

THE RELOCATION EXPERIENCES OF ABORIGINAL ATHLETES PURSUING SPORT IN EURO-
CANADIAN CONTEXTS: VISUAL AND NARRATIVE STORIES OF ACCULTURATION

by

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Abstract

Researchers have documented the importance of sport in the lives of Aboriginal people, emphasizing how it can improve health and wellness and reaffirm core cultural values and connections (Lavallee, 2007; Reading, 2009). However, there is a lack of knowledge about the experiences of Aboriginal people who are engaging in sport, as well as cultural issues that affect their participation. Addressing this dearth of information, the current project was aimed at exploring the relocation experiences of Aboriginal athletes (14 to 26 years old) who had relocated off reserves in Northeastern Ontario to pursue sport opportunities within “mainstream” (Euro-Canadian) communities. The project was developed with Aboriginal community members and was driven forward as a form of cultural sport psychology, aimed at challenging the culturally excluding processes of traditional sport psychology (Ryba, Stambulova, Si, & Schinke, 2013). Mandala drawings (circle drawings) and conversational interviews were employed as part of a decolonizing methodology that centralized local Aboriginal ways of knowing, and that enabled in-depth experiential accounts of relocation to be shared (Smith, 1999). A local Indigenous version of an inductive thematic analysis was used to organize the data around three overarching themes: (1) the benefits of relocation, (2) the challenges of relocation, and (3) strategies for helping relocation. The results provide novel insights into how the sport experiences of relocated Aboriginal athletes are shaped by the dynamics of acculturation (i.e., second-culture learning). Through the participants’ accounts, it is revealed how relocated athletes have to dynamically (re)construct a sense of identity and belonging from shifting positions in and between dual (Aboriginal and Euro-Canadian) cultural contexts. Moving towards action, this knowledge can now be used to facilitate more inclusive sport contexts that embrace (rather than

marginalize) the cultural identities of Aboriginal participants. Local community change efforts have already been initiated within the Aboriginal community through the engagement of the athletes' mandalas as visual stories. In an effort to encourage future CSP research that is meaningful within the lives of marginalized sport participants, some final implications are drawn from the research.

Keywords: Indigenous, decolonizing research, participatory action research, cultural sport psychology, Aboriginal, praxis, arts-based method

Co-Authorship Statement

To date four academic journal articles have been published from current project. The first is a methodological article that explores the arts-based research process as a vehicle for facilitating participatory action research with Aboriginal and other marginalized communities (see Appendix A). The second is a data-driven article that presents the acculturation challenges of relocated Aboriginal athletes and provides insight into how their cultural identities can be more meaningfully supported within “mainstream” sport contexts (see Appendix B). The third is a review article that overviews the landscape of CSP research and contextualizes its core goals and tenets within praxis, revealing how scholars might continue to advance this area of inquiry (see Appendix C). The fourth article explores Aboriginal athletes’ experiences pursuing dual careers as students and athletes within Euro-Canadian contexts, emphasizing the central role of culture in shaping athletes’ dual career pathways and transitions (see Appendix D).

Each article was co-authored by research team members from Laurentian University as well as from the Aboriginal community, in accordance with the collaborative nature of the research it is grounded in. However, as the lead researcher, I (Amy) undertook primary responsibility for the writing and editing of each article, which is reflected in my identification as the first author. The university co-authors (Drs. Robert Schinke, Kerry McGannon, and Diana Coholic) reviewed my writing and provided critical feedback and guidance for enhancing the academic quality of the work. The community co-authors (Duke Peltier, Chris Pheasant, and Lawrence Enosse) provided feedback from the community perspective, ensuring that the local context and people’s experiences were represented accurately. Based on the feedback of these co-authors, I continued to refine the manuscripts and put in diligence as the primary author.

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I would like to acknowledge Duke Peltier, Lawrence Enosse, and Chris Pheasant as my Aboriginal community co-researchers. In leading me through an Indigenous research process, these individuals have shown me what it means to do Indigenous community research and have expanded my understandings of what research can look like. I am so grateful for these insights. I am also grateful to Duke, Lawrence, and Chris for their willingness to bring me into the Wikwemikong community and teach me about their Aboriginal culture. It has been an invaluable and transformative learning experience for me. Miigwech!

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Chapter 1

1 Introduction

This chapter delineates the context and purpose of the current research. Drawing on the limited body of Aboriginal sport research, it is revealed that there is a need for research that explores the experiences of Aboriginal athletes and considers the ways in which their participation in sport is shaped by culture. There is a further need for research to move beyond the culturally excluding processes of traditional sport psychology research, and open up to methodological and epistemological processes which embrace Aboriginal ways of knowing. To this end, an Aboriginal community partnership is centralized at the crux of the current research, implicated as the driving force behind a culturally informed mode of inquiry that is connected to a larger agenda of social change. Through locally informed and inductive processes, the research was aimed at exploring the relocation experiences of Aboriginal athletes who have moved off reserves to pursue sport within Euro-Canadian contexts. The research was designed to contribute to the cultural sport psychology (CSP) scholarship through an integration of praxis, while also contributing to the Aboriginal community through the development of action oriented knowledge aimed at improving the context of athlete relocation. To conclude, the research questions framing the project are articulated, and definitions are provided for important terms underpinning and informing the research.

1.1 The need for research on Aboriginal sport experiences

A significant amount of research has documented sport as a meaningful conduit for improving

health and wellness among the Aboriginal people of Canada. In particular, the physical activity offered through sport participation has been emphasized as a means of counteracting elevated rates of obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease (Findlay & Kohen, 2007; Katzmarzyk, 2008; Mason & Koehli, 2012; Reading, 2009) as well as mental health problems (Health Canada, 2009; Kirmayer, Brass, & Tait, 2000; Reading, 2009) within the Aboriginal population. Research has also indicated that sport is a meaningful conduit for reaffirming core cultural values and promoting a stronger sense of identity amongst Aboriginal people. For instance, sport participation can promote balance across the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of life, therein reaffirming the holistic health and wellness processes that are centralized in Aboriginal cultures through the medicine wheel (Canadian Heritage, 2005; Lavallee, 2007, 2008). Sport has also been identified as a central means of bringing Aboriginal community members together and reinforcing deeper connections between individuals and their community (Thompson, Gifford, & Thorpe, 2000). This process of connecting is, for many Aboriginal people, more important than the individual health benefits that may accrue from more solitary forms of physical activity, such as exercise (Thompson et al., 2000), because it affirms their relational ways of being in the world (Smith, 1999; Wilson, 2008). Additionally, sport has been shown to facilitate cultural pride through the accomplishments of Aboriginal athletes who represent their communities on teams and in events outside of the local context (Thompson et al., 2000). Each of these culturally affirming processes are extremely significant for Aboriginal people, given that they are trying to heal from various cultural losses and disconnections that have stemmed from a history of colonization and ongoing cultural subjugation (Alfred, 2009; Battiste, 2000, 2002; Lavallee, 2007; Loppie Reading & Wien, 2009; Smith, 1999).

In sum, researchers have highlighted the importance of sport in the lives of Aboriginal

people. This scholarship has resulted in more concerted efforts to improve opportunities for Aboriginal people to participate in sport in Canada (e.g., Canadian Heritage, 2005; Federal-Provincial/Territorial Advisory Committee on Fitness and Recreation, 2000). What is lacking, however, is research that examines the experiences of Aboriginal people who *are* engaging in sport and considers the ways in which their participation is shaped by culture (Findlay & Kohen, 2007; Forsyth & Giles, 2013; McHugh, Coppola, & Sinclair, 2013). There remains a limited understanding of the pressing cultural issues that are tied to Aboriginal people's sport participation, as well as limited knowledge regarding how the sport experiences of Aboriginal athletes can be enhanced. More research is needed to provide an emic understanding of how sport is experienced by members of this cultural group, so that in keeping with the objectives of *Sport Canada's Policy on Aboriginal Peoples' Participation in Sport*, more informed efforts can be made to support Aboriginal athletes through culturally sensitive strategies that address their unique needs (Canadian Heritage, 2005; Forsyth & Heine, 2008; Mason & Koehli, 2012).

Exacerbating the dearth of information on Aboriginal sport experiences is the coinciding need for research approaches that are methodologically and epistemologically aligned with the Aboriginal culture and designed to embrace local voices and ways of knowing (Bartlett, Iwasaki, Gottlieb, Hall, & Mannell, 2007; Lavalley, 2009; Ryba & Schinke, 2009; Smith, 1999). Traditional sport psychology research has long been dominated by post-positivistic and Westernized research paradigms that are at odds with Indigenous ways of thinking and doing, and that have made Indigenous peoples appear exotic or alien (Battiste, 2000, 2002; Ryba & Schinke, 2009; Schinke, Peltier, Hanrahan, Eys, Recollet-Saikkonen, Yungblut et al., 2009; Smith, 1999). These mainstream paradigms have continued to be imposed on Aboriginal communities as a means of upholding the "gold standards" of science (e.g., objectivity, validity,

rigour), as well as privileging Eurocentric ways of knowing, despite their irrelevance within the Aboriginal context. Such research approaches have been shaped by colonial values and agendas that aim to reinforce the dominant culture's view of itself as the center of legitimate knowledge while undermining voices and knowledges that diverge from the mainstream (Battiste, 2000; Bishop, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Ryba & Schinke, 2009; Smith, 1999). Though more subtle than forms of colonization in the past (e.g., the residential school system), Eurocentric research approaches have further compounded the cultural destruction experienced by Aboriginal communities. Indigenous community members have been disconnected from their cultural beliefs and customs, have had their voices silenced and their experiences invalidated, and have been collectively misrepresented, stereotyped, and stigmatized through research (Bishop, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Smith, 1999). Thus, it is evident that *how* researchers go about acquiring knowledge with/in Indigenous communities is just as critical – if not more so – than the actual gained knowledge (Cochran et al., 2008; Smith, 1999). As explicated in the growing body of Indigenous scholarship, there is a critical need for culturally resonant research approaches to be developed within Indigenous communities (including Canadian Aboriginal communities) if research is to contribute positively to the lives of local people rather than marginalizing them.

Although recent awareness has grown regarding the incompatibilities between traditional research and Indigenous cultures, as well as the injustices that have accrued through colonizing practices, there has been little effort to transform research at the applied level (Prior, 2007). For instance, a number of approaches such as participatory action research (Bartlett et al., 2007; Brydon-Miller, Kral, Maguire, Noffke, & Sabhlok, 2011; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008), decolonizing research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Smith, 1999; Swadener & Mutua, 2008), and cultural praxis

(Ryba & Schinke, 2009; Ryba & Wright, 2005; Schinke, McGannon, Parham, & Lane, 2012) have been advocated as alternative (more critical) frameworks for engaging in Indigenous research. Substantial conceptual/theoretical writings have outlined the particular tenets, goals, and processes of each approach and provided impetus for their uptake within local community research contexts. Despite the breadth of conceptual writings, however, researchers have been slow to integrate these non-traditional approaches into applied sport psychology research. There remains much untapped potential for translating these approaches into culturally resonant, change inducing modes of inquiry that lend to more meaningful knowledge and action outcomes within Indigenous communities.

Endeavouring to move beyond the culturally excluding processes of traditional sport psychology research and open up space for knowledge to be generated around the experiences of Aboriginal sport participants, the current research project was developed as a form of cultural sport psychology (CSP). CSP is a contextually informed mode of inquiry that is developed within local cultural contexts in order to facilitate deeper understandings of the identities and experiences of diverse (often marginalized) sport participants (McGannon & Smith, 2015; McGannon & Schinke, 2014; Ryba, Schinke, & Tenenbaum, 2010; Ryba, Stambulova, Si, & Schinke, 2013; Schinke & Hanrahan, 2009). Aspects of decolonizing research, participatory action research, and cultural praxis were integrated into a comprehensive CSP framework in the project, centralizing culture as a central position from which to understand the identities and experiences of Aboriginal sport participants. These modalities were localized and driven forward from within the Aboriginal community in order to more deeply resonate with community members and facilitate meaningful accounts of their lives (i.e., accounts that are empowering and constructive rather than marginalizing and destructive). An Aboriginal community partnership

was further centralized at the crux of the research, recognizing the power of local people's knowledge for grounding research in a transformative agenda aimed at creating positive change.

1.2 An Aboriginal community partnership

Over eight years ago, Aboriginal community members from Wikwemikong Unceded Indian Reserve and academic researchers from Laurentian University (including myself, as an undergraduate student) partnered together to engage in sport research in northeastern Ontario, Canada. Initially, the intent of the partnership was to collect data pertaining to the experiences of elite Aboriginal athletes competing at national and international levels across Canada, in line with the high performance interests of the university researchers. However, over time and through the development of deeper (less hierarchical) relationships, this agenda began shifting to the needs of the Wikwemikong community members who were working at the grassroots level of sport in their community. These community members saw more pertinent opportunities for research initiatives to be developed with an applied focus, aimed at facilitating positive community change (e.g., Blodgett, Schinke, Fisher, Wassengeso George, Peltier, Ritchie et al., 2008; Blodgett, Schinke, Fisher, Yungblut, Recollet-Saikkonen, Peltier et al., 2010). Accordingly, a series of community based CSP projects were developed, aimed at contributing to the local Aboriginal community through increased sport programming capacity and athlete support.

As the projects unfolded, they were underscored by community led directives which affirmed an ongoing commitment to the applied needs and agendas of local people, as well as fully collaborative processes marked by an appreciation for different ways of knowing, an engagement in open and honest dialogue, and the sharing of decision-making power. Through

these efforts the research team was gradually able to transcend, to a reasonable degree, the traditional hierarchy between academic and community research team members and build genuine and trusting relationships that carry forward to present day (see Schinke, Hanrahan, Eys, Blodgett, Peltier, Ritchie et al., 2008). As has been documented by other qualitative researchers working with marginalized populations (e.g., Kral, 2014; Kral, Burkhardt, & Kidd, 2002; Loppie, 2007; Swartz, 2011; Ulturgasheva, Wexler, Kral, Allen, Mohatt, & Nystad, 2011), these relationships are imperative for opening up more meaningful research initiatives from within the community and enabling research to begin locally. The current project reflects one such initiative that was developed from within the Aboriginal community and carried forward with the guidance of community researchers who hold a stake in the work.

1.3 Purpose of the current research

Aboriginal community members from Wikwemikong indicated that there are unique circumstances that affect the sport experiences of Aboriginal athletes in Northeastern Ontario. Many on-reserve athletes with sport aspirations choose to relocate off-reserve to larger urban communities in order to pursue opportunities to compete at higher levels and advance their careers. This context of relocation is largely due to the inability to sustain sport infrastructure on reserves, since capital projects such as schools, roads and housing take precedence over sport or recreation facilities and programs, as well as the geographic location of reserves being distanced from larger cities where more facilities and programs are available (Canadian Heritage, 2005). The relocation process poses significant challenges for young community athletes, as they have to adjust to a new Euro-Canadian cultural context and persist within it. The typical stressors that are faced by any athlete who relocates away from home, such as missing family and keeping up

with arduous training, become exacerbated by the reality of acculturation, or second-culture learning (Rudmin, 2009). It is well documented that Aboriginal peoples frequently experience racism, discrimination, and alienation when they move outside of their home cultural communities and attempt to enter “mainstream” contexts, challenging their sense of identity (Berry, 1999; Goodwill & McCormick, 2012). In Berry’s (1999) research on acculturation and Aboriginal peoples’ identities, a participant explained: “When you live off the Reserve, you know what it is to be an Indian. That’s when I really had an identity crisis. On the Reserve I was protected. Once I left, it was a slap in the face” (p. 18). Aboriginal athletes who relocate away from their reserves to pursue sport opportunities are at risk of experiencing similar forms of marginalization and challenges to their identities, which will affect the way they engage in, or disengage from, their new sport contexts. Wikwemikong community members identified a pertinent applied need for research efforts to be focused on enhancing the local context of athlete relocation.

The current project was aimed at addressing community identified needs to better understand the relocation experiences of Aboriginal athletes. The intent was to identify pathways through which other aspiring youth and young adults can be supported in relocating off-reserve to pursue their sport dreams. The research was designed to contribute to the existing body of scholarship that explores the ways in which Aboriginal peoples’ participation in sport and physical activity is shaped by culture, and how their experiences can be enhanced to be more culturally affirming (e.g., Forsyth & Giles, 2013; Forsyth & Heine, 2008, 2010; Forsyth, Heine, & Halas, 2006; Giles, Baker, & Rousell, 2007; Lavallee, 2007, 2008; McHugh, 2011; McHugh, Coppola, & Sinclair, 2013). More pointedly, the research was designed to extend the previous work of Schinke, Michel et al. (2006) and Campbell and Sonn (2009) within sport psychology,

which explored the cultural adaptation of elite Aboriginal athletes relocated into “mainstream” sport contexts. Drawing on the experiences of Canadian Aboriginal athletes, Schinke and colleagues found that many athletes experienced challenges related to cultural marginalization and isolation, and thus required greater social support from the people in their host environments such as teammates. Similarly, Campbell and Sonn (2009) identified challenges of culture shock and racism being experienced by Aborigine footballers relocated away from their cultural communities in Australia, emphasizing the need for cultural social support to buffer against adverse experiences. Both projects provided initial insights into the acculturation experiences of Aboriginal athletes, demonstrating how these individuals are challenged by a lack of social and cultural support within host sport contexts, and provided initial insight into the need for such resources to be developed. However, given that these researchers directly inquired about the athletes’ challenges and social support resources (through pre-determined interview questions) and were not open-ended in exploring additional strategies and experiences that shaped their relocation, the knowledge outcomes are limited.

The current project was designed to elicit more in-depth, experiential accounts of relocation, and open up deeper understandings of the strategies that might enable Aboriginal athletes to persist meaningfully and resiliently within Euro-Canadian sport contexts. Through the open-ended nature of the data collection process, which was grounded in an Indigenous decolonizing methodology, the participants were able to take the lead in sharing their experiences and identifying strategies for change that were pertinent to them, through their own perspectives. The participants were also encouraged to share in-depth narratives around those strategies, enabling more local and contextualized understandings to come forward.

1.3.1 Situating the project: Intercultural relations in Canada

The intercultural contact between Aboriginal and Euro-Canadian peoples in Canada has long been underscored by an acculturative process that is unbalanced and one-sided (Berry, 1999). Aboriginal peoples have been changed substantially through ongoing colonizing efforts of the Euro-Canadian society as well as through continued cultural marginalization; both of which reflect attempts to sustain the cultural dominance of the Euro-Canadian society. As a result of these slanted intercultural exchanges, Aboriginal peoples have experienced a host of cultural losses (e.g., loss of native languages; loss of cultural identity; disconnection from their traditional lands and ways of living) as well as social injustices (e.g., exclusion from political decision-making processes that affect their lives; being oppressed as inferior and deficient peoples). A vigorous movement of cultural resistance has consequently been initiated by the Aboriginal community in an attempt to restore their ways of knowing and being and resist Western subjugation (Alfred, 2009). This movement has been steeped in an overarching agenda of self-determination and decolonization, and it links to the larger collective efforts of Indigenous groups around the world (Battiste, 2000; Smith, 1999). Despite these efforts, however, much damage has been done to the cultural integrity and health and well-being of the Aboriginal peoples. There is a sense of hurt and suffering that remains unresolved to the present day, and accordingly, cultural tensions and conflicts continue to persist between the Aboriginal and Euro-Canadian peoples in Canada.

Given this historically rooted context, it is evident that Aboriginal athletes' relocation experiences are framed by markedly different cultural dynamics than other community members who relocate away from their home cultural communities to pursue sport. Aboriginal athletes' experiences will inevitably be different from other transitioning athletes in that they are largely

treated like outsiders, and subjugated as third class citizens, in their own national lands. It is therefore important to bring these Aboriginal athletes' stories forward through research processes that embrace the socially and culturally situated meanings of their experiences (McGannon & Schinke, 2014; Ryba & Schinke, 2009).

1.3.2 Academic contributions

To date there has been little consideration of culture as a meaningful category of human experience within sport psychology, despite a number of scholars criticizing this shortcoming as the “cultural void” of the domain (Duda & Alison, 1990; Fisher, Butryn, & Roper, 2003; Ram, Starek, & Johnson, 2004). Building on these early writings, there has been a further push for sport psychology research to be taken up in more culturally inclusive and socially just ways, expanding beyond traditional (ethnocentric) approaches and boundaries to consider identities and topics which have long been marginalized (McGannon & Smith, 2015; Ryba, Schinke, & Tenenbaum, 2010; Ryba, Stambulova, Si, & Schinke, 2013; Schink & Hanrahan, 2009; Schinke & McGannon, 2014, 2015). Conceptualized as cultural sport psychology (CSP), this genre of scholarship is aimed at providing deeper understandings of the sociocultural issues that affect physical activity participation and sport performance, and provide potential solutions for enhancing people's experiences (Blodgett, Schinke, McGannon, & Fisher, 2014; McGannon & Schinke, 2014). The current project was aimed at contributing to the CSP scholarship by eliciting Aboriginal athletes' experiences of relocating off reserves for sport through a decolonizing methodology that centralized Indigenous processes and ways of knowing (Denzin & Lincoln 2008; Smith, 1999). The research was designed to centralize the voices and experiences of these traditionally marginalized sport participants through a culturally driven line of inquiry that was

embracing of the identities and sociocultural realities of the athletes' lives (Schink & McGannon, 2014; Ryba & Schinke, 2009). In particular, the research was aimed at extending the CSP literature through an integration of cultural praxis. This praxis articulation emphasized the need for knowledge production to be connected more deeply to the lives of local community members in order to engage an agenda of social change through research (Lather, 1987). Though a number of theoretical/conceptual papers have emphasized the centrality of praxis within CSP (e.g., Blodgett, Schinke, McGannon, & Fisher, 2014; McGannon & Smith, 2015; Ryba & Schinke, 2009; Ryba, Stambulova, Si, & Schinke, 2013; Ryba & Wright, 2005; Schinke, McGannon, Parham, & Lane, 2012), there has been very little effort to put praxis into action through empirical research. In order to move this form of inquiry forward, praxis was embraced as a guiding tenet in the current project. Through its focalization, the research was aimed at developing knowledge more aligned with the lived experiences and cultural identities of Aboriginal athletes, and opening up locally meaningful opportunities for improving their situations (Lather, 1987).

1.3.3 Applied (community) contributions

In the spirit of praxis, the current project was aimed at moving beyond academic outcomes and contributing to the local Aboriginal community. This agenda was evident through the focus on identifying applied, community-based strategies for supporting and facilitating Aboriginal athletes in relocating off-reserve to pursue their sport aspirations. Kidd and Kral (2005) explained that community members are not likely to be interested in simply knowing about lived experience, but rather want to generate critical and practical forms of knowledge that can be put into (community-directed) action to improve local people's lives. Rather than simply

describing athletes' lived experiences or producing knowledge that is only pertinent within the academic realm, this research was aimed at generated locally resonant knowledge that supports actionable outcomes for community development. Moving forward, local community stakeholders would be able to take hold of this knowledge and implement it into concrete changes that are meaningful at the local level.

Related to these community change efforts, the research was also aimed at developing visual stories around Aboriginal athletes' relocation experiences, in the form of mandala drawings (also known as circle drawings). Recognizing the potential of these visual stories to resonate more deeply and powerfully within the local community, the Aboriginal research team members suggested that they be actively engaged as community resources for educating and inspiring youth about the value of pursuing their (sport) dreams and persisting through challenges. These visual stories were used to open up a more meaningful and decolonizing pathway for knowledge to be taken up at the local level (Loppie, 2007; Smith, 1999; West, Stewart, Foster, & Usher, 2012).

The research was also designed to contribute to local capacity building through the use of a participatory action research (PAR) approach. In this collaborative approach, community members and academics partner together and contribute their respective strengths to a more comprehensive research process while also sharing in the responsibility of exploring avenues for community development (Flicker, 2008; Frisby, Reid, Miller, & Hoeber, 2005; Wallerstein & Duran, 2006). Unlike traditional researcher-driven processes, a PAR approach encourages community members to engage in knowledge production processes as the local experts so that there is a more critical interchange amongst academic commitments and applied community needs. Such an approach is conducive to local social change efforts (Frisby et al., 2005; Holkup

et al., 2004; Israel et al., 1998). Three Aboriginal community members from the Wikwemikong community were thus engaged as researchers in the current project. They were involved in all stages of the endeavour, from project development to dissemination and application, and were responsible for driving the research forward in ways that would support more meaningful, decolonizing knowledge coming forward around the experiences and needs of relocated athletes. Through these research efforts, the community members were actively building local sport capacity in terms of understanding and addressing the needs of young community athletes, as well as research capacity in terms of initiating and lead pertinent community projects that improve the local context. These capacity building outcomes have been indicated as a crucial feature of research conducted with Indigenous communities (Jacklin & Kinoshameg, 2008; Nojmowin Teg Health Centre, 2003; Smith, 1999; Stoecker, 2009).

1.4 Research questions

Through an inductive CSP approach, the research was developed to provide an in-depth, culturally grounded understanding of Aboriginal athletes' relocation experiences. The following questions were addressed more specifically:

1. What challenges do Aboriginal athletes face when they relocate off-reserve to pursue sport opportunities, and how are they experienced?
2. What benefits do Aboriginal athletes associate with their sport relocation, and how are they experienced?
3. What helps or makes it easier for Aboriginal athletes to continue their sport if they have to relocate away from home?

1.5 Definitions

Aboriginal. Aboriginal is a collective term that refers to the original peoples of North America and their descendants. The Canadian Constitution recognizes three groups of Aboriginal people: First Nations (previously referred to as Indians), Métis, and Inuit (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, 2015a). It is important to acknowledge that these three peoples each have unique histories, languages, cultural practices, and spiritual beliefs which make them distinct from one another (Smith, 1999). However, the term Aboriginal was employed in the current research to be more inclusive of participants from different communities and backgrounds who would likely self-identify in different ways (e.g., Native, Indian, First Nation, Anishnaabe). As indicated by Kesler (2009) and Mason and Koehli (2012), the term Aboriginal has been established as one of the most useful and least contentious terms for referring collectively to the first peoples of Canada. That being said, the participants in the current project were able to self-identify through their own preferred terminology when sharing their experiences. This terminological specificity came across at various points in the participants' narratives, and is maintained in the presentation of the project results.

Acculturation. Acculturation refers to the process of second-culture learning (Rudmin, 2009). It is a psychological process that individuals actively engage in when they enter a cultural context that is different from the one they were initially socialized within; such as when Aboriginal athletes relocate outside of their reserve communities and attempt to pursue sport within Euro-Canadian contexts. Upon relocating, these individuals have to make sense of the changing rules (or systems of meaning) that constitute their cultural realities, and actively navigate dual (home and host) cultural standpoints (Chirkov, 2009; Schinke, McGannon, Battocchio, & Wells, 2013). As explained by Chirkov, acculturation involves a deliberate,

reflective, and comparative cognitive activity of understanding the norms, rules, and worldviews which exist in one's home cultural community and which one discovers in a new (host) cultural community (Chirkov, 2009). Endeavouring to centralize culture at the crux of Aboriginal athletes' experiences, their relocation experiences were explored in relation to larger processes of acculturation.

It is important to note that although the term acculturation is used in this dissertation to convey and make sense of the relocation experiences of Aboriginal athletes, it was not imposed on any of the project participants. Acculturation is an academic term that is not necessarily relevant at the local community level. Thus, in the spirit of decolonization, it was not used during the research processes with participants. Participants were able to bring forward their experiences using their own terms and concepts, though it became apparent that they were often centralizing what we, at the academic level, know as acculturation.

Arts-based method. Arts-based methods refer to the use of various art forms in qualitative research in order to generate, interpret, and/or communicate knowledge (Bagnoli, 2009; Boydell, Gladstone, Volpe, Allemang, & Stasiulis, 2012). Art forms include, but are not limited to, collages, paintings, drawings, carvings, photography, videography, theatre/drama, dance, music, poetry, and stories. Arts-based methods can thus be understood as an umbrella term that encompasses a broad range of visual, performative, and narrative art forms in research. In social science inquiry, arts-based methods have been gaining ground as tools for gaining access to different dimensions of lived experience, which are often neglected or hard to articulate through verbal based methods (Bagnoli, 2009; Liebenberg, 2009). In the current project an arts-based method (mandala drawings) was used as a data collection strategy that was culturally meaningful for the participants and enabled deeper dimensions of their relocation experiences to be shared.

Critical Indigenous research. Critical Indigenous research reflects a merger of Indigenous methodologies (that privilege local knowledges, voices, and experiences) and critical strands of qualitative research (that use methods for explicit social justice purposes, aimed at creating social change; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). Critical Indigenous research is committed to critiquing and dismantling Western methodologies, while also developing culturally responsive research practices that locate power within Indigenous communities and contribute to Indigenous self-determination (Bishop, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). This form of research is concerned with issues of initiation, benefits, representation, legitimacy, and accountability, all of which must be rooted in the agency of Indigenous community members through approaches that are transformative, decolonizing, and participatory in nature (Bishop, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Smith, 1999). In the current project an Indigenous decolonizing methodology was combined with a PAR framework in order to maintain a critical Indigenous research agenda that lends to meaningful change in the Aboriginal community.

Cultural sport psychology (CSP). CSP is a contextually informed mode of inquiry that is developed within local cultural contexts in order to facilitate deeper understandings of the identities and experiences of (often marginalized) sport participants (McGannon & Schinke, 2014; Ryba, Schinke, & Tenenbaum, 2010; Ryba, Stambulova, Si, & Schinke, 2013). CSP research challenges the ethnocentric assumptions and practices of traditional sport psychology research which have long excluded the identities of diverse participants, such as homosexuals, individuals with disabilities, older adults, women, and non-white racial groups (Ryba & Schinke, 2009; Ryba et al., 2013). In an effort to articulate an agenda that moves from academic knowledge production to social justice and change, praxis is conceptualized at the core of CSP (McGannon & Smith, 2015; Ryba & Schinke, 2009; Schinke, McGannon, Parham, & Lane,

2012). The intent of this articulation is to draw attention to issues of sociocultural difference, power, ethics, and politics which are often concealed in research, and thus connect research more deeply to the issues that affect the lives of marginalized sport participants (Ryba & Wright, 2005). The current research was developed from within the local Aboriginal community as a praxis-driven form of CSP, recognizing the need to generate knowledge that is more deeply aligned with the lives of Aboriginal sport participants and opens up meaningful possibilities for change.

Culture. Moving beyond the notion of culture being a singular and static category or entity, the current research conceptualizes culture as part of shifting discourses and exchanges that produce situated meaning (Macdonald, Abbot, Knez, & Nelson, 2009; Ryba, 2009; Ryba & Schinke, 2009; Sue & Sue, 1990). In other words, culture is “the messy process of negotiated meaning in context” (Singer, 1994, p. 338) rather than the tidy and objectively identifiable category it is often assumed to be in traditional sport psychology research. People are understood as having multiple, intersecting cultural identities within various discourses of class, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, physicality, etc., with each of these identities shifting in meaning and expression within various contexts and interactions (McGannon & Johnson, 2009; Ryba & Wright, 2005; Schinke, McGannon, Parham, & Lane, 2012). Within this project, the cultural identities of the Aboriginal participants and I were accounted for as fluid, social constructions that differentially shape how we live and make sense of the world, and more particularly, produce situated meaning within the research context. Through this understanding I was better able to centralize the subjectivities and knowledges of the participants as culturally and contextually contingent, while also recognizing my subjective presence within research exchanges and processes.

Decolonizing research/methodology. Decolonizing research is informed academically by critical theory – particularly the work of Paulo Freire (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; West et al., 2012) – and is grounded politically in specific Indigenous contexts and histories, struggles, and ideals (Smith, 1999). Thus, Indigenous decolonizing research is a form of *localized* critical theory that is “grounded in the specific meanings, traditions, customs, and community relations that operate in each indigenous setting” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 6). As explained by Swadener and Mutua (2008), this form of research does not constitute a single agreed upon set of research guidelines or methods. Rather, the hallmark of a decolonizing methodology is the process of valuing, reclaiming, and foregrounding local Indigenous voices and epistemologies (Smith, 1999; Swadner & Mutua, 2008). Emphasizing an explicit social justice agenda, this form of research highlights the power of local subjugated knowledges for invoking meaningful transformation within the lives of local people (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; West et al., 2012; Youngblood Henderson, 2002). The current project centralized a decolonizing research agenda by engaging a culturally resonant research process that was led from within the local community, aimed at embracing, centralizing, and affirming the experiential knowledge of Aboriginal athletes. These efforts were rooted in the acknowledgement that non-Western knowledge forms have long been excluded from or marginalized through conventional research paradigms.

Ethnicity. Ethnicity pertains to a perceived membership or sense of belonging to a group that is either self-ascribed or ascribed by others, based on common practices and a shared sense of identity (Duda & Allison, 1990; Hall, 2001). Ethnicity is one of the many intersecting facets that make up people’s cultural identities and sociocultural locations. In the current project, the Aboriginal community members were recognized as having an ethnic identity that was different from the one shared by Euro-Canadian community members, based on aspects such as heritage,

ancestry, history of colonization, language, and customs. Accordingly, the research focused on Aboriginal athletes' identities and sociocultural location between two different contexts distinguished by ethnicity and race (i.e., the Aboriginal and Euro-Canadian contexts). Other aspects of the athletes' identities and locations (such as gender, sexual orientation, dis/ability, age cohort, or socioeconomic status) were not fleshed out, though it is recognized that these, too, are intersected in the athletes' identities and relocations experiences (McGannon, Schinke, & Busanich, 2014; Schinke & McGannon, 2014, 2015).

Euro-Canadian. The term Euro-Canadian refers to the dominant national culture of white Canadians who are of European ancestry. It is important to note that Euro-Canadians do not encompass a single, uniform grouping of people, as there are many different and shifting racial and ethnic identities within this broad group. In this project, the term Euro-Canadian was used generally to refer to those who identify as part of the "mainstream" cultures in Canada and therefore have differential access to power and privilege than Aboriginal community members. Euro-Canadian cultural worldviews which centralize linear views of the world, static ways of thinking, objective processes, and individualism are recognized as being markedly different from Aboriginal cultural worldviews (see Little Bear, 2000). Reflecting ongoing perceptions of cultural superiority, Euro-Canadian cultural community members have continued to subjugate Aboriginal cultural worldviews and the people who sustain them. In so doing, this cultural community continues to be collectively responsible for the oppression and denigration of Aboriginal peoples and their cultures in Canada (Alfred, 2009). When Aboriginal athletes relocate off reserves and into Euro-Canadian cultural contexts, they are thus moving into precarious spaces where their cultural identities and worldviews are outside of the "mainstream" and likely to be challenged.

Indigenous. Indigenous is an inclusive term that encompasses many diverse communities and nations, each with their own identification and experiences of colonization, within a single grouping. The term has gained prominence as a means of internationalizing the experiences and issues of the world's colonized peoples, and facilitating a shared struggle for self-determination at the global level (Kesler, 2009; Smith, 1999). Accordingly, the terms "Indigenous" and "Indigenous peoples" were used in the current research to link the local experiences and struggles of an Aboriginal community in Canada to the collective experiences and struggles of colonized peoples around the world. It is worth noting that the final "s" in Indigenous peoples is an important way of recognizing that there are real differences between different Indigenous groups, though each belongs to a larger network of peoples (Smith, 1999).

Indigenous coding. Indigenous coding refers to a process wherein research data is analyzed and presented using language relevant to and originating within a particular cultural context (Patton, 2002). Applying this process in the local Aboriginal context, Schinke, Peltier et al. (2009) articulated the need to invite community members to participate in the Indigenous coding process, in order to centralize and contextualize local terminology and the meanings around them. Indigenous coding was herein engaged as part of a PAR methodology that actively involved community members in the process of knowledge production, valuing local information and experience without forcing community members to adjust to non-culturally congruent terms (Bartlett et al., 2007; Schinke, Peltier et al.). This Indigenous coding strategy was employed in the current project with oversight from two Aboriginal research assistants who were vetted by the Aboriginal researchers. The participatory process enabled more meaningful and decolonizing interpretations of lived experiences to be brought forward from within the local community, transcending the ethnocentric scope of Western-oriented academic terminology (Iwasaki,

Bartlett, Gottlieb, & Hall, 2009). In turn, knowledge that resonated more deeply within the community and that was conducive to local action was developed, as per the goals of PAR.

Mandala. Mandala is a Sanskrit word meaning “circle” or “centre”, and it refers to an art form or image that is created within a circular context (Slegelis, 1987; Henderson, Rosen, & Mascaro, 2007). Jung (1973), who was the first psychotherapist to make use of the mandala as a therapeutic tool, believed it to be a visual symbol of the psyche and the quest for wholeness. Jung suggested that the act of drawing mandalas facilitated psychological healing and personal meaning in life, as the creative process helped individuals to visualize and make sense of complex experiences and emotions, while the circular form helped to promote psychic integration and a sense of inner harmony and wholeness (Jung, 1973; Slegelis, 1987). Today, mandalas are used in a variety of ways, including helping to facilitate self-awareness and self-expression in individuals (Elkis-Abuhoff, Gaydos, Goldblatt, Chen, & Rose., 2009; Henderson et al., 2007). In the current project, mandalas were employed as an arts-based data collection strategy that enabled participants to reflect on and express their relocation experiences in ways that were personally meaningful and attuned to the cultural context. It is important to note that while the term mandala is used in this dissertation, when engaging with the Aboriginal participants in the local community context, the drawings were simply referred to as circle drawings. The participants were not familiar with the term mandala, and accordingly, the reference to circle drawings was deemed to be more appropriate and culturally responsive.

Participatory action research (PAR). PAR is a process of sharing power and orienting research within local communities so that those who have traditionally been excluded from the realm of knowledge production can actively lead research from inside their communities in ways that address local priorities and contribute knowledge that is aligned with lived experience

(Brydon-Miller et al., 2011; Holkup et al., 2004; Minkler, 2000; Frisby et al., 2005). As the term suggests, the two core features of PAR are that it (1) embraces a participative reality that emphasizes community involvement, and (2) emphasizes that knowledge be integrated with action to benefit the community (Frisby et al., 2005; Holkup et al., 2004; Israel et al., 1998; Stoecker, 2009). Though these broad tenets are taken up in various ways in various research contexts, specific pathways have been proposed for supporting localized, community oriented processes (see Schinke, Smith, & McGannon, 2013). Unlike traditional researcher-driven processes, the PAR approach facilitates a more critical interchange amongst academic commitments and the applied needs of community members (thus aligning with a praxis agenda). PAR has been recommended as an appealing methodological approach for carrying out Indigenous decolonizing research (Bartlett et al., 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Smith, 1999), and was thus adopted in the current research. Three Aboriginal community members were engaged as full research team members, assuming responsibility for grounding the research agenda and processes within the local community. By drawing upon this local leadership and eliciting culturally resonant processes from within the Aboriginal community, the PAR methodology helped to decentralize traditional (ethnocentric) research processes that undermine knowledges that diverge from the “mainstream” and/or the “scientific”.

Power. Based on Foucauldian theorizing, power is conceptualized as a relational concept that works through the actions of people, rather than a possession that can be held or readily located (Pringle, 2005). Produced from within systems of social relations, power circulates through various discourses to shape and constrain perceptions of reality, including understandings of the self and others (McGannon & Busanich, 2010; Pringle, 2005). In this sense, power can be repressive for people do not have equal access in their ability to exercise it,

because it allows for some forms of knowledge to be produced and accepted around their lives over other forms (McGannon & Busanich, 2010). In this research context, power was recognized as circulating between the participants, Aboriginal researchers, and myself as we interacted with one another and co-produced knowledge. Given the grounding of the project within PAR and cultural praxis, emphasis was on challenging and reconfiguring the inequitable power relations that are traditionally maintained between academic researchers and community participants (Brydon-Miller et al., 2011; Frisby, Reid, Miller, & Hoeber, 2005; Kidd & Kral, 2005). As Pringle (2005) noted, inequitable power relations are always subject to change and resistance. The intent of such efforts was to open up more democratic power-sharing processes that would result in meaningful and affirming knowledge production around the Aboriginal athletes' lives.

Examples of strategies used to reconfigure the power dynamics in this project included the engagement of Aboriginal community members as research team leaders, the use of an arts-based method as a participatory process that enabled the participants to share their stories on their own terms, and my engagement in a reflexive process. However, it was recognized that power imbalances can never be fully dismantled or equalized between researchers and community members, given the inherent nature of the researcher's position and their control over the research (Frisby et al., 2005). In addition, power is not statically located in people or places, but is shifting fluidly through everyday social interactions (Pringle, 2005). Power must be renegotiated and reconfigured as research processes unfold, ongoing. As articulated by Frisby and colleagues in relation to feminist PAR, "the goal is not to eliminate power differences (because it is impossible to do so) but to work in authentic and meaningful ways to acknowledge and, when possible, manage them by engaging reflexively with research participants" (p. 381). Accordingly, I tried to be more aware of where and how power was dynamically shaping the

research in order to mitigate marginalizing effects on the Aboriginal community members (where possible), and, at the very least, be up front in acknowledging these power issues.

Praxis. Praxis refers to the dialectical process of reflecting and acting upon the world (particularly contexts of social injustice) in order to transform it (Freire, 2005). Freire elucidated how this transformative process can only occur when oppressors (e.g., researchers) and the oppressed (e.g., research participants) come together with the goal of creating change. Praxis oriented research, such as CSP, is thus aimed at challenging social inequalities through knowledge production processes that are carried out *with* research participants rather than *for* or *on* them (Lather, 1987; Singer, 1994). Such research opens up space for culturally marginalized participants to share accounts of the sociocultural structures and social injustices that constrain their lives, and contribute to knowledge production that is more critically connected to their interests and needs (Fisher, Butryn, & Roper, 2003; Ryba & Wright, 2005; Schinke, McGannon, & Smith, 2013). The current project was rooted in a praxis agenda in order to emphasize that CSP research is not a purely academic endeavour, but rather one that needs to address real, contemporary issues that are meaningful within the lives of the marginalized (Bredemeier, 2001; Ryba & Wright, 2005). Aboriginal community members were engaged as a key driving force behind the research, ensuring that localized knowledge would be developed in the spirit of facilitating positive community change.

Race. Race is a quasi-biological social construct that identifies different types of human bodies based on phenotypic traits such as skin colour, eye shape, or hair texture (Butryn, 2002; Duda & Allison, 1990; Hall, 2001; Ram et al., 2004). Race is one of many intersecting facets that comprise people's cultural identities. In the current project, the Aboriginal community members were recognized as having a racial identity that is different from that of Euro-Canadian

community members (including myself). In particular, while Euro-Canadian community members have white racial identities which confer on them the power and privileges of whiteness, the non-white identities of the Aboriginal community members create a context of marginalization. This research focused on Aboriginal athletes' identities and sociocultural location between two different contexts distinguished by race and ethnicity (i.e., the Aboriginal and Euro-Canadian contexts).

Reflexivity. Reflexivity is an explicit and critical evaluation of the self, wherein researchers become aware of the ways in which they operate from particular social, cultural, historical, and political standpoints that influence how they think about and conduct research on marginalized groups (Bott, 2010; Butryn, 2010; McGannon & Johnson, 2009; Schinke et al., 2012; Shaw, 2010; Sparkes, 2002). As explained by Frisby et al. (2005), "at its core, reflexivity is about reflecting on power – a researcher's power to perceive, interpret, and communicate about others" (p. 381). The intent is to draw attention to issues of sociocultural difference, power, ethics, and politics which are often concealed and taken for granted in research, and facilitate more meaningful and affirming (rather than marginalizing) understandings of diverse participants' lives (Ryba & Schinke, 2009; Ryba et al., 2013). By engaging a reflexive process in the current research, I was able to explore how culture works multi-directionally (through me and my research participants) to shape and reshape lived experiences and the meanings that are constructed around them (McGannon & Johnson, 2009). I was thus better able to facilitate a praxis oriented mode of knowledge production that more sensitively elicited the subjective identities and experiential knowledges of Aboriginal participants, and contributed to knowledge outcomes that resonated more meaningfully within the local cultural community.

Whiteness. Whiteness does not simply refer to skin colour or any fixed set of physical

attributes, but to the power dynamics related to what we consider to be “white” in a particular social space (Butryn, 2010). As the meaning of whiteness is constantly shifting, contingent upon socio-historical and political contexts, it can be viewed as an organizing principle in social and cultural relations (Butryn, 2010; McDonald, 2005). In the context of the current project, whiteness was recognized as the power and privilege that is held by those who identify as part of the “mainstream” culture (i.e., Euro-Canadians), including myself. Within CSP scholarship, there is a need to make visible the taken-for-granted norms and power issues related to whiteness and the centralization of Euro-Canadian worldviews, so that space can be opened up for diverse (non-white) epistemologies to be brought forward (Ryba & Schinke, 2009). A reflexive process was engaged in the current research so that I could explore the impacts of my white cultural identity on the research processes, and address issues of social justice that stem from the imposition of white paradigms and epistemologies into Aboriginal participants’ lives (Butryn, 2009; McGannon & Johnson, 2009; Schinke, Peltier et al., 2009).

Chapter 2

2 Review of Literature

Given the centrality of Aboriginal culture within this research project, the literature review begins with an overview of Indigenous decolonizing research. Traditional forms of knowledge production are revealed as being embedded with colonial practices and agendas that have reinforced the marginalization of Aboriginal ways of thinking and doing. The lack of effort to apply decolonizing research agendas and methodologies within sport psychology research is then linked to the larger “cultural void” in the domain, and it is explicated how cultural sport psychology (CSP) has recently been developed to address this inadequacy. Three strands of CSP research are then reviewed, including descriptive accounts of working within another culture, research emphasizing marginalized voices, and methodologically informed CSP research. The critical concepts and areas of inquiry that have contributed to conceptualizations of CSP (i.e., whiteness studies, reflexivity, and praxis) are then reviewed with an indication of how they have informed this dissertation as an interdisciplinary CSP project. Finally, a summary of contentious issues is provided, with an overview of the research questions that have framed the current dissertation.

2.1 Indigenous decolonizing research

When considering research in Indigenous contexts, it cannot be understated how the pursuit of knowledge has traditionally been entrenched with colonial practices and agendas that have constantly affirmed the dominant culture’s view of itself as the center of legitimate knowledge. The voices and knowledges of “others”, including Indigenous people, have thus been

marginalized (Battiste, 2000, 2002; Bishop, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Ryba & Schinke, 2009; Smith, 1999; Youngblood Henderson, 2000a, 2002). This has largely stemmed from an overreliance on post-positivistic and Westernized research paradigms that privilege Euro-American ways of thinking and doing, and that are fundamentally at odds with Indigenous ways of thinking and doing¹ (Battiste, 2000, 2002; Ryba & Schinke, 2009; Smith, 1999). For example, traditional Westernized research approaches tend to favour scientific processes and knowledge that is objective, non-personalized, and de-contextualized/compartmentalized. These processes profoundly diminish the value of Aboriginal ways of thinking and doing, which privilege experiential and collective sharing processes, and which emphasize knowledge that is subjective, personalized, and holistic in nature (Bartlett et al., 2007; Battiste, 2000, 2002; Castellano, 2000; Little Bear, 2000; Loppie, 2007; Smith, 1999; Youngblood Henderson, 2000b).

To date, many colonizing research strategies are evident in efforts to conduct research *on* or *for* Indigenous peoples rather than *with* them; through the imposition of research agendas that serve the academic advancement of researchers rather than the critical needs of communities; through approaches that focus only on the problems and deficiencies of Indigenous peoples and communities rather than their strengths and capacities; and through attempts to extract knowledge and information from within Indigenous communities and then claim academic ownership of that information (Bartlett et al., 2007; Battiste, 2000; Ndimande, 2012; Schnarch, 2004; Smith, 1999). Pertaining to the host of social injustices that Indigenous peoples have

¹ The differences between Aboriginal and Western ways of thinking are not nearly as dichotomous, simplistic, and static as they are presented here. Within each culture there are many nuanced traditions and lenses which are complex, ever-changing, and continually hybridizing (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2008). Though it is important in the context of this dissertation to stress that there are differences between many Aboriginal and Western ways of knowing, I do not mean to invoke them as simplistic binary oppositions or assert that they are totally antithetical to one another.

suffered under the guise of research, Smith (1999) stated:

The word itself, ‘research’, is probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world’s vocabulary. When mentioned in many indigenous contexts, it stirs up silence, it conjures up bad memories, it raises a smile that is knowing and distrustful. (1999, p. 1)

Research has thus become a site of struggle between the interests and ways of knowing of the powerful West and the interests and ways of resisting of the “other” (Bishop, 1998; Smith, 1999). In this struggle, Indigenous decolonizing approaches are being advocated as alternative ways of thinking about and doing research (Smith, 1999; Swadener & Mutua, 2008).

Indigenous decolonizing research is informed academically by critical theory, particularly the work of Paulo Freire (see Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; West et al., 2012), and is grounded politically in specific Indigenous contexts and histories, struggles, and ideals (Smith, 1999). Accordingly, Denzin and Lincoln (2008) explained that Indigenous decolonizing research is a form of *localized* critical theory that is “grounded in the specific meanings, traditions, customs, and community relations that operate in each indigenous setting” (p. 6). This form of inquiry engages an explicit social justice agenda, emphasizing the power of local Indigenous (subjugated) knowledges for invoking meaningful transformation within the lives of local people, and ultimately, facilitating their liberation from forms of domination and oppression that reduce control over their own lives (Cote-Meek, 2014; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; West et al., 2012; Youngblood Henderson, 2002). The emancipatory agenda of critical theory is driven by the local Indigenous context, challenging the assumption that oppression (and associated notions of critique, resistance, and struggle) has universal characteristics that are independent of history, context, and agency (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Smith, 1999). When viewed through this local and critical theoretical lens, Indigenous research is not an innocent or distant academic exercise

but an activity that has something at stake (i.e., knowledge and power) and that occurs in a set of political and social conditions. As Youngblood Henderson (2002) further specified, such research becomes linked to larger Indigenous efforts to create an equitable (postcolonial) society.

Upon reviewing the Indigenous decolonizing literature, Swadener and Mutua (2008) and Steinhauer (2002) concluded that decolonizing research does not constitute a single agreed upon set of guidelines or methods, or even have a common definition. Rather, the hallmark of decolonizing research is the process of valuing, reclaiming, and foregrounding Indigenous voices and epistemologies (Smith, 1999; Swadener & Mutua, 2008). Such research recognizes that non-Western knowledge forms are excluded from or marginalized in traditional research paradigms, and advocates that these paradigms be deconstructed and challenged as “natural” approaches to research. As Ryba and Schinke (2009) explained in a special issue of the *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology* devoted to decolonizing methodologies,

During the years of disciplinary socialization (i.e., formal education within mainstream universities), we [researchers] tend to internalize and take for granted disseminated *hegemonic* research methodologies so that research becomes a ritualized practice. We know how to participate in it and make sense of it as we learn to associate research with a positivistic discourse. What often goes unnoticed is that positivistic discourse is grounded in a Eurocentric vision of the world, which has always preceded and already shaped its methods of inquiry. (p. 268)

The methodologies and methods of research, including the theories that inform them, the questions they generate, and the forms of writing they employ, are all significant acts that need to be considered carefully before being applied, as they are inextricably tied into issues of power, knowledge, and representation (Smith, 1999; Swadener & Mutua, 2008).

Indigenous decolonizing research is rooted in a commitment to “decolonize Western methodologies, to criticize and demystify the ways in which Western science and the modern academy have been part of the colonial apparatus” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 2). Such research is aimed at centralizing local Indigenous ways of thinking and doing as a means of facilitating social transformation (Cote-Meek, 2014; West et al., 2012; Youngblood Henderson, 2000b, 2002). As Haig-Brown (2008) articulated in relation to curriculum studies, when Indigenous knowledge is engaged with seriously it has the potential to reframe and decentre conventional scholarship in intellectually productive and practical ways. Arising out of traditions and theory that are distinct from but also share some resonances with Western European thought, Indigenous knowledge helps us (researchers and community members) to become more aware of the border worlds we inhabit and the need to articulate our work within these border worlds. In Canada, for instance, we exist in an overlay between Aboriginal and Euro-Canadian nations, in a space irrevocably shaped by colonial conditions (see Haig-Brown, 1990). With greater awareness of this border world, researchers such as myself may choose to engage with (rather than ignore) historical and contemporary colonial relations and projects, and explore the implications of these realities in shaping our work and the lives of those we study (Haig-Brown, 2008). Such efforts would help deepen scholarship by facilitating new understandings of the interrelationships between peoples and spaces, in ways that honour holistic Indigenous thinking, and help to confront more mainstream and reductionist research practices and projects which de-contextualize and compartmentalize knowledge.

The intent of the decolonizing research approach within the current project was to centralize Aboriginal experiences and ways of knowing, recognizing these community members’ positions, as well as my own position, within a border world (Haig-Brown, 1990). Through a

more explicit acknowledgment of the intersecting sociocultural contexts around the research, more meaningful efforts could be made to develop knowledge in ways that are conducive to social change (Bartlett et al., 2007; Prior, 2007; Smith, 1999). These commitments were carried out through a re-grounding of Freire's (2005) critical *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* within the local Indigenous context, as has been suggested in the literature (see Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; West et al., 2012). Through this localized critical theoretical approach, the following emerged as characterizing traits (Schinke, Smith, & McGannon, 2013) of the research as an Indigenous decolonizing project: (a) engagement of community members as research partners rather than subjects, in order to maintain a community driven agenda; (b) emphasis on dialogue and reciprocity, whereby knowledge is shared with all involved; (c) recognition that research is an educational transformative process, with the transformation not being imposed by outside researchers, but rather coming from within the local community (thus decentralizing the role of the researcher); (d) representation of Indigenous peoples and their stories honestly and with integrity, without distortion or stereotype; (e) honouring of the cultural protocols, values, and practices of the community as integral research components that lend to the development of more meaningful, locally resonant knowledge; and (f) emphasis on connecting gained knowledge with local action in order to lend to community enhancement (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Forsyth & Heine, 2010; Schinke, Smith, & McGannon, 2013; Smith, 1999; West et al., 2012).

