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The Glengarry Highland Games, 1948–2003: Problematizing the Role of Tourism, Scottish Cultural Institutions, and the Cultivation of Nostalgia in the Construction of Identities

Abstract
In the midst of dynamic socio-economic and cultural conditions, the Glengarry Highland Games were revived in a rural community of Eastern Ontario in 1948. Throughout the second half of the 20th century, this festival became the lifeblood of a movement perpetuating Scottish Highland cultural practices and (re)producing “Scottishness” as the dominant cultural currency in an ethnically diverse county. Using primary evidence in the forms of oral histories, newspapers, and archives, this paper examines how the expansion of spaces and opportunities to celebrate Scottish cultural practices has influenced the social construction of regional and cultural identities in Glengarry County from 1948 to the 21st century.

Résumé
Dans le cadre de conditions socioculturelles dynamiques, les Highland Games de Glengarry ont été ranimés dans une collectivité rurale de l’Est de l’Ontario en 1948. Au fur et à mesure de la deuxième moitié du XXe siècle, ce festival est devenu l’élément vital d’un mouvement perpétuant les pratiques culturelles écossaises highland et (re)produisant le fait écossais comme la composante culturelle dominante dans un comté hétérogène sur le plan ethnique. Cet article examine, grâce à des sources originales telles que des entrevues, des articles de journaux et des archives, comment la multiplication des espaces et des occasions de pratiques culturelles écossaises a influencé la construction sociale des identités régionales et culturelles dans le comté de Glengarry, de 1948 au XXIe siècle.

At the Glengarry Highland Games’ fairground in the summer of 2003, Tallusia Tulugak calmly sat with thousands of spectators witnessing hundreds of Scottish bagpipers playing and marching in unison across a
converted soccer pitch. Tulugak, who is from mixed Inuit and Scots-Canadian lineage, was discovering a part of her heritage that for so long had been the source of anguish and resentment. Growing up in Puvirnituq, Quebec, a Northern Inuit community, her Anglo-Caucasian ancestry had often been the basis of serious discrimination throughout most of her life. An interest in her individual Scottish heritage and identity brought her to Glengarry, a small rural Eastern Ontario county situated on the border of the provinces of Ontario and Quebec. After only an afternoon of experiencing the pageantry of the Glengarry Highland Games, Tulugak confided to one local resident that she had finally felt as if she was a part of something—an identity that she had misunderstood for so long. As Tulugak departed from Glengarry, she expressed that she had located Scottish culture and concomitantly an aspect of her own cultural identity (PI/6, 2003). Tulugak’s experience at the games alludes to the focus of this paper—how has the proliferation of Scottish cultural practices influenced the social construction of identities in Glengarry County.1

This paper examines the cultural and socio-economic circumstances that led to the proliferation of Scottish cultural practices within Glengarry County from 1948 to the beginning of the 21st century. The Glengarry Games have become the lifeblood of a movement celebrating and perpetuating Scottish cultural practices in an ethnically diverse community. As the genesis of a cultural renaissance within a rural borderland community of central Canada, the festival has also grown to have a significant impact on the regional identities of local residents. In the 21st century, Glengarry’s annual games have become one of the world’s largest Scottish Highland celebrations, attracting over 30,000 visitors to a town with less than 800 permanent residents. Using primary evidence in the form of oral histories, newspaper accounts, and archives this paper explores the growth of the Glengarry Highland Games, the subsequent development of the tourism industry, the rise of a supportive network of Scottish cultural institutions, and the social-cultural circumstances that underpinned the proliferation of Scottish cultural practices.2 Two critical questions will be addressed to understand the impact of this Scottish sporting and cultural festival on the community it contributes to and exists within: (1) What factors led to the proliferation of Scottish cultural practices?; and (2) How do the cultural resources of a minority ethnic community acquire dominant cultural currency in the construction of local identities?

The Revival of the Glengarry Highland Games

In order to contextualize the influence of this festival on the cultural life of Glengarry County throughout the second half of the 20th century, it is necessary to briefly acknowledge the antecedents of this distinctive community and the origins of the games in the county. In the 1780s, two
successive waves of immigration from the Highlands of Scotland created one of the first Scottish settlements in Upper Canada (MacGillivray and Ross 1979). For many of the émigrés who had experienced the British government’s attempts to marginalize Highland culture with legislation, including the 1747 Disarming Act, the celebration and perpetuation of Highland cultural practices became a priority in most Canadian communities where Highlanders settled (Jarvie 1991; Graham 1969).

Within a few decades following their arrival, Highlanders in Glengarry had established a Scottish Highland Society in 1819 and began to organize Highland games a few years later (Redmond 1982). Despite the laudable intent, the festivals in Glengarry were only held for less than a decade before the practice was discontinued. It is important to acknowledge that during this period Scottish residents in Glengarry formed the overwhelming majority with over 75 percent of the population (MacGillivray and Ross 1979).

Beginning at the turn of the 20th century, the rural farming way of life that had been perpetuated in the county since the late 19th century was being drastically altered. The modern influences of industrialization and urbanization that led to rural depopulation and economic recession fuelled cultural resistance to socio-economic change and created an identity crisis in the county (MacGillivray 1990). Moreover, the established power relations of the region were subverted as the Scottish population that dominated economic, political, and cultural life for over a century was challenged by the emerging Franco-Ontarian community (MacGillivray and Ross 1979). By the late 1940s, Franco-Ontarians represented a clear majority in all of the county’s seven municipalities, they held significant economic and political power, and were beginning to seek cultural recognition to augment their economic and political achievements. This created a friction between the two ethnic communities that contributed to escalating identity crises that compelled the former majority to (re)imagine their communities in ways that led to the revival of the Glengarry Games (Mason 2005). After over a century of absence, on 1 August 1948 the Highland games were revived in Glengarry County. In order to demonstrate how several factors contributed to the proliferation of Scottish cultural practices and the establishment of “Scottishness” as the dominant cultural currency, it is now pertinent to discuss the growth of the Highland games and the development of the tourism industry.
The Growth of the Glengarry Highland Games and the Tourism Industry

As early as the beginning of the 20th century some local residents recognized the tourism potential of Glengarry County. In 1905, a pamphlet produced by the Glengarry Good Roads Association announced Glengarry’s accessibility to the tourism industry by emphasizing the county’s improved transportation infrastructure. These improvements included the addition of two new transportation arteries, one located at the southern section of the county along the St. Lawrence River, and the other just outside the county’s northern border. Although Glengarry’s potential for tourism was recognized much earlier, as late as the 1940s, tourism still did not have a significant impact on the local economy, as a relatively small number of visitors came to the rural county. During this period, most of the tourism that did exist in Glengarry was concentrated along the St. Lawrence River in the southern section of the county and few tourists were attracted north of the river to the rural farmland around towns such as Maxville, the host community of the Glengarry Highland Games (Marin and Marin 1982). In 1947, the games’ revivalists presented a persuasive argument to initiate the revival of the Highland festival—the stimulation of the local tourism economy. Anthropologist Edward Bruner (2005) asserts that beginning in the late 19th century and continuing well into the middle of the 20th century, rural communities throughout North America have utilized tourism as an important strategy for economic development. When examining the history of Highland games throughout Canada, it is clear that several Highland festivals arose in rural communities during this period, particularly in the provinces of Ontario, Quebec, and Nova Scotia (Redmond 1982). Economic development through tourism was certainly a significant consideration of the key agents responsible for reviving Glengarry’s Highland games. With over 20,000 spectators, the inaugural event accounted for the largest gathering in the county’s history and awakened many to the commercial as well as the cultural potential that the games embodied. Throughout the 1950s, the games maintained a significant level of attendance as the number of annual spectators fluctuated between 15,000 and 20,000 (Marin and Marin 1982). During this period, the festival was established as a viable cultural event that annually attracted thousands of tourists to the region.

In 1962, in an effort to capitalize on a recent influx of tourism, which was a consequence of the formation of a new provincial park, the Glengarry Games Committee expanded the cultural festival from a one-day event into a weekend affair. (PI/9, 2004) Although the committee’s decision to expand the games was influenced by the establishment of the park, it is important to recognize that this expansion met an increasing demand for the Glengarry Games that was driven by urban tourists who
were responding to a sense of rural nostalgia characteristic of modern society. Regardless of motivating factors, the committee’s expansion of the Glengarry Games was evidently a success as the attendance for the games increased throughout the 1960s and 1970s (MacGillivray and Ross 1979).

As the Glengarry Games were extended so was the impact of the tourism they generated. Many visitors would attend both days of festivities and as a result tourists would remain in the area for a longer duration (TI/3, 2004). As a well-informed consultant for Glengarry tourism throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP) for the region, Jim Brownell describes the impact of the games on the local economy:

For the last forty years all the tourist operators in Eastern Ontario have had smiles on their faces the weekend of the Glengarry Games because the festival is the largest cultural event in the region and the tourism the games generate for the local economy is significant. (TI/3, 2004)

Attendance at the games continued to increase steadily throughout the 1980s and 1990s. The connection between the Glengarry Games and tourism has become more apparent in recent years. In 2001, tourism was at the forefront during the festival as Jim Watson, the President and C.E.O. of the Canadian Tourism Commission, delivered the opening address. During his remarks, he alluded to the continued structural expansion of the games’ facilities in order to attract and accommodate more tourists in forthcoming years. Just two years later, in 2003, at the 56th annual games, a record setting crowd of 31,000 flooded the gates.

Although it is clear that tourism has influenced the games, the impact of tourism in shaping the Glengarry festival and Scottish culture in the region remains ambiguous. How has tourism influenced the growth and proliferation of Scottish cultural practices in Glengarry County? Tourism can account for the early financial success of the games and the expansion of the cultural event from 1948 to its current form (PI/8, 2003). Soon after the revival, it became clear that the festival had the potential to secure significant amounts of tourism capital for the local region and in an effort to maximize the economic potential of the games; the event was expanded in subsequent decades. This directly led to the growth of the games in attendance and tourism capital generated for the community (PI/8, 2003).

In several important ways, tourism is also indirectly linked to the proliferation of Scottish cultural practices within the region. By driving the expansion of the games, tourism ensured that Scottish cultural practices were popularized as the event assumed a larger profile. As the
tourism potential of the games was established, residents with commercial interests in the success of the event began to support the cultural festival. While the games expanded and the number of residents in support of the event began to increase, a positive image of the games was propagated throughout the community. This image of the festival, reinforced by ideas that the games helped the local economy and brought notoriety to the region, were enough to convince some residents with no cultural or commercial objectives to support the event, to willingly participate (PI/9, 2004).

It is clear that the support of residents, those with and without commercial objectives, encouraged the expansion of the games and the proliferation of Scottish cultural practices; however, tourism or the economic benefits thereof played another critical role. Using Marxist notions of political economy and Gramscian models of cultural production and hegemony, historian Ian McKay (1994) reveals how tourism in rural Canadian communities can have major implications for the (re)production of local culture. McKay demystifies Nova Scotian history by examining how the tourism objectives of key cultural producers selected elements of the past to reshape a provincial identity that endorsed Scottish cultural practices and capitalism while silencing local resistance. Drawing parallels with McKay’s study of the relationship between the revival of folk culture in Nova Scotia and the tourism economy, the Glengarry Games’ ability to generate tourism capital during the depressive economic period of the 1950s likely silenced any resistance to the revival of the cultural event that may have existed. As sociologist John Urry argues (1990), modern cultural festivals that embody potential financial benefits to hosting communities can often suppress alternative views or resistance, as economic objectives can greatly influence the celebration of these events. While it is important to acknowledge broader power structures that influence how culture is socially constructed to reproduce dominant social forms, it is critical to also recognize that this is never absolute and marginalized groups find alternative spaces to reproduce cultural forms that often challenge hegemonic discourses.

As research in tourism studies has repeatedly shown, it is imperative to consider economic factors when examining cultural festivals that are partly celebrated for tourists or the generation of the tourism economy (Greenwood 2004; Mason 2004; Grunewald 2002; Hughes 1995). In the 21st century, tourism continues to shape the games and the Scottish cultural practices that they so manifestly perpetuate. While tourism is the most significant factor that helped preserve and extend the influence of the Highland games and Scottish cultural practices in Glengarry, it is important not to discount the powerful role of agency in this process of cultural (re)production.
The Rise of Scottish Highland Cultural Institutions

The origins of the Highland games and other Scottish cultural practices in Glengarry lie in the roots of an 18th century Highland settlement in Upper Canada. Beginning in the middle of the 20th century, Scottish Highland cultural practices entered a golden age in the ethnically diverse rural county where residents of Scottish lineage had become a minority (MacGillivray and Ross 1979). In 1948, under the direction of a few key cultural agents, the Glengarry Games were revived and began to form an important part of the county’s cultural heritage. Although Scottish Highland cultural practices were present in Glengarry prior to the revival of the games, during the early 19th century, Scottish residents formed a majority population and celebrated their cultural practices within their cultural community, following the revival of the festival in 1948, Scottish culture became actively and overtly celebrated as a component of mainstream cultural life (MacGillivray and Ross 1979). With the success of the inaugural Glengarry Games, the revivalists had not only formed a significant group of individuals dedicated to the organization and celebration of this cultural festival, but perhaps more importantly, they also generated an interest in and awareness of Scottish Highland cultural practices.

The forthcoming decades would proclaim the significance of the revival, as a buttressing network of Scottish Highland cultural institutions would develop in close affiliation with the Glengarry Games. This network of key agents and cultural institutions would augment the influence of Scottish culture within the county. As the scholarship of social anthropologist Sharon Macdonald (1997) demonstrates in her analysis of the transmission of cultural practices in a rural community on the Scottish Hebridean Isle of Skye, key agents can influence the (re)production of cultural practices in especially rural communities experiencing socio-economic and cultural changes. She asserts that communities undergoing a cultural renaissance depend on a few key cultural agents that initiate the (re)imagining of both regional and cultural identities. With the Highland games as the keystone of Scottish culture in Glengarry, the contributory network of cultural institutions, formed and maintained by devoted agents, helped proliferate Scottish Highland cultural practices.11 The following pages will examine the emergence of Scottish cultural institutions, including their caretakers, in the spheres of traditional dress, Celtic music, athletics, and history.

The cultural symbols of Scotland are internationally recognized. Very few symbols are as identifiable with Scottish identity as the traditional dress that is associated with the Highlands—the kilt or philibeg (Jarvie 1991). Although in Glengarry only members of the county’s Highland regiments would have worn kilts on a regular basis, the kilt and tartan
have become emblems of Scottish Highland culture in the county (McKinnan 2000). The wearing of kilts as a cultural practice has become a powerful symbol of heritage in Glengarry. After the revival of the games, the heads of the dominant clans in the area organized a number of celebrations that have helped popularize Scottish traditional dress within the county. Beginning in the 1950s, The Kirking of the Tartan, a Highland Scottish ritual held in Glengarry, commemorates the tartans banned in Scotland prior to any Highlander arriving in the region. Many of these distinctive ceremonies are held in conjunction with the Glengarry Games. The festival offers an ideal opportunity for clans to reunite and it serves as the annual gathering for numerous clan members both nationally and internationally (PI/4, 2002). Initiated by several clans, the Tartan Ball is one example of a successful event held in close affiliation with the Highland games. The ball is usually celebrated the evening prior to the opening of the games and is often attended by the games’ many patrons.¹² Once the games begin, they become a high-profile opportunity to showcase traditional Scottish dress. At the 54th anniversary of the Glengarry Highland Games in the summer of 2001, one of the many visitors from Scotland was quoted in the Glengarry News as stating “I have seen more kilts and tartans in Glengarry this weekend than I’ve seen in fifty years in Scotland.”¹³

Although the majority of celebrations involving clans and tartans are held concurrently with the Highland games, traditional Scottish Highland dress is also part of social life and local culture. Carolyn Smith, a local resident of Scottish descent, refers to her husband Larry Harrison as an example of the cultural currency associated with wearing kilts; “Larry is not from Glengarry, but he wears a kilt… he is not Scottish, but living here has changed him” (PI/2, 2001). Harrison, who was born into an Irish family in the neighbouring county of Stormont, moved to Glengarry in his 20s and has since become deeply involved with the Highland games and consequently Scottish Highland culture (PI/3, 2001). The younger residents of Glengarry are no exception to the generation before them. Since the revival of the games, the wearing of kilts has become very common for youth at formal celebrations. Kilts have become so popular in Glengarry that many high school students of non-Scottish lineage have appropriated the cultural practice. Kilts have become fashionable for young people from diverse ethnic backgrounds (PI/3, 2001).

Organizations celebrating and proliferating Scottish traditional dress within the county have developed and remain in close affiliation with the games. The Highland games provide a unique opportunity for Glengarry residents to celebrate Scottish heritage, of which the kilt-philibeg forms an integral component. The exposure that kilts and tartans receive at the games may partly offer an explanation for the cultural capital associated
with this symbol of Highland Scottish identity. While the presence of kilts and tartans within Glengarry is explicitly linked to the influential cultural festival that renews interest in the traditional dress associated with the Highlands of Scotland, the key cultural producers that initiated events popularizing kilts and tartans, expanded opportunities in the county to celebrate Highland traditional dress. Kilts and tartans, however, are not the only vestige of Scottish cultural practices that have been proliferated in Glengarry from 1948–2003.

Perhaps the finest example of the growth of Scottish cultural practices following the revival of the Highland games is the prevalence of Scottish Celtic music. Although Celtic music may be more noticeable during the games, in Glengarry it is very much alive all year round. Prior to 1948, Celtic music was mostly preserved through social gatherings or Ceilidhs within Glengarry’s Scottish community (PI/1, 2001).14 Following the revival, a number of institutions specifically designed for the celebration and perpetuation of Celtic music emerged in Glengarry in close affiliation with the games. This facilitated the expansion of spaces and opportunities to celebrate and perpetuate Celtic music practices. The ensuing paragraphs will document the growth of these music institutions and assess their impact on the cultural life of Glengarry County.

Since the revival of the games in 1948, the bagpipe band competitions held at the festival have been continually improved by the ongoing increase in the quality and quantity of competitors. In 1948, eight bands participated in the festival. During the 1960s, when Canada’s Highland Scottish Games Council positioned the Glengarry festival as the host of the annual North American Pipe Band Championships, the number of bands competing at Glengarry began to increase. In 1973, there were 40 bands and in 2001 68 bands made the trip to Glengarry to compete (PI/1, 2001). While the designation of Glengarry as the host of the North American Pipe Band Championships was certainly an important factor in increasing attendance at the games, it took many years for this festival to become more prestigious, attract top competing bands, and also become a significant tourist draw (PI/1, 2001).15 Along with spectators, the pipe bands also travel from all over the world to be part of the Glengarry competition. Bands arrive from Australia, New Zealand, the British Isles, and all parts of North America to participate. Even though in the 21st century the Glengarry Highland Games are considered one of the premier international events for high quality piping, prior to 1948, piping did not exist in Glengarry in any institutional form (PI/1, 2001).

In 1961, to ensure high quality local participation in the annual Scottish festival, the county’s first piping and drumming band was created. Although the original objective of the Glengarry Highlanders
Pipe Band was to practice and perform annually at the Highland games, the group eventually formed competitive bands at various levels and has competed internationally for decades. However, very few of its original members were from younger generations. Consequently, the leaders of Glengarry’s Celtic music organizations expressed concern regarding their ability to replace musicians in the forthcoming decades (Marin and Marin 1982).

In 1967, in an effort to educate local youth, the Glengarry School of Piping and Drumming was established and Celtic music was further institutionalized. Only three years later, the Glengarry Board of Education began to sponsor bagpipe music courses in county high schools. Although there was some local opposition to the courses, apparently based on arguments over the expense of offering the classes (PI/7, 2003), piping and drumming were institutionalized into the very fabric of society as the education system joined the group of influential institutions (re)producing these musical practices. As sociologists Pierre Bourdieu (1984) and later Stuart Hall (1996) demonstrate, education and cultural institutions provide an effective means for empowering and sustaining cultural practices. The notion that Scottish cultural producers had accessed one of the most influential institutions in society (public youth education) is evidence of the extent of influence of these cultural producers in the region during this period. The early 1990s saw the formation of a second piping and drumming organization in Glengarry. By the turn of the 21st century, key cultural agents had established two local pipe bands, a private piping school, and had accessed the public education system to help preserve and proliferate Scottish Celtic music.

In 2001, the presence of more than one Gaelic choir in Glengarry signifies the interest in preserving the identities associated with the language. Created by Ken and Anne McKenna in 1990, the Glengarry Gaelic Choir has performed throughout the county and released a recording of selected Gaelic traditional songs in 1996. Na Nigheanan (The Daughters of Glengarry), a subsidiary of the Glengarry Gaelic Choir, was also formed in 1990. In 1994, with the establishment of the annual Feis-Glengarry, a festival celebrating Gaelic music and culture, the survival of at least some forms of the Gaelic language through Celtic music has been assured (PI/7, 2003). Similar to piping and drumming, the Gaelic choirs are prevalent at social events throughout the county and also perform annually at the Glengarry Games. The recent formation of the Celtic Music Hall of Fame in 2002, suggests that many local residents remain interested in preserving the Celtic music heritage of the county.

Although the popularity of Gaelic choirs and piping and drumming in Glengarry are certainly linked to the rise of supportive institutions, it is
important to acknowledge broader international trends such as the popularization of Celtic music throughout many Western nations internationally. Ethnomusicologists Martin Stokes and Philip Bohlman (2003) refer to the popularization of Celtic music as a transnational phenomenon that originated in the folk revival of the 1960s, was supported by many international Celtic music groups in the 1970s, and reached its pinnacle through global capitalism which commodified Celtic music and integrated it with other Celtic cultural global popular forms throughout the 1980s and 1990s. The popularization of Celtic music during this period can be viewed as a joint process of globalization and the increase in mass communication technology that has rapidly changed music recording and distribution processes. These global factors have certainly influenced the proliferation of Celtic musical practices in Glengarry and other Canadian communities.

Contrary to what one might think, all of the county’s Celtic music institutions were represented by a diverse group during this period. Men and women from various cultural backgrounds and a variety of ages participated (PI/1, 2001). Prior to the revival of the games, Scottish Celtic music was privately celebrated and perpetuated within the Scottish community through social gatherings or Ceilidhs. Following the inaugural games, Celtic music was incorporated as a component of mainstream culture as it was proliferated throughout the county. A network of key agents, many of whom were also affiliated with the games, institutionalized Celtic music by facilitating the active and overt celebration of Scottish music practices.

While analyzing the history of Scottish athletics in Glengarry, a similar paradigm of distinctive institutional growth can be identified directly following the revival of the games. The spirited and graceful athletic endeavour of Scottish Highland dancing became very popular in Glengarry beginning in the 1950s. The institutionalization of Scottish Highland dancing in the county began with the MacCulloch Dancers. Motivated by the resurgence of Scottish cultural practices in Glengarry generated by the games, the MacCulloch School of Highland Dance was formed with seven enthusiastic pupils in 1955. The school first operated in one-room schoolhouses and local kitchens until it expanded into various towns throughout Glengarry (PI/5, 2002). Despite the school’s simple antecedents, it continued to expand in the ensuing decades and by 1990 the school had acquired an international reputation. From 1990 to 2000 the MacCulloch Dancers performed in China, Mexico, Belgium, and Scotland, as well as numerous locations throughout North America. Along with competing abroad, the MacCulloch Dancers have annually performed for the large crowds at the games since the school’s establishment (PI/5, 2002). The Glengarry festival represents one of the world’s
most prestigious Highland dancing events and in 2003 over 250 dancers from the school competed at the games. From 1955 to 2003, over three thousand students have attended the MacCulloch School of Highland Dance. Contrary to what someone could presume after observing a performance, the MacCulloch Dancers represent a very culturally diverse group. Rae MacCulloch, the school's founder, estimates that less than half of her students are of Scottish descent (PI/5, 2002). For many of them, the only link they have to Scottish culture is Glengarry and Highland dancing. As a result of the diversity seen within the school, MacCulloch has expanded her classes to include the traditional dance of Franco-Ontarians. This inclusion is another example of how Scottish culture in Glengarry is produced differently with each successive generation.

MacCulloch acknowledges that the success of her school is closely related to the revival and growth of the Glengarry Games, as she recognizes the significant link between her school and the festival that puts Highland dancing at the forefront of the county’s sport and recreation (PI/5, 2002). Following the revival of the Glengarry Games and the creation of MacCulloch’s school, Highland dancing was proliferated throughout Glengarry as thousands of residents participated. In 2004, the school enjoys an exceptional reputation within the county that is surpassed by few other cultural institutions. After 1948, the growth of Highland dancing is explicitly linked to one group of key agents that popularized this unique Highland practice.

The proliferation of Scottish cultural practices in Glengarry can also be partially attributed to the impact of the resurgence of interest in the county’s Scottish cultural history. In the decades following the successful revival of the games, organizations designed for the purpose of documenting the Scottish cultural history of the county were established. As indicated by a Glengarry resident, “following the revival of the Highland games, a movement celebrating the county’s Scottish cultural heritage seemed to become the current trend” (PI/6, 2003). In 1959, a small group of individuals founded the Glengarry Historical Society. In the forthcoming decades, many projects would be assumed by the society and annual articles would be published in an effort to preserve the county’s cultural history. A local historian has indicated that the society’s main area of research and publication has always been focused on Glengarry’s Scottish residents (Rayside 1991). Although few members were active in both the county’s historical society and the Highland Games Committee, one member of the Glengarry Historical Society asserted that “there was definitely a spiritual connection between the founders of both organizations” (TI/1, 2004). Following the foundation of the county’s historical society,
another organization soon developed for the celebration of Glengarry’s Scottish cultural history. In 1974, the Glengarry Scottish Genealogical Society was formed. The society published a periodical aptly entitled *Highland Heritage* and a series of books (Marin and Marin 1982). Both the historical and genealogical societies capitalized on the resurgence of interest in Scottish cultural history generated by the revival of the games and in turn contributed to the growing network of institutions proliferating Scottish culture.

While it is important to recognize that the presence of these Scottish historical institutions does not in any way permit the establishment of a parallel Franco-Ontarian organization, the point here is to draw a correlation between the revival of the games and the formation of these historical institutions and their apparent cultural agendas. Although the development of the organizations and the initiation of many of their events can be attributed to a core group of key agents mostly from the Scottish community, the interest in and support of these cultural events by residents throughout the county is an indication of the currency of Scottish culture in the region. In Glengarry County since 1948, historical organizations have assumed an eminent role in the construction of local cultural and especially regional identities.

**Hybridity and the Construction of Cultural Identities**

Through their examination of the early history of the county, historians Royce MacGillivray and Ewan Ross (1979) contend that francophone and anglophone residents in Glengarry resisted intermarrying much later in the century in comparison to most other mixed Canadian communities. They indicate a number of important factors that contributed to the lack of interaction between francophones and anglophones in Glengarry prior to the 1950s. Most notably the power struggles related to changing population distributions, competition over economic resources, and shifting political representation, created a friction between Glengarry residents of Franco-Ontarian and Scottish descent in this border region during the first four decades of the 20th century (Mason 2005). However, it is clear that in the post-WW II era intermarriage within these communities became a common practice. As a result, as in other Canadian communities, many Glengarry residents can claim Franco-Ontarian and Scottish descent, as well as other mixed cultural backgrounds.

As sport sociologist Christine Dallaire (2003) discovered, Canadian youth in general, and particularly those of francophone descent, often identify with more than one ethnic label, creating a hybrid identity. Hybridity is a concept that appropriately describes the contemporary ethnic identities of many Glengarry residents, including those who partic-
ipate in Scottish cultural practices. Drawing from cultural studies theory in general and Jan Nederveen Pieterse’s (1994) work on hybridity specifically, Dallaire examines how and why francophones throughout Canada (re)produce and manifest various forms of hybrid linguistic and cultural identities. According to Dallaire, the concept of hybridity underlines the blending of cultures and their divisions while designating the mixing of distinct cultural and linguistic identities into a new hybrid form. 17 As postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha (1994) contends, hybridity does not imply the merging of two stable cultures or identities, but rather refers to the intersection of unstable and fluid forms of identity, as hybrid identities remain heterogeneous and discontinuous. The construction of identities is a complex process whereby many affiliations are simultaneously navigated, produced, contested, and restrained. Each individual negotiates liminal spaces where the hybrid becomes a reflection of their plural engagements with class, gender, sexual orientation, culture, and other social categories. That being stated, this paper is limited to hybrid identities associated with language and ethnicity.

The theoretical concept of hybridity can be aptly applied to the rural communities of Glengarry County. I argue that, particularly since the 1950s, hybrid forms of cultural and linguistic identities have become predominant in Glengarry. While it is possible to establish which residents identify with which cultural groups, if hybrid forms of identities have been constructed in Glengarry for several decades, it is untenable and problematic to categorize residents under one homogenous ethnic label. It is clear that many Glengarry residents share both Franco-Ontarian and Scottish cultural backgrounds (T1/2, 2004). 18 This has major implications for understanding who may participate in and support various forms of cultural practices within the county. In this paper, I am less concerned with examining the diversity and complexity of the individual identities of some Glengarry residents, but more interested in why residents of Franco-Ontarian, Scottish, and mixed cultural backgrounds sometimes emphasize their “Scottishness” in the construction of their own individual cultural and collective regional identities. As these cultural and regional identities are constructed, it is important to question why new hybrid forms tend to privilege “Scottishness” in a multicultural community. Scottish cultural practices evidently influence the construction of hybrid identities in Glengarry as complex processes ensure that they are integrated and assimilated, but why does “Scottishness” have more cultural currency than other ethnicities in the formation of cultural and regional identities?
Scottish Cultural Practices and the Construction of Regional Identities

Beginning in the 1920s, Franco-Ontarian residents began to represent a majority population in Glengarry, but evidence of active organizations designed for celebrating and perpetuating Franco-Ontarian cultural heritage is scarce during the second half of the 20th century (TI/2, 2004).19 One Franco-Ontarian resident who remains active in the preservation of the county’s Franco-Ontarian cultural history admits that in Glengarry from the 1950s onwards “events celebrating Franco-Ontarian culture have in many cases dwindled away” (TI/2, 2004). While the apparent absence of Franco-Ontarian and other non-Scottish cultural organizations may partly explain why many Glengarry residents of diverse ethnic backgrounds chose to participate in Scottish cultural institutions and practices, their involvement in these Scottish cultural institutions did not preclude Franco-Ontarians from celebrating their cultural practices in private forums within Glengarry or traveling to Prescott-Russell County (adjacent to Glengarry and with a significant majority francophone population), Ottawa, or Western Quebec to participate in francophone cultural institutions during this period. The participation of diverse residents in Scottish cultural institutions does not suggest that non-Scottish residents were not simultaneously pursuing other active and passive forms of cultural expression, but their participation did endorse Scottish cultural institutions and help initiate the formation of a unique regional identity that encompasses selected aspects of these practices.

By documenting the growth of Scottish cultural institutions after the revival of the Glengarry Games, evidence of the symbiotic relationship between the Glengarry Games and the Scottish cultural institutions is apparent. The Glengarry Highland Games Committee and the festival itself endorse the Scottish cultural institutions within the county and the institutions at the same time support the growth of Scottish cultural practices, including the games. In several important ways, the establishment of Scottish cultural institutions, including the caretakers of these institutions, was imperative to the inherent proliferation of Scottish cultural practices. Firstly, Scottish cultural organizations extended the influence of the games by institutionalizing Scottish cultural practices. This provided the opportunity for Scottish culture to be celebrated and perpetuated within the county throughout the quotidian lives of residents, rather than on an annual basis. Secondly, the creation of these institutions also extended the impact of the games by magnifying the popularity of Scottish cultural practices. As residents of diverse ethnic backgrounds became involved in these institutions, they began to celebrate Scottish cultural practices as a regular aspect of their lives. Even though it is important to indicate that not all residents have the same cultural experience while involved in these
institutions—for example some residents may choose to either ethnicize or de-ethnicize their experiences—many residents became active proponents of Scottish cultural practices as they formed a component of their lived experiences.

Borrowing from Foucault, post-structural feminist Judith Butler (1991, 1993) argues that identities are performative—they are constructed through continual practices regulated by spaces, opportunities, and experiences. Cultural and linguistic identities are constituted by the repeated performance of those very identities. In other words, an individual acquires cultural identifications by performing those specific cultural practices. Extending from Butler’s conception of the performative, as more Glengarry residents assumed the identity opportunities offered by Scottish cultural institutions, these practices were popularized to the extent that they inevitably helped shape a regional identity. Although the Glengarry Games celebrated Scottish culture from 1948 to the 21st century, the impact of these games on cultural life would have been marginal without the subsequent creation of a buttressing network of institutions. Key agents institutionalized Scottish cultural practices and provided a conduit for active and recurrent celebration, extending the influence of these practices as they were selectively weaved into the daily lives of residents of diverse ethnic backgrounds—helping shape both cultural and regional identities.20

It is apparent that the development of the tourism industry and the rise of Scottish cultural institutions were the most influential factors in proliferating the Highland games and other Scottish cultural practices in Glengarry County. What remains less definitive is whether the broader cultural circumstances that underpinned these significant developments also supported these processes as well as the formation of a regional identity that privileged “Scottishness” as the dominant cultural currency. The next section will attempt to address this decisive question.

Antimodernism: Cultural Resistance and the Cultivation of Nostalgia

Throughout the 20th century, severe socio-economic changes occurred in Glengarry County and residents tried to find responses to the transformation of the rural farming way of life that had persevered within the county since the arrival of the first wave of Scottish Highland settlers (MacGillivray 1990). In Glengarry County, as in many other areas of the Western World, modernity and the socio-economic changes related to this period were met by cultural resistance. As cultural critic Raymond Williams suggests (1985, 1961), significant socio-economic changes almost always elicit direct cultural responses that often materialize as
various forms of resistance. Historians Ian McKay (1994) and T.J. Jackson Lears (1981) have used the term antimodernism to describe resistance to a changing way of life expressed by individuals within rural communities throughout North America during the 20th century. In Glengarry, rural depopulation and the ideological challenges associated with it, created the largest cultural crisis in the second half of the 20th century (Rayside 1991). Prior to understanding how the unique cultural conditions, and the responses to these conditions, underpinned the expansion of the Highland games, it is imperative to demonstrate the link between the expression of antimodernist sentiment and the deterioration of rural way of life in Glengarry.

As outlined by McKay (1994), across the Western World beginning in the middle of the 19th century, skepticism about progress and fear of unprecedented social and economic change shaped social thought and cultural expression across a wide ideological spectrum. Changes in Glengarry, from the turn of the 20th century until the 1940s, provided the impetus from which antimodernism emerged. Although closely linked to the industrialization and urbanization of the 1930s that altered rural life in the county, by the 1950s, rural depopulation quickly transformed residents’ lives and became the most influential factor to increase antimodernist thought (Mason 2005). A rapid wave of innovation revolutionized agricultural techniques and equipment and forced agriculturists in Glengarry to upgrade or abandon the land that for generations their family had tenured. In 1891, 61 percent of the population of Ontario was classified as rural. In 1921, that number had drastically declined to 42 percent. In 1966, only 7 percent of Ontario’s population were farmers and that total was rapidly decreasing (MacGillivray 1990). The following statement refers to rural depopulation in Glengarry from 1950 to 1965:

People were leaving the countryside in large numbers... the result in this county was that farm homes were being closed, land was being mismanaged or underutilized, and the life of the rural communities was deteriorating. (MacGillivray 1990, 128)

In the following statement a local resident remembers how technology and ideological changes influenced rural life:

Then came the impact of modernism... as specialization farming became the norm, the decline of the agricultural system resulted. An anti-agrarian attitude developed and the youth of many families headed for the urban centres. (PI/9, 2004)
By the 1960s, changes in the agrarian lifestyle and culture led to the demise of the mixed farming of previous generations. During this period the residents of Glengarry were uncertain of what the forthcoming decades would bring (PI/9, 2004).

In the United States, a folklore revival was in full swing as early as the 1940s and by 1950 Canadian counterparts began to pursue their cultural history through folklore (McKay 1994). As a response to rural depopulation and the ideological changes that accompanied such a serious demographic shift, the Glengarry County Folk School was founded in 1952. The Folk School Council attempted to help the community understand the rapid changes from a rural to an urban society, regain a sense of communal effort among residents, and explore various employment alternatives to farming. Improvement of agricultural techniques and solidifying the position of the remaining farmers were also objectives advocated by the school (MacMillan 1998). The presence of the Glengarry Folk School, which was well supported and remained in operation from 1952 to 1966, not only helped residents manage these dynamic circumstances, but also encouraged them to channel their cultural resistance into positive forms. In this manner, the school facilitated the expansion of cultural opportunities through the establishment of institutions during this period (MacMillan 1998).

Some residents within the county began to cultivate nostalgia and form cultural institutions as a means of conceptualizing their own collective and individual identities (PI/6, 2003). Similar to other regions of North America and Europe, the cultivation of nostalgia had to be created through the framing and distilling procedures carried out in thought and then set into practice through the processes of selection and invention (Trevor-Roper 1997). McKay (1994) reveals how antimodernism and other forms of cultural resistance both contributed to and helped resolve an identity crisis in Nova Scotia. As in Canada’s Maritime Province, between 1940 and 1960, where cultural producers in the forms of writers, artists, and promoters began to propagate the province as a folk paradise and renew their folk heritage through music and crafts, a similar process was occurring in Glengarry with key cultural producers that established Scottish cultural institutions. Within the county, the notion that leaving the farm was aberrant appealed to residents’ nostalgia. The longing for roots, which at the time formed a prominent theme within the county, encouraged respect for rural way of life and reinforced the disillusionment with urban living (PI/9, 2004). Cultural producers in Glengarry began to appeal to a local audience in search of their history, their identity, and a response to the socio-economic and cultural changes that were shaping their community.
Documented throughout this paper is the rise of Scottish cultural institutions following the revival of the games. The success of these organizations can be partly attributed to the prevalence of antimodernism, which encouraged considerable support for the institutions from Glengarry residents of diverse ethnic backgrounds. As residents faced socio-economic and cultural changes, they looked to the past for answers to questions of uncertainty and identity. The late 18th century agricultural settlement, where Scottish residents represented an overwhelming majority, became an important reference point for the (re)imagining of Glengarry and the celebration of a simpler era (Mason 2005).

Following the revival of the games, antimodernist attitudes have influenced the growth and proliferation of Scottish cultural practices in one important way. The presence of antimodernism as a response to a changing way of life encouraged many Glengarry residents to support Scottish cultural institutions as a means of managing their own identity and the social-economic and cultural changes impacting their community. Moreover, stemming from the influence, confidence, and currency of key cultural producers, the presence and organization of Scottish cultural events and institutions in Glengarry from 1950–1970 only supported the broader cultural conditions in encouraging residents to celebrate and perpetuate these cultural practices.

Tourism in Glengarry is also explicitly linked to antimodernism. Glengarry residents were not the only Canadians who struggled with socio-economic change and rural depopulation. In the third quarter of the 20th century, middle-class urban Canadians began to voyage into rural regions in pursuit of cultural treasure. Reverence for the “authentic,” skepticism about progress, and nostalgia for the past, are related to the growth of tourism in Glengarry. According to MacGillivray (1990), as urbanization began to dominate Eastern Ontario, it gave way to small town individualism and urban centre anonymity. This became one of the attractions of rural life to urbanites. In Eastern Ontario, the move to the urban centre had its time of offering fulfillment. Beginning in the late 1960s, it was the return to the rural, or at least the thought thereof, that afforded contentment. McKay (1994) refers to this phenomena as urban tourists “playing folk” on the weekends. As urban tourists travel the countryside in search of rural treasure, their fascination with rural way of life supported local tourism in Glengarry and many other rural communities throughout Canada. The presence of festivals like the Glengarry Games and the supportive network of Scottish cultural institutions are to some extent the attraction and charm of the rural county and its appeal for tourism. Tourism has created a vocabulary in which the Highland games are a sign of the past and life in a bygone era—it has brought and continues to bring visitors to the rural county. Consequently, since 1948, anti-
modernism has in some capacities influenced the expansion of the Glengarry Games, the growth of the tourism industry, and Scottish cultural institutions. Although certainly not in the same fundamental manner as tourism and the rise of Scottish cultural institutions, broader cultural circumstances did contribute to the proliferation of Scottish cultural practices in Glengarry and the formation of cultural and regional identities that privileged “Scottishness” as the dominant cultural currency.

Conclusion

In this paper I examine the influences of tourism, Scottish institutions, and broader cultural and socio-economic circumstances on the proliferation of Scottish cultural practices and the construction of identities in Glengarry County from 1948 to the beginning of the 21st century. This analysis of the Glengarry Highland Games illuminates how many residents are offered identity opportunities that provide cultural resources. While these resources are certainly utilized by residents to derive meaning in diverse ways, they often serve to construct ethnic and regional identities that attach a significant currency to Scottish cultural practices.

For over half a century the rural communities of Glengarry County have hosted the Highland games—proliferating Scottish cultural practices and influencing the construction of cultural and regional identities. Along with examining a community at a particular juncture of cultural revitalization, this research demonstrates some of the ways that sporting and cultural practices can be used as a vehicle to maintain, shape, and perpetuate distinct identities within a broader Canadian context. This case study is significant because it reveals how the always complex and sometimes problematic relationships between cultural festivals, tourism, and the construction of identities, are often interdependent. It is perhaps this nexus between these elements that make the growth of the Glengarry Highland Games and the development of this unique region of Eastern Ontario important to the sporting, cultural, as well as the socio-economic history of Canada.

Endnotes

1. I presented an earlier version of this paper at the 26th Annual Conference of the North American Society of Sport Sociology (NASSS), Winston-Salem, North Carolina, October 26-29, 2005.

2. Many of the cultural practices discussed in this paper are referred to by utilizing the generic term “Scottish.” It is critical to recognize that many of these cultural practices are most often associated with the Highland districts of Scotland. Kilts, Highland dance, and the Highland games themselves are examples of this. In Glengarry, as in many other communities where Scottish émigrés have settled,
Lowland and Highland cultural forms have fused over several generations (MacGillivray 1979). When referring to ethnicity, individuals in Glengarry very rarely differentiate between the distinct regions of Scotland that their ancestors may have emigrated from. While Grant Jarvie’s (1998) work demonstrates that the Scottish cultural practices that are reproduced in Canada are quite distinct from those in Scotland, he has also shown that many of the Scottish cultural forms that have been popularized internationally have their origins in the Highlands of Scotland. As these Highland Scottish forms (the kilt for example) were proliferated internationally, many of them were appropriated by Lowland Scots (Jarvie 1991). This further complicates any process of distinguishing between Lowland and Highland Scottish cultural forms or practices both from Scotland or internationally in places such as Glengarry, Canada. I have made an effort to be sensitive to this issue throughout this paper by referring to specific cultural forms or practices when possible.

3. In 1784, after a prolonged struggle to settle in North America, almost fifty families established one of Upper Canada’s first Scottish settlements. The 425 Scottish Highland residents were joined by two successive waves of Scottish Highland immigration at the beginning of the 19th century establishing a distinctive community in what is currently Glengarry County, Eastern Ontario.

4. The Disarming Act of 1747 became the first of several legislations designed to dissolve the Highland Clan formation, integrate Highlanders into mainstream British Lowland culture, and marginalize Highland cultural practices. Although the Act was successfully repealed in 1782, many Highland communities did not resume their customs. Highland settlers who immigrated to Canada during this period are responsible for organizing the strong system of Scottish societies and eventually Highland games that materialized throughout the late 18th century and early 19th century.

5. The first Scottish Highland Society in North America was established in Glengarry County in 1819 under the direction of Reverend Alexander Macdonell and William MacGillivray. An extensive network of Scottish societies developed through several Canadian provinces during the 19th century and many of these societies organized formal Highland gatherings and festivals.

6. The St. Lawrence Seaway and Power Project, which forever changed the character of the United Counties of Stormont, Dundas, and Glengarry, had a major impact on tourism in the local area. At the heart of the Seaway and Power Project were the creation of more efficient water transportation routes and the development of hydroelectric power. The project began on 10 August 1954. The five-year $1.2 billion project included the flooding of 20,000 acres of land, resulting in 6,500 individuals losing their homes. As geographic remnants of the towns and hinterland that was flooded, eleven offshore islands were created between the towns of Long Sault and Ingleside. The islands were strung together to form a parkway and as provincial parkland they were quickly developed for the purposes of recreation. In 1962, the first full summer of operation, over 1.2 million visitors utilized this newly formed recreation haven.

7. As Ian McKay suggests, urban tourists attend festivals like the Glengarry Games
for a taste of the pre-modern; urban tourists paradoxically celebrate the pre-modern while concomitantly living urban lifestyles. Dean MacCannell contends that the entire concept of tourism, in particular rural tourism, is a modern creation. It was a condition of modernity that drove tourists’ pervasive nostalgia for “authenticity” or the “traditional.” For more see McKay (1994) pp. 31-35 and MacCannell (1999) pp. 17-34.

8. It is difficult to determine who the early patrons of the festival were, as very few records were kept and marketing did not play a major role in attracting visitors. While friends and family of Glengarry residents and past residents certainly accounted for a significant portion of the attendance, tourists from the nearby urban centres of Ottawa and Montréal represented most of the visitors.


11. An agent within this context is defined as one who exerts power or produces an effect. See Giddens (1984) p. 9.


14. Originally facilitating courting and prospects of marriage for young adults, Ceilidhs are informal social gatherings originating in the Highlands of Scotland. Traditional dance accompanied by Celtic music characterize these social gatherings of family, friends, and neighbours.

15. This statement is supported by an analysis of the number of pipe bands participating at the Glengarry Games from the mid-1960s onwards. The number of competing bands slowly increased throughout the 1970s and 1980s.


17. For more information on hybridity see Dallaire (2003), Dallaire and Claude (2005), Anthias (2001), and Nederveen Pieterse (1994).

18. Understanding the construction of cultural identities in Glengarry is further complicated by the reality that many of the francophones who migrated to Glengarry from the townships of Western Quebec prior to the late 19th century were often assimilated into Anglo-Scottish communities. This was particularly prevalent in the small rural communities of southwestern Glengarry where very few francophones lived prior to the early 20th century. The emergence of francophone education in 1916 was the most important development lowering assimilation rates in these communities.

19. It is important to recognize that while francophones do represent a majority in Glengarry (53%) they are also a small minority group (4.3%) within the province of Ontario (2001 Statistics Canada Census). Even though Franco-Ontarians in Glengarry held a significant amount of economic, political, and cultural power by 1940, very few francophone cultural institutions prospered in the second half of the 20th century. In 1916, after a difficult battle with much opposition, the first French elementary school emerged in Glengarry. The struggles over French education would persist after 1916, as the issue would consume local politics over the next 54 years. French secondary education was not established in Glengarry until 1970. The 1960s represented a tumultuous period for francophone/anglo-
The Quiet Revolution in Quebec encouraged many francophone communities throughout the nation to assert their cultural and linguistic identities. The battle over French secondary education, which occurred in Glengarry at this time, certainly stemmed from this broader national movement. This struggle created a great deal of friction and polarized linguistic and cultural groups in Glengarry. After 1970, both government and community organizations made efforts to bridge the two groups. Perhaps encouraging local participation and involvement in the region’s largest cultural event was viewed as part of a unifying process.

Along with acknowledging the influence of key agents and the institutions they formed, as Foucault suggests, it is also critical to recognize how broader power relations and struggles helped create the spaces and opportunities for the performance of these practices. An historical analysis of regional, provincial, and national power relations can offer an understanding of the construction of cultural identities in Glengarry. During the second half of the 20th century, the formation of a distinct identity for Franco-Ontarians was merely in its infancy as francophones in Quebec formed a unique brand of nationalism that most often excluded other Canadian francophones who lived outside of the province. This left Franco-Ontarians isolated from the francophone power centre emerging in Quebec. Meanwhile, individuals of Scottish lineage have arguably played the most influential role in the development of Canada. Beginning with confederation, from a political and economic viewpoint, Scots have represented a hegemonic group that carried a significant amount of cultural currency in national, provincial, and regional spheres of influence. As a result, there are certainly tangible and intangible consequences of this that are linked to why powerful spaces were created during this period for the performance of Scottish cultural practices and the construction of Scottish cultural identities. For more on how broader power relations can create spaces for cultural (re)production see Foucault (1980; 1983, 208-226).

In Glengarry, as supported by oral histories and historical accounts by MacGillivray and Rayside, this cultural resistance can be characterized by particular responses. Although consumerism and the pursuit of an urban lifestyle began in Glengarry during this period, a sense of alienation, a weakening of family ties, a loss of identity, rural depopulation, and a rejection of what was perceived to be “modern” and the changes associated with it were concomitantly articulated by Glengarry residents. Antimodernism is a complex phenomenon and I do not explore its various currents within this essay. For a more detailed view of antimodernism see McKay (1994) and Lears (1981).
References

Academic Sources


Interviews

Personal Interviews (PI)

1. Connie Blaney (23 August 2001): Connie Blaney is a resident of Glengarry, a member of the Glengarry Highlanders Pipe Band, and a member of the Glengarry Highland Games Committee. Her vast knowledge and experience as an educator of Scottish music practices has helped shaped this essay.
2. Carolyn Smith (26 August, 2001): Carolyn Smith is a resident of Glengarry, an elementary school teacher, and a member of the Glengarry Highland Games Committee.

