear *(Insert Name of Participant)*,

I would like to thank you for your participation in this study. As a reminder, the purpose of this study is to discuss and explore the intersection of race, power, and culture in the lived sport experiences of Aboriginal people.

The data collected during interviews and the focus group sessions will contribute to a better understanding of how Aboriginal people negotiate the intersection of race, power, and culture in their lived sport experiences. This study will also make a valuable contribution to the leisure scholarship by providing a forum for Aboriginal people to speak to being Aboriginal in Canadian society

Please remember that any data pertaining to you as an individual participant will be kept confidential. Once all the data are collected and analyzed for this project, I plan on sharing this information with the research community through seminars, conferences, presentations, and journal articles. Please find enclosed a copy of the transcripts of our interviews. If you have any questions or concerns, or if you would like a summary of the results of this study, please contact me at either the phone number or email address listed at the bottom of the page. The study is expected to be completed by August 31st, 2009.

As with all University of Waterloo projects involving human participants, this project was reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo. Should you have any comments or concerns resulting from your participation in this study, please contact Dr. Susan Sykes in the Office of Research Ethics at 519-888-4567, Ext., 36005 or ssykes@uwaterloo.ca.

Best wishes,

Daniel A. Henhawk

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