Following the suggestions of many Indigenous scholars (e.g., Bartlett et al., 2007; Evans et al., 2009; Forsyth & Heine, 2010; Smith, 1999), a PAR methodology that engaged Aboriginal community members as local researchers was used to carry out the decolonizing agenda within the project. These scholars note that PAR is particularly salient given its focus on transforming theory and practice through an acceptance of alternative ways of knowing, as well as an

emphasis on exposing and changing relations of power in the construction of knowledge. As such, by engaging PAR as a methodological vehicle for carrying out an Indigenous decolonizing agenda, the current research was enmeshed in an overarching agenda of activism. Efforts were aimed at achieving social justice, self-determination, and emancipatory goals that are essential within the Aboriginal community (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Smith, 1999; Swadener & Mutua, 2008).

Unfortunately, despite the growing body of interdisciplinary literature supporting Indigenous decolonizing research approaches, there has been limited effort to apply this knowledge within Indigenous contexts (Beeman-Cadwallader, Quigley, & Yazzie-Mintz, 2011; Cruz & Sonn, 2011; Prior, 2007), particularly within the realm of sport psychology. Beyond the research conducted by members of this research team, only a handful of examples of Indigenous decolonizing research could be found related to sport psychology. Notable contributions include McHugh, Coppola, and Sinclair's (2013) examination of the meaning of sport to urban Aboriginal youth utilizing a participatory photo-voice approach; Forsyth and Heine's (2008, 2010; Forsyth, Heine, & Halas, 2006) PAR-based exploration of how to provide Aboriginal youth with opportunities to participate in meaningful physical activity programs that improve their health and wellness and expand their leadership skills while also supporting their cultural identities; Giles and colleagues' (2007) exploration of how a Euro-Canadian based aquatics program could be refined to better reflect Northern Aboriginal peoples' experiences and ways of knowing and address their health needs (see also Giles, 2013); Lavalley's (2007, 2008) exploration of the impact of a physical activity program on urban Aboriginal adults in relation to the medicine wheel teachings, via a decolonizing research framework; and the scholarship of various authors in Forsyth and Giles' (2013) edited text *Aboriginal Peoples and Sport in*

Canada: Historical Foundations and Contemporary Issues. Each of these contributions has opened up novel insights into the key issues that enable and constrain Aboriginal peoples' participation in sport and physical activity, and specifically, the ways in which their identities and sport experiences are shaped by shifting tensions between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultures. However, the Indigenous research orientation and decolonizing approaches endorsed by these scholars have not yet been proliferated as part of a core research agenda within sport psychology.

There remains a need for more concerted efforts to apply Indigenous decolonizing approaches within Indigenous community initiatives, in order to account for the constitutive role of culture in shaping these athletes' experiences and identities, and open up understandings of how to facilitate sport contexts that are more engaging and meaningful. In reviewing the literature below, it is evident that the lack of Indigenous decolonizing research is symptomatic of a more general absence of cultural research in sport psychology.

2.2 The cultural void in sport psychology

As early as 1990, Duda and Allison noted that there had been virtually no consideration of race or ethnicity (two facets of culture) as meaningful categories of human experience within sport psychology research, and urged for a more systematic incorporation of these cultural aspects within the domain. More than a decade later, Ram and colleagues (2004) conducted an analysis of manuscripts published in the three leading North American sport psychology journals between 1987 and 2000 to reassess how far the domain had advanced in becoming more culturally inclusive. The authors found that while approximately 20% of the manuscripts made reference to race or ethnicity, less than 2% included a discussion of race or ethnicity as a substantive

empirical or theoretical construct. Extending this analysis between the years 2001 and 2006, Peters and Williams (2009) continued the effort to gauge the amount of cultural work being conducted in the field and found that, still, a “grossly inadequate” amount of research (less than 5% of articles) focused on cultural background as a key theoretical component (see also Kamphoff, Gill, Araki, & Hammond, 2010). Thus, it remains evident that discussions about cultural diversity within sport psychology have remained on the fringes of the domain while mainstream (white, Euro-American) perspectives continue to dominate as *the* voices and experiences of the field, therein lending to an ethnocentric logic in scholarship (Gill & Kamphoff, 2010; Martens, Mobley, & Zizzi, 2000).

This may seem surprising given the fact that cultural minorities are often represented in greater proportions within sport than in the general population. For example, African Americans comprise 78% of the players in the National Basketball Association (NBA; Lapchick, 2011a) and 67% of the players in the National Football League (NFL; Lapchick, 2011b), while Latinos comprise 27% of players in Major League Baseball (MLB; Lapchick, 2012). But consider that in the NBA there are currently only nine African American head coaches, only one African American (Michael Jordan) holds majority ownership of a team, and the percentage of African Americans holding team senior administrative positions is 22% (Lapchick, 2011a). In the NFL no person of colour has ever held majority ownership of a team, there are currently only seven African American head coaches in the league, and African Americans hold less than 17% of team senior administrator positions (Lapchick, 2011b). In MLB there is only one Latino who holds majority ownership of a team and three Latinos in team manager positions, the percentage of Latinos holding coaching positions is currently 17%, and the percentage of Latinos holding team senior administrative positions is 9% (Lapchick, 2012). These statistics indicate that when

it comes to positions of *power* pertaining to sport, diversity is constrained. White people (particularly white heterosexual males) are largely over-represented in the decision-making positions such as coaching, administration, and academia (Gill & Kamphoff, 2009; Sue, 2004). This over-representation within sport's power positions fosters ethnocentric environments where there is little consideration of cultural standpoints that diverge from the mainstream. Whiteness has been privileged as the norm within sport psychology research and practice, against which the experiences and perspectives of non-white "others" (i.e., cultural minorities) have been marginalized (Butryn, 2002, 2010; Fisher et al., 2003; Gill & Kamphoff, 2010).

As Peters and Williams (2009) and Ram and colleagues (2004) noted, when culture *is* considered in sport psychology research, it is typically presented as a categorical grouping strategy, expressed as an independent variable in research designs. While the small body of work conducted in this vein has brought attention to the importance of culture in shaping sport experiences, it takes a non-critical and non-reflexive approach that produces "a scientific storehouse of ultimate knowledge" (Ryba, 2009, p. 37) on cultural groups. Such research glosses over the interdependence of people and their social and cultural contexts in producing situated knowledge. In addition, most research has been undertaken through positivistic paradigms (rooted in an ontology of realism that seeks objective truths through scientific methodologies) and Westernized frameworks (rooted in white, Euro-Canadian/American values and ways of knowing) that may be culturally incongruent for many sport participants. The lived experiences and cultural standpoints of diverse marginalized groups, including Aboriginal community members, have consequently been denied through the imposition of research paradigms and processes that work to reinforce white ways of knowing (Butryn, 2002; Duda & Allison, 1990). This leads to the danger of producing discriminatory theoretical and practical understandings,

wherein the experiences of one group are established as the norms against which all other groups come to be marked by their difference (Duda & Allison, 1990; Peters & Williams, 2009; Ram et al., 2004). Through such comparisons, researchers reinforce the marginalization of diverse participants by perpetuating negative stereotypes of the “culturally different” or making them appear “exotic” rather than presenting any meaningful understanding of their lives (Liebenberg, 2009; Smith, 1999; Sue & Sue, 1990).

In light of the aforementioned, it is evident that “research is a site of complex interactions of power, knowledge, and representation” (Ryba & Schinke, 2009, p. 268). There remains a need to centralize discussions about cultural diversity within sport psychology to not only understand the experiences of diverse groups, but to confront the normative status of whiteness (as a set of ideologies, discourses, and identities) that underpins the foundations of sport psychology research and how it has perpetuated the marginalization of various racial/ethnic groups. The current project was aimed at addressing this need by centralizing local Aboriginal culture at the core of research efforts, through both content (i.e., eliciting the experiences of Aboriginal athletes) and process (i.e., engaging an Indigenous, decolonizing methodology). These efforts challenged traditionally accepted forms of knowledge production that privilege whiteness. The work was conceptualized as a form of cultural sport psychology (CSP), which although still in its infancy, is burgeoning in response to criticisms leveraged against the ethnocentric foundations of mainstream sport psychology (Ryba & Schinke, 2009; Ryba, Stambulova, Si, & Schinke, 2013).

2.3 Emergence of cultural sport psychology

Responding to the cultural inadequacy of mainstream sport psychology, CSP has begun to emerge as a contextually informed line of inquiry that is developed within a given culture to

more deeply reflect the experiences and worldviews of participants (Ryba et al., 2013; Ryba & Schinke, 2009; Ryba, Schinke, & Tenenbaum, 2010; McGannon & Schinke, 2014). CSP is rooted in its parent discipline, cultural psychology, which highlights the interdependence of human beings and their sociocultural environments in producing situated meaning as well as the need to understand meaning from an emic (insider) perspective (Heine, 2008; Kral, Burkhardt, & Kidd, 2002; Shweder, 1990). CSP extends matters of culture and meaning making into sporting contexts, with the aim of achieving a more inclusive representation of the needs and interest of sport participants who have traditionally been excluded. Recent conceptualizations of CSP have centralized praxis at its core in an effort to articulate an agenda that moves beyond academic knowledge production towards social change (Blodgett, Schinke, McGannon, & Fisher, 2014; McGannon & Smith, 2015; Ryba et al., 2013; Ryba & Schinke, 2009; Schinke et al., 2012). Through an emphasis on praxis, research is rooted in change enhancing, interactive, contextualized processes that support participants in voicing the stories that shape their lives and engaging in the struggle for social transformation (Ryba & Wright, 2005). The current project is situated as CSP research, defined as a praxis driven effort to centralize the voices of local people (i.e., Aboriginal athletes) in an attempt to develop knowledge that is aligned with their lived experiences and that opens up possibilities for improving their situations (Lather, 1987). Through this focus, the research will address issues of power, voice, and representation, and challenge the whiteness that permeates traditional research efforts (Blodgett, Schinke, McGannon, & Fisher, 2014; McGannon & Johnson, 2009; McGannon & Schinke, 2014; Ryba & Schinke, 2009).

It is imperative to note that central to CSP is a re-thinking of the term culture. Culture is viewed not as a static entity, but as a part of shifting discourses that produce situated meaning contested along a number of group based identifications such as nationality, race, ethnicity,

gender, religion, sexual orientation, physicality, and socioeconomic status, as well as across time and space (Macdonald, Abbot, Knez, & Nelson, 2009; Ryba, 2005, 2009; Ryba & Schinke, 2009; Sue & Sue, 1990). In other words, culture “is the messy process of negotiated meaning in context” (Singer, 1994, p. 338) rather than the tidy and objectively identifiable category it is often assumed to be in mainstream or cross-cultural sport psychology research (Peters & Williams, 2009; Ram et al., 2004; Ryba, 2009). In the current project, the culture of the participants and I were recognized as social constructions that shape how we live and make sense of life, and that afford us differential access to power and privilege – all of which influenced how we interacted in the research context and co-produced meaning (Cruz & Sonn, 2011). This acknowledgment helped to make overt the power struggle that is always at work in research with culturally marginalized groups, and is a core focus of CSP research (Ryba & Schinke, 2009). Three diverse strands of cultural sport research that have contributed to the movement towards CSP will be reviewed to situate the current project.

2.3.1 Descriptive cultural accounts

A number of sport psychology researchers have described their practical experiences working with participants in various cultural contexts. These descriptive efforts reflect formative in-depth attempts at understanding another’s culture, based on the assumption that the cultural context creates meaning, and human behaviour and experiences should be studied within the culture that encases it (Parham, 2005; Sue & Sue, 1990). Examples include work with African American student-athletes (Lee & Rotella, 1991; Parham, 2009), Australian Aboriginal athletes and performers (Hanrahan, 2004, 2009), Latin American athletes (Kontos & Arguello, 2009), Canadian Aboriginal community members (Giles, 2013; Schinke, Hanrahan, Eys, Blodgett,

Peltier, & Ritchie, 2008; Schinke et al., 2009), and work within multicultural contexts more generally (Kontos, 2009; Kontos & Breland-Noble, 2002; Parham, 2005). A diverse range of applied cultural practices have further been focalized in Schinke and Hanrahan's (2009) edited book *Cultural Sport Psychology*, as well as the special issue of the *Journal of Clinical Sport Psychology* on culturally informed sport psychology (Schinke & Moore, 2011).

Each of these contributions speaks to the necessity of developing culturally situated sport psychology approaches that resist Western mainstream practice models in favour of localized practices that are more meaningful and reflective of the client. In each example, the participants came from cultures with unique knowledge systems and values that were unaccounted for within traditional sport psychology approaches, and as such, the authors had to navigate through unfamiliar territory. For instance, in working with Australian Aboriginal performing artists, Hanrahan (2004) was challenged by a reoccurring theme of shame that surfaced amongst the participants in reference to their Indigenous community. Upon gleaning a better understanding of the context, Hanrahan found this shame to be connected to the historical oppression of the Aborigines, and indicated that the strengthening of self-esteem would be a necessary goal for mental training programs being implemented with these participants. Hanrahan further revealed that family and nature were integral cultural themes within the participants' lives that could be tied into mental training techniques for more meaningful, culturally steeped service provision (see also Hanrahan, 2009). This type of knowledge, gained through experience, is important for providing practical understandings of how to engage with participants from various cultural contexts and facilitate community aligned research and practice.

The aforementioned works contribute rich descriptions of diverse cultural contexts as well as anecdotal recommendations for researchers interested in pursuing CSP within these

contexts. Moreover, they support the need for sport psychology research and practice to be developed within local cultural contexts, such as the Aboriginal context, in ways that are more aligned with the lives of local people and that challenge the ethnocentrism of the domain. These descriptive cultural accounts have prompted research that more explicitly focuses on the ways in which culture shapes the identities and experiences of diverse sport populations, as shared through the voices and stories of those who have traditionally been silenced (e.g., Jowett & Frost, 2007; Lee, 2005). The current project was designed to contribute to this initiative by bringing forward the identities and experiences of Aboriginal athletes, as one marginalized group who has been largely unaccounted for within the sport psychology literature.

2.3.2 Research emphasizing marginalized voices

There is a significant body of research that has been taken up to emphasize culturally marginalized voices within sport and physical activity settings as a means of sharing previously untold stories and opening up deeper understandings of how culture shapes experiences and sporting identities. This body of research reflects a movement away from the ethnocentrism of mainstream sport psychology and has been foundational in paving the way for CSP rooted in cultural praxis. Recognizing that knowledge is socially and culturally situated and that there are multiple “truths” emanating from different sociocultural situations (McGannon & Smith, 2015), such research challenges academics to move beyond ventriloquism, where we talk on behalf of others and re-present their stories from an outsider and/or “expert” perspective (Blodgett, Schinke, Smith et al., 2011). Instead, academics focus on co-creating spaces where people who have traditionally been marginalized can share their stories and actively engage their knowledges in the struggle for social change. This is evident in Blodgett, Schinke, Peltier et al.’s (2010)

research, where Aboriginal community members authored a vignette that centralized an Indigenous perspective on research and outlined local, culture-specific research expectations in their own words. The researchers noted how that vignette was taken up at the community level as a tool for educating outside academics about Aboriginal cultural needs and expectations, and ensuring that local initiatives are carried out in ways that are meaningful and beneficial to the community. Social change was therefore supported through scholarship as the Aboriginal community members reclaimed the power and authority to centralize their (non-white, non-European) views of research and demand that future projects be carried out in a culturally informed manner.

While cultural praxis has not been explicitly articulated in much of the sport research emphasizing culturally marginalized voices, the notion is implicitly present in the underlying intent to develop knowledge that is rooted in the experiences of the participants and aimed at facilitating positive changes within their lives (e.g., Harley, Odoms-Young, Beard, Katz, & Heaney, 2009; Jowett & Frost, 2007; Lawrence, 2005; Lee, 2005; Thangaraj, 2010). For example, Jowett and Frost (2007) explored the narratives of black football players regarding their perceptions and experiences of race and ethnicity in their relationships with white coaches. These authors highlighted the potential of their work to raise ethnic and racial awareness within the coaching community and foster more meaningful cross-cultural coach–athlete relationships. Although these authors did not indicate any applied efforts to put their knowledge into action, the research itself contributes to larger social change efforts by leveraging and centralizing the experiences and perceptions of culturally marginalized athletes, therein challenging and de-centering the ethnocentric focus of traditional sport psychology. Harley and colleagues (2009) also investigated the role of cultural contexts in the physical activity experiences of African

American women, focusing on the factors that served as challenges for participation as well as contextually derived strategies for maintaining long-term physical activity participation. These researchers sought to develop culturally informed health promotion strategies from the insights of the participants to reduce the burden of sedentary lifestyles and chronic disease among African American women. The aforementioned projects each embraced the knowledges of marginalized “others” and facilitated a movement towards research that is linked with “real world” action through the centralization of these traditionally subjugated knowledges. In doing so, they have revealed and advanced concerns and tenets that are central to cultural praxis-driven CSP research (e.g., that race and ethnicity are more than categorical variables, that issues of power and oppression are intertwined in research with marginalized cultural identities, and that cultural research is more than a purely academic endeavour).

This body of research emphasizing the experiences of marginalized participants has been foundational as an early (non-critical, non-reflexive) form of cultural sport research. However, there remains potential for such research to become more deeply and critically aligned with a CSP agenda rooted in cultural praxis. Notably, much of the aforementioned research conducted on culture has remained rooted in academic agendas and methodologies that are consistent with mainstream approaches, rather than being developed from within the local cultural contexts. Thus, while the cultural identities and needs of sport participants have been centralized in terms of research content, they have been marginalized in the research processes. Such research could be enhanced through an explicit engagement with critical theoretical and/or methodological perspectives, which would inform and support particular (i.e., localized) research approaches when working with marginalized groups (McGannon & Schinke, 2013). Despite differences in orientations regarding what constitutes a critical theoretical or methodological approach

(Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000), critical research is noted as having a built-in activist and social justice component that necessitates local participatory engagement in research processes. It draws attention to sport contexts as sites where people's lived bodies, and the experiences they have in those bodies, produce situated and fluid knowledge about what it means to be gendered, raced, aged, classed, sexually oriented, dis/abled (McGannon & Schinke, 2014). Research processes and agendas are therein rooted in the local and embodied (cultural) knowledges of sport participants so that deeper understandings of their identities and the sociocultural issues that affect their sport participation and lived experiences can be articulated. These research processes help bring forward issues of power and sociocultural difference which are often overlooked through more mainstream (post-positivist, non-reflexive) research approaches in sport psychology (McGannon & Smith, 2015). A more critical interchange between academic commitments and "real world" concerns is therefore enabled, lending to more meaningful opportunities to facilitate social change that is meaningful within the lives of local people.

2.3.3 Methodologically informed CSP

As noted by Schinke, McGannon, and Smith (2013), there are various ways of engaging and conceptualizing particular cultural communities within research processes, reflecting diverse contexts, research dynamics, and purposes. Accordingly, there is no singular or universal set of methods or criteria for facilitating a critical and participatory mode of inquiry within CSP research. Rather, a relativistic approach is advocated, wherein multiple truths are acknowledged up front, and a variety of research strategies are embraced and developed within the local cultural context and research agenda (Schinke, Smith, & McGannon, 2013). This relativist approach is exemplified in the research of McHugh, Coppola, and Sinclair (2013), which was aimed at

exploring a culturally relevant definition of sport from the perspective of Canadian Aboriginal youth. These authors recognized that Westernized definitions of sport may limit research on and sport opportunities for this population. By engaging a decolonizing and participatory research framework, the researchers centralized relationships with Aboriginal youth and community members at the crux of their research. Through these relationships, research methods (e.g., photovoice, talking circles) and criteria (e.g., Aboriginal research ethics) became steeped in the local context and research purposes, enabling Aboriginal participants to take greater control in developing their own emic meanings of sport. One of the pertinent implications of facilitating these localized meanings was that they centralized the often overlooked expertise of Aboriginal youth, and in so doing, opened up a more meaningful understanding of how to enhance sport opportunities for (and by) these youth. Although other possibilities for participatory CSP research processes will emerge in other contexts (e.g., Blodgett et al., 2013; Frisby et al., 2005), there is a common emphasis on reconfiguring power and orienting research within a local community for social change, in line with cultural praxis goals (Brydon-Miller et al., 2011; Frisby et al., 2005).

In an overview of three separate research projects examining the meaning of physical activity and physical education in the lives of Indigenous and Muslim children in Australia, Macdonald and colleagues (2009) provided an example of physical education research that aligned with CSP. Notably, the projects (1) emphasized participant engagement, (2) were reflexive regarding the researchers' positions as white, Western women investigating "others", and (3) centralized culture within the research processes, in this case by using a methodological approach informed by postcolonial theory and critical race theory. Within sport psychology, McGannon and Johnson (2009) provided an example of reflexive CSP from a critical cultural

studies perspective, wherein they used writing stories as a way of exploring their researcher selves in relation to power processes, and how that exploration affected their representation of an Egyptian woman. From a different perspective, researchers from the current project engaged in multiple CSP initiatives aimed at exploring sport programming strategies for on-reserve Aboriginal youth (Blodgett, Schinke, Fisher, Wassengeso George, Peltier, Ritchie et al., 2008; Blodgett, Schinke, Fisher, Yungblut, Recollet-Saikkonen, Peltier et al., 2010; Schinke, Yungblut, Blodgett, Eys, Peltier, Ritchie, et al., 2010) and investigating the research experiences and recommendations of Aboriginal community members engaged in sport psychology research (Blodgett, Schinke, Peltier, Fisher, Watson, & Wabano, 2011; Blodgett, Schinke, Peltier, Wabano, Fisher, Eys et al., 2010; Blodgett, Schinke, Smith, Peltier, & Pheasant, 2011). These projects were grounded in local Indigenous research processes that were brought forward through an engagement in PAR and cultural praxis. Through the culturally informed methodologies adopted in each of the aforementioned projects, researchers were able to confront the often unacknowledged power issues that shape knowledge production processes and make more concerted efforts to elicit and (re)present the stories of community members in ways that were locally empowering rather than marginalizing.

As examples of methodologically informed CSP research, these projects converge with a larger body of research conducted on other aspects of culture, such as physicality (e.g., Anderson, 2009; Sparkes & Smith, 2002) and gender (e.g., Bredemeier et al., 1991; Busanich & McGannon, 2010; Roper, Fisher, & Wrisberg, 2005). This research has been steadily growing over the past years, as affirmed by texts such as *The Cultural Turn in Sport Psychology* (Ryba, Schinke, & Tenenbaum, 2010), and *The Psychology of Sub-culture in Sport and Physical Activity: Critical Perspectives* (Schinke & McGannon, 2014), as well as the recent position stand

on culturally competent research and practice in sport and exercise psychology put forth by the International Society of Sport Psychology (Ryba, Stambulova, Si, & Schinke, 2013). However, the empirical examples of CSP research are still relatively few in numbers. Such research has not been amassing in congruence with the increasing conceptual writings advocating CSP as part of a larger effort to facilitate a more inclusive and socially just sport psychology domain. More pointedly, very little efforts have been made to put the tenets of cultural praxis into action within empirical CSP scholarship. More concerted efforts need to be made to conduct CSP research where, through a focus on the theory-action nexus, efforts transfer off paper and become “alive” within the realities of marginalized community members rather than being limited to academic ends. In order to achieve this goal through the current project and build upon the existing body of research, it is necessary to review the key concepts and areas of inquiry that have contributed to conceptualizations of CSP and explore how they have informed this dissertation. These key concepts and areas of inquiry are whiteness studies, reflexivity, and praxis. As a starting point, the field of whiteness studies provides an understanding of how research is always culturally situated, though it is often taken up ethnocentrically (driven by the power and norms of one group) rather than inclusively (driven by local contexts).

2.4 Considerations from whiteness studies

While race and ethnicity, as socially and culturally constructed categories, have often been considered meaningful variables for understanding the experiences and identities of “others”, the normative status of whiteness has continued to protect white people from being identified and explored racially and ethnically. As noted by Walton and Butryn (2006), just as gender is often a code word for referencing women, race and ethnicity are often used synonymously for non-white

people. However, these aspects of culture need to be considered in the context of how white people construct and perpetuate whiteness as an invisible norm that not only affects their lives in the form of privilege, but also intrudes into the lives of other groups in the form of oppression (Butryn, 2010; Sue, 2004). This need has opened up to large amounts of interdisciplinary scholarship conducted in the field of whiteness studies, produced since the early 1990s. The collective aim of critical whiteness studies has been to make whiteness visible and thus more immediately subject to critical analysis and deconstruction, through an explicit focus on power dynamics (Bonnett, 1996; Butryn, 2010; King, 2005; Sue, 2004). Of concern is the ways in which inequalities are reproduced and experienced in modern forms of racism that are much more subtle than in the past (e.g., the modern avoidance of racial terminology that promotes a “colour blind” perspective versus the racial segregation of the past). Through a better understanding of the ways in which whiteness operates, questions are opened up about what to do about white privilege and racism, and how we can move towards equality and social justice - an outcome congruent with CSP.

However, as whiteness studies is an epistemologically divided terrain, comprised of diverse and divergent projects that are tied to shifting sociocultural formations and ongoing struggles over meaning, there is no coherent definition or agenda aligning the domain, and thus there is no agreed upon process for making whiteness more visible and subject to critical analysis (Bonnett, 1996; Butryn, 2010; McDonald, 2005). Scholars have assumed various paradigmatic standpoints in their work (including various strands of cultural studies, poststructuralism, feminism, and queer theory), which have resulted in ambiguities, inconsistencies, and contradictions. Yet, as Riggs (2004) noted, critical studies of whiteness “require a range of approaches to both epistemology and ontology to prevent the subject areas from solidifying into

a homogeneous, institutionalized subject area, an outcome that would thus only serve to reinforce the hegemony of whiteness” (para. 5). McDonald (2005) further indicated how competing understandings help scholars to recognize that whiteness is multiple and dynamic in its meaning and uses, as it is a social construction rather than a fixed race or ethnicity.² This view of whiteness aligns with the way culture is conceptualized within CSP, as a part of multiple and shifting discourses that are always under dispute across social spheres and tied to struggles over power (McGannon & Spence, 2010). Through this point awareness, it became apparent that the culture of the Aboriginal community members was not the only culture that needed to be accounted for in the current research. I needed to examine and become more sensitive about my white, Euro-Canadian cultural identity and educational/ researcher positioning in relation to the Aboriginal community, given that these sociocultural locations were shaping how I engaged in the research and co-produced knowledge around Aboriginal peoples’ lives.

The processes and effects of whiteness have also been found to extend into sport and the way it is experienced by both white and non-white people. Accordingly, whiteness studies has become a major area of focus for sport sociologists (e.g., Burdsey, 2011; Cooky & McDonald, 2005; Douglas, 2005; Fusco, 2005; Hartmann, 2007; King, 2005; King, Leonard, & Kusz, 2007; McDonald, 2005; Walton & Butryn, 2006), and to a much lesser degree amongst sport psychologists (e.g., Butryn, 2002, 2009, 2010; Hall, 2001). This body of literature must be considered in relation to the relocation experiences of Aboriginal athletes, as it reveals how the participants’ lived sport experiences are shaped by the whiteness that circulates around them. For

² A number of critiques have been leveraged regarding whiteness studies (see Bonnett, 1996; Butryn, 2010; King, 2005), particularly relating to the issue of whether whiteness studies can really “do” anything other than re-center whiteness and empower white academics via the tenure process. Thus, there are weaknesses and tensions within the field that scholars continue to grapple with.

instance, Burdsey (2011) examined British Asian cricket players' experiences of racism, and found amongst the players a tendency to downplay the repercussions of some forms of prejudice. The authors argued that this demonstrated that the colour blind ideology is so entrenched in contemporary Western sport that it is not only preserved by white groups, but actually has the capacity to compel minority ethnic participants to downplay their experiences and endorse dominant claims that the effects of racism are overstated. Drawing upon another example, Fusco (2005) conducted a spatial ethnography of the locker rooms in a Canadian sport and fitness center and found that it was characterized by a modern architectural design that represented the normative and idealized white male body. Fusco concluded that whiteness is an invisible presence that underpins the very (built) foundations of sport spaces, forming a backdrop against which non-whiteness becomes alienated. Taking a different approach, Butryn (2009) developed autoethnographic vignettes to illustrate moments of tension related to whiteness and white privilege in his academic career, using the accounts to highlight how race and whiteness operate in the various spaces of sport psychology (e.g., in athletic departments, teaching settings, research settings, conferences, sport organizations, etc.).

Taken together, these works offer important implications for CSP research and the current dissertation. They reveal that as much as marginalized sport participants' experiences are shaped by their own cultural background, they are also shaped by the whiteness that circulates around them and intrudes into their lives (e.g., Schinke, Peltier, Hanrahan, Eys, Recollet-Saikkonen, Yungblut et al., 2009). The perpetuation of whiteness within sport psychology research affects how the experiences and identities of diverse sport participants come to be understood and represented within a larger system of racial and ethnic hierarchies that uphold white domination (Butryn, 2009, 2010). Thus, rather than attempting to examine the sport

experiences of Aboriginal athletes through an explicit focus on the cultural context in front of the academic lens, there was an equal need to focus on my white, Euro-Canadian cultural identity (as the academic researcher) and the white context of sport psychology. These latter cultural aspects are traditionally hidden behind the academic lens. By engaging in an introspective, reflexive process in the current research, I aimed to understand my role in co-producing knowledge about the lives of Aboriginal community members. In particular, I wanted to explore the ways in which I could better facilitate knowledge production that was culturally supportive and empowering rather than culturally oppressing. I took up a reflexive agenda in order to work more consciously against the social injustices that have accrued from the imposition of white paradigms and epistemologies into diverse (non-white) research contexts, in keeping with the spirit of CSP (Butryn, 2009; McDonald, 2005; McGannon & Johnson, 2009).

2.5 Reflexivity

The idea of reflexivity emerges as an important legacy from the whiteness studies literature (Butryn, 2009, 2010; Riggs, 2004), though it has more generally developed out of the critical and interpretivist approaches of feminism (e.g., Deutsch, 2004; Ferrari, 2010; Wesely, 2006), as well as poststructuralism (e.g., McGannon & Johnson, 2009). At the crux of these works is the recognition that research is a mutual journey taken by the researcher and the researched, wherein both parties influence and are changed by the research process and actively co-construct meaning through their interactions (Deutsch, 2004; Dupuis, 1999). Thus, the researcher is recognized as an acting, feeling, and thinking being, subjectively enmeshed in knowledge production processes rather than being viewed as an impartial subject, simply “discovering” knowledge. Reflexivity is elicited as an explicit and critical evaluation of the self, wherein researchers become aware of the

ways in which they operate from particular social, cultural, historical, and political standpoints that influence how they think about, research, and present people's lives (Bott, 2010; Butryn, 2010; McGannon & Johnson, 2009; Schinke et al., 2012; Shaw, 2010; Sparkes, 2002).

As Dupuis (1999) proposed, locating our subjective selves through reflexive research processes is imperative if we are to present honest and comprehensive accounts of the lives we study, for our own stories and standpoints provide grounding for our understandings and therefore become entangled with the stories and standpoints of our participants (Shaw, 2010; Wesely, 2006). It was therefore necessary for me to become more aware of how my own subjectivities (e.g., my white racial identity, Euro-Canadian ethnicity, female gender, and educational positioning) were shaping the way I engaged in CSP and the stories I was telling through my research about the Aboriginal participants. Through a reflexive examination, the intent was to bring attention to the contested nature of culture and how it was working multi-directionally within the research process to shape meaning and knowledge between the participants and myself. The underlying presupposition was that through this increased reflexive awareness I could work more collaboratively and supportively with the Aboriginal community members, becoming more conscious of the cultural power dynamics at play in our interactions and my role in eliciting or subverting the community members' identities and knowledges. Moreover, it was presumed that my reflexivity would enable others (e.g., the readers of this dissertation) to assess the quality of the research through a more explicit awareness of the processes underpinning it.

Reflexivity raises questions such as “‘How do my identity and social position bring me to ask particular questions and interpret phenomena in particular ways?’ and ‘How do my own identity and social position privilege particular choices in the research process while also

marginalizing particular choices?’’ (McGannon & Johnson, 2009, p. 59; Schinke et al., 2012). Through these considerations, the project was designed to highlight the webs of power that circulate in the research process and influence how the Aboriginal community members are ultimately researched and portrayed (Bott, 2010; Dupuis, 1999; McGannon & Johnson, 2009; Schinke et al., 2012; Sparkes, 2002). Many of the key issues of traditional sport psychology research became centralized – issues of who gets studied and who gets ignored, which questions get asked and which are left unexplored, whose voices are presented in research reports and whose are absent, who benefits from research and who is exploited, etc. Through a more overt awareness of these issues, the current initiative was geared towards challenging the degree to which power differentials are maintained in traditional research approaches, and facilitating more socially just and culturally supportive processes. These efforts would advance and enhance the research as a form of decolonizing CSP.

Reflexivity has only recently been espoused in sport psychology in a number of contributions pertaining to CSP (McGannon & Johnson, 2009; Parham, 2011; Ryba & Schinke, 2009; Schinke et al., 2012) and reflective writing practices such as autoethnographies (Butryn, 2009; Knowles & Gilbourne, 2010; Sparkes, 2002) and confessional tales (Douglas & Carless, 2010; McGannon & Metz, 2009; Sparkes, 2002). In part, this may be due to the fact that being openly reflexive can be uncomfortable and even risky for researchers. For one, it goes against traditional “scientific” training and (post)positivist ideals regarding how research should be conducted and reported (Butryn, 2009; Dupuis, 1999; Sparkes, 2002). Researchers are often taught to assume a hierarchical relationship with their participants without considering it problematic or unjust, and are then taught to report their work in author-evacuated third-person accounts using accepted academic language and a scientific structure that depicts research as a

process that is objective, tidy, and linear. These standards are in stark contrast to the subjectivity brought forth through self-reflexive CSP processes wherein tensions, surprises, and new understandings are continually being identified and (re)negotiated through the interchange amongst participants and researchers as they collaboratively construct meaning in a messy and dynamic context (Bott, 2010; Dupuis, 1999; Schinke et al., 2012).

The second risk of reflexivity for researchers is that personal disclosure makes us vulnerable and visible (Bott, 2010; Butryn, 2009; Ferrari, 2010; Johnson, 2009). As noted by Trussell (2010) and Johnson (2009), it is easier to expose the vulnerability of the lives we study than it is to expose our own. However, this vulnerability is at the crux of CSP as a critical position from which social change is driven forward. When researchers open themselves up through reflexive processes, they step out of a privileged position and become situated amongst those they are working with, where they are able to gain more honest insight into lived experiences of marginalization and uncover possibilities for improving participants' realities (Deutsch, 2004; Dupuis, 1999).

A third aspect related to the difficulty of reflexivity is that this process requires continuous, intentional, and systematic introspection throughout each stage of the research rather than being a one-time awareness-raising activity or an afterthought in the writing process (Doucet, 2008; Dupuis, 1999; Ferrari, 2010; Shaw, 2010). Even when researchers have the intent to be reflexive and locate themselves within their research processes, they can only be as reflexive as the discourses or narratives available to them allow. Thus, researchers may discuss and write of reflexive processes without actually achieving significant reflexive awareness or deeper understandings. In regard to this point, researchers must be cautious not to flood research processes and texts with their own thoughts and subjectivities in ways that are self-indulgent and

subverting of the voices and thoughts of the participants (Doucet, 2008; Sparkes, 2002). The “how to” of engaging in reflexivity and faithfully presenting the voices and perspectives of marginalized participants as well as acknowledging those of the researcher can therefore be problematic. These actions have profound implications in terms of who’s story is being told, who is doing the speaking and when, and who benefits from the work (Sparkes, 2002). Some scholars have recommended that reflexive research incorporate a participatory approach in order to recognize the active, collaborative role that both the participants and researchers play in meaning making (Dupuis, 1999), as was done in the current research. As another strategy, scholars have suggested that the written products of research go beyond traditional (realist or scientific) narrative forms that promote the illusion of the disembodied researcher-author, and open up to less traditional forms of representation (Dupuis, 1999; Smith & Sparkes, 2009, 2010; Sparkes, 2002). Though some have urged academics to take ownership of their research contributions and acknowledge the interpretive nature of knowledge production by writing in the first person (e.g., Webb, 1992), it has more recently been suggested that it is not enough to simply incorporate the pronoun “I” into writings without including critical, meaningful self-disclosures (Dupuis, 1999).

To more deeply address these issues of reflexivity and representation, non-traditional narrative genres such as confessional tales (e.g., Douglas & Carless, 2010; McGannon & Metz, 2009), autoethnographies (e.g., Butryn, 2009; Denison, 1996; Purdy, Potrc, & Jones, 2008; Tsang, 2000), poetic representations (Carless & Douglas, 2009; Sparkes & Douglas, 2007; Sparkes, Nilges, Swan, & Dowling, 2003), and vignettes (e.g., Blodgett, Schinke, Peltier, Wabano, Fisher, Eys, et al., 2010; Blodgett, Schinke, Smith, Peltier, & Pheasant, 2011) have been gaining ground within qualitative sport research. In these texts, while the voices of the marginalized are the focal point, the researcher is explicitly situated as a storyteller who has the

ability to shape what people come to hold as truth regarding marginalized identities.

A narrative strategy was used to present the experiences of the Aboriginal athletes in the current project. In depth storytelling quotes were drawn from the participants' interview transcripts and used to share their accounts of relocation through their own voices and worldviews. These contextual narratives helped to reduce the degree to which my own academic voice was interjected into the participants' accounts, while still acknowledging that I was the academic storyteller within the larger dissertation document. Through this narrative effort, I was able to position myself as one culturally informed voice engaged in dialogue with multiple other culturally informed (and non-academic) voices. This helped to make overt the collaborative nature of knowledge production that is at the core of transformative research, or research-as-praxis (Freire, 2005; Lather, 1987). Moving one step beyond this narrative storytelling approach, the Aboriginal athletes' mandala drawings were also engaged as visual stories. Presented in the community without any textual framing or academic analysis, these images helped to show the athletes' relocation experiences through their own culturally bound perspectives. Finally, in an effort to balance out the participants' storytelling with my own, I also wrote reflexively about my experiences, leanings, and challenges engaging in this research.

2.6 Praxis

Praxis is a concept that has emerged from the work of Brazilian educationalist Paulo Freire, and more specifically, his influential text *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2005; originally published in 1970), which championed a revolutionary philosophy of education aimed at enabling oppressed peoples to overcome their social conditions and participate in their own liberation. Transcending the educational context, Freire's (2005) notion of praxis refers to the dialectical process of

reflecting and acting upon the world to transform it and achieve social justice. According to Freire, emancipation can only occur when oppressors and the oppressed (or colonizers and colonized/ leadership and people/ researchers and participants) come together to critically reflect on reality and then take collaborative, informed action upon it. He explained:

Attempting to liberate the oppressed without their reflective participation in the act of liberation is to treat them as objects which must be saved from a burning building; it is to lead them into the populist pitfall and transform them into masses which can be manipulated. (Freire, 2005, p. 65)

Expanding on this concept within the context of critical research in the human sciences, Lather (1987) defined praxis-oriented research as committed to a transformative agenda, aimed at challenging social inequalities through knowledge production processes that engage and empower marginalized participants. Thus, praxis links with critical forms of inquiry and PAR in that it opposes traditional scientific norms that maintain tacit power imbalances and social inequities, and alternatively, elicits a transformative agenda that is carried out *with* the oppressed rather than *for* them (Lather, 1987; Singer, 1994). Such efforts rely on an epistemology of experiential knowing, which challenges researchers to reconsider the type of knowledge they produce in the academic realm by connecting it with the lived experiences of marginalized people (Blodgett, Schinke, Peltier, Fisher, Watson, & Wabano, 2011; Fisher et al., 2003). The intent is to develop emancipatory knowledge that is based on and resonates with the lived experiences of marginalized groups and develops possibilities for creating meaningful change within their lives (Lather, 1987). This knowledge is developed through the dialectical alignment of theory and action, wherein emancipatory theoretical concerns and commitments inform and connect to the performance of contextually driven, participatory research, which then produces

knowledge that reciprocally connects back to theoretical efforts (Lather, 1987). Thus, praxis, as a continual process of reflecting and acting, serves as a link between academic and applied work (Fisher et al., 2003). It becomes a core feature of work for researchers and communities who want to affect change in the world rather than simply describe it.

Within sport psychology, praxis has emerged from critiques of the dominant scientific model for seeking objective analyses of human experience in sport and removing the person from the process of knowing, as well as isolating research efforts from the larger sociocultural context in which they are embedded (Martens, 1987; Sage, 1993). Particular concerns regarding the ethnocentric bias of traditional sport psychology paradigms and their disenfranchising effects on minority sport populations have led to the push for a new area of sport psychology that is intersected with cultural studies, termed “sport psychology as cultural praxis” (Fisher et al., 2003; Ryba, 2005; Ryba, Stambulova, Si, & Schinke, 2013; Ryba & Wright, 2005; Schinke et al., 2012). As the primary agents of the cultural praxis movement within sport psychology, Ryba and Wright (2005) clarified that cultural praxis blends together cultural studies theory, activism as practice, and empirical research as the mediator between theory and practice, “with the various components held together with a progressive politics that focuses on social difference, equity, and justice” (p. 201). Through these efforts, sport psychology is opened up to questions about athletes’ subjective experiences of being gendered, raced, sexualized, disabled, etc., as well as the ways athletes express their identities and negotiate power in their lives (McGannon & Smith, 2015). Thus, centralized at the intersection of CSP and praxis (and linking with whiteness studies) is a re-examination of athletes’ identities which opposes the traditional notion of identity as a singular and stable category through which an individual can easily be defined. Instead, the individual is viewed as “a subject of multiple discourses and various identifications, a member of

numerous social and cultural groups, and a part of sport as an institution immersed in a particular sociocultural and historical context” (Ryba & Wright, 2005, p. 204). Individuals are understood as having fragmented identities within various discourses of class, gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, physicality, and able-bodiedness. This awareness pushes sport psychology researchers to move beyond traditional disciplinary boundaries and engage in more idiosyncratic and interpretivist research projects that account for the sociocultural complexities of participants’ identities and experiences.

However, beyond a theoretical discussion of sport psychology as cultural praxis, very little empirical research has been carried out with an explicit praxis agenda. The research of Bredemeier and colleagues (see Bredemeier, 2001; Bredemeier et al., 1991; Bredemeier, Carlton, Hills, & Oglesby, 1999) stand as the first core examples of praxis in action within sport psychology, though the authors employed a feminist approach to emphasize the experiences of women in physical activity settings. Following suit from a race and ethnicity perspective, Blodgett and colleagues engaged in praxis to re-conceptualize youth sport programming on an Aboriginal Reserve in order to encourage active lifestyles through meaningful cultural practices (Blodgett, Schinke, Fisher, Wassengeso George, Peltier, Ritchie et al, 2008; Blodgett, Schinke, Fisher, Yungblut, Recollet-Saikkonen, Peltier et al., 2010), and explore the research experiences and recommendations of Aboriginal community members (Blodgett, Schinke, Peltier, Fisher, Watson, & Wabano, 2011; Blodgett, Schinke, Peltier, Wabano, Fisher, Eys et al., 2010; Blodgett, Schinke, Smith, Peltier, & Pheasant, 2011). Each effort was aimed at developing knowledge that was rooted in the lived experiences and voices of participants typically excluded from or marginalized within the dominant discourses and practices of sport psychology. These community voices and insights worked to ground the traditionally academic effort of knowledge

production within applied social change efforts, therein contributing to the theory-action dialect of praxis and the production of research that is more meaningful within people's lives.

Praxis is suited to the social change efforts that are being advocated within Indigenous communities through the use of decolonizing methodologies. Accordingly, this agenda was integrated within the current research. The relevance of praxis within such an Indigenous decolonizing context is evidenced in the words of Ndimande (2012), who was engaged in research with Black South African parents:

...I became cautious throughout this fieldwork not to enter these communities to appropriate their thoughts, experiences, personal life stories, and their daily struggles, as doing so would perpetuate the stereotypical practices of mainstream, colonizing research. Instead, I tried to establish a sociocultural and political understanding that could *connect* what I call the "world of academic research" to the "world of the oppressed peoples." (p. 222)

Such an approach, aimed at connecting the academic realm to the lived realities of local people, is responsive to the call for praxis to be incorporated within CSP as a means of opening up the monolithic boundaries of the sport psychology domain to diverse epistemologies and concepts that hold potential for meaningful social change (Fisher et al., 2003; Ryba, 2005; Ryba & Wright, 2005; Schinke et al., 2012).

2.7 Summary of contentious issues

In light of the aforementioned literature, it is evident that despite the criticisms that have been leveraged against mainstream sport psychology for being taken up ethnocentrically at the expense of diverse, non-white populations (e.g., Duda & Alison, 1990; Fisher et al., 2003; Ryba

& Wright, 2005), there is a significant lack of research being conducted in ways that centralize non-Western experiences and worldviews. Only recently has a more socially and academically transformative agenda been articulated through the emergence of CSP as an alternative area of inquiry that emphasizes culture as a driving force of research and practice (Ryba, 2005; Ryba & Wright, 2005; Schinke et al., 2012). As CSP is still in its infancy, however, there is a very limited body of research that has been conducted under its auspices to bring forward diverse experiences and voices from culturally marginalized groups. There is even less research that takes an explicit praxis-driven approach through localized methodologies that are participatory in nature and that build cultural values, traditions, and ways of knowing right into the processes of knowledge production. Though multiple theoretical/conceptual papers have highlighted the importance of praxis within CSP (e.g., Blodgett, Schinke, McGannon, & Fisher, 2014; McGannon & Smith, 2015; Ryba, 2005; Ryba et al., 2013; Ryba & Schinke, 2009; Ryba & Wright 2005; Schinke et al. 2012), empirical research has been slow in following suit.

The current research, as a contribution to CSP, emphasized praxis as means of producing knowledge that is more aligned with the lived experiences of Aboriginal athletes, while also bridging Indigenous decolonizing research with sport psychology. This project follows the more general call for decolonizing methodologies and models of research praxis that address issues of power and sociocultural difference within sport psychology, as explicated by Ryba and Schinke (2009) in a special issue of the *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*.

Taking insights from the aforementioned literature, it was evident that for this research to be a meaningful contribution to both the Indigenous research and CSP literature, I needed to dismantle whiteness as *the* cultural backdrop of sport psychology. I also needed to counter the ways in which whiteness (and other cultural identity categorizations related to sexuality,

socioeconomic status, education, etc.) has disenfranchised Aboriginal athletes through issues of power asymmetry, misrepresentation, stereotyping, and the silencing of voices. At its core, the research needed to centralize Aboriginal ways of thinking and doing so that local values and priorities would be embedded in the research questions, the methods, and the knowledge produced. The intent of such efforts was to generate emancipatory outcomes that would challenge racial and ethnic hierarchies and address pertinent community needs.

Given this agenda of change, an Indigenous decolonizing research agenda was advanced through the use of a PAR methodology. This methodology helped to mobilize a community driven research process (through the engagement of Aboriginal community researchers) so that there was a more critical interchange amongst academic commitments and applied community needs. The PAR approach also helped to bring forward traditionally-hidden power issues within the research, revealing the need for reflexive processes to open up deeper understandings of how to leverage the voices of Aboriginal athletes and (re)present their experiences. Through this fusion of approaches, the research was aimed at contributing to the CSP literature. In particular, it was aimed at generating new and culturally grounded understandings of the relocation experiences of Aboriginal athletes, as well as identifying meaningful pathways through which these athletes can be supported. In addition, the project was designed to contribute to a larger decolonizing project that supports empowerment and self-determination within the local Aboriginal community (Battiste, 2000; Bishop, 1998; Smith, 1999; Swadener & Mutua, 2008).

As I engaged in this project I was aware that neither I, as a Euro-Canadian researcher, nor the project itself could empower the community members per se. Instead, empowerment was advocated as coming forward from within the community, through community led research processes that affirmed Indigenous ways of thinking and doing and encouraged local people to

share their lived experiences from their own perspectives. Through such efforts, I believed that the research was more likely to accentuate the strengths and knowledges of community members and emphasize their potential to mobilize meaningful change at the local level. I realized that in my supporting role as the researcher I needed to constantly ask, “How can the agency, the self-direction of indigenous peoples be enhanced?” as suggested by Kincheloe and Steinberg (2008).

2.8 Research questions

Given the aforementioned need for decolonizing and praxis driven research approaches that address issues of power and sociocultural difference within sport psychology (Ryba & Schinke, 2009), the current project was developed as a CSP initiative that was rooted in an Aboriginal community and framed by a decolonizing agenda. The research was aimed at inductively exploring the relocation experiences of Aboriginal athletes who had moved off reserves in Northeastern Ontario to pursue sport opportunities within Euro-Canadian contexts. Through community consultation, the following research questions were defined more specifically:

1. What challenges do Aboriginal athletes face when they relocate off-reserve to pursue sport opportunities, and how are they experienced?
2. What benefits do Aboriginal athletes associate with their sport relocation, and how are they experienced?
3. What helps or makes it easier for Aboriginal athletes to continue their sport if they have to relocate away from home?

Chapter 3

3 Methodology

This chapter outlines how a participatory action research (PAR) approach was engaged in the current project to enable decolonizing research processes that were led from within the Aboriginal community. The constituent parts of the PAR approach are outlined, including the community context, the research team members, and the participants. In embracing a decolonizing methodology that resists traditional Westernized preferences for validity criteria, Aboriginal research guidelines are also described at the core of the methodology. These guidelines are then emphasized as facilitating a more meaningful research process that was aligned with an agenda of creating positive community change. Following, the researcher's reflexive process is articulated through a series of personal narratives and mandalas. The arts-based data collection process is then delineated, consisting of mandala drawings and conversational interviews. Finally, the data analysis procedures are overviewed, encompassing a local Indigenous inductive thematic analysis which was led by Aboriginal research assistants, and visual storytelling.

3.1 Participatory action research

PAR has been recommended as an appealing methodological approach for carrying out Indigenous decolonizing research (e.g., Bartlett et al., 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Evans, Hole, Berg, Hutchinson, & Sookraj, 2009; Kildea, Barclay, Wardaguga, & Dawumak, 2009; Smith, 1999), and many Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations are advocating for this approach in research with Canada's Aboriginal population. For instance, a PAR approach has

been recommended by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research in their *Guidelines for Health Research Involving Aboriginal People* (CIHR, 2007). PAR has also been advocated by Canada's three federal research agencies in the national *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans*, in chapter nine where research involving Aboriginal peoples is addressed (Interagency Advisory Panel on Research Ethics, 2010). Similarly, in a report aimed at providing practical guidance to Aboriginal communities interested in developing their own research policies and protocols, the National Aboriginal Health Organization called for PAR to be espoused as a foundation for ethical community-based practices (NAHO, 2007a). These calls for PAR stem from the recognition that Indigenous ways of thinking and doing need to be centralized within Aboriginal community research if it is to be meaningful rather than marginalizing. It is recognized that PAR is facilitating of this "indigenizing of research practice" (Brydon-Miller, Kral, Maguire, Noffke, & Sabhlok, 2011, p. 390). Accordingly, this approach was adopted in the current project to mobilize a decolonizing agenda and ensure that knowledge was developed from within the Aboriginal community, in ways that would be more meaningful.

Although participatory and action oriented forms of research are often identified by different labels (such as participatory research, participatory action research, community-based participatory research, action inquiry, cooperative inquiry, empowerment research), there is a lack of consistency with which any particular definition is used to distinguish a particular label or process from others (Israel, Schulz, Parker, & Becker, 1998; Stoecker, 2009). Given that they all belong to the same methodological genre and share core tenets (Holkup et al., 2004; Israel, Schulz, Parker, & Becker, 1998; Minkler, 2000; Stoecker, 2009), the term PAR has been selected in the current project to make overt the constituent parts of the methodology: participation and action. Recognizing the epistemological and political necessity for local people to be involved in

research that affects their lives, PAR researchers embrace a participative reality that emphasizes grassroots participation. PAR researchers also emphasize that the gained knowledge be integrated with action to benefit the community, either through direct intervention, or by using the research process and results to inform social change efforts (Brydon-Miller et al., 2011; Frisby, Reid, Miller, & Hoerber, 2005; Holkup et al., 2004; Israel et al., 1998; Stoecker, 2009). In sum, PAR is a collaborative process wherein community stakeholders (and often, though not always, academic researchers) partner together and contribute their respective strengths to a more comprehensive and local research process that is aimed at generating possibilities for community enhancement (Flicker, 2008; Frisby et al., 2005; Kidd & Kral, 2005; Minkler, 2000; Wallerstein & Duran, 2006). It is not a particular research method, but rather a process of sharing power and orienting research within local communities. The intent is to encourage those who have traditionally been excluded from the realm of knowledge production to actively lead research from inside their communities in ways that address local priorities and contribute knowledge that is aligned with lived experience (Brydon-Miller et al., 2011; Holkup et al., 2004; Minkler, 2000; Frisby et al., 2005).

Through this locally driven form of inquiry, all aspects of the research are enriched, from question development to data analysis and dissemination (Flicker, 2008). In particular, scholars have elucidated how PAR processes help to: (1) overcome the fragmentation and separation of individuals from their social and cultural contexts (Bartlett et al., 2007; Israel et al., 1998); (2) improve the quality of research by engaging local knowledge and local theory based on the lived experience of the people involved (Frisby et al., 2005; Israel et al., 1998); (3) achieve a balance between research and action that mutually benefits both science and the community, thus aligning with praxis (Brydon-Miller et al., 2011; Israel et al., 1998; Kildea et al., 2009); and (4)

promote a co-learning and empowering process that facilitates a two-way transfer of knowledge, skills, and capacity (Brydon-Miller et al., 2011; Israel et al., 1998; Jacklin & Kinoshameg, 2008; Kildea et al., 2009).