3. Larry Harrison (26 August, 2001): Larry Harrison is a resident of Glengarry, an elementary school principal, and a member of the Glengarry Highland Games Committee.

4. Myles MacMillan (3 January 2002): Myles MacMillan is a resident of Glengarry and a member of the Glengarry Highland Games Committee. He aided this essay by sharing his knowledge of the county’s celebrations of Scottish Highland traditional dress.

5. Rae MacCulloch (6 January 2002): Rae MacCulloch is a resident of Glengarry and the founder of the MacCulloch School of Highland Dance. Her knowledge of the reproduction of Scottish sporting and cultural practices has significantly informed this essay.

6. David Anderson (22 December 2003): David Anderson is a resident of Glengarry, a current member and past president of the Glengarry Historical Society, and the current curator of the Glengarry Archives. His vast knowledge of the cultural history of the county has significantly aided this paper.

7. Clive and Frances Marin (28 December 2003): Clive and Frances Marin are retired teachers that have authored several books on the history and culture of Stormont, Dundas, and Glengarry.

8. Jim Brownell (30 December 2003): Jim Brownell is a retired elementary school principal, a past member of the Stormont, Dundas, and Glengarry Historical Society, a past member of the St. Lawrence Parks Commission, and the current Member of Provincial Parliament for the region. His knowledge of local history, and specifically tourism within the region, has improved this essay.

9. Edward St. John (2 January 2004): Edward St. John is a past resident of Glengarry, a past member of the Glengarry Historical Society, and a past member of the Glengarry Highland Games Committee. His knowledge of Glengarry’s cultural, economic, and political life greatly informed many aspects of this essay.

**Telephone Interviews (TI)**

1. David Anderson (15 March 2004).

2. Maurice Gauthier (23 March 2004): Maurice Gauthier is a resident of Glengarry, a retired high school teacher, and a member of the Glengarry Historical Society. His knowledge of the history of francophone cultural practices in Glengarry made an important contribution to this paper.


**Newspapers**

*Glengarry News, Alexandria, Ontario.*
Heather Mair, PhD

Curling in Canada:
From Gathering Place to International Spectacle

Abstract
Curling is a central part of winter life for many Canadians and our curlers dominate the world stage. Yet the topic remains dramatically under-studied. Building on the limited writing in this area and presenting research undertaken in curling clubs across western Canada, the author seeks to help fill this gap by exploring the changing role of curling in the construction of social identities at the local community and national level. It is argued that while curling plays an undeniable, if muted, role in the construction of Canada’s image, this identity is being increasingly subjected to a number of internal and external pressures that have the potential to lead to great change.

Résumé
Le curling fait partie intégrante de la vie de nombreux Canadiens en hiver, et nos curleurs dominent la scène mondiale. Malgré tout, le sujet n’a pas fait l’objet de beaucoup d’études. S’appuyant sur le peu de publications dans ce domaine et présentant une étude réalisée dans des clubs de curling de l’Ouest canadien, l’auteure vise à combler cet écart en explorant l’évolution du rôle du curling dans la construction des identités sociales à l’échelle locale et nationale. Elle soutient que même si le curling joue un rôle indéniable, quoique en sourdine, dans la construction de l’image du Canada, cette identité fait de plus en plus l’objet d’un certain nombre de pressions internes et externes qui peuvent mener à un grand changement.

On Thursday, February 23, 2006, Newfoundland’s Education Minister, Joan Burke announced that the province’s schools would be closed the following day. Children would be free to watch Brad Gushue’s team from that province as they competed in the gold medal curling game at the 2006 Olympics. The Gushue “rink” won the gold and the women’s team came home with bronze. These athletes not only joined a long history of international domination by Canadian curlers, they became something close to national heroes. These athletes triumphed in a quintessential
Canadian sport; a victory made even sweeter in light of the disappointing results in men’s hockey.

Curling has an image as an accessible sport. It is often portrayed as small-town, classless, gender-neutral, and open to all. The following introduction to the sport was posted on the website of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation in order to explain curling to potential fans in the lead up to the 2006 Olympic Games:

In 1998, a Canadian golf pro, a plumber, an electrician and a writer swept their way to silver in the men’s Olympic curling event, when Mike Harris’s rink finished second at the Nagano Games. A rarity among world-class athletes, most curlers have day jobs and families to raise. “The curler is your neighbour,” says Harris. “It’s just a small-town game. It’s a grassroots game that everyone can identify with.”

The Canadian Curling Association states that 872,000 people curl in Canada and 56 percent of those are regular curlers in that they curl ten or more games per year (CCA 2004b). While many Canadians are not actively engaged in curling, as Russell notes, most, if not all Canadians know what curling is and have at the very least, “some sort of distant connection to the sport” (2004, 2). Yet, despite both its visibility and remarkably long history in Canada (the first organized sporting club in North America was the Montréal Curling Club established in 1807), curling is under-studied. In particular, its social and cultural significance has not been investigated to the same extent as other sports, most notably ice hockey (see Gruneau and Whitson 1993). Certainly, assessments of its importance abound from within the sport itself as writers, curlers, and historians celebrate its development with many popular writings (see, for instance, Maxwell 2002, Pezer 2003, Russell 2004, and Sonmor 1992). Of the more academically-oriented curling studies, Wieting and Lamoureux (2001) highlight both the importance of curling to Canadians and the dominance that its elite athletes enjoy worldwide. Reeser and Berg (2004) investigate self-reported injury patterns among competitive male curlers and Willoughby and Kostuk (2004) explore the strategies of elite players. However, there is little direct research that considers identity, the role of the local club or even the changing social and cultural aspects of the sport. In addition, only a handful of studies are concerned primarily with volunteers, a staple of curling activity at both the local and the national level (see, for instance, Farrell, Johnston, and Twynam 1998, Twynam, Farrell, and Johnston 2002/2003).

Alongside this limited academic attention to the sport is evidence that members of curling clubs across the country, and even the federal government, have long understood and supported its role in community life. In
1967, as part of the Centennial celebrations, the Canadian government invested in the financing and construction of many recreation facilities. The building or upgrading of curling rinks were also significant parts of these Centennial Projects (McFarland 1970). More recently, a survey of 491 clubs by the Canadian Curling Association (CCA 2004a) indicates that nearly 60 percent operate in the non-curling season, providing both rented and donated space for community events, ranging from wedding receptions to walkathons to live local theatre. The Saskatchewan Curling Association points out that curling has “made a unique and valuable contribution to the social and sport history of this province… curling was a way of life during the long cold winter months” (1991, viii).

Thus, there remains a need for more in-depth assessments of curling, particularly from a social and cultural standpoint. Further, curling has been undergoing dramatic changes as it begins to co-exist on two increasingly independent levels: as a community-based sport and as an increasingly professionalized, commercialized, Olympic-level endeavour. This paper explores these changes and considers their implications in light of the relationship between curling and identity formation.

The role of sport in the formation of social and cultural identities is, like curling, also relatively under-studied. Nonetheless, those works seeking to draw our attention to these complex relationships provide guidance throughout this analysis. For instance, Whitson (2001, 231) comments on the role of sport in (Canada’s) national identity:

…national identities are amalgams of ideas and images of “the nation” that ordinary people can identify with. These emerge out of communal historical experiences and practices, and out of stories of famous triumphs (and tragedies) that are retold in the media and in popular conversation till they become, literally, the stuff of legends…. The association of sports with familiar places, with seasonal rhythms, even with particular weekends on the calendar, all contribute to a sense of the endurance of the imagined community of the nation.

What role does the sport of curling play in the construction of this enduring image? What are the implications of the changing nature of the sport of curling in terms of the ongoing construction of local and national identities? Kidd (1982, 1996) describes the changing role of sport in shoring up national culture, particularly through modern forms of competition and sees these changes as the outcomes of power struggles. In this paper, I argue that while curling has an undeniable, if muted, role in the construction of Canada’s image, both of itself and in terms of how others see it, this role is complex and subject to a number of internal and exter-
nal tensions that are leading to great change. Curling exists at the local, national, and international levels in different forms and for different purposes. While it may be considered by many to be an unexciting sport, it is generally deemed, even by non-curlers, as characteristically Canadian: a social, winter sport built upon values of skill, amateurism, patience, sportsmanship, and non-violence played extremely well by “everyday” people.

Yet, contradictory forces are at work in the world of curling, both in regard to its place in the national psyche as well as its future at the local, national, and international levels. While small, rural clubs are in financial trouble and membership and, in particular, membership fees, are not increasing significantly enough to offset the growing costs of maintenance, there is a dramatic growth in media, sponsorship, and spectator attention at the national and international levels (CCA 2004a, 2004b). Recent and well-publicized wins like the men’s Olympic gold combined with the prominence of Canadian women’s teams as well as the success of senior and junior teams on the international stage suggest that curling is poised to attract even more attention from international media and capital through sponsorship opportunities. As curling undergoes the development of a dual existence (at the level of community gathering place as well as international spectacle), what are the implications for identity and our national sense of self?

There are four main parts to this paper. First, curling is introduced using major works on the sport and briefly tracing its development along the trajectory of Canadian colonial settlement, particularly by Scottish immigrants in the western part of the country. While this is by no means meant to be an extended treatise on the history of curling in Canada (see, for instance, Creelman 1950, Howell and Howell 1969, Maxwell 2002, Metcalfe 1987, Mott and Allardyce 1989, Murray 1982, Pezer 2003, Wetherell and Kmet 1990) it is important to understand the history of curling, in particular its social roots. Curling is often described, although mostly for the benefit of curlers and historians of Canadian social development, as being distinctly Canadian. However, as noted above, it has not been considered in sufficient depth from within the fields of leisure studies, cultural studies, or even the sociology of sport. Investigating the historical circumstance of curling allows for a deeper consideration of the modern connection between sport and identity construction in Canada.

In the second section, the paper outlines outcomes from the first stage of a research project seeking to understand the role of curling and curling clubs in rural Canadian life. Although many small curling clubs are at risk of closing, they still provide a community gathering place for many Canadians. Results of research undertaken in six western Canadian
communities in the winter of 2006 are presented in order to illustrate how the local curling rink is both a fundamental part of Canada’s settlement history and the social fabric of small town Canadian life. In this way, the clubs reinforce our historical sense of self as a relatively rural, social, wintry nation. In addition, the sport is built upon both a sense of “sportsmanship” (for example, teams shake hands before and after every game, both teams are expected to meet after the match for drinks, and play is largely self-refereed) as well as strong regional foundations (for instance, while not the site of the first clubs, major developments in the sport came from the West, particularly Manitoba and Saskatchewan). Add to this an enduring sense of honour that comes from having embraced the very worst of Canadian weather, and it is possible to see how curling complements the Canadian self-image.

Third, insights from some of the writing in the areas of sociology of sport are used to consider the forces working to alter Canadian curling. As it becomes increasingly recognized and followed internationally, Canadians hold centre stage as dominant players and leaders in its development and evolution. The growing professionalization and commercialization through sponsorship, extended television exposure, and the increase in prize-oriented competitions, is leading to the construction of major curling competitions as “spectacles.” Further, these forces are supplemented by efforts to build and improve the science of the sport through equipment development and marketing, standardizing playing techniques and rules, and analyzing the game and its elite players through the use of statistics. While these changes may be seen by some as an inevitable price for national and international exposure, the research presented below identifies a feeling, at least at the grassroots level, that there is a widening gap between Canadian curling’s global status and its rural roots. The last section concludes the discussion by asking whether these seemingly contradictory forces influencing the development of curling can co-exist and what this means for the future of the sport.

The (Canadian) Settler’s Game

Curling has a history in Canada that stretches back longer than the nation’s formal existence. Given our protracted engagement with the game, it is perhaps no surprise that we have come to associate ourselves with its evolution and development. Howell and Howell’s study of sports and games in Canadian life (1969; see also Creelman 1950, Metcalfe 1987, Mott and Allardyce 1989, Wetherell and Kmet 1990) attributes the refinement of curling among some of the more prominent contributions that Canadians have made to sport around the world. In the latter part of the 18th century, this game, thought to be brought to Canada by Scottish troops and settlers, made its mark from east to west. One of the first
recorded games was held on the St Lawrence River in 1807 (Howell and Howell 1969, 36). As noted above, the first club in Canada was formed by 20 curlers in Montréal in 1807. As Metcalfe (1987) points out, the origins of curling were rather elite as the first clubs were created by the more affluent members of society (see also Morrow and Wamsley, 2005). Other clubs began to spring up in Ontario (Kingston and Toronto in 1820 and 1836, respectively), in the Maritimes (Halifax, Nova Scotia in 1843, and Fredericton, New Brunswick established a club of 8 curlers in 1856) and others in parts of Quebec. As Howell and Howell (1969) noted, these early curlers were often mocked by other settlers from non-British origins; they include the following quotation from a farmer:

Today I saw a band of Scotchmen, who were throwing large balls of iron like tea-kettles on the ice, after which they cried “Soop! Soop!” and then laughed like fools. I really believe they are fools. (35)

It was in the western parts of the country, however, where the popularity of curling took hold in the greatest way, moving from frozen lakes and rivers to covered, outdoor facilities to fully enclosed buildings with artificial ice. Wetherell and Kmet (1990) point out that by the 1890s, clubs organizing curling in Alberta made it second only to hockey in popularity as it was “inexpensive and accessible and by the interwar years, it had come to symbolize prairie rural social life like no other game” (154). Pezer (2003) describes the importance of curling not just in western Canadian settlement, but also in terms of how the people of the Prairies see themselves today:

The game of curling is a unique component of the social history of the Prairies. From its sparse, random beginnings more than 150 years ago, to its present sophisticated level, curling defines the character and spirit of the Prairies and its people. Its requirements of self-discipline, persistence, patience, and co-operation parallel the qualities of early settlers, and it has been linked with almost every aspect of prairie life—political, religious and commercial. (1–2)

Probably the most lasting and distinguishing aspect of curling is the bonspiel, or multi-day, multi-team curling tournament or competition. As soon as clubs began to spring up on the Canadian landscape, bospies were held as curlers braved winter conditions in order to travel to other clubs in neighbouring communities (or provinces) for matches. These competitions were major social events throughout the second half of the 19th century. In 1866, a year before Confederation, an international curling match between Canada and the United States was held (Howell and
Howell 1969, 38). Not surprisingly, the spread of curling across the country is directly related to the development of the railway. At the time, rail travel provided the easiest access to other areas, and curlers traveled across great distances—with their own rocks (curling stones). Redmond and many others (1990, 114; see also Creelman 1950, Howell and Howell 1969, Maxwell 2002, Murray 1982, Pezer 2003) point out that curling is just one example of Canada’s changing geography and social life as the railway was built, piece by piece, across the nation.

However, it should be noted that even before rail travel allowed for competitions between communities, intra-community matches were frequent. Pezer (2003, 11) describes common ways of forming competitive matches, including married vs. single, Grits vs. Tories, smokers vs. non-smokers. She also describes one particularly popular type of match, Canada vs. the “Old Country,” where Canadian-born curlers played against the settlers who introduced the game (see also Creelman 1950). Local community identity developed around curling as access to more communities through rail, and later the automobile eased winter travel and allowed for the game to evolve and the standards of play to improve through consistent and increased competitions (Howell and Howell 1969, Metcalfe 1987, Morrow and Wamsley 2005, Mott and Allardyce 1989). Communities sought to be known as curling communities where the competition and the hospitality were reputed to be worth the journey. Pezer describes the pride associated with hosting a bonspiel during the curling season as well as the expected reciprocation for visiting teams:

The decision to host a bonspiel marked a major evolutionary step towards a more sophisticated level of curling competition. Communities planned for months and worked hard to provide the best ice possible, offer prizes of significant value, and show the finest hospitality to visiting teams. Bonspiel success became an important yardstick of a community’s prestige, and one mark of a bonspiel’s reputation was the number of visiting teams who participated. The expected, if unwritten, rule was the communities would support each other’s bonspies. (Pezer 2003, 111)

As sports sociologists make clear, it is also important to realize that all sports are used to imbue participants with values and ideals deemed acceptable by leaders in society (see, for instance, Kidd 1982, 1996, Metcalfe 1987, Morrow and Wamsley 2005). In the case of curling, it was hoped that the game would allow for the spread of Victorian values as brought to Canada by the British settlers although it did mix with the frontier mentality to form a distinctly Canadian value set incorporating teamwork, self-discipline and a sense of openness and democratic freedom.
As Mott and Allardyce (1989) account, curling “…tested a host of praiseworthy attributes including vigour, endurance, determination, power of concentration, ability to plan strategy and capacity to work with others” (8) and thereby served to reinforce British–Protestant social values.

Further, religion also had a place in the sport at this time and Pezer (2003) describes the role of the church, particularly the local chaplain, and the mutually supportive relationship between the church and the local curling club (see also Mott and Allardyce 1989). The chaplain could use the opportunity of the bonspiel to host a church service in order to convey moral lessons and the club used the connection to the church to promote curling as an appropriate social activity. This lasted until the 1960s and 1970s when overall church membership was dropping and Sunday competitions eliminated the traditional bonspiel church service (Pezer 2003, 92–95).

Thus, during the dramatic period of Canada’s growth as a new nation, curling provided an outlet for hard-working settlers to mix, socialize and share their values throughout their small communities and, increasingly, with neighbouring communities. Much like the quotation from Olympic curler Mike Harris cited at the beginning of the paper, there is an enduring image that all curlers, even international champions, are everyday people. As is described next, recent research with small curling communities illustrates that this is still very much the case in many parts of Canada.5

The Gathering Place

In this section, some of the outcomes of research undertaken with six curling clubs in western Canada are presented.6 Over the course of this research, I met with curlers who were currently holding executive positions at their local clubs. In the winter of 2006, I spent one full bonspiel weekend in each community. Informal interviews were conducted and participant observation techniques were used throughout the weekend events. A brief picture of three of the clubs and communities that were part of this study, one each from Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta is presented below so as to demonstrate the continued role of curling clubs as gathering places in Canada. It should be noted that the names of the communities are pseudonyms.

Cedar, Manitoba

In Cedar, a village in Manitoba with a total population of 656 in 2001 (Statistics Canada 2001), the entire community gathers at the curling club for one long weekend a year.7 In 2006, the bonspiel ran at the end of
March and was the club’s 100th. This bonspiel is the major event of the winter for this community, hosting men’s, ladies’, and master’s (seniors 60 years of age and older) teams. The club hosting the event works with the minor sports association in order to use the linked arena ice to turn their “three sheeter” into a nine-sheet rink or facility, hosting more than seventy teams. Volunteers from the local hospital and museum, some of whom were curlers, were responsible for providing the food as well as staffing the canteen and bar. These groups share the profits with the curling club. Over the course of this weekend, the club opens its doors to the community and generations of families play together, teams of teenagers take on their parents and past and present community members spend the weekend together. A Friday night banquet was held at the community hall, the local fire department hosted a breakfast on Saturday morning in the fire hall, and the club hosted a karaoke night that evening. With the exception of the ice-maker, every aspect of the bonspiel, as well as general club activity, is run and organized by volunteers.

Observation as well as discussions with curlers and club members made clear the dependence upon volunteers to make things happen, both during bonspiels and also in regular season league play. All club members know they are expected to take a shift at the bar or in another aspect of the bonspiel and that if they cannot make their shift, they are responsible for finding a replacement. There were people from all over the region, many of whom return to play in this bonspiel every year. One curler discussed traveling each year from the city of Winnipeg just to be part of the bonspiel. He noted that he used to come with a team from Winnipeg but when his teammates no longer wanted to make the (two and a half hour) journey, he was given a spot on one of the rinks entered by the local hotel. He and other curlers consistently mentioned the importance of being part of this community event. Further, locals—even non-curlers—had come to the curling club for coffee or lunch to watch the matches, play cards, and visit with the people who had returned to the community for this particular weekend.

Ash, Saskatchewan

The town of Ash had 1758 people in 2001 (Statistics Canada 2001) and hosts its annual mixed (teams of two females and two males, of any age) bonspiel in early April. While not as large as the Cedar bonspiel, this is obviously also a social event for the whole community. Families are reunited for the weekend and groups of friends who do not ordinarily curl together enter teams to increase the number of entries and enhance play. In terms of running the bonspiel, volunteers are again at the core. For instance, in 2006, teams were responsible for bringing pies or sandwiches for sale at the club over the weekend. Volunteers ran the bar in two hour
shifts, and the food counter was run and operated during the bonspiel by the Canoe Club to aid in their effort to raise funds for their annual high school trip. Over the course of my time there, active volunteers would be working in the background, selling draw tickets to fundraise for the club, heading to the community hall to help set up the food trays and arrange the tables for the Saturday night dance (referred to as a “cabaret”). Among the curlers at the bonspiel were the local mixed high-school provincial champions.

Observation and discussions with curlers over the course of this bonspiel made it clear that family was a key theme. Indeed, “curling families” were local legends and the subject of nearly mythical status. One family I spent time with in Ash was so famous that one only needed to mention the father and family name when describing a particular curling shot and everyone knew what was being described. In order to raise funds, this club sold naming rights for tables and many families or groups of friends bought a table, generally to honour a curler who had passed away. This person’s name remains on the table and the legends continue. Moreover, the significance of putting the name of a family member or friend on a curling rock, table, or scoreboard might be thought of as reflecting a connection to the broader community of curling as well as to the club, a sort of “vested interest.”

Maple, Alberta

In Maple, Alberta, a town with 1762 inhabitants as of 2001 (Statistics Canada 2001), the annual men’s bonspiel was held over the last weekend of January 2006. This four sheet rink is connected to the local hockey arena, has a large bar and seating area with a long line of windows stretching the length of the curling ice. Hosting teams of men from Maple, as well as many neighbouring communities, the event included a banquet on Saturday night, featuring a roast beef dinner and a series of raffles for door prizes donated from local businesses. Just as with the other bonspiels visited, there was a large collection of donations from local businesses. Most bonspiels offer a mix of cash prizes for the top winners of the various divisions or “events” and prizes donated from local businesses. This bonspiel in particular offered a wide array of prizes, everything from T-shirts and poker sets to Calgary Flames hockey tickets and wall-sized mirrors embossed with beer company logos. The volunteer organizer of this particular bonspiel explained that there was an unwritten expectation among small clubs, that teams be sent to one another’s bonspiels (care is taken to avoid offering bonspiels on conflicting weekends) in order to support all of the clubs in the area. In return, there is an expectation that the ice will be of adequate quality, there will be some form of entertainment (and/or a good meal), and a sufficient number of high-quality prizes.
Having presented brief sketches of three of the studied clubs, it is also important to note briefly some key themes that came from studying these clubs and being at the bonspiels. Three main themes are outlined briefly below: amateurism and sportsmanship, socializing, and volunteerism. These themes relate directly to certain social values. These values were built into the sport by the Scottish settlers who developed it, and they continue to be fostered within these small clubs. Moreover, they are central components of Canada’s sense of identity.

**Amateurism and Sportsmanship: Game Protocol**

As mentioned at the outset of the paper, curlers shake hands before and after every game. This occurs regardless of the level of play, from small community bonspiels to Olympic matches. As the game is played with alternating teams taking shots at the rings on the other end of the curling sheet, the curler who is preparing to take her/their shot will generally move his/her opponent’s next rock into an area where it can be easily accessed by that opponent when it is her/his turn. Regardless of the level of the game and the skills at work, curlers are generally known to compliment their opponents on good shots, especially if they are of a high degree of difficulty. After the game, teams are expected to sit together for a “post match” drink. While undertaking research at the clubs, these rules and unwritten expectations were made clear to me and were an obvious source of pride; a way of distinguishing curling from other sports.

**Socializing: A Part of Club Infrastructure**

The physical layout of the club is generally designed so that curling can be watched while socializing, eating, drinking, playing cards, or watching curling on the club’s television. Further, any meals and/or dances that are held in conjunction with the bonspiels are generally also held in-house. The one exception to this was Cedar where, due to the large number of curlers participating in the bonspiel, the banquet was served in two stages at a local hall not far from the club. During my time in the clubs, I observed a constant movement of curlers within the clubs. For instance, a curler might move from the bar to a table to visit a friend, over to the windows to watch other teams curls, and finally to sit with his/her team to share a story or two about their last game. Also, as smoking has been banned in all clubs, curlers who smoke are moving inside and outside the club.

One element of club infrastructure that is unchanging across the clubs participating in this study was the construction and location of the tables. The tables are always big enough (or can be easily put together) to seat eight. This is so that two teams can sit together in order to share the customary drink after playing a match. On the single occasion when I saw
a deviation from this practice, it was noted and discussed by other curlers around the room and was described to me as a deliberate slight from one team to another.

**Volunteerism: The Key to Club Survival**

Each of the clubs I visited functioned almost entirely on volunteer labour. With the exception of the ice-maker and, in two cases, the bar/food staff, every aspect of organizing, promoting, and running a bonspiel (as well as regular season play) is undertaken entirely by club member volunteers. Fundraising, such a prominent part of the life of these clubs, is also the purview of volunteers and is a consistent part of bonspiel weekends. Activities may be coordinated by an executive group or may be a much more spontaneous undertaking at the will of one volunteer. Throughout the research, it was made consistently clear that volunteering, while increasingly a challenge for small communities, was not only an essential component of the club’s existence, but was something to be proud of, especially as it was seen to be what differentiated small clubs from their larger, urban counterparts.

Thus, even this brief description of club life in these small, western Canadian communities illustrates that while the local clubs are facing financial challenges, there is a significant connection to community life and these clubs are still operating in much the same way as their settlement predecessors did. They are still, although less so, central hubs of winter recreation in this country and the activities, particularly at bonspsels, means that they are still part of our social fabric. The social values of volunteerism, socializing, and sportsmanship are instilled at every level of activity in the local club. When Canadians watch their elite curlers dominate the world stage, there is a sense that this is a sport that reflects Canadian values, particularly those of amateurism, sportsmanship, and volunteerism. However, there is a tension between this aspect of curling and its relationship to Canadian social life and the growing commercialization and professionalization of the sport. It is to this tension that the paper now turns.

**Changing Values? The Shifting Place of Curling in Canada**

While much has been made of the commercialization and professionalization of hockey in Canada, the same forces are at work, although to a lesser extent, in the world of curling. It is important to realize that these forces are not new. Indeed, the growth in the value of bonspiel prizes led to discussions within the Dominion Curling Association (established in 1935—the forerunner to the Canadian Curling Association, established in 1967) about seriously considering the implications of the growing...
commercialization of the sport and to set out firm guidelines regarding what constituted an amateur curler (see especially Metcalfe 1987, Morrow and Wamsley 2005, Pezer 2003). Murray (1982) notes the tensions within the sport between its history as amateur-based and open to all and the push to commercialize the sport, even at the local level:

In a country as large and diverse as Canada, curling developed on a regional basis, with a welter of sponsored local and district bonspiels. The prizes became so rich—they varied from motor cars to cash prizes of $20,000—that the effect of such rewards on play had to be questioned. On one hand, they encouraged skills and play among all classes of society; on the other, they encouraged commercial and professional attitudes to the sport, which many curlers felt to be not in the interests of the game. (149)

The most dramatic force at work in changing curling is television. Curling on television began with the Canadian Broadcasting Company’s (CBC) broadcast of the final draw of the 1960 Brier, the national men’s championship. When The Sports Network (TSN) came onto the televised sports scene it quickly made room for curling in its coverage of Canadian sports (Lukowich, Ramsfjell, and Somerville 1990, 61). Currently, TSN will typically cover the round robin matches during a national or international championship (particularly if it is held on Canadian soil), and the CBC broadcasts semi-final and final matches.\(^\text{16}\)

Television coverage of sports, while once feared as potentially under-cutting attendance at live sports events, has broadened its exposure and encouraged growth in the number of people who follow professional teams and competitions. According to the Canadian Curling Association, more than 3.5 million Canadians watch curling on television, with 1.5 million reporting that they watch curling once a month (CCA 2004b). Thus, there are roughly four times as many Canadians watching curling than playing it. This is a significant development for the sport and will undoubtedly lead to continued changes in the game. For instance, curling rules were changed in the early 1990s in order to allow for more rocks to be in play at one time.\(^\text{17}\) This made the game more challenging and, importantly, more exciting for spectators. In addition, curlers playing in national and international competitions wear television microphones so viewers can hear the team’s discussions, understand the more subtle aspects of strategy and get to know the personalities of the players. Further changes to the game that reflect a desire to make it more viewer-friendly may include recent suggestions to reduce play from 10 ends to 8 ends.\(^\text{18}\)
As Whitson argues, regular television coverage not only brings the sport heroes into the home, it turns them into celebrities and fans are drawn into, “the serial narratives that are the sporting seasons” (2001, 255). However, with television coverage comes increased sponsorship. As Murray (1982) notes, corporate sponsorship in curling was an outgrowth of the increasingly expensive prizes given at bonspiel competitions. In addition, the nature of travel in this country as well as financial challenges associated with mounting a national competition means that the role of sponsorship in defraying the cost of hosting major curling events is pivotal. Wieting and Lamoureux describe the challenge presented by pressures to keep curling close to its beginnings and the growing pull of sponsorship and spectator numbers by promoting and marketing curling in Canada and around the world (2001, 141). These authors argue that a balance must be struck between keeping the grassroots appeal of the sport alive and embracing “professionalization at the elite levels and aggressive and imaginative competition for national and international television airtime and sponsors…” (148).

As Whitson (2001, 219) argues, the corporate globalization of sport may indeed offer spectators and sports consumers a wider and better choice. However, it may also threaten the very existence of a particular “national sport.” Even for those sports that succeed in carving out a place on the world stage, there are inherent tendencies towards commodification and professionalization. As Wieting and Lamoureux ask: What is the cost of these changes upon the integrity of this centuries old sport? (2001, 148).

While not wanting to overly romanticize the values discussed above as being closely associated with curling, at least at the local level, it is important to consider the potential implications of this shift. Next, three interrelated areas are discussed insofar as they have implications for identity: the growing international appeal of the sport; changing gender identities; and the growth of curling as a professional sport spectacle.

International Appeal and Professionalization

Despite being a full Olympic medal sport in 1924, curling held demonstration sport status in 1932, 1988, and 1992, and again gained acceptance as a full medal sport in 1998. As part of this and other exposure at the international level, interest in curling is growing worldwide. At the 2006 Olympics, for example, there were teams from New Zealand, Sweden, Norway, Finland, the United States, Italy, Switzerland, Great Britain, and Germany. In addition, there are more than 45 member countries belonging to the World Curling Federation as well as a wide variety of multinational and regional associations. Within this web of international curling relationships, Canada is clearly dominant.
Wieting and Lamoureux (2001, 150) point out that by virtue of having been brought into the Olympic fold, curling has gone through a by now familiar series of steps towards increased professionalization. While most other sports have already experienced the tensions that this creates, curling is a relative newcomer. From the codification of game rules and the standardization of venues, to the provision of prizes and monetary rewards for the elite players, hosting national and international curling competitions, for both women and men, means finding sponsors and being able to generate enough capital to sustain these events. This is clearly controversial and contrary to the amateur-oriented openness of the sport within local level curling circles and this tension was a prominent theme in the research with clubs in western Canada.

Image, Gender and Identity

Even without direct exposure to curling, most Canadians would associate alcohol consumption with the theme of socializing (Howell and Howell 1969, Pezer 2003, Russell 2004, Wieting and Lamoureux 2001). While this is certainly an enduring association, the shifting nature of the game to a more professional, technique-driven, and international undertaking with increasingly higher rewards for elite play will have an undoubted impact upon that image. As well, there are changes in how women curlers are viewed. With the exception of some historical discussion about the challenges of sexism that women curlers faced, particularly in the early periods of settlement as clubs began to grow and as women struggled to become regular and valued curlers and contributors to club life (see especially Pezer 2003), there has been little reflection upon the gendered images of curling and how they might be re-framed under internationalized and commercialized exposure. Wieting and Lamoureux are an important exception in that they discuss the image of women curlers in their work, yet their comments from five years ago have already become somewhat outdated. These authors write:

The image of men depicted in Canadian national events such as the Brier is a hard-partying group of athletes. There is no such image presented of women, nor is there evidence of the eroticized images of women described for a number of modern sports such as gymnastics, and figure skating. (2001, 146)

In late 2005, news hit the curling world (and the popular media) that a semi-nude calendar of women curlers, including some Canadians, from around the world was being released for 2006 (with the proceeds going to help curling teams). This sparked debate within the curling community as some felt it helped bring even more attention to the sport, while others
saw it as one more downfall of curling’s move away from its small town roots and social values.\textsuperscript{20}

\textit{Curling as a Sports Spectacle}

The broadcast of curling competitions on television has grown dramatically in the past two decades. According to the Tim Hortons corporate website, now a major sponsor of the men’s national championship (the Brier, Canada’s most prominent curling championship), the per-minute television audience for the final averaged approximately 1.2 million viewers during the 2003 and 2004 championships. In the last few years, average live attendance records have been above the 250,000 mark. At the Brier in 2006, cash prizes to the top four teams included splitting $130,000 CND, in addition to the $14,000 each team receives from the Athlete Assistance Fund and for the “player cresting program.”\textsuperscript{21} For the next three years, sponsorship rights for the men’s competitions will be shared by Tim Hortons and Monsanto Canada, an agricultural technology corporation.\textsuperscript{22}

Curling is not a rich sport, especially when compared to others, but it is becoming increasingly rich when compared to its own past. Moreover, discussions about hosting major curling events are linked to economic development opportunities for the host cities and this is a theme not uncommon in the world of major sporting events. In addition, while not assessed directly here, also of concern is the added pressure placed upon all Canadian athletes who compete at the elite level to bring home wins from international competitions.\textsuperscript{23} Further, pressure is placed upon local clubs as they seek to find adequate supports and resources necessary to send their teams to these top level competitions. Although it is perhaps rather premature to sound the death knell for locally-based, small-club curling with its attendant values, as it becomes more prominent on the world stage and more media and sponsorship spotlights shine on the sport, curling, and Canada’s curlers seem poised to follow this trajectory.

\textbf{Conclusion: From Gathering Place to International Spectacle—Can these Identities Co-exist?}

The Executive Vice President of Marketing for Tim Hortons described the fit between the coffee and donut corporation and the grassroots sport in the following way:

\begin{quote}
    The sport of curling, similar to the Tim Hortons brand, has a unique Canadian identity and community appeal. Becoming the title sponsor of the Tim Hortons Brier and the Tim Hortons Canadian Curling Trials was a great fit for us.\textsuperscript{24}
\end{quote}
Indeed, even as the values underscoring curling may be changing, as its appeal grows as a spectator sport its quintessential Canadian status will place it in an increasingly unique and attractive position in the eyes of marketers and sponsors. Even in the smallest clubs there is still a feeling that elite curlers are regular people who might be found at a small club’s bonspiel or who might be willing to sit and have a drink during some of the many social events that accompany even the most elite competitions. The force of this attractiveness, however, risks changing the nature of the attraction forever. Thus, while there is still a feeling that the elite curlers are “normal,” everyday people, on more than one occasion, the people I spoke with during the research described a sense of change. For instance, as one curler from Manitoba noted, most good curlers in local clubs feel like they could beat the well-known, elite curlers but they lack the money, time, and access to appropriate facilities and supports in order to achieve such a consistent level of play.

This discussion has explored what Kidd has called the “conundrum of culture” (1996, 266) that permeates most popular, national sports in Canada and is beginning to make its mark on curling. One the one hand, the values of small, locally-based clubs are appealing aspects of what many Canadians consider to be enduring, national qualities: amateurism, sportsmanship, socializing, volunteerism, and so on. On the other hand, the drive to make curling and Canadian curlers dominant in the global sports arena brings in contradictory tensions such as professionalization, standardization, and sponsorship.

These are new tensions for curling and so it presents a unique opportunity to investigate the complex relationship between sport and identity formation. There are, then, a number of opportunities for more research in this rather wide-open area. First, the subject of gender and gender construction over time demands attention. While many have argued that curling has a relatively long tradition of gender equity (Gruneau and Whitson 1993), especially in comparison to other sports such as hockey, the social construction of gender in this sport, as noted above, is already changing. Second, issues of race are nearly never discussed in the realm of curling and it is still, with few exceptions, dominated by white Anglo-Saxon players. Third, while the research presented here investigates rural clubs in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta, regional differences across the country must also be understood and accounted for.

Fourth, scores of Newfoundland school children can still watch Brad Gushue and the rest of his team dominate the world stage and think that this is a sport to be admired and be part of because of its qualities of sportsmanship and openness. This image should be fostered and protected and the opportunity to participate in this lifelong sport extended to as
many people as possible. Yes, curling stands at a crossroads. In this situation rests an opportunity to protect the so-called grassroots foundations of the sport while tapping into the prospect for national glory and securing the support and recognition that our elite curlers deserve. How to navigate this cultural conundrum, however, must be the subject for continued and thoughtful analysis.

Acknowledgements

I’d like to extend my gratitude to the curlers and community members in all of the communities who have been part of this study to date. Without exception, they have been remarkably generous, open, and willing to let me into their “world” and to share their love of the game and their clubs. In addition, comments and suggestions from the anonymous reviewers added great insight and depth to this paper. Any errors, of course, are mine.

Endnotes

2. This is the first part of a national-level study of curling across Canada. The first part of the research, undertaken in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta in summer 2005 and winter 2006, was supported by a start-up grant from the University of Waterloo, and is presented here. The research will continue to the rest of Canada with the help of a three-year grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada/Sport Canada (Sport Participation Research Initiative).
3. While the “official” definition of rural, according to Statistics Canada, is a community with a population of less than 10,000, efforts were made for this study to locate communities with populations of less than 5,000 in order to find areas where the range of recreation facilities and opportunities for social activities might be fewer than in larger areas.
4. For a long time, certainly until the 1950s, many clubs, especially small clubs, did not supply rocks for curlers and they were expected to bring their own to competitions. One of the improvements in equipment and standardization of the game with indoor facilities was that the clubs supplied rocks as part of their facility, thereby enhancing the teams’ ability to depend on a certain standard. The other side of this expectation, however, is the expense and many local clubs cannot afford to update or improve the rocks. On two occasions during the research, I overhead conversations between curlers reflecting on the low quality of rocks provided at a particular club.
5. While not directly a study of curling in Canadian small towns, Russell’s (2004) book on curling takes him to many small communities in Canada. The discussion of what he found in those communities compliments and supports the material presented in this paper. See especially the chapter “Little White Houses,”
Club identification and selection occurred after I made a presentation about the proposed research at the Annual Congress of the Canadian Curling Association (June 2005). Representatives of clubs that might be interested in being part of this study were asked to identify themselves. In all, six clubs, two each from Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta were selected to help with this western part of the study.

The material presented in this section is taken from field notes created during research in Scotstown, Manitoba from March 24 to 26, 2006.

This is a commonly used short-hand phrase used in curling to denote the number of sheets of ice, or playing surfaces, that are available. For example, as the Scotstown Curling Club usually has only three sheets of ice, it is referred to as a “three sheeter.”

In curling, consistent quality of ice is essential to a successful bonspiel as well as attracting and retaining regular members to the club. If the club can afford only one paid position, it is the ice-maker. It should be noted, however, that in nearly every case, the ice-maker was helped by at least one other volunteer.

The material presented in this section is taken from field notes created during research in Ash, Saskatchewan from March 31 to April 2, 2006.

I’d like to extend my gratitude to Reviewer A for adding this important insight to my discussion about the purchasing of naming rights for paraphernalia around the club.

The material presented in this section is taken from field notes created during research in Maple, Alberta, from January 27 to 29, 2006.

Due to safety concerns, as well as the desire to avoid interrupting the routine a curler might go through before throwing the rock, this practice is becoming less common, especially at more elite levels of play.


Curlers in small clubs described the fundamental difference between urban and rural clubs as being the volunteer components. In urban clubs, as it was described to me by rural curlers, the membership fees are higher so that people might be paid to undertake the kind of work that volunteers would do in smaller clubs. This is not to say that urban clubs do not have a committed cadre of volunteers, not to mention the challenges associated with operating larger facilities (i.e. with more ice and activities to manage), as well as higher taxes and overall operating costs.

It should be noted that while the CBC has generally been the dominant carrier of televised curling competitions, the CCA has been in recent conflict with this organization, particularly in response to viewer outrage during the 2004–2005 season when the CBC moved some of its curling coverage to its cable channel, Country Canada, thereby requiring curling fans to have digital cable subscriptions. http://www.cbc.ca/story/sports/national/2005/07/06/Sports/curlingdeal050706.html. Data retrieved August, 22, 2005. However, in June of 2006, a deal between TSN

17. The so-called three or four rock rule was adopted widely at both the elite and local levels in Canada essentially to allow curlers to put rocks outside or “above” the key scoring zone as guards. By preventing the removal of these guard rocks (the rule states that these rocks cannot be removed by an opponent until four rocks are in play, two from each team), this has allowed for curlers to keep rocks in the scoring zone longer, and thereby to increase the number of rocks in play. This makes the game more challenging to play and more interesting to watch.


25. One of the most obvious examples of these social events is the “Briar Patch,” essentially a large area that is created during each national men’s competition where curlers and fans alike gather to drink, socialize, and listen to live entertainment and/or watch curling. In the case of women’s national curling, the equivalent is the “Heart Stop Lounge,” so named to reflect the competitions’ title: “The Scotties Tournament of Hearts.”

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Russell Field

Manufacturing Memories and Directing Dreams: Commemoration, Community, and the Closing of Maple Leaf Gardens

Abstract

In February 1999, the Toronto Maple Leafs moved from Maple Leaf Gardens (MLG) to a modern new arena, Air Canada Centre (ACC), events that were telecast live in conjunction with “Hockey Night in Canada.” These were produced shows intended to highlight certain narratives, communicate certain messages, and select for viewing certain elements. An analysis of them reveals important meanings in the confluence of sport, place, and representation, as well as iconographic messages about Canadian identity. In commemorating one arena and inaugurating another, these telecasts operationalized a “discourse of tradition,” which produced subjects who shared the preferred memories of MLG that were being celebrated and transferred to ACC.

We know that there are people who argue that they support the team and not the ground, but they miss the point. The two cannot be separated without compromising the club’s identity. Do that and you lose the deep emotional hold that even today football clubs exert over their supporters

—Charlton Athletic Fanzine

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In Toronto today, sport’s “deep emotional hold” is most commonly associated with the ice hockey Maple Leafs, the standard bearer for the city’s professional sports franchises. In a city where fans, fuelled by the media, panic if the club’s goaltender has a bad game in the first week of the season, the Maple Leafs still sell out virtually all of their home games 39 years after their last championship. In February 1999, after 67 seasons at their fabled home, Maple Leaf Gardens (MLG), the National Hockey League (NHL) team moved into a brand-new, modern facility, Air Canada Centre (ACC).

The Toronto Maple Leafs hockey team, ACC, the NBA Toronto Raptors basketball franchise, as well as MLG are owned by the corporate entity, Maple Leafs Sports and Entertainment Ltd. (MLSE)—although MLG was recently sold to the Canadian grocery store chain, Loblaws. Formed in 1998, MLSE was the result of a takeover by then-Maple Leafs’ principal owner Steve Stavro of the Raptors’ ownership group and its arena construction project. MLSE acquired the Raptors and the as-yet-unbuilt ACC project in 1998 for between $450–500 million (CDN), having already bought the assets of Maple Leaf Gardens Ltd. (which owned the hockey franchise and the eponymous arena) for $175 million (CDN). At the time of the merger, MLSE had been pursuing their own arena construction program, atop Toronto’s historic Union Station. A primary motivation behind MLSE’s acquisition of the Raptors was the desire to realize the revenues that the Raptors’ planned arena would bring to MLSE. These were generated by a greater capacity for hockey of 3,000 more seats than MLG, including a substantial number of cash-generating luxury boxes and club seats, which were absent at MLG. And so it was that in February 1999 the Maple Leafs found themselves preparing to celebrate the departure from their home of the previous 67 years and 3 months, as well as the inauguration of a new, state-of-the-art arena.

John Hannigan has provided the fullest examination of the move from MLG to ACC, which he connects to the larger economic and ideological forces that structure the postmodern “fantasy city,” the product of “a new urban economy which has its roots in tourism, sports, culture, and entertainment.” The effort by commercial sport franchises to create an identifiable brand that is aggressively marketed “isolates sports and entertainment complexes from their surrounding neighbourhoods.” Within this strategy, which disregarded the historical significance of MLG in favour of a modern, revenue-friendly entertainment complex, the Maple Leafs’ transition to ACC was accompanied by the creation and promotion of “Leafs Nation.” This invented community, where fans more resembled consumers, was what Hannigan terms a “mediated community” to acknowledge the complicity of the media in the promotion of Leafs Nation. The marketing of this community, Hannigan argues,
enabled the move to ACC to be framed within a local, shared experience, seemingly extracted from the reality of late-market capitalist impulses.

While Hannigan explores the ideological and political-economic forces motivating the Maple Leafs’ relocation from MLG to ACC, this article interrogates the rhetoric surrounding this move by focusing specifically on a critical reading of the televised ceremonies that accompanied them. This transition was marked by extended on-ice ceremonies at both the final MLG game and the first game at ACC, ceremonies that were broadcast nationally in Canada to substantial prime-time, Saturday-night audiences on the English-language network of the publicly owned Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC). Not surprisingly, the public rhetoric surrounding the closing of MLG was similar to the Charlton Athletic fanzine quoted above. Press coverage reminisced about past events at MLG, the presumed importance the arena had played in the life of the city, and the ways in which the building was inseparable from the hockey team. Indeed from the very birth of televised hockey in Canada in 1952—to say nothing of its radio presence for the two preceding decades—MLG had been the primary venue for coast-to-coast “Hockey Night in Canada” (HNIC) broadcasts. MLG was, in some eyes, the home of Canadian hockey, and its closing ceremonies sought to reaffirm the presumed “deep emotional hold” that MLG exerted over fans.

This article, in questioning these assumptions about MLG, addresses the role “place” and the memories associated with place—specifically, the constructed memories of hockey arenas—play in generating and reproducing this “deep emotional hold.” The theme that connected these ceremonies—both the closing of MLG and the opening of ACC—was unmistakably nostalgic, captured in the oft-repeated catchphrase created for the events: “Memories and Dreams.” Left implicit, however, were what memories and whose dreams were being celebrated. What follows, after a summary of these two ceremonies, is a critical consideration of their produced telecasts, within the tradition of what Michael Silk calls “a cultural studies that utilizes the insights of political economy.” This case study of the celebrations closing one hockey arena and opening another recalls the key questions Katharyne Mitchell posed when considering monuments, memorials, and memories: “How will this event be remembered? How will it be commemorated? Memorialized? Sanctified? Spectacularized? At what scale will memory reflect back on itself?” Addressing these questions reveals the ways in which these telecasts actualized a “discourse of tradition” as a way of institutionalizing selected memories of MLG and promoting particular dreams for ACC. These choices articulated specific memories of MLG, reinforced membership in the Maple Leafs’ community of fans/consumers, and affirmed the dominant ideologies of commercial North American sport, such as a hege-
monic gender order. All the while these ceremonies omitted historical
details inconsistent with the preferred narrative—such as the significant
history of sexual abuse of young boys by MLG employees that became
public just two years before the building’s commemorative closing—and
left little space for alternative memories.

Sport, Television, and Memory

As Hannigan and others have outlined, the early-1990s construction boom
in North American professional sports dramatically altered the commer-
cial entertainment landscape. The new arenas, ballparks, and stadiums
have all had their inaugurations celebrated, while the sites they replaced
have all been commemorated and memorialized. These kinds of cere-
monies serve a variety of purposes, including providing fans and specta-
tors an opportunity to celebrate their memories of particular places or
events. Some scholars, however, have argued that ceremonies act to
construct particular memories in order to serve more instrumental socio-
economic ends. Commemoration is, according to Mitchell, “an act build-
ing on the collective memory of the recent past, but also producing that
memory’s future through a highly particular form of aestheticized, spec-
tacularized politics.” In this way, ceremonies commemorating an older
hockey arena and celebrating the move to a newer one—with the rationale
for the transition, stated or not, being the realization of greater profits—
reflect Brian Osborne’s assessment of memorialization as “an attempted
agency of legitimization of authority and social cohesion.”

Anouk Bélanger’s work on the 1996 move of the Montreal Canadiens from the
71-year-old Montreal Forum to the new Molson Centre (now the Bell
Centre) best exemplifies the political economy of memory in the context
of hockey franchises and entertainment complexes. As she observes, “The
memories attached to the old Forum became inseparable from the public
reaction to the move and to the new building.”

Bélanger, however, does not focus on either the ceremony closing the
Montreal Forum or the television production of that spectacle. Considerable attention though has been paid to other television sports
spectacles, especially scripted “mega-events” such as Olympic and
Commonwealth Games coverage—including opening and closing cere-
monies—and the use of the media and events to construct and communi-
cate preferred notions of sport, identity, and nation. Despite this, there
has been less exploration at the intersection of sport, place, memorializa-
tion, and television.