Congruent with Indigenous research methodologies, PAR has emerged as an alternative to conventional post-positivistic research approaches that are characterized by researcher-driven processes that subdue community members into passive participant roles and that privilege the objectivity of scientific knowledge over other ways of knowing. Drawing upon constructivist and critical theoretical perspectives that highlight the socially constructed nature of knowledge (Israel et al., 1998; Kidd & Kral, 2005), PAR denies the possibility of objective knowing and value-free science. Knowledge(s) are recognized as being multiple and subjectively situated, enmeshed in various intersecting facets of culture, such as race, ethnicity, religion, gender, age, physicality, sexuality etc. (Brydon-Miller et al., 2011; Evans et al., 2009; Frisby et al., 2005). Rather than seeking the illusory value-free knowledge of post-positivistic science, a PAR methodology was used to develop culturally situated knowledge around the identities and experiences of Aboriginal athletes. The intent was to generate knowledge more deeply connected to the lives of the athletes, and thus to enable cultural praxis (Evans et al., 2009; Lather, 1987).

Focalized in this initiative was the need to challenge traditional (white) research processes that undermine identities and knowledges and that diverge from the “mainstream” and/or the “scientific” in favour of more localized, culturally inclusive processes. It was recognized that power (which is always circulating and being negotiated in knowledge production processes) had to be located within the Aboriginal community in order to elicit contextual processes from inside, and enable the research to unfold as a meaningful piece of Indigenous community scholarship. A shift in conventional research leadership and authority

was therefore prompted. Three Aboriginal community members were engaged as community researchers, and were tasked with providing local oversight in the development of a more socially and culturally engaged mode of knowledge production. These individuals were recognized as contextual experts who had cultural knowledges and experiences that I, as a Euro-Canadian academic, lacked. I therefore strove to accept a more decentralized and reflexive researcher role, examining how my subjectivities entered into and shaped the research processes, the power relations underpinning them, and the knowledge that was produced (Brydon-Miller et al., 2011; Genat, 2009; Frisby et al., 2005; Simpson, 2001). My task as an academic researcher engaged in PAR was to move beyond ventriloquism – wherein I would talk on behalf of others and re-present their stories through an academic lens (Blodgett, Schinke, Smith, Peltier, & Pheasant, 2011; Wallerstein & Duran, 2006) – and instead, support the creation of spaces where Aboriginal people could more deeply share their stories and knowledges through their own (decolonized) lens (Brydon-Miller et al., 2011; Frisby et al., 2005; Wallerstein & Duran, 2006). As noted by Brydon-Miller et al., (2011), these shifting dynamics centralized a more relational research context which emphasized Indigenous principles of caring and commitment, and thus enabled a true decolonizing process to unfold between myself and the Aboriginal researchers (Bull, 2010; Kral, 2014; McHugh & Kowalski, 2009).

As suggested above, PAR is a process rather than a set of particular research methods (Kidd & Kral, 2005; Ulturgasheva et al., 2011), and it is enacted *with* local community members rather than being carried out for or on them (Frisby et al., 2005). However, as indicated by Kidd and Kral (2005), what can make PAR difficult is that the sharing of power, and the approaches that facilitate the sharing of power, often require academic researchers to alter long-standing beliefs that have been reinforced through traditional academic training and that are entrenched in

Western culture (e.g., the academic “expert” deferring decisions to community members who may lack the formal research training that is valued by the dominant culture, and the recognition of local experiential knowledge as valid). When critically examining some of the research that has been conducted under the rubric of PAR, this challenge becomes evident in that the PAR label is often used to substantiate research projects that insert fractions of Indigenous knowledge and local peoples into research processes that are fundamentally Western and that have been developed outside of the local cultural community. For example, Mundel and Chapman (2010) had Aboriginal participants contribute to the initial development of a research project that focused on examining an Aboriginal community garden project as a decolonizing health promotion practice. However, the data collection and analysis procedures were carried out exclusively by the academic researchers without any indication of being locally or culturally driven. There was no input or control noted from the participants beyond a vague reference to “member checking” – a strategy which is problematic in itself in terms of the power dynamic it maintains. Marginalized community members often feel pressured to confirm analyses that have been led by academics, and therefore withhold their voices and cultural viewpoints in favour of confirming a mainstream representation of their lives (Schinke, Peltier et al., 2009). A context is thus created where researchers maintain the power to speak for these individuals and represent their experiences from outside the community.

Supporting this observation, Stoecker (2009) analyzed 232 PAR-based research proposals submitted to the Sociological Initiatives Foundation community-based research funding pool. He found that local community members were rarely involved in the critical decision-making stages of research, such as defining the research or designing the methods. Instead they were limited to participating in data collection. This finding affirms how difficult it can be for researchers to go

against deeply-engrained (Westernized) ways of thinking about and doing research in order to engage a truly participative process that is led from within the community. Even with the best intentions, researchers are often unable to translate the tenets of PAR into research processes where local people are valued, listened to, or empowered (Cochran et al., 2008; Prior, 2007; Simpson, 2001; Zolner, 2003). In addition, Stoecker (2009) found that most PAR initiatives were proposed to produce papers and presentations (which addressed the needs of the academic researchers) rather than directly benefiting the community or supporting social change efforts. For this reason, Simpson (2001) indicted that for some Aboriginal communities and people, PAR represents the latest Euro-Canadian/Euro-American way to study their lives and access their knowledge rather than any meaningful attempt to engage in Indigenous or decolonizing processes. Simpson suggested that if researchers are to support Aboriginal people in addressing local problems through meaningful PAR processes, they must be willing to learn *from* Aboriginal people rather than *about* them (Zolner, 2003). As Kral (2014) further explained, this form of inquiry is essentially a relational attitude.

In the spirit of learning from Aboriginal people, the current research engaged PAR principles that have been developed within Aboriginal communities by Aboriginal people. In particular I drew on the work of LaVeaux and Christopher (2009), which contextualized the heavily cited PAR principles proposed by Israel and colleagues (1998) and proposed additional cultural recommendations. These culturally situated insights extended beyond the recommendations provided in the general body of PAR literature, helping me to engage more meaningfully with Aboriginal community members and their knowledges. The following recommendations, advocated by LaVeaux and Christopher, were integrated into the current research:

1. *Acknowledge the historical experiences of research in Aboriginal communities and work to overcome the negative image.* This was done in the current document by emphasizing the tensions between traditional Westernized research and Indigenous research, and explicating how research has long marginalized Aboriginal communities through the privileging of white, Eurocentric ways of thinking and doing. This negative research legacy has been fundamental in shaping the current project as a decolonizing CSP initiative. In addition, as our research team negotiated our way through this project, the Aboriginal community members' previous experiences of research were continually brought forward in our discussions and acknowledged as forces of change.
2. *Recognize key community gatekeepers.* More than an effort to gain entry into the local community, community members were necessary for overseeing the development of the current research as a praxis-driven effort aimed at contributing knowledge that is meaningfully connected to the lives of local people and opens up possibilities for change. Three Wikwemikong community members who were identified from within the local community as leaders were therefore engaged as research team members. Edwards and colleagues (2008) explained that these community researchers are the strength of the PAR model, ensuring that community perspectives and agendas are centralized within the research on a day to day basis. While this community engagement was an ideal part of the research, it is important to note that there are particular challenges around Aboriginal community members conducting research in their own communities (Edwards, Lund, Mitchell, & Andersson, 2008; Smith, 1999). These individuals have to deal with intricate issues of ethics, confidentiality and

community ownership, wherein they must balance external academic requirements with local community realities in ways that foster community members' trust and confidence in their role as a researcher (Edwards et al., 2008). For instance, community researchers must be able to maintain confidentiality and reinforce their professional role as a researcher while working with neighbours, friends, and relatives. They must also engage formal consent processes in ways that are respectful and honouring of local community protocols, and ensure that they are able to clearly (and confidently) communicate the full research process and their role in it to community members. In doing research in their own communities where sensitive subjects may be broached, these researchers may also be emotionally affected by the data collection and final results, and must be prepared to deal with their personal reactions. It was important to remain sensitive to these potential challenges with the Aboriginal researchers in this project. The research team maintained an open dialogue throughout each stage of the research and continually checked in with one another in an effort to manage any arising challenges and maintain a supportive team environment.

3. *Interpret data within the cultural context by including community members in the data analysis process.* In keeping with a CSP research approach, the Aboriginal researchers designated local research assistants to lead me through the data analysis and interpretation stages of the research. This process enabled knowledge to be developed inductively through a decolonizing lens.
4. *Utilize Indigenous ways of knowing so that knowledge will resonate within the local community.* This recommendation was taken up through the decolonizing research

approach in the current project, which centralized local Indigenous ways of knowing and doing. In particular, the use of an arts-based process and visual storytelling helped to ensure that the stories of Aboriginal athletes were shared in a culturally relevant manner that would have powerful implications within the local community.

In addition to the aforementioned, Fletcher (2003) further recommended that researchers designate the Aboriginal community as the site for research meetings and discussions. The author explained that this is a demonstration of the researcher's genuine interest in working closely with the community as well as a way to address power imbalances. Accordingly, all of the research meetings and project updates were held within the Wikwemikong community rather than in the university setting, unless requested otherwise by the Aboriginal researchers. Fletcher also suggested that local contributions to research be recognized. This was achieved by identifying the Aboriginal researchers as co-authors in publications pertaining to this research, as well as acknowledging the support of the Wikwemikong community in general.

The integration of these PAR principles facilitated a more meaningful collaborative process between the Aboriginal researchers and I, which in turn, facilitated the research as a more comprehensive CSP initiative rooted in praxis. As has been indicated in the literature, the process of PAR is just as critical as the product (Brydon-Miller et al., 2011; Kildea et al., 2009; Smith, 1999). Forthcoming is a description of the community, the researchers, and the participants who were intricately involved in shaping the current PAR process.

3.1.1 The community context

The community partner for this project was Wikwemikong Unceded Indian Reserve, which is located on the eastern perimeter of Manitoulin Island in Ontario, Canada.

Wikwemikong is the largest of the seven reserve communities on Manitoulin Island, and is one of the ten largest First Nation communities in Canada (Wikwemikong Unceded Indian Reserve, 2011). Approximately 3,000 band members live on the reserve, with an additional 3,600 band members living off the reserve (Wikwemikong Unceded Indian Reserve, 2011). The community is officially recognized as Canada's only Unceded Reserve, meaning that title of its land has not been relinquished to the government of Canada. The community's heritage was originally founded on the amalgamation of three tribal nations – Odawa, Pottawatomi, and Ojibway – whose Algonquian language dialects continue to be spoken today, in addition to English (Jacklin & Kinoshameg, 2008). The community takes great pride in its culture and history, as is evidenced in their culture and language retention program, as well as through numerous cultural events, such as the annual cultural festival, agricultural fall fair, traditional pow-wow, ice-fishing derby, and traditional Aboriginal theatre performances. In addition, traditional cultural activities such as hunting, drumming, dancing, quilting, and various other forms of arts and crafts continue to be popular in the community and serve as occasions for social gatherings.

Wikwemikong is known for being a progressive Aboriginal community, and this extends into the research domain. Wikwemikong has a history of being involved in and leading research, particularly within the areas of health (e.g., Jacklin, 2009; Ritchie, Wabano, & Young, 2010), sport (e.g., Blodgett, Schinke, Fisher, Wassenges George, Peltier, Ritchie et al, 2008; Blodgett, Schinke, Fisher, Yungblut, Recollet-Saikkonen, Peltier et al., 2010; Schinke, Blodgett, Yungblut, Eys, Battochio, Wabano et al., 2010), and Indigenous research practices (e.g. Blodgett, Schinke, Peltier, Fisher, Watson, & Wabano, 2011; Blodgett, Schinke, Peltier, Wabano, Fisher, Eys et al., 2010; Jacklin & Kinoshameg, 2008). Many community members are well-versed in the ways of research and, having experienced first-hand the tensions between traditional approaches and

Indigenous methodologies, are now initiating local projects from within the community so that their needs are better met. The current project reflects one such initiative that was developed from within the community. It was driven forward through the leadership of local community researchers who centralized local Aboriginal priorities and ways of knowing, and therein opened up a decolonizing research context.

3.1.2 The research team

Reflecting a collaborative initiative, the research team consisted of Aboriginal community researchers from Wikwemikong and academic researchers from Laurentian University. Duke Peltier, the current Chief of Wikwemikong and former sport and recreation director, is a local leader who is well connected to the social and political needs of the Aboriginal community, and has experience working with and supporting local athletes in various capacities. As a former elite hockey player Duke also has personal experience relocating off reserve for sport, which has informed the current project's development. Lawrence Enosse is the manager of the Wikwemikong Youth Centre (the hub where local sport and recreation programs are run out of), as well as a competitive hockey coach. In these positions, Lawrence works daily with young community athletes and is well connected to those who have relocated for sport. Chris Pheasant, an Elder and pow-wow drummer, is an active leader in Wikwemikong's cultural programs and ceremonies and is highly respected for his extensive knowledge of traditional Aboriginal culture and history. Together, these three Aboriginal researchers contributed their experiential and cultural knowledge to the research, guiding forward an Indigenous decolonizing methodology that was rooted in local protocols, values, traditions, and ways of knowing. Each of the Aboriginal researchers had extensive experience leading previous research initiatives within the

Wikwemikong community and was therefore able to flesh out localized research processes while dismantling those from the mainstream. Given that there are potential challenges when Aboriginal community members engage as “insider” researchers within their own communities (Edwards et al., 2008), open team dialogues and check-ins with the Aboriginal team members were facilitated throughout the research so that developing concerns could be identified and managed. As much as possible, the academic team strove to support and remain sensitive to the positions of the Aboriginal community members.

The university research team members consisted of myself, a PhD candidate; my doctoral supervisor, Dr. Robert Schinke; and my thesis committee members, Drs. Diana Coholic, Kerry McGannon, and Pamela Toulouse. Each of these individuals contributed academic knowledge that supplemented and supported the applied contributions of the Wikwemikong researchers. For instance, Robert and Kerry were engaged as leaders in the area of cultural sport psychology; Diana offered expertise in arts-based research methods; Pamela contributed knowledge pertaining to Native Studies and the Aboriginal culture; and I contributed knowledge around cultural praxis. The diverse knowledges of the Aboriginal and university research team members contributed to a more informed project that, in line with praxis, served to benefit both the academic and Aboriginal communities. The research team members met regularly throughout each phase of the project, in order to discuss the project’s progress, (re)negotiate plans, and ensure that both community and academic expectations were being met.

3.1.3 The participants

The participants consisted of Aboriginal athletes who had moved off reserves in Northeastern Ontario to pursue developmental or elite sport opportunities that were unavailable

in their local Aboriginal communities. In total, 21 athletes participated in the research, ranging in age from 14 to 26 years (mean age = 19.3 years), with one participant outside of this range at 41 years old. Ten of the 21 participants were male and 11 were female. The participants came from seven different reserve communities, with the majority (n = 13) belonging to the Wikwemikong community. This proportion was deemed to be appropriate given that Wikwemikong is the largest reserve community in Northeastern Ontario, and that the research was grounded in this particular community context. The participants identified as ice hockey players (n = 17), an archer (n = 1), a volleyball player (n = 1), a pow-wow dancer (n = 1) and a boxer (n = 1). Though the Aboriginal researchers and I tried to target a variety of sport disciplines, the large proportion of hockey players reflects the prominence of this sport within the local Indigenous culture and the Northeastern region of Ontario.

The participants were recruited through the Aboriginal researchers, given their community connectedness and the fact that they had personal links to many Aboriginal athletes in the region. The Aboriginal researchers took the lead in identifying and contacting potential athlete participants via phone or email to give a brief description of the project and find out (1) if the athletes were interested in participating in the project, and (2) if it would be possible for them to meet with me in person for an interview, considering their current location. This personal recruitment strategy was necessary given that we were seeking a highly select group of athletes who had relocated out of their home reserves and dispersed themselves geographically. It was also important for helping potential participants feel comfortable and receptive towards the research, knowing that it was coming forward from within the Aboriginal community through people they knew and trusted. When the athletes responded in the affirmative to the recruitment questions, the Aboriginal researchers forwarded me their contact information and I followed-up

individually to introduce myself and begin coordinating the meetings.

Each participant chose the location of her/his meeting. This strategy was designed to maximize the participants' comfort during data collection, and facilitate a more participatory process wherein power is shared between the researcher and participants. Some participants preferred to meet at an on-reserve location, such as their family home or the community youth centre, while other participants opted to come to the university. At the time of the meeting, each participant completed a written consent form indicating their willingness to participate in the research (see Appendix E). The consent form was discussed orally with them in order to ensure that they understood what the project was about, what their participation entailed, and what their rights were before beginning the data collection process. Participants under the age of 16 years were required to have a parent or guardian sign the consent form in addition to providing their own assent.

3.1.4 Profile of the participants' reserve communities

As mentioned above, the Aboriginal participants came from seven different reserve communities in Northeastern Ontario. Given that each reserve community is culturally unique and varied in its state of development, it is important to provide more contextual information on these reserves. Doing so helps to provide insight into the local contexts the participants were immersed in prior to their sport relocation, and the backgrounds they carried in to their Euro-Canadian contexts. The names of the reserve communities cannot be provided (except for the Wikwemikong community, as the research partner) given that many of these communities are extremely small, and the participants' anonymity needs to be protected in this research. A brief profile of each community is herein provided, based on the information available from

Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (2015b) and individual community websites.

Thirteen participants came from the Wikwemikong community, which was described under section 3.1.1, “the community context”. In brief, this community is recognized as being an extremely progressive and well-developed reserve community, as it is one of the largest First Nation communities in Canada. Community members from this reserve have a high level of social and economic well-being. One participant came from a second reserve community which is located in the southern region of Northeastern Ontario. The total membership of this community is just over 1000 people, with approximately 200 people residing on the reserve lands. This community provides a range of health, employment, and administrative services, and sustains a moderate to high quality of life for its members. The community promotes a sustainable and traditional lifestyle based on the rich natural resources of its lands, which are used for hunting, fishing, camping, and hiking. Another participant came from a third community in the southern region of Northeastern Ontario, which is noted as being an Anishinaabe community. This community has a total registered population of 2,600, with 950 people living on reserve. Being in close proximity to a large urban centre, this community has a high level of social and economic well-being. Small businesses and self-employment account for a large part of the local economy, with links to the fishery and forestry industries as well.

Two participants came from a fourth reserve community which is remotely located in the James Bay region of Northern Ontario. This community is a Cree First Nation, with approximately 1,700 members living on reserve. Two participants came from a fifth reserve community located in the Georgian Bay area. This Ojibway community has approximately 1,200 members, 375 of whom live on reserve. Social and economic conditions are poor in this

community, as there are very few resources for economic development internally. One participant came from a sixth reserve, which is a remote Cree community in the James Bay region of Northern Ontario. The total registered population of this community is 3,500, with approximately 2,000 of these people living on reserve. This community continues to struggle with water, housing, and general infrastructure issues, leading to very poor social and economic conditions for community members. One participant came from a seventh reserve community located in the Algoma District of Northeastern Ontario. This reserve has a registered population of 1,300 members, with approximately 400 members living on reserve.

3.2 Aboriginal research guidelines

In advocating an Indigenous (Maori) approach to creating knowledge, Bishop (1998) indicated that when researchers employ non-Indigenous terminology and conventions for writing about and evaluating research (such as internal and external validity, triangulation, trustworthiness, generalizability, and credibility), it perpetuates the problem of outsiders determining what is “good” research for Indigenous peoples. In employing these culturally external conventions, the researcher-author is able to present the research as “valid” in a positivistic sense, thus replacing the sense making, meaning construction, and voice of Indigenous people with that of the researcher through a system of scientifically determined and dominated coding and analytical tools. Alternatively, an Indigenous decolonizing research agenda calls for a rejection of outside control over what constitutes meaningful or valid research. Instead, power is relocated within the Indigenous community, where what is acceptable and what is not acceptable research is determined and defined locally in reference to the cultural context within which it is situated (Bishop, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Smith, 1999). Brant Castellano (2004) articulated that

in relation to Aboriginal community research, when an agenda of “learning, healing or rehabilitating is aligned with traditional ethics and values, it takes on astounding energy. The leaves of a tree, connected to their vital source, display health and vigour” (p. 112).

In order to embrace this decolonizing strategy and resist traditional Westernized preferences for universal validity criteria, local Aboriginal research guidelines (outlined below) were centralized in the current project. These guidelines were infused in all stages of the research, and were used to ensure that the project developed as a meaningful piece of local Indigenous scholarship that could make positive contributions to the local community. It is important to recognize that these guidelines intersect and overlap with one another and, therefore, were not engaged as distinct criteria so much as part of a more comprehensive, culturally driven process.

3.2.1 Authentic relationships

Authentic relationships have been articulated as a precursor to ethical research conducted with Aboriginal communities (Bull, 2010; Kral, 2014; Smith, 1999). Moving beyond traditional researcher-researched dynamics, the formation of deep relationships is important for showing Aboriginal communities that researchers come with open hearts and honest intentions, and are willing to really learn about (and from) the community (Smith, 1999). As explained by one of the current Aboriginal research team members in an earlier research project, “When researchers come into the reserve, they have to come in like this [hands held out, palms up]; with friendship. That says you’re coming to learn something about our people, and the community will then embrace you” (Blodgett, Schinke, Peltier, Fisher, Watson, & Wabano, 2011, p. 273). These relational efforts facilitate a levelling out of power imbalances, as researchers engage more

deeply *with* community members and emphasize collaborative learning processes, rooted in principles of respect, beneficence, and justice (Kral, 2014). Such efforts help reduce the risk of exploitation, colonization, and misrepresentation that Aboriginal people have traditionally experienced through research led by outside academics. An agenda of decolonization is able to come forward from within the local community, as research is more equitably situated within local needs and aspirations and aimed at creating meaningful local change.

Aligning with this guideline, the current initiative was developed out of pre-existing relationships built amongst the Aboriginal and university research team members (including myself) over the past eight years. These relationships were developed and deepened over time – not only through the course of our co-researching activities, but also through non-research related moments spent together, such as when we shared meals together and participated in local community celebrations together. Particularly in these non-research related moments, as we shared deeper pieces of our lives and gleaned insight into who one another is beyond their researcher/professional identity, we formed real connections and friendships with one another. Carried forward into the current project, these relationships were centralized as a key component of the PAR framework. Through an established sense of trust and respect, the Aboriginal researchers and I were able to engage more equitably and candidly as research partners, and work together to challenge issues of whiteness and power, which are often ignored in more traditional forms of research. More open and honest dialogues and negotiations took place regarding our work in terms of what it was aimed at doing, how it would balance community needs with academic ones, how it would best be engaged within the community, how the knowledge could be put into action, etc. Through these discussions, I was able to learn from the community members what it means to do Indigenous decolonizing research that is meaningful

within the lives of local people, and gain a deeper understanding of the need to think critically about my own culturally bound understandings of and engagement in research.

3.2.2 Participation

Overlapping with the aforementioned emphasis on relationships, it has been suggested that participatory approaches to research be adopted with Aboriginal communities to encourage local oversight that better roots the research in community traditions, values, priorities, and protocols (Brant Castellano, 2004; CIHR, 2007; Interagency Advisory Panel on Research Ethics, 2010; Jacklin & Kinoshameg, 2008; NAHO, 2007a). Through shared power and decision-making processes, this strategy helps to ensure that research proceeds in a manner that is culturally relevant, respectful, responsive, equitable, and beneficial to the community. This strategy also affirms the right that local people have to participate in knowledge production processes that affect their culture, identity, and well-being (Brant Castellano, 2004). In the current research, a PAR framework was used to engage three Aboriginal community members as full research partners, therefore taking up a more participatory mode of inquiry. The Aboriginal researchers were responsible for grounding the research within the local cultural context and, more specifically, leading forward an Indigenous decolonizing process that would resonate more deeply with the participants and enable them to share their experiences through their emic worldviews. Through this cultural leadership, the research was designed to more sensitively elicit and embrace the experiences of the participants, and generate local knowledge that is more attuned to the sociocultural realities of the participants' lives. In short, the participatory approach helped ensure that both the research processes and outcomes were culturally attuned.

3.2.3 The seven grandfather teachings

In their *Guidelines for Ethical Aboriginal Research*, the Aboriginal Health Research Review Committee proposed that researchers work within the spirit of the seven grandfather teachings in order to ensure that research is ethically engaged from a First Nations perspective (Noojmowin Teg Health Centre, 2003). These seven teachings – respect, wisdom, love, honesty, humility, bravery, and truth – are interconnected and have collaboratively informed all phases of the current research, through community guidance and insight. Specific examples of how each teaching was interpreted and enacted within the research are outlined, though it should be acknowledged that the strategies overlapped and intersected with one another.

First, the teaching of respect highlights the need to respect the spirituality, beliefs, and values of Aboriginal people within their communities, as well as the stories that these individuals may share about their lives. In this project, respect for local Aboriginal values, customs, and processes was enacted through an Indigenous decolonizing methodology. By centralizing local ways of thinking and doing, the Indigenous methodology was designed to be more engaging for the participants, enabling them to share their stories and knowledge in more meaningful and culturally affirming ways. The Aboriginal researchers were instrumental in bringing this Indigenous methodology forward from within the community, and they continued to inform the project and ensure that it was unfolding in ways that were respectful of the local cultural context and the lives of local people. As an example, the Aboriginal researchers suggested that community research assistants be engaged in the data analysis stage of the research to ensure that the participants' stories were being interpreted and presented meaningfully, from a local perspective. Respect was therefore established as an ongoing tenet throughout the project.

Second, the teaching of wisdom centralizes the value of experiential knowledge. In this project, the research team recognized the power of Aboriginal community members' local

experiential knowledge for opening up opportunities for community enhancement, as articulated through a praxis orientation. The aim was to elicit Aboriginal athletes' stories of relocation so that applied community strategies could be developed for better supporting and motivating on-reserve youth in pursuing their dreams outside of the community. To this end, the Aboriginal athletes were engaged as the experts of their lives. The open-ended nature of the mandala drawing process and conversational interviews enabled the participants to exert greater control in terms of deciding how to share their experiences in ways that were personally meaningful and aligned with their Indigenous worldviews. Through these processes, the participants were able to provide richer experiential insights into the challenges and benefits of sport relocation as well as the factors that facilitate success – insights which resonated more deeply within the local community context and catalyzed local change efforts. Thus, in contrast to traditional “scientific” research approaches, this project highlighted the teaching of wisdom by centralizing Aboriginal peoples' experiential knowledge rather than subverting it.

Third, the teaching of love promotes kindness in research approaches. In this project, love was enacted by ensuring that the research benefitted the Aboriginal participants and community members, rather than just the university researchers. It was a given that, as the primary university researcher, I would be granted a doctoral degree through this research and would also be able to publish the work in an effort to advance my academic career. However, in keeping with an Indigenous decolonizing research agenda and praxis, it was necessary to shift toward a more loving research agenda of social justice and community change in order to ensure that local community members also benefitted from the research. The research process was thus designed to be a culturally affirming and empowering experience for the participants, emphasizing their strength and resilience as Aboriginal athletes who have relocated away from home and overcome

many challenges. As revealed in Chapter 5, in sharing their accounts through a strength-based approach, many participants realized that they had something to offer to their community, and became inspired to use their stories to encourage other Aboriginal youth to pursue their dreams. On a second level, the research was designed to generate action-oriented knowledge (i.e., applied strategies) that would open up meaningful opportunities for enhancing the context of athlete relocation. Through this knowledge-action nexus, the research has informed and catalyzed “real” change from within the local community. Such outcomes reflect the spirit of love that was engaged within the research.

Fourth, the teaching of honesty advocates that researchers make concerted efforts to build relationships of trust within the local community and with the people participating in the research. Aligning with the aforementioned guideline of establishing authentic relationships, this teaching emphasizes the need for researchers to show Aboriginal community members that they come with open hearts and honest intentions, and are willing to really learn with and from the community (Smith, 1999). In the current initiative, the relationships between the Aboriginal community members and university research team members (including myself) were predicated on the tenet of honesty. Through regular research meetings within the Wikwemikong community, I strove to be transparent in terms of the academic agenda I brought to the research relationship while also remaining open to the needs and interests of local community members, valuing their knowledge for shaping a more meaningful project. In these meetings, open and honest dialogues and negotiations were facilitated ongoing regarding our work, in terms of what it was aimed at doing, how it would balance community needs with academic ones, how it would best be engaged within the community, and how the knowledge could be put into action. Honesty was thus a critical tenet underpinning this project, ensuring that everyone was connected

to the research and was comfortable with how it was moving forward towards particular goals.

Fifth, the teaching of humility suggests that researchers get rid of any preconceived expectations or assumptions related to Aboriginal people and their communities, and engage in research more openly as learners. Recognizing my position as an outsider (and potential colonizer) to the Aboriginal community, the current project was taken up in a participatory manner that elicited greater humility on my part. The Aboriginal community members were recognized as possessing critical cultural knowledge which I lacked, and thus, they were engaged as the experts at the crux of the research, helping me to understand and explore the lives of local people in more meaningful ways. Through this shift in leadership and power, I had to accept a more decentralized and reflexive research role. I was encouraged to explore my subjectivities and examine how they shaped the research processes and the knowledge that was produced around the identities and lives of Aboriginal people (Brydon-Miller et al., 2011; Genat, 2009; Simpson, 2001). Through these efforts, I became more aware of the ways in which I could contribute to knowledge production processes that were culturally meaningful and supportive, or culturally marginalizing (McGannon & Johnson, 2009). The need to remain humble and open minded was thus an ongoing effort for me.

Sixth, the teaching of truth indicates that the stories and experiences community members share with researchers flow from their hearts and are given with the intent of benefitting everyone, including the local community. Researchers must therefore honour the stories that are shared with them as truths. In this project, the participants' stories of relocation were honoured through their visual and narrative presentations. In-depth narrative quotes were used to present the participants' experiences in their own words (rather than the words of the researcher), while their mandala drawings were also explored as highly meaningful visual representations. These

supplementary strategies enabled a more holistic understanding of the participants' relocation experiences to be shared, accounting for the richness and interconnected dimensions of their lives. Their voices and meanings were presented as much as possible, in order to maintain their truths. Furthermore, the research team members and I have honoured the participants' stories by presenting them (in mandala form) on a community blanket. The blanket, which is currently displayed at the community Youth Centre, visually depicts the participants' truths regarding their sport relocation. The purpose of this visual display is to educate aspiring on-reserve youth and young adults about what it like to pursue sport outside of the community, and inspire them to not be afraid to pursue their aspirations. Through this application the participants' stories are being used to enhance the context of athlete relocation, and are thus being honoured as catalysts for community change.

Seventh, the teaching of bravery promotes courage to do what is right. In the current project, this teaching was exhibited by each of the 21 participants, as they were willing to share their stories (i.e., their truths) and let me, as well as the readers of this dissertation, into their lives. It undoubtedly took much courage from the participants to open themselves up in this research, but they did it with the hope that their stories would be used to create positive community change. Bearing in mind these individuals' bravery, I have endeavored to show my own courage by conducting this research in the spirit of core Indigenous teachings and decolonizing processes while resisting traditional Westernized research approaches (with the caveat that this dissertation document is ultimately a Westernized product, written to meet external academic criteria). The Indigenous research process has been a major (and at times difficult) learning experience for me, wherein I have been challenged to move outside of my own culture-bound ways of thinking and doing, and open up to alternative perspectives. As I have

continued to learn about and engage in Indigenous research processes, I have also been confronted by people in the university and the larger academic community who subtly and not-so-subtly question the legitimacy of this research, and criticize it as being “unscientific” or simply “not research” (as has been experienced by other Indigenous researchers such as Giles, 2013). These criticisms have been hard for me to take in given that I have spent the last four years of my life devoted to this project, trying to develop it as a meaningful piece of community based scholarship. However, I also realize that these criticisms stem from a Eurocentric understanding of research, which has been so deeply engrained in many individuals that they find it difficult to imagine alternative perspectives and approaches. I have and will continue to stand by and defend this research, knowing that it was developed and carried out *with* Aboriginal community members in a culturally meaningful manner and with a critical agenda of espousing change. I hope that I have exhibited the teaching of bravery by carrying my research out in a way that is “right” for the local Aboriginal community, proving myself to be an “allied other” and a part of a process of change (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008).

Collectively, the seven grandfather teachings contributed to a more holistic and culturally resonant research process that was more deeply connected to the lives of community members and that opened up more critical knowledge around the context of athlete relocation. The teachings helped bring attention to my role in the production of knowledge and meaning around people’s lives, and made me more aware of the actions and attitudes were required to move the research forward as an ethical, locally meaningful piece of Aboriginal scholarship.

3.2.4 OCAP

OCAP is an acronym that stands for ownership, control, access, and possession. These

terms represent a comprehensive framework developed by First Nations to bring self-determination into the realm of research (NAHO, 2007b). These principles have been advocated in Aboriginal research in Canada (e.g., Loppie, 2007; NAHO, 2007b; Schnarch, 2004) as a way to pursue ethical research and also improve data quality, relevance, and value, and will be integrated within the current project. The principle of ownership indicates that the Aboriginal community owns information collectively in the same way that individuals own their own personal information. As such, the cultural information elicited in the current project is credited to the community rather than being assumed to belong to me. This information is used (e.g., in publications and presentations) with permission and guidance from the Aboriginal researchers. The principle of control asserts that Aboriginal people have the right to control all aspects of research that pertains to them. In the current project, the PAR approach helped to transfer as much power as possible into the hands of Aboriginal researchers, who oversaw all aspects of the research and were involved in all decision-making processes. I openly acknowledge that some degree of control was mitigated under the university's PhD program, given that I was working within certain requirements as a student researcher. However, the Aboriginal researchers helped to balance out these academic inclusions as much as possible by re-framing and re-contextualizing them from a community perspective. The principle of access states that Aboriginal people must have access to information about themselves and their communities, while possession focuses on the literal holding of information. In the spirit of these principles, all of the research results (i.e., mandalas and thematic analysis), publications, and presentations have been openly shared with and physically distributed to the Aboriginal researchers, the Aboriginal participants, and any other interested community members. Although the raw data remains in my possession, the Aboriginal researchers indicated that they were comfortable with

this situation given our pre-established relationships and history of working together. The Aboriginal researchers indicated that they were more concerned with receiving and possessing the project results in an accessible, community-friendly format rather than holding on to the raw data itself. However, I acknowledge that my holding of the data, as an outside researcher, does reveal a power imbalance within the research. Overall, the OCAP principles helped to ensure the research was fully accountable to the Aboriginal community and facilitating of the larger vision of self-determination.

3.2.5 Community benefits

A critical feature of meaningful research in Aboriginal communities is that there are benefits gained locally, and not just at an academic level (Blodgett, Schinke, Peltier, Wabano, Fisher, Eys et al., 2010; Interagency Advisory Panel on Research Ethics, 2010; Jacklin & Kinoshameg, 2008; Smith, 1999). The pertinence of this recommendation arises from the fact that Aboriginal communities continue to be over-researched without any positive outcomes accruing at the local level, as outside researchers assume the power to take what they want from within these communities and use it for their own academic agendas (Blodgett, Schinke, Peltier, Wabano, Fisher, Eys, et al., 2010; Noojmowin Teg Health Centre, 2003; Smith, 1999). The current research was designed to ensure that the academic benefits experienced on my part (e.g., receiving a PhD through the completion of this research, contributing to scholarly knowledge, and becoming more versed in the ways of Indigenous research) were balanced with community outcomes that were locally meaningful and valuable.

First, the research was aimed at identifying applied, culturally relevant strategies for supporting athletes' identities and facilitating their relocation and acculturation. Emphasizing the

knowledge-action nexus, the Aboriginal researchers indicated a pertinent need for this knowledge to be used to inspire and support more on reserve youth to pursue their sport dreams. In this manner, the research was developed with a locally transformative agenda. Supplementing this effort, the research also produced visual stories in the form of mandala drawings. Recognizing the potential of participants' mandala drawings to open up local cultural knowledge that would resonate more deeply within the Aboriginal community, the images were taken up as a powerful way of passing on experiential knowledge and inspiring local action. A second community benefit pertained to the empowerment of the Aboriginal participants through their engagement in the research process. As indicated above, the research was taken up through a culturally affirming and strength-based approach, wherein the participants were able to recognize their strengths and accomplishments as relocated Aboriginal athletes. In this manner, the research was aimed at encouraging these individuals to recognize their potential as community role models, and to continue sharing their stories in ways that may inspire other local youth to pursue something positive in their lives.

3.3 Researcher reflexivity

3.3.1 A personal introduction

Given the critical and interpretivist underpinnings of this project as a CSP initiative rooted in a local Indigenous community, it was recognized that I, the researcher, must be willing to identify and explore my own cultural subjectivities. This self-reflexive process was advanced as a means of explicating how I was actively enmeshed in the research *with* Aboriginal community members, and inherently shaped the way knowledge was generated around Aboriginal athletes' identities and lives (i.e., in ways that could be colonizing or decolonizing,

marginalizing or affirming; McGannon & Johnson, 2009; Smith, Allen Collinson, Phoenix, Brown, & Sparkes, 2009; Sparkes, 2002). As stated by Davis (2004), this is part of “storying the researcher” and challenging notions of researcher objectivity and neutrality which are impossible. This reflexive strategy is pertinent within an Indigenous research approach in that it is customary within many Indigenous cultures to begin any process by identifying oneself – not in terms of academic rank or title, but through a statement of where you are from and how you can be related to the people and place around you (Bishop, 1998; Davis, 2004; Lavallee, 2009; Steinhauer, 2002; Wilson, 2008). This identification allows others to know who we are, build a sense of trust in us, and understand the worldview from which we speak. It also acknowledges our connectedness and commitment to our surroundings (Bishop, 1998). In this spirit of acknowledging my connections within the current project and identifying the position from which I researched and wrote about Aboriginal athletes, I begin my reflexive journey with this personal introduction.

My name is Amy Teresa Blodgett, and I come from a white, Euro-Canadian, middle-class family, where my position was the eldest of three daughters. In this family context, I always had access to cultural, human, social, and financial capital. Thus, I always had a moderate level of comfort and security in my daily life, which, at various moments, I realized that other people didn't always have. For example, I became more aware of my own security and privilege when I saw school classmates using the free lunch program for “those in need”, or when I saw an individual from Nigeria being socially ostracized at a soccer camp for speaking in fragmented English and dressing different. With access to these various forms of capital, I have always identified as part of a “mainstream” culture and have been privileged to see my ways of thinking, being, and doing reflected back in the world around me. At school, in my sports environments, in

various work places, and in social spaces, I have always “fit in” as a cultural insider.

I grew up being consistently taught to strive for success (most notably educational and financial success); to value hard work as a primary means of achieving success; to be highly independent in pursuing my own life goals and ambitions; and to recognize that I could be or do anything, without many (overt) limitations. These values, which I have now internalized, undoubtedly stem from the white racial identity, Euro-Canadian ethnicity, and middle-class positioning of my cultural context. In effect, these cultural values have directly influenced my pursuit of a PhD degree. I recognize that I have come to the current research project with the primary intent of advancing my personal educational status through the attainment of a doctoral degree. I wanted to open up the opportunity for me to pursue a more elite career as an academic and attain greater financial prosperity, in the vein of establishing myself as “successful”. Recognizing an important privilege here, I never had to doubt my belonging in this academic domain or confront any misgivings from others regarding my research capacities and agendas. I was recognized as “fitting” here because of my cultural orientations. I was thus able to pursue the current research as part of my personal PhD journey.

Related to this academic pursuit, my religious upbringing as a Catholic has also largely intersected with and shaped the path that I have pursued as a PhD student. That is, by attending church on a semi-regular basis and being educated within the Catholic elementary and secondary schooling systems, I have been engrained with a particular moral/ethical standpoint that is rooted in religion and that shapes how I engage in the world around me. In addition to the previously mentioned values, I also believe in the moral need to help those who are “less fortunate”, to promote basic human rights and equality for all, to always act with love and compassion, to live honestly and with humility, and to generally promote “the common good”. These cultural values

have informed my efforts to engage in PhD research that is rooted in the Aboriginal community context, taking it up as an opportunity to help others, promote love and compassion, and lend to positive social change. While acknowledging this altruistic standpoint does not override my individualistic academic aspirations, I believe that it opens up a meaningful space for community members reading this document to connect to me and build a sense of trust in my research.

It's also important to bring forward my gender identity as an influencing factor and point of connection in the current research. Though I have been taught that I can succeed in anything I choose, without limitation, I have had multiple experiences that have made me overtly aware of the fact that I am a female trying to succeed in a male-dominated world. I have been made to feel different (i.e., more inferior) than male counterparts and felt undermined because of my gender, and have therein experienced a degree of cultural marginalization. One moment that really resonated with me was when I was at an academic conference discussing my research with an older male academic, whom I had just met. I will refer to this individual as "Dr. Ken".

Dr. Ken was inquiring about my career plans and aspirations, when out of the blue he made a point of telling me not to get "sidetracked" by going off and getting married or getting pregnant. I immediately bristled at his words and felt a ball of anger take root inside me. How dare he be so presumptuous in assuming that marriage and pregnancy were things I wanted in my life, when he didn't even know me. Even if I *did* want those things, what right did he have, as a male, to tell me to suppress those desires? And why was it assumed that those desires would "sidetrack" me, rather than affecting me in ways that could be conducive to my career (e.g., providing a greater sense of fulfillment, or facilitating openness and creativity in my thinking)? I felt that Dr. Ken had made an unfair judgment about me, based on my gender (and probably also my age, given that I was 28 at the time), and been extremely intrusive in projecting his own

paternalistic worldview onto me. His comment undermined the fact that I had spent the last four years devoted exclusively to my academic development as a graduate student and had, in fact, sacrificed other areas of my life in order to set myself up for a successful academic career. So for him to insinuate that I would throw all that hard work away was deeply offensive. However, I smiled politely and quickly moved out of the conversation, unable to voice my offense and unwilling to engage with him further. I felt completely closed down. Though I'm sure Dr. Ken was well-meaning and didn't intend to offend me, I knew deep down that he never would have given that same "advice" to a male student. Though it happened over two years ago, I am still quick to anger when I think about the exchange today.

I believe that experiences such as this one have sensitized me (to a degree) to the experiences of others who face forms of marginalization, and contributed to my engagement in Aboriginal community research. I recognize that my periodic experiences of gender inequality cannot be equated with the various levels of racial and ethnic marginalization and oppression that Aboriginal community members confront on a daily basis. However, my experiences enable me to empathize with and be more compassionate towards Aboriginal people, opening up opportunities for connection within this project. I also believe that my gender, combined with my younger age, are meaningful in that I likely appeared less threatening or intimidating to many of the Aboriginal participants I worked with in my research. I was probably not perceived as having the same level of power and authority that an older male academic would have, and therefore, this aspect of my cultural identity may have facilitated a more comfortable and less hierarchical power dynamic in the research. In this regard, my subjectivity as a young(ish) female was carried into the research and directly shaped the dynamics of knowledge production.

So how did I gain my entryway into research with the Aboriginal community? Eight

years ago, as a fourth-year undergraduate student, I was given the opportunity to engage as a research assistant in a CSP project developed by Dr. Schinke and the Wikwemikong community. I had no previous experience working with Aboriginal people and no real knowledge of this culture, so I was both excited and nervous at the prospect of delving into this research context. As I slowly learned about and experienced the cultural context, and showed my genuine interest and commitment to helping the community members conduct locally beneficial research, I gained a greater degree of acceptance within the Wikwemikong community. I was encouraged to continue supporting the community by pursuing my master's research within this community, which I did for another two years. I found these research experiences to be very rewarding in terms of (1) the opportunities I had to learn first-hand from the Aboriginal people about their culture and their ways of life, which often challenged my thinking and gave me a better appreciation for diversity; and (2) the sense that I was engaged in meaningful sport research that directly addressed the needs of real people. This led up to my current position as a PhD student researcher involved in the current project, wherein it was my intent to use my academic skills to continue contributing to the local Aboriginal community. Given that I have maintained deep, ongoing relationships within the Wikwemikong community, I feel tied to this reserve and want to continue supporting the efforts of the people of this community to enhance the local sport context.

This articulation reflects a first step at bringing awareness to the ways in which I am located within and connected to the current research and the local Aboriginal community. I will conclude by stating that although I inherently research and write from my Euro-Canadian outsider position, I aim to be an “allied other.” Denzin and Lincoln (2008) refer to allied others as “fellow travelers of sorts, antipositivists, friendly insiders who wish to deconstruct from

within the Western academy and its positivist epistemologies” (p. 6). I believe that a PAR approach will enable me to act as an allied other, as I will work alongside Aboriginal community members in ways that challenge traditional research approaches that maintain tacit power imbalances, and support the creation of a more meaningful Indigenous research space. Moving forward with these processes, I will continue to reflexively explore the various facets of my subjectivity, and examine how they have facilitated and/or posed tensions for carrying out an Indigenous-driven project.

3.3.2 A lesson in discomfort

A number of months ago I went through my comprehensive examination, wherein I proposed the current research to my academic committee members and other members of the university community. One of the intents of this proposal was to seek critical feedback and suggestions for moving the research forward as a more comprehensive and valuable piece of Aboriginal community scholarship. A line of discussion was opened up by my committee members regarding the need for me to engage in a reflexive protocol that would push me to think critically about the ways in which I was enmeshed in the knowledge production process and co-produced the knowledge around the Aboriginal athletes’ experiences. My committee members agreed that I needed to go beyond my initial effort of writing up “a personal introduction.” The consensus was that I really needed to identify how tensions, surprises, and new understandings were continually being (re)negotiated through the interchange amongst the participants and myself, as we co-constructed meaning in a dynamic context. Nervous about where this conversation was leading, I explained that it was extremely difficult to know how to push my thinking and recognize my subjectivities from inside my own head. Honestly, I had had a hard

enough time writing up my personal introduction. I wasn't exactly eager to have a more "messy" cultural process thrown my way.

Dr. Toulouse proposed that I engage in a reflexive process by creating and exploring my own mandala drawings relating to the research. She suggested that I create the mandalas at a couple different stages in the research, to illustrate my shifting thinking about and engagement in the research. I could then discuss the images with an Aboriginal community member who would help question me from a local cultural standpoint and bring forward more latent tensions and issues pertaining to power, whiteness, and representation within the research. My academic committee members emphasized how this reflexive process would mirror the data collection process the Aboriginal participants were being asked to participate in, and thus had a methodological symmetry. Everyone agreed that this process had significant potential to enhance the research, and so it was confirmed as part of the project.

I had to agree, I instantly liked the fact that this reflexive procedure paralleled the participation of the Aboriginal athletes. Since I was particularly passionate about the arts-based process as a non-traditional and creative mode of inquiry, I was excited to try this process out for myself. I thought about how innovative it would seem compared to what most other PhD students were doing in their research, and I felt a rush of energy course through me. However, this excitement didn't last long. Almost as soon as I walked out of that examination room I began feeling overwhelmed and stressed out about what I was supposed to be bringing forward in the mandalas and the types of things I would talk about. I constantly kept thinking, "I don't have a clue what I'm doing." This thought and discomfort remained with me months later. I felt paralyzed whenever I thought about trying to start this process. I repeatedly sat at the computer to record some informal notes and thoughts around the process, only to stare blankly at the

blinking cursor on the screen, unable to produce any text.

Upon reflection, this experience being uncomfortable and unsure of what I was supposed to be sharing about myself in the research provided me with a glimpse of understanding into what it might be like for the participants in this project. I was asking the participants to reflect on their experiences relocating for sport and to bring forward deeply personal stories which would (I hoped) touch on multi-dimensional aspects of their challenges and triumphs. These were stories which some of the participants indicated they had never previously shared with anyone. Thus, the participants were being expected to open themselves up and become vulnerable in the research, putting their personal lives “out there” in ways that I was reluctant to do myself (as researchers in general are often unwilling to do). In my researcher role I hadn’t given much thought to just how uncomfortable and scary this process could be for the participants, assuming that if I was friendly enough and could exude a sense of trustworthiness, the participants would be comfortable and happy to share their stories with me. However, when I shifted into a reflexive role, I became much more attuned to the vulnerability that is at stake in being asked to open oneself up and share personal stories that are often kept private. This experience provided me with an initial insight into why it is that power can never be truly levelled between researchers and participants, only re-configured. Researchers are inherently positioned with a greater degree of power as the conductors of research, the ones who get to ask the questions; participants are in more vulnerable roles as the subjects of investigation, positioned as the ones who have to answer the questions and bring forward aspects of their personal lives.

After struggling to initiate my reflexive journey, I met with two of my academic committee members, Dr. Coholic and Dr. McGannon, to provide an update on my research progress. I explained to them that I was extremely unnerved about engaging in the reflexive

process and that it was becoming the most challenging aspect of the research for me to work through. Dr. McGannon said to me, with a laugh, “That’s how you are supposed to feel. You should be uncomfortable.” Well, okay. I felt marginally better about the fact that I was “right” to feel uncomfortable with the reflexive process. But I was still deeply resistant to the process and could feel the ball of dread amassing in the pit of my stomach.

Since that meeting I have been asking myself: why does this reflexive process feel *so* difficult to me and why am I resistant to it? I realized that one of the main reasons is because I have never been taught how to do this in any of my academic training. Only in one qualitative research course, at the master’s level, was reflexivity discussed at all. And even then, I only recall it getting a brief overview in terms of delineating what it is, and discussing examples of the biases and assumptions that researchers might bring into their research. It wasn’t explored on a level that would help me carry it out meaningfully within my own research. It seems to me that researchers are taught to tout the virtues of reflexivity without necessarily making any real efforts to incorporate such practices into our research. This became more apparent to me when I scoured interdisciplinary research databases for articles that provided examples of reflexive research processes in action (at this point I was desperate for any practical insight on how to “do” the reflexive process). I was able to come up with numerous conceptual articles on reflexivity, as well as examples of reflexive forms of research presentation, such as autoethnographies and confessional tales. However, articles that provided in-depth, practical accounts of how researchers engaged in reflexive processes within their scholarship (particularly within sport research) were much more scant, revealing a gap between the theory and practice of researcher reflexivity.

A second interrelated reason for my resistance to the reflexive protocol is that it actually

seemed to grate against my engrained ways of thinking about and doing research. As noted in the literature, reflexivity goes against traditional “scientific” training and post-positivist ideals regarding how research should be conducted and reported (Butryn, 2009; Dupuis, 1999; Sparkes, 2002). Though my experiences and training in cultural research have enabled me to move away from many of these conventional ideals around research, I still have a Westernized orientation wherein I place value on tidy, linear processes that can be easily articulated and made sense of in my writing. The most disconcerting issue for me with regard to the reflexive process was that it was not at all linear or tidy. It was open-ended and messy, and I realized I did not like that. That’s not how I am comfortable doing research, and thus, the reflexive process necessarily involved me stepping outside of my academic comfort zone.

If there's one thing I know about myself it's that I like to work (and live) within clear parameters, with definitive plans and schedules, and with a general sense of structure and systematization. I need firm rules and regulations. I need agendas. I need to know “what’s next”. These things give me a sense of direction, purpose, and productivity. This is obvious when I look around my office and my house. I have check-lists everywhere, keeping a running tally of the things I need to do (ordered, of course, by importance and time urgency). I get a deep sense of satisfaction from being able to place a checkmark in one of the tidy little boxes beside an item, knowing that I have been productive and moved forward (linearly) on some minor level. I probably get more satisfaction from this than any person should. I have an agenda book that I am constantly filling with personal notes, appointments/events, goals, and more checklists, to keep my life on track. I have meticulously and systematically organized closets and office files. I have a half marathon training schedule displayed on my fridge, which I use to guide my training and physical conditioning, and a race-day time goal clearly displayed on a post-it note, to keep me

focused. The examples could go on. The point is that I inherently lean towards “neat”, clearly defined, linear processes, both in my life and in research, because they give me a sense of control. These preferences have been engrained and reinforced through my years of education and academic training, reflecting a Western cultural orientation. Anything outside of this orientation (e.g., reflexive processes and aspects of PAR) makes me feel uncomfortable and destabilized because it detracts from my sense of control.

As I have engaged in Aboriginal community research processes, where there is more emphasis on circular, dialogical, open-ended processes, I have become much more aware of the orientation that I bring to this research context. I remember a few years ago, when I came back from a community research meeting with my advisor (Dr. Schinke), and he asked me how I thought the meeting went. Referring to the printed out agenda I had brought to the meeting (aka a glorified checklist), I indicated that I was disappointed that we didn't discuss all of the items I had planned. I thought we had talked too long about issues we had already discussed in previous meetings, and I found this iterative process to be frustrating. I was focused on the empty checkmark boxes we still needed to tick off, wanting to move forward with the research in a more linear sense. Dr. Schinke quickly pointed out the things that we *did* accomplish in that meeting, specifically *because* we had veered away from my academic research agenda. By going back to renegotiate research plans that had previously been made, the community members had brought forth a number of new ideas and insights that ended up facilitating a more meaningful re-conceptualization of our work. Though I no longer remember the details of the meeting, I do remember this conversation with Dr. Schinke being a "light bulb moment" for me. He helped me realize that this open ended, circular research dialogue was part of a community-based research process. It had actually led to much richer insights and plans for the project than we could have

otherwise expected, and through continued efforts, it enabled the research to unfold more meaningfully within the community. I realized that I needed to let go of my own personal preferences and cultural ideas of how research should be done, and be more sensitive to the Aboriginal orientation that was coming forward from the community.

Through these reflections, I can see just how much my perspective of research has been shaped through a mainstream Westernized lens, and how this privileges certain research approaches, processes, and choices above others. It is this cultural (and often colonizing) lens that I want to challenge in the current research, in the vein of producing more meaningful local knowledge around Aboriginal people's identities and lives and contributing to a decolonizing agenda. Through I don't always like the messy processes of our research, and I have a hard time relinquishing personal control over the research, I have tried to remain mindful of the possibilities for new and richer insights that may emerge through these dynamic efforts. I have also reflected on the trust that the Aboriginal community members have put in me – as an outsider – by allowing me into their community and sharing parts of their lives with me. It reminds me that I need to reciprocate trust in the community members by supporting them in exerting greater control over the research and leading it forward from a local perspective. I believe that this is where our pre-established relationships have continued to be essential in helping both the community members and I renegotiate our shifting roles and agendas as the research moves forward. I believe some of my difficulties around embracing PAR and Indigenous processes may be mitigated through the trust and open and honest dialogues in these relationships, as I continue to learn with and from the Aboriginal community members.

Moving forward with these opening insights, was my intent to explore how various cultural tensions, issues, and understandings arose in the research in relation to my cultural lens

and subjectivities, as I engaged with the Aboriginal researchers and participants. I understood the inherent need to feel uncomfortable throughout these processes, given the epistemological and methodological shift required of me, and the personal implications of becoming “visible” and subject to interrogation.

3.3.3 My reflexive mandalas

As I immersed in the data collection stage of the research and was engaging with the participants, I created my first reflexive mandala. This mandala depicted my thinking around and engagement in the research at that point in time, with a particular focus on how knowledge was being brought forward and developed between the participants and myself (see Figure 1).

As I had begun conducting the mandala drawings and interviews with the Aboriginal participants, I recognized that I would actively be involved in co-constructing their stories by inviting them forward, responding to them, and asking specific questions aimed at deepening and (re)creating meaning. I was aware that the stories that would get shared and received would be influenced by what the participants and I both brought to the relationship from our own lives and contexts (Smith, Allen Collinson, Phoenix, Brown, & Sparkes, 2009). Accordingly, in dialoguing with the participants, I wanted to respect and acknowledge our differences while striving for a meaningful understanding of the participants’ lives and stories. My efforts to strive for this ideal were examined through my mandala. Chris Pheasant, one of the Aboriginal research team members, helped guide me through this introspective process by questioning me regarding the meaning of my image and pushing me to examine the implications of my thinking and subjectivities from a more culturally grounded perspective.



Figure 1. Reflexive mandala created by Amy during data collection.

Early on in our discussion, I explained to Chris that I had depicted five stick figures in the centre of the mandala, representing my place amongst Aboriginal and university research team members. The red, orange, and yellow swirling colours were used to visualize the collaborative nature of our research and illustrate how I perceived knowledge as being continually shared and renegotiated between us. Slightly off centre, I had also drawn three smaller stick figures to represent the athlete participants who were involved in sharing their personal stories/knowledges. Chris asked me to think about why I had positioned our research team centrally while locating the participants elsewhere, and what relationship was revealed there. My first reaction was to claim that I didn't mean anything by it; I just wanted to show the collaborative, dialogic nature of the research. However, as I reflected more on this image, I began feeling guilty and even embarrassed by it. I had to admit that the image clearly showed a (power) distance between myself, as a research team member, and the participants. The participants were drawn much smaller than the research team members, and they were placed more peripherally on the edge of the knowledge production "swirls" rather than in central positions aligning with the researchers.

As I reflected on this point with Chris, it became apparent that I had unconsciously

privileged myself and the research team at the crux of the research, while diminishing the value and power of the participants. I was shocked that this came through in my mandala. It challenged my perception that I had been actively working to facilitate a more engaging and participatory process for the participants, and that their experiential knowledge (i.e., stories of relocation) was being valued and centralized as a catalyst for community enhancement. More generally, the image challenged my belief that I was dismantling the power differentials of traditional Westernized research and facilitating a decolonizing process. I realized that I had been so focused on trying to reduce power imbalances amongst the research team members and validate the community driven nature of this project, that I had inadvertently marginalized the participants within the research process. I had not made efforts to reduce power imbalances with the participants and value their knowledge contributions in the same way I had with the Aboriginal researchers. In this moment, I became uncomfortably aware of the fact that I had been reinforcing Western, educationally-driven preference for favouring the “expertise” and authority of researchers above participants.

This power relation needed to be addressed as I moved forward in the research in order to align with the dialogical and decolonizing ideals of the initiative. I wanted to be more conscious of thinking about and engaging with the participants as central sources and co-creators of knowledge, the same way I envisioned the Aboriginal researchers and I working together in a more (though not totally) equal dynamic. Months later, this shift in thinking became evident as I created a second reflexive mandala. Created during the writing-up of the results, the intent of this mandala was to re-examine my thinking around the research and, more particularly, to focus on my role in presenting particular types of stories or knowledge around Aboriginal people’s lives (see Figure 2). In this second mandala I centralized both the participants and I as stick figures,

and re-imagined us as engaged in a more equitable knowledge production process, rooted in a back and forth dialogue.



Figure 2. Reflexive mandala created by Amy during the writing-up of results.

Reflecting a changing view of power within the research, the participants were no longer relegated to the margins of the mandala. Instead, they were brought forward as expert storytellers who were actively involved in shaping the research and knowledge outcomes with me, through the stories they shared. Though this drawing does not mean that the research process truly *was* equitable for the participants, it does highlight a momentary reconfiguration of power from my researcher perspective. I was thinking about and positioning the participants in new ways as expert storytellers, opening up potential for more meaningful relational exchanges within the research that could enhance the knowledge being produced. At the same time, I was aware that the participants were still likely holding me in a position of power and authority, and thus would not truly experience their interactions with me as equitable exchanges, despite my best efforts. However, as I moved into writing up the results of the research, I was mindful of trying to continually (re)position these participants as the central storytellers, while also acknowledging my own central presence as the academic storyteller.

Moving back to Figure 1, the three different colours moving around the perimeter of the mandala represented the diverse types of knowledge coming forward in the research. In particular, I discussed with Chris how surprised I was by the depths of emotions the participants expressed in their accounts of relocation, bringing forward these deeper dimensions of their lived experiences and different ways of knowing. Though I had engaged an arts-based research process in order to enable such knowledge to come forward, I explained that I had not truly expected the participants' relocation stories to be all that emotional. When Chris asked me why I had not expected this emotional dimension to come forward in the research, I realized it was due, in part, to the academic assumptions I brought into the research. Compared to other areas of academic investigation, such as abuse in sport, I had implicitly assumed that sport relocation was not a "sensitive" subject that would elicit deep emotions. I had probably drawn these conclusions from my own experiences of relocation, when I first moved away from home to attend university at the age of 19.

The gist of my relocation story is that, at 19, I was at point in my life where I was ready for a change of scenery and felt like it was necessary for me to move away from my family and get out into a new space on my own. So I made the decision to pursue post-secondary education four and a half hours away from home. Though I was initially nervous about the transition, I ended up adjusting very quickly and fitting in to my new environment without any major challenges. I had moved into a school residence where the vast majority of the students were first-years who had also moved away from home for the first time, and were therefore going through the same transition as me. We were all looking to form new relationships and create a sense of home in our new environments together, while navigating our educational careers. This is one major aspect that highlights how my relocation experiences were different from many of

the Aboriginal athletes in this research. Most of the Aboriginal athletes were relocating into contexts where everyone else was already at home, and they were the only ones going through the transitional process. These athletes were on their own in a very different way than I was. In addition, I had moved to a city where I was still part of a “mainstream” culture, and therefore did not have to go through a process of acculturation like the Aboriginal athletes. I immediately felt like I belonged in my new environment and was able to relate and connect with the people around me. I didn’t have any real struggles around trying to fit in. Herein, it becomes evident why I made the mistake of presuming that relocation was not a sensitive subject that would elicit deep emotions from the participants. I was projecting my own culturally situated experiences of relocation into the research in a way that was insensitive to the different cultural dynamics around the Aboriginal athletes’ experiences.

In addition to drawing on my own relocation experiences, I had brought forward an academic agenda that was initially aimed at investigating relocation as a sport-specific topic, without considering the significance of these experiences in people’s larger (non-sport-related) lives. It wasn’t until I went through the interview process with the first few athletes that I realized that these individuals’ stories were not exclusively sport oriented, but were actually connected to larger themes around holistic life journeys and experiences of personal and cultural growth. My misguided assumptions highlight the lack of contextual knowledge I had coming into the interviews with the participants, and how much of a cultural outsider I was/am. They also affirm how crucial the open-ended mandala and interview processes were for enabling the participants to share more meaningful (holistic) accounts of their sport relocation in their dialogues with me, and challenge my understandings. In bringing all of these insights to the fore, I have been better able to recognize the participants as the experts of their lives, and have tried to

follow their lead in exploring and presenting their relocation experiences holistically.

As I moved through the interviews with the participants, I felt a pertinent need to let them know that I was listening to them, relating to them, and understanding the meaning of their experiences. In order to do this, I often responded to their stories and insights by saying "I understand." This was part of a conscious effort to empathize with and connect to the participants, believing that such efforts would facilitate a less hierarchical power relation and encourage them to share deeper aspects of their experiences. The question marks in my first mandala thus demarcated my efforts to support deeper knowledge around the athletes' experiences, through the development of mutual understandings between the participants and I.

During one interview in particular, I listened to a participant's account of how his father enabled him and his siblings to pursue their sport dreams by moving off-reserve together. The participant explained how his father taught them important values and teachings about supporting one another and striving to reach their full potential, which have informed his journey as an athlete and Aboriginal community member. He revealed that his father had more recently passed away, and how deeply this loss affected his life. As I listened to the participant, I began recalling my own soccer career and how important my parents had been in my development, as primary sources of support. I recalled a particular time when, after finishing an extremely difficult (and losing) soccer season, my dad gave me a hand-made trophy that said "winner at heart", and talked about how important it was for me to always maintain "heart" and a strong work ethic rather than focusing on winning or losing. I remembered how much his words (and trophy-making effort) had touched me, and how much love and support I always got from him and my mother.

I connected this personal experience to the participant's story, and imagined that I could

understand how painful it would be to lose a parent who was so instrumental in shaping my life. As the participant paused a short while into his account, I quickly said “I understand how painful that would have been for you.” The participant gave me a curt "Yeah," and then sat silently. I waited a few seconds, thinking that he was going to say more regarding this experience. It seemed like he had been getting ready to say something. But he didn't volunteer anything further; he left the story hanging where it was. The moment suddenly felt awkward. I wasn't sure why, but I sensed some sort of disconnect between us. Out of my own discomfort, I decided to quickly move the interview forward, posing a new question on a different (and lighter) topic.

A few weeks later, I was discussing my mandala with Chris when I realized my error. I mentioned another participant's story, and explained how it resonated with me and made me feel that I had a real understanding of what the athlete had gone through. Chris agreed that I probably did gain much insight into this experience and have a deeper level of understanding. But he also pointed out that this was *my* understanding, and that I would probably never truly *know* this experience the way the participant did. Through further discussion, Chris helped me realize that I shouldn't have been so quick to respond to any of the participants by claiming that I fully understood their experiences. Inadvertently, I was imposing myself and my experiences onto the participants' lives, and inserting my own colonizing perspective. This was more apparent when I reviewed the notes I had made following the interview with the participant who had lost his father. I found the following excerpt:

I think I gained a real sense of the meaning of [participant's] father's death. His story made me reflect on my own relationship with my father (and mother) and consider what it would be like to lose one of them. Although I have not lived that experience, I think I was able to gain a real sense of it by reflecting inward and considering the emotions that I

would feel in that situation... I would have liked to explore some aspects of this experience more deeply with him, but I sensed his hesitancy to do so, likely because it was very emotional for him.

As revealed in this text, I was using my own experiences and imaginings as a window through which to create meaning around the participant's account. I wanted to focus on and emphasize our similarities, believing that this would lend to more meaningful knowledge production. However, I was unaware of how I was infringing on the participant's ability to share aspects of his father's passing that were culturally specific and individual to him. By claiming that I understood this participant (as well as others) I had presumed that his experiences, feelings, and thoughts matched mine and didn't allow for our differences to be acknowledged. Moreover, I had directly shut this participant down, as evidenced by his silence and the hesitancy he displayed through the rest of the interview. In the excerpt from my interview notes I mistakenly attributed the participant's hesitancy to his own emotions, rather than recognizing it as a reaction to my culturally insensitive and finalizing comment. This example demonstrates how my whiteness enabled me to impose my thinking and meanings onto participants as a mutual "truth" without considering that my cultural worldview was different from them. In essence, it permitted me to gloss over the fact that there are aspects of other people's lives and experiences which I can never truly know (Smith et al., 2009). It was necessary that I acknowledge and be more sensitive regarding the differences between the participants and myself, in order to shift towards decolonizing processes rather than trying to force shared (colonizing) understandings.

Related to the aforementioned, I also came to realize that I was seeking out specific stories from the participants at various times during the interview and writing up stages of the research, and was thus imposing a colonizing lens onto the participants' lives again. This came

across when I reflected on the image of a written text in my second mandala (see Figure 2) and attempted to examine my connection to and influence on the relocation stories being presented. I acknowledged that I was drawn to some participants' stories more than others, finding certain stories to be more powerful and pertinent than others. More than that, though, I realized that I had been instrumental in encouraging certain stories to come forward from the participants and then re-presenting them as central narratives within the research document. I was actively privileging some stories and silencing others, based on my own cultural preferences and understandings.

As an example, I recalled an instance where one participant had drawn an image of a star in his mandala. After sharing a number of stories related to his challenges as a relocated athlete, I asked him what his star symbolized or meant to him. He said he didn't know. I continued to circle around this image trying to elicit a story from him, to no avail. Finally, I blatantly asked the participant if the star represented his success in overcoming so many relocation challenges. The participant responded with a "maybe," no doubt feeling that he had to at least say that in order to appease me. After the interview, I felt frustrated that I didn't get any information from the participant about his star. I had wanted (and overtly pushed for) a particular narrative about how this athlete rose above challenging circumstances and found success as an Aboriginal athlete. What I didn't realize at the time was that I was seeking a story that followed the "underdog overcoming adversity" genre of (Western) sport research, reflecting my academic and cultural preferences. In this instance, I had interfered with the participant's right to tell his own tale and offer up a plot and resolution that was different from the one I desired. I had also opened up the possibility of reproducing a Westernized sport story that could be misrepresentative of the lives of Aboriginal athletes. I realized that my power as the academic storyteller in this research

was again disproportionate to the participants' power, as it probably always would be, and needed to be acknowledged. I became aware of the fact that this power would never be completely levelled between the participants and me, due to the implicit nature of my position as the researcher who was conducting the project and taking control of writing it up and presenting it. While it was important to do what I could to facilitate less hierarchical relationships as I engaged with the participants, I realized that I needed to be more cautious in my writing and presenting of the research to not make claims that I had created a fully equal dynamic (as I had previously been guilty of).

Beyond identifying the aforementioned issues and tensions stemming from my cultural outsider/academic subjectivities, my reflexive discussion with Chris also helped to reaffirm my connection to the community. Chris pointed out the fact that I had written the name "Wiky" instead of "Wikwemikong" in my first mandala, and asked me to think about what that meant. I realized that it just felt natural for me to use the local colloquial term that is used within the community, rather than the formal name of Wikwemikong. Given the time I have spent in the community over the last eight years and the relationships I have built with local people, I have developed a true sense of closeness and connectedness to this context. I have been striving to foreground these aspects of caring in my research efforts, in order to enhance the meaningfulness of the research within the local community and demonstrate my intentions to be an "allied other" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). I believe that this was encompassed in my use of the term "Wiky" in my mandala. As Chris stated, other academics working in the community without such a history and relationship would probably have written the full name as "Wikwemikong", reflecting their distance from the community. As a community insider, Chris further explained, "We have to trust ourselves first before we can go in and gain trust from others and break down barriers." He

revealed how my trust in myself and what I am doing with the research team has led to me being accepted by the community.

Even though I will always be a cultural outsider, and even though I will inevitably make cultural missteps within the research, my acceptance from the community has helped me to engage more meaningfully *with* local people, through principles of caring, support and co-learning. This theme was reiterated in my second mandala (Figure 2), through the image of a red heart. Located at the top of the circle, the heart reflected my overarching commitment to engaging in caring, culturally conscious (i.e., decolonizing) research processes, including the writing up and presenting of the results. The intent through these processes was to produce knowledge that was meaningful (rather than marginalizing) within the lives of local community members and lend to positive change efforts.

In bringing all of these reflexive insights forward, it was my hope to continually change and enhance the way I engaged in, thought about, and wrote up the current research. Moreover, I wanted people reading this to be more aware of the power circulating within the research between the Aboriginal researchers, participants, and I, and how these shifting dynamics affected and re-informed various aspects of the research.

3.4 Data collection

3.4.1 An arts-based method

As indicated in the Indigenous research literature, there is a pertinent need to develop research approaches that are methodologically and epistemologically aligned with Aboriginal cultures and designed to embrace local ways of knowing (Bartlett et al., 2007; Smith, 1999; Swadener & Mutua, 2008). In response to this need, an arts-based data collection process was

engaged in the current project. Given that artistic modalities are integral to traditional Aboriginal cultures (Archibald & Dewar, 2010; Cueva, 2011; Dufrene, 1990), the arts-based process was taken up as a culturally relevant mode of inquiry that would more deeply resonate with Aboriginal community members and lend to decolonizing knowledge production processes that centralize Indigenous ways of knowing (Finley, 2008; Swadener & Mutua, 2008).

For one, arts-based activities support holistic ways of knowing and being that emphasize the interconnectedness of the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual dimensions within an individual as well as with the life around an individual (Archibald & Dewar, 2010; Cueva, 2011; Dufrene, 1990). Illustrating this point, Cueva (2011) found that the use of moving, drawing, and sculpting in cancer education workshops with Alaska Natives “nurtured heart, head, and body ways of knowing” (p. 14) that ultimately opened up deeper personal insights and expended perspectives from the participants. This approach facilitated a more inclusive way of sharing knowledge and understanding lived experience from a holistic perspective, challenging the reductionist preferences of traditional research. Thus, in the current project mandala drawings (described below) were used to help participants share the multiple, interconnected layers of their sport relocation experiences and explore how those experiences related to their larger life journeys. Second, when arts activities are linked to cultural components, they help Aboriginal participants reconnect to their culture and feel a resonance with their traditional way of life (Archibald & Dewar, 2010). Given the cultural erosion that has been experienced by Aboriginal peoples under a legacy of colonization and assimilation efforts, Archibald and Dewar noted that the act of rediscovering cultural elements through art can be a powerful and healing experience. Accordingly, the mandala drawings in the current project were rooted in a key Aboriginal symbol – the circle – in order to support cultural links within participants’ stories of relocation

and foster a sense of cultural pride and affirmation as they share those stories.

Beyond the local relevance of arts-based methods, it has further been indicated that art serves a decolonizing agenda through a process of defamiliarization or “making strange” (Kaomea, 2003). We (researchers) are forced to slow down our perceptions, attend to the images and narratives in front of us, and take notice of the meaning that is beyond initial surface impressions. Defamiliarization is important because it helps researchers become more reflexively aware of the need to move away from our own preconceptions and ways of thinking so that meanings and perspectives that have long been silenced can be uncovered (Kaomea, 2003). The mandalas in the current project thus helped me to ask more meaningful questions about the athletes’ relocation experiences in order to elicit more holistic and circular understandings of their experiences, and ultimately, produce knowledge more aligned with their lives. As one example, my thinking began shifting once I realized that many of the participants’ mandalas contained images of goals, aspirations, and opportunities that related to larger life journeys outside of sport (such as the word “life”, images of graduation caps and diplomas, and symbols of sunlight). In asking participants about these elements, I became aware of the fact that their relocation journeys did not always center on their sport experiences, and were more often focused around experiences of personal growth and the opening up of their futures. Accordingly, I realized that I needed to broaden my scope of thinking and remain open to non-sport-related experiences as meaningful components of the athletes’ relocation journeys.

This process of coming to understand the meaning that images held for participants further helped to bring awareness to the power relations between myself and the Aboriginal athletes, and support a reconfiguration of power (Bagnoli, 2009; Packard, 2008). As explained by Liebenberg (2009), the researcher must rely on the insights of participants to better

understand the various meanings being conveyed, and accordingly the research process becomes a more mutual initiative “as opposed to a hierarchical, one-way flow of information” (Liebenberg, 2009, p. 445). In this manner, the arts-based process was used to facilitate a participatory mode of knowledge production that aligned with the tenets of PAR and decolonizing research (Adams et al., 2012).

Moving beyond the Indigenous decolonizing context, arts-based methods have been gaining ground in social science inquiry in light of increasing dissatisfaction with the way verbally based research methods have been used to emphasize intellectual knowing over other ways of knowing (Bagnoli, 2009; Gillies et al., 2005; Guillemin, 2004; Mason & Davies, 2009). Most traditional research methods rely on language as the sole medium for the creation and communication of knowledge. This can become a problem when researchers use language in ways that produce logical scientific views of reality and privilege intellectual forms of knowledge (Sparkes, 2002; Bagnoli 2009), as this may produce knowledge that is “oddly abstracted and distanced from the sensory, embodied and lived conditions of existence that it seeks to explain” (Mason & Davies, 2009, p. 600). People and their lives become “flattened” into one-dimensional forms that are often unrecognizable at the community level, and accordingly, research fails to resonate with the people and communities it involves (Cole & Knowles, 2008). Alternatively, arts-based methods embrace emotional, sensory, embodied and imaginative ways of knowing that extend beyond verbal and intellectual modes of thinking (Finley, 2008). Herein, the arts-based process in the current research was employed as a means of gaining access to deeper dimensions of experience, which would otherwise remain neglected or ineffable (Bagnoli, 2009; Liebenberg 2009), as well as developing knowledge that is more connected to the lives of the Aboriginal participants (Cole & Knowles, 2008).

3.4.2 Mandala drawings (or circle drawings)

Given the cultural relevance and advantages of an arts-based research method, a mandala drawing activity was engaged as a means of eliciting the relocation experiences of Aboriginal athletes. Mandala is a Sanskrit word meaning “circle” or “centre”, and it refers to an art form or image that is created within a circular context (Henderson, Rosen, & Mascaro, 2007; Slegelis, 1987). Carl Jung (1973), who was the first psychotherapist to make use of the mandala as a therapeutic tool, discovered various forms of mandalas all around the world (in art, architecture, religion, nature, dreams, and across diverse cultures) and believed it to be a visual symbol of the psyche and the quest for wholeness. Jung suggested that the act of drawing mandalas facilitated psychological healing and personal meaning in life. He proposed that the creative process helped individuals to visualize and make sense of complex experiences and emotions, while the circular form helped to promote psychic integration and a sense of inner harmony and wholeness (Jung, 1973; Slegelis, 1987). Today, mandalas are used in a variety of ways including helping people to heal from trauma (Henderson et al., 2007), facilitating self-expression (Cox & Cohen, 2000; Elkis-Abuhoff et al., 2009), and reducing anxiety (van der Venet & Serice, 2012).

In the current project, mandalas were engaged as a means of facilitating self-expression among the participants, enabling a deeper understanding of their relocation experiences to be shared. They were also selected as a culturally relevant art form, given that the circle is a highly visible and sacred theme in the Aboriginal community (Dufrene, 1990; Little Bear, 2000). To Aboriginal peoples, circles represent the natural life cycle of the world, including the human journey through life, and they signify ongoing transformation and movement (Little Bear, 2000). Thus, they are a pertinent motif for eliciting and understanding the relocation experiences of Aboriginal athletes within a larger life journey (holistically), as well as for passing these stories

on within the community in a way that emphasizes the continuous and transformative movement of experiential knowledge (e.g., one athlete's relocation story can inform and inspire a future athlete's journey).

It is important to note that the mandalas were simply referred to as circle drawings in the local community context, when being engaged with the Aboriginal participants. This was reflective of the fact that mandala is not a culturally familiar term and would not resonate with the participants as deeply as the circle reference. Therefore, while the term mandala is used in this dissertation to connect to the arts-based literature, the term circle drawings was engaged in the community context as part of a culturally meaningful and affirming process. Participants were given a piece of white paper and a set of coloured pastels, and instructed to begin by drawing a circle. They were then told to reflect on their experiences relocating for sport and to draw anything that came to mind. The participants held creative license to create their drawings in whatever way made sense to them, therein engaging them in a more participatory process (Bagnoli, 2009). Participants were simply told not to over-think the process and to let their instincts guide them. When created spontaneously in this manner, it is purported that the symbolic nature of the mandala will not only reveal conscious insights from its creator but also provide access to deeper levels of the individual's unconscious, expressed through the use of colors, shapes, lines, numbers, and motifs (Elkis-Abuhoff et al., 2009; Slegelis, 1987).

Each mandala produced was recognized as being highly personal and representative of how the participant understood his or her experiences of relocation at that particular point in time (Guillemín, 2004). The drawings were also recognized as being the property of the participants who created them. Accordingly, at the conclusion of the research meeting, the participants (and their parents/guardians, when appropriate) were asked if they would be willing to provide

permission for their mandalas to be shared in publications and presentations related to the project. They were informed that they had full rights to their drawings and could take them home and keep them private if they wished. All 21 participants provided permission for their images to be shared. They were assured that all identifying information contained within their mandalas (e.g., reserve names, family member names) would be removed in order to maintain their anonymity in the research.

A number of researchers who have used drawings as part of an art-based method have proposed that this strategy be integrated with an interview in order to elicit richer understandings (Bagnoli, 2009; Boydell et al., 2012; Guillemin, 2004; White et al., 2010). Guillemin (2004) utilized drawings of illness, and explained how interviews are essential in eliciting from participants the nature of their drawings, including why they choose to draw particular images, and the reasons for choice of colour and spatial organization. Both the drawing and the description comprise the data, and the researcher is thus able to utilize the participants' interpretations of their drawings in the analysis rather than assume her/his own interpretation (Phoenix, 2010). Moreover, when drawings are followed up with an interview, they can enhance participants' reflexivity and garner a more holistic picture of the experience under investigation (Bagnoli, 2009). Accordingly, conversational interviews (Patton, 2002) were engaged as a second step of the data collection process.

3.4.3 Conversational interviews

Each participant's mandala was used to facilitate a conversational interview, in order to elicit narrative data that would supplement the visual. As noted by Patton (2002), conversational interviews are the most open-ended interview approach, accounting for flexibility, spontaneity,

and responsiveness to individual differences. In the current project, the conversational interview was selected because it aligns with an Indigenous decolonizing methodology in multiple ways. First, it honours the cultural tradition of storytelling as a means of transmitting knowledge, beliefs, and values within Aboriginal cultures (Castellano, 2000; Kovach, 2010; Little Bear, 2000; Loppie, 2007; Smith, 1999). In contrast to the short question-response exchanges of structured or semi-structured interviews, the open-ended and unstructured nature of the conversational interview invites participants to share stories that convey the complexity and depth of their experiences, from their own cultural perspectives. Second, a more dialogical context is facilitated wherein both researchers and participants can engage in a more participatory mode of knowing that “privileges sharing, subjectivity, personal knowledge, and the specialized knowledges of oppressed groups” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 14; see also Kovach, 2010). This participatory process facilitates a reduction in traditional power imbalances, as participants are better able to share their stories from their own perspectives and exercise greater control over the knowledge that is produced. Third, the researcher can pose contextually informed questions in situ rather than being bound to a set of pre-determined questions rooted in a priori academic assumptions (Kovach, 2010; Ryba & Schinke, 2009). This challenges traditional interview approaches where questions are derived from the assumptions of the researcher and posed to participants in a manner that may define (or colonize) what information is revealed and how it is expressed.

Given the open-ended nature of the conversational interview, and the fact that I did not initially know what specific themes or topics would be important to ask the participants about, a list of predetermined research questions was not developed. Only the three broad questions established at the outset of project were used to frame the interview agenda (i.e., the challenges

of relocation, the benefits of relocation, and helping strategies). Each interview began with the open-ended question, “Can you tell me about what you have drawn in your circle drawing?” All pursuant questions were posed during the interviews in relation to the themes brought up by the participants and the points of interest in their mandalas. As suggested in the arts-based literature, questions pertaining to the mandalas were asked about colour choices, numbers of points in an image, particular motifs, symbolic meaning, and the location of objects on the page (Elkis-Abuhoff et al., 2009; Moss, 2009). The questions were aimed at encouraging the participants to reflect on the relationship between what they drew and what they experienced as relocated athletes, eliciting deeper accounts of their relocation.

The interviews ranged in length from 30 minutes to 88 minutes, with the average interview lasting 45 minutes (not including the mandala drawing time). The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. The transcripts were then analyzed via a local Indigenous version of an inductive thematic analysis, as follows.

3.5 Data analysis

3.5.1 A local Indigenous inductive thematic analysis

The participants’ interview transcripts were subjected to a local Indigenous version of an inductive thematic analysis in order to identify common patterns of meaning (i.e., themes) more sensitively within the local Aboriginal context. Braun and Clarke (2006) affirmed the need for this localized approach, stating that thematic analyses must be modified within individual research contexts, based on the epistemological and theoretical positions driving the work and the intended outcomes. The general analysis guidelines proposed by Braun and Clarke were therefore contextualized in relation to local cultural protocols and meaning making processes

used within the Aboriginal community, in line with the positioning of the research as a form of community based CSP (Schinke, Smith, & McGannon, 2013). This approach was used to enable Indigenous knowledge to be presented and understood locally, through a culturally congruent and decolonized lens, rather than through a Western-academic (colonizing) perspective (Bartlett et al., 2007; Schinke et al., 2009).

In order to facilitate the locally grounded and decolonizing process, the Aboriginal researchers suggested that the thematic analysis be performed collaboratively with two Aboriginal research assistants, and that it also be performed within the Wikwemikong community. It was emphasized that by physically engaging the analysis process on community lands, the Aboriginal research assistants would become naturally positioned as the contextual experts, and power and authority would more readily shift towards the local (Fletcher, 2003). The Aboriginal research assistants would thus be able to lead me through culturally meaningful analysis protocols, and help to challenge mainstream academic practices or interpretations during the coding of data. Though I would offer general analysis skills, my role as an academic would be decentralized to better support the expertise of the research assistants, as has been advocated in community based research (Schinke, Smith, & McGannon, 2013). I was invited to work out of the Wikwemikong community youth centre, with two research assistants who worked in that space as sport and recreation programming staff and were highly attuned to the experiences of local athletes. The research assistants had also personally experienced sport relocation and acculturation, and were therefore able to offer contextual insight around the coding of the project data, while also ensuring the cultural integrity of the analysis.

The steps of the analysis, rooted in local cultural protocols and a decolonizing agenda, were conducted collaboratively with the Aboriginal research assistants as follows. First, to

become familiar with the data, the Aboriginal research assistants and I read through each interview transcript and discussed the terms, experiences, and concepts that stood out. This dialogic process was part of an Indigenous consensus-building strategy that facilitated the sharing of ideas and the development of mutual understandings (Schinke et al., 2009). It was a critical step in enabling knowledge to be developed relationally, in line with collectivist cultural protocols within the Aboriginal community as well as a collaborative CSP research approach (Kral, 2014; Schinke et al., 2009). Second, the Aboriginal research assistants developed and inserted key words/phrases around quotations within each interview transcript, using the local terminology of the participants, in order to begin establishing topic patterns across the data set. Known as Indigenous coding, this strategy values local information and experience without forcing community members to adjust to non-culturally congruent, academic terms (Bartlett, Iwasaki, Gottlieb, Hall, & Mannell, 2007; Iwasaki, Bartlett, Gottlieb, & Hall, 2009; Schinke et al., 2009). As an example, the research assistants tagged a number of quotations with the phrase “just going for a skate,” which they described as an attitude amongst local Aboriginal hockey players of not expecting to be successful when trying out for or playing on teams in Euro-Canadian contexts. Through the use of this local terminology, the analysis centralized local Indigenous experiences and ways of thinking without the imposition of Western-oriented academic terminology (Bartlett et al., 2007; Schinke et al., 2009).

As a third step, the research assistants and I identified broader-ranging patterns of meaning, organizing the initial key words/phrases into more defined themes and sub-themes. Here, the knowledge of the Aboriginal research assistants was essential for contextualizing the themes and sub-themes and offering insight into what each meant in relation to the lived experiences of the participants. For example, the research assistants suggested organizing the

quotations tagged as “just going for a skate” into the more encompassing sub-theme “confronting attitudes that Aboriginal people can’t ‘make it.’” They explained how the self-doubt that many Aboriginal hockey players (and also other athletes) experienced within Euro-Canadian sport contexts was tied to broader racist attitudes and stereotypes about Aboriginal people. Through this (and other) lines of discussion, the research assistants provided deeper insight into the ways in which the Aboriginal athletes’ experiences were framed by a system of cultural oppression. As suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analyses need to progress from description (where the semantic content of data get summarized) to interpretation (where the significance of data patterns are articulated and broader implications are gleaned). Moving forward with these insights, the analysis was presented to the Aboriginal researchers in order to further refine the themes and facilitate deeper understandings of their meaning. An open group dialogue took place amongst the Aboriginal team members and myself regarding the terminology, organization, and interpretation of themes until consensus was achieved. The team members’ feedback and refinements were incorporated into the analysis, whereupon it was finalized.

It is important to note that the data analysis process was much more recursive than it appears here (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Movement through the aforementioned steps was not linear, but rather back and forth as the research assistants and team members continually discussed and reflected on the data, and gained new (and fluid) understandings. This recursive aspect contributed to the community driven nature of the analysis, as the data was continually being explored in light of new insights brought forward from within the community and (re)negotiated through collective dialogues (Kral, 2014; Schinke, Smith, & McGannon, 2013).

3.5.2 Visual storytelling

In addition to the production of thematic data, the research also produced visual data around the participants' relocation experiences, in the form of mandala drawings. These images supplemented the narrative-based thematic data, by presenting the participants' experiences more holistically (i.e., within a circular life context), and emphasizing the interconnectedness of various themes within a larger story (Loppie, 2009). Given that an Indigenous epistemology emphasizes the wholeness and interconnectedness of experiences rather than compartmentalization (Battiste, 2000; Loppie, 2009; Smith, 1999), it was essential to bring these mandalas forward as a form of visual storytelling.

Within many Indigenous communities, including the local Aboriginal community, stories are a traditional way of passing on knowledge and teachings (Castellano, 2000; Little Bear, 2000; Loppie, 2007; Smith, 1999). Storytelling has therefore been advocated as meaningful cultural pathway for developing and transmitting knowledge within Indigenous research (Loppie, 2007; Smith, 1999; West, Stewart, Foster, & Usher, 2012). Falling within the repertoire of arts-based methods, which engage multiple ways of knowing beyond the verbal-intellectual, storytelling has been implicated as a vehicle for resisting traditional Western knowledge formations and processes and enabling decolonized knowledge to be espoused (Brydon-Miller et al., 2011; Smith, 1999; Swadener & Mutua, 2008). Recognizing the potential of the participants' mandala drawings to open up local cultural knowledge that would resonate more deeply within the Aboriginal community, the images were engaged as visual stories.

The Aboriginal researchers suggested that the participants' mandala drawings be printed on a community blanket and displayed publicly at the Wikwemikong Youth Centre. They explained how the images, individually and collectively, conveyed important cultural narratives

about young Aboriginal people who are pursuing their dreams and trying to make something of themselves. Recognizing the important teachings these images offered for local youth, the Aboriginal researchers made it clear that knowledge would be received more powerfully through this visual storytelling display than through traditional forms of presentation, such as a written report. In particular, they noted that the visual display would enable community members to connect to the participants' stories more deeply through their hearts, heads, and bodies, in holistic ways that cannot always be achieved through words alone (Cueva, 2011). It was emphasized how community members would be encouraged to reflect dynamically on the meaning of various symbols and images, and through this interpretive process, make more meaningful connections to themes, experiences, and feelings in their own lives (Cole & Knowles, 2008). As noted by Smith (1999) and Daes (2000), it is an extremely affirming and powerful experience when Indigenous people are able to connect to the lives of others, develop shared understandings, and know that they are not alone in their struggles and triumphs.

Accordingly, the participants' mandalas have been displayed in the Wikwemikong community without any further academic analysis or written commentary. As visual stories, they have been left to resonate with community members on deeper, personal levels. This has opened up a more meaningful and decolonizing pathway for knowledge to be taken up at the local level.

Chapter 4

4 The Challenges of Relocation

This chapter addresses the following research question: What challenges do Aboriginal athletes face during the relocation process and how are they experienced? Throughout their visual and narrative accounts, the participants revealed how their relocation challenges were connected to larger processes of acculturation, or second-culture learning (Rudmin, 2009). As the participants entered Euro-Canadian host communities that were different from the Aboriginal cultural communities they were socialized within, they had to make sense of changing norms, rules, and worldviews and work to create a meaningful reality for themselves in and between their dual cultural standpoints (Chirkov, 2009; Rudmin). The athletes found themselves being pulled towards and pushed away from each context at various times, and therein their sense of identity and place within each culture was continually being challenged and changed. In this chapter, acculturation challenges pertaining to experiencing culture shock and becoming disconnected from home are explored, using both narrative and visual data from the participants to provide an in-depth and local understanding of their experiences. Through the participants' accounts, it is revealed how the Aboriginal athletes navigated various challenges from shifting positions in and between the Aboriginal and Euro-Canadian contexts. The findings provide a deeper understanding of the ways in which the athletes' identities and participation in sport are shaped by larger cultural contexts. The findings are also explicated as offering a more experiential understanding of acculturation that supports a movement away from overly simplistic, reductionist conceptualizations and approaches.

4.1 Results

The challenges identified by the Aboriginal athletes coalesced into two overarching themes relating to distinct aspects of the acculturation process: (a) experiencing culture shock (which occurred in relation to the host culture), and (b) becoming disconnected from home (which occurred in relation to the home culture). The sub-themes within each of these overarching themes are explicated below, using direct narrative quotations from the athletes to centralize their voices and stories. Pseudonyms are used to identify the participants in order to maintain anonymity. The athletes' mandala drawings are also presented within the sub-themes in order to illustrate how the arts-based process enriched the meanings and interpretation of the narrative data. In line with the Indigenous research approach and PAR methodology, the sub-themes were developed and explored inductively from a local cultural perspective to reveal the unique cultural dynamics around the athletes' relocation and acculturation experiences.

It is important to acknowledge that there are differences in the athletes' experiences, reflecting their involvement in different sport disciplines, their different age cohorts, their positions in high school versus university/college, their identities as males and females, as well as their different socioeconomic positions. In this project, focus was on presenting common themes and sub-themes that moved fluidly across the participants, with an exclusive focus on how these athletes' experiences were shaped by shifting cultural dynamics around race and ethnicity. The results presented below are therefore limited in that pertinent differences between the athletes have not been fully explored and accounted for. Narrative quotes from multiple participants are shared under each sub-theme in order to help reveal how the sub-themes were contextualized in varying ways by the participants. However, major differences between participants have not been articulated. This limitation relates to a larger need for research that

considers the intersectionality of athletes' lives, wherein various layered sociocultural locations are explored as shaping athletes' experiences in different ways (Schinke & McGannon, 2015).

4.1.1 Experiencing culture shock

Upon their initial relocation, the participants described experiencing culture shock – a sense of anxiety or discomfort resulting from being immersed in an unfamiliar cultural context with different systems of meaning (Adler, 1975). The participants were jarred by the vast changes that the host culture imposed upon them, as well as their newfound status as “outsiders” as they attempted to integrate and engage with non-Aboriginal people. They were also shocked by the racism they encountered in their new contexts. The sub-themes identified were (a) feeling overwhelmed by change, (b) living with non-Aboriginal billets, (c) lacking meaningful engagement from host culture members, (d) dealing with racism, and (e) confronting attitudes that Aboriginal people can't “make it”.

Feeling overwhelmed by change. Almost all of the participants discussed the vast changes that relocation within a new cultural context brought into their lives, and how overwhelmed they were at the prospect of having to navigate this new world alone. The participants described their experiences being overwhelmed as the sense that everything was moving and shifting around them in unfamiliar ways, while they remained immobile, unable to move into the flow of daily life. Through their accounts, the participants revealed how they were challenged by the immediate necessity to move past their culture shock and actively engage in the precarious process of second-culture learning, without any sense of direction. This experience was articulated by Natasha as she explained why she drew a stop sign and an array of vivid colors and scribbles around the central image of a tree in her mandala (see Figure 3):

I kinda went to the emotions that I felt when I first went there. I remember not wanting to be there, like once we were in [city] driving down the last stretch before we got to the school. I just remember wanting to turn around and go back. And I remember seeing three crosses on top of a hill; I guess they're supposed to be comforting, but it was really creepy to me. I guess I just felt really out of my element... The whole summer [prior to relocating] I'd been really excited and I was like yeah, it's going to be great – because I thought it was going to be different, it's gonna work. And then getting there, it was kind of a shock. I hadn't really thought about being by myself and dealing with a lot of different things, like having different beliefs and everything being just so chaotic and uncomfortable. I hadn't thought about those things until I got there... Then it kind of felt like, once my parents were gone, I was by myself in the middle of [city] with nothing. That made me not want to be there, just because everything familiar was gone and I just felt like it was chaos all around me. That's how I picture it, like I'm stuck in the middle, I'm rooted with this tree into the ground and I can't move. (Natasha: 22 year old female)



Figure 3. Mandala created by Natasha.

Natasha noted that she was not prepared for all of the changes that accompanied her relocation and the feelings she had of being completely out of place in the Euro-Canadian context.

Accordingly, she was hit with an unexpected sense of fear and paralysis as she moved into the host environment and was confronted with the “chaos” of her shifting cultural realities. Jessica, a younger high school athlete, also highlighted these feelings of chaos and paralysis as she reflected on her drawing of a highway flanked by a “blur” of colors on each side (see Figure 4):

That represents the sadness and emotions. You’re looking back through the car window behind you and you’re like “Oh my god, I’m driving away [from reserve] for the first time!” ...You don’t realize how hard and different it is until you actually get there. When I got to my first day of school it was like, I’ve never rode a bus in my life because I always got driven to school. So I had to learn how to get on the bus and get the bus times. Then of course you’re shaking all day and you’re worried; What if my locker doesn’t work? What if I have to go to the office? And of course everybody is going around talking to their friends and you’re just standing there and you almost feel like everybody is moving around you and you’re the only one standing still. It’s like those movies where you just see everything as a blur and then there you are standing there like, “What am I doing here? I don’t even know what I’m doing. Where do I start?” It was really scary.

(Jessica: 15 year old female)



Figure 4. Mandala created by Jessica.

These participants highlighted the chaos that they perceived around them as their cultural realities shifted and moved, as well as the fears and uncertainties that took root inside of them and simultaneously made them feel immobilized in their host contexts. Caught off guard by the reality of acculturation, these individuals became overwhelmed at the prospect of having to mobilize themselves within their new surroundings and begin navigating this unfamiliar territory without any insight into how to do so or where to start. They realized they were on their own in having to figure out how to adapt to a place that they felt inherently out of place in. The participants' drawings of multi-colored "blurs" and scribbles provide a further sense of chaotic movement, helping to illustrate how they experienced acculturation as a dynamic, moving process which cannot be readily predicted or prepared for (Chirkov, 2009).

Living with non-Aboriginal billets. A number of participants ended up living with non-Aboriginal billets (host families who offer room and board to athletes who are relocated away from their homes), in homes where they experienced an ongoing sense of discomfort. The participants noted how they were constantly unsettled by the external pressure they felt to conform to the in-house norms and expectations of their host families, and the feeling that they were unable to be their true selves in these environments. In particular they emphasized concerns around having to adjust to different etiquettes regarding meal times with their billets, dealing with different billet family dynamics, having different rules around their time outside of the house, and managing expectations that they not spend too much time alone in their rooms. These situations contributed to the participants' sense of cultural shock in that they were being immersed in new home environments that were vastly different from their "real" homes on-reserve, and that challenged them in terms of having to renegotiate how (or if) they expressed their cultural ways of being. To articulate the challenges of these new living arrangements,

Jessica reflected on the image she created of her on-reserve home (see Figure 4):

The house is just kind of like, when you're trying to sleep and you close your eyes and you just wish that you could wake up there, at home, and see – Like, I have a Bon Jovi poster that hangs above my bed at my old house that my dad put up when I was like seven because I was obsessed with Bon Jovi. I would look at that every morning. And it's still there to this day. So it's just the little things at home that just make it home... And to me, that home represents somewhere where you don't always feel like you're being judged by what you're doing. You know, if you do something at home it's going to be natural... You don't feel like somebody different is just watching you. You don't have to worry "I wonder what they're thinking? I wonder if I spend too much time in my bedroom? Do I have to go down and visit with them for a certain amount of time?"... Moving here [to city] I was really, really uncomfortable all year. I just always felt like I was always being judged, no matter what I did. If I stayed in my room too long [billet] would always make comments about how when her brother lived with her he would stay in his room really long. Like, "He just sits on his Facebook all the time. I don't know what you do in your room." And it's like oh, shit! I don't know if she's giving me subtle hints that she wants me to be off my computer or get out of my room more. So then I tried to come out and sit there, but I couldn't handle it. The kids were always yelling and playing around on the floor. And it's like sometimes I just need time to myself, especially when there's a lot of noise... It just was not home at all, because you never have to put on a fake mask for anybody at home; it's just, that's you. (Jessica: 15 year old female)

For Jessica, living with a billet family in a new cultural context meant she had to mask her true self and change her behaviours in order to meet external expectations. The cultural norms and

expectations of the host environment seemed to subvert her Aboriginal identity and ways of being and made her cling more deeply to her notion of home, as illustrated in her mandala.

Jordan acknowledged similar challenges while living with non-Aboriginal billets, but shared a somewhat different perspective on the need to acculturate:

Billeting; that's a headache, because you can't do what you normally do at home when you live in these other people's non-Native homes. That sucks. But I did find one family that was really laid back, and to this day I'm still really good friends with them. I actually lived there for three years. I even lived there when I was done hockey, which was nice. They just let me be, and I became good friends with them. But with other families, you're just not at home. The thing about dealing with that is you have to have an open mind to it too. At times when it's tough, you have to embrace it. Because at the same time, these people do want you in their homes; otherwise they wouldn't say yeah. (Jordan: 24 year old male)

Jordan realized that it was necessary for him to be open to the ways of his billets and acculturate towards this new cultural environment as a means of fitting in and creating a more viable living situation; even though it meant shifting away from or altering some of his Aboriginal ways of being. Other participants in other instances were more resistant to this change, clinging to their Aboriginal culture in order to resist assimilative pressures that threatened their sense of identity. These findings illustrate the fluid nature of the acculturation process – sometimes the participants shifted towards the host culture in an effort to integrate and persist within that context, and sometimes they clung more deeply to their Aboriginal culture (as reflected in Jessica's image and discussion of home) in order preserve their sense of self and resist pressures to “put on a fake mask”.

Lacking meaningful engagement from host culture members. Extending beyond their experiences with billets, many participants emphasized the difficulties they had engaging and building relationships with non-Aboriginal people more generally. In moving off-reserve, the participants became abruptly aware of their positions as cultural minorities in relation to the larger Euro-Canadian collective, and how this created an uneven social dynamic (and implicitly a one-way acculturation experience). As explained by Mike, being the only Native in a group of host culture members made him aware of the unfair expectation that *he* make the effort to relate to the people around him, as illustrated in his mandala (see Figure 5):

As I wrote on the bottom [of mandala], the challenge I had was being the only Native on all the teams I joined. It's not that they were being rude or excluding me out. I'm just saying that I was the only Native out there and I was kinda nervous, because I'd never really mingled or socialized with non-Native people because I was always here on the reserve. And I'm usually a quiet person all around, like all the time. I find that's due to my cultural teachings and values. Like as a kid, you are taught to just sit there and watch and listen, and you just pay attention to your educators or your teachers or your elders or your parents; you just sit there and listen and pay attention. That's how I was taught anyway, and that's how I've been my whole life. So, basically, in those first few weeks I just kind of did that; I just sat back and listened. You want to be a part of the group, so you have to get to know them [people in host culture] and then see if they will accept you or not... But that challenge there, with me being the only Native, is that no one really knows who I am or what I actually see. But I know what they see. I know who they are.

(Mike: 26 year old male)

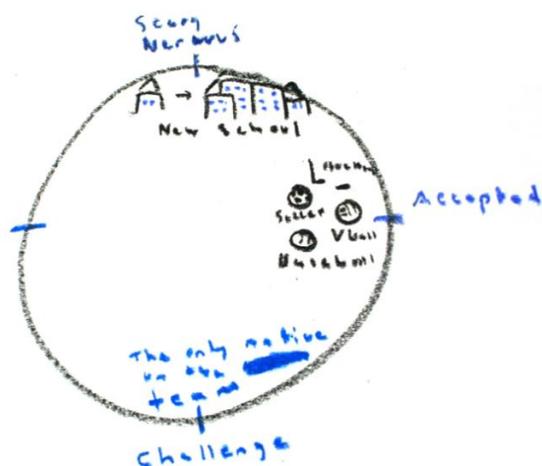


Figure 5. Mandala created by Mike.

Although Mike was able to learn about the people in the host culture around him and consider things from their cultural vantage, there was little reciprocation from those same people to learn who he was as an Aboriginal athlete. Therefore, Mike struggled to build relationships with those in the host culture, feeling burdened by the responsibility being placed solely on him to forge relationships through a one-way cultural sharing process. This was reinforced in Trevor's mandala, as he depicted himself in a hockey arena alone, without any teammate support (see Figure 6):

It just pretty much shows me standing on one side of the blue line and the goalie on the other end – just me and the goalie. In [city] I played for the first time for a team that didn't consist of any Native players, so I felt like I was on my own. The first day I walked into the dressing room, you could just hear chatter, chatter, chatter, chatter. They [teammates] were all having a good time talking amongst themselves. And then as soon as I walked around the corner, it just went quiet. They're not saying anything but they're looking at you, like Who is this guy? Where did he come from? What is he doing here? But at the same time, I knew that I was going to be in that position, coming in as the only

Native. And I knew it would be hard being an outsider and having to break into the group. But it's something that you just have to do. (Trevor: 24 year old male)



Figure 6. Mandala created by Trevor.

The lack of engagement from host community members reinforced the participants' status as outsiders in the host culture and created a sense of isolation, as visualized in the Trevor's mandala. At various times these experiences worked to push the participants back towards their Aboriginal communities to gain a sense of belonging and support, and therein hindered their acculturation. However, at other points, many of the participants noted that once they were able to get past the initial challenge of having to "break the ice" with the host members around them, they became much more comfortable in their environments and were able to continue forming meaningful connections. This fluid experience was revealed in an account from Andrea:

I've always been a shy person. But when I moved up here I knew I needed to get friends and be more open and talk to people, or else they would avoid me and think that I just want to be on my own or don't want to be talked to. At the time it was really hard for me to open up to these new people and try to socialize with them. Those first few days I was

terrified to talk to anyone. But now that I look back at it, it was really so simple and shouldn't even have been a problem. I find it easy now to talk to other people. I don't know why I made a big deal out of it when I first moved. (Andrea: 18 year old female)

Through accounts such as this, it is evident that the participants' acculturation experiences were directly affected by their shifting interactions with host culture members. In some moments, the participants were challenged by the lack of engagement they received from host community members, recognizing that they were the outsiders who would have to make the effort to get to know and fit in with the people around them. In other moments, when the participants were able to break the ice and forge personal connections, they began to feel a sense of belonging in their host contexts and shifted into more of an insider position (to a degree) that facilitated their acculturation within the Euro-Canadian culture.

Dealing with racism. Many participants were shocked by the existence of racism in the Euro-Canadian culture, which they described as forms of prejudice and discrimination that denigrated their Aboriginal identities by characterizing them as culturally inferior to those in the "mainstream". The various forms of racism they identified included being called names and dealing with culturally offensive jokes, being stereotyped, as well as dealing with more subtle, systemic forms of discrimination within sport, such as being unjustly cut from teams. These incidents reinforced the participants' experiences of acculturation as one-sided, as outlined above. Providing an insightful example, Jessica described her first encounter with racism, in the form of name-calling, and explicated how she struggled to come to terms with her place in a society that projects such cultural prejudice:

I was playing hockey with my [city] team. It was the last 30 seconds of the game, and this guy skates by me and goes, "You're a dirty effing Native!" That was my first ever

experience of racism. Like, my dad kind of talked about it and how he went through it in high school, but I thought that's not really present today at all and I can't believe that. And then when this guy said that comment to me, I didn't know how to take it. At first I was kind of mad. But then when I got to the dressing room I just burst out crying. It really offended me and it made me like, I don't know – To be completely honest it actually does make you question yourself. Like why was I born Native? Or what if I was born white? You know, would I be as pretty as other people, and not what I look like now? That kind of thing. You know, it just really surprised me. This happened last year, but I could still cry about it. It's like a knife through the heart because it's something you can't change about yourself. I can't change the way I look or like my background, my Aboriginal background. You can't change that. And for someone to call you dirty or make you ashamed of it, it's like, oh my god! Especially if you're living in a white society right now, you can't really go and turn your back on those people because then you're like "What am I doing here if I don't even like any of the people around me?"

(Jessica: 15 year old female)

This incident served as a jarring and painful reminder to Jessica that she was living in a white-dominated culture where her Aboriginal identity marked her as being an "other" and served to marginalize her. By perpetuating such overtly racist discourses (projected onto Jessica through the reference to being "dirty"), these host members were actively reinforcing a cultural hierarchy that privileges whiteness as the cultural norm and subverts the identities of non-white "others" under pretenses of inferiority. Ultimately, their actions served to protect their own identities and status as part of the "dominant" culture. Taylor highlighted an image of a red scribble in her mandala to symbolize her experience being positioned inferiorly through racist discourses,

revealing the damaging effects an incident had on her (see Figure 7):

We were in the middle of the [hockey] game and I noticed that the whole other team started to hack at me and body check me and everything. Then they started blurting out racial slurs towards me, like calling me squaw, telling me to go back home to my effing tepee and whatnot. I pinned one of the girls to the boards and she got hurt because of that, and I got kicked out of the game for that. I was kicked out of the rest of the tournament actually. So me and my teammates complained to the association about what the other team was doing to me; it states in the rule book that if that happens the team is automatically ejected. But they asked the referees and the referees said they didn't hear anything. Like, the referees didn't hear anything so we think you're lying. That's basically how it went. I called my mom and I was balling my eyes out telling her what the other team was saying to me the whole game, and she started crying too... And after that I was just angry and scared about a lot of stuff. I was actually scared to play hockey for a while, like scared to get on the ice and play against another team just because someone tried to single me out because of the colour of my skin and tried to bring me down. I guess I just felt really inferior to everyone on the rink. And since I was seven years old hockey has been a place that I can just escape everything; I can escape any problems that I have at home or with homework or whatever. Hockey was just the one thing that I could get away to. So to finally have a problem that happens on the rink, I kind of felt lost, like I couldn't escape anything because it was there too... That's kind of like what this big scribbling blob is for; it kind of just signifies the fear and anger that I felt after this situation. I just used red for the anger. Red also symbolizes the Aboriginal skin colour; that's usually what it is. When they were yelling slurs at me one of things

one of the girls called me was a squaw. In our language that means red, but when white people used to use it against us it was like calling a black person the N word. (Taylor: 19 year old female)



Figure 7. Mandala created by Taylor.