It is in revealing such a space that an examination of the telecasts of the
MLG closing and ACC opening is useful. These broadcasts cannot be
considered innocently as unimpeachable narratives telling the story “as it
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is” of the closing of one hockey arena and the opening of another. These are not impartial accounts. Rather, they are produced shows intended to highlight certain narratives, communicate certain messages, and select for viewing certain elements (consequently, de-selecting or omitting others). An analysis of them reveals important meanings in the confluence of television broadcasting, professional hockey, and iconographic messages about Canadian (or at least Torontonian) culture. These ceremonies, more specifically the televised representations of them, are not solely cultural texts to be consumed. They are also productive. The sports telecast, in this sense, is, in Stuart Hall’s words “a practice that produces meaning, that makes things mean.”\(^{15}\) In examining the meanings produced by (or, at least, observed by the researcher in) texts, it is important to keep in mind Gillian Rose: “An image may have its own effects, but these are always mediated by the many and various uses to which it is put.”\(^{16}\)

To what ends are the broadcasts under consideration here put? They not only include television conventions, but also the dominant values of sport. Both sport and television are important objects of study because of the ways in which they work to construct as “common sense” dominant social practices and relations. Richard Gruneau, David Whitson, and Hart Cantelon’s standpoint is that cultural and ideological practices are important sites in the production and reproduction of social order; and in our view it is precisely this ‘naturalization’—of a cluster of meanings and practices which are integral to a class society and to masculine hegemony…—which sport and television combine to reinforce.\(^{17}\)

The display of bodies and values consistent with hegemonic masculinity is, as Garry Whannel says, “part of the ideological work that is performed through the representation of sport stars.”\(^{18}\) As Donald Sabo and Sue Curry Jansen argue, “male images in sport media contribute to the social reproduction of cultural values and structural dynamics of dominance systems within the gender order.”\(^{19}\) The act of representation normalizes and legitimizes elements of a specific type of masculinity that privileges strength and aggression—and denigrates emotional, introspective, and nurturing qualities labelled as feminine—that are typical of the televiusal representation of hockey in Canada. It is important to remember, however, in considering the celebration of two commercial hockey arenas, that not only does the representation of hegemonic masculinity operate in relation to certain femininities, but, as Whannel, Toby Miller, and others have argued, such representations are complicit in “the marginalisation of alternative masculinities.”\(^{20}\)
The preservation of the gender order is one of the primary outcomes of sport media. However, as Whannel argues, it is difficult to separate this ideological project from the articulation and preservation of discourses about the nation as a whole. “One of the central significances of sporting heroes is precisely the way in which they are available for articulation within discourses about the state of the nation.” Indeed, as will become clear—especially through the use of Benedict Anderson’s notion of the “imagined community”—the building of and belonging to a “nation” was essential to the commemoration of MLG and the inauguration of ACC. Not only did these telecasts accumulate and sell audiences, they legitimated these efforts by bringing together a community and crafting its unifying message. “In the attempt to win and hold large audiences,” as Whannel observes, “popular television is always striving to produce a discourse of unity.”

A number of scholars have argued for a critical examination of this discourse of unity, noting, as Rose does, that “it is the economic processes in which cultural production is embedded that shape visual imagery.” Gruneau focuses this analysis on sport media when he notes: “Television sports programs … figure indirectly in winning consent for a dominant social definition of sport ideally suited to a capitalist consumer culture.” It is within attempts to win consent for the dominant capitalist organization of sport that Hannigan explains the transition from MLG to ACC and Bélanger positions the Canadiens’ 1996 move from the Montreal Forum to the Molson Centre. Both also argue that preferred elements of historical memory—nostalgia—are marshalled to serve these socio-economic ends. Bélanger contends that memories of the Forum and the team were constructed and communicated, in a way that precluded alternative or competing memories, “in order to move them to the new complex in a way that would be financially profitable.”

Sport television, however, is what Gruneau, Whitson, and Cantelon label a “constitutive event,” which enables “the transformation of a live event (e.g. a hockey game) into a television event (Hockey Night in Canada).” This constitutive power can have important ideological implications. As Silk notes, the host feed of the Malaysian broadcaster at the 1998 Commonwealth Games “attempted to construct a particular version of ‘the collective memory’ and a preferred sense of national identity.” The mobilization of “memory” to serve socio-economic ends is an important, if unstated, element of the telecasts considered here. Ceremonies such as these can be used to “reconstruct a purified version of the history.” Bélanger, in arguing for a political economy of memory, highlights:
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the immense power of contemporary media to produce and frame memories in hegemonic ways, to manage apparent crises in memory, and even to promote forms of ‘organized forgetting’ in the realm of everyday popular cultural experience” all within “the changing political, economic, spatial, and historical context.”

Television has the power to not only “frame memories” but also to invoke dramatic narratives that smooth out, perhaps even obscure, the socio-economic changes to which both Bélanger and Hannigan refer. The MLG and ACC ceremonies may have been connected to professional sport, and broadcast before and after NHL games, nevertheless they were pre-produced events and should be considered within the conventions of both dramatic television and televised sporting events. The meaningful intersections of these two forms are the ways in which the broadcasting of these two “dramatic” ceremonies invoked the conventions of sports television as a means of communicating a “discourse of tradition.”

Reading Arena Commemorations as Texts

This paper proceeds from the well-established premise that mediated sporting events, in this case sports-related ceremonies, can be considered as “cultural texts” whose ideological meanings and representations are open to analysis. As Mary McDonald and Susan Birrell articulate such analysis has the potential to not only reveal preferred or dominant readings of these texts but can also be a useful methodology for “uncovering, foregrounding, and producing counter-narratives, that is, alternative accounts of particular incidents and celebrities that have been decentred, obscured, and dismissed by hegemonic forces.”

Analyses of sport texts have their roots in cultural studies, and the work of British scholars has been especially influential. Early work exploring sport television has been critiqued for privileging—beyond the mediation of television—a “purer,” perhaps more real, underlying event. Television acts, Whannel argues, to construct an appearance of reality, “the effect [of which] is to naturalise the coverage, minimising audience awareness of the mediating effect of television.”

More recent analyses have abandoned the search for the real sport event and instead turned their attention to the operation of power relations and the nature of representation within the production of mediated texts. Fiske and Hall, among others, argue that a consideration of hegemonic power relations can be useful in exploring preferred, oppositional, and negotiated readings of cultural texts. McDonald and Birrell advocate a consideration not only of the dominant axes of power—e.g., gender, race, ethnicity, social class, age, ability—but also of the intersections of these
varied identities. Furthermore, the “linguistic turn” in cultural studies has encouraged sport scholars to move beyond the distinction between a sporting event and its mediated production to consider these as a text open to analysis. Attention to issues of representation has enabled texts to be deconstructed in search of the narratives that contain ideological representations and the operation of power relations. The narratives constructed around cultural texts are “ideologically coded and affected by larger political struggles related to age, race, and class divisions,” which are in turn reflected in the ways sports texts are produced and received. Abandoning the search for the “truth” of a text and considering it within the material processes of its production “opens up,” as McDonald and Birrell argue, “other opposing, resistant versions and readings, and it acknowledges the particular social and historical contexts within which the text is constructed and/or consumed.”

Highlighting the production process points at some of the limitations of a content analysis that cannot account for every stage in this process, what McDonald and Birrell call the “complex interrelationship of the producer of the text and the readers of text.” As Gruneau, Whitson, and Cantelon identify, in invoking the work of Richard Johnson, studies of media and cultural production need to focus on three spheres of interest: (a) the institutional and organizational context of production; (b) the structure and content of the text that is produced; and (c) the audience that reads/decodes/receives this text. They go on to note that too many studies have tended to focus on only one sphere with little attention to the intersections of these three spheres. Given the intersecting interests of MLSE and CBC, a production analysis would offer additional insights to a reading of these texts. And, in the Canadian context, both Gruneau and Margaret MacNeill have examined sport television from this perspective. Additional nuance could come from an examination of the audience reception of televised commemorative ceremonies such as these, as well as an exploration of the sites where this consumption occurs. Rose argues that an understanding of texts that are culturally constructed requires us to examine not only what is seen but how it is seen as well. In this vein, there are alternative readings of these telecasts than those presented here. While Ava Rose and James Friedman suggest that televised sport is “a uniquely masculine experience of spectatorship,” in the case of HNIC, Sandra Langley makes the argument that the time dedicated to watching this program on Saturday nights has been part of creating distinctly masculine spaces within homes across Canada for over 50 years. This opens up a variety of interpretations for how the ceremonies considered here can be understood from the many perspectives of viewers who do not identify themselves with HNIC’s core “target” audience.
Despite the polysemic possibilities of these texts, the ceremonies examined here invoke codes and conventions familiar to an audience schooled on HNIC and, it is reasonable to conclude, they held some meaning for a considerable number of viewers. The elaboration of narratives contained within these two televised ceremonies helps excavate the effort to present a unified, inviolate history of MLG. For this reason, a critical reading of these texts, even without an extended examination of production details or an analysis of audience reception, can still shine light on “the constitutive meanings and power relations of the larger worlds we inhabit.” In this case, these “larger worlds” include the hegemony of a particular masculinity and the normalization of whiteness (among other identities) that pervade the culture of hockey as a form of pan-Canadian identity. A critical reading of these representations, then, “is not to search for facts … but to search for the ways in which those ‘facts’ are constructed, framed, foregrounded, obscured, and forgotten.”

Live from Toronto

This analysis considers videotaped reproductions of the national, English-language CBC telecasts of two events: post-game ceremonies from MLG, commemorating the final NHL game at the arena, broadcast on Saturday, 13 February 1999, and lasting one hour and 15 minutes; and pre-game ceremonies, carried live by the CBC, on the occasion of the first game at ACC, one week later, Saturday, 20 February 1999, that were 15 minutes long. A critical reading of two short texts can produce a meaningful analysis. McDonald and Birrell argue that the benefit of “using particular incidents as points of analytical access is precisely their particularity.” These ceremonies remain texts open to analysis. (In the case of the ACC opening, the production limitations caused by the CBC labour dispute, discussed below, are a component of the text.) These texts are composed of video images and an audio script, both of which are the outcome of selection processes (e.g., camera angles, key messages for announcers to emphasize, etc.), and this analysis seeks to understand both the inclusions and exclusions.

There are important production considerations worth noting about both telecasts. The MLG closing ceremonies were broadcast live, immediately following the Maple Leafs–Chicago Blackhawks game. The Blackhawks had been the Maple Leafs’ opponent at the inaugural MLG game and two surviving participants from that match, Toronto’s Red Horner and Chicago’s Harold “Mush” March—the latter of whom had scored the first goal at MLG—dropped the puck for the ceremonial faceoff to begin the arena’s final contest. This game, which was the final regular-season contest at MLG, was the feature game that night on CBC’s Saturday-evening national HNIC telecast. However, the post-game ceremonies,
titled “Memories and Dreams: A Closing Celebration,” were not an exclusively CBC production. The pre-ceremony credits note: “The following Special Presentation has been produced by Maple Leaf Sports & Entertainment, Insight Productions, Doug Grover Productions, [and] Hockey Night in Canada.” This ceremony was broadcast without commercials, running uninterrupted for the entire hour and 15 minutes.

It began with Stompin’ Tom Connors performing a rendition of his ubiquitous “The Hockey Song” and ended with Anne Murray awkwardly lip synching to a pre-recorded version of “The Maple Leaf Forever,” while fumbling to unfold a small piece of paper (presumably the lyrics). In between, the in-house crowd and television audience were introduced to 105 former Maple Leafs players as well as MLG staff and watched a number of videotaped remembrances. The evening concluded with the Leafs players—both current and alumni—at centre ice passing a “Memories and Dreams” flag between themselves and waving it for the crowd.

The television audience for the HNIC broadcast and the post-game ceremonies was substantial, drawing CBC’s best hockey audience in nearly three years. The pre-game show drew its highest-ever audience of 993,000, nearly 500,000 above average. The Maple Leafs–Blackhawks game itself was CBC’s highest-rated HNIC telecast of the year to-date, with an audience of 1.937 million, 800,000 above average. The post-game MLG closing ceremonies drew the evening’s largest audience, 2.614 million Canadians. Comparable to a Leafs playoff, Stanley Cup final, or Canadian Olympic hockey game, this was the highest hockey rating for CBC since 2.6 million people watched Game Six of the 1996 Toronto–St. Louis first-round playoff series.48

Despite the audience numbers, the print media response to the MLG closing ceremony was unequivocal. The National Post called it “an excessive undertaking sucked dry of subtlety and understatement,” while the Globe & Mail recalled “a curious evening, an affair that had all the ingredients of an emotional, moving farewell, but little of the result.” The Toronto Star’s media critic, Chris Zelkovich, assessed the ceremony as “painfully long … [and] definitely not a made-for-TV event,” noting “it’s doubtful even Bernardo Bertolucci could have made interesting TV out of these ceremonies.” Finally, his colleague at the Star, columnist Damien Cox, called the post-game ceremony “ponderous.” “[I]t was,” he noted, “a curious, disjointed evening rooted in dusty nostalgia, with no compelling theme or message other than it has been a very long time since this franchise has accomplished anything.”49

A week later the Maple Leafs again opened themselves up to similar criticism—although this time not entirely of their own making—as they
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hosted the opening ceremonies at their new home arena, ACC. These were broadcast by CBC as part of the regular HNIC telecast (though the same Doug Grover who had orchestrated the MLG closing ceremonies also produced the ACC opening ceremonies). As a result, the broadcast broke away six minutes into the 15-minute ceremony for two minutes of commercials. The distinguishing feature of the ACC opening, however, was the telecast’s poor production values.

The week between the MLG closing and the ACC opening, CBC technicians went on strike, putting in jeopardy the Saturday night telecast of the inaugural ACC NHL game between the Maple Leafs and Montreal Canadiens. Negotiations continued unsuccessfully until game day, at which time the CBC adhered to the letter if not the spirit of an earlier agreement not to broadcast the game using CBC personnel. Instead, the American network broadcasting the game, ESPN2, supplied its feed to the NHL, which in turn offered it to the CBC. The Canadian network production staff and on-air personnel—studio host Ron MacLean, personality Don Cherry, play-by-play announcer Bob Cole, and analyst Harry Neale—broadcast the ACC game live from the MCI Center in Washington, D.C. (where they had planned to broadcast the Washington Capitals–San Jose Sharks game in the event of continuing labour strife). Using the NHL feed, the CBC’s staff in Washington “broadcast” the Leafs–Canadiens game nationally in Canada. The ESPN2 crew, however, originally had no intention of covering the ACC opening ceremonies, so their camera personnel had spent no time with the ceremony producers scripting and practicing that evening’s festivities. As a result, the telecast of the ceremony was disjointed, with the camera missing much of the key action, and lacked any narrative signposts for the audience from either a CBC commentator such as MacLean or ACC public address announcer Paul Morris.

These production difficulties meant that the television audience was never informed of the significance of the choreographed routine performed by Canadian figure skater Kurt Browning, which launched the evening’s ceremonies. Furthermore, the denouement of the celebration—the unfurling of banners commemorating the Maple Leafs’ Stanley Cup victories and honouring former players—was largely missed by the production team, who selected a wide shot panning across the arena’s ceiling, so that it was likely that only aficionados could identify the honourees. The raising of the “Memories and Dreams” flag, which had been used at the closing of MLG, was presided over by two young minor hockey players before the ceremony concluded with the Canadian national anthem. The two teams then began warming up in their respective ends of the ice. Following a set of commercials, the puck was dropped to start the Maple Leafs–Canadiens game.
Again, despite a television audience of 1.52 million—almost twice that for a game at a similar point in the season a year earlier—the response of the print media to the pre-game ceremony was unflattering. The criticisms were triggered by the production problems caused by the CBC labour dispute. The Toronto Sun called the ceremonies “low-key,” but the National Post was less flattering: “It may have been the worst hockey broadcast in modern hockey broadcasting history ... Perhaps it was hastily put together. Certainly, the camera operators hadn’t been involved in extensive rehearsals because they didn’t know where to point.” Browning’s skating routine was singled out for special condemnation. It was for the National Post, “…a visual mess. It may have made some sense to the audience at the Air Canada Centre but on TV, the choreography was non existent.” And Browning seemed “…in constant danger of plowing down several of the participating hockey players of the future.” Noted Zelkovich of the Toronto Star: “They were probably doing something significant, but viewers had no idea what.”

Stephen Brunt, in calling the Memories and Dreams flag a “prefab icon,” noted that “this enduring symbol of all that is Maple Leaf was apparently invented on the spot, a cheap knock off that no one was going to confuse with the Canadiens’ torch.” This is a reference to a torch that all living former captains of the Montreal Canadiens had passed from one to another at the closing ceremonies of the Montreal Forum on 11 March 1996. The torch held significance for the storied franchise because written on the wall of the team’s dressing room in the Forum were words from John McRae’s “In Flanders Fields”: “To you from failing hands we throw the torch, be yours to hold it high.” The Montreal ceremonies were widely praised and had included unscripted moments, such as a 10-minute standing ovation for Canadiens great Maurice “Rocket” Richard. To observers of both celebrations, the MLG commemoration fell flat. The Montreal Gazette called them a “poor imitation” of the Forum closing ceremonies, while jingoistically noting that “our city did a far better job of closing the Canadian hockey shrine.” While the Forum closing remains an important point of comparison, there is little evidence to suggest that the Forum ceremonies directly influenced the production of events at MLG. Given the importance of anglo-francophone relations to Montreal’s cultural history, the Forum closing ceremonies are deserving of their own detailed examination. As already noted, Bélanger has discussed the Forum ceremonies in the context of the economic promotion of the modern city. Similarly, what MLG management did learn from previous arena commemorations was that the nostalgia associated with historic sports spaces could be marketed to win consent for the move to ACC. As Brunt wrote on the eve of the MLG closing: “the Leafs have done a magnificent job of exploiting their exit, following a pattern already established in Chicago with the Stadium, in Montreal with the Forum, and in many other places.”
The Discourse of Tradition

How then to understand the many layers (CBC broadcasts of events planned and produced, broadcast to a diverse audience) of these ceremonies and the meanings that can be read into them? One starting point is to attempt to understand the perceived need for such ceremonies, to consider why the CBC and MLSE determined that MLG needed commemoration and ACC inauguration.

John Bale offers a useful perspective in this regard, arguing that the affective ties that human beings develop with their material environments can be applied to sports spaces. Borrowing from the work of Yi Fu Tuan, Bale calls this attachment “topophilia.” One key element of topophilia is the notion that sport spaces are infused with sacredness by the fans who attend events or follow them on radio, television, and the Internet, as well as by the media that report on these events. Examining British soccer stadiums, Bale observes that “Tuan’s recognition of a sacred place as one being identified with overpowering significance must undoubtedly apply to the football stadium.”

On one level, positioning sporting places as sacred spaces can be helpful in understanding the significance of the closing of MLG and the need to publicly commemorate the last game there. Indeed, William Kilbourn once observed that: “If I were asked by some stranger to North American culture to show him the most important religious building in Canada I would take him to Toronto’s Maple Leaf Gardens.” Weekly radio broadcasts that began after MLG opened in 1931 were a key factor in this pan-Canadian popularity. At the time, hockey was among the only radio programming to reach a national audience. Originating in Toronto at MLG, these broadcasts became a national touchstone, and their voice, Foster Hewitt, became a household name across English Canada. Barry Broadfoot recounts tales of Canadians listening to Hewitt during the Great Depression, while Saskatchewan resident Jack Warner recalled in 1994 that, in the 1930s, “we’d gather around the radio on Saturday nights and listen to Foster Hewitt’s broadcasts from the Gardens.” But if listening to hockey games broadcast from MLG became a ubiquitous Canadian experience, it was not a universal one. Owned by Conn Smythe, who proudly flaunted his loyalty to crown and country, the Maple Leafs and MLG came to represent Anglophone Canada, while promoting what Kidd and others have noted was a particularly masculinist vision of sport.

A fanzine for the English soccer club Chester noted in 1990 about the club’s recently departed stadium: “It is more than bricks and mortar.” At a press conference following the MLG closing ceremony, former Maple Leafs’ winger (and all-around tough guy) Dave “Tiger” Williams invoked
similar sentiments: “The building is just bricks and mortar, which you can get anywhere. What made this place great is the people in it” But what are hockey arenas, if not just bricks and mortar? The answer, clearly, is places of meaning and memory for a great many people. As Bélanger notes of Montreal when the Forum closed in 1996, “it became clear at that time that what might be taken as just a commercial venue in the city had deep social, cultural and political significance for Montrealers.” Nevertheless, it is important to keep in mind that buildings have no essential identities, no uncontested histories. And, the need to commemorate “sacred” spaces such as MLG does not entirely explain CBC’s participation or the ways in which the messages of these ceremonies were crafted. What these texts offer instead is a mediated definition of place based upon carefully selected and represented memories; selected memories, which are largely visual and aural, constructed to communicate preferred meanings. In the case of the MLG/ACC ceremonies, production decisions intentionally highlighted a story of sport in Toronto that privileged commercial male hockey. These ceremonies invoked what Gruneau, Whitson, and Cantelon have termed a “discourse of tradition” to mark these mid-season telecasts as considerably more important than typical mid-season games, “designed to celebrate the event as one of ‘national’ significance, a spectacle whose place in national culture goes beyond that of a mere sporting contest.”

One purpose of this discourse of tradition was to a construct a preferred past as a way of christening the Maple Leafs’ new arena. These ceremonies were, to cite Eric Hobsbawm, “essentially a process of formalization and ritualization, characterized by reference to the past.” However, as much as the discourse of tradition used the past to inform the present, there were important moments where, when deemed necessary, the present was used to inform the past. These references were most prominent in Ron MacLean’s introduction of Maple Leaf alumni from the 1940s. These were men, unfamiliar to all but the most knowledgeable in the audience, who at their advanced age did not appear to fit hockey’s physical stereotypes. So MacLean placed Ron Hurst (a “bodychecker” compared to Mike Peca) and Fleming Mackell (“a Theoren Fleury-like star in his day”) into terms that contemporary audiences would both understand and presumably value—a process of “reinscription” that is discussed below.

What the use of the present to illuminate a version of the past also makes clear is the importance to these telecasts of intertextual messages. To be truly successful, ceremonies use intertextual references that are easily decoded by community members, which at the same time reinforce membership in an exclusive group capable of this decoding (more on community and membership later). MacLean made this clear at the outset
of the MLG ceremonies by making repeated references to his usual Saturday-night HNIC sidekick, Don Cherry. On his top hat and tuxedo: “I let Don Cherry outfit me just this once.” While introducing Maple Leaf alumni Rene Robert: “one of Don’s favourites.” And introducing Bessie Lampson, a long-time MLG staff member: “She’s 100 years old and she was in telling Don Cherry what’s going on tonight.” Without knowing who Don Cherry is, the hockey ethos he’s seen to represent, and the values of hegemonic masculinity he reinforces (to say nothing of his fashion sense), these messages are lost on the audience.

Such ceremonies can be read as implicitly constructing a fan/viewer subject position. From this perspective, the broadcasts tell you that, as a viewer, you have been (or should be) a member of a community with a long-standing tradition. Not only are you a part of the past (at MLG), but you can be a part of the future (at ACC), safe as a member of Leafs Nation, a community whose very purpose is to transcend the differential histories of the two arenas. This presumed an educated viewer who understood the value of MLG, its celebrated memories, and cherished dreams. This continued at the ACC ceremony, where production problems meant that the cameras failed to capture for viewers close-ups of the unfurling of banners celebrating Stanley Cup victories and honouring famous former players. There was no voice-over to tell ACC spectators or the TV audience what was happening or to relate its significance. But it is possible to surmise that what was going on was understood. One of the reasons that the significance of the banners unfurling at ACC and MacLean’s references to Cherry might have been decoded by the audience was that the MLG and ACC ceremonies were firmly entrenched within the culture of HNIC and other ceremonies. For the audience, these ceremonies were the culmination of many other viewing experiences, on many other Saturday nights.

Anderson notes the behaviours of newspaper readers that make intertextuality possible while building what he calls an “imagined community:”

…each communicant is well aware that the ceremony he performs is being replicated simultaneously by thousands (or millions) of others of whose existence he is confident, yet of whose identity he has not the slightest notion. Furthermore, this ceremony is incessantly repeated at daily or half-daily intervals throughout the calendar.69

In the case of hockey televised in English by the CBC in Canada, Anderson’s “ceremony” is repeated every Saturday night from October to June. Sport television may, as Gruneau, Whitson, and Cantelon argue,
transform a live event into a television event (e.g., a hockey game into HNIC), but the two ceremonies examined here go beyond this. The telecasts of 13 and 20 February 1999 were not ordinary mid-season games carried live on HNIC. They were, if you will, the über-“Hockey Night in Canada.” As the centrepiece of CBC’s nationally televised Saturday-evening prime-time programming, it is reasonable to conclude that the MLG closing ceremony was significant for Canadians geographically distant from the city of Toronto. It is equally likely that this significance resonated most strongly with Canadians at a particular intersection of gender and racial identities, for as Mary Louise Adams notes: “If hockey is life in Canada, then life in Canada remains decidedly masculine and white.”

Manufactured Memories and Directed Dreams

During the MLG closing ceremony, PA announcer Paul Morris noted of “most Canadians”: “Even if they didn’t live here the way I did, they lived here in their dreams and they’ll never forget the great events they’ve seen at Maple Leaf Gardens.” Thus began the evening’s focus on the “Memories and Dreams” theme. The substance of the memories and dreams narrative, and the attempts during the ACC opening to invoke “continuity with the past,” call to mind Hobsbawm’s notion of “invented traditions.” This connection is seen most clearly in the ceremonies’ “attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past.” The repeated appearance of the “Memories and Dreams” flag is consistent with Mitchell’s assertion that:

Memory is sustained through the interplay between collective recollection and repetition … [where repetition helps in] blurring the differences between individual interpretations of events, and creating a single, highly idealized, composite image.

This continuity is established using paraphernalia, ritualized practices, and “the personification of ‘the nation’ in symbol or image.” During the ceremonies, this “personification of the nation” was most prominent in the “Memories and Dreams” flag that was both symbolically and physically transferred from MLG to ACC. The inclusion of it and other symbols (e.g., Stanley Cup banners) in the MLG/ACC ceremonies clearly delineated the “memories” that were to be celebrated, as well as the “dreams” to be dreamt. A key theme in the MLG ceremony was the celebration of the hockey team’s history (which was unquestioningly conflated with the building’s history). It was taken for granted that this tradition of success, while only 67 years old, and marked at the time by 32 years of failure to win a championship, was a memory celebrated by all in similar ways.
Throughout both ceremonies the dreams of the Maple Leafs’ imagined community were most often articulated as the dreams of children. What these dreams were was less clear. However, much of the rhetoric of the ceremonies made it clear that these dreams, whatever their content, would likely only be realized by playing for the Maple Leafs at MLG (now ACC). In introducing the Maple Leaf alumni enshrined in the Hockey Hall of Fame, MacLean began by claiming that “to live out your fantasies … is to play in the company of these men.” Later, prior to the exchange of the “Memories and Dreams” flag between 1930s star Red Horner and current team captain Mats Sundin—the physical and symbolic transfer of tradition—MacLean introduced the young banner bearers: “This is how it feels, folks, when history turns the page. We have reached a defining moment, and to help us with that, we’d like to call upon our banner bearers. These are some young hockey players who have dreams themselves.” This sentiment was revisited at the ACC opening when PA announcer Morris introduced the ceremonial banner raisers as “two young hockey players representing young hockey players everywhere who will one day create the memories and dreams of the Air Canada Centre for us all.” Who these players were—Lianne Murphy of the Durham West Lightning and Daniel Clark of the Toronto Colts—and what their dreams were, or even if their dreams had anything to do with hockey, was never revealed. To do so was, in a sense, unnecessary. The audience already “knew” that their dreams must be to play on that ice surface for the Maple Leafs. What other dream could be more desirable?

Throughout both ceremonies, themes emerged and repeated themselves that communicated the preferred memories and dreams. These messages highlighted the building of community, the privileging of a certain type of masculinity, and the conscious omission of elements that were inconsistent with the evenings’ dominant narratives and ideal identities.

A Nation of Fans/Fans of a Nation

Both ceremonies invoked symbols and messages that marked out a community of hockey fans and established MLG as the institution around which they celebrate their citizenship. As Anderson argues, even though most community members will never meet each other, invented traditions create an imagined or shared sense of community. This notion is important in understanding the ways that invented traditions and notions of membership in an imagined community were operationalized during these ceremonies to transfer the preferred memories and dreams of MLG to ACC. Anderson notes that “nation-ness, as well as nationalism, are cultural artefacts … once created, they become ‘modular,’ capable of being transplanted.”

Manufacturing Memories and Directing Dreams: Commemoration, Community, and the Closing of Maple Leaf Gardens
That a televised commemoration would be put to this task, to highlight for an entire community or “nation” desired memories and dreams, is perhaps unsurprising. As Mitchell notes: “The ‘spectacular’ memorial event is created in order to produce a certain kind of collective memory, generally at the scale of the city and in relation to the production of a nation.” In communicating the preferred memories of MLG, elements of the closing ceremony were clearly aimed at a community of presumably like-minded people. On one level, it was assumed that such fans were insightful enough to grasp MLG’s historical and socio-cultural significance. The telecast festivities produced, as Hannigan notes, “a discourse of mediated community that suggests a shared social bond and common lifestyle.” But this ceremony went beyond community-affirmation. It also reinforced that a key element of community is the desire to belong to Leafs Nation. Belonging to the community meant fans could share in the accomplishments being celebrated and that what had been achieved had, in a sense, been for the fans. So, after the parade of Leaf alumni, MacLean thanked the 105 former Leafs: “For all the fans across Canada, we thank you men for the thrills you’ve given us.”

Perhaps the moment most telling of the power of the imagined Maple Leafs community was revealed by Red Horner, whose 12 seasons playing for the team ended in 1940. During a video-taped reminiscence, Horner recalled: “It was something that I had dreamed about for years and years to wear the Maple Leaf sweater and to be part of the team. It was something that’s very, very difficult to put into words.” The irony of this statement was that Horner joined the Maple Leafs in 1928. At the time it was a franchise that had been in existence only 11 years and had been named the Maple Leafs for only a single season. Yet, the presumed desire to wear a Maple Leafs’ jersey—a dream to which all anglo-Canadian boys were taught by media such as HNIC to aspire—pervades Horner’s memories.

The closing ceremony at MLG not only encouraged the desire to belong, it also honoured the community’s values, including the celebration of grassroots hockey. But this is an imagined community structured in such a way as to reinforce the NHL’s hegemonic position within Canadian hockey. The valorization of hockey’s grassroots was a narrative revealed during the introduction of Maple Leafs’ alumni. Throughout his player introductions, MacLean celebrated the local origins and junior team affiliations of a number of former Leafs: Garry Monahan (“from Barrie and the Peterborough Petes”), Rod Seiling (“a Toronto Marlie from Elmira”), Jim Morrison (“Barrie Flyers”), Noel Price (“from St. Mike’s”), and Marc Reaume (“another St. Mike’s grad”). These introductions reaffirmed the NHL’s position that it is a supporter of “small-town” Canadian hockey and that hockey is a cohesive element in communities across the country. Yet this obscures the ways in which the NHL has constructed
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itself as the pinnacle of hockey success, the ultimate goal for players who are in fact part of a large feeder system where this commercial league dominates all levels of local amateur hockey.\textsuperscript{77} Ceremonies such as these celebrate this local connection as a way of preserving the socio-economic order that perpetuates the NHL’s hegemonic position.

The MLG ceremony clearly intertwined the Maple Leafs, their arena, and their fans within a single community. If fans were unsure of what membership in this community meant, or what they, as the audience, were intended to take away from this evening, the ceremony left no doubt as to the values privileged by this community. Before the players from the Stanley Cup-winning teams of the 1960s were introduced, video footage commemorating this era was shown within MLG and to the national television audience. Its narration is telling. The 1960s featured some of the most popular players ever to wear the [team colours of] blue and white … [They were] hardworking, unselfish players who defined the very essence of the Leafs, the Gardens, this whole country … They won through sheer effort, strength of heart, and will. And they taught everyone who watched a little bit about team.\textsuperscript{78}

Memorializing Men

As Sabo and Jansen observe: “The dominant narrative structures in sports media construct and valorize hegemonic masculinity.”\textsuperscript{79} More specific to these ceremonies is Gruneau and Whitson’s assertion that hockey is “a game whose dominant practices and values have been those of a very specific model of aggressive masculinity.”\textsuperscript{80} It is important to note, however, that this kind of masculine performance is not unique to hockey, as Chas Critcher, for example, notes of English soccer: “There is not football style here and some separate entity called masculinity there. Rather, football articulates or represents masculinity.”\textsuperscript{81} Not surprisingly—given the intersection between sport and media—a narrative runs throughout these ceremonies that privileges a particular kind of masculinity in hockey settings, which values toughness, perseverance, strength, and the exercise of brute force.

What is interesting about the MLG/ACC ceremonies is the way in which this aggressive masculine discourse is elided with a physical space. Hockey arenas, as spaces, have historically been constructed as masculine, or “men’s cultural centres.”\textsuperscript{82} So it is not surprising that the celebration of two hockey arenas should be infused with rhetoric that reinforces a particular type of masculinity.
This narrative was prominent in MacLean’s introduction of the 105 Maple Leaf alumni. In his role as emcee, he sprinkled extemporaneous editorial comments about a number of players into his introductions. These positioned the men, many of whom were unfamiliar to the audience, within the privileged values of hockey. So Stew Gavin was “rugged,” Jeff Jackson “tenacious,” Dan Maloney an “enforcer,” and Kurt Walker was as “tough as they come.” Two players, Bob Neely and Allan Stanley, were “strapping.” Beyond Stanley, other Hall of Famers were “fearless” (Johnny Bower) and “a tenacious checker, a brilliant goal scorer” (Norm Ullman). Dave Keon, one of only three absentees acknowledged during the MLG closing, was remembered as “always relentless, he would never give in.”

Both ceremonies reinforced this brand of masculinity by relying on intertextual references. Gruneau and Whitson note that hockey fans are “a market well primed for macho myth-making and the celebration of fighting skills.” So it was not surprising that MacLean, in introducing the alumni, felt confident that his references would not be lost on the in-house or television audiences. His praise of Jim Dorey—“he set a penalty minute record, like a good Kingstonian ought to”—was understood by the knowledgeable fan who grasped that “Kingstonian” referred to Don Cherry (who was born in Kingston, Ontario) and that Cherry valorizes this brand of physical masculinity. Similarly, MacLean’s praise of Mike Walton, who “once challenged Gordie Howe to a fight,” resonated with older fans. As Gruneau and Whitson remind us: “For generations of Canadian boys a slightly meaner version of the same [aggressive masculine] image was represented by skilled but tough hockey players, the archetype of them being Gordie Howe.”

Despite Miller’s argument that the increasing attention paid to male bodies—both displayed and gazed at—and “the commodification of sports stars across the 1990s” challenges the dominance of hegemonic masculinity, the MLG ceremony affirmed hetero-normative ideals of sexuality, while at the same time leaving little space for alternative masculinities. MacLean introduced 1960s star Dick Duff as a “heartthrob” during his playing days, one assumes not necessarily for Toronto’s vibrant gay community. And, as the evening concluded with Anne Murray’s unfortunate rendition of “The Maple Leaf Forever,” the camera captured a teary-eyed Tiger Williams. The discourse of tradition ensures that the classic hockey tough-guy can be seen crying without threatening the presumed boundaries of hockey masculinity. This scene should not be read as anti-masculine, but as Williams’ solemn recognition of tradition and a demonstrable affirmation of the “correct” way to show respect on the occasion of MLG’s closing, the proper time to “soften” masculinity. What is less clear, however, is the audience response to the use of a figure
skater, Browning, during the ACC opening ceremony for, as Adams has noted, the masculinity associated with figure skating is significantly more marginalized than the hyper-masculinity of hockey.  

**Organized Forgetting**

It is well understood that sport media productions involve the selection of material and images as well as choices regarding narrative and storyline. But, as Sabo and Jansen argue, “What is not said in sports media reveals as much or more about how hegemonic processes work within the U.S. sports industry as what is said.” So, on these two evenings in February 1999, the things left unsaid, the history ignored, and the memories not honoured were as revealing as the explicitly celebrated memories and dreams. A two-and-a-half minute video history shown early in the MLG ceremony remembered the Gardens as host to performers such as Elvis Presley, Frank Sinatra, and The Beatles, wrestlers like Whipper Billy Watson, skating shows, circuses, and the 1966 Muhammad Ali–George Chuvalo heavyweight boxing match. This, however, was the only time MLG’s role as more than a hockey arena was featured during the evening. No mention was made, for example, of Winston Churchill’s address in 1932 or the 1934 rally for Tim Buck, the leader of the Communist Party of Canada recently released from jail, which attracted one of the largest crowds in MLG history. This evening was about hockey, and MLG was to be commemorated almost exclusively as the home to a hockey team and its fans.

But, not everyone within this hockey community was celebrated and remembered equally. Both Anderson and Hobsbawm argue that community and tradition transcend individuals in attempts to become “immortal.” Anderson notes that the nation is “much concerned with death and immortality.” Similarly, the idea of team goes beyond the players so as to render the team “immortal.” Regardless of who plays for the Maple Leafs, their imagined community, housed for 67 years at MLG, survives. MLG, its social order, and economic relations were bigger than the individual players. The players might change, but fans could be sure that the Maple Leafs and their home endured.

The notion that the MLG community transcends its members—allowing the nation to remain, in Hobsbawm’s words “eternal and unchanging”—played itself out during the MLG closing ceremony. This was a ceremony that celebrated healthy, alive, present bodies, choosing largely to ignore the deceased or absent. Important former Maple Leafs who were no longer living (e.g., Syl Apps, 1951 Stanley Cup hero Bill Barilko, or the “Kid Line” of Primeau, Conacher, and Jackson) were briefly remembered in video clips, but they were never acknowledged during the live
portions of the ceremony. In noting that recent Maple Leafs’ coaches and
general managers, as well as former owner Harold Ballard, went unmen-
tioned, the *Globe & Mail* concluded that “[n]ot nearly enough mention
was made of departed immortals, such as Charlie Conacher, and Turk
Broda and Syl Apps.”92 Hall of Famers were honoured, but only those still
alive and present. During this segment, the considerable number of absent
or deceased former Maple Leafs who have been inducted into the Hockey
Hall of Fame went unrecognized.93 Banners representing honoured play-
ers, many of whom are dead, were raised at ACC, but no mention was ever
made of these men, their achievements, or their contributions to the
community.

Attempts were also made to re-animate the living alumni present at
the MLG closing ceremony who no longer conformed to the masculine
ideals privileged by the community. Similarly, using the case of one-time
heavyweight boxing champion Muhammad Ali, Whannel argues that
public figures can be “reinscribed” by the media, allowing for a potential
reinterpretation of their popular image. In the case of Ali, this reinscrip-
tion, which Whannel attributes in part to the ways that Parkinson’s
disease “has slowed and limited Ali’s own speech,” has allowed Ali to be
depoliticized and “has achieved what the white establishment could not
do—it has silenced him.”94 Although the context was different, the pres-
tentation of Maple Leafs stars from the past at the MLG closing can also
be read as a reinscription. For many viewers this was the first time they
would have seen (or perhaps even heard of) the older Leaf alumni.
MacLean’s introduction of these men, who were clearly aging and
infirm, emphasized the physical, healthy, masculine attributes of
the stereotypical hockey player. He in essence reinscribed the visual image
with a preferred memory: Gus Mortson was “a hard rock” and as for Bill
Juzda, “if you went into the corner with this man, it was worth your life.”
Similarly, men whose qualities as players favoured skill over physicality
were remembered for these attributes, even though they were no longer
apparent. Danny Lewicki was a “speedster,” Gaye Stewart “led the NHL
in goals in 1946,” Hank Goldup “once scored four in a game,” and Pete
Langelle once had “three assists in one period.” The use of apparently
unimpeachable statistics demonstrated the worth of these men and justi-
fied their inclusion in this community celebration despite appearances.
They deserved to be at the closing of the Gardens.

Despite Miller’s assertion that hegemonic masculinity is increasingly
becoming “destabilized,” these ceremonies consistently reaffirmed domi-
nant notions of gender roles.95 On one hand, there was little acknowledge-
ment of or space for alternative masculinities. On the other, the roles
reserved for women within commercial sport spaces, especially those
valorized by the media, buttress the feminine position within the hege-
monic gender order. At the MLG closing ceremony, women were featured most prominently as staff in food service and ushering roles. Even the older Leaf alumni who needed assistance walking out on to the ice were assisted by female “ushерettes” in skirts. The corollary to the masculine discourse that was a subtext throughout the ceremonies was the absence of any true sense of inclusion, revealed in the awkward ways in which the ceremonies’ organizers made attempts at gender inclusion.

As has been noted, the “dreams” theme of these ceremonies was articulated most frequently through the participation of children and youth. At the MLG ceremony adolescents, both male and female, paraded Stanley Cup banners. While at ACC, the “Memories and Dreams” banners were raised by two children: Lianne Murphy and Daniel Clark. They entered the ceremony to the introduction: “two young hockey players representing young hockey players everywhere who will one day create the memories and dreams of the Air Canada Centre for us all.” But will Lianne really have the same opportunity to create memories and dreams at ACC as Daniel? This narrative suggests somehow that the NHL, professional hockey, and ACC are open to gender equity. But as Adams argues, “national sports” such as hockey in Canada—and by extension the celebration of these sports—“afford men—in general, and certain men in particular—an opportunity to represent the nation in a way not open to women.”

Indeed, women have been playing ice hockey in Canada since at least the 1890s. In the intervening century, women’s and girls’ hockey organizers have suffered from the stigma of moral physiologists questioning the appropriateness of their participation in hockey, battled a shortage of facilities and resources compared to men’s and boys’ hockey, and received little coverage in a sport media that is fully implicated in the promotion of a masculinist vision of sport. As a result, it stretches believability to imagine that the dreams of competitive female hockey players will be realized anytime soon at gendered spaces such as ACC, at least in comparison to the opportunities afforded their male counterparts.

Adams argues that hockey’s place in Canadian popular culture has not only privileged masculine sport but has also reinforced a white vision of Canada, and there was no acknowledgement of an ethnic or racial imbalance in these two ceremonies. As Pitter articulates, “visible minorities have faced sharp challenges in hockey, challenges that I believe are related to the difficulties that blacks and Aboriginals face in being fully accepted as Canadians.” While hockey has celebrated the immigrant experience of white, non-Anglo Canadians, including many of the former Maple Leafs introduced during the MLG closing, such as Frank Mahovolich, “hockey does not seem to have bridged the gap between whites and non-whites in Canada in the same way that it has done for whites of many different backgrounds.” Virtually all of the participants
in the two ceremonies were white, celebrating an imagined community in a city where 36.8% of the population of greater Toronto self-identifies as a visible minority. Unlike the gender disparity, there were no attempts to address this imbalance. The children who paraded the banners at MLG may have been both male and female, but they were all white. And, while the ethnic identity of the kids who participated in the skating routine with Browning at ACC was obscured both by their hockey helmets and the poor production of the telecast, Lianne Murphy and Daniel Clark—the featured “young hockey players representing young hockey players everywhere”—skated to centre ice wearing hockey jerseys but no helmets, making their gender and racial (Caucasian) identities clear. Such images normalize whiteness, as Giroux argues, legitimating the hegemony not only of a particular gender order but also a particular ethnic and racial order. This was highlighted by a video montage honouring MLG staff that visually portrayed men and women of a variety of ethnic backgrounds, but no minorities were included in speaking roles, even while their location in a food service underclass was being reinforced. For the celebration of a hockey arena opened in 1931, it was a community most representative of pre-WW II, white, anglophone Toronto that showed up to the party, one that failed to acknowledge “the significance of racialized identities to the very idea of being Canadian.”

Finally, perhaps the most distressing yet unsurprising omission from the MLG closing ceremonies was the failure to acknowledge the young boys and men who suffered sexual abuse at the hands of a number of the building’s employees throughout the 1970s and 1980s. These horrors became public in 1997 when one of the victims, Martin Kruze, stepped forward. His subsequent suicide—three days after MLG employee Gordon Stuckless was sentenced to only two years less a day for his part in the abuses committed on 24 boys—made Kruze the public face of a scandal that revealed “Gardens employees were regularly violating young boys in return for tickets to hockey games.” While “celebrating” such horrors might seem inappropriate to some, in the wake of MLG management’s initial attempts “to discredit the victims and cover up the sex scandal,” Globe & Mail columnist Brunt asked: “Is there any way to get past the horrors that were being perpetrated behind closed doors, when the Gardens/Leafs allure was used to facilitate the sexual exploitation of children?” Similarly, John Barber wrote, in anticipation of the MLG closing: “The paint in the public areas is still fresh—always has been. But there is now something sinister, the legacy of the abuse, that it can never cover up.” As a result, the absence of any attempts to acknowledge the abuses perpetrated by MLG personnel or to honour Kruze or other victims haunted MacLean’s introduction of the segment of the MLG ceremony that focused on the arena’s staff: “Well, you can’t go through sixty-eight years with the fans and the players
alone. A lot of people have helped to develop dreams and memories experienced here, and we want to take some moments out to thank those people behind the scenes.” Even though three men were convicted in connection with the MLG sex scandal, the exploitation of vulnerable young men and women in hockey, “behind the scenes,” is more common than publicly acknowledged and, Laura Robinson argues, is a by-product of the game’s hyper-masculine culture.107

(Dis)Continuities: Preserving tradition, privileging modernity

The celebration of selected memories at MLG not only commemorated the old building, it also invested the new one with similar values. It was possible to transfer a constructed notion of tradition from MLG to ACC because there were, in fact, no fixed measures of this tradition. This ambiguity was captured during these ceremonies, by the words “Memories and Dreams,” which pervaded both the visual and oral narrative. They manifested themselves physically on the flag that was paraded into MLG, metaphorically and literally passed from one generation to the next, physically transported to ACC, and then ceremonially raised to the rafters of the new arena.

The transfer of tradition began at the MLG ceremony. The inclusion of the Memories and Dreams flag in the parade of Stanley Cup banners marked this brand-new, hitherto unseen, flag as part of a tradition of historical depth and successful achievement. The significance of this flag was confirmed by its participation in the evening’s last ceremonial moment. Red Horner, the last living member of the first team to play in MLG, passed the flag to current Leafs’ captain Mats Sundin with the words: “Mats, take this flag to our new home but always remember us.” The physical transfer of the Maple Leafs from MLG to ACC was invested with emotional significance; the past gave its blessing to the present.

The transfer took on physical form the day before the first game at the ACC, Friday, 19 February 1999, with a parade from MLG to ACC. The parade was led by the Memories and Dreams flag and the 48th Highlanders (the pipe band that has played at every Maple Leafs’ season opener, beginning with the first game at MLG in November 1931). Adolescents again paraded the Stanley Cup banners. Even the ice-resurfacing Zambonis took part. (The interesting addition to the parade was a group of striking CBC technicians, protesting the network’s plans to broadcast the next evening’s game whether or not a settlement had been reached.) The media varied in its estimates of how many Torontonians watched the parade in person: from 10,000 (National Post), to 20,000 (Toronto Star), to between 50,000 and 60,000 (Toronto Sun).108 Regardless, people turned out to get an up-close glimpse at their heroes,
past and present. They were not disappointed. Cars paraded down Toronto’s main thoroughfare, Yonge Street, each carrying a member of the current team and one or two alumni. The message from the team was clear: we’re literally bringing the past, our tradition, with us to our new home.

The next night, at the ACC inauguration, the transfer of tradition was completed. The Memories and Dreams flag took its place among the other banners—each of which signified a more tangible accomplishment—in the rafters. PA announcer Morris marked the occasion:

One week ago tonight, the Toronto Maple Leafs marked the passing of an era when Red Horner presented his Memories and Dreams flags [sic] to Mats Sundin … Tonight, Red’s flag commemorating the memories and dreams of sixty-eight years at Maple Leaf Gardens will be raised alongside a new flag commemorating the beginning of a new era of memories and dreams starting tonight at the Leafs’ new home, Air Canada Centre.

This second flag, dedicated to ACC, was also raised. It read: “New Memories, New Dreams.”

These ceremonies attempt to convey messages of safety and certainty within the discourse of tradition. In Hobsbawm’s words, they “attempt to structure at least some parts of social life … as unchanging and invariant.” In reassuring the faithful among the community that tradition will be transferred and enhanced by the move to the new arena, there is no mention of the rationale for building the ACC. This reality though was not lost on media commentators. The National Post highlighted “the NHL’s changing demographics … Which, after all, is the reason the Leafs are moving to more up scale digs.” For the Toronto Sun: “Clearly, the move from the Gardens is as much about economics as it is comfort.” Not surprisingly, the Montreal Gazette noted, at ACC “the cash cow—the private box—is well represented.” But, in winning consent for the move, its most compelling rationale never entered into the ceremonies that set it in motion.

The irony of this conscious omission is that history and memory are marshalled here to support one overarching objective: progress. These ceremonies were more about the disposability of tradition than the privileging of it, in an attempt to maximize the profitability of the franchise’s brand. The popularity of “retro” jerseys and other historical sports consumables is a broader example of the financial attractiveness of re-marketing tradition. MLSE took advantage of this trend when a highly
publicized auction attracted fans and collectors who stripped MLG bare, urinals and all.\textsuperscript{112}

The flip side of selling tradition is marketing progress. This theme was in evidence at the ACC opening, which began with a time-lapse video sequence showing the new building’s construction. As the ceremony wound down and the commemorative banners were unfurled, it became clear that the parade down Yonge Street had moved through both space and time. The banners that in-house fans and the TV audience saw raised were nothing like those that had been lowered at MLG. This state-of-the-art entertainment facility would see its primary tenant’s championship victories and memorable players honoured with brand-new, modern artifacts of the team’s past.