Building on these overt experiences of racism, Jordan described a more subtle incident where he felt undercurrents of racism at work systemically in the Euro-Canadian sport context. His narrative was linked to the predominant use of red in his mandala, similar to Taylor's mandala, as well as the word "prejudice" (see Figure 8):

I remember an instance where there was a big all-star game going on, where we would have got to play a team from Russia. I think I was fourth in the entire league in scoring, and I didn't get asked to go. There were probably 20 people on the team. They had asked the top three guys to play, then bypassed me, and then picked everybody else below me. My coach came to apologize to me after for me not being there. He never gave me a real answer, he just apologized to me. He just gave me some answer like "Oh, we didn't know where you were going to be." Well he never once approached me to ask if I wanted to go or anything like that. And you know what, I can accept losses and accept not being

picked, or whatever. But when there's no justification as to why I wasn't picked, it doesn't make sense... If it was somebody else on another team, say a white guy, I really believe that he would have been picked. Because if you're a leading scorer, you're a leading scorer and you should be recognized for it... So I was shocked by it all. But like, what was I going to do? Part of it too, I think, is that Natives are a very humble people. I think maybe too humble many times. I think that was an instance where I was too humble, because I never questioned the coach as to why I didn't go to that game. But it didn't seem right. It still doesn't seem right. But I can't just go out and say its racism because I don't have any facts. You can't prove it. (Jordan: 24 year old male)

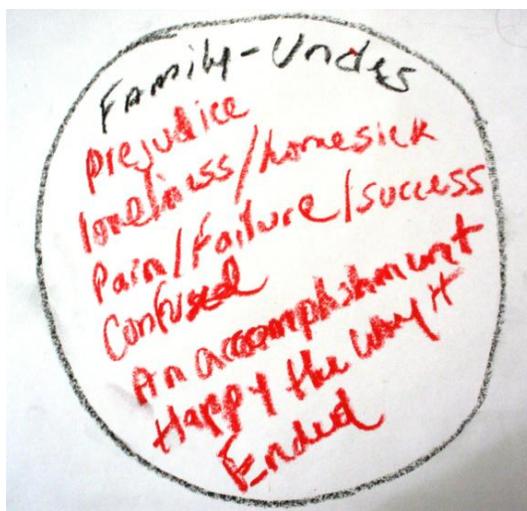


Figure 8. Mandala created by Jordan.

These stories reveal the unequal racial power dynamics that are at play within the Euro-Canadian context and which challenge the participants' sense of self by privileging whiteness as the norm. Through this norm the superior status of those in the host culture is preserved, while non-white community members, such as the Aboriginal participants, are characterized as being inferior "others". These dynamics must be continually challenged and re-negotiated by the Aboriginal athletes if they are to meaningfully adapt and express their identities in the host

context, as revealed through the participants' centralization of the colour red in their mandalas. The red represented the participants' anger related to their experiences of racism, and also represented the need to challenge the whiteness circulating around them in the Euro-Canadian contexts. Given that red is associated with the Aboriginal skin colour, as explained in Taylor's narrative, it was used by the participants to highlight the need to create a space where their own cultural identities could be supported and affirmed (see Figure 9 as another example of how red was used to depict the word "racism"). In seeking space where their Aboriginal identities could be embraced within the host context, the participants demonstrated how they were actively working to acculturate in and between their dual cultures, rather than moving linearly towards one culture at the expense of the other.

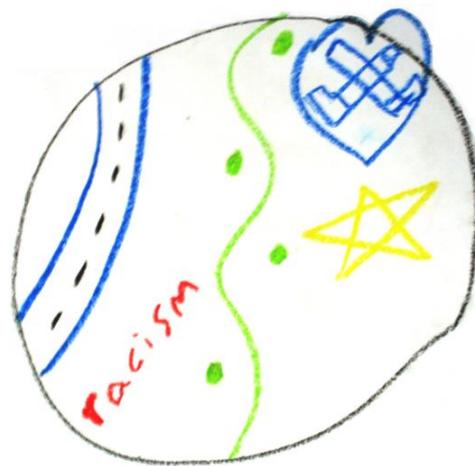


Figure 9. Mandala created by Alexander.

Confronting attitudes that Aboriginal people can't "make it". Intersecting with their experiences of racism, a number of participants explained how, in their new cultural environments, they were confronted with an underlying attitude that Aboriginal people are not supposed to "make it" outside of the reserve. This attitude was evident in the discouraging verbal comments the participants received from people in their new sport environments, as well as in

prevalent racist stereotypes about Aboriginal people being lazy and inept. This was apparent when Jordan explained why he centralized the word “failure” in his mandala (see Figure 8):

I made it to the [elite hockey league] training camp and was competing for a spot. It’s something way different than just going to any other tryouts. This is the best level of hockey in the country for my age. This is a stepping stone to get to pro hockey for a lot of people. So it was a huge accomplishment for me to be there. But at the same time, there was a blindness going in there. I was going into that camp blind, not knowing what to do, not knowing how to talk to these people. I knew I was playing with people that were going to be playing in the National Hockey League and be millionaires, so you can see why I was almost in awe of where I was. It was a whole new experience for my family too, so they didn’t know how to tell me what to do. I was really in a territory that no one around me knew... Here I am, a little Native kid from [reserve]. When you’re coming from [reserve] you’re not supposed to make the [elite hockey league]. So to be where I was, I was intimidated. And that eventually related to failure.

I ended up getting sent down to the junior team. But throughout that year I did get called up [to play in elite hockey league]. But I was still intimidated being at that level. I knew this was another make-or-break right here. They told me “You might be getting signed and you might be sticking.” So I was like, wow! This is what I wanted. But it turns out I didn’t get signed. And now that I look at it, I wish I had really pursued it with the coaches and the people in the office to prove to them I know I belong here and I know that I should be here, today and the rest of the season, and next year, and the year after that. I wish I would have told them that. I think that would have really opened their eyes because I think they knew that I could play hockey. It’s just off the ice that was a little

different, with me being intimidated and a little afraid, and not being as aggressive as other players that were there with the team. They all had an attitude about them, like I'm here, this is where I should be, this is what I'm going to do, this is my life. For me it wasn't like that. I was standoffish and scared. I was playing with a bunch of people who were in these environments their entire lives growing up surrounded by people who knew what it meant to be at the elite level. I didn't have that. (Jordan: 24 year old male)

In stories such as this, the participants were challenged by a view of themselves as deficient by the standards of Euro-Canadian society. They began to internalize this oppression by doubting their abilities to compete and perform as higher-level athletes, as well as their abilities to thrive in general in their host context. In suddenly becoming confronted with this way of thinking, Caroline explained why she filled her mandala with numerous questions such as "What level?" (see Figure 10):

I was thinking about how high I could play and how high the expectations were when I moved up here [to host city]. I didn't think that I would be able to play at the highest level here. I didn't think that I was capable of doing it at first. I just had – My self-confidence was down. So I didn't try as hard as I could have, and I needed to push myself a bit more. (Caroline: 14-year-old female)

Caroline noted how she began to doubt her potential to play competitive hockey outside of the reserve and, as evidenced in her mandala, began to question herself on multiple levels about her decision to relocate. These insights demonstrate the power of the host culture to impose its (often oppressing) view of reality onto outsiders. Moreover, these insights provide an understanding of why many participants experienced lapses where they withdrew from the host culture – they were working fluidly to re-ground themselves within the Aboriginal community in

order to regain the personal and cultural substantiation that they lost in the host culture. This finding supports the supposition that acculturation is an open-ended process which includes progresses, relapses, and turns, rather than a linear movement towards statically adopting a new host culture (Chirkov, 2009).

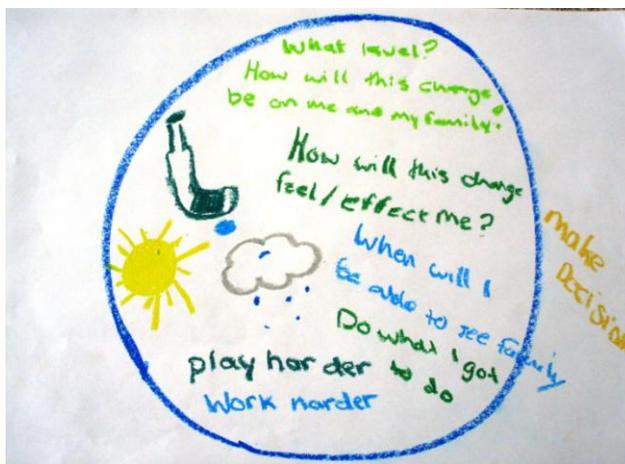


Figure 10. Mandala created by Caroline.

4.1.2 Becoming disconnected from home

In addition to experiencing culture shock in their host contexts, participants identified challenges pertaining to a growing sense of disconnection between themselves and their cultural roots as they moved away from their home communities. It was emphasized how the physical distance separating the participants from their families and homes triggered feelings of isolation, while also stirring up negative reactions among their on-reserve peers. Participants also felt disconnected from their Aboriginal culture as they immersed into the Euro-Canadian context, challenging their sense of identity and belonging to their home community. The sub-themes identified were (a) being distanced from family, (b) losing loved ones while away from home, (c) missing the Aboriginal culture, and (d) dealing with on-reserve rejection.

Being distanced from family. The majority of participants emphasized the intense bouts

of homesickness that plagued them as they moved away from their families to pursue new sport opportunities. They described their homesickness as a sense of being physically and psychosocially disconnected from their core relations, leading to feelings of isolation and a loss of support in their host contexts. In his mandala, Patrick visually centralized the importance of family connectedness and support in his relocation experiences (see Figure 11):

I drew my dad, my sister, my brother, and myself in the center of the circle, and on the outside I put the things that we've shared, like some of the values that we were taught. I wrote "Dad gave us opportunity" by allowing us to live in [city] as opposed to [reserve]. Then at the bottom it says that "this enabled us to reach our full potential" as to the goals that we wanted to achieve; which was hockey for me and my brother. Basically, the things my dad gave us while we were in [city], most people that live on the reserve probably never get a chance to have those opportunities. Not even just in sports, but maybe educational wise too. My take is that he just wanted us to reach our full potential in whichever way that was. And I think that's why it's important to have family around you, to have support from your family. Because if you don't, no one is going to be there to support you and push you to achieve what you want. (Patrick: 23 year old male)

Patrick went on to explain the struggle he had once he was physically disconnected from his family and alone in his sport environment:

I played in the [elite hockey league] for three years, and then one day I just didn't want to go back. I didn't want to play anymore because I wasn't enjoying what I was doing. So I chose to come back to [city near home reserve] and play at home. At that time I was 19 and I'd been living away from home since I was 16. So I guess maybe a lot of it was that I missed my family. I think that's what I had a hard time adjusting to when I moved away

– there was no one there, no family. Everywhere I went I was six or seven hours away from my home, so it wasn't like it was close or anything like that. And when you're playing in the [elite hockey league], it's such a high level that you only get six days to come home at Christmas and then you're not home again for the rest of the season. So it was challenging, because you're so young and you're looking for support and guidance, but there isn't really anyone to give it to you, so you have to try and guide yourself... It wasn't until I moved back home that I started enjoying hockey again. And I think that's because I had all the people around me who supported me – my family.

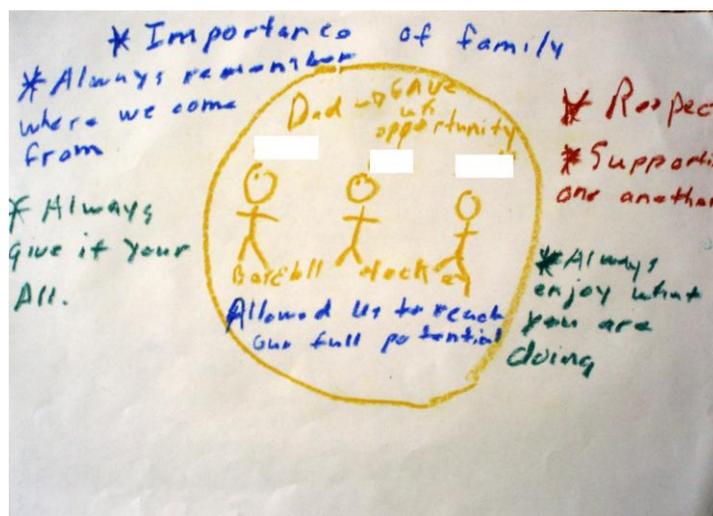


Figure 11. Mandala created by Patrick.

Building on this experience, Andrea used her mandala to visualize her heart's connection to her family (see Figure 12):

Those three houses [on mandala] are pretty much the heart of my family, just because we're so close together. There's my house, then my next door neighbour is my grandma, and then next door is my auntie and uncle with their kids. So we're all in one little area. And I put a heart because I'll always love being there, home in [reserve], surrounded by the people who have supported me and pushed me to become the best that I can be.

That's where my heart will always be. Like, when I moved away to [city] it was hard because I was by myself for the first time and my family wasn't there anymore. It was really, really tough, going from all the support to – well, I know they supported me, but I didn't feel that. I felt alone. My heart was pulling me back to this place [shown on mandala], and it was a very emotional experience. (Andrea: 18 year old female)



Figure 12. Mandala created by Andrea.

These participants' mandalas helped to reveal a core belief within Aboriginal culture – that one's greatest resource lies in family relationships and community connections rather than in external successes (Pattel, 2007). In this manner, the mandalas provided a deeper understanding of how the participants were conflicted, on an ongoing basis, by being physically disconnected from their kin. This finding highlights the athletes' experiences of being pulled within and between each culture at various times in order to address tensions which had no static resolution (i.e., the collectivist need to be near family in the Aboriginal culture, and the simultaneous need to pursue their individual sport dreams in the Euro-Canadian context).

Losing loved ones while away from home. A number of participants talked about the

unexpected challenge of having family members pass away while they were away from home. They again emphasized feeling torn between their need for kinship during these hard times and their individual goals and desire to continue on their athletic journeys. This was exemplified by Caroline's use of a rain cloud in her mandala (see Figure 10):

I put the raindrops [in mandala] as people that I miss the most and that passed away... My uncle passed away this year, right around the time I was supposed to go to [city] for a tournament. It was kind of hard, because he had supported me. He helped me raise money to get up there to [city], he always told me that I was a good hockey player, and he used to come watch me all the time. So when he passed away, I just didn't know what to do. I had to make decisions to go back home or go to the hockey tournament. I felt that was hard and it got to me later at a point that I just felt I couldn't do it anymore. That was probably the toughest thing. (Caroline: 14 year old female)

Though Caroline initially struggled with the idea of giving up her hockey opportunities to go home and grieve with her family, she later realized that she needed to continue pursuing her dreams. She depicted this psychological shift as a sun rising above the rain cloud, explaining how her uncle's passing gave new meaning to her sport journey:

I started thinking about [uncle] and how he'd be so proud of me and that he was supporting me before [his passing]. I knew that he'd want me to do this. I think I felt that when I tried out this year for [team]. I felt that I was thinking of him more and trying harder because I thought that he'd be watching me and cheering me on.

The images used by Caroline helped to depict the acculturation process as being in a constant state of flux, wherein seasons (or experiences) are ever changing and must be navigated fluidly. For this individual to move forward from the unexpected loss of her uncle and make her

relocation journey more meaningful, she had to re-conceptualize her journey as a means of honouring her uncle's memory and making him proud, rather than perceiving it as her own individualistic pursuit. Conversely, Jordan explained how he felt the need to re-prioritize his family and give up his hockey career after losing his father (see Figure 8):

I had just been given the news that my father died, and my team had a game that next night. I decided I'm going to play it. I probably had an hour of sleep the night before, and I was mentally drained because it wasn't even 24 hours yet. But I decided to play. And I ended up scoring a goal 30 seconds into that game... That was such a high in the midst of a trial. I remember being on that ice and I was almost crying... But from then on, for the next year and a half, that's when it was just a rollercoaster ride. I put "confused" [on mandala], because I did have the chance to pursue pro hockey. But I turned it down to stay closer to my family because my father had died. I wish I would have pursued pro hockey, but at the same time, it's my family; you only have one. We were a very tight family, my dad, my mom, and my brothers and sisters. So when he died it was obviously an overwhelming experience. (Jordan: 24 year old male)

Both of these examples illustrate the complex psychological activity involved acculturating, as the participants had to navigate the back-and-forth push and pull between priorities in their home culture (e.g., family) and those in the host culture (e.g., sport careers). The participants had to work actively and fluidly to re-construct meaningful realities that would help them cope with the sudden loss of their loved ones and reconcile their need for family and home connectedness, while also navigating their losses as critical turning points in their sport careers. The ongoing nature of this psychological process was further highlighted by Jordan as he reflected on the word "confused" in his mandala:

I wish I would have pursued pro hockey. There's always a part of me that will wish I did it. I put "confused" there [in mandala] because not pursuing it made a lot of confusion in my life. Something you work for your entire life – hockey – it's chopped off right there. Even to this day there's still a part of me that questions it.

Jordan continued to grapple with his decision to return home following his father's death, indicating that while part of him recognized the need to remain with his family, part of him will always wish he had persisted with his hockey. His words reveal how the acculturation process is never fully resolved in one context or the other, as the participants' lives become enmeshed *partly* in the Euro-Canadian context and *partly* in the Aboriginal context, in ways that overlap and intersect. As such, the participants continued to sway in their thinking around their relocation and sport pursuits, often feeling challenged by the back-and-forth pull between their two cultural contexts.

Missing the Aboriginal culture. Some participants described being challenged by the absence of the Aboriginal culture as they relocated off-reserve. With the Euro-Canadian culture pervading their everyday reality (i.e., a culture rooted in white European influences, traditions, and values), these individuals began to feel disconnected from their traditional Aboriginal ways of life. This was exemplified by Hailey as she explained why she needed to re-immense herself in the Aboriginal community periodically and "absorb" the culture:

The one thing that I noticed over the years is that I miss hearing people speak the [Ojibway] language. I'm so familiar with that – I don't want to call it noise, but those words – that when I'm not around it for a long time I do miss it. As soon as I hear somebody speaking it I just stop and listen to try and absorb it. I find that with pow-wows, too; I miss hearing that beat. When I get to go to a pow-wow it's like I just want to

absorb everything. It's like a replenishment of the Anishinaabe in me. When you don't have it for a long time and then you have it for a brief period, you want to absorb as much as possible to last until the next time. So that's the cultural thing that I noticed I miss when I'm not at home in [reserve], being around the language and around the drum beat, and those kinds of things. You look forward to when it does come. Living in [city] I felt like I was missing that cultural aspect. (Hailey: 41 year old female)

Similarly, Taylor highlighted her need to stay connected to her Aboriginal culture in her mandala, symbolized through the colour red (see Figure 7):

The red, I guess it just symbolizes the Aboriginal skin colour. I'm just proud of that colour now, I'm proud to be Aboriginal. At first it hurt me and it made me angry, like when I first moved off the reserve and was dealing with things like racism. Then I actually started to learn about the history of my people and what we went through, which is what this [image of teepee] shows. I learned a lot of stuff, and it kind of made me proud to be who I am again. Now I embrace it, my culture and my people. I want to stay connected to that, even when I'm not living on the reserve. I love coming home for that reason. (Taylor: 19 year old female)

These participants often felt inundated by the dominance of the Euro-Canadian culture in their host contexts, and took active measures to ensure that it didn't pull them completely away from the Aboriginal culture and identity that they drew strength from. Accordingly, they periodically (and fluidly) withdrew from the host culture and immersed themselves in home environments that strengthened their ties to their Aboriginal heritage and renewed their sense of identity. As hinted at by both Hailey and Taylor, these moments of cultural renewal helped to facilitate the participants' acculturation by enabling them to retain a critical sense of connectedness to the

Aboriginal community while they simultaneously immersed in and created attachments to the Euro-Canadian host context. As part of the acculturation process the athletes had to dynamically navigate their embeddness within multiple sociocultural contexts, reconciling shifting tensions around the need to maintain meaningful attachments to each context (Agergaard & Ryba, 2014).

Dealing with on-reserve rejection. After moving off-reserve and pursuing higher levels of sport outside of the Aboriginal community, many participants noted that they were confronted with rejection from some of their peers back home. Thus, in addition to feeling internally disconnected from their home, there was another disconnect occurring outwardly at the community level. This was evident when Andrea shared an account of how she was confronted with overt hostility and resentment from a young woman she used to play hockey with on the reserve and was even friends with:

When I moved back on reserve for school in grade 8, after being in [city] with [team name], there was issues with this one girl who used to be my friend. At school she wouldn't look at me, wouldn't talk to me, and if I was with my friends she wouldn't come to us. Then one day she was like "Oh, you think you're so good. Just because you moved away and are playing for [team name] you think you're just the best around here, don't you?" I got up and was about to walk away when she grabbed my shoulder and was like "What, you want to fight?" It just triggered me, and that was my first fight. It was pretty crazy, because we used to be good friends. We used to play on the same team down here [on reserve]. (Andrea: 18 year old female)

Andrea became somewhat isolated from her home community due to perceptions that she believed she was better than local community members for having moved off-reserve.

Similarly, Alexander described how local attitudes changed towards him after he relocated off-

reserve, symbolized by a wavy line in his mandala (see Figure 9):

I drew a bumpy road because people [on reserve] have said that I won't make it or whatever, and I get criticized. There's just a lot of jealousy. People think that I think I'm better than them. I don't think I'm better; I'm not better than anybody. But that's what they think. And that's why I don't really hang around with people here anymore. So there's always low points that come with being successful. (Alexander: 16 year old male)

These accounts reveal that even though the Aboriginal community is a source of support and substantiation for the participants during their relocation, there are some on-reserve community members who regard their relocation as a form of cultural betrayal and push the athletes further outside the community. The athletes thus had to deal with being positioned as outsiders not only in the Euro-Canadian context, but also in relation to some of the Aboriginal community once they moved off-reserve. They had to navigate their acculturation from changing insider-outsider positions, shifting fluidly along the hyphen and finding themselves partially inside *and* outside both cultures. The participants were challenged ongoingly by the cultural instability this created in their lives, as they had to continually renegotiate their positions and “prove themselves” in both contexts, rather than focusing solely on adjusting to the Euro-Canadian context. This fluidity was insightfully captured by the wavy line in the Alexander's mandala, demarcating how the athletes struggled to navigate changing cultural dynamics without a sense of stability.

4.2 Discussion

These research results provide insights into how Aboriginal athletes experience challenges stemming from within their home cultural community (i.e., *becoming disconnected from home*) in addition to those related to the host cultural community (i.e., *experiencing culture shock*).

These dualistic themes highlight the intense and fluid psychological process that is involved in navigating multiple cultural realities (Chirkov, 2009; Rudmin, 2009), as the athletes had to make sense of the changes and challenges which pulled them towards and pushed them away from each cultural context at various times (Schinke et al., 2013; Schinke & McGannon, 2013; Stambulova, 2013). Previously, only challenges related to acclimation within the host culture were considered in research regarding the experiences of elite Indigenous athletes in “mainstream” contexts (e.g., Campbell & Sonn, 2009; Schinke et al., 2006). The current project thus demonstrates how a group of Canadian Aboriginal athletes navigated various challenges from shifting positions *in* and *between* their two cultural realities, moving to various degrees along the insider-outsider hyphen as their sense of identity and place within each culture was challenged.

For example, in their narratives pertaining to the sub-themes *missing the Aboriginal culture* and *losing loved ones while away from home*, the participants described experiences which created a need for them to reconnect to their Aboriginal culture and strengthen their positions within their home communities. In these moments the participants were pulled towards their home contexts. Alternatively, in their narratives pertaining to the sub-theme *dealing with on-reserve rejection*, the Aboriginal athletes described being pushed outside of their home communities. In these instances, the participants shifted into positions in between the Aboriginal and Euro-Canadian cultures without a sense of fully belonging to or identifying with either culture. This experience of rejection from within the Aboriginal community has been articulated in previous research with participants who relocated into Euro-Canadian contexts (see Berry, 1999), emphasizing how these participants struggled to reconcile their shifting positions within dual cultural realities. As one participant in Berry’s research succinctly stated, “It’s like I belong

everywhere, but nowhere” (p. 18). This unique cultural experience has not been previously explored within the Aboriginal sport research, and as such, the current project extends Berry’s findings within the sport domain. Where the sub-theme *dealing with on-reserve rejection* does intersect with the Aboriginal sport research is in revealing how the athletes were significantly challenged by a loss of cultural social support as they moved into their Euro-Canadian contexts. Cultural/community social support has been found to be one of the most prominent factors in Indigenous athletes’ success in “mainstream” sport contexts (e.g., Campbell & Sonn, 2009; Nicholson, Hoye, & Gallant, 2011; Schinke et al., 2006). These scholars noted how such support provides Indigenous athletes with a critical sense of substantiation and cultural connectedness which they often lack in non-Aboriginal contexts. Given that the athletes in this project made various references to being “different” and “outsiders” in the Euro-Canadian context, it is clear how detrimental this loss of cultural social support was for their identities and experiences as relocated Aboriginal athletes. The finding demonstrates how belonging and social support from within their home cultural communities is critical for shaping relocated Aboriginal athletes’ sport careers and providing (or not providing) a foundation for success (Nicholson et al., 2011; Schinke et al., 2006).

While the athletes in this project were pushed away from their home communities in some moments, as outlined above, they also had experiences that pulled towards the Euro-Canadian culture. This came across in the sub-themes *being overwhelmed by change* and *living with non-Aboriginal billets*. In these moments, some of the participants expressed a need to identify with and integrate within their host community in order to create a more meaningful reality that would facilitate their sporting success. Through these fluid accounts of the pushes and pulls within each cultural context, the project provides experiential insights into how the

acculturation challenges of Aboriginal athletes are navigated dynamically from in and between the Aboriginal and Euro-Canadian contexts (Berry, 1999). These findings coincide with Schinke et al.'s (2013) acculturation research with immigrant athletes, where the authors identified *navigating two world views* as a key source of acculturation challenges and an indicator of the fluidity of this process. Extending this knowledge within the Aboriginal population, the current findings offer more contextual insights from a local cultural perspective.

More generally, the research also supports the conception of acculturation that has been advocated by critical scholars such as Chirkov (2009), Rudmin (2009), and Bhatia (2002): that acculturation is a fluid and dynamic psychological process involving cognitive movements in and between different cultural standpoints. Moving away from overly simplistic conceptualizations of acculturation as a linear movement towards one culture and away from another, the current project supports a richer understanding of acculturation as an open-ended process which includes progresses, relapses, and turns (Chirkov). This was evidenced in the way the Aboriginal athletes engaged fluidly in cultural negotiations and renegotiations which were never fully resolved in one context or the other (Schinke & McGannon, 2013; Stambulova, 2013). The athletes continued to vacillate in and between their cultural counterpoints at different times, in light of new experiences and understandings, all the while working to construct a more meaningful reality.

Moving beyond the acculturation literature, the project findings also contribute to the general body of research on Aboriginal peoples and sport. To date, much of the research on Aboriginal peoples and sport has been taken up from a health promotion perspective. Efforts have been primarily focused on examining the factors that affect these community members' participation in sport and physical activity (e.g., Findlay & Kohen, 2007; Mason & Koehli,

2012), and the benefits of their participation for facilitating culturally-relevant (holistic) health and wellness processes (e.g., Lavallee, 2007, 2008; Thompson, Gifford, & Thorpe, 2000). There has been very little effort to explore the lived experiences of Aboriginal peoples who are pursuing sport and consider the ways in which their participation and experiences are shaped by culture. As indicated by Forsyth and Giles (2013), such research is needed to facilitate understandings of the pressing cultural issues that are tied to Aboriginal people's sport participation, and enable deeper insights into how their sport experiences can be enhanced from a cultural perspective (McHugh, Coppola, & Sinclair, 2013). Herein, the current project provides an in-depth understanding of how, when Aboriginal athletes relocate off-reserve to pursue sport opportunities in "mainstream" contexts, their experiences are shaped by various cultural tensions and challenges around acculturation. Emphasizing the Aboriginal athletes' embeddedness within dual cultural contexts, the research illustrates how the athletes' experiences unfolded in a complex interplay between developing a sense of belonging and place in the Euro-Canadian culture, while simultaneously maintaining a sense of connectedness and identity within the Aboriginal culture (Agergaard & Ryba, 2014). The results reveal the cultural instability that the participants had to cope with, ongoing, as they navigated shifting insider-outsider positions in relation to each context and attempted to (re)construct meaning around their experiences that would facilitate their sport persistence.

Through these novel (and emic) cultural insights, implications can be gleaned around how to better engage and support the fluid identities of Aboriginal athletes in "mainstream" sport contexts. This knowledge can be put into action to facilitate more culturally affirming sport experiences for Aboriginal athletes, and in so doing, advance a core objective of *Sport Canada's Policy on Aboriginal Peoples' Participation in Sport* (Canadian Heritage, 2005). Herein, the

research builds on the few previous research initiatives that have examined the cultural needs of Aboriginal athletes and focused on creating more meaningful opportunities for these athletes to engage in sport in ways that resonate with and strengthen their cultural identities (Blodgett et al., 2008, 2010; Forsyth, Heine, & Halas, 2006; Forsyth & Heine, 2010; Giles, Baker, & Rousell, 2007; Lavalley, 2007, 2008; McHugh, 2011; McHugh et al., 2013). For example, Giles and colleagues (2007) explored how a Euro-Canadian based aquatics program could be refined to better reflect Northern Aboriginal peoples' experiences and ways of knowing and address their unique health needs. McHugh et al. (2013) explored a culturally relevant definition of sport from the perspective of Canadian Aboriginal youth, emphasizing the need to open up understandings of how to enhance sport for these youth by moving beyond limiting Westernized definitions. The current project adds to these initial efforts by bringing forward athletes' experiences of relocation, examining the cultural issues and needs arising in these precarious sport contexts. Collectively, these projects help to open up wider understandings of the need to facilitate sport spaces that are culturally inclusive and embracing of diversity rather than subverting (Ryba et al., 2013; Ryba, Schinke, & Tenenbaum, 2010; Schinke & McGannon, 2014, 2015).

One notable insight drawn from this research is how effective cultural sharing processes between host culture members and Aboriginal athletes can be in facilitating more inclusive sport spaces. This was revealed when a number of athletes discussed instances where they were able to educate people in the host community about Aboriginal culture and history, and help break down negative stereotypes and misconceptions. Providing an example, Mike discussed how he attempted to show, rather than tell, his Euro-Canadian teammate what the Aboriginal culture is all about:

A lot of them [host culture members] had questions about the Aboriginal culture. I'd try

and answer them but I'm like, you know what, you have to be with me in order to see that. So that's basically what I did with my friend; I took him with me to pow-wows and I invited him over to all my family gatherings, like for a birthday or a barbeque, or just to hang out with my family on the reserve. He was a non-Native, Caucasian kid, so he had no knowledge of what Natives were about whatsoever. So I had to tell him the basics. But a lot of it can't be put into words. It was the only way that I could show him is if he actually hung around with me and stayed with me. (Mike: 24 year old male)

These words illustrate how the Aboriginal athletes were able to share insights and experiences through their cultural lens, which influenced the thinking of their hosts and ultimately facilitated heightened cultural awareness within Euro-Canadian contexts. The finding provides insight into the potential of authentic cultural sharing processes to break down racist attitudes, cultural misperceptions, and discriminatory behaviours in host community members (see also Battochio et al., 2013; Schinke & McGannon, 2013). Reciprocally, when host culture members actively engage in cultural sharing processes *with* Aboriginal athletes, these athletes are able to acculturate more meaningfully within their host contexts, gaining a sense of belonging and connectedness. This latter point was emphasized in the sub-theme *lacking meaningful engagement with host culture members*. It aligns with Berry's (1999) research on Aboriginal cultural identity, which notes how meaningful social relations, including those facilitated through sport, have a positive impact on Aboriginal people. Indeed, Thompson and colleagues (2000) indicated that social connections are often one of the most important aspects of Aboriginal people's participation in sport. The findings herein affirm the interactional, two-way influence of social cultural sharing processes, revealing the potential for such strategies to be used within applied sport contexts to enhance the experiences of Aboriginal athletes, as well as other athletes.

Finally, it is important to note that the current project makes a significant methodological contribution and advancement within the critical acculturation literature. The project responds to the need for non-deductive, interpretivist methodologies to be engaged (Sparkes & Smith, 2014) as a means of opening up meaningful local descriptions of acculturation that are rooted in the experiences of culturally diverse people (Chirkov, 2009; Cresswell, 2009). Most research pertaining to acculturation has been rooted in deductive, positivistic methodologies, where scholars are concerned with discovering universal laws rather than exploring acculturation as a context-bound phenomenon (Chirkov; Cresswell; Rudmin, 2009). These methodologies have misaligned with conceptions of acculturation as a sociocultural process, and have thus been insufficient for providing insight into the complex dynamics of acculturation as experienced by diverse people in various sport contexts. An inductive and localized Indigenous decolonizing methodology, rooted in CSP (Forsyth & Heine, 2010; Ryba & Schinke, 2009) was used in this project to open up a more experiential and culturally relevant understanding of acculturation. This methodology, which was developed and led by the local community utilizing a participatory approach, centralized local Aboriginal processes and ways of thinking, and ultimately facilitated knowledge outcomes that resonated more deeply with the lived experiences of participants (Blodgett et al., 2013; Ryba & Schinke, 2009; Schinke, McGannon, & Smith, 2013).

The resonance of these locally derived research processes were articulated by one participant at the end of her interview, as she reflected on the information that she had shared: “I never really told anybody about any of the stuff that I was going through before. Nobody knows how hard it was. I always lied, like ‘oh, everything’s good,’ even though it wasn’t.” These words reveal how the mandala drawing and interview processes helped her share her story in a way that was personally meaningful, resisting the tendency to give a superficial and clichéd account of her

experiences. Similarly, another athlete expressed surprise at how deeply she was able to share her relocation challenges through the mandala and interview processes, stating, “I never talk about this, like, not even with my mom.” These words demonstrate how the contextually informed and participant led inquiry helped to elicit untold stories and insights from the Aboriginal athletes, and provide a deeper understanding of the ways in which their cultural identities and participation in sport are shaped by Canadian culture. Indigenous stories have remained largely untold and/or marginalized within sport research (Forsyth & Giles, 2013), and need to be centralized through contextually driven research processes that are sensitive to local voices and worldviews (Forsyth & Heine, 2010; Ryba & Schinke, 2009; Schinke, McGannon, & Smith, 2013; Schinke, Smith, & McGannon, 2013).

Chapter 5

5 The Benefits of Relocation

This chapter addresses the following research question: What benefits do Aboriginal athletes associate with relocation, and how are they experienced? Through their mandala drawings and the narratives around them, the Aboriginal athletes each indicated that they experienced a number of broad-ranging benefits from relocating off reserve to pursue their sport dreams. These benefits helped to offset many of the acculturation challenges they experienced in their new contexts (outlined in Chapter 4), and enabled the participants to create a more meaningful reality for themselves between the Euro-Canadian and Aboriginal contexts. In this chapter, benefits pertaining to beginning a new life chapter and developing a vision for the future are outlined, using both narrative and visual data from the participants to provide an in-depth and local understanding of their experiences. The implications of these findings are then discussed. The findings are noted as extending the sport acculturation literature by opening up a new understanding of the positive experiences that are associated with acculturation, rather than focusing exclusively on the challenges. Moreover, it is emphasized how the findings advance an Indigenous decolonizing agenda by valuing the positive aspects of Aboriginal athletes' lives and affirming their strengths. A more holistic understanding of their experiences is facilitated that aligns with local Aboriginal ways of knowing.

5.1 Results

The benefits of relocation were grouped into two overarching themes: (a) beginning a new life chapter (wherein participants moved towards the Euro-Canadian culture), and (b) developing a

vision for the future (wherein the participants moved towards the Aboriginal community). The sub-themes within each of these overarching themes are explicated below, using direct narrative quotations from the athletes and images from their mandala drawings to better centralize their voices and stories. It is important to note that the narratives presented around these sub-themes are not distinct from the challenges outlined in Chapter 4. The narratives on the benefits of relocation should be understood as intersecting and overlapping with the narratives on the challenges of relocation, reflecting the complex and dynamic nature of the participants' lives and the way they sinuously (re)negotiated and (re)constructed meaning around their relocation in different moments. The participants continued to move fluidly in and out of the various challenges and benefits they experienced, reflecting shifting experiences and understandings. Thus, while all 21 participants discussed benefits accruing from their relocation, their stories did not imply that they had statically "overcome" all of their challenges, such as dealing with racism or feeling uncomfortable in their billets' homes. Rather, their narratives were presented as fluid moments where the participants were able to (re)construct meaning around their journeys that gave them a sense of significance and achievement. The participants could (and did) lapse back into moments where they felt challenged and marginalized in the Euro-Canadian context, and struggled to make sense of their relocation. The sub-themes presented below are therefore more dialogical and dynamic than they appear, and do not necessarily represent positive "endings" to the participants' journeys.

As explained in Chapter 4, the results do not fully account for differences in the athletes' experiences and the intersecting facets of their sociocultural locations (i.e., their location in a particular age cohort, sport discipline, socioeconomic status, or gender). The results are therefore limited in that they explore only the convergences in the athletes' experiences.

5.1.1 Beginning a new life chapter

Through the drawings and stories they shared, the participants revealed that their relocation signified the beginning of a new chapter in their lives. As they moved outside of the Aboriginal community and entered the Euro-Canadian context, the participants realized they were opening themselves up to many new prospects and opportunities which they likely would not have had on their reserves. They experienced much excitement related to this new life chapter, as they gleaned a better understanding of what was “out there” beyond life on the reserve and also gained a pertinent sense of belonging in this new sociocultural space. The following sub-themes were identified more specifically as benefits related to this new life chapter: (a) the excitement of going off to pursue a dream, (b) exposure to opportunities unavailable on-reserve, (c) connecting with new and diverse people, and (d) travelling beyond the reserve.

The excitement of going off to pursue a dream. When discussing their thoughts and experiences related to their initial relocation, many participants spoke about how momentous it felt to be going off and pursuing a personal dream. The excitement and significance of this experience was highlighted by Jessica as she explained why she drew a highway with a red stripe down the centre leading towards a burst of sunlight (see Figure 4):

[Reserve] is behind and then this light is kind of like something new. You're just looking at a new light because you're out with the old and you're going forward, you're moving forward with your life. First time in high school, first time being alone, first everything. And this was why you moved – to play what you love, which is hockey. And that's the excitement, like, oh my god! That was the excitement of meeting new friends and living somewhere new and playing hockey and being on my own. It's kind of like you want to be on your own sometimes and you wonder what it would be like, and that was just the

whole excitement about it. I had no idea what to expect when I first moved. I didn't think I was going to love it as much as I did. And that's pretty much what I was going for there [in mandala], the initial excitement of everything, like all your firsts. I don't know, I guess I just never knew that I would enjoy my time here [in city] so much. So that's kind of like the red. It just really catches your eye and it keeps you hooked kind of. You follow the red more than the blue or the black. You really just look at the red and follow it to the sun. That's where all the feelings are right away, when you're on the highway for the first time and it's just like 'I'm doing this, I'm doing this! I'm moving away!' (Jessica: 15 year old female)



Figure 4. Mandala created by Jessica.

Another participant, Jacinta, shared similar sentiments as she explained the symbolism behind the images in her mandala (see Figure 13):

To me, my idea when I was going down for school was to play hockey. The dream was to play varsity hockey with the university. So this is a drawing of a hockey rink. That's where I always saw myself being around, you know, always around the hockey rink. I figured I was going to live at the rink. You know, you eat, sleep, and play hockey there...

And then that [image of a bus] was me being on the road. That kind of shows me just going anywhere to do what I want, to fulfill something – that kind of literal symbolization. I was 17 at the time and I just thought it was the best thing ever to be going away and doing that, following my dream wherever it led. (Jacinta: 19 year old female)



Figure 13. Mandala created by Jacinta.

These words and images reveal how the participants' sport relocation experiences were understood as being part of a larger life journey that transcended the sport context. In moving away from home for the first time and taking the chance to following their dreams, the participants realized that they were opening up their lives to new possibilities and "firsts", and they expressed a great sense of anticipation at the unknown prospects that lay ahead of them. The participants' excitement about pursuing their dreams enabled them to overcome initial fears or challenges pertaining to their acculturation, and helped them enter the Euro-Canadian context with a positive outlook. This was affirmed by Crystal as she reflected on her drawing of a happy face in her mandala (see Figure 14): "I was excited to move off-reserve and have new opportunities to be doing what I love. The excitement just blocks out what you're leaving and

any of the hard stuff” (Crystal: 15 year old female).



Figure 14. Mandala created by Crystal.

Similarly, Kaitlyn used the image of a sun to centralize the positivity and excitement she felt as she embarked on her relocation journey:

I put the sun shining because on the day I was driving down [to city] it was sunny. There wasn't like rain or anything. I just felt like it was the perfect setting for me to go off and fulfill my dream... It was just me following my dreams with an open mind about everything. (Kaitlyn: 18 year old female)

In emphasizing their resolve to keep “an open mind about everything”, the participants revealed how they actively shifted into a positive mental space that was conducive to their relocation and acculturation. Rather than focusing on their fears or a sense of sadness related to moving away from home, they focused on the possibilities that lay ahead of them in the Euro-Canadian context and entered this new context with excitement. They relished their relocation as a major turning point in their lives that was putting them on a trajectory to achieve their dreams and open up new opportunities, and accordingly, they eagerly moved towards the host culture.

Exposure to opportunities unavailable on-reserve. Building off the previous sub-theme,

the participants unanimously indicated that one of the primary reasons for their relocation was that they would be exposed to new opportunities which they never would have had on-reserve. Noting that their home reserves were “not as fully developed” as mainstream communities, the participants explained that the advanced educational and sporting opportunities available in their Euro-Canadian contexts gave them invaluable experiences that opened up possibilities for their futures. This was focalized in Sara’s mandala, where school and sport images were tied to the words “new opportunities” (see Figure 15):

First of all, there’s a net with a hockey puck and hockey stick. I’ve always dreamt of becoming a professional hockey player, and that’s partially why I moved, so I could pursue that more. Then on the side [of mandala] I have a pencil and eraser because I also moved away from home for school purposes, to have more opportunities in school. I wrote “new opportunities”, because I’ve actually done a lot of stuff I knew I wouldn’t be able to do out in [reserve]... The biggest opportunity that caught me was an Aboriginal news camp with [local tv station]. I got to go there through school [in city] and we experienced all of the different departments of the news place at [local tv station]. They said they were trying to recruit Aboriginal people because...it would make more sense to have an Aboriginal news reporter to go the reserves, just because they feel they would get the vibe of communities and have more connections. So I went there. We were there for the day and we got to see all the different departments, and we were taught how to do an actual news report, like an entire show. We ended up doing a mock show, live on tape. It was pretty cool. So there’s that. And then our hockey class. We get a hockey focus class that we get a credit for at our school. I think that’s definitely a unique opportunity... I know that wouldn’t be possible in [reserve] at all. So that’s why I continue to go to

school in [city]. (Sara: 16 year old female)

Sara later went on to say that she would encourage her peers back home to “experience the life out there, like just to see what’s out there off-reserve. I would encourage people just to see that there are different opportunities for education, for sports, and whatever your heart desires.”



Figure 15. Mandala created by Sara.

Building on these sentiments, Andrea provided further insight into how the opportunities in her new context helped to put her on a path towards success:

In grade seven I moved up there [to city] for hockey and also for schooling. I was scouted for hockey when I was playing with the [city] team, and I got invited to an elite prospects camp in [city] during the summer. And during that camp I got phone calls from different hockey organizations or schools. There was one high school that was a private and boarding school, and that’s where I picked to play because they said they’ll pay 90% of my tuition and whatnot just so I could play hockey there. So that’s where I decided to go. I stayed in a residence there and they had their own arena there, their own chapel, and everyone was so nice. It was really fun there. Those are just some of the things that

[reserve] cannot give you... If I had stayed here [on reserve], I know I wouldn't be where I am today or the person I am. I kind of see myself as probably quitting hockey after that first year. And with school I probably wouldn't be doing so well. I'd probably be slacking off with my friends [on reserve]. I know they skip a lot because they always want to call me and ask to go over to the beach or ask to hang out while school is on... And I can see myself with them if none of this had happened – if I didn't move away and didn't have all these other opportunities and support. (Andrea: 18 year old female)

As evidenced in these accounts, the participants' relocation off-reserve opened up more than a chance to pursue higher levels of sport. In their new contexts, the participants were exposed to a broad range of opportunities and experiences that opened up myriad possibilities for the things they could do and become. Many participants openly stated that the opportunities that came with their relocation helped them get off paths that were “destructive” or “going nowhere” by enabling them to find things they are passionate about and pushing them to excel in the Euro-Canadian context. As such, the participants felt they developed stronger visions and aspirations for themselves in their host contexts, and noted how they acculturated more deeply within the Euro-Canadian culture in these instances.

Connecting with new and diverse people. Many participants spoke positively about their experiences meeting new and diverse people in their host communities, and the new relationships that they were able to form through their relocation. This was brought forward in Kaitlyn's mandala (see Figure 16) as she explained why she positioned the words “bye” and “hello” together:

I wrote “bye” and “hello” because although I was saying goodbye to my family, I was also saying hello to new people – like my new teammates and everything. I think they go

kind of hand-in-hand because yeah, I was sad to be saying bye to my family and friends from here, but then again, I was excited about saying hello to a new experience and new people, like a new family, I guess. I actually was able to meet new people along with the hockey girls, and I've made so many other friends that will come watch our games and stuff. It's just awesome. (Kaitlyn: 18 year old female)



Figure 16. Mandala created by Kaitlyn.

The “bye/hello” metaphor reflects the circular Aboriginal worldview this participant carried with her into the Euro-Canadian context, which helped her to make sense of her relocation. Through the circular perspective, the participant realized that although she was moving away from her family and friends back home, she was cycling towards new relationships outside of the Aboriginal community which were also important for facilitating her athletic journey and her identity development.

Lending insight into the pertinence of these new relationships in the relocation process, Taylor created an image of a teepee on top of a red scribble that symbolized her experiences of racism (see Figure 7). She shared the following account of how she was able to learn about other

cultures and share her Aboriginal culture in the Euro-Canadian context as she connected with new and diverse people:

I was experiencing other cultures, especially when I went to private school, because there were people from Asia, Jamaica, Bahamas, and everywhere. So I experienced other cultures and that just helped me get over the racism that I had experienced before... Everyone seemed so welcoming and friendly, and it made me want to be a part of that community there. They didn't really judge me because they are exposed to different cultures there too. So that was really nice. I was still the only Native in that school, but everyone thought it was cool. Like they asked me so many questions about my culture and everything. They were intrigued by it. (Taylor: 19 year old female)



Figure 7. Mandala created by Taylor.

As Taylor formed new and meaningful relationships with diverse people, she gained a sense of acceptance and belonging in the Euro-Canadian community. She was able to embrace her Aboriginal identity and share it with others, and through these positive experiences, she was able to heal and move past previous experiences of racism. Andrea shared similar experiences as she explained why she framed her mandala in the colours of the Medicine Wheel (see Figure 12):

It pretty much represents the people I've met since moving to [city] and all my experiences. I know there's going to be racist people out there, but I've made friends with Chinese, Natives, Whites, and Blacks. I've had friends from all over and from different races, and they've always been so nice. They kind of helped me build who I am in my social life and gave me a better understanding of respect and self-pride and of how other people live compared to how I live. I'm not very judgmental towards people now. It just reminds me of home pretty much, and how I was brought up with the Medicine Wheel.

(Andrea: 18 year old female)



Figure 12. Mandala created by Andrea.

Through these mandalas and the narratives around them, the participants explicated how the new relationships they formed with diverse people in their host culture helped them acculturate more meaningfully within the Euro-Canadian context by enabling their cultural identities to be embraced. This was overtly indicated when Mike wrote the word “accepted” in his mandala (see Figure 5) and stated, “When I wrote ‘accepted’ it’s all around people that accepted me for who I am, and how I accepted it saying okay, it’s a whole new environment and I’m comfortable here now,” (Mike: 26 year old male).

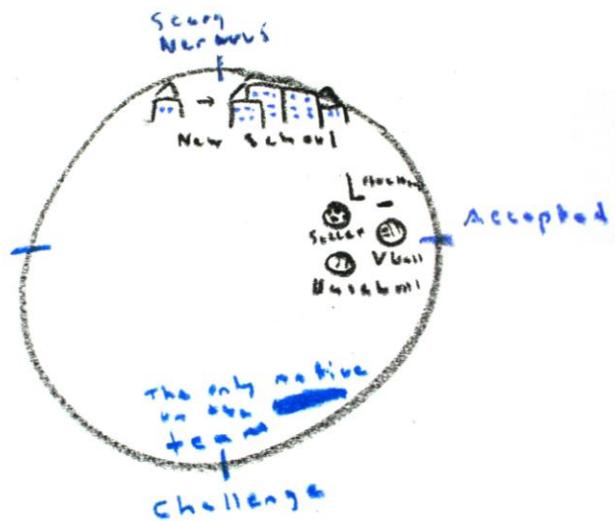


Figure 5. Mandala created by Mike.

These accounts affirm that acculturation is a collective process that can be greatly facilitated or hindered by the attitudes and interactions of people in the host culture. This was repeatedly illustrated through the participants' mandalas, as exemplified by two figures shaking hands in Figure 17, and the image of new friends in Figure 18.

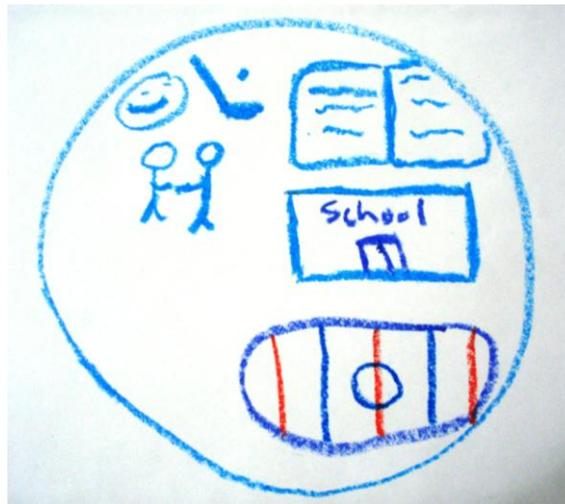


Figure 17. Mandala created by David.



Figure 18. Mandala created by McKayla.

Travelling beyond the reserve. Many participants cited travel opportunities as a major benefit of their relocation into the Euro-Canadian context. They explained that they were given more opportunities to travel to different places to train and compete at more elite levels of sport, and in the process, they got to experience different locales and learn about diverse ways of living. As a result, the participants became more acutely aware of the cultural diversity that exists in different contexts and the different opportunities available, deepening their understandings of what they could see and do later in their lives. This was evidenced when Jacob pointed out the road that was depicted as the focal point of his mandala (see Figure 19):

Roadtrips are definitely the best, no matter if it's only three hours away or 13 hours. You get to go places and see new things, and it's fun. Especially when you've lived here [on reserve] most of your life, in a small place with a population of 5000 to 7000 people... With hockey we'd get to go different places, see new things, meet new people. And you get to learn about stuff. And it's like, you know, I'm going to come back here one day... and experience more of what this place has to offer. (Jacob: 20 year old male)

Echoing these sentiments, Justin indicated that if he hadn't moved off reserve to pursue hockey,

he likely never would have travelled outside his home community and had experienced other ways of living:

I got to go to Europe with my hockey team. It was pretty neat to go over there. We went over there for like three weeks on Christmas break, and we played against all the Sweden teams and Finland. We lived with a family for a week out of the three weeks, and it was pretty neat to see how they lived and stuff like that. If I didn't play hockey I probably never would have went anywhere. So that's a bonus. (Justin: 20 year old male)



Figure 19. Mandala created by Jacob.

These participants indicated that travelling was not something that many of their on-reserve peers got to do, and thus they recognized that they were advantaged in being able to experience new and diverse places beyond their own community. Andrea went on to explain how her travels benefitted her by showing her what was “out there” for her to pursue (see Figure 12):

There is a picture of a vehicle on the road, and I wrote “travelling” and “moving” because that’s what I really enjoy doing – travelling wherever, going on little road trips or vacations. Whether it’s alone or even to go play a sport, I really enjoy travelling and moving because I get to meet new people, it’s a new environment, and there are new

ways of life within their Euro-Canadian contexts. These participants repeatedly emphasized their intent to continue travelling and relocating to new places in their futures, thus highlighting an increased sense of belonging in their host contexts.

5.1.2 Developing a vision for the future

In addition to their positive experiences beginning a new life chapter in the Euro-Canadian context, the participants revealed how their relocation helped them develop more meaningful visions for themselves as Aboriginal community members. The participants explained that as they worked through many of the acculturation challenges in the Euro-Canadian context, they developed as people (more than just athletes) and gained a better understanding of who they are and what they are capable of achieving. They were therein able to delineate what they wanted to do and become in their futures, and more specifically, emphasized how they could contribute positively to their Aboriginal community through their stories and successes. In these moments, the participants were positioning themselves more deeply within their Aboriginal communities. The following sub-themes were identified around this experience of developing a vision for the future: (a) finding out who you are, (b) gaining motivation to succeed, (b) developing personal goals, and (c) becoming community role models.