By the time that Maple Leafs’ winger Steve Thomas had scored the overtime, game-winning goal to send ACC’s sellout crowd home happy on the night of the arena’s inauguration, the transfer of tradition had been completed. The Maple Leafs had been installed at ACC. The move had been so well received that the \textit{Toronto Star}, noting the number of subscribed seats and luxury boxes sold in advance of the building’s opening, observed: “Folks seem to want to cry over the end of the Gardens, but no one wants to stay, either.”\textsuperscript{113} While Leafs Nation had vacated MLG, they had made sure to leave behind nothing they valued.

\textbf{Conclusion}

As the telecasts of the two commemorative celebrations make clear, the Maple Leafs’ community brought to ACC the dominant memories, ideologies, and representations that had made the hockey franchise and the arena financially successful since the 1930s. The telecasts of ceremonies such as these reflect the ways in which, in the words of McDonald and Birrell, “particular groups have access to the important cultural signifying systems (like the media) to proclaim a particular world view.”\textsuperscript{114} Despite the absence of details concerning production decisions or audience reception, a critical reading of these media texts sheds light on this world view and adds value to analyses such Hannigan’s and Belanger’s, who situate the building of modern new arenas within the growing importance placed upon tourist and entertainment economies in the modern city. The transition to these new complexes is accomplished by invoking a discourse of tradition that makes history portable and nostalgia marketable. In Toronto, Leafs Nation—a community of fans/consumers—is a visible example of portable nostalgia.

On one hand, the elements added by these ceremonies transform mid-season games into memorable spectacles; while on the other, these broad-
casts reveal the accumulation of language, symbols, and messages—the discourse of tradition—that marks these ceremonies as extra-ordinary. The MLG–ACC ceremonies did not just close one arena and open another, they also produced a preferred narrative—one “history” of MLG—that reflected a particular world view and its inherent power relations. These preferred memories reinforced membership in the community that surrounded MLG, reassuring all members about the move to ACC. At the same time, these telecasts can be read as affirming the hyper-masculine values of hockey’s dominant gender and racial order while omitting historical details that diverged from the preferred narrative and silencing voices that might recount alternative memories.

Endnotes

2. Stavro, now deceased, was bought out in February 2003. MLSE is currently owned by the Ontario Teachers’ Pension Plan (58%), Bell Globemedia (15%), TD Capital Group (14%), and Kilmer Sports (13%). Larry Tanenbaum, the head of Kilmer Sports’ parent company, Kilmer Van Nostrand, is the managing partner of MLSE.
7. Hannigan makes only passing reference to these ceremonies, in the opening paragraph of his chapter.
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20. Whannel, Media Sport Stars, p. 64; See also Toby Miller, Sportsex (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001), p. 49.

21. Whannel, Media Sport Stars, p. 163.


26. Bélanger, p. 76.


34. John Fiske, Understanding Popular Culture (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989); Hall, “The Work of Representation.”

35. McDonald and Birrell, p. 291.

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37. Ibid.
40. Gillian Rose, p. 12.
41. The position of the researcher—in this case, white, heterosexual, male, and middle class—should also not be ignored.
43. McDonald and Birrell, p. 283.
44. Ibid, p. 292.
45. Ibid, p. 284.
46. Gruneau, Whitson, and Cantelon, p. 272, note the importance of analyzing both the visual and verbal components of sportscasts to address a “shortcoming of these early semilogically-based analyses of sport on television, namely a neglect of verbal commentary.”
47. Hannigan, “From Maple Leaf Gardens to the Air Canada Centre,” p. 201, makes note of these nostalgic touches.
52. Houston, Ibid.
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63. Cited in Bale, p. 131.
64. Cited in Shoalts, “Gardens farewell lacks certain emotion.”
68. These and all subsequent quotations are taken from the telecasts of the two ceremonies considered here: CBC Television, 13 and 20 February 1999.
71. Hobsbawm, p. 1, emphasis added.
73. Hobsbawm, p. 7.
74. Anderson, p. 4.
75. Mitchell, p. 443.
76. Hannigan, “From Maple Leaf Gardens to the Air Canada Centre,” p. 212.
78. Emphasis original to video narration.
79. Sabo and Jansen, p. 177.
84. Ibid, p. 191.
85. Miller, p. 52.
Mary Louise Adams, “Separating the Men from the Girls: Constructing Gender Difference in Figure Skating,” International Sociological Association conference paper, 1998. This author wishes to thank an anonymous reviewer for highlighting this important nuance.

See Gruneau, “Making spectacle.”

Sabo and Jansen, p. 177, emphasis original.


Anderson, p. 10.

Hobsbawm, p. 10.

Brunt, “Despite the memories.”

Uncovering the reason(s) behind this is an instance where details of production decisions would enhance the analysis.

Whannel, Media Sport Stars, p. 125.

Miller, p. 52.


For discussions of the history of women’s participation in ice hockey and the struggles women have faced as participants and organizers, see Elizabeth Etue and Megan Williams, On the Edge: Women Making Hockey History (Toronto: Second Story Press, 1996); M. Ann Hall, The Girl and The Game: A History of Women’s Sport in Canada (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2002); and Helen Lenskyj, Out of Bounds: Women, Sport and Sexuality (Toronto: Women’s Press, 1986).

Robert Pitter, “Racialization and Hockey in Canada: From Personal Troubles to a Canadian Challenge,” in Gruneau and Whitson (eds.), Artificial Ice, p. 125. While Pitter situates his experiences at a particular intersection of race and social class, Adams, in the same volume, explores the intersection of gender and race.


Pitter, p. 123.

Cathy Vine and Paul Challen, Gardens of Shame: The Tragedy of Martin Kruze and the Sexual Abuse at Maple Leaf Gardens (Vancouver: Greystone, 2002). Vine and Challen offer the best and most sensitive account of these events.


Brunt, “Building on Maple Leaf Gardens.”

Barber, p. A13.


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111. A. Bernstein, “NHL thaws out retro jerseys, hopes to boost category to $250M,” Street and Smith’s Sportsbusiness Journal, 6 (11), 7–13 July 2003, pp. 1, 34.


114. McDonald and Birrell, p. 292.
Janice Forsyth

*The Indian Act and the (Re)Shaping of Canadian Aboriginal Sport Practices*

**Abstract**

This paper examines how the Indian Act shaped the types of sporting opportunities that were made available for Aboriginal people in the late 19th to the mid-20th centuries. The Indian Act was (and still is) a significant piece of legislation in terms of Aboriginal sport history in that it structured the possibilities for Aboriginal participation in sport in Canada and legitimized Euro-Canadian ways of playing as the most appropriate forms of play.

**Résumé**

Ce document examine la manière dont la Loi sur les Indiens a façonné les genres d’activités sportives que pouvaient pratiquer les Autochtones de la fin du XIXe siècle au milieu du XXe siècle. La Loi sur les Indiens était (et est toujours) un texte législatif important sur le plan de l’histoire des sports autochtones, car elle a structuré les possibilités pour les Autochtones de pratiquer des sports au Canada et elle a légitimé les façons de jouer euro-canadiennes comme étant les formes de jeu les plus appropriées.

**Introduction**

In his treatise on Indigenous self-government, *Peace, Power, Righteousness: An Indigenous Manifesto*, Mohawk scholar Taiaiake Alfred (1999) critiques the Western notion of power that aims to regulate, dominate, and control. Drawing on the work of French theorist, Michel Foucault, Alfred contends that state power is extended through constitutional frameworks that claim to define the relationship between the state and its citizens, even when the citizens are not part of the decision-making processes. Alfred sees this extension of state power through legislative means as evidence of a coercive relationship. For Aboriginal people, this coercion is even more pronounced as the federal government, supported by a majority of voters, has claimed the power to define how Aboriginal people should participate in Canadian society. On this subject, Alfred writes:

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A critique of state power that sees oppression as an inevitable function of the state, even when it is constrained by a constitutionally defined social-political contract, should have special resonance for indigenous people, since their nations were never party to any contract and yet have been forced to operate within a framework that presupposes the legitimacy of state sovereignty over them. Arguing for rights within that framework only reinforces the state’s anti-historic claim to sovereignty by contract. (48)

According to Alfred, it is not possible for Aboriginal people to argue for legitimacy within a framework that they did not construct because that framework was not established to privilege or protect Aboriginal ways of living and viewing the social world but to maintain the power and authority of its non-Aboriginal creators.

Alfred’s (1999) critique has merit. In 1876, the Government of Canada created the Indian Act. Historically, the Indian Act was established to protect Aboriginal lands from the encroachment of non-Aboriginal settlers and to establish Aboriginal autonomy from the developing society, but soon came to be interpreted by policy-makers as an instrument to control almost every aspect of Aboriginal life. Unlike the treaties, Aboriginal people did not formally approve this piece of legislation. No agreements were signed. No verbal promises were made. In short, it was drafted by federal bureaucrats in Ottawa who took responsibility for defining the Government’s relationship with Aboriginal people, who were positioned as wards of the state (Wotherspoon and Satzewich 2000). With this type of bureaucratic power, federal officials asserted the right to regulate Aboriginal lives and restrict their access to resources that could be used to develop their human and financial potential. More than one hundred and thirty years later, the Indian Act continues to regulate Aboriginal lives from the “cradle to the grave” in spite of Aboriginal efforts for self-determination (Mecredi and Turpel 1993, 81).

In this paper, I examine the relationship between federal policies directed at Aboriginal people, the major institutions that took responsibility for implementing these strategies, and the shaping and reshaping of Aboriginal sport practices in Canada. More specifically, this paper focuses on how the Indian Act shaped the types of sporting opportunities that were made available for Aboriginal people in the late 19th to the mid-20th centuries. The developments that took place during this era, including the repression of traditional Aboriginal practices and residential schooling, are examined and, together, they demonstrate how federal authorities, working in conjunction with various religious groups, relied on Euro-Canadian sports and games to help them achieve their assimilative goals.
The Indian Act

For many people, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, the Indian Act has come to symbolize the paternalism embedded in government policy-making. In the past, Aboriginal people were rarely consulted on how to improve their lives through government policies, and when their opinions were sought, their recommendations were almost never taken seriously. In her study on the development of the 1969 White Paper, Sally Weaver (1981) shows how this paternalism continued apace within the federal government well into the 20th-century. Although Indian Affairs hosted a series of consultations with Aboriginal leaders throughout the country to gather their input on how to revise the Indian Act, when the White Paper was released it was obvious Aboriginal concerns had been ignored in favour of federal objectives. Rather than revise the Indian Act, the federal government proposed to abolish its historical relationship with Aboriginal people by transferring responsibility to the provinces. As Aboriginal leaders have often pointed out, the solution is not to abolish the Indian Act, but to revise it with Aboriginal input leading the way (e.g., Cardinal 1969). Understandably, many Aboriginal people have expressed their dismay with the federal government. Even the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples describes the relationship as a “dialogue of the deaf” characterized by “vast differences in philosophy, perspective and aspirations” between federal policymakers and Aboriginal leaders (Canada 1996, 257).

Aboriginal authors have also criticized the enormous power wielded by the federal government through the Indian Act. Thomas King (2003), for example, calls attention to the irony of a Canadian nationalism that boasts of fair treatment for Aboriginal people by contrasting its history of bureaucratic management with American efforts to exterminate them. To be sure, the Government of Canada has endorsed physical violence, mainly in instances where Aboriginal people have asserted their rights, or when they are protecting their lands from corporatist takeover (e.g., Edwards 2001; Goodleaf 1995). However, south of the border, in the United States, it was far more common for militiamen to shoot or imprison Aboriginal people if they impeded American settlement in any way. The connection between Canadian and American practices has not escaped Aboriginal critiques, as King (2003) wryly implies, “No need to send in the cavalry with guns blazing. Legislation will do just as nicely” (143). The process of colonization, whether enacted through legislation or sheer force, has always been a violent one and, in spite of Aboriginal resistance, persists in Canada (Neu and Therrien 2003).

The present challenge for Aboriginal people is to maintain their distinct ways of life within a social system that has historically been hostile towards Aboriginal practices. Some scholars have even called into question...
the likelihood of peaceful coexistence, arguing that it is not possible for two different cultures to flourish in a system that was designed to support one way of life and not another (e.g., Denis 1997). In this struggle for power, policies and legislation are much more than discursive constructs, they are concrete manifestations of a rational way of thinking about a particular way of life. The abstract concepts embedded in these bureaucratic statements thus receive their fullest expression when they are implemented by the people who have been employed to carry them out.

In terms of Aboriginal assimilation, the state could not achieve its goals without the assistance of various Christian denominations, whose missionaries came with their bibles and their beliefs in competition for new souls in the 17th-century. Their assumptions about Western cultural and religious superiority influenced the way they saw and understood Aboriginal ways of life and helped to legitimate colonial authority over Aboriginal affairs (e.g., Pettipas 1994; Titley 1986). To the missionaries, Aboriginal people were uncivilized and in need of moral and spiritual guidance. Even Aboriginal opposition to their authority was interpreted as childish hedonism and reinforced religious beliefs that their work was an act of benevolence that Aboriginal people would one day learn to appreciate (e.g., Furniss 1992). Missionaries did not always question their assumptions, but accepted the evolving Euro-Canadian Christian way of life as natural and right, and worked in conjunction with government authorities to maintain their control over Aboriginal people. One of the ways in which church and state extended their power over Aboriginal lives was through the regulation of traditional beliefs and practices, a mode of control that had a far-reaching impact on how Aboriginal people came to participate in the developing structure of Euro-Canadian sports and games in the 20th-century.

**Cultural Regulation**

Beginning in 1885, the federal government implemented a series of amendments to the *Indian Act* to put an end to Aboriginal religious ceremonies because they were thought to be incompatible with Euro-Canadian Christian life. There was a widespread belief among government and church officials that, as long as Aboriginal religious systems remained intact, Aboriginal people would never realize the spiritual benefits of Christianity or learn how to engage in productive labour. Armed with documents that were conceived in private, and which justified their actions, church and state attempted to replace traditional practices, like the Potlatch and Sundance ceremonies, with activities that were seemingly secular but were imbued with Christian religious ideals, and relied on Euro-Canadian sports and games to help them accomplish this task (Pettipas 1994).
In order for the process of cultural regulation to work, there had to be a reference point for assessing the difference between “savage” and “civilized” behaviours. Without such a point to mediate this understanding, attempts to “civilize” Aboriginal people lacked meaning. The habituated practices of colonial authorities provided the foundation upon which this understanding was based, and Euro-Canadian sports and games provided a convenient standard with which to measure such behaviours. At the local level, where the missionaries and Indian agents attempted to carry out their directives, traditional physical practices were discouraged as much as possible, and, to fill the void caused by their absence, were replaced with Euro-Canadian sports and games. It was hoped that this process of cultural replacement would facilitate an understanding of Euro-Canadian sports and games as “modern” and appropriate behaviours while positioning Aboriginal physical practices as “uncivilized” and undesirable (Paraschak 1998). Within these repressive environments, “sports days” emerged as appropriate forms of social activities for Aboriginal people and were often held in conjunction with national celebrations, like Dominion Day, thereby symbolically linking sports to Canadian citizenship and patriotic duty. Sports days also coincided with Euro-Canadian styled gatherings, like White-sponsored stampedes, agricultural exhibitions and fairs, and government-approved community celebrations, suggesting that Euro-Canadian sports and games would help usher Aboriginal people into the 20th-century through hard work and patriotic play.

The extent to which sports days replaced Aboriginal ceremonies is not discussed in the secondary source literature, though it is possible they took on more significance for Aboriginal people after 1914, when off-reserve dancing was punishable by fine or imprisonment. Nevertheless, it is clear that sports days were opportunities for Aboriginal people to gather without raising the suspicions of the local missionaries or Indian agent. Accordingly, sports days served a dual purpose for Aboriginal participants. On the one hand, they were opportunities to engage in friendly competition, a practice that was already well established among Aboriginal people throughout the land. On the other hand, they were also opportunities to host traditional religious ceremonies, as some people took advantage of these hectic and boisterous meetings to engage in their old time practices. For example, Daniel Kennedy, an Assiniboine Chief from Saskatchewan, recalls how his elders used him as a spokesperson to convince Indian Affairs’ officials to host local dances under cover of sports days and other Euro-Canadian celebrations (Kennedy cited in Gresko 1986, 100). Many Aboriginal people integrated Euro-Canadian sports and games into their everyday lives, and at least some people did so as a way to divert attention away from the practice of their traditional pursuits.
Rewards for participation were a prominent feature of sports days. Through this system of symbolic signification, government and religious authorities deliberately encouraged participation in “modern” Euro-Canadian forms of activities by publicly rewarding individuals who “adopted the dominant society’s value system and lifestyle” while simultaneously discouraging traditional physical practices by actively repressing them (Pettipas 1994, 160). Take, for example, the Indian agent for the Blood Reserve in southern Alberta who, in 1917, recommended that Indian Affairs allocate a grant for the purchase of prizes for fairs and sports meets, but for Euro-Canadian forms of activities only (Pettipas 1994). Symbolic awards and recognition, whether in the form of cash prizes or medals, thus played a key role in encouraging conformity to Euro-Canadian culture.

Sports and Games at Residential Schools

The most aggressive attempt to Christianize and civilize Aboriginal people was done through the residential school system. In his detailed study on residential schools in Canada, Jim Miller discusses the difference between education and schooling, noting how the two concepts are often mistaken to be one and the same. According to Miller, education is a process that all cultures of the world possess, but not all cultures engage in schooling to educate their young (Miller 1996). The difference between these two practices is more than a matter of degrees; it has to do with practices that are fundamental to creating and maintaining cultural stability (e.g., Heine 1999; Heine 1998; Mitchell 1978).

Profound changes came with the establishment of the residential school system in the late 19th-century. Missionaries had tried to establish schools in eastern Canada as early as the 17th-century, but their initiatives failed to take root; there was little incentive for Aboriginal people to alter their traditional ways, since their knowledge of the land and its resources was still vital to their survival and provided a viable means for living. Religious authorities would have to wait another two hundred years before their visions for schooling were implemented, and this was achieved only after many nations, weakened by disease and starvation, acquiesced to federal demands to settle on reserves.

Soon after Confederation in 1867, the new federal government was given legislative responsibility for Indian Affairs and an administrative team was charged with the responsibility of creating a national policy on Aboriginal education, with the federal authorities relying on the services of the Roman Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, and Presbyterian churches to implement its programme. It was in this fashion that the two major institutions that came to dominate Aboriginal life, the church and state,
pooled their limited human and financial resources to Christianize and civilize Aboriginal children. For roughly one hundred years, beginning in 1880, when the first policy on Aboriginal education was drafted, to 1996, when the last government-run school closed its doors, many Aboriginal youth received their education away from home and off the land.

In order for the schooling to be effective, it had to be a “lived” experience. Euro-Canadian sports and games were integral to Indian Affairs’ assimilative program, a reality that is well understood by Aboriginal people today. The *Report on the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (1996) notes how Indian Affairs looked to popular Euro-Canadian sports and games to help bring about fundamental changes in the values and behaviours of its students. It was thought that participation in Euro-Canadian activities would contribute to the breakdown of communal values by fostering a competitive spirit among the pupils, and hopefully, through regulated instruction, the skills they learned would translate into a desire for individual achievement and wealth (Canada 1996).

Generally speaking, in Canada, federal priorities for Aboriginal education shaped the kinds of sport and recreation activities that were offered at government-run schools. Two broad phases, differentiated by changes to the 1951 *Indian Act*, characterize the federal approach towards Aboriginal education. The policy approach taken during each phase influenced the types of sport and recreation opportunities that were available at these institutions. As the federal policy on Aboriginal education shifted, so too did its emphasis on sports and games, with organized sports and games becoming more pronounced as missionaries and bureaucrats alike attempted to integrate Aboriginal youth into Euro-Canadian culture. In short, the more the government focused on assimilation, the more important organized activities became to the overall agenda.

*Pre-1951*

In the pre-1951 era, the primary responsibility for schooling fell to the churches. Left largely to their own devices, religious officials implemented curricula geared towards their own practical and moral objectives. Financial support was provided by the federal government through a per capita grant system that operated according to the number of bodies enrolled in each school. The more bodies identified on the registry, the greater the amount of funding from Indian Affairs. The per capita grant system might have seemed like a financially-prudent decision to the bureaucrats in Ottawa, but in practice it led to fierce denominational rivalry among the different sects competing for student bodies (Miller 1996). This rivalry, combined with the lack of standard curricula and the means to enforce it, meant that the residential schools throughout this
period were chronically underfunded, almost always in disrepair, poorly staffed, and lacking qualified teachers. Of the students who survived the impoverished conditions—and the emotional, psychological, and physical abuse present in some schools—the vast majority were neither prepared to take their place in the dominant labour force, nor able to contribute effectively to reserve life.

In light of these circumstances, it is no surprise that physical education programs were linked directly to physical health. From the early 1900s to the late 1940s, waves of communicable diseases circulated through the schools wreaking havoc on the bodies of Aboriginal pupils, who were generally overworked, underfed, and emotionally exhausted, leaving them vulnerable to virus and infection. These matters were made worse by the terrible living conditions inside the schools, which were characterized by overcrowded rooms and poor air circulation. According to historian Mary-Ellen Kelm (2001), Indian Affairs’ failure to improve the health of the pupils in the early half of the 20th-century contributed to the abolishment of the residential school system in later years. As parents increasingly spoke out against the atrocities of residential schooling, Indian Affairs had little choice but to address the high morbidity and mortality rates among its students. The numbers of dead or ill were simply too high. The introduction of physical education curricula was thus an efficient and cost-effective way for dealing with the recurrent health issues in the schools.

In the first half of the 20th-century, callisthenic programs were widely utilized as part of the health curricula. Indian Affairs introduced these exercises in 1910 in an effort to reduce the spread of pulmonary disease among its pupils (Department of Indian Affairs 1910). These exercises could be performed indoors when the weather was poor because they required relatively little space and no equipment, but instructors were encouraged to move outdoors whenever possible to capitalize on the fresh air. Aboriginal bodies, once a symbol of strength and virility, were repositioned within the growing discourse on physical education as weak and diseased, justifying the need for proper, orderly instruction on how to regain their vitality.

The introduction of callisthenic programs coincided with the use of military drill, which was also a common feature of the public school system by virtue of funding through the Strathcona Trust (Morrow 1977). The link between military training and nationalism was unmistakeable as the drills were designed to replace tribal allegiances with a sense of patriotic duty; callisthenic programs were constructed along similarly regimented lines. Even in the far north, at the Hay River Mission School located on the southern tip of Great Slave Lake in the Northwest
Territories, Aboriginal pupils, male and female, were trained in the military style (Heine 1995).

Popular recreational activities, like basketball, baseball, and hockey, rounded out the regimen by providing the students with some respite from the monotony of everyday life, but these opportunities were few and far between and were available mainly to boys. For the most part, students played with and amongst themselves, although, from time to time, organized activities were arranged with students from nearby residential schools or, less frequently, with non-Aboriginal students from urban areas. However, these meetings usually occurred only on special occasions and were normally limited to sports days or national celebrations. Though most students seemed to have enjoyed these activities, it is clear that sports and games were used as tools to discipline the students, as school instructors augmented their power by awarding or withholding recreation time. Sports and games were thus collateral for teaching obedience to school rules; they were not a right, but a “reward” for good behaviour. Pupils who disobeyed the rules or fell into disfavour with the instructors had their recreation privileges taken away (e.g., Gresko 1986; Persson 1986).

Mass displays and sporting competitions also provided church and state with opportunities to promote assimilation and to attract new students to school. In areas where there was more than one school, the parents had some measure of control over where their children would be educated. It is possible that physical education programs could help sway their opinions. Images of young bodies moving in formation could evoke ideas about health and well-being and lend visible support to the ideological contention that the children were being mentally and physically prepared to meet the demands expected of them in the labour force. Many families, however, had little or no input as to where their children would be kept, nor did they have much contact with their children during the school year. Thus, it is more likely that the military drills and mass gymnastic displays were contrived to win public support for the federal agenda than they were to gain parental support.

Euro-Canadian sports and games also reinforced the dominant assumptions about appropriate male and female sporting behaviour. As was the case in the public school system, Aboriginal boys and girls were channelled into gender appropriate activities. Male students were provided with opportunities to participate in vigorous activities that developed their manly character, while female students were encouraged to participate in gentle, healthful exercises that were deemed appropriate for young women, despite the fact that they were required to demonstrate incredible strength and stamina as the housekeepers of entire institutions.
The inculcation of gendered norms through sports and games did not escape the participants, as one female student explained,

Boring, that’s what play time was. Some play. We couldn’t do nothing. Dolls, knitting, things like that, but not playing, not like the boys. They had balls, bats, hockey sticks, everything. Sundays were the worst. I hated Sundays. We couldn’t even work on Sundays. Just sat in the playroom or went out on those awful walks (Fiske 1981, 36).

Opportunities for females to engage in competition or participate in traditionally male-dominated sports were apparently rare. An exception to this rule was the Mohawk Institute, where, in the early 1900s, female students played ice hockey in their recreation time. According to Martha Hill, a former student of the school, the girls were “a little clumsy” in getting the puck to “go right” on the ice (Graham 1997, 356). Nevertheless, it is difficult to assess the sporting experiences of female students, as historians have tended to overlook their participation in this area of social life.

Physical activity programs in the residential schools during the pre-1951 era were characterized by callisthenic exercises and military drills. The general purpose of these activities was to encourage better health, to replace traditional physical practices with “appropriate” physical behaviours, to prepare the students for citizenship, and to impart gendered norms. Although the activities changed in the post-1951 era, ushering in a new emphasis on competitive amateur sports, the underlying principles remained largely the same.

Post-1951

The post-1951 era marks a shift in the balance of power between church and state, with Indian Affairs taking on more responsibility for government-run schools. Two key factors precipitated this move. First, the churches were more interested in converting the young than providing them with vocational training; government interference was deemed necessary if the youth were ever to become productive members of society. Second, increasing public awareness about the deplorable conditions in the schools gave strength to Aboriginal demands for better quality of care and education. These factors led Indian Affairs to take over the hiring of teachers, replacing unqualified missionary instructors with professionally trained staff who could implement provincial curricula, and substituting the per capita grant system with a global funding structure (herein provided funding to institutions based on grant applications), though strict criteria prevented many school administrators from accessing these resources (Miller 1996). In spite of these improvements, the government
was still unwilling to make serious investments in Aboriginal education and looked increasingly towards the public school system to achieve assimilation.

Athletic competitions became a more pronounced feature of residential schools during this era because federal officials believed these contests would help facilitate assimilation and encouraged school staff to promote participation, especially in team sports. In Alberta, Blue Quills Indian Residential School held its first all-Aboriginal track and field meet in 1961, presenting the first opportunity for its students to develop contacts with students at other Indian schools (Persson 1986). Some institutions developed outstanding athletic programs, and a number of students, who honed their athletic skills in the residential school system, later moved on to professional sports careers or competed successfully in elite level amateur sport (Dewar 1986). Yet even when the global funding system was implemented by Indian Affairs, funding for sport and recreation remained scarce and primarily those institutions situated a reasonable distance from other Indian schools or urban centres, and managed by sports-minded teachers and administrators, engaged in regular, competitive play (Miller 1996).

During this era, competitive sporting events replaced the mass displays and military drills as the most efficient way for the government to achieve assimilation. The competitive ethos that accompanied sport furnished these meetings with signifying power so that contests between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal teams were more than just fun and games, they were highly racialized events (Churchill, Hill, and Barlow 1979). In the words of historian John Bloom, “Not only did winning teams spread a school’s name but they also provided an easily interpreted set of representations that fit well with the boarding-school agenda” (Bloom 1996, 98).

In the United States, school administrators, sport organizers, and the media framed such contests as battles between the “Indians” and the “Whites” in an attempt to fill the stands (Bloom 2000). Gate receipts were crucial for developing and maintaining competitive schedules at government-run schools, like Carlisle and Haskell, where funding for elite level sport was limited. According to historian Raymond Schmidt (2001), the Haskell Institute football team, one of the top football teams in the country during the interwar years, never once received federal subsidies for its athletic competitions. The winning tradition generated by successive football teams at Haskell led to the construction in 1926 of a massive stadium seating about 10,000 fans—a project that was financed entirely by monies raised by Native American supporters throughout the country (Schmidt 2001; Bloom 1996). Although victories amassed by Carlisle and Haskell have dominated the sport scholarship, it is clear that administrators at
other American Indian boarding schools valued the public recognition that competitive sports provided to their institutions and invested a great deal of time and energy to produce the best athletes and teams possible (Lomawaima 1994; Trennert 1988).

There is a dearth of information on the use of competitive sports and games as public relations tools in Canadian residential schools. The only mention of this aspect of residential school life in the Canadian context can be found in Celia Haig-Brown’s (1988) study on Shushwap experiences at the Kamloops Indian Residential School in British Columbia. Further studies on this area of residential school life would enhance our understanding of the way Euro-Canadian sports and games emerged in the 20th century as the dominant way of playing.

With the development of a competitive ethos in the school system, winning took on increased significance. Students, as well as their instructors, placed a high premium on successful teams and athletes, especially when competing in explicitly racialized contexts where meetings were framed as “Indian” versus “White” contests. Athletic competitions were arenas where ideas about race, as well as gender, were contested on a regular basis. For many Aboriginal youth, however, athletic competitions were one of the few areas of life where they could derive some pleasure and foster a sense of pride. Sometimes the contests were one-sided affairs. In his autobiography, Indian School Days, Basil Johnston (1988) recalls how male student-athletes at Spanish Indian Residential School, in Ontario, repeatedly had their clothes and bodies “patched up” and sent back onto the playing field to finish matches against older and stronger White teams. He describes one particularly memorable game of touch football played against a group of senior high school students from the nearby town of Espanola. His comment highlights the importance of winning but also suggests the heightened sense of masculinity and race that students might have felt in a competitive atmosphere,

If we were expected to risk cuts, gashes, lacerations, bruises, welts and maybe even broken bones while clinging to Jack Major or oversized backs, we preferred to maintain some style and respectability while doing so (Johnston 1988, 206).

If Johnston and his teammates could not win against the White teams, then losing with their dignity intact was the next best thing.

In the logic of competitive sports and games, medals and awards became an important means through which to articulate and reinforce a narrative of “progress” among Aboriginal people. Winning athletes came to symbolize the best their race had to offer. Within this competitive
context, male athletes emerged as the symbolic leaders of the residential school era (Dewar 1986). Female athletes, in contrast, were generally relegated to non-competitive events or participated in contests where the social aspect outweighed the competitive. Similar to the pre-1951 era, stories of female participation in competitive sports are conspicuous in their absence from the literature on residential school experiences. Though most references to “athletes” do not specify whether the subject is male or female, it is clear from the type of activities available—boisterous, competitive sport—that the term “athlete” almost always refers to a male. The treatment resulting from this differential status could be dramatic. As K. Tsianina Lomawaima (1994) points out in her study on Chilocco Indian School in northeast Oklahoma, the athletes were “universally respected” by their peers and administrators (125), leaving most females to earn respect through other means, as this avenue for expression was available only to the male students. In either case, winning athletes and teams signified disciplined, civilized bodies and Indian Affairs and school administrators were proud of their winning traditions.

The overwhelming emphasis on a competitive sports structure meant that male athletes received the majority of the limited financial support for equipment, coaching, and travel that was provided by Indian Affairs. For boys, being on a sports team had its privileges. The most significant advantage was time away from school, but fringe benefits could also entail better food and accommodations. Few oral histories challenge the overwhelmingly positive spin on sport and recreation adopted by former residential school students. Most accounts suggest that the students embraced the idea that athletic excellence would help to improve the morale at school. However, at least one female student at Kamloops recognized the rhetoric as empty dogma, stating, “You won prizes and wondered why the hell you even bothered to go because when you got back it was still the same way” (Haig-Brown 1988, 72). Gradually, as Indian Affairs moved away from direct involvement in the day-to-day operations of Aboriginal education by transferring administrative responsibility to regional school authorities, the residential schools were shut down and the students were sent into the mainstream public education system.

Whatever visions of progress the sporting events and athletic bodies provided for the participants, religious officials, government agents, or the general public, they had little or no basis in real life. They were ideological in the sense that the Aboriginal participants were ill-prepared to meet the growing demands of a skilled workforce. Nor was sport the great leveller that advocates claimed. Most often, it accentuated and exacerbated the perceived differences between people, with negative connotations attached to traditional Aboriginal practices and positive reaffirming
qualities attached to modern Euro-Canadian activities. For most Aboriginal athletes, the reality was that their successes in sport and recreation left broader relations of power untouched.

Conclusion

Analyses of the *Indian Act* often overlook the role of Euro-Canadian sports and games as a part of the broader assimilative agenda in Canada. This oversight is understandable given the need to remedy more pressing matters, such as housing, health care, education, and land claims. When viewed from this broader social vantage point, research that explores the relationship between government policies and legislation and opportunities for Aboriginal sport and recreation seems like a trivial undertaking.

However, the link between the concepts embedded in policies and legislation and the concrete practices that flow from them is not something to be taken lightly. As this brief analysis shows, the *Indian Act* was (and still is) a significant piece of legislation in terms of Aboriginal sport history in that it structured the possibilities for Aboriginal participation in sport in Canada and legitimized Euro-Canadian ways of playing as the most appropriate forms of play.

The fact that Euro-Canadian sport and games are not identified in the *Indian Act* is also important because it speaks to the firm belief that existed among federal decision-makers that Aboriginal people would naturally adopt Euro-Canadian ways of playing once their cultural traditions were wiped out and their children enrolled in school. The absence of these elements in the *Act* has also diverted attention away from serious scholarly analysis that could shed some light on how federal Indian policies and legislation shaped, and continue to shape, Aboriginal (and non-Aboriginal) sport practices in Canada.

Ultimately, this paper problematizes the assumption that minority cultures can selectively integrate into the dominant sporting culture and find affirmation and acceptance in these foreign spaces. Even though history has shown that Aboriginal people refashioned Euro-Canadian ways of playing into meaningful opportunities that reinforced their cultural identities, they did so under very limiting conditions; colonization is not a negotiation between equal partners but a process whereby one group claims the authority to rule over another and impose its will on them, leaving the dominated group with little choice but to respond to the best of its ability. In order to gain a better understanding of how organized sport has contributed to the construction of a Euro-Canadian identity, we need to explore how policies and legislation—abstractions of official intentions—were implemented on the ground, resulting in concrete
opportunities that were either accepted or challenged by the recipients of a new sporting culture. Aboriginal people in particular had few alternatives but to accept the dominant ways of playing, as this was all that was made available for them by government agents and church officials.

More broadly speaking, this paper also demonstrates the need for scholars to recognize the different historical benchmarks that mark Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal sport history. The extent to which the Indian Act—and the timelines that distinguish each feature of the Act (e.g., cultural repression and residential schooling)—influenced non-Aboriginal sporting practices in Canada is not known. What is clear is that federal Indian policies and legislation helped to legitimize and naturalize Euro-Canadian sports and games as the most appropriate forms of physical expression and, in that regard, influenced the structure of Canadian sport by not challenging its dominance. Moreover, a different set of historical benchmarks guide our understanding of Aboriginal participation in sport. Oftentimes, these benchmarks exclude dates that are significant to Aboriginal people (e.g., 1876, the creation of the Indian Act), thereby reinforcing dominant notions about the centrality and importance of Euro-Canadian sporting practices. Contrarily, this examination of the Indian Act and its relationship to Aboriginal physical cultural practices shows how abstract concepts, embedded in Indian legislation and policies, supported by a network of compliant institutions, influenced the types of opportunities that were made available to Aboriginal people and, at the same time, shaped our Canadian sporting heritage. It remains to be seen how Aboriginal participants in contemporary sport will maintain their unique ways of living and doing sport when, perhaps, what they are being offered is a constantly unfolding set of opportunities to integrate into the mainstream. It also remains to be seen how historians will link the turning points in Aboriginal and Euro-Canadian sport history to explore how government policies and legislation differentially shaped and reshaped the sporting experiences of Canadians.

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The Indian Act and the (Re)Shaping of Canadian Aboriginal Sport Practices


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Children’s Sport Participation in Canada: Is it a Level Playing Field?

Abstract

In this article a study of children’s sport participation in Canada is presented, examining both children’s participation in organized sport (with a coach or instructor) and informal sport (without a coach or instructor). This was done using a national sample survey. The results indicate that, for participation in organized sport, household income was the strongest predictor variable, followed by parent’s education, gender, regional differences, and age of the child. In informal sport, gender was the strongest predictor variable, followed by regional differences, household income, age of the child, and parent’s education. The findings are discussed in terms of the implications these factors may have on the development and reproduction of social division between children who are able to access sporting activities and those who cannot.

Résumé

Cet article, qui porte sur une étude de la pratique des sports par les enfants au Canada, examine la participation des enfants à un sport organisé (avec un entraîneur ou un instructeur) ou à un sport non structuré (sans entraîneur ou instructeur). À cette fin, on a eu recours à une enquête par sondage nationale. Selon les résultats obtenus, dans le cas de la pratique des sports organisés, le revenu du ménage était la principale variable explicative, suivie de l’instruction des parents, du sexe, des différences régionales et de l’âge de l’enfant. Dans le cas des sports non structurés, le sexe était la principale variable explicative, suivie des différences régionales, du revenu du ménage, de l’âge de l’enfant et de l’instruction des parents. Les conclusions sont examinées en fonction des répercussions que ces facteurs peuvent avoir sur le développement et la reproduction du fossé social entre les enfants qui peuvent avoir accès aux activités sportives et ceux qui ne le peuvent pas.
Introduction

Considerable evidence has been provided in recent years demonstrating the benefits of children’s participation in sport. Of significant note are the physical benefits of sport in combating childhood obesity and countering negative risk behaviours such as alcohol and drug use (Flegal 1999, Iwasaki 2005, Thorlindsson 1999). Research has also supported the proposition that parents encourage and support their children’s participation in sport to facilitate the development of valuable life skills that will carry into adulthood. Parents believe children’s participation in sport will give them the opportunity to develop self-esteem, social skills, teamwork, responsibility, cooperation and competition; all attributes that are valued within a capitalist society (Adler and Adler 1994, Coakley 2006, Donnelly and Harvey 1999, Dunn, Kinney, and Hofferth 2003).

The majority of research to date has examined the psychological, moral and physical importance of the sport experience as it relates specifically to the child’s growth, development, and performance. While the significance of children’s involvement in sport has been demonstrated, access to these activities may not be realistic for all children due to participation barriers. Unlike the European sport literature (see e.g. Scheerder, Vanreusel, Taks, Renson 2002, Waser and Passavant 1997), children’s involvement in sport as it relates to participation rates and social class, has received little attention in North America (Stempel 2005). Studies that have examined sport participation as it relates to social differentiation are placed within the context of the child’s participation in school related extra-curricular sporting activities (see e.g. Darling, Caldwell, and Smith 2005). Extra-curricular school athletics make up only a small part of the broader context of sporting activities that contribute to adolescent development (Cooper, Valentine, Nye, and Lindsay 1999). Thus there is a need to address children’s participation in organized sport outside the context of the publicly funded school system (Waser and Passavant 1997), and to investigate the effects of social differentiation and social inequality within the community, to gain a better understanding of children’s sport participation in Canada.

Adler and Adler (1994) argued that children’s unstructured sport involvement is also important in understanding children’s development and growth. Whereas structured sporting activities may exemplify corporate-style organization, and encourage professionalization and specialization, unstructured sport may provide opportunities for creative thinking, flexibility, and originality (Adler and Adler 1994). These latter attributes give children the freedom to make adaptations and variations to traditional sporting activities’ rules and style of play. Furthermore, without adult imposed cultural ideologies and beliefs and the opportunity for...
creative adaptations, Yuen and Shaw (2003) argued that “unstructured play may enable children to resist current gender ideologies, while structured play may be more conducive to reproducing gender stereotypes” (12). Not only does children’s participation in informal sport have physical benefits, but it may also provide children with the opportunity to develop and enhance individual social beliefs and values, divergent from those provided by adult-organized sport. With this in mind, insight that can be gained from studying children’s participation levels in both organized and informal sport is valuable.

As children’s participation in community-organized sport has become a phenomenon of the North American culture and added a new aspect to the socialization of children (Berryman 1996, Coakley 2006), clearly there is a need to examine the factors that may assist or inhibit children’s participation. Further, a greater understanding of factors that may effect children’s participation in informal sport may provide a more holistic representation of children’s overall sport participation rates. Accordingly, the aim of this present study was to examine the relationship between socio-economic status, as measured by household income and parent’s education, and Canadian children’s involvement in both organized and informal sport as measured by children’s frequency of participation. Data from a national sample survey provided findings that were generalizable to the larger population.

Related Literature

In North America and the United Kingdom, organized sport for youth 12 years and older is largely funded and delivered by interschool sport programs (Berrymen 1996, Coakley and Donnelly 2004). Interschool sport programs refer to organized competition between educational institutions. However, in the 1990s Canadians experienced significant reductions to public expenditures, particularly in the health and education systems. To facilitate cost-saving measures some sports were eliminated from interschool sport programs and/or participation fees were introduced or increased (Coakley and Donnelly 2004). Despite these cutbacks, interschool sport programs still remain a significant sport context for many Canadian youth.

In contrast, organized sport delivery systems in other developing countries are primarily “tied to community-based athletic clubs funded by members or a combination of public and private sources” (Coakley and Donnelly 2004, 441). Accordingly, children’s participation in community/club organized sport has received more attention in the European sport literature than in the North American sport literature. For example, while studying the lives of young people (12–18 years) in Caen, France,
Waser and Passavant (1997) reported that socio-economic status influenced youth’s organized sport participation. They found that the wealthier the parents, the higher the participation rates in organized sport. Further, they suggested that boys were more active in sporting activities than girls. Harro, Alep, and Eensoo (1999) also reported that children from families with higher monthly incomes were more involved in sport training classes in addition to their regular physical education curriculum at school, than children from families with lower incomes.

However, conflicting findings have been reported between socio-economic status and its relationship with youth sport participation. In contrast, a study that examined youth sport participation over a 30-year period in Flanders, Belgium reported that sport participation for youth 13–18 years old “is no longer correlated with the socio-economic status of the parents” (Scheerder, Vanreusel, Taks, and Renson 2005, 5). Instead, these authors argued that gender was the most significant predictor of youth sport participation. In fact, they reported that female participation rates have actually declined: “At the end of the 20th century, teenage girls are more likely to be non- or moderately active sports participants than was the case a decade before” (Scheerder, Vanreusel, Taks, and Renson 2005, 19). However, when considering club organized sports specifically, Scheerder, Taks, Vanreusel, and Renson (2005) reported that youth participation rates (for both girls and boys) have increased over the past three decades.

In North America, children’s organized sport participation has also increased led by national youth organizations and community-based sport programs. Initial organized sport programs were first developed by the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA), and were followed by various national youth organizations such as the Boys and Girls Clubs in the beginning of the 20th century (Berryman 1996, Hall 1999, Wiggins 1996). Most sport programs were developed for boys and it was not until the 1970s that opportunities for girls’ sport participation were created (Coakley and Donnelly 2004).

In the 1950s there was a large movement towards adult-organized activities for children and youth led by agency-sponsored sports such as little league baseball and minor hockey (Coakley 2006, Donnelly 1997, Sundeen 2001). These leagues were “intentionally designed to inculcate children with a particular set of values necessary to function properly in a democratic society” (Wiggins 1996, 15). Consequently, the emergence and popularity of children’s sport organizations added a new aspect to the socialization of children and the nature of their leisure (Berryman 1996, Coakley 2006). With each new generation the popularity of children’s community-based sport programs has continued to grow (Adler and Adler 1994, Fishman 1999).
Despite the increased participation rates in children’s organized sport, relatively little attention has been given to the socio-economic status of its participants within the community context. The sociology of sport literature on adult participation rates has shown that differences according to age, gender, and social stratification variables (education and income) do exist (Donnelly and Harvey 1999, Sport Canada 2000). Even with policy and legislation for gender equity in the provision of opportunities, male participation rates continue to be higher than those of females. Furthermore, younger adults and adults from a higher socio-economic status, as measured by income and education, report higher levels of sport participation.

Canadian studies have also noted regional differences as they relate to adult involvement in sport, through participation rates (Curtis and McPherson 1987) and spectatorship at professional and amateur events (White and Wilson 1999). Both studies found that the farther west the participant’s place of residence, the higher the rate of sport involvement. Curtis and McPherson (1987) suggest that this pattern can be partly explained by the effects of regional differences related to “sociodemographic composition, socioeconomic profiles, and opportunity structures” (363). Eastern Canada endures high net out-migration patterns, while Western Canada has a slightly lower mean age, higher socio-economic status, and greater urbanization. Extending this collective body of research, do the patterns of socio-economic status, age, gender, and regional differences also influence children’s participation in organized sport as they do for adults? Although it has been alluded to that active parents and higher incomes are key predictors of children’s participation in organized sport (Donnelly and Harvey 1999, Kremarik 2000), little quantitative research to date in North America has explored these issues specifically.

In an ethnographic study drawing upon 88 in-depth interviews with working-class and middle-class children and their parents, Lareau (2002, 2003) investigated the effects of social class on family interactions inside the home, and the child’s consequent participation in organized and informal leisure activities within their community. The results of the study suggest that middle-class parents engage in what Lareau (2002) termed “concerted cultivation” (748). Parents seek out opportunities to foster their children’s talents, skills, and abilities through organized leisure activities. She argues that middle-class parents “enroll their children in numerous age-specific organized activities that dominate family life and create enormous labour, particularly for mothers. The parents view these activities as transmitting important life skills to children” (748). Other research has supported the notion of children’s organized sport participation being time-consuming for the family unit as a whole, often at the expense of the
parents’ leisure, and in particular the mothers’ leisure experiences (Shaw 2001, Shaw and Dawson 2001).

In contrast, Lareau (2002, 748) suggested that the working-class and poor parents engage in what she termed “natural growth.” Parents provided the necessary conditions under which children can grow (comfort, food, shelter, and other basic support), but left leisure activities to the children themselves. This facilitated a slower paced day with more impromptu moments of unstructured play and child-directed activities. Lareau illustrates this in her discussion of “Harold,” an 8-year-old boy from a working-class family:

Harold loves sports. He is particularly fond of basketball, but he also enjoys football, and he follows televised professional sports closely. Most afternoons, he is either inside watching television or outside playing ball. He tosses a football with cousins and boys from the neighboring units and organizes pick-up basketball games. Sometimes he and his friends use a rusty, bare hoop hanging from a telephone pole in the housing project; other times, they string up an old, blue plastic crate as a makeshift hoop. One obstacle to playing sports, however, is a shortage of equipment. Balls are costly to replace, especially given the rate at which they disappear— theft of children’s play equipment, including balls and bicycles, is an ongoing problem. (Lareau 2002, 758)

Although parents believed that sport participation was important for working-class children and boys in particular, parents did not see the value in their children’s participation in organized sport when faced with limited economic resources. In their view, children’s participation in informal sport served the needs of their child. Also, unlike the middle-class parent, they did not see the perceived gain in the development of skills and abilities deemed valuable within a capitalist society, and the social connections that sport would facilitate within the broader community.

Summarizing, Lareau (2002) suggested that social differentiation does matter. “It is interweaving of life experiences and resources, including parents’ economic resources, occupational conditions, and educational backgrounds, that appears to be most important in leading middle-class parents to engage in concerted cultivation and working-class and poor parents to engage in the accomplishment of natural growth” (772). In reviewing Lareau’s (2003) in-depth qualitative study, Stemple (2005) suggested that sport sociologists have not reported on the degree of social differentiation in adult-organized children’s sport, “but if Lareau’s findings are representative it is considerable” (267).
In the present study our aim is to examine the relationship between socio-economic status, as measured by household income and parent’s education, and children’s participation in both organized and informal sport as measured by the children’s frequency of participation. In doing so, we test the validity of the theoretical arguments focusing on the relative importance of these variables as predictors of Canadian children’s participation in organized and informal sport.

Methods

Data were drawn from the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (NLSCY), Cycle 3. The NLSCY-3 was conducted in 1998–1999 by Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) and Statistics Canada. The primary objective of the NLSCY is to monitor the development and well-being of Canada’s children as they grow from infancy to adulthood. The NLSCY-3 collected information on a wide variety of topics—biological, social, economic, family, peers, school, and community. Data were collected through telephone and/or in-person interviews conducted by an interviewer using a computer. In each case the questions were answered by the parent who was most knowledgeable about the child in question, and it was that parent’s level of education that was used in the highest level of education obtained variable.

The analysis of the NLSCY data were limited to children aged 6 to 9 years old based on the available data set (N=5,189; 2,576 males and 2,613 females). Given that the study was a secondary analysis of survey data, the authors had no control over the framing of the survey questions themselves. However, the data presented the authors with the opportunity to investigate the participation of children’s involvement in both organized and informal sport and to present controlled findings generalizable to the Canadian population.

The dependent variables were based on responses to the following questions:

(1) “In the last 12 months, outside of school hours, how often has [child’s name] taken part in sports with a coach or instructor (except dance or gymnastics)?” This variable was labelled Organized Sport in the data analysis.

(2) “In the last 12 months, outside of school hours, how often has [child’s name] taken part in informal sports or physical activity without a coach or instructor?” This variable was labelled Informal Sport in the data analysis.
The frequency of participation for both questions were measured along ordinal scales with five categories: (1) most days, (2) a few times a week, (3) about once a week, (4) about once a month, (5) almost never. As a consequence of very low response rates for the “most days” and “about once a month” categories, the frequency of participation for both questions were reversed and re-coded to a simple ordinal scale with three categories: (1) almost never, (2) once a week or less, (3) more than once a week.

The independent variables were household income (less than $15,000; $15,000–$19,999; $20,000–$29,999; $30,000–$39,999; $40,000 or more); highest level of education obtained (not completed high school; completed high school; some post-secondary; degree/diploma); gender (male; female); age of child (6 years; 7 years; 8 years; 9 years); region (Maritimes—Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland; Quebec; Ontario; Prairies—Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta; British Columbia) and number of children aged 0–17 in the household (1 child; 2 children; 3 children).

The analysis of the data was carried out in two stages. First, an examination of the relationship between each of the independent variables and the child’s participation in organized and informal sport was conducted. This initial step used a Chi-square analysis that helped to clarify the nature of the direct relationship and statistical significance between individual independent variables and the dependent variables. In the second stage Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) with Multiple Classification Analysis (MCA) was used as the statistical procedure to examine the relationship between a single independent variable and a dependent variable while simultaneously controlling for the effects of the remaining variables. MCA expresses the deviations from the grand mean for each predictor variable. MCA also produces eta scores (zero-order correlations) and beta scores (proportional reduction in error). These scores indicate the relative strength of a predictor variable by itself before controls (eta) and after controlling for the effects of the other predictor variables after controls (beta) (Andrews, Morgan, Sonquist, and Klem, 1973; Norusis, 1993).

**Findings**

Table 1 shows the relationship between the independent variables individually and children’s participation in organized and informal sport. Generally, all of these variables had a statistically significant relationship with each of the dependent variables, with the exception of the “number of children aged 0–17 in the household.” For the variable “number of children aged 0–17 in the household,” the relationship with children’s partici-
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Participation in organized sport had no clear direction and was not statistically significant, and children’s participation in informal sport showed a weak positive relationship ($p<.05$). In light of this, this variable was omitted from the second stage of data analysis.

Household income and parent’s education were both positively related to children’s participation in organized and informal sport ($p<.001$ for both). The higher the household income and parent’s education level, the higher the children’s participation in both organized and informal sport. Families in the lowest income category (less than $15,000) had the highest percentage of inactive children reporting “almost never” participating in organized sport (69%) and informal sport (40%), and the lowest percentage in both categories for “more than once a week” (organized=12% and informal=40%). Children from families in the highest income category ($40,000+) had the highest percentage of active children who reported participating in organized sport (34%) and informal sport (54%) “more than once per week,” and the lowest percentage in both categories for “almost never” (organized=34% and informal=23%).

Gender and age of the child were also significantly related to the children’s participation in organized and informal sport ($p<.001$ in both cases). Males were more involved in both organized and informal sport than females. Males reported participation in organized sport (36%) and informal sport (59%) “more than once a week.” In comparison, females reported participation in organized sport (22%) and informal sport (46%) “more than once a week.” More females than males reported “almost never” participating in both organized sport (49%) and informal sport (30%) compared to males (38% and 23% respectively). The age of the child was also significantly related to children’s participation in organized and informal sport; the older the child, the higher the participation in both organized and informal sport ($p<.001$). The oldest age group (9 years) was the most active participating “more than once a week” in organized sport (36%) and informal sport (55%). The youngest age group (6 years) was the least active participating “almost never” in organized (47%) and informal (31%) sport.

The further west a child’s place of residence in Canada the higher the participation in organized and informal sport, with the anomaly of Quebec ($p<.001$). In organized sport, Quebec had the highest percentage of inactive children (55%) who reported “almost never” participating, followed by the Maritimes (48%), Ontario (38%), Prairies (38%) and B.C. (34%). In informal sport, B.C. had the highest percentage of active children (61%) who reported participating “more than once a week,” followed by Quebec (54%), Prairies (53%), Ontario (50%), and Maritimes (50%).
## TABLE 1

Frequency of Canadian Children’s Sport Participation (Percent) by Household Income, Education, Gender, Age, Region, and Number of Children in Household (Chi-square)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>Organized Sport</th>
<th>Informal Sport</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Almost Never (%)</td>
<td>More than week or once a week (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HOUSEHOLD INCOME</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than $15,000</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$15,000 to $19,999</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$20,000 to $29,999</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$30,000 to $39,999</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$40,000+</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stat.Sig.</strong></td>
<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EDUCATION</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Completed High School</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed High School</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some Post-Secondary</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree/Diploma</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stat. Sig.</strong></td>
<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GENDER</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stat.Sig.</strong></td>
<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AGE OF CHILD</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 years</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 years</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stat. Sig.</strong></td>
<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>REGION</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maritimes</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quebec</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prairies</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Columbia</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stat. Sig.</strong></td>
<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHILDREN AGED 0–17 IN HOUSEHOLD</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 child</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 children</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 children</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ns</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Statistical Significance: ***=p<.001; **=p<.01; *=p<.05; ns=non-significant
Table 2 shows the relationship of the predictor variables on children’s participation in organized and informal sport, before and after controls for the effects of each other (except for the variable “number of children aged 0–17 in the household” as noted earlier). All of the predictor variables, after controls, had a statistically significant relationship with the two dependent variables. Parent’s education and informal sport was significant, although only at the five percent level ($p<.05$), compared to the others at the one percent level ($p<.001$).

In organized sport, after controls, household income was a stronger predictor than parent’s education ($p<.001$ in both cases, beta=0.18 and 0.16 respectively). For informal sport, household income ($p<.001$, beta=0.07) and parent’s education ($p<.05$, beta=0.04) were weaker as positive predictors compared to that of competitive sport, but still significant. Therefore, household income and parent’s education were stronger predictors of children’s participation in organized sport than in informal sport.

As expected, after controls, gender was a strong predictor of children’s participation in both organized and informal sport ($p<.001$ in both cases, beta=0.15 and 0.12 respectively). After controls, age was a weaker predictor in children’s participation in both organized and informal sport, but still significant ($p<.001$ in both cases, beta=0.09 and 0.07 respectively). Finally, regional differences were a strong predictor of children’s participation in sport ($p<.001$ in both cases). Regional differences were noted to be a stronger predictor in organized (beta=0.14) than informal (beta=0.08) sport.

In sum, the direction of the relationship between income, education, and age of the child in both organized and informal sport were positive. Males were more active in both organized and informal sport than females, and the further west a child resided the more active he/she was in both organized and informal sport (with the anomaly of Quebec). In organized sport, household income (beta=0.18) was the strongest predictor variable, followed by parent’s education (beta=0.16), gender (beta =0.15), and regional differences (beta=0.14) ($p<.001$ for all variables). The weakest predictor variable was age of the child (beta=0.09, $p<.001$). In informal sport, gender (beta=0.12) was the strongest predictor variable, followed by regional differences (beta=0.08), household income (beta=0.07), and age of the child (beta=0.07) ($p<.001$ in all variables). The weakest predictor variable was parent’s education (beta=0.04, $p<.05$).

It should be noted that the beta coefficients, and thus the variance explained by all of the variables in the models ($r^2$) are quite low. Clearly there are a number of other factors associated with this unexplained vari-
### Table 2 Canadian Children’s Sport Participation by Household Income, Education, Gender, Age, and Region: Without and With Controls (ANOVA via Multiple Classification Analysis) for Social Background Factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor Variables</th>
<th>Organized Sport</th>
<th>Informal Sport</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NC&lt;sup&gt;2&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>WC&lt;sup&gt;3&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grand mean</strong></td>
<td>1.86</td>
<td>2.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HOUSEHOLD INCOME</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than $15,000</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>1.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$15,000 to $19,999</td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td>1.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$20,000 to $29,999</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>1.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$30,000 to $39,999</td>
<td>1.70</td>
<td>1.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$40,000+</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beta/Stat. Sig.&lt;sup&gt;4&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>0.18/***</td>
<td>0.07/***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EDUCATION</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Completed High School</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>1.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed High School</td>
<td>1.79</td>
<td>1.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some Post-Secondary</td>
<td>1.84</td>
<td>1.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree/Diploma</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>1.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beta/Stat. Sig.</td>
<td>0.16/***</td>
<td>0.04/*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GENDER</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1.99</td>
<td>1.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1.74</td>
<td>1.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beta/Stat. Sig.</td>
<td>0.15/***</td>
<td>0.12/***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AGE OF CHILD</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>1.77</td>
<td>1.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>1.85</td>
<td>1.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 years</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>1.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 years</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>1.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beta/Stat. Sig.</td>
<td>0.09/***</td>
<td>0.07/***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>REGION</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maritimes</td>
<td>1.79</td>
<td>1.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quebec</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td>1.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>1.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prairies</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>1.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Columbia</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>2.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beta/Stat. Sig.</td>
<td>0.14/***</td>
<td>0.08/***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>1</sup> Controls are for gender, age, region.
<sup>2</sup> NC=No controls.
<sup>3</sup> WC=With controls.
<sup>4</sup> Statistical Significance: ***=p<.001; **=p<.01; *=p<.05
Discussion

The findings here make a significant contribution to our understanding of the relationship between socio-economic status, as measured by household income and parent’s education, and children’s participation in organized and informal sport. The findings show that socio-economic factors influence children’s participation in sport; and particularly organized sport. These factors have less of an impact on children’s participation in informal sport. Cultural factors such as gender and regional differences appear to be more influential on children’s participation in informal sport.

Organized Sport

Children’s participation in organized sport was most strongly predicted by household income and parent’s education. The higher the household income and parent’s education, the higher the child’s participation in organized sport. Income was the strongest predictor, suggesting that the financial demands associated with organized sport can create inequity in Canadian children’s opportunity to participate in organized sport. Indeed, parents with lower incomes facilitate their children’s participation in organized sport less often. This is reasonable when taking into account the financial investment associated with the cost of participating in organized sport programs. The findings here support other studies that have shown registration costs and/or transportation as significant barriers to children’s participation in sport (Havitz, Morden, and Samdahl 2004, Lareau 2003, Thompson, Rehman, and Humbert 2005). The need for reliable private transportation (especially as it relates to “select” or “rep” teams who often travel great distances) and the inflexible work schedules that are often congruent with lower socio-economic jobs, may create a social divide in the families who are able to support organized sporting opportunities for their children and those who cannot.

The recognition of the direct costs (i.e. registration fees) as well as the “hidden” indirect costs (i.e. equipment, transportation, tournament fees, hotel rooms, uniforms) needs to be acknowledged and taken into consideration with program implementation to ensure accessibility to all children. For children who come from families already on social assistance, the stigma associated with asking for additional financial assistance is often too much. In a research project conducted in the province of Ontario, Havitz, Morden, and Samdahl (2004) noted, “Some participants
in the study felt that a stigma existed simply from being unemployed; to approach a leisure agency looking for special treatment would potentially exacerbate that stigma” (173). Consequently, with very limited financial resources to cover the rent and bills, many parents on social assistance chose not to facilitate their children’s participation in organized sport activities. Furthermore, those who did attempt to access subsidization programs felt that at times the “red tape” and administrative process were too much of a barrier to overcome. Accordingly, easier access to fee assistance programs, development of inclusive sport policies and social marketing may help all children experience the benefits that organized sport provides.

Gender differences also showed significant independence as the predictors of children’s participation in organized sport. This would suggest that not only financial implications influence participation, but also cultural factors. Of considerable note (and concern) was that almost half (49%) of females “almost never” participated in organized sport. Gender remains a significant issue in children’s organized sport participation. Even with policy and legislation aimed at equality for females, male participation rates continue to be higher than those of females (Raudsepp and Virra 2000, Shakib and Dunbar 2004). This may be representative of a disconnect from policy to practice, and inadequacies found in the quantity and quality of opportunities provided for girls at the community level. In a study conducted in Nova Scotia, Thompson, Rehman, and Humbert (2005) found that “girls only” hockey and baseball teams were not available for the girls and this became a barrier to participation. With limited facility resources (i.e. ice pads and fields) gender differences may also be reflective of the realities of practice and game schedules and females being allocated less “favourable” time slots compared to their male counterparts.

Gender differences in children’s organized sport participation may also be shaped by parents’ decision-making at the family-unit level. Once again, despite policy and legislation aimed at equality for females, perceptions and traditional gender ideologies reinforcing the notion that participation in sport is more important for sons than it is for daughters, may influence parental support and encouragement based upon gender (Coakley 2006). This notion is particularly important as the “family is a primary socializing agent where gender roles are learned” (Shakib and Dunbar 2004, 275) and may have long-term implications for sport participation patterns.
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Informal Sport

Children’s participation in informal sport was predicted by socio-economic status as measured by household income and parent’s education. The higher the income and parent’s education, the higher the child’s participation in informal sport. However, relative to organized sport, it had a weaker relationship. The positive relationship between socio-economic status and rates of participation in informal sport may seem counterintuitive to Lareau’s (2002, 2003) study, showing that children from lower status families are highly encouraged to participate in “natural growth” activities, that promote unorganized and unstructured moments of play. However, this may be partially explained by some valuable explanations in the literature that suggest why social differentiation occurs.

Parent’s informal sport participation may be a predictor of children’s informal (and organized) sport participation. Higher educated parents are more physically active themselves (Donnelly and Harvey 1999, Sport Canada 2000) thus serving as positive role models for their children. Scheerder, Vanreusel, Taks, and Renson (2005) suggest that “young people’s (non-) participation in leisure-time sports is strongly related to parental attitudes and behaviour with respect to sports” (22). Social learning theory provides one explanation of this type of sport related behaviour, which is facilitated by children’s role-modeling and imitation of their parent’s informal sport activities and interests, or conversely, lack of activities and interests (Shakib and Dunbar 2004).

Further, higher levels of education not only lead to higher levels of income, but also to greater knowledge about the potential benefits of involvement in sport and physical activity. This increased knowledge may also play a role in explaining the positive relationship between involvement in both levels of sport (organized and informal) and parent’s education. Donnelly and Harvey (1999) argue that social awareness programs, such as ParticipACTION, and Active Living are ineffective in breaking down social class barriers, and thus, these programs may have little impact in educating lower status families on the benefits of informal sport participation. This may be a systemic issue of middle-class bureaucrats (Donnelly and Harvey 1999) failing to recognize the “importance of social class as an organizing principle of social life, largely because for them class is an invisible force that makes everyone look pretty much the same” (Kimmel and Messner 2001, x). As Donnelly and Harvey (1999) and Frisby et al. (2001) noted, individuals from the working-class must be included in the original design of programs, in more than just a token role, if the message is to be effective in its meaning and reach more than just middle-class parents and children.
Gender was the strongest predictor variable for informal sport participation, followed by regional differences, household income, age of the child, and parent’s education. As the strongest predictor variable, gender influenced children’s participation in informal sport as boys in particular were more active. As suggested earlier with respect to organized sport, this may be attributed to gender stereotypes that are learned and reproduced within the individual family unit with sons’ informal sport participation being encouraged more than the daughters’ (Waser and Passavant 1997). It may also be indicative of broader socio-cultural structures reflecting “patriarchal power relations and ideologies about masculinity and femininity” (Shaw 1999, 272) and appropriate sport participation. In light of the known physical, emotional and social benefits associated with children’s participation in sport, this situation is problematic and continued social awareness and education is necessary to ensure the positive development and maturation of all children, regardless of their gender.

A limitation of this study is in understanding the context of with whom children participate in informal sport activities. Middle-class children may be more apt to participate in informal activities under parental supervision within the family context as opposed to on their own or with their friends. As Lareau (2002) suggests, “middle-class children are less likely to learn how to fill “empty time” with their own creative play, leading to a dependence on their parents to solve experiences of boredom” (774). In Belgium, Scheerder, Taks, Vanreusel, and Renson (2005) reported that boys spend time in sports activities in the context of friends (51%), followed by family (31.8%) and alone (31.3%). In comparison, girls spend time in sports activities in the context of friends (46.9%), followed by family (31.7%) and alone (23.9%). Canadian research examining the context in which children participate in informal sport (i.e. alone, with parents, siblings, or friends) would be beneficial in further understanding children’s informal sporting practices.

Regional Differences

Similar to the Curtis and McPherson (1987) study on adult involvement in sport, and White and Wilson’s (1999) study on sport spectatorship, regional differences showed significant independence as the predictors of children’s participation in both organized and informal sport. The further west a child resides, the higher the participation in both organized and informal sport. This would suggest the possibility of regional subcultures, social attitudes, and unique regional norms towards the value of children’s participation in sport (see Curtis and McPherson, 1987). In part it also addresses White and Wilson’s (1999) findings that high levels of amateur spectatorship in the west may be explained by high levels of children’s organized sport participation.
However, of particular interest in this study was the anomaly identified in Quebec, for both organized and informal sport, in which this province clearly deviated from the patterns. Quebec had the highest proportion of inactive children in organized sport. Conversely, Quebec had the second highest proportion of active children in informal sport. This would imply that Quebec’s subculture places a higher value in supporting children’s participation in informal sport than competitive sport, relative to the trends noted across Canada. Future research would be insightful in examining why this regional subculture in particular, supports and encourages informal sport more than organized sport. Is it a reflection of the community and family value systems? Or is it an outcome of provincial policies, programs, and facilities that provide or inhibit opportunities for participation?

Conclusion

Even with policy and legislation aimed at equality for children in accessing sport through funding programs and gender equity initiatives, clearly, Canada remains a country where social divisions exist. Disparity between those with higher and lower household income and education levels, gender, and regional sub-cultural differences is apparent. As demonstrated in this study, the imbalance of children’s sport participation may be reflective of the larger inequity of Canadian families’ access to social resources and illustrates the complicated and problematic social issues facing its population. As Donnelly and Harvey (1999) noted the “widespread myth that Canada is a classless society, that we are all middle class now” (40) has certainly been blemished, but through continued social awareness and sport program development, cognizant of the varying needs of all Canadians, barriers to sport participation may be diminished.

Although the findings in this study are significant, they raise several questions and suggestions for future research in the exploration of cultural meanings as they relate to parental influences, gender and regional differences and children’s participation in organized and informal sport. Further, research also needs to examine structural factors such as federal and provincial policies, programs, and facilities that may encourage or inhibit children’s participation in sport. Easier access to fee assistance programs, development of inclusive sport policies and social marketing may help all children experience the benefits that organized sport and informal sport provides. Investigation into these areas may help minimize the imbalance and provide a level playing field for all children.
References


Integration of Paralympic Athletes into Athletics Canada

Abstract
This paper explores the integration of Paralympic athletes into Athletics Canada. Highlighting the charitable foundation of sport for the disabled as well as the issue of classification, this paper offers insight into the habitus of Paralympic athletics as a key factor influencing this integration process. Integration is conceptualized on a continuum of compliance where true integration is the goal and segregation is frowned upon. Using ethnographic data collected in participant observation roles as an athlete, administrator, and journalist, the paper illuminates the success of the Paralympics in capturing the imagination of the Canadian public. At the same time, the process of integration within Athletics Canada has been less than successful because the achievement of athletes with disabilities is not as valued, by those who administer the sport, as those of their “able” counterparts. To this end the integration process within Athletic Canada appears to be stuck at the uncomfortable point of accommodation, which means that a truly integrated sport system is still a goal to be achieved.

Résumé
Ce document examine l’intégration des athlètes paralympiques à Athlétisme Canada. Ce document, qui fait ressortir l’œuvre de charité que constitue le sport pour les personnes handicapées ainsi que la question du classement, présente un aperçu de l’habitus de l’athlétisme paralympique comme facteur clé de ce processus d’intégration. L’intégration est conçue comme un continuum de conformité où la véritable intégration est l’objectif et la ségrégation est mal acceptée. Au moyen de données ethnographiques qu’il a recueillies à titre d’observateur comme athlète, administrateur et journaliste, l’auteur de l’étude démontre le succès qu’ont remporté les paralympiques en faisant appel à l’imagination du public canadien. Par ailleurs, le processus d’intégration à Athlétisme Canada n’a pas été un aussi grand succès parce que les réalisations des athlètes handicapés ne sont pas valorisées par les administrateurs du sport, comme celles de leurs homologues non handicapés. À cette fin, le processus d’intégration au sein d’Athlétisme Canada semble se limiter
à une certaine tolérance; par conséquent, l’objectif d’un système sportif vraiment intégré n’est pas encore atteint.

Introduction

This paper offers an insight into the difficulties associated with integrating Paralympic sport into Athletics Canada. Athletics Canada is the National Sports Organization (NSO) for track and field athletics and, as such, receives core funding from Sport Canada, which is a branch of the International and Intergovernmental Affairs and Sport Sector within the federal Department of Canadian Heritage. Publication in 2006 of No Accidental Champions (Canadian Sport Centres 2006) highlights the importance the government is placing upon the integration of elite sport for the disabled within Sport Canada. The development of policy in Canada that will lead to the integration of sport for the disabled into mainstream sport reflects the International Paralympic Committee’s (IPC) desire for this process, which it has been expressing for some time (Labanowich 1988, Steadward 1996, Vanlandewijck and Chappel 1996). A policy shift away from a disability centred model of sporting provision at the elite level within Canada aims to enhance the competitive opportunities as well as educating the public about [dis]ability as it relates to high performance sport (Steadward 1996).

Canada has played an important role in the transformation of the Paralympics from a movement focused on opportunity and participation to one where excellence through high performance training is the sole aim. Indeed, the first president of the IPC was Canadian Dr. Robert Steadward and his tenure in office (1989–2001) saw the IPC forge closer links with the Olympic Movement. Benefits include long-term financial support, access to high quality facilities in which to hold the Paralympics, and countless other commercial benefits. An agreement between the IOC and IPC was signed in 2001 to formalize these closer ties. In 2003 this agreement was amended to transfer “broadcasting and marketing responsibilities of the 2008, 2010, and 2012 Paralympic Games to the Organizing Committee of these Olympic and Paralympic Games” (IPC 2003, 1). Agreements such as this will ease financial concerns for the IPC and allow the Olympics and Paralympics to be marketed as a single entity, thus transforming sport for the disabled from a pastime to a high performance sporting spectacle (Howe 2004).

Attempts toward such integration, both in Canada and in an international context, have occurred relatively recently. This paper uses ethnographic data to examine the integration process currently being undertaken by Athletics Canada to determine whether or not truly inclusive NSOs are becoming a reality. Ethnographic methods have been successfully adopted in the fields of anthropology and sociology (Bernard...
Primary to this approach is the use of participant observation where I collected what are commonly called field notes. These notes are effectively a diary of observations that are later interpreted and analyzed. Field notes are used as data to help the ethnographer piece together the cultural world under investigation. In the case of this particular research, I adopted various participant observer roles within Paralympic athletics (as athlete, administrator, and journalist) during which I took field notes. The semi-structured interview is another ethnographic tool that has been adopted to collect the data on which this paper is based.

By linking field notes, interviews, and material collected from the print media, this paper aims to show that the habitus of Paralympic athletics has an influence upon the process of integration within Athletics Canada. First this paper will briefly examine the use of the concept of integration as it relates to sports.

Integration within Sport

The integration process that is being undertaken by Sport Canada is seen as important if an inclusive society is to be achieved. Integration, broadly speaking, is the equal access and acceptance of all in the community. Some scholars have distanced themselves from discussion of integration since the concept implies that the disabled population are required to change or be normalized in order to join the mainstream (Oliver 1996, Ravaud and Stiker 2001). In other words the concept of integration requires members of the disabled community to adopt an “able” disposition in order to become members of the mainstream. However, scholars working within sport studies have adopted a concept of integration that is useful in the current exploration of Athletics Canada. Sørensen and Kahrs (2006), in their study of integration of sport for the disabled within the Norwegian sport system, have developed a “continuum of compliance” that aims to explore the success of their nation’s inclusive sport system. Within this study, integration, where both athletes with disabilities and those from the mainstream adapt their cultural systems, is referred to as true integration. Where athletes with a disability are forced to adopt the mainstream culture without any attempt at a reciprocal action is seen as assimilation. Finally the least integrated model is seen as segregation, where neither group is willing to transform its core cultural values in spite of being jointly managed within the sport system.

For the purpose of this paper it is the process of successful integration, which allows an inclusive society to be established, that is most relevant. If society is going to become more inclusive “it is necessary for existing economic, social and political institutions to be challenged and modified.
This means that disabled people [sic] are not simply brought into society as it currently exists but rather that society is, in some ways, required to change” (Northway 1997, 165). True integration therefore has to be undertaken in order to establish an inclusive NSO.

This conceptualization of integration reflects recent work that argues that integration can be effectively understood as an outcome of an inclusive society (van de Ven et al. 2005). More specifically it is argued that “[i]ntegration occurs through a process of interaction between a person with a disability and others in society” (van de Ven et al. 2005, 319). In other words, it is the process of interaction between an individual with a disability who possesses his/her own attitude toward integration, strategies, and social roles and others in society who adopt certain attitudes and images of people with disabilities. As a result factors that influence the success of the integration process are both personal and social but also include an element of support provision that will be distinct depending on the severity of the individual’s disability (van de Ven et al. 2005; see also Kelly 2001).

It is possible, for example, to see true integration as a literal intermixing that entails the culture of both groups adapting to a new cultural environment. Dijkers uses the term community integration to articulate his concept of true integration. Community integration, according to Dijkers:

is the acquiring of age, gender, and culture-appropriate roles, statuses and activities, including in(ter)dependence in decision making, and productive behaviours performed as part of multivariate relationships with family, friends, and others in natural community settings. (1999, 41)

True integration therefore is “a multifaceted and difficult process, which although it could be defined at a policy level rhetoric, [is] much less easy to define in reality” (Cole 2005, 341). The difficulty when exploring the success of integration policies is that the balance between the philosophical position and the reality (in this case a cultural sport environment) is not always clear. Simply exploring the policy landscape means that any interpretation is devoid of explicit cultural influences, though all policy is a cultural artefact. This being said, the aim of integration is to allow the disabled to take a full and active role within society. The ideal would be:

[a] world in which all human beings, regardless of impairment, age, gender, social class or minority ethnic status, can co-exist as equal members of the community, secure in the knowledge that their needs will be met and that their views
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will be recognized, respected and valued. It will be a very different world from the one in which we now live. (Oliver and Barnes 1998, 102)

Within the context of high performance sport this aim is hard to achieve. By its very nature, elite sport is selective, as Bowen suggests: “Within professional sport, though, all but the super-able ‘suffer’ from ‘exclusion or segregation’” (2002, 71). How then can we establish whether integration has actually been a success within an institution such as Athletics Canada? In reality “sport isolates individuals, but only those who are super-able. The rest are left to the realm of the minor leagues, masters’ leagues, local tournaments, or backyard pick-up games” (Bowen 2002, 71). This understanding of sport makes it difficult to address the issue of integration. It is important, however, that Sport Canada achieves true integration at the high performance end of the spectrum in order to send a clear message regarding the positioning of people with disabilities within Canadian society (Canadian Heritage 2000, 2002, Green and Houlihan 2005, Canadian Sport Centres 2006). In order to fully understand the success or failure of integration within Athletics Canada it is important to explore certain elements of the habitus of sport for the disabled and it is to this issue that the discussion now turns.

Paralympic Athletics Habitus

In the investigation of the social organization of distinctive sporting environments such as the Paralympic Program within Athletics Canada, Bourdieu’s notion of habitus is a useful concept (1977, 1990). Habitus can be understood as habitual, embodied practices that collectively comprise and define a culture. For Bourdieu, habitus informs social action as grammar structures language; allowing for multiple forms of expression through the body, whether that be how the body moves or how it is covered (Bourdieu 1984). Social agents are players in a game, actively working toward achieving a goal with acquired skills and competence but doing so within an established structure of rules, which are only gradually transformed over time. Habitus predisposes action by agents but does not reduce them to a position of complete subservience. In other words habitus is the nexus between the decisions individuals make and the structured environment in which they play a part. In his book, Outline of a Theory of Practice (1977), Bourdieu demonstrates that structured physical activity is a cultural product that is both shaped and transformed by individuals who administer and practice within that framework.

An individual’s habitus is the embodied sediment of every encounter they have had with the social world. It can be used in the present to mould perception, thought, and action to the extent that it has an important role
to play in decisions that an individual might make in future encounters. In this sense actors can be seen not simply to follow rules but also to bend them much in the same way as the work of Merleau-Ponty (1962, 1965) highlights improvisation as being fundamental to an individual’s disposition. Dispositions, or more generally forms of social competence, may be viewed as a product of well-established social environments. While society may be seen as shaping people, it needs individuals’ improvisations from time to time if it is going to evolve. Therefore it is as important to see the body as being as much a product of the self as it is of that society. It is the self that provides improvisation by drawing upon the sediment of previous social encounters.

The theory of practice developed by Bourdieu (1977, 1984, 1990) identifies the nexus between the body and its social environment. In a sporting context, the games metaphor that is employed by Bourdieu (1984, 1990, 1993) highlights the nexus between capital and field. The multiplication of a player’s disposition, their competence (habitus), and the resources at their disposal (capital) in relation to the social environment highlights the social actors’ position in a field. In the particular environment such as sport for the disabled it is the embodied disposition or doxa that enables a social exploration of the distinctive character of sporting habitus.

Within the field of sport for the disabled, one component of this particular habitus is the charitable mandate of International Organizations of Sport for the Disabled (IOSD). Canadian affiliates of the IOSDs—namely the Canadian Amputee Sports Association, Canadian Blind Sports Association, Canadian Cerebral Palsy Sports Association, and Canadian Wheelchair Sports Association, all of which have related provincial organizations—were founded to look after sporting provision for particular groups of people with disabilities. It was the role of the Canadian members of the IOSDs to organize national competitions across the sporting spectrum, as well as select the national squad for various international events. Due in part to the relatively small number of competitors involved in sport for disabled in Canada, the explicit intention of these organizations was the creation of opportunities for people with disabilities to be involved in the practice of sport. As a result, these associations did not have strict performance criteria that athletes had to meet. A charitable ethos that entailed dispensing assistance to people with disabilities through the IOSD network meant that early national teams were made up of many non-elite performers who it was felt “should be given the opportunity” to compete internationally as one official commented.

It was the IOSDs and their predecessors that helped to organize the Paralympic Games from 1960 through to 1988. The fact that these games
were staged at all is a testament to the commitment of those involved with the IOSDs. Official sponsors and suppliers were in short supply and my own personal involvement, and that of all athletes, required us to raise funds to attend the Paralympic Games in 1988. Those who could not raise the funds were replaced by athletes who were less proficient but were better fundraisers. Early Paralympic Games, as a result, placed less emphasis on high performance and more on the opportunity for international participation. This is not to say that elite athletes were not involved, but that participation was the main imperative.

The charitable ethos of the IOSD-led Paralympic Games means that participation (over performance) is still, in part, a central component of Paralympic athletics habitus. Another related element of the habitus is the classification system employed in Paralympic athletics and the debate surrounding it. A complex classification system is the result of the historical development of sport for the disabled (Steadward 1996, Vanlandewijck and Chappel 1996, Daly and Vanlandewijck 1999). The classification system was established by the IOSDs to allow for fair competition, making it somewhat distinct from able-bodied sports provision (Jones and Howe 2005, Howe and Jones 2006). Classification is simply a structure for competition, similar to the system used in boxing, weight lifting, and judo, where competitors perform in different weight categories. Within sport for the disabled, competitors are classified by their body’s degree of function; therefore it is important that the classification process achieves equity in Paralympic sporting practice and enables athletes to compete on a “level playing field” (Sherrill 1999).

As far as the IOC and IPC are concerned, the classification system developed by the IOSDs, and until recently used within sport for the disabled, detracts from the Paralympic Games as a sporting spectacle because it confuses spectators (Steadward 1996, Smith and Thomas 2005). Debates about the legitimacy of various classifications are central to Paralympic habitus and they are also important when considering the integration of athletes with disabilities into mainstream sporting contexts. The Paralympic athletes who receive the greatest exposure are, in fact, the most “able”; that is, the least impaired. Nevertheless, the ethnographic material on which this paper is based highlights the difficulties faced by even the most high-profile athletes in Paralympic sport. Since these individuals are struggling with complete acceptance it is important to remember that others are probably more marginalized than those discussed here.

A classification system, known as integrated functional classification, where athletes with a disability who are members of an IOSD are placed in a competition category regardless of their disability, has been used in most sports since the early 1990s (Howe and Jones 2006). However, there
has been resistance to changing the classification system developed by the IOSD and much of the politics I observed as a member of the IPC Athletics Committee surrounded the issue of how the athletics classification system could be improved. Classification in athletics is based on what disability an athlete has (amputee, blind, cerebral palsy, or wheelchair) and the extent to which the degree of impairment affects the athlete’s physical performance.

The process of classification makes a distinction between the physical potential of athletes and attempts to achieve an equitable environment in competition whereby the successful athletes in each class will have an equal chance of accumulating physical capital (Jones and Howe 2005). In reality, however, there are a number of factors that impact the accumulation of capital (both physical and cultural) in various classifications. The first factor is the number of athletes within a particular event. If there are simply a handful of competitors (a common situation in the most severely impaired classes) then the amount of capital that can be accumulated is limited. In some classes there may only be six athletes from four countries (the IPC minimum for eligible events), which means that winners are less likely to receive the same kudos as an athlete who has defeated twenty competitors. Another important factor, in terms of whether winners ultimately gain capital from their involvement in sport, has to do with the nature and degree of their impairment. In the social environment surrounding elite sport for the disabled there is a hierarchy of “acceptable” impairments within the community of athletes where the most severely impaired are marginalized (Sherrill and Williams 1996, Schell and Rodriguez 2001).

Paralympic athletics habitus has been shown to include both the charitable foundation of the IOSDs and the process of classification within sport for the disabled. Both of these components of the habitus of Paralympic athletics can be seen, in part, as reasons why true integration has been a struggle within Athletics Canada. The remainder of the paper will explore why this is the case.

Paralympic Athletics Comes of Age

Events in Sydney 2000 marked the zenith of the Paralympic movement as the games benefited tremendously from sharing the same organizational structure of the preceding Olympics at the behest of the sports “mad” Australian public. According to athletes and officials, the organization of the games was second to none and the performances within the various sporting arena were of the highest quality—none more so than the women’s T54\(^3\) 800m wheelchair race that captured the attention of the international media. What follows is an extract from a field diary started
Sydney, Australia—October 22, 2000: This evening there was a classic confrontation on the track at Stadium Australia. Just weeks after the media frenzy that marks the Olympic Games, the Paralympics are producing their own drama. Unlike twenty years ago, a large collection of the world’s press are present and tonight one of the blue ribbon events of the athletics program—the women’s T54 800m wheelchair final—was taking place. The women’s 800m and the men’s 1500m wheelchair races have a special place in the history and development of high performance sport for the disabled. Since 1984 these events have held demonstration status at the Olympic Games. By 1993 the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) also included these events as demonstrations in their bi-annual world championships. These two wheelchair races have done a great deal to showcase the ability of Paralympians. Performances produced by the athletes involved are superior in terms of time achieved for the distance in comparison to ambulant Olympian. For the public this may be the only opportunity they get to see Paralympic athletes in action, as the demonstration events are slotted into the regular Olympic program.

For the first time the Olympic and Paralympic Games were marketed to the world as a single entity. The enthusiasm for the Paralympics by the sport “mad” Australian public has been great, with over a million tickets sold across all venues. This evening the Australian Paralympic team’s answer to Cathy Freeman—Louise Sauvage—is racing the 800m and, as with Freeman, Australia expects! Sauvage has been so dominant in women’s wheelchair racing that since 1993 she has won every IAAF and Olympic demonstration event. The event today was destined to be another reaffirmation of her physical superiority over the other elite women. Having won the Olympic demonstration weeks earlier in Sydney, the Paralympic outing would be a “wheel” in the park.

The most captivating quality of sport is its ability to surprise. In the 800m this evening, eight of the world’s most talented women wheelchair racers compete in a keenly contested final—powerful torsos draped in the latest Lycra racing gear in a luscious rainbow of national colours. From the waist up these athletes are as chiselled as any on the planet. This is definitely not an event for the faint-hearted. Rivalry here is as vicious as anywhere in sport. On the first lap there was some jostling, as can be expected in all 800m races, and this is one of the reasons that the IPC stipulates that wheelchair races that are not run in lanes (800m – marathon)
require all athletes to wear a helmet. The physical nature of this race was not, therefore, unexpected.

Down the back straight an accident occurred behind the leading athletes, including Sauvage. There was another surprise for the partisan crowd: Canadian Chantal Petitclerc soundly defeated Sauvage. Petitclerc, while a vastly experienced athlete, had seldom managed to get the better of Sauvage and never, until this point, on the world stage. Sauvage had finished second, the look of despair on her face evidence of how much the defeat hurt. In contrast the celebration of Petitclerc conveyed delight at realizing a dream. In tomorrow’s paper Petitclerc will be quoted as saying, “I dream about Louise more than I do my boyfriend,” a clear indication of how much this victory meant to her.

The drama did not stop there. The host nation was not happy. Australia filed a protest to have the race re-run because one of their athletes, Holly Ladmore, had been involved in the crash. Race referees disqualified Ireland’s Patrice Dockery for leaving her lane before the break in the back straight and set the race to be re-run in a few days time. Outraged Canadian officials appealed the decision knowing full well that the Australians protested because Sauvage had lost the race. Canada’s appeal sighted the fact that the crash had occurred behind the chief protagonists. A long and frustrating debate ensued into the small hours of the next morning. Canada’s appeal was ultimately upheld and the result was confirmed as official.

The result of the women’s T54 800m at the Sydney Paralympic Games can be seen as a watershed for several reasons. It was the first time that rivalries took centre stage at the Paralympics—often seen as a hallmark of professional sport that is worthy of public consumption (Whannel 1992, Smart 2005). As rivals Petitclerc and Sauvage fit into the classic athletics mould made famous by Englishmen Sebastian Coe and Steve Ovett at the 1980 Moscow Olympics. Petitclerc is small and graceful, not unlike Coe, and Sauvage is a powerhouse with immense physical talent, one of the chief ingredients attributed to the success of Ovett. The victory in this event and the controversy surrounding it brought Petitclerc to a much wider audience and numerous sponsorship deals followed.

After the surprise victory by Petitclerc, Sauvage continued to have success on the IAAF stage, winning demonstration events in both 2001 and 2003. Petitclerc proved to herself and her fans at the 2002 Commonwealth Games that her victory over Sauvage in Sydney two years earlier was not a “flash in the pan.” The Manchester Commonwealth
Games marked another crucial development in Paralympic sport. Petitclerc, Sauvage, and others in the women’s 800m wheelchair were competing for the first time in a mainstream athletics event that had full medal status. After her second victory over Sauvage, Petitclerc was clear that it was the status of the race that was the real achievement: “It is a very special medal. No matter who might have won this gold medal, it would have been an historic occasion” (Kalbfuss 2002). Without question this victory in Manchester was a personal achievement for Petitclerc. However, the historical importance of this event in achieving elite status for wheelchair athletes is of greater significance, in terms of progress towards true integration on the international stage.

Since the 2000 Paralympic Games, Petitclerc has been treated as a hero by the Canadian press and applauded by the public as a role model for high performance athletes across the country. In relation to other Canadian Paralympic champions she is, in part, the acceptable face of sport for the disabled—photogenic, charismatic, high functioning, and an international winner. By its very nature, however, some athletes who are world and Paralympic champions are excluded from the media spotlight. Petitclerc is a very able user of a wheelchair and while she is one of the best within her classification there are other Canadians, also great champions, who compete in different classes and who do not get the same degree of attention. As a result, issues and debates surrounding classification continue to be of concern (Wu and Williams 1999). The lack of equity of treatment of champions is just one issue facing Athletics Canada in its attempt to integrate athletes with a disability into its mainstream programs.

Integration within Athletics Canada

The move of elite disabled track and field athletics into Athletics Canada was preceded by the integration of swimmers with a disability into Swimming Canada in 1994. In 1997 high performance wheelchair users—members of the Canadian Wheelchair Sports Association—became part of Athletics Canada. The other national affiliates of the IOSDs, who all continue to be funded by Sport Canada, entered into negotiation with Athletics Canada in 1998 to have their elite athletes integrated. By 2002 high performance athletes who were the responsibility of the IOSDs were included officially within the framework of Athletics Canada, though they had become unofficial members of Athletics Canada while negotiations continued with the various disability sports organizations in the late 1990s.

The advent of a Paralympic manager within Athletics Canada in 1999 was facilitated in part because of Sport Canada’s desire to see sports inte-
grated across its programs. At this stage the role and responsibility of the manager was to liaise with Sport Canada primarily about funding (carding) for the athletes. The Athletes Assistance Program (AAP), which has, in various forms, provided financial support to elite able-bodied athletes for several decades, was now available to Paralympians. This funding program is designed to offset some of the costs of training but, unless the athlete is supported by family members, does not facilitate full-time athlete status. Nevertheless, opportunities such as this within high performance sport for the disabled represent a coming of age for Paralympic sport. The adoption of more comprehensive funding for athletes with a disability within Athletics Canada is also an important step in validating these athletes as “high performance.” To many within the Paralympic program, acceptance within the mainstream able-bodied organization and its funding scheme is seen as justifying the hard work and energy put into their training. A Paralympian who has competed at the international level for almost a decade stated:

Finally after years of hard training I am getting my reward. When I started training Paralympic athletes were not considered worthy of financial support. I believe the fact that AAP is available to athletes with a disability goes some way to showing our acceptance within the Sport Canada system.

The desire to organize a separate high performance program for Paralympic athletes within Athletics Canada suggests that true integration (Sørensen and Kahrs 2006) is an issue that has not been properly tackled. There is a perception within the Paralympic program that some athletes gain the benefits of carding and support from Athletics Canada while not having to work as hard as others because the classification system advantages some impairment groups. A veteran of several Paralympic Games elaborates:

It really does not seem fair that people such as them should get funding. I mean look at the physical state of [him]! Are we to believe that he has done the appropriate type of training? His gut is offensive. If I were to let myself go like that I would be nowhere near fit enough to make the team. What does it say about the depth of his class when he can get carded and be in such bad physical shape. To some of us the fact that [he] is part of the Athletics Canada program makes a mockery of the term “high performance.” (SOURCE?)

The issue highlighted above is of concern to a great many of the carded athletes. In other words, carding should be a perk for those who train seri-
Integration of Paralympic Athletes into Athletics Canada

ously. In essence a carded athlete should see training as a full-time occupation, in spite of the fact that carding money alone is not enough to sustain an individual with no family, friends, or sponsors to rely on. If some athletes are not committed to training, their carding becomes devalued. Another athlete expressed similar sentiments but was also clear about the differences between Paralympians.

I do not care whether some athletes can win medals without training. It seems to me that if you are being funded by Sport Canada you have a responsibility to be as well trained as possible. I would say that at least a quarter of the team need to train harder. They simply haven’t got the commitment that I think a high performance athlete should have. (SOURCE?)

To many of the athletes, being carded reduces the financial burden of training. However, this carries an important responsibility. Receipt of the money necessarily imposes an obligation on the athlete to devote considerable time to training. In this respect the athletes that are funded by Athletics Canada can be divided by their commitment to performing at their best, with all that entails, and those who are simply taking the money. Athletics Canada currently has forty AAP cards to give out to athletes on the Paralympic program and observational and interview data suggests that anywhere up to fifteen percent of these athletes are not training as effectively as they could be. This may be a direct result of many of the athletes being “products” of the IOSD disability specific system, the sediments of which still exist in Paralympic athletics habitus. A lack of communication between the national coaches that are part of the Paralympic program and athletes might be exacerbated by the fact that Athletics Canada only looks after high performance disabled athletes. While Athletics Canada maintains a degree of responsibility for grassroots development in mainstream athletics (Green and Houlihan 2005) they have limited contact with potential athletes for the Paralympic program. This can make talent identification problematic and if the Paralympic program needs to card a certain number of athletes (or lose the funding) they will return to known athletes who may be a product of the participation model established by the IOSDs.

The image of an athlete with a disability who does not undertake training at the level expected of a high performance athlete can have negative consequences for the organization of Paralympic programs. Structurally the Paralympic program at Athletics Canada is included within the provision of services but it is clearly not truly integrated.

Athletics Canada is organized broadly into four event areas: endurance, speed, power, and Paralympic. In other words, an athlete with a disability
who runs 5000m is the responsibility of the Paralympic Program. If the Paralympic program was truly integrated the event areas might replace the Paralympic area with wheelchair racing as the latter is distinctive to running. Athletes would then be the responsibility of their own athletic sub-discipline. To further highlight the lack of integration, athletes profiled on the organization’s webpage are also highlighted by their impairment group. By implication, a javelin thrower with cerebral palsy is not of the same status as his or her “able” equivalent.

The status of the Paralympic program within Athletics Canada does not currently represent true integration. Following Sørensen and Kahrs (2006), the system at Athletics Canada can be seen as a form of integration that is somewhere between assimilation and segregation. This is demonstrated again by Chantal Petitclerc who had an excellent athletics season in 2004, winning the Olympic demonstration T54 wheelchair 800m. Several weeks later at the Paralympic Games, Petitclerc broke three world and one Paralympic record on the way to winning all five races she contested. The phenomenal performance of Petitclerc on the track meant that the media spotlight intensified. At the end of this remarkable year she was honoured internationally at the sixth annual Laureus World Sports Awards as the best disabled athlete, by news magazine Maclean’s as “Canadian of the Year,” and voted “Woman of the Year” by Canadian women’s magazine Chatelaine. After such accolades, Petitclerc was “honoured” by Athletics Canada by being jointly made “Athlete of the Year.” Petitclerc refused to accept the award she was to share with 100m hurdler Perdita Felicien, a world-class athlete and world indoor champion who fell at the start of her final in Athens.

**Accommodation of the Paralympic Program**

While the public in Canada celebrated Petitclerc’s success, there are still problems related to the integration of Paralympic athletes into mainstream athletics. A lack of integration manifests itself in such a way that Sørensen and Kahr’s (2006) typology of integration, which can be seen as a continuum between true integration and segregation needs to be further expanded. Between assimilation and segregation is where Athletics Canada’s current integration model stands. This position can be termed “accommodation” because, although there is little acceptance within Athletics Canada of the value associated with the Paralympic program, elite athletes with a disability are still governed by Athletics Canada. In spite of Petitclerc’s triumphant 2004 season, the joint award of Athlete of the Year devalued her achievements and demonstrates the second class status of the Paralympic Program. She said of the award,
To me, it’s really a symptom that [Athletics Canada] can’t evaluate the value of a Paralympic medal—that it’s easier to win a Paralympic medal than an Olympic medal. That may have been true 15 years ago. That’s not the case any more. (Wong 2004)

In the events in which Petitclerc competes, the depth of the field is as great as any in able-bodied athletics. At the Olympic Games and other mainstream track and field athletics events there are only ever a handful of likely winners of the top prize. At the Paralympic Games the only difference is that the winners are drawn from nations that are often the most technologically advanced, particularly in wheelchair racing. The problem, according to Patrick Jarvis, former president of the Canadian Paralympic Committee and one of the few former Paralympians in a position of significant power within the movement, is that:

We get many supportive comments as Paralympians. But as soon as you start to incur in their [able-bodied athletes] territory, being respected just as equal athletes and you threaten to win some of their awards, a lot are still uncomfortable with [disability]. (Christie 2004)

If the shoe had been on the other foot and Felicien had won her race and Petitclerc had not won all she contested would the honour have gone to both athletes? Presumably not.

Conclusion

In spite of Canada being at the forefront of human rights legislation regarding discrimination on the grounds of disability, true integration at all levels of sport is clearly not happening. In 1982 the Canadian Government enacted the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which includes disability as a prohibited ground for discrimination. On November 25, 2003, the Secretary of State for Physical Activity and Sport, Paul DeVillers, announced the creation of a working group to examine the issues related to sport and disability. This raises questions about Sport Canada. Why has such a group been launched over two decades after it was illegal to discriminate against people with a disability in Canada? Perhaps the following statement made by an Athletics Canada official during an international event in 2005 highlights the struggle that the Paralympic program faces: “You guys are almost as serious as the able-bodied program.” (SOURCE?)

To the public, the integration of Paralympic athletes within the matrix of Athletics Canada may be seen as a statement of a progressive nation.
Nevertheless, integration within Athletics Canada has not been complete and, as a result, heightens the social division between the able and the disabled within high performance sport in Canada. While Athletics Canada has attempted to integrate athletes with a disability by branding them as products of their organization, these gestures have done little to address the inequities within the organization that favours the “able” athletes. Although the processes of accommodating the Paralympic Athletics Program within Athletics Canada has been relatively successful, integration or the intermixing of persons previously segregated has not.