Finding out who you are. Many participants highlighted how important their sport relocation experiences were in helping them learn about and develop themselves as people, more than just as athletes. These participants explained that as they moved outside of the Aboriginal community and began navigating a new cultural reality, they found themselves being challenged in terms of who they are and what they really want for their lives. They were forced to reflect more deeply on themselves and consider their life goals and aspirations as part of their

acculturation process, developing a stronger sense of themselves to carry forward into their futures. This was exemplified by Kaitlyn's image of an open road leading off into the distance (see Figure 16):

I drew the road of opportunity because even though I know where I want to be, there always will be challenges that I will always end up having to face. And I feel like the “dot, dot, dot” is the biggest part for me because like I said, I do know that I want to graduate and become a teacher, but there's always going to be room for me to either improve or room for me to adjust to my environment, room for anything really. Like, this experience has given me so much. It's been an opportunity for me to grow as a person and mature... I feel like the challenges – like going away from home for the first time, not knowing anyone, having to adjust to the different level of hockey – all those challenges have made me, have ended me up where I am now. And I'm glad that I've experienced this because I'm happy where I am now. I've grown to be independent, I've grown to live on my own, not rely on my parents, not rely on anyone really. I was able to find myself – find out who I wanted to be and what I wanted to do. (Kaitlyn: 18 year old female)

In finding herself through her relocation journey, Kaitlyn noted that she was better prepared to dynamically navigate the challenges and unknown circumstances of the future, as symbolized through the “dot, dot, dot” in her narrative. The fluidity of her acculturation experiences were brought forward as she highlighted an awareness of the need to remain open and flexible to ever-changing circumstances. Also addressing this theme of learning about oneself dynamically, Jessica shared the following account of how she learned to be comfortable on her own and to have faith in herself:

The experience is just indescribable. Usually when people move they move with their family and they go somewhere. But you're being sent off to this place to just learn how to get comfortable by yourself. It's hard sometimes, like right off the bat, but you have to go through it yourself. You have to learn how to make decisions on your own, and you have to learn how to control situations on your own, and you have to learn not to panic and that everything's going to be okay. And you have to learn to study on your own, and you've got to get that project done on your own. It's completely about being on your own and being independent. I developed so much as a person, as myself, through this experience. You know, you actually find out what you can do. You just find out who you are. (Jessica: 15 year old female)

When asked to give a title for her mandala that would capture the essence of her relocation experiences, Jessica referred to the burst of sunlight in her mandala (see Figure 4):

I think I would just call it "a new light" or something. Because you just learn so much. You look at everything differently after you move away. I think that's just the biggest thing. You just come to realize what you want and what you miss, and what actually meant something to you and what was just a passing – like some things just come and go and then there's something that is always going to be there, which is your home.

Jessica denoted a psychological shift taking place during her relocation (represented through her image of a burst of light) as she learned about herself and what was important in her life. She actively worked to make sense of her position in the Euro-Canadian context and understand what was important for her as an Aboriginal person as she moved toward her future (e.g., her connections to home). These accounts highlight the dynamic change and growth that the participants experienced in their Euro-Canadian contexts, and how this process enabled them to

move forward in their lives as stronger and more resilient Aboriginal people.

Gaining motivation to succeed. As the participants persisted after their dreams in their host contexts, they experienced a number of personal accomplishments which made them more aware of their potential for success and instilled in them a sense of pride. Many participants explained how these experiences motivated them to strive for bigger goals in their futures and to stand up as examples of Aboriginal people who are thriving beyond the reserve. This was exemplified when Crystal reflected on her image of a star (see Figure 14):

I tried out the year before and I didn't make the [hockey] team. But the coach was like "You should come back next year." So I came back. He remembered me and I think he saw something in me, like "Oh, I can make her better." And he did. He helped me improve so much. Our coach was amazing. He treated us like triple A players, so it kept us going... Then I built up enough confidence and a bit more skill, and I realized that I just have to keep working at it to get what I want. Like, I think it would be pretty awesome to get a scholarship. But at this point I figure I have to keep going and try harder because there's other girls that want that too... So I guess it's just a matter of me pushing myself a bit more for what I want, to reach the top. (Crystal: 15 year old female)

Reflecting on an image of a boxing glove (see Figure 21), Brent further explained how his motivation to succeed was rooted in a desire to positively influence other Aboriginal community members:

I got to go to Italy to fight. The organizers out there asked [coach] to send boxers from out here, and [coach] picked me. He isn't just going to pick up some guy that's never fought before and bring him over. You've gotta have some experience and potential to go there. So it was kind of an honour to get asked to go. The people back home thought it

was pretty cool too, you know, like on the reserve. People were watching me fight and cheering me on it. So that was pretty awesome. It makes me want to keep fighting and do more. Just because I fought in Italy and I won doesn't mean I'm just going to stop. There's going to be more, like more things to be proud of. I want to keep doing it, you know... It's just winning, winning a bunch of tournaments and stuff. Like going to the provincials and winning provincials, then going to the nationals and winning that too. I'm hopefully going to Kansas next year too. They give out belts down there when you win. That would be awesome. I want to win a belt. I don't have one yet, but I'm going to get one soon... I'd like to get other Aboriginals involved in boxing, you know, showing them that we can have success. Like two or three years from now it would be nice to see even three Native boxers here instead of just one. Right now I think I'm the only one in [city]. I want to change that. (Brent: 22 year old male)



Figure 21. Mandala created by Brent.

As revealed through these accounts, the participants framed their efforts to succeed as part of a larger mission to prove that Aboriginal people can thrive outside of the reserve. With this

agenda, the participants were motivated to continue persisting in the Euro-Canadian context and continue navigating the challenges of acculturation. For example, after Jacinta talked about being challenged in relation to her hockey aspirations, she still focused on the image of a gold medal in her mandala, highlighting her drive to continue pursuing success (see Figure 13):

I just want to have that feeling of accomplishing something again. I love that feeling. It's like the feeling of winning a championship. I remember that feeling and I haven't had that in a long time, but I don't want to forget about it. I want to keep it going. I want to make a new accomplishment instead of remembering the old ones, because that's in the past and I have to keep going... This year, when I didn't make the hockey team, I was really embarrassed by it. But now, you know, I'm not embarrassed by it because I hear so many other stories and it's like, at least I'm trying to do something. There are a lot of people, even not on reserves, who don't try. (Jacinta: 19 year old female)

This quote demonstrates how the participants worked fluidly to create more meaningful realities for themselves that would enable them to persist through the challenges in the Euro-Canadian context. In connecting their personal journeys to a more collective cultural effort to centralize Aboriginal success, the participants were re-positioning themselves within the Aboriginal community and strengthening their ties to their home culture.

Developing personal goals. Related to the previous sub-theme of gaining motivation to succeed, many participants articulated specific goals for what they wanted to achieve in their futures as Aboriginal people. The participants explained that the opportunities they were given in the Euro-Canadian context made them more aware of the educational and career paths they could pursue, and inspired them to focus on goals that would take them beyond sport. More than being successful athletes, the participants realized the potential they had to become successful

Aboriginal professionals who could contribute to their home communities through vocational pathways. This was exemplified in Kaitlyn's drawing of a road leading to a graduation cap (see Figure 16):

My whole life, like I've had plans and I've had schedules for what I've wanted to do with my life. But I haven't always set myself on the right track. And now I feel that the road is definite and now I know where I want to be and what I want to do at the end of it... In the beginning it was mainly just about hockey. Like that's all I could think about. But now I find myself calling [university] about teacher's college, because at the end of my four years away at college, hockey is going to be done for me. This is just something I'm pursuing as my dreams while getting an education. And that's what I've done my whole life. I've always played hockey and then went to school. It was always hand in hand. So I feel like this is pushing me to push myself to become a better student, and a better person. I know that in the end I want to be a teacher, so I'm pushing myself to hopefully graduate with that... I feel like this [image of a road] was just kind of like the unknown before. And now I know where I'm going. Like the road is leading to where I want to be at the end of my four years, graduating with a degree. So I'm looking towards my future. Once I have that degree I can help educate other young people on the reserve and show them what they can achieve. (Kaitlyn: 18 year old female)

Kaitlyn's relocation off-reserve was illustrated as a journey, showing how she moved from the "unknown" towards a more defined and meaningful future that connected her to more deeply to her Aboriginal community. A second participant, Taylor, wrote the word "life" in her mandala to symbolize how her purpose as an Aboriginal community member was opened up through her relocation (see Figure 7):

Even now some of my friends who live here [on reserve], they're pregnant or they have kids, and I see that they're stuck. They try and finish school but they can't so they just quit. So I think kind of moving away to play hockey in a way saved my life, I guess. Now I'm just continuing with my education. I want to go to medical school and I want to be a doctor. I'm not saying if I had stayed here [on reserve] it wouldn't have happened, but I never would have thought some of my friends who are pregnant now would have happened to them. But they are. So it could really happen to anybody. I think hockey and moving away did teach me how to grow up, I guess, and take care of stuff that might happen and ruin my dreams. And it made me want more. Like once I saw that I was able to excel in school, even just in high school, it made me want to continue on and do more, like becoming a doctor. I want to be the best that I can be, because then I can really go back and help the community... Like I work with the clinic now and I know a lot of the nurse practitioners do seminars on different problems in our community, so I was thinking that I want to do something like that. (Taylor: 19 year old female)

These accounts illustrate how the participants were moving fluidly towards the Aboriginal community by constructing new vocational aspirations and goals within this context. Ultimately, this positioning helped the participants maintain a sense of belonging and purpose in the Aboriginal community while they persisted in the Euro-Canadian context.

Becoming community role models. Another benefit of relocation discussed by a number of participants was the opportunity it gave them to step up as role models within their local Aboriginal communities and have a positive influence on other youth. These participants explained that in moving off-reserve to pursue their sport dreams, they realized that they could become examples and sources of inspiration for other on-reserve youth to see that they too can

pursue their goals outside of the Aboriginal community and achieve success. Jordan described the importance of this role model position as he explained why he wrote “happy the way it ended” in his mandala (see Figure 8):

You know, my goal was to make it to the NHL and I didn't make it. A lot of people could view that as a failure. But it shouldn't be that way. It should be about just pursuing something. I didn't know it at the time, but I was paving the way for other Native hockey players to really succeed. I was showing that you can be a Native and you can succeed... I'm happy with everything I know now, because I'm in a position now where I'm ready to go out and help these Native kids get to new levels and new heights that they don't know about, that they don't know that they can reach. Which is mainly the reason why I'm happy the way it ended. I'm happy for all my experiences that I faced. Like I didn't have to make the NHL, I didn't have to go play pro; I found success in what I did. And I think if these Native kids are going to go out to play sports, it's not all about making it to these elite levels of hockey. It's about pursuing something and having something in their youth, especially at a critical time in their lives... I really want to work with the youth and show them what I know through hockey. I want to show them a way to live life so that they can be happy, which is such a huge problem with the youth. They're living lives where they're not happy. It's leading to a lot of turmoil and a lot of kids living such a terrible life that they shouldn't have to live. They should be pursuing something positive in their lives. (Jordan: 24 year old male)

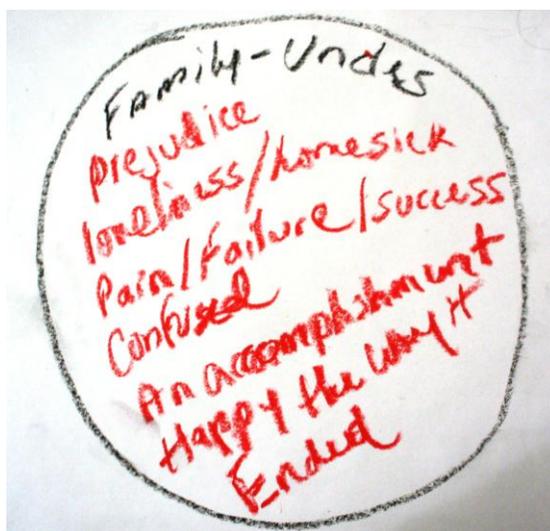


Figure 8. Mandala created by Jordan.

This participant centralized the importance of being able to show youth how to pursue their dreams and create a more meaningful life for themselves, and also hinted at the need to breaking down negative stereotypes that Aboriginal people can't make it outside of their reserves.

Natasha highlighted similar aspirations to give back to her reserve, by illustrating herself as a tree with roots deeply connected to her home community (see Figure 3):

The tree was something that I felt kept me grounded and kept me going on. I would think about the reserve, and I would think about all my friends and all my family members that that are on the reserve, and it helped me to see that I can go out and I can do this; I can prove that I'm not going to be another negative stereotype, that I'm going to be able to change something. In that sense the roots were where I was like I want to change how people view Natives. Knowing that I'm Native, knowing the stuff that happens on the reserve – and a lot of the stereotypes are true, and it's sad – it's like I want to be different. I want to prove to people, even the kids on the reserve, like you don't have to be a res kid. You can go out and you can do something. (Natasha: 22 year old female)



Figure 3. Mandala created by Natasha.

Natasha later provided an example of how being a community role model made her relocation journey and her struggles more meaningful:

I had a father talk to me about his son. He was talking to me because his son is in grade 11, and he's already been approached by about four or five different universities for golf and for hockey. And they're from a reserve. And I'm so happy for this kid, but the dad is stressed out because he doesn't know what to do because he stopped, he gave up his own athletic dreams. He just doesn't want the same for his son. So I told him some of my experiences, and I guess that made me happy, that I'm that person that someone can turn to and look up to. It makes me think that my experiences weren't just all for nothing.

In being able to educate and encourage others through her own lived experiences and helping to change the stereotypes about Aboriginal people, Natasha noted how her relocation gave her a greater sense of purpose (i.e., becoming a role model).

Providing another insightful example of the pertinence of being a community role model, Taylor explained why she depicted bright rays, almost like sunbeams, radiating around her mandala (see Figure 7):

These are just symbolizing how I got over my struggles and how I want to be kind of like a role model for other people on the reserve to get out there and do what they want. I do tell most of my friends all the time to go after what they want to and to go to school, because I know a lot of people who still haven't graduated high school; or they graduated and they're just staying here [on reserve] and not doing anything with their diploma. So just go after what you want because you can be whatever you want to be if you just work for it. Just seeing all the negativity on the reserve and then knowing that I've gone through this and I've risen above it and I'm still going after my dreams, I want to show that anyone can do it. Anyone can do that if they just know someone else went through it.

(Taylor: 19 year old female)

The rays of light drawn around Taylor's mandala illustrate how her relocation experiences radiated out into the Aboriginal community, serving as a source of inspiration and education for others community members. Through such narrative and visual accounts, it is evident that the Aboriginal athletes adopted positions as community role models in an effort to stay connected to (or rooted in) the Aboriginal context, and to give back to their home communities through their experiences. The participants stressed that this experiential process made all their relocation and acculturation struggles worthwhile.

5.2 Discussion

In exploring the benefits experienced by Aboriginal athletes during their sport relocation, the current chapter provides a deeper understanding of the acculturation process from a positive perspective. As noted by Rudmin (2009), most acculturating individuals experience some positive psychological and sociocultural outcomes as they work to adapt to their new cultural

environments, such as developing a stronger personal and cultural identity, experiencing a sense of freedom, and undergoing personal growth. To date, however, most of the psychological acculturation research has been focused exclusively on the challenges or difficulties encountered by acculturating individuals and their negative implications, without considering any positive aspects of their lived experiences (Chirkov, 2009). This trend is evident in the sport psychology acculturation research, where the focus has primarily centered on the issues faced by migratory/minority athletes with the aim of identifying factors that can support or facilitate athletes' transitions within new cultural contexts (e.g., Campbell & Sonn, 2009; Richardson, Littlewood, Nesti, & Benstead, 2012; Schinke, McGannon, Battocchio, & Wells, 2013; Stambulova, 2013). The current project adds to this scholarship by providing new experiential insights into the benefits that coincide with the acculturation process, from a local Aboriginal perspective.

The findings illustrate how the Aboriginal athletes worked to construct a meaningful reality that would enable them to achieve a sense of belonging and success in the Euro-Canadian context, as well as in relation to the Aboriginal cultural community. By emphasizing the positive advantages they gained in relation to the Euro-Canadian and Aboriginal cultures, the participants were better able to connect to their dual contexts and move more fluidly in and between them (Agergaard & Ryba, 2014). This was evident as the participants expressed how the relocation benefits they experienced pulled them towards the Euro-Canadian host context in some moments, and connected them more deeply to their Aboriginal home culture in other moments. For instance, in the sub-theme *connecting with new and diverse people* the participants indicated that as they formed meaningful relationships with host culture members, they gained a sense of acceptance and belonging in the Euro-Canadian context. These positive experiences helped the

participants to move past challenges related to racism and the lack of engagement they received from some members of the host community (see Chapter 4), as they provided a sense of substantiation in their new contexts. Rather than becoming marginalized, the participants were able to share their Aboriginal identities and ways of life with people in their new contexts, therein enabling them to acculturate more meaningfully with a sense of social support and connectedness (Berry, 1999; Thompson, Gifford, & Thorpe, 2000).

Alternatively, in the sub-themes *gaining motivation to succeed* and *developing personal goals*, the participants made a cognitive shift as they re-framed their relocation as part of a larger journey towards success that was closely tied to the Aboriginal community. These two sub-themes connect to the research of Goodwill and McCormick (2012), which identified processes of personal accomplishment as facilitating strong Aboriginal identities. In this case, as the participants centralized processes of personal accomplishment within their Euro-Canadian contexts, they were explicitly trying to work against oppressing attitudes that Aboriginal people can't "make it" off-reserve (as outlined in Chapter 4). The participants were renegotiating their sport pursuits in the host culture as pathways for becoming positive examples of Aboriginal success, therein re-positioning themselves as cultural representatives deeply connected to the Aboriginal community. As acknowledged by Thompson et al. (2000), Aboriginal athletes' positions as community representatives are highly valued as sources of local pride and esteem.

The aforementioned findings were further articulated through the sub-theme *becoming community role models*. In their accounts of this sub-theme, the athletes emphasized a need to persist in advancing their sport careers as a way of actively countering the oppressive attitudes of the Euro-Canadian community members, as well as proliferating more constructive and empowering messages within the Aboriginal community. In relation to the latter, the athletes

specifically articulated how they were trying to leverage themselves as local role models within the Aboriginal community, taking responsibility for inspiring local community members to pursue their aspirations (Findlay & Kohen, 2007). This was particularly evident when Hailey stated, “I try and tell the kids, like, anybody can do it. Look at me; I’m from the res and I went to the World Championships. If I can do it, you can do it,” (Hailey: 41 year old female). This sub-theme and the more encompassing theme of *developing a vision for the future* reveal how many of the Aboriginal athletes developed a stronger commitment to contribute to their Aboriginal communities as they engaged in the Euro-Canadian context (Goodwill & McCormick, 2012). This focus on community development has been documented by Nicholson et al. (2011), in their research on elite Aboriginal football players relocated into “mainstream” contexts in Australia. However, these authors emphasized how the Aboriginal athletes were willing to retire early from their sport pursuits in order to return home to help their communities. In contrast, the athletes in the current project emphasized how they were motivated to continue persisting in their sport pursuits, even when it was challenging, in order to give back to their communities through their success. The current project herein provides new contextual insight into how Aboriginal athletes dynamically navigate the need to “give back” to the communities they relocated away from.

The current project advances an Indigenous decolonizing research agenda through the focus on positive experiences. To date, much of the research on Indigenous peoples has focused on the negative aspects of their lives, emphasizing the problems or challenges that Indigenous peoples must overcome, without recognizing the positive aspects of their lives and their strengths (Battiste, 2000; Forsyth & Heine, 2010; Smith, 1999; Wilson, 2008). Such research, driven by mainstream positivist approaches and academic agendas, has been problematic in proliferating negative stereotypes and problem-saturated narratives about Indigenous communities and

peoples (Smith, 1999; Wilson, 2008). The current project responds to the need for Indigenous decolonizing research that is strength-based and that generates locally meaningful understandings of community members' lives so that possibilities for social change can be espoused from within that community (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Forsyth & Heine, 2010; Smith, 1999; Youngblood Henderson, 2002). Smith (1999) referred to this decolonizing project more directly as "celebrating survival". She explained, "Events and accounts which focus on the positive are important not just because they speak to our survival, but because they celebrate our resistances at an ordinary human level and they affirm our identities as indigenous women and men" (p. 145).

This theme of "celebrating survival" came forward in the current project via the open-endedness of the mandala art-making process and the conversational interview. Through these methods, the Aboriginal participants were able to bring forward positive aspects of their acculturation from their own emic perspectives, and discuss how their experiences made them stronger and more resilient individuals (Blodgett, Coholic, Schinke, McGannon, Peltier, & Pheasant, 2013). Rather than directing the participants to only discuss their acculturation challenges, the research process opened up space for the participants to centralize and celebrate positive aspects of their lives that were personally meaningful. The project herein follows suit with and builds upon the decolonizing Aboriginal sport research of Forsyth, Heine, and Halas, (2006), Forsyth and Heine (2010), and Lavallee (2007, 2008) by taking up a strength-based research approach that highlights the positive aspects of Aboriginal athletes' sport experiences. The implications of this positive focus came across when one participant stated, "I think it's so cool that you are doing this and asking about this stuff. It kind of reminds you that you're actually doing something that's really big and amazing to people." This participant truly enjoyed

sharing her story through both the art making and interview processes, and together these processes seemed to build a sense of pride in her as she reflected on her accomplishments as a relocated athlete. Many of the participants further articulated their intent to use their stories to encourage other Aboriginal youth to pursue their dreams and make positive life choices. In sharing their accounts through a strength-based process, the participants realized that they had something to offer to their community, and acknowledged the potential they had to put their knowledge into action by educating and supporting other on-reserve community members. This outcome reflects a local social change process, as many of the participants became inspired to contribute positively to their home communities through the sharing of their personal stories (Forsyth & Heine, 2010).

The open-ended and strength-based research process also enabled a more holistic (Indigenous) understanding of the participants and their lives to come forward that was not limited to the sport context. Through the participants' visual and narrative accounts, it became apparent that the benefits of their relocation extended well beyond the sport context and had much greater meaning as part of a larger life process. For instance, in the sub-theme *exposure to opportunities available on-reserve* the participants highlighted how their relocation opened up more than a chance to pursue higher levels of sport. In their new contexts, the participants were exposed to a broad range of opportunities and experiences that opened up numerous possibilities for the things they could pursue and become in their futures, therein expanding their life horizons. Many participants openly stated that the opportunities that came with their relocation helped them get off paths that were deemed "destructive" by enabling them to find things they are passionate about and pushing them to excel more generally. Similarly, in the sub-theme *finding out who you are* the participants highlighted the dynamic personal change and growth

they experienced in their Euro-Canadian contexts, and how this process enabled them to move forward in their lives as whole and resilient Aboriginal people rather than just as athletes.

The participants' mandalas also revealed how their sport relocation experiences were made meaningful in relation to a larger life journey. For instance, in Figure 4 an athlete drew a “blur” of colours along a highway leading into in a burst of sunlight, while in Figure 7 another athlete wrote the word “life” and depicted rays of light emanating from her circle. The participants used these images to symbolize the life-changing nature of their sport relocation, revealing how it facilitated a process of personal and cultural growth which enabled them to develop a stronger sense of themselves as Aboriginal people. Similarly, in Figure 11 an individual wrote core cultural values around the perimeter of his mandala; in Figure 12 a participant framed her mandala by the four colours of the Medicine Wheel; and in Figure 22 another participant drew feathers and webbing marks that shaped his mandala into a dreamcatcher.

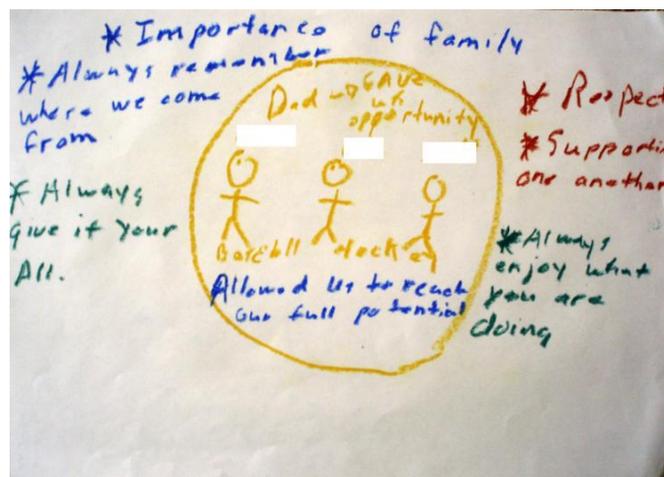


Figure 11. Mandala created by Patrick.



Figure 22. Mandala created by Derek.

These local Aboriginal images served to connect the athletes' individual sport relocation experiences to a larger collective story, illustrating how their journeys as Aboriginal people (including their struggles and accomplishments) were not individual ones (Smith, 1999). Each example demonstrates how the mandala drawing process and conversational interviews resonated with the participants and helped them to share their experiences more holistically through an Indigenous worldview that is encompassing rather than compartmentalizing (Blodgett et al., 2013; Loppie, 2007). As such, the participants' relocation and acculturation experiences can be understood more deeply in relation to a larger sociocultural life context, rather than through a myopic sport focus. The current project contributes to the Indigenous decolonizing scholarship by resisting Western/academic tendencies to decontextualize and compartmentalize knowledge, and alternatively, privileging the experiential and holistic nature of Aboriginal knowledge (Bartlett et al., 2007; Battiste, 2000, 2002; Castellano, 2000; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Loppie, 2007; Smith, 1999).

Chapter 6

6 Strategies for Helping Relocation

This chapter addresses the following research question: What helps or makes it easier for Aboriginal athletes to continue their sport if they have to move away from home? As the participants shared accounts of the changes and challenges they experienced during their relocation, they identified a number of culturally relevant strategies that enabled them to persist in the Euro-Canadian context and experience success. In particular, the participants identified the importance of nurturing an Aboriginal identity, utilizing social support, and fostering a mindset for success. These strategies are explored in the current chapter, with emphasis on how they helped the participants create meaningful positions for themselves in and between their dual cultural contexts and facilitate their acculturation. The implications of these findings are then discussed. Emphasis is placed on how the findings advance an Indigenous decolonizing research agenda by producing knowledge that is action-oriented and aimed at enhancing the community context of athlete relocation, as well as centralizing Indigenous ways of being in the world. In addition, it is explicated how the research findings contribute to the Aboriginal sport research on acculturation by opening up new insight into the need to facilitate social, cultural, and psychological dimensions of athletes' relocation and acculturation. Such findings reflect and respond to the complex, multi-faceted nature of acculturation as it is experienced in the lives of Aboriginal athletes, thus moving away from reductionist understandings of acculturation.

6.1 Results

The strategies for helping relocation were grouped into three overarching themes: (a) nurturing

an Aboriginal identity, (b) utilizing social support, and (c) fostering a mindset for success. The sub-themes within each of these overarching themes are explicated below, using direct narrative quotations from the athletes and images from their mandala drawings to better centralize their voices and stories. The sub-themes were developed around relocation strategies that were identified by multiple (though not necessarily all) of the participants, with an exclusive focus on how these athletes' experiences were shaped by shifting cultural dynamics around race and ethnicity. As explained in Chapter 4, the results do not account for differences in the athletes' experiences and the intersecting facets of their sociocultural locations (i.e., their location in a particular age cohort, sport discipline, socioeconomic status, and gender). The results are therefore limited in that they explore only the convergences in the athletes' experiences.

6.1.1 Nurturing an Aboriginal identity

While navigating the changes and challenges of their relocation, the participants emphasized the importance of nurturing an Aboriginal identity as a means of staying grounded within their home culture. They explained how their identities as Aboriginal community members helped them to connect their personal struggles and experiences to a more collective cultural story of survival and success, therein enabling them to persist more meaningfully in their Euro-Canadian context. They also gained a sense of strength and substantiation through their Aboriginal identities, which helped them overcome experiences of marginalization within the Euro-Canadian culture. In particular, the participants identified the following sub-themes related to nurturing an Aboriginal identity: (a) staying connected to home, (b) engaging in cultural learning, (c) connecting with other Aboriginal people in the host context, and (d) participating in Aboriginal sport contexts.

Staying connected to home. Many participants talked about the importance of periodically returning to their home reserves and re-immersing themselves in their local cultural contexts in order to maintain a sense of community connectedness. As revealed through Patrick's mandala (see Figure 11), staying connected to home was an important life teaching that his father passed on to him and his siblings in order to ground them as Aboriginal people:

My dad chose for our family to live in [city] as opposed to living in [reserve]. But at the same time, throughout the summer we would always go back and stay with my grandma on the reserve. So we still had that tie back there... It's hard to explain because he [dad] never really said any of this stuff. It's more like you just know what he was trying to do, right? I guess it's just like a subliminal message that you learn. This is what I learned from it. Basically, what I surrounded the circle with was some of the things that our dad taught us... That one there [in mandala], I wrote "always remember where you come from". That's probably a lesson where we would always go back to [reserve]. It's not like we moved to [city] and then didn't remember our community. And I still continue to go back. It's soothing when you go there, I guess. (Patrick: 23 year old male)

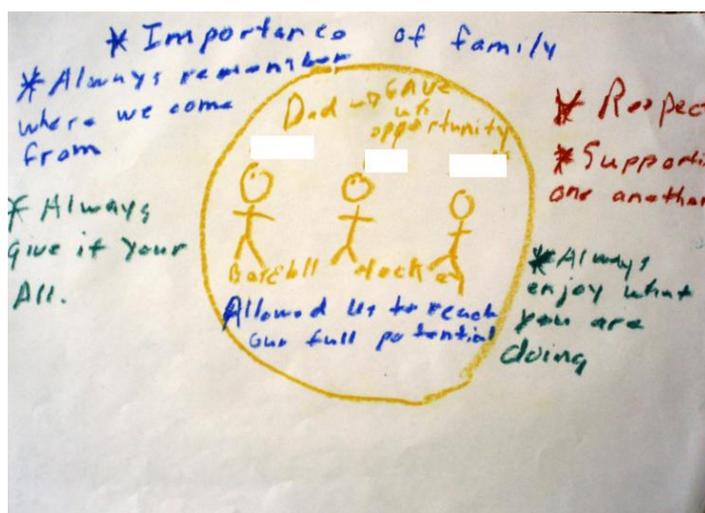


Figure 11. Mandala created by Patrick.

Through regular retreats to his home community, Patrick was able to forge meaningful cultural connections that supported his Aboriginal identity and provided a sense of solace and security during his relocation. He was thus better able to persist in the Euro-Canadian context without becoming inundated by the “white ways” around him.

Building on this account, Andrea used the image of a heart to reveal how deeply important these home connections were to her journey (see Figure 12):

Those three houses [on mandala] are pretty much the heart of my family, just because we’re so close together. There’s my house, then my next door neighbour is my grandma, and then next door is my auntie and uncle with their kids. So we’re all in one little area. And I put a heart because I’ll always love being there, home in [reserve]... Wherever I go I’ll always come back and be proud of where I’m from. I’ll never just leave [reserve] and never come back. I’ll always love being here. (Andrea: 18 year old female)



Figure 12. Mandala created by Andrea.

Through the image of a heart, Andrea visually positioned her home community as a core lifeline in her relocation journey. No matter how far away she moved she always made time to come

back home and cultivate her community connections, as this local context instilled pride and strength in her as an Aboriginal person. Together, these accounts reveal how the participants actively worked to re-negotiate their positions as Aboriginal community members, vacillating towards their home communities as sources of strength and substantiation during their acculturation. Their efforts helped to offset trepidation that they were abandoning their Aboriginal communities through their relocation.

Engaging in cultural learning. A few participants shared accounts of how they sought to learn more about their Aboriginal culture and history when they were confronted with the realities of the Euro-Canadian context. This cultural learning helped to ease the participants' acculturation by making them more aware of the cultural struggles that Aboriginal peoples have gone through for many years, and connecting that knowledge to their own struggles pursuing sport in the Euro-Canadian context. Reflecting on her image of a graduation cap linked to a teepee (see Figure 7), Taylor articulated how learning about Aboriginal history facilitated her relocation journey:

That [image] was just connecting my education to my learning about my culture, and kind of getting over the racism that I went through. I went to private school in [city] for grade 10 and 11, and it wasn't until then that I actually started to learn about the history of my people, like learning what we went through. I even asked my dad, because my dad knows a lot about this stuff. He says he's been through a lot of racism too, and that's when he started telling me about the history and letting me know what really happened and how some people can be really ignorant and they don't know what they're talking about, basically. So I learned a lot of that stuff and it kind of made me proud to be who I am again, just to see how far we've come. I just incorporated that into my education to

get over what happened with the racism. Now I know that I should be proud. I get that other people – well, I don't get it, but I can see where it comes from, like our history. But now I know the truth about our history so I know these people are just kind of ignorant about the whole situation about Aboriginal people. I just kind of incorporated that with my education and learned about Aboriginal peoples, and just got over it. Well, maybe not got over it, but it helped me to realize why that happened. That really helped me get back on track. (Taylor: 19 year old female)



Figure 7. Mandala created by Taylor.

Taylor emphasized the new sense of pride she gained from learning more about her cultural background, as she came to appreciate the strength and resiliency of Aboriginal peoples and recognized those traits within herself. She was better able to overcome challenging situations in the host context (e.g., racism) with this deeper cultural understanding, as she connected her personal sport journey to a more collective cultural journey of survival.

Building on these insights, Derek visualized eagle feathers hanging from hockey sticks (see Figure 22) to reveal the pertinence of his cultural knowledge in his relocation journey:

I've got the eagle feathers hanging here and that represents my culture, something that I

stick too. It's something very strong that I'm very proud of. It makes me stronger and prouder as a Native athlete, because it reminds me of all the struggles our people have gone through and how we are survivors. (Derek: 20 year old male)



Figure 22. Mandala created by Derek.

It is evident that participants such as Derek actively engaged their cultural knowledge as a means of fortifying their Aboriginal identities within the Euro-Canadian culture. As they learned more about their cultural roots, the participants were better able to make sense of the cultural changes and challenges they were navigating in their new sport contexts, and were prepared to resist assimilative pressures that threatened their identities. In short, the participants were shifting their thinking to create a more meaningful reality for themselves in and between the Euro-Canadian and Aboriginal contexts.

Connecting with other Aboriginal people in the host context. Another strategy that helped to facilitate the participants' relocation and acculturation was connecting with other Aboriginal people who were also living in the Euro-Canadian context. This was evidenced when Derek shared an account of how he gravitated towards the only other Aboriginal teammate on his hockey team, feeling a greater sense of comfort and connectedness with this individual:

The culture shock for me in a sense was in the dressing room. Like, I was one of only two Aboriginal guys in there. The rest of the dressing room was purely French-speaking guys and English non-Aboriginals... When I walked into the room and saw the other Aboriginal guy he was real quiet the whole time until finally I went up to him and said “Hey, where are you from?” Because I could tell he was Aboriginal. So I said “What reserve are you from?” or whatever. Then that’s when he started speaking up more about himself. And I did as well. It did make me feel more comfortable. Because I had never played on a team without Aboriginal people on it. It’s like you gotta go talk to him, because it’s someone to relate to. (Derek: 20 year old male)

By nurturing a cultural connection with his fellow team member, Derek opened up a space where he could more comfortably share his identity and experiences as an Aboriginal person and receive cultural support. This helped him to embrace his Aboriginal identity within the larger Euro-Canadian sport context, as symbolized in his mandala through the image of a Native hand shaking a white hand (see Figure 22). Hailey affirmed this cultural dynamic, noting that she was able to be more open and less censored with Aboriginal people:

There are not really a lot of Native people who are into archery that compete at the same level as me. So when I do see Native people competing, it’s not really a shock but it’s like oh, I should go and introduce myself. It’s a little bit different being with Native people than non-Native people, because when you joke with Native people it doesn’t matter what the joke is, everybody laughs. Especially when they’re res [reserve] jokes. If you’ve lived on a res then you know because it’s like that on every single reserve. But if you accidentally use that joke to a non-Native person they just kind of look at you like, what are you talking about? You have to remember who you’re with when you’re talking

about yourself, because Native people will relate easier than non-Native people. (Hailey: 41 year old female)

These words provide insight into the fact that Aboriginal community members are mindful of how they express themselves around Euro-Canadian people and often withhold certain aspects of their identities and experiences because they are outside of the “mainstream”. Accordingly, it was pertinent for the participants to build connections with other Aboriginal community members in their host contexts in order to create meaningful spaces where their identities could be fully embraced and reinforced.

Participating in Aboriginal sport contexts. While pursuing their sport dreams in Euro-Canadian contexts, many participants emphasized how beneficial it was for them to periodically participate in Aboriginal sport contexts such as the Little NHL, the National Aboriginal Hockey Championship (NAHC), or a pow-wow event. The participants noted how revitalizing it was to be able to compete alongside other Aboriginal peoples from across Canada and build new cultural relationships within the realm of sport, away from the host culture. This was articulated by Andrea when she was asked to identify a high point during her relocation:

I went to Saskatchewan for NAHC, the National Aboriginal Hockey Championship. And the people we met there – there were a bunch of Natives, and we just had a ball over there. Even though it was really strict, like the hours and you had to be at games at certain times and warm-ups and you couldn't have any distractions, after all that was done we'd go meet up with other teams that we knew or that we just met and go for a little dinner or go for a movie. Those tournaments were always fun. NAHC is pretty much the biggest thing for Native players in Canada because there's one team from every province, and it's the best players going up against each other... It just felt so awesome to be a part of that

and experience that. (Andrea: 18 year old female)

Taylor also reflected positively on her experiences participating in NAHC, depicting red spokes around her mandala (see Figure 7) to capture how affirming such experiences were for her as an Aboriginal person:

Just being able to meet other Aboriginal peoples from all over Canada was pretty cool. I think those were my favourite tournaments every season. Like, just getting together with like 15 or 16 other Aboriginal girls and just playing for a week – no school, just hockey every day, against other Aboriginal people from all over Canada – that was pretty cool.

(Taylor: 19 year old female)

Such experiences re-invigorated the participants to persist in the Euro-Canadian context, showing them that they weren't the only Aboriginal athletes striving to succeed and that there was a larger network of support around them. This came across more deeply when Mike explained why he regularly participated in pow-wows:

You have to be there for the experience, for the social aspect and the cultural aspect of it... My family just started off going traditional pow-wows. Like, we would just go to pow-wows to have fun basically. Then eventually my parents leaned us into "Well, let's go to this competition pow-wow and we'll just see how it goes." Along the way you find what is called pow-wow families, new relationships with other families that are not related to you by blood or anything but you know them as if they were your family. So eventually they might invite you to go into one of those competition pow-wows... At times, like for one summer, there were about five families that travelled together including ours. Starting here in the pow-wows around this area, we went to Quebec, and then we had exactly two days to dart across a couple provinces to go to Saskatchewan

and do pow-wows there, and then work our way back throughout those pow-wows. That was actually a lot of fun. When you get that kind of family support, everyone supports each other... That's what I like mostly about it, is that you make a tonne of new friends and a tonne of new pow-wow families, a lot of relationships. (Mike: 26 year old male)

When asked what kept him motivated and committed to his pow-wow dancing, Mike stated, "It's part of your life. That's just who you are." These sentiments reveal how deeply these Aboriginal sport contexts resonated with the participants, affirming their identities both as Aboriginal community members and as athletes. These experiences substantiated the participants on a cultural level that enabled them to persist in the Euro-Canadian context.

6.1.2 Utilizing social support

Recognizing that their journeys as relocated athletes were facilitated by key people around them, the participants emphasized the importance of utilizing social support throughout the relocation process. They explained that they frequently had to deal with feelings of insecurity, isolation, and marginalization as they moved away from their Aboriginal communities and into the Euro-Canadian context, and thus it was imperative that they had a network of support around them to give them a sense of substantiation and enable them to persist within this environment more meaningfully. Many participants overtly stated that they would not have been able to endure their relocation and persist after their dreams if they didn't have the support and encouragement of key people in both cultural contexts (i.e., their families, home communities, and host culture team members). The sub-themes identified around the topic of social support were: (a) staying connected to family, (b) drawing support from the Aboriginal community, (c) trusting host team members, and (d) reaching out for help when needed.

Staying connected to family. Across the board, the participants identified their families as the most pertinent source of support during their sport relocation. They explained that they never would have been able to persist in the Euro-Canadian context if they didn't remain connected to their family members throughout, as these people continually encouraged them to achieve their dreams and pushed them through the challenges. This was evident when Andrea illustrated her grandpa as her "number one supporter and fan" in her mandala and linked it to a heart and the word family (see Figure 12):

I guess it started off with my grandpa, with the picture there [in mandala]. He's always supported his main family, like my mom and her brothers and sisters. Like my uncle – which is my grandpa's son – he was really big into hockey. He played Junior A and my grandpa coached. There was a Junior A team in [reserve] a long time ago, and my grandpa coached that. After that he supported my uncle to go out of town and go to college and play hockey. He always pushed him and didn't let him settle for anything less. Same with my mom. She didn't go too far with hockey, but he always pushed her into schooling to get the highest level of education that she can get. So that's where my mom and the rest of the family started supporting and pushing me and motivating me, never letting me settle for something that I could do a lot better. If my mom or dad couldn't attend a hockey tournament due to work or maybe being sick with my little sister, then my grandparents or aunties or uncles would take me. If they knew I was playing bad they would come see me in the dressing room and pull me away and tell me "If your mom or dad or grandpa was here they'd know you could play better." So I'd be like okay, and I'd go back out there and play my best or hardest. (Andrea: 18 year old female)

This account reveals how deeply the support runs in many Aboriginal families, with multiple generations of family members enabling this participant to move outside of the reserve and pushing her to succeed to her full potential. The centrality of this support was reaffirmed when Justin reflected on the word “family” in his mandala (see Figure 23):

I put family because that’s who comes and watches my games. I put a hockey rink because that’s pretty much what brings my family together. When I was younger I didn’t play right away in organized leagues, I just played on the outdoor rink with my dad. We went there after school every day, me and my dad. Every day, from 4:00 until 10:00 after school. He wanted me to get good for when I joined a league. He has pretty much taught me everything I know with hockey and that, and he supported me moving away to pursue it more competitively. My grandma and grandpa are die-hard hockey fans too. They’re pretty much the reason why I am still playing. They enjoy watching me play and supporting me. My mom and sister do too. They all always come up to watch my games – like, every game. Even if we go to [city] or [city], they go pretty much everywhere... It makes it pretty easy when you have all that support. (Justin: 20 year old male)



Figure 23. Mandala created by Justin.

When asked to reflect on a title for his mandala, Justin stated, “I would call it family circle. They’ve supported me so much and been an important part of my hockey experiences.”

Similarly, Patrick created a mandala that visually centralized his family members within the circular form, and proceeded to refer to it as the “family sharing circle” (see Figure 11).

Providing insight into the pertinence of the family circle during relocation, Kaitlyn depicted a heart near the word “family” (see Figure 16) and explained how her family continually reassured her when she doubted herself in the Euro-Canadian context.

I’d say the biggest thing for me was Skyping my mom. As much as I cried and it was upsetting for me [being away from home], she was the one – both of my parents actually, like my whole family – they would reassure me why I was there [in host city]. Even though I knew why I was going there, they were the ones reassuring me, telling me that my decision was right and that I would get over the homesickness. I’m happy that my family was there along the whole way, because I wouldn’t have done it without them.

(Kaitlyn: 18 year old female)



Figure 16. Mandala created by Kaitlyn.

As revealed through these accounts, the support the participants received from their families

helped to validate their relocation and reassure them that they were in the right place to achieve their dreams and realize their life's potential. With their family behind them, the participants realized that they were not on this arduous journey alone and were thus able to persist in the Euro-Canadian context without feeling like they were disconnecting from their kin or being pulled back home. In short, the participants' were able to move towards the Euro-Canadian context with a greater sense of security knowing they were embraced within their family circle.

Drawing support from the Aboriginal community. Moving beyond the family, a handful of participants emphasized the important role their home communities played in supporting and facilitating their relocation as athletes. This was exemplified when Andrea drew an image of her home reserve (see Figure 12) and shared how local community members recognized her potential as an athlete early on and encouraged her to pursue hockey outside of her reserve:

I started off in house league hockey in [reserve] with the boys, and a lot of people in the community knew that I was more outstanding than most of the players, and they suggested to my parents that they put me on the [regional] boys' team. My parents were like "What [regional] boys' team?" They told them there was a AA team for atom, bantam, and midgets and I would have qualified for the atoms at the time. So we went to those tryouts with the AA boys and I made it. So that's where I played for two years and started advancing in hockey... Those community members definitely supported me going off to pursue hockey... The parents around [reserve] still really support me and [friend]. Not just our own parents, but other parents in the community. They want us to be role models for their kids so they support us in the things we do. (Andrea: 18 year old female)

It was through the initial encouragement of community members that Andrea was able to realize the potential for her to pursue sport outside of the reserve and advance her hockey career. Brent

added an example of how community members from his home reserve supported his boxing and financially helped him to advance his career by competing in Europe:

I got to go to Italy to fight. The people back home thought it was pretty cool too, you know, like on the reserve. People were watching me fight and cheering me on it. So that was pretty awesome... A guy from [reserve] paid for my ticket too. He paid for my ticket just because I was from there. I've never even met him before. So I've got lots of support from the people back home, and it feels pretty good. (Brent: 22 year old male)

Given these experiences, the Andrea indicated above that community members continued to support her and other local athletes as positive examples of Aboriginal people who are pursuing their dreams and achieving success. A second participant, Patrick, reaffirmed this propensity for Aboriginal people to support fellow community members who are pursuing success, as reflected in his mandala by the words “supporting one another” (see Figure 11):

The people from [reserve] really supported me. Like when I played for [city], we only played one game in [city near home reserve] each year just because they were so far away. And I remember the one time we played there, there was a big sign with my name on it and all these people cheering me on. So it was pretty awesome to see that support. It's not even just members of your community, its members from other surrounding reserve communities too. It's hard to explain the support. It's just everyone goes and watches, no matter which community you're from. Like even for me with the Little NHL, like I'd go watch some games even though I don't know anyone. You just go support other Aboriginal people. You want to support those kinds of people who are out there working for something. (Patrick: 23 year old male)

Patrick's account lends insight into the fact that community support is not limited to one's home

reserve, but often encompasses the cultural community of Aboriginal people more generally. Such cultural-level support helped the participants realize the significance of their relocation journeys in terms of a more collective endeavour to uphold examples of the strength and success of Aboriginal people. In addition, this cultural-level support helped the participants retain a pertinent sense of connectedness to their home culture and strengthen their identities and positions as Aboriginal community members. The participants were thus able to persist more meaningfully within the Euro-Canadian context as community-supported Aboriginal athletes.

Trusting host team members. Another significant source of support for the participants came from their teammates and, to a lesser degree, their coaches in the host sport context. This came across when Caroline shared an account of how her teammates immediately helped her adjust to her new environment by socializing with her and encouraging her on the ice:

It was hard, but the team that I played for made me feel better. They got to know me well and they helped me a lot. The first day I came, they were just really friendly and started talking to me even though I was shy because I didn't know anybody in the room. And they just made me feel comfortable and they told me when I was doing good, and would help me out and say "Oh, try this next time. Maybe it will make a change." (Caroline: 14 year old female)

Building on this example, Trevor explained more generally how teammates can become like family, thus revealing the importance of these relationships during the relocation and acculturation process:

With team sports, as you age there is an unwritten rule that you have to learn to bond. And for me that's how it's always been. With my teams, we've always been a group. I'm not going to say that we've liked everybody all the time, but if we saw somebody

struggling, we were there for them. That's just how I was brought up in team sports. No matter what it is, they're your team member. They become your family for that moment in time. That's just the way I always see it. (Trevor: 24 year old male)

Trevor went on to explain how his dad instilled this perspective into him when he relocated into the Euro-Canadian context and was the only Aboriginal player on his team:

My dad helped me a lot with this kind of stuff, like pre-game preparation talks. We were on our way to the arena and we're just sitting there and he goes, "You know, there's a good chance that you're going to be the only Native player there. It's not going to be different. They're still going to be your teammates, and if it comes down to it, they should still have your back. They should still be there for you and you can still trust them."... That's how I understand it and that's the way it has always been for me.

In his mandala (see Figure 6), Trevor drew himself in the hockey arena from the back angle, revealing how his teammates were symbolically behind him in a supporting role. His account lends insight into the deep level of trust and security that was established amongst the members of his team, and how these dynamics made him feel connected to his team as a family.



Figure 6. Mandala created by 24 year old male.

This family-like relationship was highlighted again when Kaitlyn shared a story about how her teammates helped her work through her initial homesickness and feel welcomed into the Euro-Canadian context:

My friends, like the girls on the team, pulled me through my homesickness. Without them I wouldn't have gotten this far. The girls were very welcoming. They weren't hesitant to welcome me in with open arms. And most of those girls knew each other, so it was easy for them to connect. But then after a couple weeks it was just easy for them to bring me in, and I was able to talk to them about my problems, and talk to my coach about everything. My coach didn't think I would end up staying there the whole year, because I was that homesick. But I ended up doing it with the support of the girls on the team. They were like my new family, I guess. They have all just been so welcoming that it didn't matter who you were, because we all come from different parts... We spend most of our time with our hockey team. I mean, we're on the ice twice a day every day, and then we have school. So we look out for one another and support each other. (Kaitlyn: 18 year old female)

It is evident that the social support offered by their new teammates and coaches helped the participants gain a sense of belonging and acceptance in the Euro-Canadian context, akin to being in a family. The participants were thus substantiated in their new environments and were able to acculturate more meaningfully knowing they were connected to and embraced by the host cultural members around them.

Reaching out for help when needed. In order to facilitate success during the relocation process, the participants emphasized the importance of knowing when they needed to seek help from others, and not being afraid to reach out for that help. It wasn't enough to simply have

supportive people around them, such as family or teammates, if the participants did not ask for help when they needed it. This was explicated by Hailey as she revealed of how she landed in the hospital before a major competition, because she had too many things on her plate that she was trying to manage alone:

Two years ago when I was planning to go to the World Championships I had a really hard time juggling work and my family and practice and the finance. It really stressed me out and I had to go to the hospital once because I was just really stressed out about everything. So it was like ugh, I can't worry about that... You need to get who you need to help you. Because I think that's what we as Anishinaabe people have trouble with, is asking for help sometimes. "I have too much to do, can you help me?" We really don't like to let others see us as we can't do it all. We're not super humans... I think this year so far that's been working for me. Because I used to just go with the flow and whatever came my way I'd just deal with it however, or ignore it.... This year it's been like okay, I've gotta do this, I've gotta do this, I've gotta do this, and if I need help I'll tell somebody. If I've got too much on my plate, I'll get help to deal with it and try to make it go away. (Hailey: 41 year old female)

As revealed through this narrative, Aboriginal people are often working so hard to prove that they are capable of success that they often find it hard to ask for help from others, even when they are struggling. Through their experiences, however, the participants realized that their journeys as relocated athletes were greatly facilitated when they were able to accept assistance from the people around them, rather than struggling through difficult times alone. This was affirmed when Natasha explained how she experienced greater success and happiness, symbolized as a sun in her mandala (see Figure 3), once she began to embrace the social support

around her in the host sport context:

It helped me feel like I'm not the only person who has these lows. I started to notice other people's stories and kind of connect with people who had similar stories, similar hardships. Like my best friend at school, she's kind of doing the same thing. She used to play on [team], which is a really good hockey team, but she was the only one of the girls from that hockey team who didn't get scouted for an [elite] school. She got scouted by the lower schools, and ended up coming to [university] like me. So she was in the same boat as me, like proving everybody wrong, proving she could do it; Proving everything... So it just helped me to realize that I'm not the only one who has this pressure that I feel. So it kind of made me feel like I could disperse it, I guess. I just got happier... It's silly because I guess I could have had more fun the first two years if I had just reached out to people and asked for help. Those people are really put in your life for a reason, that's how I see it. (Natasha: 22 year old female)



Figure 3. Mandala created by Natasha.

Taylor similarly recognized that challenges are experienced in life by everyone and can be overcome with support from the right people:

I just think that everybody has a situation that they feel like they won't get over or conquer. But if you ask the right people and get the help, anyone can get over it and learn from it and make themselves a better person. (Taylor: 19 year old female)

These participants realized that asking for help is not a sign of weakness, but rather a necessary strategy for success. By reaching out to those around them and opening up about their relocation and acculturation struggles, the participants discovered commonalities in their struggles and experiences that were shared with other people around them. They came to understand that struggles are a part of everyone's story, and were able to disperse some of the burden they felt in their new contexts by recognizing that they were not alone in their journeys. The participants' acculturation was thus facilitated as a social process, wherein they were able to ask for and accept help from the people around them rather than concealing their struggles.

6.1.3 Fostering a mindset for success

As the third major strategy for successful relocation, the participants highlighted the need to foster a mindset that is conducive to success. By maintaining a strong and positive frame of mind, the participants found they were better able to cope with the demands and pressures of their host sport context, and were psychologically prepared to work through challenges from both the Euro-Canadian and Aboriginal cultural contexts that threatened to pull them away from their sport pursuits. They were able to stay focused on the dreams they set out to achieve and remain optimistic and confident in their ability to achieve them. In particular, the participants identified and discussed the following sub-themes around fostering a mindset for success: (a) staying focused on goals, (b) maintaining a positive attitude, (c) reflecting on one's love for sport, and (d) accepting that there will be challenges.