References


Integration of Paralympic Athletes into Athletics Canada

vан де Вен, Л., М. Пост, Л. де Витте, и В. ван ден Хевел, “It Takes Two to Tango:


**Endnotes**

1. It has been widely accepted within disability studies circles that a person-first approach should be adopted when addressing athletes with a disability. In this paper I have stuck to this convention except when referring to sport as an institution. In such cases I use the phrase “sport for the disabled” in stead of “disability sport” because through my research it has become clear that sporting provision for the disabled is part of what might be labelled a “disability industry” (Albrecht and Bury 2001). Therefore, because Paralympic sport is run largely by the “able” the phrase “sport for the disabled” seems appropriate.

2. I was a Paralympic athlete from 1985 until 2003, and was an athletics technical official (1996–2003). In 2004 I worked in Athens as a journalist reporting on the sport of athletics. Within all of these roles I was able to take numerous notes and, as a result of my participation, was able to sustain a position in the field that facilitated the data collection for this paper.

3. T54 is an event classification. The “T” says that this is a track event. The “5” says that it is an event for a wheelchair athlete and the “4” means that the athletes is a highly mobile user of a wheelchair.

Judy Davidson

Homophobia, Fundamentalism, and Canadian Tolerance: Enabling Gay Games III in Vancouver

Abstract

Gay Games III were held in Vancouver in August 1990. This paper analyzes the effects of three different moments of homophobic backlash faced by organizers of that event. While quiet institutional homophobia might have been tolerated, public representations of blatant homophobia could be mobilized by the organizers of Gay Games III to their advantage. The effects of a hateful campaign paradoxically functioned as an interesting condition of possibility for Gay Games' credibility. I then suggest that the limitations of these liberal strategies were shown up by the fractures within local lesbian and gay communities, demonstrating the weaknesses of accepting tolerance as a limit to the possible.

Résumé

Les troisièmes Jeux Gais ont eu lieu à Vancouver en août 1990. Ce document analyse les effets de trois moments différents du ressac homophobe auquel ont fait face les organisateurs de cet événement. Même si l’homophobie institutionnelle discrète aurait pu être tolérée, les organisateurs de ces jeux ont pu tourner à leur avantage les représentations publiques de l’homophobie flagrante. Les effets d’une campagne de haine ont paradoxalement été favorables à la possibilité de tenir des Jeux Gais crédibles. Je crois donc que les fractures observées dans les communautés lesbienne et gaie locales ont fait ressortir les limites de ces stratégies libérales en démontrant les failles de l’acceptation de la tolérance comme limite du possible.

Between August 4 and 11, 1990, the City of Vancouver played host to that year’s largest international athletic event—Celebration ’90: Gay Games III and Cultural Events. Over 7,000 participants and over 12,000 spectators took part in the multi-day festival, which celebrated lesbian and gay pride through an athletic and cultural spectacle. It was the first time the Gay Games were not held in their “birthplace” in San Francisco or in the
United States. Gay Games III in 1990 were also the test run event for the newly formed Federation of Gay Games (FGG), which worked in coordination with the local Vancouver organizing committee, the Metropolitan Vancouver Arts and Athletics Association (MVAAA). As outlined in their mission statement, the primary purpose of the Federation of Gay Games is “to foster and augment the self-respect of gay women and men throughout the world and to engender respect and understanding from the non-gay world through the medium of organized, noncompetitive cultural/artistic and athletics activities” (FGG Bylaws 1989). Such a statement follows on the trajectory of Tom Waddell, the Gay Games founder, who had fashioned the Games to provide opportunities for gay and lesbian athletes to be “out” in a competitive sporting environment, so as to not have to hide or deny their sexuality (Davidson 2003).

This position works against the general orientation of mainstream sport, which is one of the last bastions of most forms of conservative sociality, homophobia and heteronormativity included. Sport is, after all, a manly man’s domain where the effeminate stereotype of the gay man has no place. Women are always already interlopers in the masculinist confines of the athletic sphere, and therefore, heterosexual femininity is always put under question and suspicion—differently disciplining lesbians, straight women, and other minoritized sexual identities. In this context, it is tempting to simply celebrate the Gay Games. Indeed, the Gay Games have been read as contesting normative social divisions as certain authors have suggested (Donnelly 1996, P. Griffin 1998, Krane and Waldron 2000). However I will argue that Gay Games III also contributed to a version of normative sedimentations. The world’s best known lesbian and gay athletic event, the Gay Games, has adopted and promulgated a very assimilative and conservative approach in attempting to gain public acceptance for their sporting event and lesbian and gay athletes.

It seems fair to say, in the historical moment that was 1990 in Canada, the legitimacy of a public lesbian or gay identification was perceived as tenuous and fragile. This deeply informed a gay and lesbian identity politics. Foregrounding gay pride, the push was for gay and lesbian leaders to downplay, negate, and push aside homophobic commentary. Gay Games III served as an exemplar of how the Canadian lesbian and gay movement turned more fully towards a liberal tolerance strategy, leaving behind a more radical gay liberationist approach that had characterized the 1970s and early 1980s (Warner 2002). Gay and lesbian identified events such as the Gay Games promote sexual minorities as exemplar citizens, as individuals who would be proud to take up the privileges and obligations of liberal democracies, and who will demonstrate their competence to do so. Tom Waddell’s guiding philosophy of the Games—“to do one’s personal best is the ultimate goal of all human achievement”—underpins how the
Gay Games are deeply implicated in the liberal ethos of individuality (Waddell in Labrecque 1994).

The need for “positive portrayals” that such a position entails, led some individuals to critique the gay community’s analysis of Gay Games III. Halifax radio broadcaster Brenda Barnes (1991) was unimpressed with media attention on the Games, and, in particular, found the electronic media’s coverage of Gay Games III “sparse and tokenistic” (6). Commenting on a television clip of the Opening Ceremonies, she had this to say:

The biggest chunk of time, over 30 seconds or one-fifth of the story, [was] devoted to providing a soapbox for four fundamentalists [who protested the Gay Games] thereby lending them credibility. They had already been mentioned in the in-studio set-up by the anchor. Why did they need to be mentioned again? Unless what they said was considered important? (6)

Barnes was referencing a blatantly homophobic, fundamentalist Christian campaign launched against the Vancouver Gay Games in November 1989. While the answer to Barnes’ rhetorical question about importance is meant to be “no,” I contend that media coverage of the fundamentalist protest was useful for Gay Games III. Contrary to Barnes’ interpretations, this paper will suggest that the media’s attention to the fundamentalists (and their extraordinarily negative campaign) was very important to Celebration ’90’s success, specifically the media attention the conservative Christians generated paradoxically functioned as an interesting condition of possibility for Gay Games’ credibility. I will suggest that in the context of Vancouver through the late 1980s and in 1990, while expressions of quiet, unobtrusive institutional homophobia from governmental departments and universities might have been tolerated, overt, well-publicized representations of blatant homophobia could be mobilized by the organizers of Gay Games III to their advantage. While the Games profited from deploying liberal strategies of multiculturalism discourse and identity-based politics, the limitations and constraints of these strategies were shown up by the fractures within the local lesbian and gay communities that demonstrated the weaknesses of accepting tolerance as a limit to what is possible.

**Early Resistance and Homophobia**

The MVAAA anticipated that public response to a large concentrated gathering of gay men and lesbians would be anxiety, especially given mid-to late1980s moral panics regarding the “spread” of HIV/AIDS. Thus
attempts to manage public homophobic reaction to the announcement that Gay Games III would be held in Vancouver, started early. In 1986, in an attempt to avert a social panic, the MVAAA took the proactive step of encouraging the Chief Medical Officer for the City of Vancouver to make a public statement four years before the actual event was to take place. Dr. John Blatherwick went on record for MVAAA organizers, stating that there should be no reason to stigmatize Gay Games’ participants (Blatherwick 1986). By the time the Games occurred in 1990, Blatherwick had refined and extended his position: “Wide community support for the Games will strongly assist those of us attempting to stem the tide of AIDS. The presence of gays in our community poses absolutely no risk to citizens” (Blatherwick in Temple and Hughes 1990, 3).

Despite such statements, expressions of public homophobia seemed more prevalent in 1990 than they had been at the two previous Games (Davidson 2003). There was quiet opposition from some groups in the Vancouver community, such as the Canadian Legion, which declined to lend flag-holsters for the Opening Ceremonies (Brunt 1990). Homophobic graffiti (such as “Death to Queers” and “Fags Go Home”) was sprayed in orange letters, sometimes misspelled, on the West End Community Centre just days before the Games opened (K. Griffin 1990d). Before the Games were over, there were two more instances of homophobic graffiti and one reported incident of gay-bashing, in which a Seattle visitor was sprayed in the eyes (K. Griffin 1990g). Given such conditions, MVAAA organizers worked closely and extensively with Vancouver city police and the RCMP to anticipate security needs, develop contingency plans at every venue, and prepare for disruption, protest, or violence (K. Griffin 1990a, K. Griffin 1990c). However, some of the most pernicious, quiet homophobia came from well-established bureaucracies and institutions—governments and universities.

In typical Canadian fashion, the Vancouver organizers applied for several forms of government funding. At the federal level, Fitness and Amateur Sport gave them no funding, in all likelihood because the Gay Games did not fit their rationalized, Olympic-focused mandate and structure. The Federal Department of Communications—Cultural Initiative Program did provide Celebration ’90 with a $15,000 grant, but only after the MVAAA had applied for over $130,000 and had actively lobbied several federal and provincial representatives (Amundson 1989, “Grant Applications” 1990, Kidd 1989). The British Columbia Social Credit provincial government, under the leadership of the very conservative Bill Vander Zalm, flatly refused to provide any money to Gay Games III, even after three separate grant applications. Lyall Hanson, the Minister for Municipal Affairs, Recreation and Culture, suggested in his refusal letter to the MVAAA that the province already funded...
virtually every sport and recreation activity offered at your event... In light of this all-encompassing array of opportunity, it does not seem appropriate in a world of scarce public resources, to fund “Celebration ’90” which basically duplicates activities already very successfully offered. Accordingly, may I invite you to consider participating in sport and recreation activities through our Province’s outstanding existing system. (Hanson 1990, 1)

This seemingly benign response, which on the surface assumes an equality of opportunity, access and participation, was patronizingly disingenuous in its implicit homophobia and lack of recognition of the workings of heteronormativity in sport. While a generous reading of the letter from the minister could imply that identity-based sporting events were not what the province wanted to fund, such a reading would need to ignore that the province had supported other identity-based games. The BC provincial government had funded events like the Special Olympics, the Seniors Games, and the Police and Fire Games (all identity-based events) without referring these events to opportunities that were already being provided by the province through their existing sport system (K. Griffin 1991). In homophobic fashion, this refusal denied gays and lesbians the right to be considered provincial citizens who could hold their own identity-based athletic event with public financial support.

In response to the province’s denial of funding, MVAAA treasurer, Bill Amundson, threatened to launch a human rights complaint (K. Griffin 1990h). In September of 1990, with Gay Games III completed and posting a deficit of $140,000, the B.C. Civil Liberties Association sparked an investigation suggesting that Premier Bill Vander Zalm had blatantly discriminated on the basis of sexual orientation, both in the decision to deny grant funding and in his public explanations (K. Griffin and Bramhan 1990). One year later, after multiple appeals for donations, the MVAAA offered its creditors 21 cents on the dollar to wind up its affairs. MVAAA spokespeople continued to identify the provincial government as the reason for this debt (K. Griffin 1991). While no suit was ever pursued, acknowledgement that gay and lesbian organizations suffered (and continue to suffer) from this kind of systemic discrimination had to wait for almost another decade.4

Institutionalized expressions of homophobia were further highlighted by yet another incident. In its efforts to be well-organized, two MVAAA directors had an enthusiastic and positive meeting in October 1986 with UBC Conference Services staff to book residence, gym, and aquatics facilities for the 1990 event. By booking almost four years in advance, the organizing group knew they would not be in conflict with any other
events. However, shortly thereafter, the MVAAA received a short, two-line letter informing them that the university was not available to them. For the next eighteen months, the Vancouver organizers attempted to get some concrete reasons as to why they could not rent the public facility. They were finally directed to UBC president, Dr. David Strangway (“For Immediate Release” 1988).

Svend Robinson, the first publicly-gay federal Member of Parliament (NDP, Burnaby East), and an Honorary Board Member for Gay Games III, managed to speak with Strangway in July of 1988. At that time, the UBC head claimed that dealing with the Gay Games was not in the University’s best interest. Robinson reported back to the MVAAA and assisted them with strategy. As a former UBC Student Union president and representative on the UBC Board of Governors, Robinson was well versed in how to negotiate academic political channels. He advised the MVAAA to get on the agenda for the September 1988 Board of Governors meeting, and to have all members of the Games Honorary Board write letters to the UBC President and Board of Governors. Robinson himself would speak with Canadian Prime Minister John Turner and contact the UBC Alumni Association (MVAAA Board 1988).

A media leak, just before the MVAAA was to present to the Board of Governors, proved very helpful. The UBC student newspaper obtained a memo from the UBC President. In it, Strangway “explained he had banned the Gay Games because he believed the activity to be more political than athletic or cultural and he did not want to involve the university in such a social issue” (“For Immediate Release” 1988, 1). Mainstream media, surprisingly led by the conservative Vancouver newspaper The Province, picked up the story and challenged this position by supporting the Gay Games editorially. The MVAAA presentation to the Board of Governors received full press corps attention, stretching their allocated 15-minute slot to a full hour during which they addressed the most senior UBC arbiters. A day later, the MVAAA received a letter from the UBC President, requesting they submit their booking requests in writing: the Board of Governors had overturned Strangway’s decision (“For Immediate Release” 1988).

The MVAAA used the University’s about-face to full advantage. In a press release about the changed decision, an MVAAA spokesperson suggested that, while he was happy with Strangway’s new request,

he [was] even more pleased with general community outrage which followed the press announcements. Every significant media outlet in the city has been in touch with us... Every person we have talked to is sympathetic and it’s clear that the
media won’t be dropping this issue until we have the booking confirmations in our hands... We have spent a lot of our time during the past two years educating the general community about all the positive qualities of the Gay Games movement... The feeling most frequently expressed by people associated with the university has been embarrassment... Our very desire to settle this through negotiations rather than confrontation underscores the fact that we are a sports and cultural organization rather than a political activist one. (McDell in “For Immediate Release” 1988, 2)

The media attention was positive, and the Gay Games was able to spin out of the situation an acceptable image of a reasonable group of athletes and cultural practitioners being unfairly treated. They were represented not as in-your-face queers, but well educated professionals (the press release indicated that nine of twelve MVAAA board members were UBC alumni, many of them holding two degrees from the institution), who were involved in a worthy cause—promoting the acceptance of gays and lesbians in mainstream culture. This kind of lobbying and political manoeuvring heralded the impending political and legal struggles the gay and lesbian movement in Canada was about to enter into over the next 15 years, with the struggle for Charter recognition and ultimately the legalization of same-sex marriage. Reading the history of the present (Foucault 1979; 1990), we might argue that leaders in that struggle were learning valuable political and legal strategies through Gay Games III controversies.

The successful protest to the UBC Board of Governors was well orchestrated, planned and quietly executed without placards and loud slogans. However, it posed no serious challenge to societal attitudes towards gays and lesbians; it simply allowed them access to a liberal mainstream institution. And while, in the end, the MVAAA did not register a human rights complaint against the Province for denying funding for the event, that option was considered and may have been a viable challenge.7 Interestingly, however, garnering even more public support for the event did not occur through formalized human rights challenges. One of the most blatant expressions of resistance to Gay Games III was a full page, fundamentalist Christian newspaper advertisement denouncing the Gay Games as a gay plot destined to ruin the souls and morality of Vancouverites. This ad ran in both of Vancouver’s mainstream daily newspapers and was a much broader attack on the MVAAA than UBC’s, but one they used in the end to further promote their event and to solidify themselves as decent, upstanding citizens. I turn now to that incident and the MVAAA response.
Fundamentalist Fervour—Gay Games Favour

Many months before Gay Games III were to take place, a certain segment of the large fundamentalist Christian community in the greater Vancouver area had been praying for God to overturn and stop the “immoral” event (Brunt 1990). About one year after the reversal of UBC’s refusal to allow the Gay Games access to their facilities, a group of religious moral conservatives presumably made the assumption that they represented mainstream Vancouver values when they ran a full page ad (purportedly worth $15,000 at the time) in both major daily Vancouver newspapers—The Province and the Vancouver Sun (Kelly and McDell 1989, Todd 1990b). On November 4, 1989, the ad ran, under the heading “Time is Running Out—Concerning Gay Games Vancouver—August 4-11, 1990.” It was filled with quotes from Biblical scripture heralding the perils of homosexual perversion, wickedness, corrupted social values, easy sex, and incest, among others. The chilling ad ended:

We therefore with all reverence and serious intention, in Christ’s name, make a public statement: That because these Games will bring God’s judgment upon us all in this city, we therefore forbid them in the name and authority of Jesus Christ. We believe that they shall not take place... We believe that this is a clear call to spiritual warfare. (“Time is Running Out” 1989, A9)

The sponsors were identified along the bottom of the ad, in small print as follows: “The above declaration is initiated and paid for by Christian leaders who live in Greater Vancouver, and who love this city and its people” (“Time is Running Out” 1989, A9).8

The virulent quality of the hatred in the ad backfired on its producers. Fortunately, for Gay Games III organizers, public outrage about the ad was immediate. Spokespeople from the BC Civil Liberties Association and the BC Conference of the United Church of Canada both condemned the action. Letters to the editor were overwhelmingly opposed to the ad and the Vancouver Sun issued an apology: “We regret it went unflagged as advertising (its appearance was such that a reader might have perceived it as editorial material) and we unequivocally deplore its lack of signatures or attributions. In addition, we consider its message repugnant” (cited in Kelly and McDell 1989, 1). Given the Sun’s history of refusing to run advertising for gay organizations a decade earlier,9 it is hard to know if this retraction is to be read as a positive sign of change or gratuitous damage control.

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The effect, however, was that in the week following the publication of the ad, the MV AAA office was inundated with offers of financial and volunteer support. It appeared that large numbers of the public did not think Gay Games gay pride was about backroom perversion and wild sex, as the fundamentalist rhetoric implied. Richard Dopson, a board member of the MV AAA, called the phone number listed at the bottom of the ad. He introduced himself to the person at the other end saying, “Thank you very much for spending $15,000 to advertise for us” (Dopson in Richards 1990a, 25). Further, Celebration ’90 parodically reinscribed the hourglass that was prominent in the middle of the original ad. They superimposed the Celebration ’90 logo on it, left the formatting and font the same, so that it read “Time is Running Out—Support Celebration ’90 NOW!” The design was silk-screened on T-shirts and sold for fundraising (Richards 1990a, 39). It was a golden opportunity for the Gay Games to present themselves as a sane, tolerant, liberal event—a reading they widely promoted.

The outpouring of support from gay and non-gay organizations and communities buoyed the beleaguered organizing group. Six months later, MV AAA director Betty Baxter was still making the most of the liberal angle. By appealing to and recalling experiences of social exclusion that gays and lesbians commonly suffer, Baxter made it clear that these stories would motivate the organizers to be as welcoming of as many kinds of diversity as possible at the Gay Games. Focusing on inclusion at the event, she suggested, “this is about gays and lesbians coming out and being part of the community and being respected as such” (Baxter in K. Griffin 1990a, B4). Conservative attempts to quash the Gay Games had, paradoxically, repeatedly turned into productive conditions of possibility for them.

However, the fundamentalists continued their well-funded religious protest of the event. In the winter of 1990, they opened an office in Vancouver, the sole purpose of which was to work against Gay Games III. Founded by retired evangelical church pastor, Bob Birch, the anti-Games group “Watchmen for the Nation” was formed as an ad-hoc assemblage of Christian evangelicals (K. Griffin 1990c, MacQueen 1990). Various rallies and prayer vigils were held, culminating with a huge spectacle, just as Gay Games III were about to commence (Canadian Press 1990, Richards 1990a). An American group of Christian muscle-men, the “Power Team,” were brought in for almost a quarter of a million dollars by a coalition of Christian churches. They hoped for a turnout at BC Place of 40,000 people who would pay to listen to and be moved by the word of Jesus, as eight hunky bodybuilders smashed bricks and lifted weights. The organizers denied that the event was organized to protest the Gay Games, but rather suggested that the team would draw “the atten-

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In the end, despite a lot of money, organization, and advertising, only four protesters gathered outside BC Place Stadium when the Opening Ceremonies for Gay Games III were held. Three people were shouting anti-homosexual slogans through a loudspeaker and one person carried a placard prophesizing doom. They were quickly surrounded by six members of the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, who, as good drag nuns, encircled the protesters in ridicule. Police removed the homophobic objectors shortly thereafter (Canadian Press 1990). Inside the stadium, lesbian comic and performer Robin Tyler, the emcee for the Opening Ceremonies of Gay Games III, referenced the fundamentalist Christian opposition to the huge crowd, wryly observing: “I don’t mind them being born again, but do they have to come back as themselves?” (Tyler in Richards 1990b, 14). None of the events at the Games were disrupted; Celebration ’90 received a large amount of positive local and national media attention, and the “only major protests by Christian evangelicals took place near the Terry Fox Memorial before opening and closing ceremonies” (K. Griffin 1990g, B1). They did not garner any mainstream media attention.

Situating Support—Historicizing Tolerance

It is important to consider how the Gay Games were able to mobilize public support for their lesbian and gay athletic event against the strong fundamentalist opposition they faced. Part of this can be attributed to the choice of Vancouver as the city to host the third Gay Games. The fledgling Federation of Gay Games deliberately moved the event out of San Francisco, and the United States, partly to internationalize the event and organization and partly because a group of lesbian and gay Vancouverites had proactively lobbied and planned to host the event since the first Games in 1982. A third consideration, particularly important to my argument here, is that Vancouver was perceived to be a gay-positive metropolitan city in 1990 that could successfully host the Games outside of San Francisco, without attracting excessive homophobic protest (Davidson 2003). I suggest, in this instance, in the end, the “tolerance” associated with the urban core outstripped the “intolerance” ascribed to the sprawling suburban periphery. At the time, urban Vancouver was a much more socially progressive constituency than many of the outlying suburbs and municipalities in the Lower Mainland area. The West End of Vancouver had an established and burgeoning gay community in 1990 and parts of East Vancouver supported vibrant lesbian culture. While the right-wing Social Credit provincial government explicitly denied Gay Games III support of any kind, the City of Vancouver had supported the Gay Games,

13 At the time, urban Vancouver was a much more socially progressive constituency than many of the outlying suburbs and municipalities in the Lower Mainland area. The West End of Vancouver had an established and burgeoning gay community in 1990 and parts of East Vancouver supported vibrant lesbian culture. While the right-wing Social Credit provincial government explicitly denied Gay Games III support of any kind, the City of Vancouver had supported the Gay Games,
officially sanctioning them, and the Greater Vancouver Regional Transit Authority provided the largest injection of public funds for the Games (K. Griffin 1990b).\textsuperscript{15}

Yet Vancouver is and was not isolated from larger historical and political developments. How might a broader history have mattered in this specific time and place? In the 1960s and 1970s, the Canadian federal “government undertook widespread social reform designed to facilitate cultural expression, forge a strong national identity, and project an image of Canada as a model liberal democracy” (King 2000, 164). An effect of such a program was that progressive new social movements, such as civil rights battles, feminism, and gay liberation, emerged, and, in reaction, Christian social conservatives mobilized to counter their efforts (Escoffier 1996, Kinsman 1987, Warner 2002). Electorally, the Christian right in Canada, as embodied in the Social Credit party (and later in its Reform/Alliance/Conservative Party guises), was primarily viewed as a “Western fringe phenomenon,” one not “taken seriously by the traditional political elites or the media, especially in central and eastern Canada” (Warner 2002, 48). In 1990, the Premier of B.C., Bill Vander Zalm, a fundamentalist Christian, led a provincial government that publicly expressed hostility against homosexuality in its almost 20 years in power (Warner 2002). While socially conservative Christians were present in the Lower Mainland area (generally outside of Vancouver’s urban centre), and in the province more generally, organized political activity of the Christian right in Canada had, to that point, been disparate and amorphous (Herman 1994, Patton 2006), well behind the emergence of the Christian New Right in the United States.

Ronald Reagan’s election as U.S. President in 1980 signified the victory of the New Right as an American phenomena, which produced a potent alliance of “traditional conservatives preoccupied with communism and economic issues with religious fundamentalists such as Jerry Falwell” (Escoffier 1996, 166). Deeply informed by American religious fundamentalists such as Jimmy Swaggert, Jerry Falwell, James Dobson, Phyllis Schafly, and Anita Bryant, the New Right in the United States became identifiably American in their social conservatism, a fundamental aspect of which was an absolute hatred of and opposition to homosexuality. This American phenomenon first spilled into Canada with Anita Bryant’s “Save Our Children” speaking tour of Canadian cities in the late 1970s (Warner 2002). As Didi Herman (1994) points out, however,

Right wing moral activism in Canada has had a decidedly patchy and uneven development in the latter part of this [20th] century. A Canadian equivalent to the “Moral Majority” has not emerged; neither have the moral reform groups that do
exist been particularly successful at advancing their public policy agendas. (268)

One of the main reasons Herman cites for this lack of cohesion is that the Christian fundamentalist rhetoric is too illiberal, too bitterly anti-gay, and too hateful for the prevailing late 20th century social climate in Canada. As she argues, given “Canadians apparent intolerance of religious fundamentalism in the public sphere… a ‘liberal consensus’ dominates public debate and policy in Canada” (Herman 1994, 273). Christian fundamentalism has been unable to organize coherently enough to attract widespread support from a larger Canadian public. Arguably, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, this has discursively produced Christian fundamentalism in Canada as a deeply American-influenced phenomenon—something that is not “really” Canadian.

I am arguing that Gay Games III was able to benefit from this distinctly Canadian disdain for intolerance. Without explicitly invoking Canadian national identity, Celebration ’90 was able to capitalize on the strong sense of a distinctly Canadian liberal tolerance in their articulation of the Games as a healthy, clean cut, sporting event. In a seemingly unconscious differentiation, “Canadians” (or at least those tolerant, liberal Canadians in Vancouver) clearly indicated, through volunteerism, media support, and corporate investment, that American-style hate campaigns did not have significant purchase. While there is a body of work that considers how sport is often intimately tied to the project of nation-building and the discursive production of Canadian-ness (Grueneau and Whitson 1993, Jackson and Ponic 2001, King 2000, among others), it rarely considers how intolerance benefits minority groups through particular Canadian values.

The mobilization of Canadian liberal tolerance of the Games showed up in mainstream media coverage. Stan Persky, a Vancouver print media journalist, suggested that:

Coverage in The Sun, The Province, and the Globe & Mail as well as on the three local TV stations was extensive, prominent, and positive. Both explicitly in editorials, and subtextually through such “gatekeeper” choices as story angles and placement of coverage, the media indeed projected the message that “being gay is not wrong but being intolerant of gays is”… In fact… Celebration ’90 was accorded the utterly normal treatment that would be given to any large-scale successful trade fair, scholarly gathering or other public spectacle that was peaceful, profitable, and full of photo opportunities… In the same way that the media generally oppose
As Jhally (1989) contends, the sport/media complex, while never static and always contestable at all stages of production and consumption, often reproduces ideological messages that are consumable within the hegemonic norms of the day. While Wachs and Dworkin (1997) suggest that there can be no such thing as a gay sports hero, perhaps in Canada in Vancouver in 1990, a gay sports event was more heroic than a rabidly anti-gay Christian fundamentalism. In a tolerant Canada, even a lesbian and gay sporting event (and its media coverage) could be mobilized to keep the American-inspired intolerant fundamentalist threat at bay.

Fittingly, Gay Games III organizers carefully positioned themselves to avoid being construed as radical or deviant. Celebration ’90, the innocuous title for the event, was a neutral name “chosen by organizers so as not to offend the Vancouver population” (Bociurkiw 1991, 6). In May 1989, in correspondence with an adolescent who was a potential athlete, the Gay Games office manager, Mary Brookes, had to deny the youth the opportunity to participate, because all registrants for Gay Games III had to be of legal adult age. She wrote: “We must avoid accusations that we ‘corrupt’ or ‘recruit’ minors for ‘deviant and/or sexual’ purposes. We want Celebration ’90 to be an expression of gay and lesbian pride, and hesitate to give extremists a focal point” (Brookes 1989, my emphasis added). Rather than openly question or refuse the classic homophobic stereotype of lesbians and gay men as rabid pedophiles, the MVAAA made decisions to simply minimize and avoid those kinds of interpretations. To access and maintain a positive and supportive response from Vancouverites and the mass media, the MVAAA had to ensure it could present athletes who “happened” to be gay, rather than opening up inquiry into the workings of heteronormativity. This is the paradox of in/tolerance—while it was a mobilizing condition for the Gay Games, it also came with its associated disciplining and disciplinary requirements, a position I will elaborate further in the paper.

While enduring the homophobic attacks from right-wing fundamentalists must have been unduly stressful, anxiety-producing, and frightening, organizers were able to carefully steer their way through the hate-filled harassment. An MVAAA director noted how the radical Christian right assisted the event. “Most people were indifferent about the event until the campaign against it. The attacks pushed many people into supporting the Games” (Dopson in Matas 1990, A3). Small business owners were successfully approached specifically to support the Games because of the furor caused by the fundamentalists’ protest (K. Griffin
The generally conservative daily, *The Province* issued a *mea culpa* editorial just before the Games started. “Almost a year ago, we called these Gay Games ‘silly’... Since then we’ve been educated. We’ve learned that these games are intended to build bridges, strengthen community, and bolster self-esteem” (Persky 1990, D2). The hate-filled ad was the limit of intolerance in this case. While quiet, bureaucratic forms of homophobic discrimination went relatively unremarked (the denial of substantive government funding for the Games, the initial refusal to rent UBC facilities), it was the explicitness and virulence of the homophobic resistance to the Gay Games that rallied and motivated “normal” (read tolerant) Canadians to act to support a lesbian and gay athletic event.

The vast majority of media exposure was to represent the Gay Games as an exemplar of tolerance and as indicative of an acceptance of diversity. Examples of this assimilative discourse were especially abundant in mainstream media. Many major Canadian daily newspapers picked up on the Games’ story at least once in 1990. The producer and choreographer of the Opening and Closing Ceremonies suggested that he was approaching the project as he would any kind of family entertainment that included participation and inclusion (K. Griffin 1990e). Echoing what it sensed was public opinion, editorial comments in Canada’s national newspaper reiterated Vancouver’s general openness to the event. The *Globe & Mail*’s sports writer, Stephen Brunt, wrote, “As a whole though, Vancouverites seem comfortable enough with the whole notion [of the Gay Games]” (1990, A24). Other *Globe & Mail* coverage indicated that

after several stormy debates over morality and human rights, the city of Vancouver is ready to open its arms to thousands of gays and lesbians for the third international Gay Games... [the event] blur[s] the boundary between homosexuals and others in an attempt to show that homosexuals have many of the same interests as the rest of the world... Canada is a tolerant society that accommodates personal differences. (Matas 1990, A3)

This gesture to the character of Canada was one of a few explicit references to Canada in the media coverage. A filmmaker from Los Angeles suggested “I think the U.S. is a lot more polarized on how it perceives and treats gays. Canadians seem to try to solve issues in the mainstream” (K. Griffin 1990f, B4). The lack of any explicit nation-based discourse activated by the Gay Games’ organizers may be attributed to the Gay Games official policy of not organizing the sporting competition along national lines. Seeking to combat the hyper-nationalistic discourses that are produced at the Olympic Games, the Gay Games have consciously resis-
Athletes paraded into the Opening Ceremonies under banners for Team Vancouver or Team San Francisco and so on (Davidson 2003). While Games’ organizers may not have overtly wielded nationalistic discourses, it is worth noting there was a context of quiet unease about Canadian identity in the late 1980s. Fears of losing a distinctly national identity were heightened by the 1988 Free Trade agreement with the U.S. (Jackson and Ponic 2001). As Samantha King (2000) reminds us, “Canada appears to be in a constant identity crisis” (163). To which Jackson and Ponic (2001) add, “crisis become[s] a contested terrain that reveal[s] a struggle over the past, present, future meaning[s] of Canadian identity” (47). In the case of the Vancouver Gay Games, the crisis of a sustained homophobic, Christian fundamentalist protest showed up a particular history of the treatment of gays and lesbians in Canada, the historical emergence of Christian fundamentalism associated with Americanism, how a particular sexual identity sporting spectacle negotiated that crisis in a particular historical moment, and how the future of Canadian gay and lesbian politics moved in a direction of assimilative rights along a multicultural model that was distinctly different from the path its American neighbour was to take over the next 15 years. So, while in the American context, the Moral Majority is much more influential in politics and policy direction, in the Canadian context, the Christian fundamentalists were positioned as somewhat fractured, marginal, and fanatical.

Subsuming Difference

While these incidents of homophobic constraint are now the familiar hue and cry of a gay rights movement, what is often left aside is how gays and lesbians have used liberal tolerance discourses based on multicultural arguments to their advantage, but, in so doing, inadvertently contribute to the exclusionary impulses of such discourses. Even though the Gay Games’ organizers attempted to discredit the Christian fundamentalists as being unfairly restrictive through their desire not to welcome homosexuals, the Gay Games, as suggested earlier, also participated in a practice of subsuming difference under an umbrella of a cohesive lesbian and gay identity politic. While appearing at first brush as inclusive, the Gay Games’ own prejudices reared their heads. MVAAA member, Richard Dopson suggested right before the Games started, “The gay and lesbian community... has come out with tremendous pride. We’re going to meet people here from all over the world who are very proud to be gay, very proud to be athletes. They are not leather and drag queens but they’re athletes” (Dopson in MacQueen 1990, A8). Akin to the rhetoric the MVAAA mobilized after winning the concession from the UBC Board of Governors, the use of “athlete” here in contradistinction to “leather men”
and “drag queens” continues to discursively depoliticize and de-queer the Games. Leather and drag conjure up dissident sexual cultures and practices that were championed in a gay liberationist political movement. By insistently reiterating athletics and sporting culture as not political, the Gay Games further mobilized and entrenched itself into a version of multicultural acceptance. The MVAAA organizational discourse in mainstream media kept a sanitized, unsullied, squeaky-clean gay or lesbian intact.\(^{18}\) Promotional posters were incredibly bland, reinscribing heterosexist imagery with the word Gay in tiny, almost indiscernible print (Davidson 1996, MacQueen 1990). Dominant, mainstream press responded with primarily sympathetic, positive coverage that considered the gay and lesbian angle to be diverse enough.

Even though there was an official brochure indicating that leather was welcome in Vancouver, and that Svend Robinson noted the drag queens, bull dykes, men in leather, and radical fairies in his opening ceremony address (Canadian Press 1990, “Letter” 1988), alternative presses told a bit of a different story about Gay Games III:

Celebration ’90 was a celebration of jocks, kitsch, and mainstream silliness... It was a homecoming for every closeted gym teacher and dyke baseball starlet, a paean to Weimaresque notions of the body beautiful, a reclamation of spectacle, a temporary utopia that removed the taboo and made queers feel normal—if only for a week. It was a week where you weren’t supposed to wonder what it means to want to be normal, where you weren’t expected to analyze the deeper meanings of say... the presence of Socred politicians [at the Opening Ceremonies], or the erasure of the word “lesbian,” or the whiteness of almost everyone’s skin. (Bociurkiw 1991, 6)

The questioning of very obvious attempts to re-create a conventional athletic event by a lesbian and gay community was not part of official MVAAA organizing discourse. Gay pride was the discourse, and its whiteness (and that legacy) permeated the event.\(^{19}\) However, this was not seamless. Under-representation of almost all minorities came up as a discussion topic at many of the forums in the Cultural Festival. Toronto author Dionne Brand suggested that the very title of the literary festival—Words Without Borders—reinvented Columbus-like colonialism:

Sometimes in trying to say what is most fine about us, we borrow from the wrong terrain. We, as lesbians and gays, need to turn over these terms. We need to fight against the culture rather than fight for inclusion... We must take on dissidence rather than inclusion. (Brand in Bociurkiw 1991, 7)
The Gay Games imperative for inclusion effectively occluded the recognition of politically important differences amongst various sexual communities. This played out not only in terms of the lack of racial and ethnic diversity but also along gender lines. The women-only social events sanctioned by the MVAAA could not be advertised as women-only, and men were to be permitted to attend any of these parties. In the lesbian and gay alternative presses in Vancouver, there was lively debate and concerns expressed about the pervasive sexism and heteronormativity involved in many MVAAA board decisions. For example, a group of dykes had organized Queers in Arts, an artisan’s bazaar meant to be one of the 75 events of the Cultural Festival. The group was forced to change its name by the Games’ organizing committee, who felt the word “queer” did not promote a positive image of lesbian and gays, instead conjuring up the derisive slur of the mid-20th century, a time period that the Games’ discourse was endeavouring to make invisible, or at least produce distance from (Davidson 1996).

These attempts by Gay Games III organizers to control language use, practices and/or expressions of anything overtly sexualized or visibly marked as “too” gender transgressive (for which the term queer was often used) exposed anxieties about appearing “normal” to a general “public.” Instead of honouring and celebrating very brave, queer butch/femme cultures (both historical and contemporary), the Gay Games—in its efforts to celebrate gay pride inclusively—pushed already marginalized identifications further to the periphery. There were very definite limits to tolerance—both in public sentiment and within the Gay Games’ community. The athlete was organizationally celebrated—not the queer, nor the drag queen, nor the leather man, nor any other transgressive, non-normative sexual minority. As such, other commentators indicated that Gay Games III—Celebration ’90—was a week to provide a clear vision of what they did not want gay and lesbian utopia to look like. Critiques were made that at events such as these, issues of under-representation would often be noted and almost always overlooked (Bociurkiw 1991). The overt representation of anything “too sexual” conjured up the liability worries of an earlier, too radical, gay liberationist politics (Warner 2002, 214).

These dissident critiques from within evoke that very Canadian national discourse—that of multiculturalism. While the dominant, nation-building rhetoric is one of diverse cultures, ethnicities, and races co-existing harmoniously under a Canadian national umbrella, various authors have called into question how this policy masks serious systemic racism, classism and xenophobia (among others, see Bannerji 2000, Mackey 2002). With the enactment of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1982, Canada entered an American-style of individual human rights discourse (Filax 2004). The claim of being a tolerant, inclu-
sive nation that celebrates diversity aligns with the Gay Games’ claim to being the most inclusive athletic event in the world. No surprise then that strategies of tolerance were easily mobilized to claim legitimacy for Gay Games III within a “multicultural” nation such as Canada. While I have shown that this coalescing provided an important condition of possibility for Gay Games III, their policy of inclusion, like Canada’s notion of multiculturalism, can be held up to the same kind of scrutiny—a critique of liberalism and identity politics that is well documented in contemporary social theorizing. The message that gays and lesbians needed to be considered (or consider themselves) as a fractured, polyvocal, and contested identity category was not effectively heard by subsequent organizers of the Gay Games, as they have carried on the unfortunate legacy of producing an exclusionary type of inclusive, normalized Gay Games athlete (Davidson 2003).

While there was criticism of Celebration ’90 from the margins, this more radical critique of the adoption of liberal tolerance discourses by a gay and lesbian event was generally lost. The organizers of Gay Games III managed the public homophobia in such a way as to manoeuvre the stigma of queer shame (as promulgated by the fundamentalists) away from the Games, and in fact, used that stigmatization to show up the ridiculousness of its claim. They were able to distance themselves from the social opprobrium of being gay and managed to come up the middle rhetorically in mainstream media representations. The Gay Games were about pride, self-esteem, and tolerant goodwill. Even though there were several attempts to shame the Games by governments, universities, and religious organizations, that shame did not stick.20 In fact, Gay Games III went a long way to positioning gays and lesbians as worthy Canadian citizens—a tack the lesbigay movement took in the late 1980s and which they have not left since (Warner 2002).

As Samantha King (2000) has observed, “the national public face of Canada’s approach to sexuality [is] … diverse, tolerant and even enabling” (164). On the surface, Gay Games III was able to benefit from this distinctly Canadian ideology. Unfortunately, what this liberal approach masks is the failure of a rights movement to address other forms of systematic homophobic state violence against sexual minorities. As one example, by way of conclusion, at the same time that the Gay Games were held in Vancouver, Little Sisters, a Vancouver gay and lesbian bookstore, was consistently having over 75 percent of their imported books from the U.S. seized by Canada Customs officials at the border (Fuller and Blackley 1995, Warner 2002, Green and Weissman 2002). This state sanctioned censorship of explicitly queer sexual material went largely unnoticed as a political protest opportunity at the Gay Games.21 King notes that the weaknesses of a liberal rights approach is that it does little
to address less visible nefarious effects of other laws and systems that still unfairly and often violently (psychically and physically) affect queers and those occupying other non-conforming sexual identities. It leaves little room for imagining what transformational political change might look like. While surely liberal advances such as garnering positive public opinion for Gay Games III, gaining full human rights for lesbian and gays, and legalizing same-sex marriage are to be considered positive changes, other effects of a liberal tolerance political strategy (such as Gay Games III organizers drawing criticism for under-representation of diversity and charges of being sex-phobic) are crucial to consider in countering what seems to be a growing complacency to an emerging and powerful neo-conservative movement in the contemporary Canadian context. Only time will tell how successfully Stephen Harper’s Conservative government can more closely align a Canadian identity as being more (fundamentally) American.

Endnotes

1. I would like to thank the guest editors of this special issue (Christine Dallaire and Jean Harvey) for creating important interdisciplinary publication spaces. The comments of two anonymous reviewers were helpful in producing a clearer and more cogent paper. Special thanks to Sharon Rosenberg for living and loving alongside me in the production of this paper.

2. Gay Games I and II were held in San Francisco in 1982 and 1986 respectively.

3. The Federation of Gay Games was formed in 1989 to be the international governing body for the Gay Games and Cultural Events. Functioning much like the International Olympic Committee, they oversee the long-term development and maintenance of the Gay Games movement, ensuring that the event is hosted every four years, adjudicating site selection and maintaining trademark and marketing policies (Davidson 2003).

4. In 1998, the Supreme Court of Canada would rule, in the Vriend case, that sexual orientation was a protected category under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, legally bringing sexual minorities into the multicultural fold (Warner 2002).

5. Celebration ’90 created an Honorary Board of Directors for Gay Games III. These publicly prominent Canadians represented a cross section of sport advocates, community activists, politicians, and writers who were asked to advocate for Gay Games III in a number of different political arenas. In 1989, the Honorary Board was comprised of Emery Barnes (MLA), Kevin Brown (Founder, AIDS Coalition Vancouver), June Callwood (Author, Columnist), Libby Davies (Alderwoman), Michael Harcourt (Provincial Opposition Leader), Bruce Kidd (Director, Olympic Academy), Darlene Mazari (MLA), Margaret Mitchell (MP), Jane Rule (Author), Svend Robinson (MP), Donald Saxton (National Volleyball Team Captain), Floyd St. Clair (CBC), The Very Reverend Robert Smith (United Church Minister), John Turner (Federal Opposition Leader), and David Watmough (Author) (Dahl 1989, 5). The idea of an honorary board of directors seems to have lived and died with
Gay Games III. None of the subsequent Gay Games organizers have picked up on the idea (Davidson 2003).

6. Strangway attempted to mobilize a particularly homophobic rendering of multicultural logic here. By positioning the Gay Games as political rather than athletic or cultural, the UBC President mobilized the discursive multicultural logic, which “excludes people seen as divisive and political (lesbians and gays, Oka warriors, people who raise “women’s issues”). It reifies a set of norms which act to categorize and isolate social deviants” (Mackey 2002, 134).

7. When, in October 1991, an NDP provincial government was elected in British Columbia, it moved quickly to add sexual orientation to the province’s Human Rights legislation (Warner 2002).

8. One year earlier, in October 1988, a monthly newsletter called *Life Gazette*, which self-described as “non-partisan in politics and biblical in religious perspective,” ran a front-page headline story entitled “Sodomite Invasion Planned for 1990” (1988, 1). While I cannot ascribe a direct connection, the fundamentalist Christian, hyper-homophobic perspective in the publication is akin to the kind of rhetoric presented in the “Time is Running Out” advertisement. In wonderfully queer fashion, *Angles*, at the time the main gay and lesbian newspaper in Vancouver, ran a literary supplement in August of 1990 to coincide with the Gay Games Cultural Festival. It was aptly dubbed the *Sodomite Invasion Review* (Larventz 1990).

9. In 1976, the *Vancouver Sun* newspaper refused to run an ad for the *Gay Tide*, the newspaper of GATE (Gay Alliance Towards Equality). It was the first time a human rights complaint was launched for discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. The challenge was ultimately unsuccessful at the Supreme Court level; the *Sun* was granted the right to exclude content from its advertising as it so chose, based, in part, on its ability to maintain subscribers (Warner 2002).

10. Anecdotally, I recall a moment of expression for that support. While I was in California at the archive in San Francisco, I stayed with my sister and her male partner who lived in the Bay Area. One night over dinner, we were discussing my finds that day in the library, one of which was the information on the fundamentalist ad. My brother-in-law immediately remembered the incident, and talked about how in 1989 his family and teenage peer group from suburban Vancouver were generally disgusted by it. This response, and my sister’s partner’s crystal clear memory of the event, surprised me. I had not expected that the support for the Gay Games was really as palpable as the historical texts were portraying it. It must also be acknowledged that there is likely some revisionist memory work going on knowing his “sister outlaw” is a lesbian writing about the Gay Games (S. Paranjpe, personal communication, October 2000).

11. By late July 1990, Bob Birch, as pastor emeritus of Burnaby Christian Fellowship, was taking responsibility for sponsoring the “Time is Running Out” ad of the previous November (K. Griffin 1990c).

12. Almost parallel in a queer kind of way, the very popular Gay Games male physique contest commanded the most expensive ticket price at the Games at fifty dollars a pop (Davidson 2003). One can read this through a gay camp ironic sensibility, understanding the economy of chiselled male bodies at both the Gay Games
physique contest and the Power Team event as eroticised, fetishized objects of gay male desire—a reading that exceeds the limits of a particular Christian morality and political strategy.

13. While Eva Mackey’s (2002) work around tolerance and inclusion in a multicultural Canada focused on racial and ethnic identities, this analysis speculatively borrows from her findings. I suggest that the boundaries and limits of sexual identifications can be read in an analogous manner in this case. The tolerance for gay and lesbian community building and politics is expected to be higher in large metropolitan centres (such as Vancouver), whereas the assumption is there would be less support outside of those areas (such as the Lower Mainland in BC). But, and again following Mackey, what the incident with UBC and the federal and provincial governments shows up, is that even in the “progressive centre,” there are definite limits to that tolerance of sexual diversity, ones in which particular norms must still be kept intact. As the end of this paper argues, anything too “queer” was not encouraged as it was perceived by Gay Games organizers as too “divisive and political” (Mackey 2002, 134).

14. A majority of urban Vancouver ridings were held by the NDP (seven of ten seats) in 1990 (Elections BC n.d.). In 2006, Steven Harper’s (neo)Conservative party was unable to win any urban ridings in the major Canadian cities of Vancouver, Toronto, and Montreal in that year’s federal election. Much of this has been attributed to his neo-conservative and regressive social agendas not winning over more progressive metropolitan areas.

15. In a province with a history of polarized politics, British Columbia elected a socially democratic, leftist NDP provincial government a little more than a year later, a government that addressed minority claims more directly (see note 4 above), and which put itself more in line with federalist multicultural discourse (Warner 2002).

16. Fear of violent retribution against Gay Games organizers would have been completely understandable and is historically supported. There are many instances of not only state-sanctioned violence against sexual minorities in Canada, but specific instances when Christian fundamentalists have perpetrated violent acts or have threatened to be violent. In 1978, San Francisco municipal politician and gay activist Harvey Milk was publicly murdered by a “disgruntled conservative Family Values politician” (Escoffier 1996, 171). In Alberta, Edmonton out gay city councillor Michael Phair had violent death threats left on his telephone answering machines in the wake of the Vriend decision in 1998 (Phair 2005, Warner 2002). Rumours of organized violence to disrupt the Vancouver Games were running through the gay community, and while there turned out to be no substance to them, the existence of the rumours warranted coverage in the city’s mainstream press (K. Griffin 1990c).

17. For an extensive analysis of the Gay Games and its founding relationship with the United States Olympic Committee, please see Davidson 2006.

18. The Gay Games certainly do not have a unique position in this production of a “clean” version of lesbian and gay subjectivities, identities, or culture. Among others, this has certainly been an issue in many Gay Pride Marches across North
America, and the issue of gay marriage is predicated on assimilating to a particular heteronormative ideal. In many ways, this event capitalized on, and further sedimented, the mainstream lesbian and gay rights movement discourse that has emerged as hegemonic in the rest of the decade and into the 21st century.

19. The Gay Games continues to struggle with its whiteness and imperialistic legacies. The development of the Outreach Committee and the sponsoring of “Third World” athletes in subsequent games are just two examples of many that need further analysis (Davidson 2003).

20. For a different analysis on shame as constitutive and sustaining for the Gay Games, please see Davidson 2003 and 2006.

21. This was not the case, though, across the country where many different communities mobilized in support of the bookstore.

References

The following abbreviations are used for frequently cited materials.

FGG – Federation of Gay Games.
GG – Gay Games
GLC – Gay and Lesbian Center Collection in the SFPL History Centre.
MVAAA – Metropolitan Vancouver Athletic and Arts Association
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Warner, T. Never Going Back: A History of Queer Activism in Canada
Review Essay

Essai critique
William Bridel

*Considering Gender in Canadian Sport and Physical Activity*

One need not look much further than daily sports coverage in print, on television or the Internet to recognize that male sport rests atop a hierarchy that relegates female athletes and sports to subordinate status. This inequity presents itself in other ways as well: limited or restricted opportunities for participation, differences in funding and prize money, and gendered/sexualized media representations of female athletes are but a few examples. Beyond reproducing the traditional gender order, sport (and most physical activity spaces) also works to create a hierarchy of certain gender performances—traditional forms of masculinity are privileged over “alternative” masculinities and femininities. It has been, therefore, largely argued in academia that sporting and physical activity spaces, problematically, reproduce traditional gender ideologies. At the same time, throughout the history of sport in Canada, there has been some evidence of resistance to these dominant gender norms.

Recently, a handful of Canadian scholarly books have set out to deconstruct the “problems” of gender and sport. The three texts included in this essay explore the constructions of gender within varying sporting and physical activity spaces in mostly complementary ways though from varying theoretical perspectives. Each, however, works nicely with the other to provide a rather sweeping perspective of contemporary issues of sport and gender in Canada, painting a picture at once bleak and yet (at points) cautiously hopeful. It would be impossible to address each of the many important issues raised within the three texts. Rather, I will focus on the larger arguments made in each text and the contributions made to sociocultural studies of sport and physical activity.

It makes the most sense to begin with Kevin Young and Philip White’s *Sport and Gender in Canada*. Of the three, this text covers the largest scope, presenting a collection of 15 scholarly articles from leading Canadian academics in the fields of cultural studies and sport sociology. The stated goal of the text, while recognizing the vastly different theoretical and methodological approaches adopted by the contributors, is to put forth one main argument: “that gender is a central way in which sport is...
stratified and, reciprocally, that sport assists in the gendering of the wider community” (xviii). An important point made by the editors is that gender issues within sport are not something new; since the late 19th century sport has served a divisive purpose between men and women. In one of the socio-historical contributions to Young and White’s collection, Wamsley notes in this regard that, “sport helped construct and reinforce the idea that men were expected to be strong, physical, and active in public affairs and that women were expected to be weak, passive, and involved in domestic or charitable activities” (75). This constructed difference between men and women, both on and off the field of play, resonates throughout the various chapters in the book but is not solely restricted to gender-based differences. Importantly, and reflecting the move toward intersectionality within the studies of sport and physical activity, many of the contributions consider issues at the intersection of gender with race, class, sexuality, and age. Each of the texts included in the second edition of this textbook, then, moves beyond liberal feminist ideology, though the theoretical approaches adopted do vary considerably. However, it is important to note that all of the authors have moved well beyond a universal, homogeneous notion of “women” and an “add women and stir” approach toward gender issues in sport and physical activity.

The editors have usefully organized this text into three different sections: (1) theoretical, methodological, and historical issues; (2) stratification and power; and (3) problems and controversies. The four articles that comprise the first section provide an effective introduction to the collection. In particular, the chapter entitled “S/He Plays Sport? Theorizing the Sport/Gender Process” by Parker and White proves an excellent starting point as it outlines the various theoretical approaches adopted by sport academics throughout the field’s rather young history in Canada. Within this text a few key points are made that resonate throughout the remainder of the articles: (1) the case for intersectionality, noting that “systems of oppression are interlocking” (10); (2) the important role of feminist theories from the 1970s onward in the deconstruction of sport; (3) the growing application of queer theory to sport; (4) the notion of multiple masculinities and femininities; and (5) not monolithic, the possibility of reading certain sport practices and/or bodies as resistant.

Within the remaining 14 chapters, the reader (who could just as easily be a sport academic or simply a “lay person” with an interest in sport) is introduced to interpretations of a vast array of sport and physical activity milieus and the ways in which traditional gender logic is reproduced or, in some cases, resisted. Importantly (as previously noted) all deal with the intersection of gender with one or more other socially constructed “identities.” For example, while Canada is often considered a “classless society” (i.e., we are all middle class) such is not the case. Thus, socio-
economic class is argued as playing a significant role in the participation in sport and physical activity opportunities: “Class and gender are, therefore, powerful predictors of sport involvement, and these differences, at least for social class, are usually interpreted as being related to economic capital—what types of sport and physical activity participation is a person able to afford, and how often?” (Donnelly and Harvey, 101). In this vein, Frisby, Reid, and Ponic argue that women in poverty are the least likely to be provided with access to sport and physical activity opportunities. Thus, while there may be increased opportunities for girls and women in sport and physical activity in Canada, they are largely restricted to those with the economic means to participate.

The authors of the remaining chapters consider that even when one has access to certain sport or physical activity practices, gender issues remain problematic—and in particular the reproduction of expected performances of masculinity and femininity that become problematic for those who do not “fit.” In this regard, adding to a small but growing body of research (that, at present, has almost exclusively been conducted outside of Canada), Davison and Frank’s contribution related to the intersection of gender and sexuality in sport is an important one. The authors of this chapter speak to the problematic prevalence of stigma, homophobia, and hegemonic masculinity (at the expense of women and other male athletes) in organized sport.

Though often highly problematic spaces for gay men and lesbians, experiences are said to differ. For example, male athletes are seldom required to declare their sexuality as it is just assumed, within traditional constructions of masculinity, that they are heterosexual. Sport is, without a doubt, an arena in which such traditional notions of masculinity are reproduced. Sport, and team sports in particular, are often considered locations of homophobic discourse where “gay men in sport are often feared, distrusted, and stigmatized” (186). Gay male athletes are considered not to adhere to hegemonic masculinity and, therefore, disrupt the notion of sport as a (heterosexual) male preserve. Due in large part to the unwelcoming environment of sport (and professional sport in particular) there are few examples of openly gay male athletes. Both lesbian and gay males may, in fact, choose to remain closeted for fear of retribution from homophobic coaches or organizations and the potential loss of funding and/or sponsorship. Lesbian athletes are also often oppressed within certain sporting contexts where expected performances of femininity are connected to sexuality:

[W]omen who participate in physically rough and high-risk sport are still commonly seen as “unfeminine” and their (hetero)sexuality is often considered suspect. It is at this point
where gender and sexuality converge and become intertwined. The goal for an individual woman to do well in sport is eclipsed by the stigma of having to continually defend or publicly discuss how one is gendered and/or sexually defined. (180)

While I have drawn only from a few chapters in Sport and Gender in Canada, this is not to say that the remaining chapters are any less important or thought-provoking. If there are criticisms to be made they are few and reflect the absence of certain identities from sport research in Canada in general, namely disabled and transgendered persons. Though each of these identities is mentioned within the context of other chapters, there must be a greater focus given to the experiences of these persons within sport and physical activity. Furthermore, there was a notable absence of race-related literature in this particular collection. Of the 15 chapters, only one addressed race and gender specifically. By and large, however, Young and White (and, more specifically, the contributing authors) make an important contribution to the study of sport and gender in Canada through this text. To borrow from the editors, “this collection of readings shows that one is better able to investigate unequal gender relations and the oppression of women (and some men) if one understands the nature and extent of gender-related power and privilege” (329). This text works as an excellent starting point for such inquiries as the intersections of gender with other social identities, and the ways in which these intersecting identities are central to the construction of sport and vice versa.

With a more specific focus than the previous text, M. Ann Hall, in the introduction to her 2002 socio-historical text The Girl and the Game: A History of Women’s Sport in Canada, proposes that sport remains a space considered by many as a male preserve. She states that, “sport in our culture is still viewed by many as a ‘masculinizing project,’ a cultural practice in which boys learn to be men and male solidarity is forged” (1). This leads to the subordination of women (and gay men) that reproduces the dominant gender ideology that typically constructs women as the “weaker” sex. The notion of the “weak and passive” female echoes throughout the history of women’s sport participation in Canada and thus female participation in physical activity and/or sport has often been met with great resistance—both from men and from other women:

Women continually resisted popular notions of their biologically restricted bodies through their involvement in male-defined sport, but at the same time their physical emancipation was rarely without opposition, certainly from men, and sometimes from other women. As time went on,
women became more welcome on the playing fields, but they were never viewed as men’s equals there. (1)

Hall goes on to argue that this mostly remains true today. Women’s involvement in sport and physical activity is marked with open resistance from others, often rooted in medical-related “concerns.” From the time of the introduction of the bicycle in North America in the 1880s, concerns were raised about the appropriateness of physical activity for women on medical “grounds.” This, according to Hall, continued well into the 20th century and, likely, even today: “Cultural messages that overstate the negative rather than positive effects of exercise and physical activity on women’s health continue to act as a deterrent to women’s enjoyment and participation” (207). This notwithstanding, there were significant gains made throughout the 20th century in terms of opportunities for girls and women to participate in sport.

Importantly, Hall’s text, rather than providing a discourse of victimization by oppressive sport structures, traces the evolution of women’s involvement in Canadian sport, highlighting individuals and organizations that openly contested the male-dominated world of sport and physical activity. She also notes the ways in which gains made in sport worked to challenge gender relations/norms within the broader social context. For example, returning to the introduction of the bicycle, Hall comments on the changes in women’s fashion in the latter part of the 19th century that resulted from necessary modifications to clothing to make it more feasible to ride. She also points to the ways in which changes within the broader social context impacted on sport participation (e.g., the two World Wars were both of great significance in increasing sporting opportunities for girls and women). In this regard, sport is seen not in isolation but rather as both being influenced by and having influence on the broader social context.

In contemporary times Hall notes that there is an increased respect for female athletes, increased participatory opportunities at many levels (i.e., municipal, provincial, national, and professional) and an increased commodification of female sport that allows (some) women athletes to earn a living through sport participation (e.g. the WNBA). Such changes are both reflective of the changing role of women in society and can also likely be considered in part as assisting in the changing role of women in society. Such is the reciprocal nature of sport and society. However, this move towards equity in the sporting terrain is not unproblematic. Along with the increased prevalence of sporting opportunities for girls and women in Canada come a myriad of problems that make gender a continued issue. Hall is succinct in expressing some of the negatives, most of which tend to “model” male sport:
Among the issues and problems are an increased use of performance enhancing drugs among women athletes, the continuing exploitation and abuse of female athletes by male coaches, an often dangerously hostile environment for lesbians in sport, unhealthy practices and body abuse, and the sexualization of female athletes strictly for marketing purposes. (195)

The notion of modeling is one of the central themes to Hall’s socio-historical account of women and sport in Canada. Not only receiving resistance from men in terms of sport participation, women athletes were also subjected to divisions created by the opposing views of women holding organizational roles. On one side of the argument were those that suggested women could participate in sport just the same as men—with a focus on competition, skill acquisition/perfection, and performance. On the other side was the proposition that women should participate in “less strenuous” types of physical activities so as to gain physical benefits solely to become healthy women in order to aid in reproduction and child-rearing. Beyond physical concerns, there also emerged (even in the early days of women’s sport participation) the idea of “appropriate” femininity. This was distinguished not only in arguments between approaches to sport and physical activity, but also in the consideration of some sports as more “masculine” than others. In an example specific to mountaineering, the often contradictory nature of women’s sport participation is highlighted:

Despite the ACC’s official policy of sexual equality and enthusiastic support for women’s climbing, there were unwritten codes of conduct and structure whose purpose was to perpetuate a gender-based hierarchy of skill, ability, and authority…. As more and more climbers gained experience and skill it soon became clear that women were not considered to have the mental and physical qualities necessary to lead climbs, nor were they thought capable of making high-altitude first ascents. (27).

As such, the history of women’s involvement in sport has been plagued by paradox. On the one hand, women have been included into various sporting spaces (though undoubtedly to greater and lesser extents). Such inclusion, however, does not come without a caveat. Even in the most “masculine” of sports (such as hockey, rugby, etc.) female participants are expected to maintain a certain degree of femininity. The paradoxical nature of women’s involvement in sport remains as problematic in contemporary times as it was in the latter stages of the 19th century. Hall does well to highlight this continued paradox, challenging the often assumed ideology of sport as an unquestioned good. Such speaks to the
continued prevalence of gender ideology reproduced within sporting and physical activity spaces.

Undoubtedly, *The Girl and the Game* makes a significant contribution to the field of Canadian sport sociology and cultural studies, hence its inclusion in this particular review even though it was published four years ago. Not only does Hall present the voices and stories of marginalized athletes who have largely been left out of Canadian sport history, she also considers these experiences through a feminist lens that provides a rich exploration of the ways in which gender is both produced within and by sport and physical activity. If there are any shortcomings to the work, they are noted by Hall herself in terms of the lack of histories of women of colour and the need for further research specific to disabled female athletes. However, the stories, anecdotes, and theoretical considerations that are offered throughout the text highlight the many ways in which male hegemony in sport has been challenged over time and yet continues to remain problematic in many regards. Finally, the text works as an excellent starting point for all feminist sport researchers, a starting point alluded to in the closing commentary: “[M]y approach has been to paint the broader picture in the hope that others will fill in the missing details through regional and local stories, more specific studies in depth, and tracking down former athletes and competitors. Who now will take up this challenge?” (215). Who, indeed?

Though not taking up Hall’s challenge, Gamal Abdel-Shehid makes another significant contribution in his 2005 publication, *Who da Man? Black Masculinities and Sporting Cultures*. Abdel-Shehid’s text addresses the intersections of race and gender, focusing specifically on the construction of black sporting masculinities within Canadian culture—importantly filling a void in cultural studies/sport sociology literature (King 2005). There are two main arguments in *Who da Man?* The first is that sporting cultures and nations act as normalizing powers that are repressive insofar as they seek the production of “conformity and sameness, and disavow difference and inequality” (3). The second argument is that theorizing identity using the concept of “nation” is problematic. Rather, Abdel-Shehid proposes a theorizing of identity (and specifically, black masculinities) drawing on the notion of “diaspora,” arguing that identities are formed across territorial boundaries (i.e., beyond geographically-constituted nations). Thus, it is not as simple as looking at the experiences of black males in sport within dualistic notions of inclusion and exclusion (or, a Manichean model) as has been the case historically. Drawing on this notion of diaspora, Abdel-Shehid explores many different Canadian sport figures, teams, and events noting the necessity of recognizing that many of Canada’s black athletes have “histories and attachments outside the geopolitical space defined by Canada” (7). Such explorations include the Ben Johnson “scan-
In investigating these various figures and scenarios, Abdel-Shehid exposes the problematic nature of sporting cultures and nations that seek the production of sameness and homogeneity, thereby effectively erasing social differences (i.e., race). Bodies that disrupt this sameness within such homologous cultures or spaces are often punished or disavowed. Abdel-Shehid argues that the, “repressive nature of sporting cultures and nationalism result in the need for social difference to be constantly managed. Those marked as ‘different’ are encouraged or rather expected to, assimilate or fit in to the existing frameworks of team or nation” (4).

While there are many excellent arguments made in this regard in *Who Da Man?*, it is the reading of the Ben Johnson 1988 Olympic gold medal win and subsequent failed drug test that provides the most poignant illustration of the production of “sameness.” As the author comments:

> Perhaps the most lasting and insidious form of “retribution” regarded Johnson’s “citizenship.” In what became known as a national infamy, there was a progression in the representation of Ben Johnson from one of a “Canadian hero” in victory to one of a “Jamaican” after disqualification. (73)

Such constructions of Johnson work within what Abdel-Shehid considers as the “whitening” of the Canadian nation. In effort to create the illusion of a “clean,” “pure,” “racism-free” nation, Johnson—upon the failure of the drug test—immediately becomes non-Canadian, thus distancing him from the nation itself.

As indicated, Abdel-Shehid’s unpacking of the media representations of Johnson is but one example in a text ripe with considerations of the constructions of black masculinities in sport that move beyond the dualistic notions of inclusion and exclusion and that further highlight the socially constructed nature of gender—in this case when intersecting with race. Specific to the creation of black masculinities, Abdel-Shehid offers his conceptualizations of blackness in sport in terms of the black man as criminal, the “spectacularized” black male athlete, the production of Raptor morality within the city of Toronto (coinciding with the expansion of the National Basketball Association into Canada), and black male athletic identity and “hardness”—each presented within solid theoretical considerations and empirical “evidence.” In his concluding chapter, Abdel-Shehid offers a particularly intriguing idea of re-considering sport through a lens of black queer theory. Such consideration, he argues, would provide opportunity to,
re-read many of the figures in the nation’s stories and histories much differently including those of Ben Johnson, Daniel Igali, etc. In addition it would involve drawing a connection between narratives of nation and narratives of sexuality, an area of inquiry that needs further exploration. (149)

As noted in the discussion of Young and White’s text, the interconnection of sport, race and sexuality in general is an area in need of further exploration. Abdel-Shehid’s suggestion of a black queer theory could make an important contribution to the field should he or other scholars take up the challenge. The strength of *Who da Man?*, in my opinion, lies in the theoretical approach he has adopted. In considering identity through the concept of diaspora, he furthers critical race theory within the field of sport studies insofar as his thinking moves well beyond inclusion/exclusion approaches (his critique of the prevalence of stacking-related literature in the sport field is a particularly poignant argument to be considered). Like the other texts included in this review, *Who da Man?* emphasizes the complex nature of the construction of gendered (and raced) subjectivities and, again, demonstrates the ways in which sport both influences and is influenced by the broader social context.

In similar and different ways each of the three texts reviewed herein suggests that because of the highly stratified nature of sport and (most) physical activities along a biological sex/gender divide, these terrains serve as important locations from which to deconstruct the reproduction of (and resistance to) gender ideologies. However, it remains necessary to conceptualize the issues of gender and sport beyond a simple male/female, masculine/feminine dichotomy, taking into consideration that the constructions of masculinity and femininity are multiple and always intersecting with race, class, sexuality, ability, age, and contextually specific regulatory power relations. As it has been noted, such conceptualizations do not remain static although many have remained mostly consistent over the history of Canadian sport and physical activity. Such is the problematic nature of dominant gender ideology.

Each of the three texts reviewed above make significant contributions to sport studies and offer different theoretical and methodological approaches that could be taken up by other researchers. However, just as Hall offers her own work as merely a starting point for the socio-historical research on women’s involvement in sport in Canada, Young and White note that their compilation of scholarly research is meant to serve as an introduction to the many different considerations of gender and sport. Finally, Abdel-Shehid offers a potential new way of thinking about black sporting masculinities through the concept of diaspora and (for future work) the lens of black queer theory. As such, given the articulations of
the authors themselves, inquiries into gender and sport—and their inter-
sections with class, race, sexuality, age, and ability—remains terrain open
to study and deconstruction—continually chipping away at the oft unchal-
lenged assumption of sport as an unquestioned good within neo-liberal
discourses of health, sport, and physical activity.

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Research Note
Note de recherche
Giving Hockey’s Past a Future:
When Identity Meets Demography
in Canadian Sports

Introduction

The term “hockey nation” is being increasingly used to refer to Canada because hockey is widely regarded as a fundamental element of Canadian identity. As the principal architect of a motion to have hockey recognized as the country’s official sport, federal Member of Parliament Nelson Riis remarked that:

“It is safe to say that hockey matters to all of us, in Quebec and the rest of Canada. It is part of our culture. It is key to the understanding of Canada. It is the perfect game on the perfect Canadian medium in the perfect Canadian season. We are a northern people and hockey is a northern sport. It is certainly fair to say it is much more than a game in our country.” (Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons Canada, National Sport Act Statement by Members Private Members’ Business, Wednesday, April 27, 1994—hereafter Parliamentary Debates, April 27, 1994)¹

Hockey’s dominance in Canada is rooted in the country’s history; it is played and watched by an important number of Canadians and Canada has achieved international success in the sport. Hockey has been widely described as the sport that unites all Canadians across regions, language groups and ethnic origins. But this idea has not gone unchallenged, whether it be from the historical perspective of hockey’s status as the country’s official sport or from the perspective of the growing attention given to other sports by an increasingly diverse population. The following discussion will consider how recent debates on Canadian identity have influenced hockey’s status as the country’s principal unifying sport. This discussion will include the 1994 debate in the House of Commons over the recognition of hockey as Canada’s official sport and present the case for according a similar status to lacrosse. The discussion will also exam-
the growing impact of demographic changes on these sports played and viewed by more and more Canadians.

Discussions on the role of hockey in Canadian history and its contribution in promoting a better understanding among Canadians of diverse backgrounds sometimes appear to be parallel national debates on identity, most notably as it pertains to the recognition of the country’s distinct characteristics. Indeed, it is against the backdrop of such debates that we are able to better understand the exchanges leading up to the adoption of Bill C-212 which on May 12, 1994 recognized hockey as the country’s official winter sport and lacrosse as its official summer sport. An analysis of the discussions in the Canadian House of Commons related to this recognition reveals that the underlying motivation for conferring such status was to support Canadian unity. Elected representatives from the federalist parties made no secret of the fact that for them Bill C-212 represented an important contribution to Canadian unity at a time when the threat of Quebec separation was a matter of growing concern.

Establishing the Context: Hockey and the Debate over Canadian Identity

The move to have hockey and lacrosse recognized as Canada’s official sports in 1994 was not the first attempt to have Parliament recognize hockey as Canada’s official or national sport. However, in this instance, it occurred as part of an attempt to identify initiatives aimed at fostering Canadian unity following a number of setbacks in the country’s ongoing constitutional debate.

In June 1987, a draft of the Meech Lake Accord had clearly stated that any interpretation of the Canadian Constitution must recognize that Quebec forms a distinct society within Canada. It affirmed the role of the Quebec government and legislature to “preserve and promote the distinct identity of Quebec”\(^3\). Approximately one year before it was slated to take effect, the Accord’s near unanimous approval disintegrated as the vigorous opposition from certain provincial leaders in Manitoba, New Brunswick and Newfoundland grew. A number of reasons have been given for the failure of the Accord, but its failure to satisfactorily address the issue of Aboriginal rights motivated opposition from Aboriginal leaders to the Accord. In 1990, a member of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly, Elijah Harper, held up an eagle feather in the province’s legislature to symbolise his refusal to endorse the Meech Lake Accord, thereby torpedoing the deal which required unanimous consent from that body. In Quebec, support for Quebec sovereignty reached unprecedented heights following the failure of the Meech Lake Accord.
In another area, a land dispute opposing the Mohawk nation and the town of Oka, Quebec unfolded from early March to the end of September 1990. The conflict resulted in three deaths and, although it initially fuelled tension between Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals, it ultimately raised public awareness and sympathy for Aboriginal concerns in much of Canada.

Under the leadership of Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, the Conservative government pursued constitutional change and, in 1992, proposed a new deal, the Charlottetown Accord. Whereas the Meech Lake Accord had focussed more specifically on the recognition of Quebec’s distinct character, the Charlottetown Accord was an attempt to respond to other constituencies that also desired some form of recognition. Through the “Canada Clause”, it also proposed the recognition of self-government for Aboriginals and provided greater empowerment to Western Canada through the reform of Canada’s Senate.

Although the Charlottetown Accord was supported by the provincial and territorial governments, and representatives from the Assembly of First Nations, with the exception of New Brunswick, the majority of the voters in each of the provincial referendums rejected the Charlottetown Accord. The more popular amongst the many interpretations of the causes for this failure is the rejection by Canadians of what they saw as too large a concession to Quebec and the rejection by Quebecers of what they perceived as too little when compared with the failed Meech Lake Accord. In the federal election of the following year, the Conservatives were left with only two seats in the House of Commons while the Liberals, under Jean Chrétien, formed a majority government with 177 seats. Much of the Conservatives’ support went to two regional parties: the Western Canadian-based Reform Party took 52 seats while the Bloc Québécois, committed to Quebec sovereignty, won 54 seats with approximately half the vote in that province. Although it ran candidates only in Quebec, its performance and the fragmentation of the federal vote resulted in the Bloc becoming Canada’s Official Opposition. Meanwhile in Quebec, the sovereignist Parti Québécois was favoured to win the election anticipated in the fall of 1994. This meant that the promised referendum on Quebec sovereignty would be held before the end of 1995.

The aforementioned political circumstances clearly influenced the thinking and actions of parliamentarians struggling to deal with the threat to Canadian unity during that period. Hence, while Bill C-212 recognized hockey as an official sport principally to foster unity between Anglophone and Francophone Canadians, by also recognizing lacrosse, it included the Aboriginal in this parliamentary acknowledgement. Given the rationale behind recognizing the summer sport, Bill C-212 was sort of a “Canada Clause”.

Giving Hockey’s Past a Future:
When Identity Meets Demography in Canadian Sports
Hockey Patriotism and Canadian Identity

The parliamentary discourse in favour of recognizing hockey as an official sport essentially consisted of four arguments: (1) the game was invented in Canada and its creation was an important moment in Canada's history; (2) hockey is played and watched by nearly all Canadians; (3) hockey unites all Canadians regardless of their linguistic or ethnic origins and (4) Canada's world leadership in hockey has resulted from the cooperation of persons of various backgrounds and more specifically of English and French Canadians. The Member of Parliament (MP) for Kamloops (British Columbia) Nelson Riis, who spearheaded the legislation, was quite explicit in invoking national unity as justification for the adoption of the Bill. Riis declared that:

“We look at the present and to the future and see the need to bring Canadians closer together. We need symbols that represent Canada as a whole. We need to build on what we have. Hockey and lacrosse can play a part in furthering pride in our land and our unity.” (Parliamentary Debates, April 27, 1994)4.

For her part, MP Sharon Hayes stated that: “This discussion encompasses much more than the pros and cons of two Canadian sports. Rather it is an opportunity for us as members of Parliament to raise a rallying point to help us further define ourselves as Canadians. I assert that by naming Canada’s national sports, with which we identify parts of our history, our present reality and a future that can bring all Canadians a step closer together.” 5(Parliamentary Debates, April 27, 1994)

The discourse related to the recognition of lacrosse as an official sport of Canada was quite different. While the recognition of hockey as Canada's official sport was seen as a response to the contributions of English and French Canadians to national identity, the recognition of lacrosse as an official sport was an attempt to include Aboriginals in this undertaking. The recognition of lacrosse as an official sport responded mainly to one of the criteria used by those advocating the recognition of hockey as Canada's official sport, namely its roots in Canada's history. Not surprisingly, the debate stirred little interest in Canada's international achievements in this sport, in its role in fostering unity between Canadians of diverse origins or in the extent to which it is watched and played by Canadians. In fact, lacrosse was not viewed discursively as a nation-building sport in the manner that hockey was described in the remarks made by elected officials. Indeed many of the parliamentarians admitted to their ignorance about lacrosse and its place in the country's history. The debate on the Bill that ultimately recognized both hockey and lacrosse as Canada’s national sports gave several
elected officials an opportunity to reaffirm their pride in Canada. This is reflected in the many statements in reference to hockey that were made during the discussions.

Hockey and the Founding of Canada

During the debate of Bill C-212, Sharon Hayes noted that most countries chose a national sport created in that country. In this regard, hockey was described as a sport as old as Canada itself. A combination of bandy, originally from England, shinty, originally from Scotland, hurley, originally from Ireland, and lacrosse borrowed from the native Indian population, hockey has a multiethnic legacy. The debate among historians regarding the exact origins of hockey in Canada was not resolved by parliamentarians. Authorities in Montreal have emphatically declared that their city is the original home of ice hockey. Tracing this ‘uniquely’ Canadian sport back to the early 19th century, MP Hayes noted that the hockey most familiar to Canadians today was first introduced in Montreal by J.G.A. Creighton, a McGill University student. The first world hockey championship was held in Canada in 1883. Another MP, Pat O’Brien, said he was proud to inform the House that although many early hockey players were French Canadians and the sport was founded in Montreal, it was developed by an Irish Canadian by the name of Ambrose O’Brien (Parliamentary Debates, April 27, 1994).

Hockey is rooted in Canada’s history as well as in its geography. Parliamentarians were inspired by sports historian Bruce Kidd who wrote: “Hockey is the Canadian metaphor. The rink is a symbol of this country’s vast stretches of water and wilderness, its extremes of climate, the player a symbol of our struggle to civilize such a land. Unsure as we are about who we are, we know at least this about ourselves: We are hockey players and we are hockey fans”. 6 “It is safe to say that hockey matters to all of us, in Quebec and the rest of Canada. It is part of our culture. It is key to the understanding of Canada… We are a northern people and hockey is a northern sport.” 7 (Parliamentary Debates, April 27, 1994).

Every Canadian is a Hockey Player?

Yet another justification for recognizing hockey as an official sport was the extent to which it is watched and played by Canadians. As parliamentarians remarked, hockey is the preferred sport of a majority of Canadian households and it is played in every region of the country. As one MP observed, there is an organized hockey event in virtually every Canadian community, in large cities and in humble villages. It was also pointed out that hockey is an inclusive sport and that it is the fastest growing sport played by women in Canada. When Bill C-212 was passed, the Canadian
women’s national team had already won three consecutive world championships, the last one just two weeks before. MP Dennis Mills summed up the debate when he said: “….although its symmetry is far from perfect hockey does far better than most [sports] in cutting across social divisions, young and old, rich and poor, urban and rural, French and English, east and west, able and disabled.” (Parliamentary Debates, April 27, 1994).

Canada World Leader in Hockey

Parliamentarians pointed out that there was nothing more identifiably Canadian to the rest of the world than the game of hockey. Canadians had successfully competed internationally in both amateur and professional circuits. Many agreed that nations achieve international status and recognition through sports. Canada claims to have exported the game of hockey to more than twenty countries. During the debate, parliamentarians referred to the 1972 summit series that pitted Canada against the Soviet Union, an event credited by some analysts as having eased tensions between the West and East during the Cold War. In this particular instance, sports do appear to have eased political tensions. The dramatic victory of Canada over the Soviet Union has long been seen as a pivotal moment in our pursuit of national pride and unity, and this in spite of the fact that it took place during a tumultuous political era that coincided with the emergence of the sovereignist Parti Québécois.

Hockey Unity

A well known Canadian hockey broadcaster, the late Foster Hewitt once stated that: “In our country while hockey is usually played for sheer enjoyment, its outdoor rinks and enclosed arenas are meeting places for youths of all origins where race, culture and creed are forgotten. The Stewarts, Kellys, Smiths, Beliveaus, Delvecchios, Mahovlichs, the Ullmans and Howes combine for the glory of the team and in the process, Canada gains in unity and strength”. (Parliamentary Debates, April 27, 1994). These views were echoed in the Parliamentary debates and many remarks similar in tone and emphasis were made by elected officials. An MP declared that we are most united on a hockey rink as we set aside backgrounds, English, French, ethnic, and as we work together as a nation.

Representatives of the sovereignist Bloc Québécois were up to the challenge of debating Bill C-212 even though it was cast in such patriotic terms. The Bloc did not shy away from the discussions; its members even joined in the affirmation of pride in past hockey achievements, even though they focused on Quebec born hockey players and on their contri-
bution to the sport. High on their list was Maurice Richard, who led the Montreal Canadians hockey team to several championships and who was the first player to have scored 50 goals in one NHL season. Maurice Richard was included in the federalist parliamentarians’ list of Canadian legends, but the Bloc Québécois MPs referred to him as a powerful symbol for Quebecers. Maurice Richard was presented as a symbol of French Canadian success within Canada and as a widely recognized symbol of Quebec’s Quiet Revolution of the 1960s characterized by the struggle for equality between French and English speakers.

The Bloc Québécois confined their nostalgic reflection to the Montreal Canadiens hockey team and referred to several of the leading players throughout the team’s history as French-speaking stars. This included such names as Phil Goyette, Bernard Geoffrion, Jacques Plante, Jean Béliveau, Jacques Laperrière, Henri Richard, Guy Lafleur, Jacques Lemaire, Guy Lapointe, Patrick Roy, Guy Charbonneau. Bloc Québécois MPs also pointed out that English players had also contributed to the Montreal Canadians and that: “some French-speaking players also won fame with other teams”.

Declaring that hockey will be one of the things that ultimately keep us together as a nation, MP Dennis Mills said he simply could not imagine that one day the Montreal Canadians hockey team would be called the Montreal Blocs. The Bloc Québécois did not wish to reject something viewed favourably by a majority of Canadians and Quebecers. One Bloc MP remarked that making hockey and lacrosse Canada’s national sports added to existing symbols such as the beaver, the national anthem and the Canadian flag. In the final analysis, the Bloc MP warned that a sovereign Quebec would likely confer similar status upon these sports. The following statement was in response to Dennis Mills’ comment: “The Montreal Blocs could very well play against the Toronto Maple Leafs. That would be a good representation of the two Canadian nations, once sovereign.”

The Bloc described its consent to support the recognition of hockey and lacrosse as Canada’s national sports as a good will gesture. While congratulating MP Nelson Riis for his determination for wanting to have hockey recognized as a national sport, Bloc Québécois MP Antoine Dubé stated that nothing would prevent the two countries, in the aftermath of a sovereignist victory, from sharing the same national sports.

**Lacrosse**

As noted earlier, the formal recognition of Aboriginal Peoples constituted an ongoing challenge to those involved in the formal acknowledgement of the founding characteristics of Canadian society. Supporters of the recog-
nition of lacrosse as an official sport contended that their efforts were rooted in Canada’s past and, in particular, in the contribution of Canada’s Aboriginal Peoples. The earliest European record of lacrosse dates back to the early 1800s when French missionaries reported seeing Aboriginal people playing a game with sticks and a ball. They called it “à la crosse” because the sticks reminded them of the bishop’s crozier or “crosse”. In the early 1800s, white settlers in Montreal took up the game. Virtually every nation in North America had some form of ball and stick game and each had its own name for the game. The Ojibway played Baggataway while the Mohawk played Tewaarathon. Lacrosse, which the Native People of North America knew under many different names such as Baggataway or Tewaarathon, played a significant role in the community and in the religious life of tribes across the continent for many years.

The game of lacrosse was quickly winning the loyalty and interest of the newest North Americans. Lacrosse was named Canada’s National Game by Parliament in 1859. In 1867, the Montreal Lacrosse Club, headed by Dr. George Beers, organized a conference in Kingston in order to create a national body whose purpose would be to govern the sport throughout the newly formed country. In much the same way that hockey is described as contributing to unite English and French Canadians, lacrosse was said to establish a bond between Aboriginal nations and European settlers. European concepts of structure and rules were added to the religious and social rituals of the first North Americans, resulting in one of the first symbols of the new Canada. Lacrosse remains a significant contribution of Aboriginal culture to North American society. In fact, it is viewed as the oldest game in the United States. Canadians are credited with introducing the game to the United States, England, Ireland, and Scotland.

This recognition was widely documented by recognized authorities including researchers, sports writers and historians of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The earliest source is Scribner’s Magazine (volume 14, May to October 1877) where we find the statement: “The game of lacrosse was adopted as the national game of Canada on July 1, 1859”15. The 11th edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica (1911) refers to lacrosse as “… the national game of Canada”16. In 1904 Canada sent its first delegation to the Olympic Games and lacrosse was one of the team sports in which it participated. Lacrosse is the only Olympic team sport where Canada won more medals than all the other countries combined. Those who supported the recognition of lacrosse in the national debate pointed out that many hockey legends played both sports, among them former National Hockey League stars Bobby Orr and Wayne Gretzky who used lacrosse to sharpen their hockey skills. During his term as Prime Minister, the Right Hon. Lester B. Pearson became the honorary chairman of the Canadian Lacrosse Association.
In the early twentieth century, lacrosse was the dominant sport in Canada and there was much activity at both the amateur and professional levels. During the 1930s a rethinking of the relationship of the two most popular games, lacrosse and hockey, resulted in the creation of indoor lacrosse, also known as Box Lacrosse or Boxla. The game was built upon speed and action and very quickly won support from the organized leadership. Lacrosse is described today as a combination of football, hockey and basketball. By the mid 1930s, the field game had been completely replaced by Boxla and the box version became the official sport of the Canadian Lacrosse Association. It is worth noting that some historians view this ‘seasonal’ reorganization as a major cause of the decline of lacrosse.

In 1964, a bill was introduced in the House of Commons to declare hockey Canada’s national sport. An opposing bill countered that although the official status of lacrosse had not been legislated, it was viewed as Canada’s official game by important segments of the population. This second bill sought the official recognition of lacrosse. Ultimately, neither bill was debated by Parliament. A few years later on the occasion of Canada’s 100th birthday the issue again arose and the outcome was similar. Some twenty seven years later, in 1994, Aboriginal leaders objected to the government bill that proposed the recognition of ice hockey as Canada’s national sport. They argued that by excluding the recognition of lacrosse, the bill ignored an important Aboriginal contribution to Canadian history and society. The parliamentarians who supported the recognition of lacrosse stated that they were not out to undermine hockey and that they believed that it was: “… time for Canadians to realize the cultural contribution of our first people, our truly first people not just in sport but in many things”\(^{17}\). The passage of a bill recognizing only hockey would have been viewed negatively by the Aboriginal Peoples, much like the rejection of the Meech Lake Accord, which contained the distinct Quebec society clause, resulted in negative sentiments in Quebec.

In response, the bill was amended “to recognize hockey as Canada’s National Winter Sport and lacrosse as Canada’s National Summer Sport.”\(^{18}\) Some officials stated that the recognition would give them an opportunity to learn more about lacrosse. One Member of Parliament, while not opposing the recognition of lacrosse, stated that in his constituency in southwestern Ontario the summertime sport of choice was baseball and always had been. This elected official did not wish to denigrate the sport of lacrosse; he simply wanted to point out that, unlike hockey, it was not played in all parts of the country. It was MP Pat O’Brien who, while describing hockey as the national obsession of Canadians, demonstrated his concern to include a Canadian sporting tradition that predated Confederation when he introduced an amendment
to recognize both ice hockey and lacrosse as national sports of Canada. He contended that:

“While many Canadians would certainly view the national sports status of ice hockey as a natural expression of the Canadian reality, the concept has been on ice for decades. Canadians have long recognized the significance of another sport which also originated in Canada and which is played all over the world today. Our proposed amendment would allow for the inclusion of Canada’s long tradition in the sport of lacrosse and would resolve an issue that has been left on the bench since Confederation.”

More than a decade after the official recognition of hockey and lacrosse as Canada’s national sports, sports remain an important part of our national identity and the government is perhaps now more focused on the contribution of sports on unity and cohesion across the country. Although the connection between achievement in sports and national pride is so self-evident for many, it merits some examination. According to a 2005 report prepared for Sports Canada by the Conference Board of Canada, sports give us pleasure, help define us and our communities, and contribute to the sense of what it means to be Canadian (Conference Board of Canada, 2005). An international survey conducted in 2004 revealed that some 85% of Canadians were proud when their country did well in international sports. Canada ranked 14th in a 34 nation International Social Survey Program (ISSP) for the level of national pride exhibited in international sports achievements (see Table 1). Feeling good about national sports performance does not imply that a country is proud of its actual achievements. Pride is often contingent upon a country’s expectations vis-à-vis such achievements. Overall some 88% of Canadians say they are proud of their country’s achievements in sports. This is above the combined average for all the countries surveyed (81%) yet below such nations as Ireland, Australia and the United States (see Table 2). However, hockey’s ability to remain the principal source of such pride may depend on its ability to broaden its viewership and participant base within the country’s growing non-European population.

Since the 1960s, perhaps the most important feature of Canada’s demographic evolution has been the growing presence of non-Europeans. Statistics Canada projects that the non-European segment of the Canadian population could top eight million by 2017, representing a two-fold increase since 2001. By 2017, roughly one in five Canadians will be of non-European origin, an increase from slightly more than one in eight in 2001. The population of European origin will continue to grow, albeit at a much slower pace (between 1% and 7% between 2001 and 2017).
These demographic changes will undoubtedly influence cultural choices and practices including those widely considered to be fundamental to Canada’s self-definition. This is true in the area of sports where changing demographics are among a number of factors that influence the preferred choices of Canadians. As the composition of the nation’s population rapidly evolves so too do the sports that its peoples choose to watch and/or play. Regarded as the dominant sport in a world marked by increasing globalization, soccer is perhaps seen as the principal competition to the supremacy of hockey in Canada. This is not to imply that soccer will one day supplant hockey; rather, it suggests that it will diminish the extent of its dominance nationally. If this occurs, and there is evidence that it is already underway, it will not be solely attributable to the influx of non-European immigrants and to their descendants. The appeal of soccer is strong among many Canadians of European background. They are connected, and in many instances reconnected, via satellite and the internet to the sport that dominates most of the European continent. Indeed far more Canadians watched Italy’s victory over France in the 2006 FIFA World Cup than the Edmonton Oilers’ defeat by the Carolina Hurricanes in the final game of the National Hockey League Championships. In a 2006 survey of several ethnic groups in Canada’s major cities, pollster Kaan Yigit found that although its margin of dominance will shrink, hockey will remain the sport most followed in Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver over the next decade. He found that the potential market growth of basketball and soccer among the fast-growing population of non-European origin is much greater than it is for hockey (Solutions Group, May 8, 2006).21

Hockey also faces stiff competition as a sport played by Canadians. Based on the membership in Canadian sports federations, in 2005, soccer was well ahead of hockey with over 840,000 registered players while Hockey Canada claimed 550,000 for that same year. The number of registered soccer players for 2005 was nearly double the number reported by Soccer Canada a decade earlier. Given that this membership is mostly comprised of younger Canadians, the changing demographic trends will likely contribute to a widening of the membership gap. Where Canada successfully competes internationally in hockey, the country has yet to enjoy any meaningful success in soccer on the world stage. The growth in popularity of soccer may result in reinforcing the diaspora ties for many European and non-European immigrants and their descendants who favour the teams of the countries of origin.
The Evidence on Sports Consumption in Canada

Data from surveys conducted in recent years provide a somewhat diverse portrait of changing trends in the sports viewed and played by Canadians. Interpretations of survey data depend upon the manner in which questions were put to the population and the sports included in the choices made available to respondents. While ethnic background is an important consideration in understanding patterns of sports consumption, factors such as age, gender and region are equally, if not more important. The intersection between such demographic characteristics is very relevant. For example, it would be interesting to know the sports consumption habits of young members of ethnic communities.

A 2004 survey conducted by the Conference Board of Canada points out that Canadians participate in many sports but tend to concentrate on a few. According to the Conference Board out of nearly 100 sports played, involvement is strongly focused in about a dozen sports of which ice hockey, golf, soccer, baseball, basketball, volleyball, skiing, swimming and cycling are the top choices. On the basis of the polling data, hockey has the single largest number and share of “active participants” as opposed to the number of registered members in sports associations. Hockey also has the largest number and share of volunteers and attendees. Soccer has the second largest number and share of volunteers and attendees, but only the fifth number of active participants. Golf, a summer sport with a disproportionately greater number of persons in the 45 plus age category, is second in the number of active participants, closely behind hockey (see Table 3).

A survey conducted by the firm Leger Marketing for the Association for Canadian Studies in the fall 2006 explores the population’s preferences in sports participation on the basis of language and gender. One-fifth of the Francophones surveyed chose hockey as the sport in which they prefer to participate. Some 13% of Anglophone Canadians surveyed said hockey is the sport they preferred to play. Eleven percent of Anglophone respondents indicated that they prefer to participate in swimming, golf and baseball. Soccer was a clear favourite among the allophone respondents. In the 18 to 44 age groups, hockey and soccer were almost equally preferred. Golf emerges as the favourite sport in which to personally participate for those over the age of 55 (see Table 5).

Sports Followed by Canadians: Viewing and Listening Habits

When it comes to the sports that Canadians follow, University of Lethbridge sociologist Reginald Bibby believes that it is an exaggeration to say that they live or die by the National Hockey League. Based on data
compiled in 2005, he maintains that in the past few years the Canadian Football League was followed by more Canadians than the National Hockey League (Maclean’s Magazine, July 1, 2006). Bibby explains that the 2004-2005 players strike resulting in the cancellation of the 2004-2005 National Hockey League season, the retirement of celebrity players like Wayne Gretzky, poor team performance and the loss of the Winnipeg and Quebec City franchises contributed to a drop in the number of Canadians following the game.

Other survey data suggest that while hockey is clearly facing competition as the preferred sport of play of Canadians, it is faring better as a “viewer” sport, as one listened to and read about by the population. The data from two surveys conducted in 2003 and 2006 that looked at the number of Canadians following different sports (not just the professional teams) provide a less pessimistic view of the state of hockey, although there is still cause for concern.

Nearly three in ten Canadians surveyed by Environics in January 2003 said they follow hockey through television, radio and in newspapers more than any other sport. Its popularity varies from region to region with Quebec, the home province of the legendary Montreal Canadians, somewhat less likely to follow hockey than other Canadians. The popularity of hockey is greater for Canadians under the age of 30. With respect to the other sports followed by Canadians, preferences vary considerably. While important segments of Canadians follow football, baseball and golf as noted earlier, the biggest threat to hockey’s ongoing dominance may come from soccer and basketball. Non-European immigrants are more likely to follow soccer than hockey. As noted in the tables, when it comes to viewing, listening or reading about sports, Quebecers are somewhat more likely to prefer amateur hockey and figure skating than other Canadians. In addition, in Quebec, tennis and soccer have a greater viewing and listening audience than is the case elsewhere in the country. The proportion of respondents that do not follow any sport whatsoever is higher in Quebec than it is elsewhere in Canada. In 2003, the proportion of Quebecers who followed baseball and basketball was particularly low compared to other parts of the country (see Table 6).

When the sports viewing and listening habits of Canadians living in larger cities are considered, hockey is the sport of choice for 38% of Vancouverites, 31% of Torontonians and only 19% of Montrealers. In fact, a majority of the Vancouver respondents prefer to watch or listen to winter sports. Canadian football attracts a somewhat higher percentage of viewers in Montreal (6%), than in Vancouver (2%) and Toronto (1%). On the basis of gender, while women (23%) were somewhat less inclined to follow hockey than men (35%), they had a marked preference for figure
skating (13%) compared to their male counterparts (1%). Women were also more likely to say that they did not follow any sport (23%) than men (12%). As observed below, hockey is much more popular for the groups between the ages of 18 to 44 than for the groups over 45. Figure skating, golf and baseball seem to be more popular with the older group. The respondents aged between 18 to 29 preferred to watch and listen to hockey over soccer. This is likely attributable to the effect of demographic change and the fast growing share of non-Europeans within that age cohort (see Table 7).

When the menu of sport choices offered to Canadians is reduced to include only the dominant sports, survey respondents tend to pick hockey well over any other spectator sports. This suggests that hockey may stand to lose more as a result of the increased choices offered to Canadians through various media. In the fall 2006 Leger Marketing survey, 45% of the respondents chose hockey as the sport that they most prefer to follow in the media. No other single sport appears to compete with hockey. As for the other sports, the preferences of Canadians are divided relatively equally across the board. There are, however, some significant regional differences. Hockey has somewhat fewer fans on the Prairies than in other parts of Canada. As for football, it is followed by more than one out of five people in the Prairie region (both Winnipeg and Regina have Canadian Football League teams but no professional hockey clubs). In Quebec, Ontario and British Columbia soccer finishes second while baseball holds down second spot in the Atlantic (see Table 8). It is interesting to contrast the 2003 and 2006 survey results related to the popularity of hockey in Quebec. While the earlier survey offered a greater range of choices, it is reasonable to conclude that following the National Hockey League players’ strike, hockey has rebounded in the province. The Leger Marketing survey found the strongest support for hockey in the youngest cohort of respondents; the majority of the 18-24 category claimed that hockey is the spectator sport that they prefer to follow in the media (see Table 9). However, Canadians whose mother tongue is neither English nor French (allophones) followed soccer as much as hockey. English Canada chose football over soccer whereas Francophone Canadians are equally divided between the two sports (see Table 10).

**Hockey’s Prospects: Looking to the Future**

Although hockey seems to be doing reasonably well as a spectator sport in Canada, when asked what the future holds for the sport widely regarded as the country’s national game, many Canadians are not as confident. When asked which spectator sport will be dominant by 2020, a majority of Canadians said it would be hockey (58%) with soccer finishing in second place (28%) But the prospects for hockey’s dominance by 2020
were the object of far greater optimism for the younger generation than for the older one. The 2006 Leger Marketing survey reveals that while 80% of Canadians between the ages of 18 and 24 believe that hockey will remain dominant by 2020, that figure drops to about 45% for those respondents over the age of 55. Within that group, some 35% predict that soccer will be the country’s most popular spectator sport by 2020. Reviewing the results regionally, it is interesting to note that Quebecers are the least optimistic about the future prospects of hockey as a spectator sport. Indeed, Quebec is the only region surveyed where more people believe soccer will be the most popular spectator sport by 2020. Some 45% of Quebecers polled predicted that soccer would remain dominant over hockey (36%). Paradoxically the allophones surveyed were more likely to think that hockey would be the most popular (62%) and soccer in second (24%) and this despite the fact that this group watches and plays the latter sport significantly more frequently than either Anglophones or Francophones. For their part, Anglophone Canadians are much more sanguine regarding the future prospects for hockey with nearly two-thirds saying it would dominate by 2020, while just under four in ten Francophones share that point of view.