Staying focused on goals. The participants unanimously agreed that a major facilitating factor for their success as relocated athletes was staying focused on the goals they had set out to achieve in the Euro-Canadian context. By maintaining this mental focus, the participants were able to determine what they needed to do to get where they wanted to be, in terms of their sport and education aspirations, and not allow other distractions to jeopardize their dreams. This was revealed through Jessica's image of a road leading towards a bright light (see Figure 4), which symbolized how she was focused on guiding herself towards her goals:

That's really the big thing about moving away, is that you're not with your family. You're not with your mom who's going to guide you through everything, or your dad who's going to guide you through everything. You have to guide yourself. You have to know which direction you want to go, and which way to turn and what to avoid. The biggest thing is what to avoid and what not to get into. You just gotta know what's right and wrong for you. It's a big thing with me too. I know what I want in my life and that's what I'm going to go for. It's about knowing what you want, what your goals are, and not getting mixed up in all the other things. (Jessica: 15 year old female)



Figure 4. Mandala created by Jessica.

Trevor shared a pertinent example of how he lost sight of his hockey goals when his grandmother became ill, and how he still grapples with the knowledge that he missed an opportunity to advance his career. He illustrated himself focusing on a goalie in a hockey net, while the word “cancer” surrounded him on the ice (see Figure 6):

It just pretty much shows me standing on one side of the blue line and the goalie on the other end – just me and the goalie. But when I was in [city] I was given news that my grandma was diagnosed with cancer and it was getting pretty late, so every time I was playing all I could think about was her and the cancer. That’s why I wrote cancer all over the ice and in the stands... I told the coach the story, told him about my grandma getting cancer, and I said “I’d like to go home.” And then I said “can you give me two weeks to come back?” He said “I’m not too sure”. We talked about it a little bit and we came to the conclusion that I could come back if I wanted to, if I felt that I actually could come back. So I came home, made a few phone calls and no call ever came back. So I don’t know if I really should have stayed [in city], if then I would have made it [onto the team]. And that’s something that I’m going to have to live with... It just pops into the back of my head every once in a while. You know, I don’t regret coming home, but I do sit there when I’m watching the hockey game and think what if? What could have happened?

(Trevor: 24 year old male)

Based this experience, Trevor went on to share the following advice for relocated Aboriginal athletes:

Be careful with your choices. You’re going out there [to the Euro-Canadian context] for a reason, whether it’s just to go to school or go play hockey. If you’re going to go play hockey, go there and play hockey... Just know that if you want to get out of here you’ve

got to be focused. See your target, pick it, and hit it. You've got to realize that it's not going to be easy. You're going to have a choice every day that you're not going to want to make... But keep in mind why you're going and don't get side tracked. Just focus on your goal and reach out and grab it. It's right there, you just have to work hard to get it.

It is evident that the participants were better able to direct themselves in the Euro-Canadian context and stay on track for success when they kept their sport and educational goals at the forefront of their minds. This mental focus helped the participants prioritize what was truly important for moving forward in their lives, rather than allowing them to become side tracked by new influences and freedoms in the Euro-Canadian context, as well as factors in their home communities that could pull them back from their aspirations. In other words, the participants' goal-orientation helped them to maintain meaningful positions in between their dual cultural realities, without feeling the need to pull away from one or the other.

Maintaining a positive attitude. In addition to staying focused on their goals, the participants emphasized the value of maintaining a positive attitude while pursuing their sport in the Euro-Canadian context. They explained that it was very easy to become intimidated and self-doubting in the host context, not only because they were adjusting to higher levels of sport, but also because they were also confronted with host culture attitudes that Aboriginal people can't "make it" off the reserve (see Chapter 4). It was thus imperative that the Aboriginal athletes believed in themselves and were able to project a positive attitude when times got tough. This was articulated when Jordan explained how he overcame a period of failure and was able to achieve success in his sport, as written in his mandala (see Figure 8):

What happened is that I just wiped those previous years away when I was getting demoted continuously and was failing continuously. I left them behind me and forgot

them. Starting over. I was no longer feeling down and feeling sorry for myself. I was going out and playing, and believing in myself... And then that translated into success on the ice. My skating was always okay but even that felt faster. And my confidence on the ice handling the puck, that's when it kind of took off. This was when I started feeling good about myself. I just kept focused and found my way. After that was when I was called up to the [elite hockey league]. Things really went up that year. When I got called up to the [elite hockey league] I was only the second guy of my time to play from [reserve]. So that was a huge accomplishment. That was the real goal, to get to that point. That's really what I was striving for from day one. It was an exciting time. Coming to the end of that season I was really written off by a lot of people to really be a successful hockey player. After not being wanted by all these teams and being traded, to get to that point was a real accomplishment. Because I knew I was exceeding all these expectations that other people had put on me. These guys didn't want me. This was really where I just showed myself and showed them that I was much better. I showed them... And again, that year I remember I did change my mindset again when I got called up. I told myself intimidation is no longer going to be with me when I play for the [team name]. I had a more positive attitude. And I remember when I said that that I got called up again and I scored my first two goals with them, which again was a huge accomplishment...

Going through everything that I have gone through, I think I know if another Aboriginal person got into my position that I was in, of being at the doorstep of an elite level of sport, I think I would know what to tell them, whether it was hockey or baseball or basketball. I would just say they're playing these sports for a reason; because they're good at it. You cannot be intimidated and cannot back down from pursuing what you

want to do, no matter what anybody ever throws at you and whatever happens to you.

(Jordan: 24 year old male)

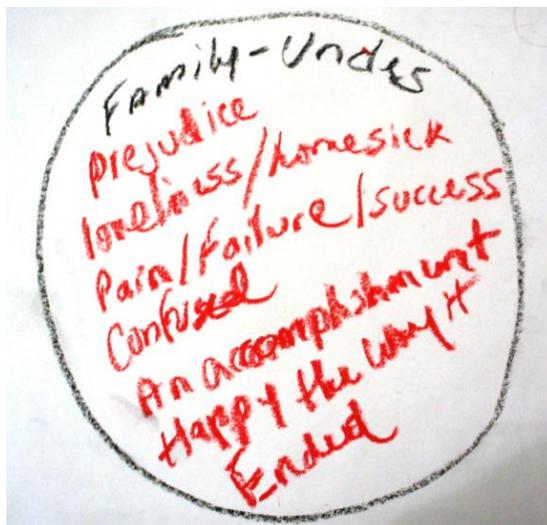


Figure 8. Mandala created by Jordan.

Another participant, Derek, summed up these insights when he succinctly stated:

Honestly, the biggest thing is that you start to doubt yourself and that's when things are going to go wrong. You've always got to believe that you can find a way and that there is a way that you can do it. Just stay positive. (Derek: 20 year old male)

These accounts reveal how the participants' attitudes could either enhance or hinder their success in the Euro-Canadian culture. By maintaining a positive attitude, the participants found they were better able to cope with the demands of their host context, both in terms of their physical sport performances and their mental ability to rise above negative cultural stereotypes.

Reflecting on one's love for sport. Many participants revealed that the higher pressures and challenges that came with their Euro-Canadian sport contexts often left them feeling disenchanting with their sport dreams. Accordingly, they stressed the importance of taking time to re-connect with the reasons why they love their sport. This strategy helped the participants to

remember the enjoyment they get from their sport and keep them in a positive mindset to persist. The pertinence of this love for sport came across in Jessica's mandala when she visualized a hockey net and puck with a vibrant heart above it (see Figure 4):

Hockey is just an unreal sport. Everything about it is just awesome. Like whenever your skates push on the ice and you hear that sound, you know that you have a powerful stride and you're going to get to that puck first, and you're going to beat that person. Or when somebody runs you against the boards and you give them that shot back it's like that rush of excitement. Or when you throw your punch for the first time and your coach gets mad at you. You have to experience all these things... You just know what it feels like, and it's hard to describe how it feels without getting lost and just sitting there thinking about how it feels. I don't know, it's just all about the general love. I'll never ever stop loving hockey... Even sometimes when I'm in the car listening to music and I'm thinking about hockey, my legs just tense up and it's like oh, I just wanna go skate. Nobody will understand that feeling unless they play. It's just that urge and that love of the sport.

(Jessica: 15 year old female)

Jessica then went on to explain how she struggled to persist in the Euro-Canadian context when she lost sight of her love for hockey and no longer felt enjoyment in it:

I just find that when you get to a certain level people start getting like "I'm all that." It's just not about the fun of the game anymore. People lose touch with what they actually like in hockey, besides being the one who can score the winning goal.... That's why I was just like I don't want to play anymore. I mean, I wanted to keep playing hockey, but not like this.

Natasha shared an account of how she re-discovered her love for hockey, which she symbolized

as a bright sun in her mandala, and how it relieved the pressure she visualized as black scribbles pressing down on her heart (see Figure 3):

For two years I was just miserable. There was just a lot of pressure that I felt... It was the pressure of like, I'm here now, so I can't fail because if I fail then I go back on everything I've done to prove to everybody I can do it. And I guess I didn't want to be another stereotype that tried to go away and didn't make it. I was just trying so hard not to fail... But the hockey was bad and the coaches were bad. We were not learning anything, we were not improving, we were not working as a team, we were not doing anything to make ourselves better, to become a better hockey program. And I just couldn't play for that. None of it was fun... So by the end of that second year I had made the decision to not play on the team anymore. I decided I was going to finish my schooling, but just not play for the university. But over the summer I got an email saying that they were starting up a [second] team and they wanted me to play on that team because they knew I had quit the [first] team. So I was like, great. This was like a sign I'm supposed to be playing... And it kind of brought it back to being fun as opposed to being an obligation, like I *have* to go to hockey. I just started thinking, like, hockey is supposed to be fun. I started not caring so much about those other things and just kind of being me. It helped a lot to take the pressure off. It made hockey more enjoyable. So that's kind of where it kind of gets happy at the end. I'm so excited for next year now, I can't wait to go back... But it took me a really long time to realize that hockey is supposed to be fun and not a chore or a job. (Natasha: 22 year old female)

These accounts illustrate the need for participants to stay connected to the enjoyment they get from their sport and not getting caught up in all the pressures and expectations that come with

greater success. By reflecting on their love for their sport, the participants were better able to maintain a positive mindset in the Euro-Canadian context and persist through the challenges that pushed them back towards the reserve. This finding was reaffirmed through other mandala drawings depicting images of hearts around hockey sticks (see Figure 9), the words “love sports” (see Figure 18), and an image of the hockey arena as “the place I love to be” (see Figure 23),

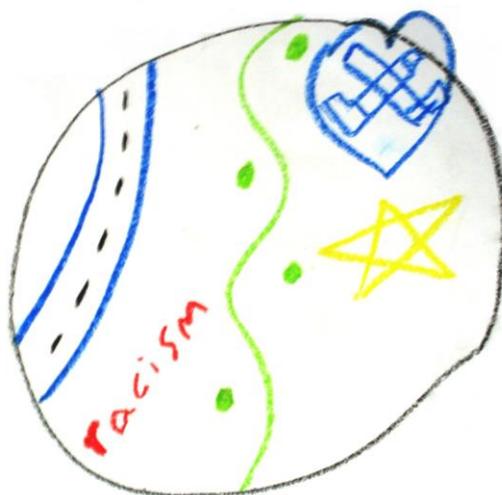


Figure 9. Mandala created by Alexander.



Figure 18. Mandala created by McKayla.

Accepting that there will be challenges. Another mental strategy that the participants used to facilitate their success in the Euro-Canadian context was to accept that challenges are an inevitable part of the journey, and refusing to allow themselves to give up during those difficult times. This was evident when Jordan explained why he wrote “happy the way it ended” in his mandala (see Figure 8):

The reason why I’m happy with the way it ended is because I finished what I set out to do. I went right to the end of what I could do. A lot of Native kids don’t go right to the end. They stop in the middle somewhere; they stop when they’re faced with obstacles. Which is something that happens it seems like every day, where somebody quits out of sports just because it’s not easy for them. What I went through, none of it was easy for me... But I stuck to it. Now I’m happy that I did stick to it. Because I know a lot of my friends, even they got to certain points of playing Junior and they never got to where I got to. They gave up part way... I guess in ways I was warned a little bit too, given the heads up to keep going, no matter what. That’s what I was taught. Because there’s a lot of instances where we do face difficult times and it’s a stepping stone to where we really want to be. I think to get to really where you want to be, you’re going to have to face those difficult times. A big part of having these kids leave the reserve to play sports is warning them about the difficulties that they’re going to face and making them aware of everything. They have to know that they just have to keep pursuing and keep going and don’t stop. You can’t stop. (Jordan: 24 year old male)

Jordan indicated that Aboriginal athletes leaving the reserve need to be mentally prepared to persist through difficult times, as those experiences are often the stepping stones to success. This sentiment was reiterated by Trevor who stated, “It’s going to be hard. If it wasn’t hard everybody

would be doing it. Plain and simple. You've got to be ready to give everything you've got if you want to make it," (Trevor: 24 year old male). These participants accepted the challenges of their relocation and acculturation as inevitable, and recognized that they would have to work through them if they wanted to accomplish their goals. Andrea added insight into the reality that there would likely be challenges from within their home communities, in addition to the Euro-Canadian context, which they would have to persist through:

You can't just give up when something goes wrong... Like you can't just give up if something bad happens in your family. Say someone passes away, like your cousin, a grandparent, or your parent, or if there's a split up and you and your boyfriend of a long time split up – you can't just give up and run home. You have to move on. Life goes on and good things will happen and opportunities will come, as long as you keep trying your best... The main thing is to never give up and push yourself as far as you can be pushed.
(Andrea: 18 year old female)

By accepting that they would face difficult times, wherein they would be pushed towards and pulled away from their host and home cultures at various times, these participants were better prepared to navigate their acculturation. They saw these experiences as the precursors to success, and worked through them fluidly in order to come closer to their goals.

6.2 Discussion

Knowledge generation in both Indigenous research and PAR is inextricably linked to action, in alignment with praxis. As explained by Kidd and Kral (2005), community members are not likely to be interested in simply knowing about lived experience, but rather want to generate critical and practical forms of knowledge that can be put into (community-directed) action to

improve local people's lives (Brydon-Miller et al., 2011; Genat, 2009; Jacklin & Kinoshameg, 2008). This action-orientation was affirmed at the outset of the current project when the Aboriginal researchers expressed a need to not only understand the experiences of community athletes who relocate off reserves to pursue sport, but to identify applied pathways through which community athletes can be better supported in relocating and persisting after their sport dreams. The driving emphasis was on generating greater understanding of how the community can transform the situation of athlete relocation for the better, and opening up meaningful opportunities for change to occur (Brydon-Miller et al., 2011; Genat, 2009).

Such action-oriented efforts connect to a larger Indigenous project of decolonization by disrupting the processes and knowledge formations of positivist Western science which have long oppressed and colonized Indigenous communities (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Smith, 1999; Swadener & Mutua, 2008). There is a relinquishment of power and authority to the local Indigenous community, in recognition of the potential of local subjugated knowledges to mobilize community change and facilitate the emancipatory goals of praxis (Lather, 1987). An agenda of self-determination is thus enabled, with local Indigenous community members reclaiming control over their lives through the knowledge-action nexus (Brydon-Miller et al., 2011; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Smith, 1999; Swadener & Mutua, 2008). The current project advances an Indigenous decolonizing agenda by developing applied, culturally relevant strategies for facilitating the relocation of Aboriginal community athletes. Rather than simply describing athletes' lived experiences or producing knowledge that is only pertinent within the academic realm, the research has generated locally resonant knowledge that supports actionable outcomes for community development, in line with local community aspirations. The community can now "take hold of the project of emancipation and attempt to make it a reality on their own

terms” (Smith, 2000, p. 229) by implementing this knowledge into concrete community changes.

For instance, in the core theme *nurturing an Aboriginal identity*, it is evident that the Aboriginal community plays a critical role in strengthening and affirming athletes’ sense of identity and place as they relocate into Euro-Canadian contexts, thus maintaining their cultural connectedness. The importance of these cultural connections have been affirmed through previous research with relocated Aboriginal athletes (Campbell & Sonn, 2009; Nicholson, Hoye, & Gallant, 2011; Schinke et al., 2006). Moving this knowledge into action, the community may now opt to integrate cultural education within local sport programming (as per the sub-theme *engaging in cultural learning*) in order to help on-reserve athletes connect more deeply to their cultural roots and recognize the strength and resiliency that is within them as Aboriginal community members. Through such efforts, athletes will be better prepared to overcome feelings of cultural disconnection or marginalization when they relocate outside of the reserve, and resist assimilative pressures that may threaten their identities in the host culture (Berry, 1999; Goodwill & McCormick, 2012).

The Aboriginal community may also direct efforts at providing more opportunities for off-reserve athletes to participate in Aboriginal sport contexts, such as by hosting community tournaments or pow-wow events. The culturally affirming power of such sport spaces has been emphasized by Lavallee (2007, 2008) through an exploration of an Aboriginal martial arts program offered at a Native Friendship Centre. Similarly, in an investigation of how to mobilize physical activity programs that facilitate Aboriginal youth’s health and well-being and expand their leadership skills, Forsyth and colleagues (Forsyth, Heine, & Halas, 2006; Forsyth & Heine, 2010) focalized the potential of sport for strengthening Aboriginal identities. As further outlined in the sub-theme *participating in Aboriginal sport contexts*, these culturally resonant sport spaces

and experiences can help to substantiate relocated athletes on a cultural level that enables them to persist in Euro-Canadian contexts with a renewed and strengthened sense of self. As another viable opportunity for facilitating athletes' relocation, the community may wish to provide motivational and educational resources with their sport programming to help aspiring athletes *foster a mindset for success*. For instance, the stories of successful athletes may be presented within the Youth Centre to educate and inspire community athletes (Findlay & Kohen, 2007), or local Elders may be brought in to share cultural teachings and personal insights for maintaining a strong mind. Through these efforts, aspiring young athletes will be better prepared to pursue their dreams with a strong and focused mental state, knowing that they are capable of pushing through the challenges and achieving success.

In mobilizing these strategies for change, the community's aim is to facilitate athletes' success during relocation, and support these individuals as positive examples of community members who are pursuing their dreams and striving to make something of their lives. Through such efforts, more on-reserve Aboriginal youth will be inspired to pursue their ambitions wherever they lead, knowing that they are capable of achieving success outside of the reserve and are not confined to their immediate context. As explained by Youngblood Henderson (2000b), it is extremely important from an Aboriginal worldview that each person sets out on a journey to explore his/her talents and gifts, and develop to his/her full potential. Stemming from a holistic approach to life, this journey helps individuals to understand how they contribute to a larger ecological system and are connected to a greater whole. The current project advances this key cultural imperative by facilitating a context that encourages community members to go off and explore their gifts and realize their life potential. These efforts intersect with the work of Forsyth and colleagues (Forsyth et al., 2006; Forsyth & Heine, 2010), which is also aimed at

encouraging Aboriginal youth to develop their leadership skills and personal capacities through sport and physical activity programs, so that they can realize their full potential. Through these projects, social transformation may be catalyzed from within the Aboriginal community, as local people move knowledge into action through their own agency and reclaim control over their lives. Goals of self-determination and emancipation, which are central to decolonizing research, may therein be enacted through the research outcomes (Bishop, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Smith, 1999; Swadener & Mutua, 2008).

The project findings also reinforce another important agenda that is central to Indigenous research and the project of decolonization: connecting (Smith, 1999; Wilson, 2008). Indigenous people's identity and sense of place is grounded in their relationships with other people, the environment, and the larger universe around them. As explained by Wilson (2008), "Rather than viewing ourselves as being *in* relationship with other people or things, we *are* the relationships that we hold and are part of" (p. 80). However, many Aboriginal community members have been disengaged from their core relationships and their relational ways of being, due to a history of being forcibly removed from their lands, families, and communities, and disconnected from their culture and spirituality (Alfred, 2009; Berry, 1999). Making connections and affirming connectedness has thus been centralized as an imperative agenda within Indigenous community research, aimed at re-establishing community members' relational ways of being in the world (Smith, 1999; Steinhauer, 2002; Wilson, 2008; Youngblood Henderson, 2000b).

In this project, the need to connect came across as an adaptive strategy that enabled the Aboriginal athletes to move fluidly in and between their dual cultural contexts by seeking attachments to each. This was first revealed through the core theme *nurturing an Aboriginal identity*. In this theme, the Aboriginal participants stressed the importance of connecting to their

home culture as means of strengthening their identity and place as Aboriginal community members while pursuing sport outside of the community. Through efforts such as visiting their home community, engaging in cultural learning, participating in Aboriginal sport contexts, and connecting with Aboriginal people in the host context, the athletes sought to form deeper cultural ties which would enable them to persist on their journeys as community-backed athletes. These strategies helped the athletes to acculturate in and between their dual contexts more meaningfully, without losing themselves exclusively to the Euro-Canadian culture. Similarly, in the core theme *utilizing social support*, the Aboriginal participants emphasized the pertinence of connecting socially to the people around them, in both the Aboriginal and Euro-Canadian contexts. By forging and resourcing these human relationships, the participants noted that they were able to establish a sense of belonging and identity in both cultural contexts, and could thus move fluidly within and between their two realities. They were better able to persist through the challenges of relocation and achieve success knowing they were connected to the Aboriginal and Euro-Canadian people around them and could (fluidly) seek out support and substantiation within each context as needed. Together, these findings reinforce the need for Aboriginal athletes to make meaningful connections with the people and places around them in order affirm their relational ways of being in the world (Smith, 1999; Steinhauer, 2002; Wilson, 2008; Youngblood Henderson, 2000b) and make their relocation context more meaningful. As summed up by Smith (1999), “To be connected is to be whole” (p. 148; see also Youngblood Henderson, 2000b).

The project findings also contribute to the Aboriginal sport scholarship pertaining to acculturation, most notably by extending the work of Schinke, Michel et al. (2006) and Campbell and Sonn (2009). In examining the adaptation of elite Aboriginal athletes to “mainstream” sport contexts, Schinke and colleagues found that many athletes experienced challenges related to

cultural marginalization and isolation, and thus required greater social support from the people in their host environments (i.e., teammates). Campbell and Sonn identified a coinciding need for Aboriginal social support (i.e., from family members and other Aboriginal athletes) to counteract the culture shock and racism experienced by Australian Aboriginal footballers relocated away from their home communities. Both projects demonstrated how Aboriginal athletes are challenged by a lack of social support within host sport contexts, and provided initial insight into the need for such resources to be developed. However, given that the projects directly inquired about athletes' social support resources (through pre-determined interview questions) and were not open-ended in exploring additional strategies that could facilitate the relocation experiences, the knowledge outcomes are limited. The current project opens up new and more in-depth knowledge about the strategies that enable Aboriginal athletes to persist more meaningfully and resiliently within host sport contexts. Through the open-ended nature of the mandala drawings and conversational interviews, the participants were able to take the lead in sharing strategies for change that were pertinent to them, grounded in their own emic perspectives. They were also encouraged to share in-depth narratives around those strategies, therein enabling local and contextualized understandings to come forward.

The results of this open-ended exploration reaffirmed the work of Schinke, Michel et al. (2006) and Sonn and Campbell (2009) by identifying *utilizing social support* as a core strategy for enhancing relocation. However, the participants provided a deeper understanding of how social support was needed from both host community members and home community members, simultaneously, given their fluid positions in and between dual cultural realities. This finding demonstrates the dynamic nature of their acculturation, as the participants continually had to work to create a meaningful sense of belonging within each culture, and thus required ongoing

support from the people in both contexts (Chirkov, 2009; Rudmin, 2009). It further supports the supposition that acculturation is a shared/social process rather than an individual one, as it involves (re)negotiations in everyday interactional settings (Rudmin, 2009; Schinke, McGannon, Battiochio, & Wells, 2013). Accordingly, it is evident that the acculturation of Aboriginal athletes can be greatly facilitated or hindered by people in the host cultural context, beyond just the Aboriginal community. The identified strategies provide possibilities for those within the Euro-Canadian sport system (i.e., practitioners, administrators, coaches, and teammates) to assist in the development of more meaningful sport contexts for Aboriginal athletes.

Beyond the need for social support, the participants also identified the strategies *nurturing an Aboriginal identity* and *fostering a mindset for success*. The strategy *nurturing an Aboriginal identity* illustrates the pertinence of the home cultural community for substantiating athletes during the relocation and acculturation process and providing a sense of cultural connectedness (as previously discussed). The athletes indicated that they drew much strength and resilience from their identities and positions as Aboriginal community members, and thus they sought to nurture their home cultural identities rather than neglect them while acculturating to the Euro-Canadian context. This finding confirms that acculturation is an open-ended and fluid process of cultural (re)negotiations (Chirkov, 2009), wherein individuals work to maintain meaningful positions and identities within their home culture while also creating new connections within the host culture (Schinke, McGannon, Battiochio, & Wells, 2013; Stambulova, 2013). Moving away from an overly simplistic understanding of acculturation as a linear process, it is recognized that individuals do not move statically towards the host culture and away from their home culture (Schinke & McGannon, 2013; Schinke, McGannon, Battiochio, & Wells, 2013).

The theme *fostering a mindset for success* further highlights the psychological nature of the relocation and acculturation process, as emphasized in the critical acculturation writings of Chirkov (2009) and Rudmin (2009). As explained by Chirkov, individuals must make sense of different culturally constructed realities and systems of meaning when they relocate away from their home culture, and must construct a meaningful reality for themselves in and between their dual contexts in order to function successfully. Given such cognitive demands, the Aboriginal participants identified locally resonant strategies for fostering strong and positive mind frames. Through these strategies the participants found they were better able to cope with the demands and pressures of their host sport context, and were psychologically prepared to work through challenges from both the Euro-Canadian and Aboriginal cultural contexts that threatened to pull them away from their sport pursuits. At the same time, many participants admitted that there were periods when their mental states wavered and they were unable to effectively engage these strategies. These accounts reflect the fluidity of the athletes' experiences, as their journeys were characterized by dynamic ups and down, challenges and successes, and advances and lapses. The results provide novel insight into the need to facilitate cognitive aspects of Aboriginal athletes' relocation, through strategies that are fluid and dynamic.

Taken as a whole, these findings reflect and respond to the complex, and multi-faceted nature of acculturation as experienced in the lives of Aboriginal athletes. Through the open-ended and culturally relevant research processes, the participants were able to bring forward more holistic and comprehensive understandings of how the context of relocation and acculturation can be enhanced at the local level. These contextually driven processes challenged conventional Westernized research approaches that subvert the experiential knowledges of cultural minority groups, instead centralizing them as catalysts for social change. Researchers

should continue to explore diverse, interpretivist methodologies and CSP research approaches to elicit culturally aligned accounts of acculturation as experienced by various athlete groups and bring forward a wider breadth of localized understandings. Such understandings would help direct the efforts of sport psychology practitioners to foster more inclusive sport contexts that support the identities (which are fluidly changing) of all athletes.

Chapter 7

7 Conclusions

This chapter provides an overview of the academic and community level contributions made through the current research, summarizes the main findings of the research, and reveals implications for future CSP researchers. Emphasis is first placed on how the research contributes to the CSP scholarship and also advances the Indigenous project of decolonization by producing knowledge which is tied to community change efforts (i.e., praxis-oriented knowledge). Through highly contextualized and experiential accounts, the research generated in-depth understandings of how the community can better support the identities of Aboriginal athletes and facilitate more meaningful relocation processes. This knowledge is highlighted as a conduit for action, opening up opportunities for community members to transform the local sport context. Second, it is explicated how the culturally resonant research process facilitated a more meaningful and engaging research experience for the participants, which translated into positive community impacts. In particular, the discussion highlights how the research process supported holistic ways of knowing, emphasized participants' strengths, facilitated a less hierarchical and more relational research context, and produced locally meaningful knowledge. Third, the dark side of the research is briefly explicated, in terms of how the findings may be problematic for acculturating Aboriginal athletes. A brief acknowledgement is then made about the voices from within the Aboriginal community that are missing from this research, and how these individuals' stories of relocation remain unheard. The findings are then re-articulated in relation to the research questions posed at the outset of the project, coming full circle in the research process. Finally, in

an effort to encourage more progressive CSP research that is aligned with the change-enhancing agenda of cultural praxis, implications are articulated for future CSP researchers.

7.1 Generating knowledge about Aboriginal sport experiences

A significant body of research has documented the health and wellness benefits of sport participation for Aboriginal people (e.g., Canadian Heritage, 2005; Findlay & Kohen, 2007; Katzmarzyk, 2008; Kirmayer, Brass, & Tait, 2000; Mason & Koehli, 2012; Reading, 2009), as well as the cultural significance of sport to this population (e.g., Canadian Heritage, 2005; Lavallee, 2007, 2008; Thompson, Gifford, and Thorpe, 2000). However, there has been little effort to examine the experiences of Aboriginal people who are involved in sport and consider the ways in which their participation is shaped by culture (Findlay & Kohen, 2007; Forsyth & Giles, 2013; McHugh, Coppola, & Sinclair, 2013). Thus, there remains a limited understanding of the pressing issues tied to Aboriginal people's sport participation, as well as limited knowledge regarding how the sport experiences of Aboriginal athletes can be enhanced in culturally affirming ways.

In response to this dearth of knowledge the current project was developed as a form of cultural sport psychology (CSP), taking up culture as a central position from which to understand the identities and experiences of Aboriginal sport participants (Ryba, Schinke, & Tennenbaum, 2010; Ryba, Stambulova, Si, & Schinke, 2013; Schinke & Hanrahan, 2009). The research was aimed at inductively exploring the relocation experiences of Aboriginal athletes who have moved off reserves in northeastern Ontario to pursue sport within Euro-Canadian contexts. Athlete relocation was identified as a pertinent issue within the local Aboriginal community, and was brought forward by community members as a potential area for community development.

Rooted in this local CSP agenda, the current project provides an in-depth understanding of how the sport experiences of relocated Aboriginal athletes are shaped by the dynamics of acculturation, or second-culture acquisition. As the participants entered Euro-Canadian host communities that were different from the Aboriginal communities they were socialized within, they had to make sense of changing norms, rules, and worldviews, and navigate shifting cultural tensions (Chirkov, 2009; Schinke, McGannon, Battocio, & Wells, 2013). The athletes found themselves being pulled towards and pushed away from each context at various times, and therein their sense of identity and place within each culture was continually being challenged and changed as they attempted to pursue their sport dreams. In some moments, the participants were positioned as “outsiders” in relation to both cultural contexts; they were deeply aware of their “foreignness” in the Euro-Canadian context, as exacerbated by experiences of racism and marginalization, and also struggled with feeling disconnected from their Aboriginal cultural community (see Chapter 4). At other times, the participants shifted into more meaningful positions as cultural “insiders”, with an increasing sense of belonging in each context. They moved fluidly towards the host culture as they realized all the new opportunities and prospects that were available to them to pursue in this context as aspiring athletes and students; they also moved towards their home culture as they developed a clearer vision of themselves contributing positively to the Aboriginal cultural community through their experiences (see Chapter 5).

These findings provide highly contextualized insights into how the sport experiences of relocated Aboriginal athletes are both hindered and enhanced by their ever-changing positions as insiders and outsiders in dual cultural contexts. In order to persist and succeed in their sport environments, the participants had to engage in ongoing cultural (re)negotiations and work to create a meaningful reality for themselves *in* and *between* their host and home contexts. Building

on previous research examining Aboriginal athletes' relocation (Campbell & Sonn, 2009; Schinke, Michel et al., 2006), the findings provide novel insights into how Aboriginal athletes dynamically (re)construct a sense of belonging and cultural identity in and between their dual cultures, in an open-ended process that “that includes progresses, relapses, and turns which make it practically impossible to predict and control” (Chirkov, 2009, p. 94, footnote 1).

The participants' experiential accounts of acculturation further revealed knowledge around the strategies that enable them to persist meaningfully within Euro-Canadian sport contexts and facilitate success. As revealed through the powerful images and narratives of the participants, Aboriginal athletes' relocation and acculturation can be facilitated through efforts to (a) nurture their Aboriginal identities, (b) develop social support around them, and (c) help them to foster mindsets for success (see Chapter 6). These applied strategies, in conjunction with the contextual knowledge generated around Aboriginal athletes' acculturation experiences, open up potential to facilitate more inclusive sport contexts that embrace (rather than marginalize) the cultural identities of Aboriginal participants (Ryba, Schinke, & Tennenbaum, 2010; Ryba et al., 2013; Schinke & Hanrahan, 2009). Such knowledge is at the crux of CSP research-as-praxis, where the intent is to facilitate contextual understandings of traditionally marginalized sport participants so that more informed efforts can be made to support their identities and enhance their sport experiences (Ryba & Schinke, 2009; Ryba & Wright, 2005; Ryba et al., 2013). This knowledge can now be put into action – not only by Aboriginal community members, but also host culture members within the sport system – to better support Aboriginal athletes in their dual cultural locations and facilitate more meaningful acculturation experiences that are conducive to sporting persistence and success.

The knowledge-action connection correlates to a larger Indigenous project of

decolonization by challenging the academic-oriented knowledge formations of traditional Westernized research, and alternatively, emphasizing knowledge formations that are tied to community change efforts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Smith, 1999; Swadener & Mutua, 2008). As explained by Kidd and Kral (2005), community members are not likely to be interested in simply knowing about lived experience, but rather want to generate critical and practical forms of knowledge that can be put into (community-directed) action to improve local people's lives. Rather than simply describing athletes' lived experiences or producing knowledge that is only pertinent within the academic realm, the research has generated locally resonant knowledge that supports actionable outcomes for community development, in line with local community aspirations. The project is thus meaningful in that it transfers off paper and "comes alive" within the community context (Blodgett, Schinke, Peltier, Fisher, Watson, & Wabano, 2011; Jacklin & Kinoshameg, 2008). Moving forward, the community can now "take hold of the project of emancipation and attempt to make it a reality on their own terms" (Smith, 2000, p. 229) by implementing this knowledge into concrete community changes.

7.2 Engaging a culturally resonant research process

Beyond producing knowledge (and action) around Aboriginal sport experiences, what must be articulated at the crux of the current project is the significance of a culturally driven research process. Traditionally, sport psychology research has been engaged from ethnocentric (Westernized) standpoints that are fundamentally at odds with Aboriginal ways of thinking and being, and that subvert their knowledges (Ryba & Schinke, 2009; Schinke, Peltier et al., 2009; Smith, 1999; Wilson, 2008). Recognizing the need to challenge these conventional research approaches and leverage the subjugated knowledges of Aboriginal community members as

conduits for community change, a local Indigenous decolonizing methodology was centralized in this research. This methodology was characterized by an open-ended arts-based process that included mandala drawings and conversational interviews, as well as an indigenized analysis process. Driven forward from within the Aboriginal community, these non-traditional knowledge production processes were aimed at embracing local Indigenous ways of knowing and enabling the stories of relocated athletes to be shared in ways that would resonate more deeply within the community (Swadener & Mutua, 2008). These processes facilitated a more meaningful CSP project that had positive impacts on the participants and the local Aboriginal community, as outlined herein.

First, the mandala drawing process enabled the participants to share their lived experiences more holistically through a circular (Indigenous) worldview that is encompassing rather than compartmentalizing. To Aboriginal peoples, circles represent the natural life cycle of the world, including the human journey through life, and reflect core cultural values of wholeness, interconnectedness and collectivism (Dufrene, 1990; Little Bear, 2000). With this circular motif centralized within their mandalas, the participants were more meaningfully able to share the interconnected layers of their sport relocation experiences and explore how those experiences related to larger life journeys that went beyond the sport context. For instance, one participant depicted red rays of light around her mandala with the word 'life' written inside, illustrating how her relocation journey helped her develop a stronger identity as an Aboriginal person and inspired her to make something of her life in order to give back to her cultural community (see Figure 5). Through this image and the narratives that accompanied it, this participant highlighted the significance of her sport relocation in terms of a larger cultural journey, wherein she developed a sense of community pride and responsibility that is aligned

with a collectivist worldview. Another participant constructed his mandala around an image of his family and the core values they shared (see Figure 9). Through this account, the participant revealed how his relocation journey was connected to deep familial processes wherein each member supports one another in pursuing their talents and developing to their full life's potential. As explained by Youngblood Henderson (2000b), this reflects how Aboriginal people view their lives as being connected to other lives around them rather than being a solitary journey. Individuals must explore their place within a larger whole and discover how they can contribute to the lives around them.

Through these examples, it is evident that the participants were able to explore their relocation experiences more meaningfully and deeply through the circular drawing process. Rather than having to fragment and decontextualize their lived experiences – as is often done in more traditional research processes that reflect Westernized understandings of the world – the participants were able to highlight how their relocation experiences were made significant in relation to larger sociocultural life contexts. The data collection process thus resonated with their holistic ways of knowing and being in the world, and created a more powerful and affirming process for the participants to engage in (Archibald & Dewar, 2010).

The arts-based process was also brought forward from within the Aboriginal community as a strength-based research approach (Huss, 2009), stressing what the participants did well in their lives and emphasizing how they had worked to overcome a number of relocation challenges. It has been noted that strength-based research processes are particularly relevant for marginalized peoples who often have problem-saturated narratives about their lives (Coholic, 2011; Forsyth & Heine, 2010). For example, within the Aboriginal context, it is well documented how research has traditionally been conducted on Aboriginal peoples in ways that emphasize

their problems and deficiencies rather than their strengths and capacities (Bartlett et al., 2007; Battiste, 2000; Smith, 1999; Wilson, 2008). In order to support any positive change within these communities it is imperative that a strength-based approach to be adopted that celebrates and builds upon the assets of local people (Forsyth & Heine, 2010; Smith, 1999; Youngblood Henderson, 2002). To this end, the open-ended nature of the mandala art-making process and the conversational interview enabled the Aboriginal participants to bring forward positive aspects of their acculturation from their own perspectives, and discuss how their experiences made them stronger and more resilient individuals (Blodgett, Coholic, Schinke, McGannon, Peltier, & Pheasant, 2013). Rather than directing the participants to only discuss their acculturation challenges, the research process opened up space for the participants to centralize and celebrate positive aspects of their lives that were personally meaningful.

The implications of this positive focus came across when one participant stated, “I think it’s so cool that you are doing this and asking about this stuff. It kind of reminds you that you’re actually doing something really big and amazing to people.” This participant truly enjoyed sharing her story through both the art making and interview processes, and together these processes seemed to build a sense of pride in her as she reflected on her accomplishments as a relocated athlete. Many of the participants further articulated their intent to use their stories to encourage other Aboriginal youth to pursue their dreams and make positive life choices. In sharing their accounts through a strength-based process, the participants realized that they had something to offer to their community, and acknowledged the potential they had to put their knowledge into action by educating and supporting other on-reserve community members. In this manner, the research process had a transformative impact on many participants, as they saw their potential to contribute positively to their home communities through their experiences.

A third advantage of the culturally aligned and non-traditional research process was that it facilitated a less hierarchical relationship between the researcher and the participants and created a much more comfortable context for the participants to share their experiences (Bagnoli, 2009). Many of the participants were noticeably nervous when they first came to the research meeting. Rather than immediately jumping into a formal, researcher-led process, the mandala drawing activity opened up a space where the researcher and participants were able to casually get to know one another and establish a relational connection. The researcher conversed with the participants about school, work, family, and sports, and shared personal information about herself while they each drew mandalas that evoked their individual stories. Conversational interviews were then similarly engaged as a dialogic approach to sharing knowledge that is relational at its core (Kovach, 2010). Together, these processes facilitated a relational research context that encouraged the sharing of personal stories, and helped to level out (to some degree) power differentials by recognizing the participants as the experts/storytellers of their lives. The participants gained a deeper understanding of the research as an open opportunity to share their stories on their own terms rather than having to respond to “scientific” researcher-led inquiries. They were thus able to engage in a more participatory mode of knowledge production congruent with an Indigenous research paradigm (Kovach, 2010; Smith, 1999).

Appreciating the research as a safe space to share their relocation stories openly and honestly, on their own terms, the participants in the current project were able to bring forward deeper dimensions of their experiences. This was affirmed by one participant at the end of her interview, when she stated: “I never really told anybody about any of the stuff that I was going through before. Nobody knows how hard it was. I always lied, like ‘oh, everything’s good,’ even though it wasn’t.” Similarly, when discussing the emotional challenges of her relocation, another

athlete stated, “I never talk about this, like, not even with my mom.” These individuals acknowledged that they were able to bring forward aspects of their relocation experiences that they often kept hidden in their daily lives. They were able to resist the tendency to recite clichéd or filtered accounts of their experiences, and instead provide more profound accounts that reveal the complexities, tensions, and struggles in their lives. More meaningful knowledge outcomes have thus been gleaned through relational research processes that are aligned with Indigenous traditions and that feel safe to the Aboriginal participants.

Finally, the arts-based research process produced knowledge (in visual form) that is much more accessible and relevant at the community level than traditional forms of data presentation, and is therefore conducive to local action (Cole & Knowles, 2008). This was revealed when the Aboriginal researchers suggested that the participants’ mandala drawings be printed on a community blanket and displayed publicly at the Wikwemikong Youth Centre. They explained how the individual mandalas fit together to reflect a more collective cultural narrative about young Aboriginal people who are pursuing their dreams and trying to make something of themselves. Recognizing the important teachings these images offered for local youth, the Aboriginal researchers made it clear that knowledge would be received more powerfully through this visual storytelling display than through traditional forms of presentation, such as a written report. In particular, they noted that the visual art display would enable community members to connect to the participants’ stories more deeply through their hearts, heads, and bodies, in holistic ways that cannot always be achieved through words alone (Cueva, 2011). The mandalas have thus been put into local action, and are currently being used by sport and recreation staff to educate youth about what it is like to relocate off-reserve for sport opportunities, as well as to inspire those with dreams of their own to go out and pursue them. Through these efforts, the

mandala drawings are serving a decolonizing and PAR-driven agenda by producing knowledge that is directly amenable to local action and that sustains local cultural (i.e. holistic) ways of thinking and being. As summed up by Cole and Knowles (2008), art is not produced for art's sake, but rather to involve community members "in an active process of meaning making that is likely to have transformative potential" (p. 62).

While the Indigenous arts-based process was intended to be an enjoyable and affirming experience for the participants, it is important to note that not all of the participants were comfortable with it. As noted in previous research (Bagnoli 2009), some participants may experience anxiety at the thought of having to draw something, while others may fear negative judgments of their creation, or even think that the activity is "childish". In the current project, four of the Aboriginal participants noticeably struggled with the idea of drawing a mandala and exhibited some initial resistance to the process. One participant expressed his anxiety when he stated "I'm bad at art, I failed art class." In these situations, I reiterated to the participants that the arts-based method is a vehicle for self-expression and not an art activity per se. In addition to providing verbal support and encouragement, I also created my own mandala alongside the participants and facilitated casual conversations with them as we created our drawings together. The intent was to help the participants feel more at ease and less "put on the spot" in the process. With these efforts, the four participants were able to successfully create their mandalas. However, future researchers should note that some individuals may remain resistant to the art-making process and, as experienced by Bagnoli (2009), even decline participation.

7.3 Acknowledging the dark side of the research

A number of positive implications have been gleaned from this research, most notably in relation

to the developing of knowledge around how to facilitate meaningful acculturation processes that better support the cultural identities of Aboriginal athletes. It would be remiss not to also consider darker aspects of the research in terms of how the findings are problematic for Aboriginal athletes' acculturation. Accordingly, two challenges stemming from the project findings are briefly articulated here.

The first challenge relates to acculturation being a shared, social process rather than an individual experience. The Aboriginal participants indicated how their acculturation could either be greatly hindered or facilitated by the people around them in the host culture, such as teammates, classmates, coaches, and billets. When these host members exhibited racism or were unwilling to make an effort to engage with the participants, for example, the Aboriginal athletes experienced isolation and marginalization, and found it difficult to acculturate within the Euro-Canadian context. Alternatively, when host community members made an effort to get to know the athletes and showed them support, the Aboriginal athletes were able to acculturate more meaningfully with a sense of belonging and connectedness within the Euro-Canadian context. This social dynamic gives host culture members significant power in the acculturation process (recognizing that other processes of power are also at work on various levels) in that they are able to choose to engage or not engage with the participants in mutual cultural sharing and learning. Unfortunately, Schinke, McGannon, Battochio, and Wells (2013) indicated that within sport contexts, host culture team members are often not willing to engage in the acculturation process with relocated athletes. They regard this process as unnecessary for them, given that they are not the ones experiencing cultural discomfort.

As a result of host community members positioning, wherein they are unable to see themselves as part of others' acculturation, Aboriginal athletes are likely to be left with the

burden of having to navigate their host contexts and go through the cultural change process on their own, in isolation. They are also not likely to be given any meaningful opportunities to share aspects of their Aboriginal culture and identity with host team members. This reality lends to sport contexts and experiences that are apt to be marginalizing for Aboriginal athletes and not facilitative of adaptive acculturation (Schinke et al., 2006).

The second challenge relates to the fluidity of the acculturation process and whether it can be supported in applied sport contexts. Throughout their accounts of relocation, the Aboriginal athletes illustrated how they continued to move in and between the Euro-Canadian and Aboriginal cultural standpoints as they worked to construct a meaningful reality that would facilitate their sporting success. These findings highlight the need for Aboriginal community members and host sport team members to provide support that is responsive to the dynamic cultural positioning of these athletes, and that recognizes that their identities will always be in flux. However, given that this fluidity has only recently been brought forward and explored as a critical aspect of athlete acculturation (see Schinke & McGannon, 2014; Schinke, McGannon, Battocchio, & Wells, 2013), there is little understanding of how to manage it through applied strategies. The support offered to Aboriginal athletes is likely to be aligned with linear understandings of acculturation, which presume the maintenance of one static cultural identity over another (Chirkov, 2009; Schinke & McGannon, 2014). This support will not resonate with the athletes' experiences of acculturation as a dynamic, moving process, and will therefore be unable to address their shifting cultural needs. Aboriginal athletes may also struggle with a lack of understanding from the people around them (e.g., coaches, teammates, family members) around the fluidity of their identities within the open-ended acculturation process. Accordingly, Aboriginal athletes risk feeling alone and unsupported as they try to navigate the process.

7.4 Unheard voices

It is important to acknowledge that there are voices from within the local Aboriginal communities that are missing from this project. Given that the project participants were recruited through the connections of the Aboriginal researchers, it is evident that the participant group consisted of Aboriginal athletes who had maintained some degree of connectedness to their home communities during their relocation. It is likely that there are other Aboriginal athletes who have moved away from their home reserves without maintaining strong connections to those communities, and whose voices and perspectives are not accounted for in this research. In addition, this research does not account for the voices of Aboriginal community members affected by Bill C-31 – a bill to amend gender discrimination in the Indian Act, which passed into law in 1985 (First Nations Studies Program, 2009). Those affected by Bill C-31 include Indian (or First Nation) women who married non-Aboriginal or non-status partners and therefore legally lost their own status as First Nation band members, including the right to live on their reserve lands. It also pertains to children who lost their status rights due to both their mothers and grandmothers acquiring Indian status as a result of marriage. These Bill C-31 members have had their Aboriginal identities and community and family connections stripped away from them, and have thus been unaccounted for in this research. These individuals would undoubtedly have different stories to share from the Aboriginal participants in this project. There are also people who have been adopted into Aboriginal communities even though they are not Indigenous people themselves, and who therefore occupying unique cultural positions. These individuals were not included in this research, and therefore their voices and stories remain unheard. Future researchers could focus on bringing these unheard voices forward, enabling more diverse and nuanced understandings to be generated around Aboriginal peoples' sport experiences.

7.5 Coming full circle: Answering the research questions

Moving away from the darker implications of this research, it should be reiterated that novel insights into the relocation and acculturation experiences of Aboriginal athletes were gleaned through this research. The project addressed three research questions relating to distinct aspects of the relocation and acculturation process, each of which was driven forward from within the local Aboriginal community and connected to an agenda of change. In coming full circle through the project, it is important to return to those questions and briefly summarize what was learned.

The first research question was: *What challenges do Aboriginal athletes face during the relocation process and how are they experienced?* The Aboriginal participants identified various relocation challenges centred around the core themes of experiencing culture shock and becoming disconnected from home. In terms of the culture shock, the participants described a sense of anxiety or discomfort resulting from being immersed in an unfamiliar cultural context with different rules and systems of meaning. The participants were jarred by the vast changes that the host culture imposed upon them, as well as their newfound status as cultural “outsiders” as they attempted to integrate and engage with non-Aboriginal people. In addition to this discomfort in the host context, the participants also highlighted the distress they experienced around the growing sense of disconnection between themselves and their home cultural communities during their relocation. It was emphasized how the physical distance separating the participants from their community and family networks, as well as the Aboriginal culture more generally, triggered feelings of isolation, while also stirring up negative reactions among their on-reserve peers.

These findings reveal how Aboriginal athletes experience challenges stemming from within their home cultural community in addition to those related to the host cultural community.

Previously, only challenges related to acclimation within the host culture were considered in research regarding the experiences of elite Indigenous athletes in “mainstream” contexts (e.g., Campbell & Sonn, 2009; Nicholson et al., 2011; Schinke et al., 2006). Moreover, the participants’ accounts highlight the intense and fluid psychological process that is involved in navigating multiple cultural realities, as they experienced changes and challenges which pulled them towards and pushed them away from each cultural context at various times. The participants’ sense of identity and belonging within the Euro-Canadian and Aboriginal communities were continually being challenged and changed, as they moved to various degrees along the insider-outsider hyphen. Accordingly, the Aboriginal athletes had to navigate various challenges from shifting positions in and between their two cultural realities.

The second research question addressed was: *What benefits do Aboriginal athletes associate with their sport relocation, and how are they experienced?* The Aboriginal athletes described a number of broad-ranging benefits from relocating off-reserve to pursue their sport dreams, centred on the core themes of beginning a new life chapter and developing a vision for the future. Within the theme of beginning a new life chapter, the participants articulated the realization that by entering the Euro-Canadian context, they were opening themselves up to many new prospects and opportunities which they likely wouldn’t have had on-reserve. They expressed much excitement related to this new beginning in the Euro-Canadian context, as they experienced what was “out there” beyond life on the reserve and also gained a pertinent sense of belonging in this new sociocultural space. In addition to becoming more deeply connected to the Euro-Canadian context, the participants revealed how their relocation helped them to develop more meaningful visions for themselves as Aboriginal community members. The participants explained that as they worked through many of the acculturation challenges in the Euro-

Canadian context, they developed as people (more than just athletes) and gained a better understanding of who they are and what they are capable of achieving. They were able to articulate what they wanted to do and become in their futures, and more specifically, emphasized how they could contribute positively to their Aboriginal community through sharing their stories and successes as local role models.

Through their accounts, the participants revealed how they experienced benefits which fostered a sense of belonging and connectedness in the Euro-Canadian community, as well as benefits which strengthened their connections and positions within the Aboriginal community. With these ties to each cultural context, the Aboriginal athletes were able to construct a meaningful reality that enabled them to persist and achieve success in the Euro-Canadian context while also staying grounded in and committed to the Aboriginal community. The participants were therefore able to move fluidly in and between their dual cultural contexts, in ways that facilitated their acculturation as a dynamic and ongoing process of cultural (re)negotiations. These findings provide novel insights into the positive aspects of acculturation, revealing how the benefits experienced by athletes can help to offset many challenges.

The third research question was: *What helps or makes it easier for Aboriginal athletes to continue their sport if they have to relocate away from home?* The participants described a number of culturally relevant strategies that helped facilitate their success by nurturing an Aboriginal identity, utilizing social support, and fostering a mindset for success. The participants emphasized the importance of nurturing their Aboriginal identity as a source of strength and substantiation during the relocation process. They explained how their identities as Aboriginal community members helped them to connect their personal struggles and experiences to a more collective cultural story of survival and success, and enabled them to persist more meaningfully

and resiliently as relocated athletes. In terms of utilizing social support, the athletes indicated that they frequently had to deal with feelings of insecurity, isolation, and marginalization within the Euro-Canadian context. As such, it was imperative that they had a network of support around them, in both cultural contexts, that they could lean on and resource as they attempted to acculturate in and between these dual cultures. As the third core strategy, the participants identified the need to foster a strong and positive mindset, wherein they were focused on the dreams they set out to achieve and remained optimistic and confident in their ability to achieve them. By developing this mindset, the participants found they were better able to work through challenges from both the Euro-Canadian and Aboriginal cultural contexts that threatened to pull them away from their sport pursuits.

These findings highlight the necessity for Aboriginal athletes to feel connected to both their home and host cultural contexts during the relocation and acculturation process. Within the themes nurturing an Aboriginal identity and utilizing social support, the participants sought to connect more deeply with the people and spaces around them as they fluidly moved in and between their dual cultural contexts. This emphasis on connecting affirms the athletes' relational ways of being in the world, and also supports connecting as a key cultural imperative within the Indigenous context (Smith, 1999; Wilson, 2008; Youngblood Henderson, 2000b). More generally, the findings provide highly localized and culturally resonant knowledge around how the Aboriginal community can support and facilitate the relocation and acculturation of local Aboriginal athletes. These results support actionable outcomes for community development, in line with local community aspirations.

7.6 Implications for future CSP research

The current project stands as one of only a few examples of CSP research that is grounded in praxis. It is hoped that more sport psychology scholars will take up this line of inquiry in the future, in a more concerted effort to facilitate meaningful understandings of diverse sport participants and explore the sociocultural issues that affect sport participation and performance. Such work is necessary in order to facilitate more socially just, inclusive sport contexts that embrace diversity and difference rather than marginalizing it. It is also pertinent as a form of inquiry that has the potential to invoke action and change within local community contexts, as demonstrated in the current project. In an effort to encourage more progressive CSP research in the future that is aligned with the change-enhancing agenda of cultural praxis, the following implications are drawn from the current project.