Yet another possible challenge to hockey’s future influence within the Canadian population of non-European origin will be the sport’s capacity to involve players at the highest levels from this segment of the population. To the extent that certain ethnic groups will prefer in the future to follow sports that include at least some participants from their particular cultural background, professional hockey could face an important challenge. Indeed, 2001 census figures reveal that with the exception of persons who identified themselves as Black on the census question related to visible minority identification, Canada’s professional sports have little, and in some instances, no representation from most of the non-European origin groups (see Table 11). Given the demographic changes anticipated in the decades ahead for Canada, this surely represents an issue which will warrant attention of those marketing various sports in Canada.

Conclusion

The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation’s 2006 televised series, Hockey: A People’s History, is described as “…chronicling the story of a game and the soul of a nation. Born as a game of survival against the snow and ice of a Canadian winter, hockey gave a new country its first heroes and champions…hockey is where Canada’s cultures collide and rivalries divide. It’s also a game that unites us like nothing else can.” 22 Douglas Fisher, a politician and the author of the book Canada’s Sporting Heroes, once said that: “most of our shared experiences and values from
Bonavista to Vancouver Island are through politics and sport. It is ultimately woven in our Canadian self-image and our mythology.²³

MP Pat O’Brien proudly boasted that the winning goal in the final game in the 1972 series between Canada and the Soviet Union was scored by Paul Henderson with the help of Yvan Cournoyer and Phil Esposito. O’Brien concluded by saying: “That is the kind of co-operation we need in this country: An English Canadian, a French Canadian and an Italian Canadian working together to help us win a hockey series.”²⁴ In spite of this sentiment, hockey’s growth potential will, at least to some extent, depend on the sport’s capacity to attract non-Europeans and the cooperation described by O’Brien will need to include several other groups.

Despite the mixed evidence from existing data, during the early part of the twenty-first century and for the foreseeable future, hockey will continue to be the sport followed by most Canadians. Although it is being challenged by soccer as the sport that Canadians play most frequently, the competition seems to be greatest within the younger segment of Canada’s population. This is attributable in part to rapidly shifting demographics, more specifically to the increasing presence of non-Europeans. If soccer’s popularity as a sport played by Canadians continues to grow, it will surely create demands for opportunities to follow the sport professionally. Those in the business of marketing hockey in Canada are likely paying close attention to these trends and will likely develop strategies to keep the sports dominant. It has been argued that since hockey is a winter sport, and soccer largely a summer game, the two sports should complement one another rather than be in competition. To date, no study has been designed to examine carefully the seasonal patterns of sports participation and consumption in Canada and to determine the possible combinations of preferences of multiple sports consumers. Such information may be invaluable in an environment characterized by an increasing competition for attention and resources, and where cooperation may be beneficial to the Canadian sports community.

Endnotes

3 Cameron, David. The referendum papers: essays on secession and national unity, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1999
4 Parliamentary Debates, op.cit, April 27, 1994
Giving Hockey’s Past a Future: 
When Identity Meets Demography in Canadian Sports

5 Parliamentary Debates, op.cit. April 27, 1994
7 Parliamentary Debates op.cit. April 27, 1994
8 Ibid
9 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid.
12 Ibid.
14 Ibid.
15 Parliamentary Debates op.cit. April 27, 1994
16 Ibid
17 Ibid
18 Ibid
19 Ibid
20 “National Household Survey on Participation in Sport”, Conference Board of Canada December 2004
22 Bibby, Reginald, as cited in “How Canadian Are You? The 2006 Canada Day Poll”. In Maclean’s Magazine, July 1, 2006
24 Fisher, Douglas as cited in Parliamentary Debates op.cit. April 27, 1994
**TABLE 1**

When my country does well in international sports it makes me proud to be (nationality)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Combined</th>
<th>Agree Strongly</th>
<th>Agree</th>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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Source: International Social Science Program Survey, 2004 (the survey was conducted in 34 countries with national samples ranging between 700 and 2300 respondents. In Canada there were approximately 1150 respondents and the survey was conducted by the Carleton University Survey Centre)
### Table 2
**Pride: Country’s Achievements in Sports**

<table>
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<td>77.3</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>52.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>76.1</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>65.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>75.7</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>49.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uruguay</td>
<td>73.7</td>
<td>28.3</td>
<td>45.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chile</td>
<td>73.1</td>
<td>27.2</td>
<td>45.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>72.0</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>52.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>72.0</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>57.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany West</td>
<td>71.7</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>55.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Britain</td>
<td>69.1</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>51.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>56.5</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>42.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>51.1</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>41.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel (Jewish Population)</td>
<td>42.6</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>32.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ISSP 2004
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SPORT</th>
<th>ACTIVE PARTICIPANTS</th>
<th>VOLUNTEERS</th>
<th>ATTENDEES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ice hockey</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golf</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseball</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soccer</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennis</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curling</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bowling</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TABLE 4
Which do you consider your favourite sport to personally participate in?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LANGUAGE</th>
<th>FRANCOPHONE</th>
<th>ANGLOPHONE</th>
<th>ALLOPHONE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hockey</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soccer</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swimming</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golf</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseball</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basketball</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennis</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Leger Marketing for the Association for Canadian Studies, September 21-27, 2006

### TABLE 5
Which do you consider your favorite sport to personally participate in?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>18-24</th>
<th>25-34</th>
<th>35-44</th>
<th>45-54</th>
<th>55-64</th>
<th>65 AND OVER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hockey</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soccer</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swimming</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golf</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseball</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basket-ball</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennis</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Leger Marketing for the Association for Canadian Studies, September 21-27, 2006


### TABLE 6
What, if any, do you consider to be your favorite spectator sport to watch on TV, listen to on radio or follow in the newspapers?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WESTERN</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>ATL. PROV</th>
<th>QUEBEC</th>
<th>ONTARIO</th>
<th>CAN.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hockey (professional)</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure skating</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hockey (amateur)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseball</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soccer</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golf</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Football (NFL)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Football (CFL)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None, do not follow sports</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Environics for the Association for Canadian Studies, January 2003

### TABLE 7
What, if any, do you consider to be your favorite spectator sport to watch on TV, listen to on radio or follow in the newspapers?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>18 TO 29</th>
<th>30 TO 44</th>
<th>45 TO 59</th>
<th>60 OR MORE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hockey (professional)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure skating</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hockey (amateur)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseball</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soccer</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golf</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Football (NFL)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Football (CFL)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auto racing</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basketball</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None, do not follow sports</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Environics for the Association for Canadian Studies, January 2003
**TABLE 8**

Among the following which is your favorite spectator sport to follow in the media (TV, Radio, Newspaper, etc.)...?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CANADA</th>
<th>ATLANTIC</th>
<th>QUEBEC</th>
<th>ONTARIO</th>
<th>PRAIRIES</th>
<th>ALBERTA</th>
<th>COLUMBIA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hockey</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Football</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soccer</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseball</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basketball</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Leger Marketing for the Association for Canadian Studies, September 21-27, 2006

---

**TABLE 9**

Among the following which is your favorite spectator sport to follow in the media (TV, Radio, Newspaper, etc.)...?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Hockey</th>
<th>18-24</th>
<th>25-34</th>
<th>35-44</th>
<th>45-54</th>
<th>55-64</th>
<th>65</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Football</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Soccer</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Baseball</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Basketball</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>None</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Leger Marketing for the Association for Canadian Studies, September 21-27, 2006
**TABLE 10**
Among the following which is your favorite spectator sport to follow in the media (TV, Radio, Newspaper, etc.)...?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LANGUAGE</th>
<th>FRANCOPHONE</th>
<th>ANGLOPHONE</th>
<th>ALLOPHONE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hockey</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Football</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soccer</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseball</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basketball</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Leger Marketing for the Association for Canadian Studies, September 21-27, 2006

**TABLE 11**
Numbers of Canadians by Visible Minority Status Reporting Occupations as Professional Athletes, 2001 (Where the number is less than 10, the Census lists the figure at 0)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CANADA</th>
<th>TOTAL – POPULATION 15+ IN LABOUR FORCE</th>
<th>FEMALE</th>
<th>MALE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Occupation: Athletes Total - Population 15+ in labour force</td>
<td>2595</td>
<td>380</td>
<td>2220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visible minority population</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Asian</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeast Asian</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filipino</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arab/West Asian</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin American</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All other visible minority groups</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>2295</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>1930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Statistics Canada, Custom Tabulations for the Department of Canadian Heritage Census of Canada, 2001
Open-topic Articles

Article hors-thème
Trevor W. Harrison

Anti-Canadianism:
Explaining the Deep Roots of a Shallow Phenomenon

Abstract

Anti-Americanism is often said to be a central element of Canadian identity. Recently, however, its counterpart – anti-Canadianism – emerged in the United States. This article examines these expressions of anti-Canadianism, situating the phenomenon within the two countries’ historical, ideological-discursive, and political relationships. The paper suggests anti-Canadianism in the United States stems from a mix of anti-French sentiment, a refusal to accept the distinctiveness of English-speaking Canada, and a growing divergence of value orientations between the two countries. The paper argues further that anti-Canadianism must be viewed (like its counterpart) according to its political uses on both sides of the border.

Résumé

On dit souvent que l’anti-américanisme constitue un élément central de l’identité canadienne. Récemment, toutefois, sa contrepartie, l’anticanadianisme, est apparue aux États-Unis. Cet article examine ces expressions de l’anticanadianisme en situant le phénomène dans les relations historiques et politiques et le débat idéologique entre les deux pays. Selon le document, l’anticanadianisme aux États-Unis résulte d’un mélange de sentiment antifrançais, d’un refus d’accepter le caractère distinct du Canada anglais et d’une divergence croissante des valeurs entre les deux pays. L’auteur du document soutient également que l’anticanadianisme doit être examiné (comme sa contrepartie) d’après ses utilisations politiques des deux côtés de la frontière.

We are witnessing something new in the [Canadian–American] relationship: the emergence on the American right of a troubling anti-Canadianism, albeit confined to strident voices in the media. It is not yet widespread, but it is not uncommon among some commentators, who regularly contrast American values with those of a soft and self-indulgent Canada.

—The 105th American Assembly, February 2005

International Journal of Canadian Studies / Revue internationale d’études canadiennes
35, 2007
It is a cliché that “Canadians”—in the words of the late American sociologist Seymour M. Lipset (1990, 53)—“are the world’s oldest and most continuing anti-Americans.” Until France abandoned them in 1763, the people of New France, with their Indian allies, successfully fought off invasions from the south long before there was an America. Wariness of “the Yankee” gained further support from fleeing United Empire Loyalists during the American Revolution. Appropriating the history of New France as their own (see Dufour 1990), the Loyalists subsequently became even more obdurately anti-American, while ignoring the many initial similarities between them and their American cousins (see Grabb et al. 2000). Since that time, anti-Americanism has remained a central element of Canadian identity (Granatstein 1996), waxing and waning with events. This history is well known and requires little elaboration.

Not acknowledged until recently, however, is the phenomenon of anti-Canadianism. Its often virulent re-emergence among some elements of America’s political and chattering classes since the attacks of September 11, 2001, requires examination. This article attempts just that, situating the recent re-emergence of anti-Canadianism in its socio-political and historical contexts. The paper begins with an examination of the concept of “anti-Canadianism.”

What is Anti-Canadianism?

The term “anti-Canadianism” defies easy definition. According to Webster’s Dictionary, the prefix “anti” refers to “one who is opposed to some course, measure, policy, or party.” Common sense, however, tells us “anti-Canadianism” goes beyond mere opposition to involve active hostility, but active hostility to what? And, under what circumstances does it arise?

Some help in answering these questions is provided by looking to anti-Canadianism’s counterpart, anti-Americanism. Most analysts of anti-Americanism agree it is 1) old, even dating to America’s founding; 2) geographically and socially widespread; 3) amorphous, hence difficult to define; 4) grounded in opposition to the notion or idea of America itself, including its culture, values, and institutions; and 5) generally set off by proximate causes (e.g., the decision of President George W. Bush to invade Iraq in 2003) (Hollander 1992, 2004, Crockatt 2003, Gibson 2004, Ross and Ross 2004, Sweig 2006, Kohut and Stokes 2006).

On other points, however, there is disagreement. Hollander (1992, 334–35) and Gibson (2004) define (and therefore explain) anti-Americanism as largely irrational, resulting from envy and weakness. By contrast, Crockatt (2003), Ross and Ross (2004), and Sweig (2006)
eschew definitions of irrationality, instead grounding (but not justifying) anti-Americanism in historical relations and specific policy decisions and actions. Likewise, while Hollander (1992, 2004) and Gibson (2004) suggest anti-Americanism does not differentiate between the American state and its people, and Kohut and Stokes (2006) suggest a more recent fusion of the two, Crockatt (2003) and Sweig (2006) contend anti-Americanism is not directed at the American people per se. Finally, in an important consideration, Crockatt (2003, 46) notes the political uses of the label “anti-American,” that its employment “as a political weapon to discredit an opponent.”

These efforts at defining anti-Americanism provide some clues to how we might conceptualize anti-Canadianism. Like its counterpart, anti-Canadianism is amorphous in its expression and often uninformed (perhaps even irrational). Similarly, anti-Canadianism often fails to differentiate between the government of Canada and the people and is set off by immediate and specific catalysts—most recently Canada’s refusal to be part of the American-led invasion of Iraq in 2003. And, finally, as this article shows, it has a long pedigree.

Yet, the two phenomena also display clear differences. Most particularly, while anti-Americanism is a worldwide phenomenon, anti-Canadianism is confined to the United States and some segments within Canada itself. Since both these mutual “anti’s” exist on each side and across the same border, it seems reasonable therefore to investigate anti-Canadianism in the specific context of the historical, ideological-discursive, and political relationships between the two countries. This article begins with a recitation of recent examples of anti-Canadianism in the United States.

Recent Expressions of Anti-Canadianism

No doubt, the term, “anti-Canadianism” sounds peculiar to Canadian ears. In fairness, the term must also sound unusual to most American ears. As Rice (2004, 124) notes, “most Americans see Canada as benign, kind and irrelevant” views largely substantiated in recent surveys (Pew Research Center 2004, *Globe & Mail* 2005). Nonetheless, the term actually appeared in a report released by the American Assembly in February 2005 (quoted above). If anti-Canadianism exists, who are its chief purveyors?

A search of Internet blogs will turn up a number of anti-Canadian rants from “ordinary” Americans. Still, anti-Canadianism, in general, does not seem a widespread phenomenon within the American populace.
Anti-Canadianism can also be found among a few American politicians. In recent years, some of the more hawkish members of the American right-wing political establishment, such as Patrick Buchanan, have thrown fastballs at Canada. Buchanan’s 2002 depiction of Canada as “Soviet Canuckistan” (based on such “socialized” things as Medicare) is now a permanent fixture within American right-wing discourse. But these examples also are few and far between. Even when American politicians, both Republican and Democrat, take verbal swipes at Canada, it is usually over policy issues—border security, missile defence, and trade policy, for example—and fall within the ambit of “normal” disagreement (see Handelman 2005, 28–29). In Buchanan’s case, moreover, it should be noted he made his famous quip not as a politician but as a media pundit.

Indeed, the primary carrier of anti-Canadianism in the United States is the American media, especially a few right-wing political commentators who have regularly attacked and disparaged Canada. Their main broadcast vehicles are Fox News and, to a lesser degree, Sinclair Broadcasting. While anti-Canadianism in the American media goes back intermittently over several years, it has intensified in recent years, occurring in two waves. The first wave began in the spring of 2003 following Canada’s refusal to join the American-led invasion of Iraq. It took off especially the following year, however, as a Canadian federal election got underway and as things began going particularly badly for the American war in Iraq, and continued into early the next year. The second wave was coincident with the onset of another Canadian election in the fall of 2005.

The First Wave

Fox News host Bill O’Reilly was a major figure in the initial outpourings of anti-Canadian rhetoric. On April 19, 2003, he warned, “Canadians should understand that storm clouds are gathering to the south.” Almost a year later, in April 2004, O’Reilly termed the Canadian press “rabidly anti-American,” warned that “Canada is totally dependent on the U.S.A. for its economic well-being,” and called upon Americans to boycott Canadian goods and services if it granted political asylum to two U.S. Army deserters (Boycott Watch 2004).

Several months later, on November 30, 2004, Tucker Carlson on CNN’s Wolf Blitzer Reports, said, “Without the U.S., Canada is essentially Honduras, but colder and much less interesting.” He also said anyone with ambition went to the United States, adding “Doesn’t that tell you something about the sort of limpid, flaccid nature of Canadian society?” (MediaMatters 2005a).
That same day, right-wing pundit and author Ann Coulter on Fox News’ Hannity and Colmes, took on Canada. The following excerpts are taken from MediaMatters (2005a):

COULTER: Conservatives, as a general matter, take the position that you should not punish your friends and reward your enemies. And Canada has become trouble recently.

It’s I suppose it’s always, I might add, the worst Americans who end up going there [to Canada]. The Tories after the Revolutionary War, the Vietnam draft dodgers after Vietnam. And now after this election, you have the blue-state people moving up there. […]

COULTER: There is also something called, when you’re allowed to exist on the same continent of the United States, protecting you with a nuclear shield around you, you’re polite and you support us when we’ve been attacked on your soil. They [Canada] violated the protocol. […]

COULTER: They better hope the United States doesn’t roll over one night and crush them. They are lucky we allow them to exist on the same continent. […]

COULTER: We could have taken them [Canada] over so easily.

ALAN COLMES: We could have taken them over? Is that what you want?

COULTER: Yes, but no. All I want is the western portion, the ski areas, the cowboys, and the right-wingers.

ELLIS HENICAN (Newsday Columnist): We share a lot of culture and a lot of interests. Why do we want to have to ridicule them and be deeply offended if they disagree with us?

COULTER: Because they speak French.

COLMES: There’s something else I want to point out about the French. Is it’s fashionable again on your side to denounce the French.

COULTER: We like the English-speaking Canadians.
Carlson’s and Coulter’s comments (to which I will return) were followed, in February 2005, by Fox’s Bill O’Reilly complaining publicly about a story on the CBC public affairs program, *The Fifth Estate*, dealing with the Fox Network (Zerbisias 2005). A few days later, another Fox personality, John Gibson—whose 2004 book, *Hating America*, contains an entire chapter denouncing Canada and labelling it part of an “Axis of Envy”10—used a closing television segment to attack Canada’s support for America’s the War on Terrorism (quoted in *News Hounds* 2005):

Osama bin Laden can get on a plane in Lahore, Pakistan, disembark in Quebec, declare himself persecuted back home and get asylum quicker than he can say, “Kill the Infidel!” But an American running north, lured by the anti-Americanism and anti-Bushism of the Canadian people and the Canadian government has to wait years.

The statement, of course, is not only false and derogatory; it is absurd. It is also somewhat contradictory of what the author intended, as Gibson clearly does not mean to give support to the notion that fleeing Americans—O’Reilly’s deserters—should get faster immigration treatment. But literal meaning is not important here. What is important is a general depiction of Canada as a left-leaning site of anti-Americanism and a potential jumping off point for terrorists entering the United States.

While attacks by the right-wing media such as Fox News are predominant, they are not the only source of anti-Canadian rhetoric in the media. In the spring of 2005, for example, the *Wall Street Journal* took a swipe at Canada for its refusal to join in the Ballistic Missile Defence program, complaining of the “one-sided” nature of Canadian–U.S. continental defence (*National Post* 2005). The implication was that Canada is a generally poor ally that doesn’t pull its weight.

The *Wall Street Journal*’s editorial was followed three weeks later by a *New York Times* article, headlined “Canada May be a Close Neighbour, but it Proudly Keeps Its Distance.” The article went on to note that, “with the possible exception of France, no traditional ally has been more consistently at odds with the United States than has Canada” (story in the *Edmonton Journal* 2005). Then, in quick succession, the *Weekly Standard*, a neo-conservative Washington-based magazine, ran an article by senior writer Matt Labash (2005), titled “Welcome to Canada: The Great White Waste of Time.” I quote the article at length for two reasons. First, Labash’s comments are illustrative of the general contempt with which much of the American right holds Canada. Second, because I am Canadian, I also have a sense of humour and find some of the remarks absurdly funny:
WHENEVER I THINK OF CANADA… strike that. I’m an American, therefore I tend not to think of Canada. On the rare occasion when I have considered the country that Fleet Streeter calls “The Great White Waste of Time,” I’ve regarded it, as most Americans do, as North America’s attic, a mildewy recess that adds little value to the house, but serves as an excellent dead space for stashing Nazi war criminals, drawing-room socialists, and hockey goons.

For the most part, Canadians occupy little disk space on our collective hard drive. Not for nothing did MTV have a game show that made contestants identify washed-up celebrities under the category “Dead or Canadian?”

If we have bothered forming opinions at all about Canadians, they’ve tended toward easy-pickings: that they are a docile, Zamboni-driving people who subsist on seal casserole and Molson. Their hobbies include wearing flannel, obsessing over American hegemony, exporting deadly Mad Cow disease and even deadlier Gordon Lightfoot and Nickelback albums. You can tell a lot about a nation’s mediocrity index by learning that they invented synchronized swimming. Even more, by the fact that they’re proud of it.

But ever since George W. Bush’s reelection, news accounts have been rolling in that disillusioned Americans are running for the border in protest. This prompts the thought that it may be time to stop treating Our Canadian Problem with such cavalier disregard. In fact, largely as a result of Bush and his foreign policy, what was once a polite rivalry has become a poisoned well of hurt feelings and recriminations.

The Second Wave

The second wave of anti-Canadianism began in the fall of 2005 in partial response to comments made on December 7 by then Canadian Prime Minister Paul Martin criticizing the United States at an environmental conference held in Montreal for its reluctance to sign on to the Kyoto Accord. It is important to note the incident began in the context of a Canadian election that had recently begun. On December 9, American Ambassador Wilkins in a speech stated, “It may be smart election-year politics to thump your chest and constantly criticize your friend and your number one trading partner. But it is a slippery slope, and all of us should hope that it doesn’t have a long-term impact on the relationship.”

Martin then responded, in a manner clearly calculated for its political mileage, that it was his job as Canada’s leader to tackle tough issues such
as those that arose occasionally between Canada and the United States. He also suggested Conservative leader Stephen Harper would always give in to Washington, while he would “defend Canada—period.” Not to be outdone by Martin’s rhetorical defence of Canadian independence, Harper and Canada’s other political leaders quickly chimed in with statements suggesting the American ambassador had been out of line in getting involved in the Canadian election. American Wilkins quickly then responded in a salutary fashion, and the political tit-for-tat soon fizzled—except in the American media.

On December 14, Fox News host Neal Cavuto asked, “‘[H]ave the Canadians gotten a little bit too big for their britches?’ and ‘*[C]ould our neighbors to the north soon be our enemies?’” (MediaMatters 2005b). The following day, MSNBC’s *The Situation with Tucker Carlson*, Carlson renewed his attacks on Canada (MediaMatters 2005b):

Here’s the problem… Here’s the problem with telling Canada to stop criticizing the United States: It only eggs them on. Canada is essentially a stalker, stalking the United States, right? Canada has little pictures of us in its bedroom, right? Canada spends all of its time thinking about the United States, obsessing over the United States. It’s unrequited love between Canada and the United States. We, meanwhile, don’t even know Canada’s name. We pay no attention at all.

Carlson added:

First of all, anybody with any ambition at all, or intelligence, has left Canada and is now living in New York. Second, anybody who sides with Canada internationally in a debate between the U.S. and Canada, say, Belgium, is somebody whose opinion we shouldn’t care about in the first place. Third, Canada is a sweet country. It is like your retarded cousin you see at Thanksgiving and sort of pat him on the head. You know, he’s nice, but you don’t take him seriously. That’s Canada.

The next day, December 16, Douglas MacKinnon, former press secretary to Senator Bob Dole, made the following comments dealing with Ambassador Wilkins’ comments (above) (MediaMatters 2005b):

Insulting and verbally attacking the United States has become such a national sport among liberal Canadian politicians that one conservative member of parliament said they displayed “a consistent attitude of anti-Americanism.” …
The ambassador’s point raises a larger question: Can Canada really be considered a “friend” anymore? … It pains me to ask the question. That said, what other question can be asked when the Canadian government not only willingly allows Islamic terrorists into their country, but does nothing to stop them from entering our nation.

While anti-Canadianism in the United States remains a marginal and evanescent phenomenon, spurred by several immediate issues (in particular, Canada’s refusal to join the U.S. in its invasion of Iraq in 2003) (see Gibson 2004), there is sufficient evidence of its existence to make it worthy of study. At the very least, terming Canadian society “limpid” and “flaccid,” disparaging a large number of Canadians because they are of French origin, depicting Canada as pro-terrorist and Canadians as “stalkers,” and suggesting they are envious, uppity, retarded failures is clearly beyond the pale and connotes a deep vein of anti-Canadianism. This rest of this article attempts an archeology of the roots of this phenomenon, beginning with a time before either country even existed.

The French Connection

Many will remember the “Freedom Fries” nonsense that seized parts of the United States during the Second Iraq War. When France, along with Germany, blocked American efforts at the United Nations to go to war in Iraq, the United States experienced one of those moments when “the other” was turned into a subject of vilification and abuse. French fries were marketed by some fast food restaurants as “Freedom Fries,” suggesting America—unlike “the French”—were standing up for freedom.11 Talk shows were suddenly filled with callers repeating the old canard that “the French” were a bunch of cowards who—again frequently restated—had been saved in two world wars by beefy and brave American soldiers.12 Television commentators and late-night comics joined in this racist and historically inaccurate falsehood. Some conservative pundits and Republican politicians in the United States robustly adopted from a much earlier 1995 Simpson’s cartoon show the phrase “cheese-eating surrender monkeys” to insult the French people.13

The cultural history of this racist depiction of the French goes back to the two “Great Wars” of the 20th century and has, I would interject here, a strong following in English-speaking Canada as well, feeding off (in part) the Conscription Crises that beset Canada during both wars. But American hatred of “the French” also draws from a deeper, historical well; a time before there even was a United States.

During the more than a hundred years before Britain defeated France in the Seven Years War (a.k.a., in North America, the French and Indian
 Wars), there had developed between New France and the American colonists a profound and deep dislike. There were numerous wars and smaller skirmishes before France’s final defeat. As in all conflicts, there were many causes. Certainly, one cause was a power struggle between two great mercantilist states. It was also an economic conflict in the sense of a growing battle between modes of economic development (fur trading vs. agriculture), in much the same way that the American Civil War would, in part, become a battle between industrial and plantation economies. Finally, however, the conflict between the English colonists and the French colonists was also cultural, based both on linguistic and—to a degree we do not always appreciate today—religious differences.

One measure of the importance of this cultural divide is to note that the American Revolution began shortly after the Quebec Act of 1774 came into effect (Dufour 1990, 42–43). Though the Act, which restored the previous borders of New France, and which the American colonists also saw as re-imposing “the Papacy,” did not launch the revolt, it was a significant provocation; a last straw, as it were.

The fact is, the people of New France viewed the New England colonists as uncultured and barbaric. Out-manned and out-gunned, they also feared them; the Bostonians were known to be almost fanatical in their hatred of Catholicism. For their part, the New England colonists had no reason to fear “the French,” but did hate them with a passion surpassed only by their dislike of the Indian “savages.” This cultural conflict continued after the American Revolution, transposed onto interstate relations between France and the United States (over France’s continued involvement in the “Americas”), and lasted until after the American Civil War.

Yet, to be accurate, this mutual antagonism has not always dominated. France provided support for the Americans during both the Revolution and the later War of 1812, proving the old adage that “the enemy of my enemy is my friend,” as both peoples viewed the English as the enemy. And a kind of mutual admiration society arose in both countries that viewed themselves as shining beacons to subjugated peoples everywhere (hence the gift of the Statue of Liberty from the French to the American people). Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson spent considerable time in France; the latter is said to have envied the French for “their advances in science and in the arts of sculpture, painting and music” (Rayner 1834). On the other side, Alexis de Tocqueville’s rhapsody to American democracy and society is famous. One can point to even more recent instances when mutual antagonism has given way to respect and sympathy. No one will forget, for example, the Le Monde editorial after 9/11 proclaiming, “We are all Americans.”
Nonetheless, there remains an historical and cultural rift just beneath the surface of French–American relations. Many French citizens still view Americans as uncultured (though fascinated with Jerry Lewis; indeed, the French, like Europeans in general “continue to like American pop culture and admire U.S. technology”) (Pew Research Center 2004, 2). And many Americans still dislike France and view the French (in general) as weak and affected. The term “Old Europe,” used by the current Bush administration to describe (in particular) France and Germany is an epithet as historic as it is condescending.

More importantly—as Ann Coulter’s quote “Because they’re French” shows—this French–American rift also explains some of the deeper roots of anti-Canadianism in the United States. Culturally and politically, Canada is very much the heir to New France. Twenty-five percent of Canada’s population is French-speaking, the vast majority of Quebec’s francophones being, in fact, direct descendants of the original settlers of New France (see Dufour 1990). And it is this French element within Canada that contributes to it being a North American—but not an American—country; indeed, in many ways a European country (Resnick 2005) in its values, sensibilities, and general view of the world.

It is perhaps also worth noting the relationship between Canada and the United States in recent decades has been particularly difficult during the tenure of “Quebec” prime ministers (Pierre Trudeau and Jean Chrétien). This coincidence should not be overstated: both were Liberal prime ministers governing during periods of aggressive Republican presidents. Nonetheless, the historical and cultural background is not entirely incidental. Many in the American administration and media, for example, noted the decision to not join in the Second Iraq War was made by Prime Minister Chrétien and that, while the decision had wide support throughout Canada, it was a decision particularly popular with the people of Quebec.

But anti-Canadianism in the United States is not solely a product of old French–American tensions. It also is the result of English-speaking Canada’s misidentification in the minds of many Americans.

The “Taken-for-Granted Other” in the American Mind

After he left office, former American Ambassador to Canada Paul Cellucci in both interviews and a book (Cellucci 2005) attempted to explain some causes of American “disappointment” with Canada in recent years. Beyond any pique resulting from some rather stupid and undiplomatic comments made by a few Canadian officials—not worth repeating here—Cellucci identified two main causes. First, there was the process by
which Canada made its decisions on such things as the Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) program. Second, there were the decisions themselves.

It is true the Martin government was slow in its decision regarding BMD; indeed, that it appeared to “flip flop.” But, had the Martin government been slow, yet come on board with the American decision, the issue of process would not be paramount. It is then Canada’s actual decisions surrounding both the War on Terrorism and the Missile Defence Program that appear central to recent American anger or, to again use Cellucci’s low-key phrase, “disappointment.” As previously stated, this paper is not intended to deal with the particular policy disputes, as important as they are. Rather, the point is to examine the broader question of why the Canadian refusal to join the United States in both instances engendered the reactions they did.

One looming explanation is the terrorist attacks of September 2001. One should not minimize the loss of life, but the more long-term impact of the attacks has been their psychological harm to the American psyche. For most of its history, the United States has escaped the consequences of wars fought elsewhere, even those in which the American military has been (often significantly) involved. The 9/11 attacks brought home—tragically—to America the reality of living with an increasingly complex, interrelated, and smaller world. The attacks—and some administrative responses, such as the alert system—have made many Americans feel unsafe, and have sought reassurance from the rest of the world.

In the early days after 9/11, many Americans found support coming from much of the world, including France (again, Le Monde) and—of course—Canada. Many people will remember Newfoundland’s assistance to stranded travelers, the going to New York of Canadian paramedics and firefighters to help out, and the memorial to the dead held on Parliament Hill shortly after the attacks.

What is worth noting, however, is that while many Americans viewed with pleasant surprise the support received from other countries, that received from Canada was not so similarly viewed. Indeed, it was taken for granted. And perhaps this is how it should be between “friends.” But I think this lack of surprise—this taken for granted-ness—also points us in the direction of something deeper in the way many Americans view Canada and Canadians.

The fact is, for many Americans, Canada is merely a northern extension of the United States. American “disappointment” is the result of a failure to see Canada as distinct. Whenever Canada actually “appears,” the result is that at least some Americans are perplexed. And a few, often
members of the political and media establishment, react with anger that Canada should even dare be different.

Once again, history provides a promontory for understanding this psychological predisposition to “not see” Canada. Let’s begin with Article 11 of the American Articles of Confederation, written in 1777:

Canada, according to this confederation, and joining in the measures of the United States, shall be admitted into, and entitled to all the advantages of this Union; but no other colony shall be admitted into the same unless such admission be agreed to by nine states.

Canada’s easy terms of admittance into the United States were based upon a belief held by many framers of the American Constitution that Canada would inevitably—and soon—join the new country. After all, who would not want to become part of a country clearly “destined” to do great things? But when they didn’t immediately join, American politicians and journalists took to disparaging Canadian character. It was alleged, for example, that Canadians did not love liberty, preferring instead to remain subjects to the tyrannous rule of the British Empire (Bowsfield 1967–1968: 1). Many of the media quotes previously reported express similar characterizations of Canadians today. Such depictions are not limited to the media, however. Lipset (1990, 1968), for example, wrote numerous books and articles comparing deferent and conformist Canadians to their more freedom-loving and individualistic American counterparts.

The first half of the 19th century saw Canada and the United States fight several border skirmishes. The end of the American Civil War also saw the U.S. demand Canada be “given” to them as reparation for British actions during the war. For the most part, however, American thoughts of conquering Canada by military force had all but dissipated by the end of the 19th century, though plans for invasion remained on the books until the mid-1930s at least (Rudmin 1993). Nonetheless, the idea of eventually absorbing Canada has remained part of the American psyche, again in part because—in American eyes—Canadians are not really different from Americans, the country itself being a kind of polite fiction “allowed”—Coulter’s expression (above)—by the United States. Three quotes from American presidents in the 20th century make the point:

… when I have been in Canada, I have never heard a Canadian refer to an American as a ‘foreigner.’ He is just an ‘American.’ And, in the same way, in the United States, Canadians are not ‘foreigners,’ they are ‘Canadians.’ That simple little distinction
illustrates to me better than anything else the relationship between our two countries.
—President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, 1936.

Canada and the United States have reached the point where we no longer think of each other as ‘foreign’ countries.
—President Harry S. Truman, 1947.

You know, it seems ridiculous. We both speak the same language. We think alike. We behave the same. Don’t you think you would be better off as the 49th state?
—President Dwight D. Eisenhower to Canadian diplomat Lionel Chevrier, 1956.

On occasion, this sense of familiarity has given way to open contempt. Thus, Presidents Kennedy and Nixon felt it their prerogative to lecture Canadians in their own House on their foreign policy. President Johnston even took to physically assaulting Prime Minister Pearson. And the Reagan administration sent letters warning Canada of retaliatory action if it pursued its National Energy Policy (see Martin 1983, Clarkson 1985). Paul Cellucci’s regular hectoring of Canada during his time as ambassador to Canada was in keeping with this pattern.

The point is, American disappointment and anger arises whenever Canada and Canadians do something unexpected. Whether trade with Communist China and Cuba in the 1960s, or more recently in refusing to join the “coalition of the willing” in invading Iraq, the American reaction to Canada taking a different road is always expressed in terms of a betrayal. And the only way this can be understood is that Canada is not sufficiently viewed as distinct from the United States; in other words, the assumption too often made by people south of the border is that Canadians are “just like us.” As recent studies show, this is an increasingly dangerous assumption, one that contains the potential for future American–Canadian misunderstandings and a deepening of anti-Canadianism among Americans.

A Question of Values
Recent years have seen heated debate regarding whether or not Canadian and American values are converging or diverging. In the oldest version of these debates, Lipset (1968, 1990) argued the early histories of both countries had established political traditions and institutions that, while similar, marked out Canada and the United States as having fundamentally different value orientations. More recent research has suggested some tantalizing variations on this question of values. Nevitte (1996), for exam-
ple, suggests that Canadians and Americans are both converging and diverging. Adams (2003) suggests Canadians and Americans are diverging, but that also the two countries have switched positions: Canadians are now the liberal individualists while Americans are the conservative conformists (mixed with a growing tinge of nihilism). Meanwhile, Grabb and Curtis (2005) argue that there are emerging four distinct cultural communities in North America led by a liberal Quebec and a conservative American south that are “pulling” the rest of their respective countries in their directions. In effect, there is a growing divide not merely between North America’s “extremes”—Quebec and the southern states—but also between “the rest of Canada” and “the rest of the United States.”

It is easy to make too much of some differences, and Grabb and Curtis note that some of the differences they measured were small. At the level of individual Canadians and Americans, similarities often outweigh differences. Nonetheless, the opus of recent survey data suggests some broad national differences. Religion, for example, plays a far greater role in the lives of Americans than it does in the lives of Canadians (Pew Research Center 2002). Americans, in general, are more traditional on moral matters, being less supportive of homosexuality and the right of women to abortion. They are also more supportive of traditional family roles; i.e., that fathers should head households (Pew Research Center 2004, Adams 2003). And Americans, contra Lipset (1968, 1990), tend increasingly to be more conformist and deferent to authority than Canadians (Nevitte 1996, Grabb and Curtis 2005). Taken as a whole, the evidence supports Adams’ (2003) claims that Canadians are today more “liberal” and “individualistic” than Americans; or, as Mickelthwait and Wooldridge (2004) argue, that America has undergone a recent transition from a liberal to a conservative nation.

In short, some of the rise of anti-Canadianism may reflect growing value differences between the two countries that have made Canada increasingly stand out in the American mind. But, I also think something else is going on that perhaps transcends national borders: an ideological battle in which anti-Canadianism is a political weapon of choice used today by right-wing elements on both sides of the border for slightly different purposes.

Canada’s “Anti-Canadians” and the Other North American Divide

Few recent remarks appear as derogatory—as anti-Canadian—as the following:
Canada is a Northern European welfare state in the worst sense of the term, and very proud of it.

Canada appears content to become a second-tier socialistic country, boasting ever more loudly about its economy and social services to mask its second-rate status, led by a second-world strongman [Prime Minister Jean Chrétien] appropriately suited for the task.

Current Prime Minister Stephen Harper made both of these statements, during times when he was not an elected official. The first statement was made in June 1997 at a Montreal meeting of the Council for National Policy, an American think tank. The second statement appeared in an article published in the *National Post* on December 8, 2000 following a federal election—an election that Harper (and many other conservatives) viewed as a “rejection” of the Alberta-based Canadian Alliance party by Canadians at large.\(^{17}\)

These statements are not quoted in order to question Harper’s patriotism, something done by the Liberal party to little effect during the 2006 federal election; Crockatt’s (2003, 46) warning that labels are often used as political weapons applies here. Harper’s negative comments about Canada do point to a broader phenomenon within Canada’s recent political discourse, however. The fact is, Harper’s comments are not singular. As Anastakis (2003) notes, many of the nastiest things written about and against Canada in recent years have come from its own politicians and various media pundits in the *National Post* and the *Western Standard*. The comments of partisan (generally right-wing) talk show hosts who fill Canada’s airwaves are often even more negative. The Harper quotes are heuristic as a means to exploring how ideological differences play into disparaging commentary even within nations.

Especially valuable is the ideological lineage underlying Harper’s negative depiction of Canada. In his biography of Harper, William Johnson (2005) notes the importance of a single book in forging Harper’s political views. That book was *The Patriot Game*, written by Peter Brimelow (1986), published just as the Reform party (of which Harper was a key member) was in its formative stages (see Harrison 1995). Brimelow is a former British citizen who settled in Canada for a time, but now lives in the United States and has continued to write books and magazine articles about that country. His thesis in *The Patriot Game* is fairly simple: Canada is a state, but not a real nation. English-speaking Canada, in particular, lacks an identity because it has spent too much time 1) pacifying Quebec; and 2) denying its cultural similarity to the United States. In time, Brimelow argues, Quebec will separate—something that
many on Canada’s extreme right would welcome—and the rest of Canada will (likely) join the United States.

While Brimelow’s argument may have seemed original to Harper and other western conservatives in the 1980s, it was actually quite old. In fact, as Brimelow himself acknowledged, *The Patriot Game* was fashioned in style and argument upon a much earlier book written in 1891 by Goldwin Smith, *Canada and the Canadian Question*. Like Brimelow, Smith also was British and a journalist. He was also a typical 19th century liberal who believed in free trade, continentalism, and republicanism. He saw Canada’s destiny as being one with the greater Anglo-American community and felt, like Brimelow, that Quebec was a hindrance to English Canada discovering its “true” future, which Smith—even more openly than Brimelow—argued was to join the United States.

Note that, in the late 19th century, the most virulent things written about Canada were those written by liberals like Smith. Liberal “anti-Canadianism” of the day was forged around identification with the United States. Their continentalist economic policy was directed at Canada’s dominant party, the Conservative party of Sir John A. Macdonald, its prevailing National Policy, and Canada’s continuing ties to the British monarchy.

Today, the tables have turned. The Liberals have long been Canada’s “natural governing party,” while the Tory party, as George Grant (1965) lamented years ago, is no more. In this context, it is the newly-renovated Conservative party that today identifies most with the United States—think of that party’s overwhelming support for joining the “Coalition of the Willing” in Iraq—and argues against the prevailing ideology of the Liberal party. Some years ago this author wrote that, for many supporters of the then Reform party—precursor to the current Conservative party—“Canada in its present form constitutes … a kind of failed experiment relative to that of the United States” (Harrison 1995, 172). That statement holds true today for much of the Canadian right, and explains the anti-Canadian rhetoric it sometimes emits. Most dispassionate observers would likely see Canada as a wealthy country marked by little civil unrest and a political system that, while needing some repair, is relatively free of scandal—even noting the Sponsorship Scandal—compared with other countries. To listen to the Canadian right, however, Canada is a corrupt banana republic, beset with a host of failed policies—education, health, welfare, multiculturalism, immigration, criminal justice, etc.—facing certain economic ruin and verging on civil war.

Herein lies a central point. Anti-Canadianism, like anti-Americanism, is in part a product of an ideological divide separating North America. As
such, it is best understood in the context of what political purposes it serves. It serves slightly different purposes depending on whether a party or an ideological perspective is “in” or “out” of power. In the United States, neo-conservatives today employ the rhetoric of anti-Canadianism as a means of “insulating” Americans against “left-wing” policies, such as multiculturalism or Medicare. By contrast, American Democrats on policy issues sometimes point positively to Canada.

In Canada, meanwhile, the governing Conservative party and its right-wing supporters (e.g., the National Post, the Fraser Institute, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation) occasionally employ anti-Canadian rhetoric partly out of frustration, but also necessarily in order to drive Canada towards an alternative (generally American) policy model. By contrast, Canada’s right is generally reluctant to criticize American policy, that is, to appear “anti-American” because it does not want to denigrate its chosen model.

For its part, the Canadian left uses anti-Americanism as a means of “inoculating” Canadians against adopting right-wing policies while also using the anti-Canadianism label as a means of dismissing their right-wing opponents. In effect, both anti-Canadianism and anti-Americanism transcend national borders to instead constitute opposing positions along ideological borders.

**Conclusion**

The degree of anti-Canadianism in the United States should not be exaggerated. At the level of ordinary citizens, many of whom display considerable sophistication in differentiating between citizens and the actions or policies of their governments, Canadians and Americans generally get along very well. This paper does not attempt to make of a relatively small and perhaps transient phenomenon more than what it is.

At the same time, creeping anti-Canadianism should also not be entirely ignored. Some of the major media that espouse anti-Canadianism in the United States do have constituencies and do inform public opinion. Likewise, some of the right-wing media’s political counterparts do aspire to positions of power that, if attained, could harm Canadian interests. But it is also important to recognize the degree to which anti-Canadianism (no less than anti-Americanism) is fed by internecine political battles fought on both sides of the border. Finally, for Canadians as a whole, and policy makers in particular, it is important to understand some of the deep roots of anti-Canadianism; to recognize that these roots are durable enough to ensure the phenomenon’s occasional re-emergence, irrespective of the generally good will that flows between the two countries.
Endnotes

1. A version of this paper was presented to the Biennial Meeting of the Association for Canadian Studies in the United States, St. Louis, on November 17, 2005. I want to thank the panel discussant, Dr. Claire Turenne Sjolander, as well as the other panel presenters and people who attended the session for their helpful comments. I also want to thank Dr. Harvey Krahn for comments made on a revised version and the anonymous reviewers of this journal for their insightful suggestions.

2. As described in its website (http://www.americanassembly.org/index.php), the American Assembly is “a national, non-partisan public affairs forum illuminating issues of public policy by commissioning research and publications, sponsoring meetings, and issuing reports, books, and other literature…. Founded by Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1950, The American Assembly is affiliated with Columbia University.” The 105th American Assembly, on “U.S.–Canada Relations,” was held February 3–6, 2005 at Arden House in Harriman, New York.

3. Ross and Ross (2004, 1) remark, “Anti-Americanism is as old as political modernity and could be said to be one of its founding discourses.”

4. Several authors note that it is not only foreign citizens who express anti-American sentiment, but also Americans themselves. Ross and Ross (2004, 2) also differentiate between anti-Americanism from above (among patrician elites) and from below.

5. Hollander (1992, 334) terms it “unfocused.” Crockatt (2003, 46) states that anti-Americanism “assumes many different forms, depending on historical contexts and political agendas.” Similarly, Sweig (2006, xii) states that “Anti-Americanism is expansive and diverse, deep and shallow; its intensity varies and is difficult to measure.”

6. Kohut and Stokes (2006) tie anti-Americanism to the founding idea of American exceptionalism, implying that these exhorted differences necessarily set the U.S. up for both praise and criticism.

7. These surveys suggest some slippage since the onset of the Second Gulf War in 2003. For example, a Pew Research Center (2004) report, based on 2002 and 2003 surveys, found Canada’s image among Americans slipped from 83 percent viewing it favourably in 2002 to 65 percent doing so in 2003. Similarly, an Ipsos-Reid poll, taken in April 2005, found that only 14 percent of Americans view Canada as their country’s closest ally, down from 18 percent in 2002 (Globe & Mail 2005).

8. Among examples of extreme hostility shown by Americans towards Canada is found in an email sent by a 56-year-old construction worker to Maclean’s magazine after it published a poll in 2004 showing most Canadians opposed George W. Bush’s re-election. “Socialized, homosexualized, feminized, gutless wimps,” said the individual, incensed that Canada did not join the American campaign in Iraq (The Canadian Encyclopedia, 2005).

9. Ten years earlier, Buchanan also remarked that, “For most Americans, Canada is sort of like a case of latent arthritis. We really don’t think about it, unless it acts up.”

10. Gibson’s other two countries in the Axis were Belgium and South Korea.
Some Americans also boycotted French wines and other products.

More than 1.6 million French soldiers died during WW I, no more than 1/3 of French soldiers coming out unscathed in some fashion (Hobsbawm 1995, 26). Roughly 250,000 French soldiers died during WW II, along with perhaps 350,000 civilians. France did not “quit” during WW II, it was defeated, as were numerous other countries in Europe, by the German Wehrmacht, the most powerful military assembled to that time. And, while some members of France’s elite collaborated with the Nazi occupation, this also occurred in other countries, just as an active underground continued in France and elsewhere.

Wikipedia provides an extensive etiology of the phrase and its later political use in the U.S. in the period leading up to the Second Iraq War.

Canada, it should be noted, also kept up to date its own plans for invading the United States in the event of war.

The incident in question occurred following a speech made by Pearson at Temple University in the United States in which he mildly criticized American involvement in Vietnam. Johnston summoned Pearson to his Texas ranch where the president (a large man) picked up the more diminutive prime minister by his lapels and shook him, declaring, “Dammit, Les, you pissed on my rug!” to describe metaphorically his anger at what he viewed as Pearson’s intrusive comments.

At the same time, the two countries are sometimes recognized as distinct when it is to the United States’ advantage, as President Richard Nixon declared when he came to Ottawa in 1972 declaring the special relationship between Canada and the United States was dead. “It is time for us to recognize,” he stated, “that we have very separate identities; that we have significant differences; and that nobody’s interests are furthered when these realities are obscured.”

An attendant at the St. Louis conference wondered if the quote had perhaps been taken out of context. The enlarged quote reads as follows:

Alberta and much of the rest of Canada have embarked on divergent and potentially hostile paths to defining their country.

Alberta has opted for the best of Canada’s heritage—a combination of American enterprise and individualism with the British traditions of order and co-operation. We have created an open, dynamic and prosperous society in spite of a continuously hostile federal government.

Canada appears content to become a second-tier socialistic country, boasting ever more loudly about its economy and social services to mask its second-rate status, led by a second-world strongman appropriately suited for the task.

Albertans would be fatally ill-advised to view this situation as amusing or benign. Any country with Canada’s insecure smugness and resentment can be dangerous. It can revel in calling its American neighbours names because they are too big and powerful to care. But the attitudes toward Alberta so successfully exploited in this election will have inevitable consequences the next time Canada enters a recession or needs an internal enemy.
Having hit a wall, the next logical step is not to bang our heads against it. It is to take the bricks and begin building another home—a stronger and much more autonomous Alberta. It is time to look at Quebec and to learn. What Albertans should take from this example is to become “maîtres chez nous.”

18. It should be pointed out that, much of the misinformation about Canada’s health care system, including the repeated epithet that it is “socialized,” comes from right-wing organizations in Canada, such as the Fraser Institute.

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Anti-Canadianism: 
Explaining the Deep Roots of a Shallow Phenomenon