CSP research involves an active and reflexive re-thinking of the term *culture*, moving away from conceptions of culture as a static, external entity or independent variable. Culture must be recognized as infused with people's identities, which are constantly shifting in relation to broader discourses and narratives that circulate outside and within them (us), simultaneously. Given this socially constructed understanding of culture, CSP researchers need to be aware that all sport participants have multiple, intersecting cultural identities, relating not only to race and ethnicity, but also to gender, sexuality, nationality, physicality, education, religion, socioeconomic status, etc (Gill & Kamphoff, 2010; McGannon & Smith, 2015; Ryba et al., 2013; Schinke & McGannon, 2015). Though the current research focused almost exclusively on the racial and ethnic identities of the Aboriginal participants, it is recognized that various other facets of their identities and sociocultural locations were also likely intertwined in their experiences. For example, there were times when gender differences were expressed in terms of

how the male and female participants experienced homesickness during their relocation and how they reacted to racism. Although gender was not directly explored as an intersecting component in the Aboriginal athletes experiences, future CSP research could be advanced by adopting a more explicit focus on intersectionality (Schinke & McGannon, 2015).

Moving forward, I suggest that researchers explore the ways in which multiple facets of athletes' cultural identities overlap and intersect with one another, and how these complex cultural dynamics shape sport experiences. As illustrated in the current project, these identities are always in flux in terms of how they are expressed, transformed, and made meaningful in different times and spaces. CSP researchers must thus remain cognizant that culture is a messy and ever-changing process that cannot be statically captured or tidily compartmentalized (McGannon & Smith, 2015). Interpretivist methodologies that recognize the socio-culturally constructed nature of cultural identities as well as their multiplicity and fluidity are advocated as meaningful pathways for embracing and exploring the dynamics of culture. These methodologies are further detailed below.

Endeavouring to move beyond the universalist and ethnocentric research approaches of mainstream sport psychology, CSP demands that culture be centralized not only in research content, but also in research process. In the current project, a local Indigenous decolonizing methodology was used to open up a culturally affirming space where the Aboriginal participants were able to share their experiences and identities more meaningfully, from an emic perspective. This was notably evident in the mandala drawing process, wherein the circular motif was used to symbolize the human journey through life as a moving, holistic process, reflecting core beliefs within the local Aboriginal culture. The drawings were engaged to help participants share the complex, shifting layers of their relocation experiences in ways that aligned with their Aboriginal

worldviews. Conversational interviews were then used as a culturally grounded story-telling process for exploring (non-deductively) how the participants made sense of and dynamically navigated their experiences through their shifting cultural identities. These localized processes facilitated a more encompassing understanding of the athletes' relocation and acculturation experiences, which resonated deeply within the local community and opened up meaningful opportunities for community development.

I propose that CSP researchers continue to engage non-deductive interpretivist methodologies (e.g., participatory action research, decolonizing methodologies, critical Indigenous methodologies, discourse analysis, narrative analysis) that centralize local contexts of meaning making and draw attention to the subjective and socially constructed nature of knowledge. Through these methodologies, the complexity of participants' identities and experiences as sociocultural constructions can more readily be explored, as well as possibilities for creating meaningful change in their lives. However, it is important to stress that these methodologies must be developed within the local community and cannot be imposed from the outside. What works in one community will not necessarily work in another. CSP researchers must be willing to learn from local community members and cultivate their methodologies in situ, to more deeply reflect the context at hand. Doing so would further help to build local capacity, as local people begin to lead knowledge production processes from within their communities and engage in creating positive change in their lives.

Following from the above point, interpretivist methodologies presume that the researcher is subjectively enmeshed in knowledge production processes and outcomes, and cannot be impartial or detached. Regardless of the exact methodology chosen, CSP researchers should engage in reflexive processes that bring attention to the ways in which their own cultural

backgrounds infuse with their research and shape the way they (re)produce knowledge about diverse participants. At its crux, reflexivity is about reflecting on power – the power researchers have to think about, engage with, and (re)present the lives of others in ways that can be either meaningful or marginalizing. These reflexive efforts recognize the collaborative and dynamic nature of knowledge production that is at the core of transformative CSP research, as new and more meaningful understandings emerge through dialogical negotiations.

I recommend that researchers engage in ongoing reflexive processes as an integral part of their CSP research activities. Although I found the process to be extremely difficult and uncomfortable, it helped me identify the ways in which I was connected to the Aboriginal community members I was working with, as well as the ways in which I remained an outside academic with the power to marginalize these community members. By continuing to bring forward tensions and issues around my thinking and engagement in the research, as it unfolded, the reflexive process enabled me to make more informed and concerted efforts to facilitate a culturally meaningful project that resonated within the Aboriginal community. Similarly, future CSP researchers should make continuous efforts to gauge how their thinking about and ways of engaging with community members shifts throughout their research and (re)shapes the way knowledge is produced. I encourage researchers to resource local community members in their reflexive processes, using their local insights and worldviews to challenge and question one's own culture-bound ways of thinking and doing. I gained invaluable insights from the questions that Chris posed during our reflexive interview and the local anecdotes he shared with me about engaging in Aboriginal community research. He pushed my thinking from a local community perspective, in ways that I may not have experienced had I engaged in the reflexive process with someone from the academic community. With that said, I readily admit that my learnings from

this initial process are far from comprehensive. I remained somewhat resistant to the reflexive journey even as I attempted to move through it with Chris, and therefore was likely only able to reach a certain degree of reflexive awareness. This reflects but a first step into this realm of awareness for me, which I will strive to build upon as I engage in future CSP initiatives.

Finally, extending from the need to be reflexive, it is imperative to recognize that CSP research is relational (Kral, 2014). This form of research occurs through sets of relationships that are developed between academic researchers and community members, as illustrated through the PAR approach in the current work. Researchers must be prepared to step out of the expert role they have been indoctrinated into and be willing to spend time listening to, learning from, and sharing with local community members (more than just engaging in reflexive processes). As explained by Smith (1999), community members will not fully engage in research and open up access to their lives unless they are able to see who the researcher is as a person and trust that he/she brings a good and open spirit to the community. Relationship building must therefore be valued at the crux of any CSP research initiative.

In order to facilitate a relational process, I suggest that researchers make an effort to spend time in the communities they are working with, engaging in non-research related socializing. Throughout my work with the Aboriginal community, I made numerous trips to the Wikwemikong reserve simply to connect with local people and participate in community celebrations, including a pow-wow event and a community youth conference. This time was invaluable for showing community members that I was genuinely interested in learning about their culture and their lives in a heart-connected way, and that I was there as an “allied other” to support the community in making positive change. It also enabled the community members and I to open up points of connection in our lives and glean deeper insight into who one another is

beyond the researcher/professional identity. Through such (ongoing) efforts to open up real relationships, social distance and power differentials are minimized between researchers and community members, and barriers of mistrust may be broken down within the community. A more meaningful context of trust, respect, reciprocity, and collaborative learning will emerge, wherein open and honest research dialogues and exchanges of viewpoints can occur between the academic researchers and community members. It is through these joint dialogues and (re)negotiations that more critical and innovative CSP initiatives will continue to unfurl, with deeper implications for community change.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Article published in *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*

Blodgett, A. T., Coholic, D. A., Schinke, R. J., McGannon, K. R., Petier, D., & Pheasant, C. (2013). Moving beyond words: Exploring the use of an arts-based method in Aboriginal community sport research. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 5, 312-331. doi:10.1080/2159676X.2013.796490

Abstract

In recognising the limitations of verbally-based research methods for understanding and capturing the multidimensionality of lived experience, arts-based methods have been gaining ground within the social sciences. These methods embrace emotional, sensory, embodied, and imaginative ways of knowing that lend to richer knowledge production and communication processes. Yet, these methods are rarely used in sport research. The purpose of the current project was to explore an arts-based method as a tool to facilitate participatory action research and generate locally-resonant knowledge about the sport experiences of Aboriginal community members in Northeastern Ontario, Canada. Mandala drawings were used to embrace an Indigenous epistemology and open up a culturally-affirming space for Aboriginal athletes to share their experiences of sport relocation. Conversational interviews were then used to facilitate deeper understandings of the athletes' mandalas. The images contributed toward community action on two levels: (1) they affirmed a need for athletes to feel connected to their cultural community

during relocation, therein reinforcing local efforts to support relocated athletes; and (2) they served as a resource for educating and inspiring other aspiring young athletes. The strengths and challenges of arts-based methods are discussed in relation to participatory action research. It is concluded that arts-based methods offer potential for community-based sport research, as these methods open up a diversity of art forms which can be adapted to reflect localised PAR processes and ways of knowing.

Keywords: participatory action research; Indigenous research; Aboriginal; mandalas; drawings

Introduction

‘Arts-based methods’ refer to the use of art in qualitative research in order to generate, interpret and/or communicate knowledge (Boydell *et al.* 2012). Although these methods are often derived from art therapy techniques, they are differentiated from ‘art therapy’ in that the latter is usually performed by graduate trained professionals who hold a degree in art therapy (Coholic 2010). Alternatively, arts-based methods have been used by a wide variety of researchers and professionals to assist people in expressing feelings and thoughts that otherwise might remain repressed or unconscious, or that are difficult to articulate in words. These methods include, but are not limited to, collages, paintings, drawings, carvings, photography, videography, theatre/drama, dance, music, poetry, and stories (Boydell *et al.* 2012). Herein, ‘arts-based methods’ can be understood as an umbrella term that encompasses a broad range of visual, performative, and narrative art forms in research.

Arts-based methods have been gaining ground in social science inquiry in light of increasing dissatisfaction with the way verbally-based research methods have been used to emphasise intellectual knowing over other ways of knowing (Guillemin 2004, Gillies *et al.* 2005, Bagnoli 2009, Mason and Davies 2009). Most traditional research methods rely on language as

the sole medium for the creation and communication of knowledge. This can become a problem when researchers use language in ways that produce logical-scientific views of reality and privilege intellectual forms of knowledge (Sparkes 2002, Bagnoli 2009), producing knowledge that is ‘oddly abstracted and distanced from the sensory, embodied and lived conditions of existence that it seeks to explain’ (Mason and Davies 2009, p. 600). People and their lives become ‘flattened’ into one-dimensional forms that are often unrecognisable at the community level, and accordingly, research fails to resonate with the people and communities it involves (Cole and Knowles 2008). Alternatively, arts-based methods embrace emotional, sensory, embodied, and imaginative ways of knowing that extend beyond verbal and intellectual modes of thinking (Finley 2008). These research methods have been taken up as tools for gaining access to different dimensions of experience, which would otherwise remain neglected or ineffable (Bagnoli 2009, Liebenberg 2009), as well as developing knowledge that is more connected to the lives of participants (Cole and Knowles 2008).

Despite gaining recognition as a fruitful approach for social science inquiry (Boydell *et al.* 2012), arts-based methods are rarely used in sport research (Gravestock 2010). That being said, a few researchers have advocated for narrative (e.g., Sparkes and Douglas 2007, Carless and Douglas 2009, Douglas and Carless 2009, 2010, Gilbourne 2010) and performative (e.g., Llewellyn and Gilbourne 2011) art forms to be integrated into sport research as an alternative to the scientific/realist texts that have long dominated the sport sciences. In addition, the 2010 special edition of *Qualitative Research in Sport and Exercise* on “Visual Methods in Physical Cultures’ (volume 2, issue 2) made the case for visual methods (which utilise various technologies and the images they produce, namely photography and film) to be employed within sport and exercise research as a means of rendering the world in visual terms. However, beyond

photography and film, visual arts-based methods, which are differentiated by the actual making of artistic creations, have remained relatively unexplored within the sport realm. Gravestock's (2010) use of drawings to achieve embodied understandings in figure skating provides one of the only examples of a visual arts-based method in sport.

The purpose of this paper is to explore mandala drawings as an arts-based method for facilitating participatory action research (PAR) and generating locally-resonant knowledge about the sport experiences of marginalised community members. The arts-based process is articulated within a local sport initiative aimed at understanding the relocation experiences of young Aboriginal athletes who move off reserves in Northeastern Ontario, Canada to pursue sport opportunities. Through this contextual example, the strengths and challenges of arts-based methods in relation to PAR are brought forward, and recommendations for engaging these methods are provided. The paper builds on the aforementioned examples of arts-based research in disrupting the assumption that language (particularly in scientific/realist form) is what constitutes 'good' sport scholarship (see Phoenix, 2010). This paper further contributes a new understanding of how the expressive modalities of arts-based methods can enhance community-based sport research.

Arts-based methods and Aboriginal cultures

As indicated in the Indigenous research literature (e.g., Smith 1999, Bartlett *et al.* 2007, Swadener and Mutua 2008), there is a pertinent need to develop research approaches that are methodologically and epistemologically aligned with Aboriginal cultures and designed to embrace local ways of knowing. Sport research has largely been dominated by Westernised research approaches that are fundamentally at odds with Aboriginal ways of thinking and being, and have therefore failed to contribute meaningful knowledge to Aboriginal communities (Smith

1999, Ryba and Schinke 2009, Schinke *et al.* 2009). Given this inadequacy, an arts-based method was engaged in the current project as a culturally-relevant, localised form of inquiry that would more deeply resonate with Aboriginal community members and lead to decolonising knowledge production processes that centralise Indigenous ways of knowing (Finley 2008, Swadener and Mutua 2008).

For one, arts-based activities support holistic Indigenous ways of knowing and being that emphasise the interconnectedness of the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual dimensions within an individual as well as with the life around an individual (Archibald and Dewar 2010, Coholic *et al.* in press). Illustrating this point, Cueva (2011) found that the use of moving, drawing, and sculpting in cancer education workshops with Alaska Natives ‘nurtured heart, head, and body ways of knowing’ (p. 14) that ultimately opened up deeper insights and expanded perspectives from the participants. Thus, in the current project mandala drawings were used to help participants share the multiple, interconnected layers of their sport relocation experiences and explore how those experiences related to their larger life journeys. Furthermore, when arts activities are linked to cultural components they help Aboriginal participants reconnect to their culture and feel a resonance with their traditional way of life (Archibald and Dewar 2010). Given the cultural erosion that has been experienced by Aboriginal peoples under a legacy of colonisation and assimilation, Archibald and Dewar noted that the act of rediscovering cultural elements through art can be a powerful and healing experience. Accordingly, mandala drawings were engaged as a culturally-relevant art form in the current project in order to support cultural links within participants’ stories of relocation and foster a more meaningful research experience. A number of traditional Aboriginal motifs are rooted in the mandala (e.g., the Medicine Wheel and dream-catcher), and its circular form is a sacred cultural theme that affirms the values of

wholeness, interconnectedness, and collectivism (Dufrene 1990, Little Bear 2000). The arts-based research process was herein designed to support a circular research process that would centralise Aboriginal ways of knowing.

Participatory action research and arts-based methods

Visual methods have long been used in anthropology (see Pink 2003) and sociology (see Packard 2008) as a means of carrying out PAR, and more recently, have been used within the health sciences as a participatory approach to Aboriginal community research (e.g., Castleden and Garvin 2008, Adams *et al.* 2012). These links between visual methods and PAR stem from coinciding concerns with minimising the power differentials between the researcher and the researched, and facilitating more democratised processes (Packard 2008). Based on the same premises, arts-based methods converge with PAR in multiple ways. For one, the creative process provides participants with a sense of agency in that they are able to share their experiences and thoughts in ways that are personally meaningful, therein allowing individuals to engage as the experts of their own lived experiences (Packard 2008, Bagnoli 2009). Participants may feel more in control of the research interview when they are given the opportunity to create and discuss an image on their own accord, rather than having to respond to a series of questions that are developed along the researcher's lines of thinking. In this manner, arts-based methods can be used to enrich the interview process as a more participatory experience. Similarly, the process of coming to understand the meaning that an image holds for a participant helps to reformulate the relationship between the researcher and participant, lending to a more equitable distribution of power (Liebenberg 2009). Researchers must rely on the insights of participants to better understand the various meanings being conveyed, and accordingly, the research process becomes a 'mutual initiative as opposed to a hierarchical, one-way flow of information' (Liebenberg

2009, p. 445). Furthermore, in engaging creative meaning making processes that draw upon multiple ways of knowing, arts-based methods have the power to evoke emotion, thought, and action in participants and audiences in ways that cannot always be achieved through words (Cole and Knowles 2008). In this manner, when discussing the potential of visual methods in sport and physical culture research, Phoenix explained that images can make arguments more vivid and evoke deep responses from those who come into contact with them, aligning with the action component of PAR.

Given these convergences with PAR, arts-based methods have been touted as relevant conduits for understanding the experiences of marginalised, non-Western cultural groups (Swadener and Mutua 2008, Huss 2009). However, we appreciate Packard's (2008) argument that the implicit assumption that visual (in this case, arts-based) methods inherently reduce power imbalances and situate participants as co-collaborators 'are off the mark' (p. 75). Indeed, while our rationale to utilise an arts-based method is rooted in the desire to reduce traditional power imbalances and facilitate a more meaningful process for participants, we understand that PAR is not achieved through any single research method in and of itself, but rather through an ongoing process of reconfiguring power and orienting research within a local community (Kidd and Kral 2005, Brydon-Miller *et al.* 2011). An arts-based method has herein been integrated into an overarching PAR initiative with an Aboriginal community in order to better understand how arts-based methods can be used to *facilitate* PAR rather than *be* PAR.

Situating the project

The community

The community partner for this project is Wikwemikong Unceded Indian Reserve, which is located on Manitoulin Island in Ontario, Canada. Wikwemikong is one of the 10 largest First

Nation communities in Canada. Approximately 3,000 band members live on the reserve, with an additional 3,600 band members living off the reserve (Wikwemikong Unceded Indian Reserve 2011). The community is officially recognised as Canada's only Unceded Reserve, meaning that title of its land has not been relinquished to the government of Canada.

The Wikwemikong community has engaged in a number of locally-driven sport research initiatives, stemming back as far as 2006. Recent efforts, for example, have been aimed at identifying culturally-relevant strategies for increasing local sport programming capacity and athlete support (e.g., Blodgett *et al.* 2010, Schinke *et al.* 2010), and exploring Indigenous research recommendations and methodologies within sport psychology (e.g., Blodgett *et al.* 2011a, 2011b). Through these initiatives community research capacity has been centralised within academic scholarship. Local people are continuing to initiate projects from within the community, using their knowledge and skills to lead Indigenous research processes forward, as evidenced in the current project.

The research team

The research team consists of three Aboriginal community researchers from Wikwemikong and four academic researchers from Laurentian University, most of who have worked together on community-based sport projects over the past 10 years. The Aboriginal researchers include the current Chief of Wikwemikong, the manager of the Wikwemikong Youth Centre (the hub where local sport and recreation programs are housed), as well as a retired vice principal. These three Aboriginal researchers contributed experiential and cultural knowledge to the project, guiding forward an Indigenous methodology that was rooted in local protocols, values, traditions, and ways of knowing. The university research team members contributed their understandings of participatory research and experience with arts-based methods in ways that supported the applied

contributions of the Wikwemikong researchers. The research team members worked together at all stages of the project in order ensure that efforts were both culturally appropriate and methodologically sound. The Aboriginal researchers, however, were the local experts, and thus their insights have been the core driving force behind the research.

The project

The current project is the latest in a series of culturally-driven sport research ventures that have been developed by members of the research team between 2006 and 2012. In an earlier initiative, Schinke *et al.* (2006) found that elite Aboriginal athletes (competing nationally or higher) faced a number of culture-specific adaptation challenges as they attempted to compete within mainstream contexts, including dealing with unfamiliar cultural practices, and feeling stereotyped. Building on these findings from a grassroots perspective, the Aboriginal research team members indicated that many young community athletes face similar challenges, as they have to relocate off-reserve and integrate into mainstream contexts in order to pursue sport opportunities which are unavailable locally. The current project was thus conceptualised to explore the relocation experiences of young aspiring athletes who moved off reserves in Northeastern Ontario to pursue sport opportunities within mainstream contexts. The Aboriginal researchers proposed that this project be carried out in order to identify pathways through which athletes can be better supported in pursuing their sport dreams outside of the community. At the methodological level, the project was also developed to explore the potential of an arts-based method (i.e., mandala drawings) to facilitate PAR and generate knowledge that is more deeply connected to the lives of Aboriginal community members. It is this methodological exploration that is the focus of the present paper.

The participants

Participants consisted of Aboriginal athletes who had moved off a reserve in Northeastern Ontario to pursue sport opportunities that were unavailable in their local community. Twenty-one athletes participated in the study, ranging in age from 14 to 26 years (mean age = 19.3 years), with one participant outside of this range at 41 years old. Ten of the 21 participants were male and 11 were female. The participants came from seven different reserves, and they most commonly relocated within Ontario, though a few moved across provinces and into the United States. The participants consisted of ice hockey players (n = 17), an archer (n = 1), a volleyball player (n = 1), a pow-wow dancer (n = 1), and a boxer (n = 1). Though the researchers tried to target a variety of sport disciplines, the high proportion of hockey players reflects the prominence of hockey within Northeastern Ontario.

Methods

Training and development

The first and third authors were trained in the use of arts-based methods by the second author, who is an experienced clinical social worker as well as a researcher in this area. The second author, who was familiar with mandalas as a culturally-relevant art form for Indigenous peoples, proposed that the team consider this particular arts-based method because it embraced the cultural context of the research and was also feasible and practical to carry out. Training included an experiential activity wherein the first and third authors created mandala drawings and engaged in discussions about the meaning of their creations, with the aim of gleaning a better understanding of the arts-based process and the skills required to facilitate it as a meaningful conduit for sharing lived experiences. As Huss (2009) pointed out, arts-based research necessitates skills in working simultaneously with both visual and verbal elements, which may not be familiar to researchers who are new to these methods. For instance, once a drawing is

created, it is important to know how to utilise open-ended questions and statements to assist the person who created the drawing to reflect on its colours, shapes, action, position on the page, and so on. It is imperative that the researcher does not make assumptions about the drawing or impose academic interpretations of it, but help the participant to share the meanings and interpretations that she/he attributes to it. Due to the ability of arts-based methods to elicit deep (sometimes unexpected) feelings about experiences, researchers must also be aware of the emotional potential of this approach and be prepared to support participants should they experience any distress. Accordingly, an effective way to learn how to use arts-based methods is to experientially engage with these methods, under the guidance of an expert.

Following training, the first and third authors met with the three Aboriginal community-appointed research team members to discuss the relevance of the arts-based approach within the Aboriginal context and to explore its potential as a method of data collection. We acknowledge that given the PAR agenda, it could have been more ideal for the university and Aboriginal research team members to have collaborated on the initial brainstorming of arts-based approaches. As an alternative step, the community meeting was held to facilitate an open team dialogue about the mandala drawing activity (and any other potential methods), as well as to strike a consensus as to how the project could best be carried out. The first and third author led the three Aboriginal researchers through a mandala drawing activity in which they were asked to depict their experiences as community researchers and then discuss the meanings behind their images. The Aboriginal researchers affirmed the pertinence of the mandala activity when they reflected upon their creations, as they described how they each instinctively linked the circular image to core cultural themes that influenced their lives. One researcher described how he used the Medicine Wheel to depict four different stages of his research journey; another researcher

used the symbol of water to depict his journey as a flowing process that rippled with various life lessons; the third researcher identified the Seven Grandfather Teachings as guiding his vision of research. The Aboriginal researchers were excited with how the mandala process elicited their stories, and they suggested that this cultural link would improve the meaningfulness of the research for the athlete participants and help them share their stories more holistically. Though other culturally-relevant art forms could have been used, such as beading, quilting, or drumming, the research team concluded that these methods were much less feasible than the mandala drawings, particularly in that they required art-specific skills and expertise that the team members did not have. In confirming the use of mandala drawings, the Aboriginal researchers recommended that the art process be carried out in a space that was most comfortable to each participant (e.g., in their own home or at the community Youth Centre) so that they could feel at ease and allow their stories to be shared more openly and authentically. The Aboriginal researchers suggested that to do otherwise, by utilising an academic space such as a research lab, would be to create an intimidating research context that favours the researcher over the participants.

Mandala drawings

Following the insights of the Aboriginal researchers, a mandala drawing activity was engaged as a means of eliciting the relocation experiences of Aboriginal athletes. Mandala is a Sanskrit word meaning ‘circle’ or ‘centre’, and it refers to an art form or image that is created within a circular context (Slegelis 1987, Henderson *et al.* 2007). Carl Jung (1973), who was the first psychotherapist to make use of the mandala as a therapeutic tool, believed it to be a visual symbol of the psyche and the quest for wholeness. Jung suggested that the act of drawing mandalas facilitated psychological healing and personal meaning in life, as the creative process

helped individuals to visualise and make sense of complex experiences and emotions, while the circular form helped to promote psychic integration and a sense of inner harmony (Jung 1973, Slegelis 1987). Today, mandalas are used in a variety of ways including helping people to heal from trauma (Backos and Pagon 1999, Henderson *et al.* 2007), facilitating self-expression (Cox and Cohen 2000, Elkis-Abuhoff *et al.* 2009), and reducing anxiety (van der Venet and Serice 2012).

In the current project, mandalas were engaged as a means of facilitating self-expression among the participants, enabling a deeper understanding of their relocation experiences to be shared. They were also selected as a culturally-relevant art form, given that the circle is a highly visible and sacred theme in the Aboriginal community (Dufrene 1990, Little Bear 2000). To Aboriginal peoples, circles represent the natural life cycle of the world, including the human journey through life, and they signify ongoing transformation and movement (Little Bear, 2000). Thus, they are a pertinent motif for eliciting and understanding the relocation experiences of Aboriginal athletes within a larger life journey (holistically), as well as for passing these stories on within the community in a way that emphasises the continuous and transformative movement of experiential knowledge (e.g., one athlete's relocation story can inform and inspire a future athlete's journey).

Participants were given a piece of white paper and a set of coloured pastels, and instructed to begin by drawing a circle. They were then told to reflect on their experiences relocating for sport and draw anything that comes to mind. The participants held creative license to do whatever form of circular expression made sense to them, therein engaging them in a more participatory process (Bagnoli 2009). Participants were told not to over-think the process and to let their instincts guide them. When created spontaneously in this manner, it is purported that the

symbolic nature of the mandala will not only reveal conscious insights from its creator, but also provide access to deeper levels of the individual's unconscious, expressed through the use of colours, shapes, lines, numbers, and motifs (Slegelis 1987, Elkis-Abuhoff *et al.* 2009).

Conversational interviews

A number of researchers who have used drawings as part of an arts-based method have proposed that this strategy be integrated with an interview (Guillemin 2004, Bagnoli 2009, White *et al.* 2010, Boydell *et al.* 2012). Guillemin (2004) utilised drawings of illness, and explained how interviews are essential in eliciting from participants the nature of their drawings, including why they choose to draw particular images, and the reasons for choice of colour and spatial organisation. Both the drawing and the description comprise the data, and the researcher is thus able to utilise the participants' interpretations of their drawings in the analysis rather than assume her/his own interpretation. Moreover, when drawings are followed up with an interview, they can enhance participants' reflexivity and garner a more holistic picture of the experience under investigation (Bagnoli 2009). Accordingly, in the current project, each participant's mandala was used to facilitate a conversational interview.

The conversational interview (see Patton 2002) was selected because it aligns with a community-driven Indigenous methodology in multiple ways. First, it honours the cultural tradition of storytelling as a means of transmitting knowledge, beliefs, and values (Little Bear 2000, Kovach 2010, Smith 1999). In contrast to the short question-response exchanges of structured or semi-structured interviews, the open-ended and unstructured nature of the conversational interview invites participants to share stories that convey the complexity and depth of their experiences. Second, a more informal dialogical context is facilitated wherein participants are able to share their stories from an emic perspective, and exert greater control

over the direction of the conversation as they prioritise pertinent themes within their stories (Patton 2002). This facilitates a reduction in power imbalances, which, like the mandala art process, invites participants to position themselves as the experts of their experiences. Third, the conversational strategy promotes a decolonising agenda in that the researcher poses contextually-informed questions in situ rather than being bound to a set of pre-determined questions rooted in a priori academic assumptions (Ryba and Schinke 2009, Kovach 2010). This challenges traditional interview approaches where a rigid set of questions are derived from the assumptions of the mainstream researcher and posed to participants in a manner that may define (or colonise) the information that is revealed and how it is expressed.

Each interview began with the following broad question: ‘Can you tell me about what you have drawn in your mandala?’ All pursuant questions were posed during the interviews in relation to the themes brought up by the participants and points of interest in the mandalas. The questions were aimed at encouraging the participants to reflect on the relationship between what they drew and what they experienced as a relocated athlete, therein connecting the visual data to more contextual narrative information.

Results for action

Knowledge generation in PAR is inextricably linked to action. As explained by Kidd and Kral (2005), community members are not likely to be interested in simply knowing about lived experience, but rather, want to generate community-developed action that is aimed at improving people’s lives. Thus, the arts-based approach in the current project was used to support actionable outcomes, which would positively contribute to the Aboriginal community.

First, although each mandala produced was highly unique, many participants constructed their mandalas with reference to cultural and community themes. For example, one participant

described his mandala (Figure 1) in the following manner: ‘I’ve got the eagle feathers hanging here, and that represents my culture, something that I stick too, something very strong that I’m very proud of.... I always want to represent my culture.’ [Insert Figure 1 here] Eagle feathers are sacred to Aboriginal peoples, as the eagle soars higher and sees farther than any other creature on earth, and is believed to be a messenger to the Creator. The feathers are used to symbolise honour, strength, courage, wisdom, power, and freedom, and are given to people who exhibit valour and bravery. In this manner, the participant’s depiction of eagle feathers on hockey sticks serves to link his relocation journey with notions of bravery and honouring of the Creator.

Another participant described how her mandala (Figure 2) was outlined by the colours of the Medicine Wheel, which reminded her of the cultural teachings she was brought up with and how those teachings aided her through her sport journey. She also added ‘I put a heart for home, my home in [reserve]. Wherever I go I’ll always come back and be proud of where I’m from.’ [Insert Figure 2 here] This participant describes how her heart remains in her community, no matter where she moves, and indicates that she is connected to her community at a fundamental level. Through the image of a heart, her community is positioned as a core lifeline in her relocation journey, while the Medicine Wheel outline reveals the cultural frame of her life. Similarly, another participant used the symbol of a tree with roots (Figure 3) to describe how she was linked to her home community and her culture, and how this connection gave her the strength to pursue her sport dreams:

I felt tied to my roots. It was really racist and that made me more proud of who I was... I wouldn’t let go of my roots. In that sense the roots helped me to see that I can go out and I can do this, I can prove that I’m not going to be another negative stereotype.

[Insert Figure 3 here] Just as tree roots are connected to Mother Earth and serve to nourish the

tree, this participant developed roots in her home community and her culture, which served as sources of strength and pride during her relocation and helped her to persist after her dreams. These examples demonstrate how the mandala drawing process resonated with the participants and helped them to share their experiences more holistically through a circular (Indigenous) worldview that is encompassing rather than compartmentalising. The images, and the narratives around them, reveal the participants' connectedness to their home communities and their culture, indicating that these individuals see their relocation experiences as tied to the collective rather than being solitary, individual journeys. In this manner, the arts-based research process has affirmed the need for culturally-driven, community-level efforts to continue being made to support athletes who move into mainstream contexts.

Figure 4 tells the story of an athlete who was challenged by racism, but who used that as an opportunity to learn more about her culture and to build strength through knowledge. Her mandala is encased by rays of light with the word 'life' inside to show how her relocation journey helped her develop pride in her Aboriginal identity and inspired her to make something of her life in order to give back to her cultural community. In this manner, her image highlights a growing sense of community responsibility that is aligned with an Aboriginal collectivist worldview. [Insert Figure 4 here] In Figure 5, an athlete shares how his father gave him and his siblings the opportunity to reach their full potential by enabling them to relocate for sport opportunities. By drawing his family inside the mandala and writing shared values around the perimeter, the athlete affirms the centrality of family processes within Aboriginal culture, explicating how his relocation journey stemmed from his family's emphasis on supporting one another. [Insert Figure 5 here] Figure 6 tells the story of a young athlete whose mind was flooded with questions about her decision to relocate for sport hockey and how it would affect her and

her family. Though the image of a rain cloud shows how she struggled with being away from her family, a sun is used to symbolise how she persisted through the hard times in order to realise her sport dreams and make her loved ones proud. These seasonal images centralise an Aboriginal worldview that recognises the life process as being in a constant state of flux; as one season falls upon another, hardships pass and life changes in ways that bring new perspectives. [Insert Figure 6 here] Through the contrasting use of bright and dark colours alongside the image of a road, Figure 7 reveals the overwhelming emotions that one athlete experienced, ranging from fear and sadness to excitement and happiness, as she moved away from home for the first time and set out to pursue her sport dreams. Her road leads into a burst of light to show how she overcame the initial challenges of relocation and is now filled with excitement at the thought of what the future holds. The image reveals the emotional aspects of relocation which are intertwined with the physical and mental aspects of the journey, reinforcing a holistic (Indigenous) way of knowing and being in the world. [Insert Figure 7 here]

Overall, the arts-based method produced knowledge (in visual form) that is much more accessible and relevant at the community-level than traditional forms of data presentation (Cole and Knowles 2008). Each of the aforementioned mandalas tells a story in a way that may resonate more deeply and lucidly with local people than a written research report. The Aboriginal researchers demonstrated this when they suggested that the images be printed on a community blanket and displayed publicly at the Wikwemikong Youth Centre. They explained how the individual mandalas fit together to reflect a more collective narrative about young Aboriginal people who are pursuing their dreams and trying to make something of themselves, and how the images offered valuable teachings for local youth. Through this community display, the mandalas are now being used by sport and recreation staff to educate youth about what it is

like to relocate off-reserve for sport opportunities as well as to inspire those with dreams of their own to go out and pursue them. This reflects the circular nature of the mandala art process in terms of connecting the individual to the collective whole and emphasising the interconnectedness of lived experiences. Additionally, in using the blanket to share the mandalas with younger generations of community athletes, knowledge dissemination has taken on a circular form, cycling information from one generation to another. The arts-based method in the current project thus served a community-driven PAR agenda by producing knowledge that is directly amenable to local action and that sustains Aboriginal (i.e., circular) ways of thinking and being in the world.

Discussion

Although visual methods (i.e., photography and film), as well as performative and narrative art forms, have been promoted within qualitative sport and exercise research as alternatives (or supplements) to verbal modes of knowledge production, visual arts-based methods that involve the actual making of artistic creations (i.e., drawings), have rarely been used. This is disappointing given that researchers in other social science disciplines have increasingly attested to the value of these arts-based methods for facilitating richer understandings of the emotional, sensory, embodied, and imaginative dimensions of experience (Guillemin 2004, Gillies *et al.* 2005, Finley 2008, Bagnoli 2009, Mason and Davies 2009), as well as for engaging more meaningful research processes with marginalised, non-Western cultural groups (Huss 2009, Liebenberg 2009). The purpose of the current initiative was to explore and show how one arts-based method (i.e., mandala drawings) can be used in sport research to facilitate PAR and generate knowledge that resonates more deeply with marginalised (e.g., Aboriginal) community members. Toward this end, a discussion of the strengths and challenges of arts-based methods

within PAR is provided, as learned through the current project.

Strengths of arts-based methods in PAR

One of the advantages of arts-based methods is that these methods are strengths-based (Huss 2009), stressing what people do well in their lives, and are therefore enjoyable for people to participate in. This may be particularly relevant for marginalised or oppressed peoples who often have problem-saturated narratives about their lives (Coholic 2011, Coholic *et al.* 2012). For example, it is well-documented how research has traditionally been conducted on Aboriginal peoples in ways that emphasise their problems and deficiencies rather than their strengths and capacities (Smith 1999). In order to support any positive change within these communities, it is imperative that a strength-based approach to be adopted that recognises and builds upon the assets of local people (Bartlett *et al.* 2007). In the current project, upon creating a mandala and completing an interview, one young woman exclaimed ‘I think it’s so cool that you are doing this and asking about this stuff. It kind of reminds you that you’re actually doing something really big and amazing to people.’ This participant truly enjoyed sharing her story through both the art-making and interview processes, and together, these processes seemed to build a sense of pride in her as she reflected on her accomplishments as a relocated athlete. Many of the participants further articulated their intent to use their stories to encourage other Aboriginal youth to pursue their dreams and make positive life choices. For example, one young woman stated,

I want to be kind of like a role model for other people on the reserve to get out there and do what they want... because I know a lot of people who still haven’t graduated high school. Or they graduated and they’re just staying [on reserve] and not doing anything with their diploma. So just go after what you want because you can be whatever you want to be if you just work for it.

It is evident that after exploring their experiences in a positive light in the current project, some participants have been inspired to give back to their community by supporting others and acting as role models. This reflects a full-circle process in that the community engaged in this research to identify pathways for supporting local athletes, while reciprocally, athletes have been inspired through their participation to give back to the local community.

A second strength of arts-based methods is that they offer expressive alternatives (or supplements) to words and talk, which may be more appealing for people not used to discussing things along Western (logical-scientific) lines of abstraction (Huss 2009). In this regard, arts-based methods hold much promise for carrying out decolonising research with Indigenous and other non-Western cultural groups (Swadener and Mutua 2008, Huss 2009), as community participants are able to engage in research through their own preferred modalities of expression (Bagnoli 2009, Liebenberg 2009). Furthermore, as explained by Kaomea (2003), art serves a decolonising agenda through a process of defamiliarisation or ‘making strange’, wherein we (researchers) are forced to slow down our perceptions, attend to the images and narratives in front of us, and take notice of the meaning that is beyond initial surface impressions. Defamiliarisation is important when working with a marginalised community because it helps researchers become more reflexively aware of the need to move away from our own preconceptions and ways of thinking so that meanings and perspectives that have long been silenced can be uncovered (Kaomea 2003). The mandalas in the current project thus helped the researchers to ask more meaningful questions about the athletes’ relocation experiences in order to elicit more holistic and circular understandings of their experiences, and ultimately, produce knowledge more aligned with their lives. As one example, the first researcher’s thinking in the project began shifting once she realised that many of the participants’ mandalas contained

images of goals, aspirations, and opportunities that related to larger life journeys outside of sport (such as the word 'life' and the image of a graduation cap in Figure 4, or the burst of light symbolised at the end of a highway in Figure 7). In asking participants about these elements, the researcher became aware of the fact that their relocation journeys did not always centre on their sport-related experiences, and were more often focused around experiences of personal growth and the opening up of their futures. Accordingly, the researcher realised that she needed to broaden her scope of thinking and remain open to non-sport-related experiences as meaningful components of the athletes' relocation journeys.

A third and fourth advantage of arts-based methods is that the informal, creative process can help alleviate much of the tension and apprehension that participants may feel coming into the research context (Bagnoli 2009) and facilitate a less hierarchical relationship between the researcher and participant (Spaniol 2005). For instance, in the current project the researcher conversed with the participants about school, work, family, and sports, while they both created mandalas, using the activity to establish a sense of rapport and comfort, while also reducing power differentials. Many of the participants were noticeably nervous when they first came to the meeting. Rather than immediately jumping into a formal, researcher-led interview process, the art-making activity seemed to help the participants relax and engage more candidly with the researcher. These methods also facilitated participants' understanding of the arts activity as an opportunity to share their story on their own terms. When working with participants from marginalised communities who have often been made vulnerable through research, it is especially important to facilitate a research process within which participants feel safe and the participant-researcher exchange is less hierarchical. In so doing, participants are enabled to share their experiences more comfortably and openly, and engage in a more collaborative process with

the researcher.

Finally, arts-based methods are conducive to the action-oriented outcomes that are fundamental to PAR. As indicated by Cole and Knowles (2008), art is not produced for art's sake, but rather to involve community members 'in an active process of meaning making that is likely to have transformative potential' (p. 62). Through creative processes that embrace the multidimensionality and complexity of lived experience, arts-based methods can generate knowledge that more deeply resonates with local people and therefore has the power to inform and provoke action (Cole and Knowles 2008, Phoenix 2010). As previously explained, the mandalas in the current project contributed to community action in reaffirming the need for local efforts to be directed at supporting athletes through the relocation process, as well as in engaging the mandalas as educational and inspirational resources for aspiring young athletes.

Challenges of arts-based methods in PAR

While arts-based methods are intended to be enjoyable and strengths-based, not all community participants will embrace these activities or feel comfortable engaging in them (Bagnoli 2009). Some participants may experience anxiety at the thought of having to draw something, while others may fear negative judgments of their creation, or even think that the activity is 'childish'. In the current project, four participants noticeably struggled with the idea of drawing a mandala and exhibited some initial resistance to the process. One participant expressed his anxiety when he stated 'I'm bad at art, I failed art class.' In these situations, it is important to reiterate that the arts-based method is a vehicle for self-expression and not an art activity per se. In addition to verbal support, warm-up exercises such as having participants doodle on a page without looking, could be used to create some comfort with the process of working with arts-based materials. We acknowledge, however, that some individuals may remain resistant to the art-making process

and, as experienced by Bagnoli (2009), even decline participation.

As previously indicated, researchers need to be trained in the use of arts-based methods before engaging with them, as certain skills are required to work simultaneously with both visual and verbal elements (Huss, 2009). This requires the guidance of a practiced expert, who can experientially lead the researcher through the art process and help him/her become comfortable with it. This takes time and may be somewhat of a challenge for researchers unaccustomed to working with non-verbal-based methods. However, it is important to note that one does not have to be an artist in order to use these methods, as the researcher does not teach art techniques (but rather, facilitates self-expression), and does not analyse/interpret the art creations (participants provide their own interpretations through the use of an interview). With time and training any researcher, including graduate students, can learn to use arts-based methods as vehicles for community-based PAR.

Conclusions

Researchers from a variety of social science disciplines have attested to the value of incorporating arts-based methods into research examining people's lived experiences, suggesting that these methods generate more in-depth understandings that better reflect the perspectives of participants (Guillemin 2004, Bagnoli 2009, Liebenberg 2009, White *et al.* 2010). As further shown in the current paper, arts-based methods can be used to facilitate PAR processes with marginalised community members, as well as to produce locally-resonant knowledge that lends to community enhancement. For instance, the circular form of the mandala drawings in this project centralised Indigenous ways of thinking, and thus contributed to a knowledge production process that reflected circular links between individuals and their community, as well as research and action. What we would like to articulate through this article is that these methods offer

enormous potential for generating more meaningful and innovative community-based sport research, as they are open to a diverse range of art forms (such as drawings, paintings, collages, carvings, theatre performances, music, poetry, and stories) which can be adapted in different ways to reflect local community contexts. We recognise that the current project exemplifies just one of an infinite number of possibilities for incorporating arts-based methods within community sport research. Moving forward, other sport researchers working with Aboriginal communities (as well as other non-Western communities) may consider building on the work of the current project by exploring alternative ways of engaging arts-based methods.

It is important to note that in the current project, both the drawings and the interviews comprised the data. Rather than relying on the visual data to ‘speak for itself’, we used the mandala drawings as a tool to facilitate deeper discussions with the participants and generate a more in-depth, holistic understanding of their experiences. The visual data was understood as being complementary to the narrative data in terms of opening up different ways of knowing that were more aligned with the culture and lives of the Aboriginal participants. While there will be instances when researchers want visual data to stand on its own and elicit emotions and thoughts from an audience, such as a photographic display used to increase awareness of a health issue, in cases such as the current project it is necessary to have the participants translate (through words) the meanings and experiences behind their images in order for others to gain an appreciation of them (e.g., Guillemin 2004, Bagnoli 2009, White *et al.* 2010).

In whatever way an arts-based method is approached within community research, the important point is that it needs to be developed with community members in order to resonate at the local level. What works in one community will not necessarily work in another. As evidenced in the current project, it is critical to engage the local knowledge of community

researchers in order to understand how an arts-based method can best be employed to serve the aspirations of PAR, as understood from a community perspective. Accordingly, academic researchers must be willing to learn *from* local community members rather than *about* them.

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Appendix B: Article published in *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*

Blodgett, A. T., Schinke, R. J., McGannon, K. R., Coholic, D. A., Enosse, L., Peltier, D., & Pheasant, C. Navigating the insider-outsider hyphen: A qualitative exploration of the acculturation challenges of Aboriginal athletes pursuing sport in Euro-Canadian contexts.

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Abstract

Objectives: The purpose of this project was to explore the acculturation challenges of Aboriginal athletes (14-26 years) from Canada as they moved off reserves to pursue sport within non-Aboriginal (Euro-Canadian) communities. The project was also aimed at contributing to the acculturation literature in sport psychology through an Indigenous decolonizing methodology.

Design: University academics partnered with Aboriginal community researchers from one reserve to facilitate an Indigenous decolonizing methodology rooted in practices from the local culture. The project was articulated as a form of cultural sport psychology.

Methods: Mandala drawings were used to facilitate conversational interviews with 21 Aboriginal athletes about their experiences relocating off reserves and the acculturation challenges they faced as they attempted to pursue sport within Euro-Canadian contexts. A local Indigenous version of an inductive thematic analysis was then conducted.

Results: The acculturation challenges of Aboriginal athletes coalesced into two major themes: (a) culture shock (which occurred in relation to the host culture), and (b) becoming disconnected from home (which occurred in relation to the home culture). These themes illustrated how the athletes' sense of identity and place were challenged and changed, as they (re)negotiated meaningful positions for themselves in and between two cultural realities.

Conclusion: This project centralized a culturally resonant mode of knowledge production embracing local Aboriginal ways of knowing. This approach facilitated deeper insights into athletes' acculturation challenges, which contextualized the complexity and fluidity of the acculturation process.

Keywords: Cultural sport psychology; Indigenous research; Decolonizing methodology; Aboriginal

Introduction

Given the increasing globalization and mobility of society, it is not surprising that there is a growing trend of athletes migrating across and within national borders in pursuit of increased sport opportunities (Schinke & McGannon, 2013). As a result of these movements, many athletes are encountering and negotiating cultural contexts that are unfamiliar from the ones they have been socialized within, thus initiating a process of acculturation or second-culture learning (Rudmin, 2009). How acculturation is experienced by athletes who relocate into new contexts where their identities are outside of the “dominant” culture is a pertinent and under-explored question, through which sport psychology researchers can glean deeper understandings of a diverse range of participants. As indicated by a small body of scholars who have considered the acculturation of immigrant and migratory athletes (e.g., Campbell & Sonn, 2009; Kontos & Arguello, 2005; Richardson, Littlewood, Nesti, & Benstead, 2012; Schinke et al., 2006; Schinke & McGannon, 2013; Schinke, McGannon, Battochio, & Wells, 2013; Stambulova, 2013), such research has the potential to facilitate more inclusive sport contexts that embrace (rather than marginalize) the cultural identities of diverse participants. However, Schinke and McGannon (2013) noted that much of the writing relating to this topic has been limited by an overly simplified and reductionist view of acculturation as a linear process of culture change, wherein

individuals are assumed to statically adopt the practices of the culture around them and move away from their home culture. This conception has not fully captured the complexity and dynamicity of acculturation as it is experienced (Schinke et al., 2013). Underscoring the foregoing point, scholars outside of sport psychology have advocated for more inductive research that generates deep descriptions of individuals' acculturation experiences and explores the dynamics of negotiating multiple cultural realities (e.g., Chirkov, 2009; Cresswell, 2009).

The purpose of the current project was to address the need for acculturation scholarship that aligns more closely with lived experiences, via an exploration of the challenges encountered by Aboriginal athletes from Northeastern Ontario, Canada as they relocated away from their reserves to pursue sport within Euro-Canadian³ communities. There is a notable lack of sport psychology research that inquires from a critical lens about the experiences of Indigenous athletes and explicitly considers the ways in which their cultural identities and sport participation are shaped/misshaped by the Euro-Canadian culture (Forsyth & Giles, 2013). The current project was thus developed around the following research question: What acculturation challenges do Aboriginal athletes face as they relocate into Euro-Canadian cultural contexts, and how are these challenges experienced by the athletes?⁴ An understanding of acculturation that would account for the psychological and sociocultural complexity and dynamicity of its processes was

³ Euro-Canadian refers to the dominant national culture of white Canadians who are of European ancestry. The culture of Aboriginal peoples is also considered a Canadian culture, though a markedly different one, which has historically been marginalized and denigrated through the colonizing efforts of Euro-Canadians. Thus, when Aboriginal people relocate off reserves in Canada, they are moving outside of the Aboriginal Canadian culture and into Euro-Canadian contexts, where the Aboriginal element is largely absent or subverted.

⁴ We focused on the athletes' sociocultural location between two different contexts distinguished by race and ethnicity (i.e., the Aboriginal and Euro-Canadian contexts). We did not flesh out other aspects of the athletes' sociocultural locations (such as their location within an elite sport context, a socioeconomic status, an educational context, a sexual orientation, etc.), though we recognize that these, too, are intersected in the athletes' identities and acculturation experiences (McGannon, Schinke, & Busanich, 2014).

necessitated by this question, in order to meaningfully embrace the lived experiences of the Aboriginal athletes. Herein, drawing on the critical acculturation writing of Chirkov (2009) and furthering the work of Schinke et al., (2013) in sport psychology, we advance the conception that acculturation is not a process that simply or universally *happens to* individuals, but rather, is *executed by* individuals upon entering a cultural community that is different from the one they were socialized within. Acculturation involves a deliberate, reflective, and comparative cognitive activity of understanding the norms, rules, and worldviews which exist in one's home cultural community and which one discovers in a new (host) cultural community (Chirkov). In short, acculturation is an active and ongoing process of second-culture learning (Rudmin, 2009).

The above definition supports the supposition that acculturation is a fluid rather than a linear movement towards fixed outcomes (Bhatia, 2002; Chirkov, 2009; Rudmin, 2009). Accordingly, athletes who relocate outside of their home cultures to pursue sport may vacillate in and between two cultural worldviews (home and host) in their daily living, rather than move towards a complete adoption or rejection of the host culture's practices (Schinke et al., 2013; Stambulova, 2013). It is also recognized that acculturation is (re)negotiated in everyday interactional settings. Rather than being explicitly driven by the thoughts and actions of the individual, acculturation is denoted as a shared process that is influenced by the people in the host culture (Bowskill, Lyons, & Coyle, 2007; Rudmin, 2009; Schinke et al., 2013) as well as the social structure and cultural norms of the host context (Bowskill et al.).

Acculturation and Aboriginal Athletes

It is well documented that Aboriginal peoples frequently experience racism, discrimination, and alienation when they move outside of their home cultural communities and attempt to enter "mainstream" contexts, challenging their sense of identity (Berry, 1999;

Goodwill & McCormick, 2012). As a participant in Berry's (1999) research explained: "When you live off the Reserve, you know what it is to be an Indian. That's when I really had an identity crisis. On the Reserve I was protected. Once I left, it was a slap in the face" (p. 18). Aboriginal athletes who relocate away from their reserves to pursue sport opportunities are at risk of experiencing similar forms of marginalization and challenges to their identity, which will affect the way they engage in (or disengage from) their new sport contexts. In research examining the adaptation strategies of elite Aboriginal athletes, Schinke et al. (2006) illustrated this very point when numerous athletes explained why they returned to their reserves following a period of sport relocation in order to be closer to family and community support. These athletes' identities, culture, and sense of belonging were challenged in the "mainstream" sport contexts, and consequently, they returned to their home contexts in order to re-gain substantiation and cultural connectedness. Similarly, Campbell and Sonn (2009) identified challenges of culture shock and racism being experienced by Aborigine footballers relocated away from their cultural communities in Australia, emphasizing the need for cultural social support to buffer against adverse experiences. Both projects provided initial insights into the acculturation experiences of Aboriginal athletes, demonstrating how these individuals are challenged by a lack of social and cultural resources and also a lack of structural support within host sport contexts. Beyond these initial insights, however, there remains a dearth of knowledge about the acculturation changes and challenges that are encountered by relocated Aboriginal athletes. In particular, no scholarship has explicitly addressed the dynamic nature of the acculturation process as outlined earlier, exploring how Aboriginal athletes move fluidly in and between their dual cultural realities and continually re-construct their identities rather than opting linearly towards one culture and away from the other.

The limited scholarship on Aboriginal athletes' acculturation experiences is symptomatic of a more general lack of sport psychology research that explores the ways in which the identities of cultural minority or marginalized athletes intersect with, and are shaped by, their sport contexts. While the lack of inclusion of culture and/or cultural identities in sport psychology has been challenged for many years (e.g., Butryn, 2002; Duda & Allison, 1990; Fisher, Butryn, & Roper, 2003; Ram, Starek, & Johnson, 2004) cultural diversity has long been marginalized within sport psychology, subverted under "mainstream" (white, Euro-American, heterosexual, male) norms and traditions. More recently, cultural work within sport psychology has continued to grow under the collective genre of *cultural sport psychology* (CSP). Extending previous calls for cultural work within the discipline, scholars who position their work within the CSP genre explicitly challenge the dominant cultural norms of the domain with the goal of facilitating more culturally inclusive research (see Ryba, Schinke, & Tennenbaum, 2010 for CSP research; Schinke & Hanrahan, 2009 for CSP practice; Schinke & McGannon, in press for critical approaches in sport subcultures). While CSP work is not limited to the foregoing examples, the CSP lines of inquiry centralize issues of culture within sport contexts and, more specifically, generates culturally aligned understandings of diverse (often marginalized) sport participants (Ryba, Stambulova, Si, & Schinke, 2013; Schinke & Hanrahan, 2009). The intent is to facilitate knowledge that can be utilized to support the identities of diverse sport participants, rather than marginalize them, and foster more inclusive sport contexts (McGannon & Schinke, in press; McGannon, Schinke, & Busanich, 2014).

The current project was conceptualized as a CSP initiative, aimed at facilitating an in-depth and culturally meaningful understanding of Aboriginal athletes' acculturation challenges. Building upon the work of Schinke et al. (2006) and Campbell and Sonn (2009) within

Aboriginal sport and Schinke et al., (2013) on the fluidity of acculturation in sport, the overarching intent was to contribute an experiential understanding of acculturation as a fluid process that is navigated by Aboriginal athletes. The project was rooted in a local Indigenous decolonizing methodology that encouraged the participants to share their stories through their own cultural perspectives, and enabled them to express the complex and dynamic nature of their lived experiences (Ryba & Schinke, 2009; Smith, 1999). By positioning the current project within a specific type of CSP approach, we are able to respond to the need for non-deductive, interpretivist methodologies (see Sparkes & Smith, 2014) to be engaged as a means of opening up more meaningful, localized accounts of acculturation that reflect lived experiences (Chirkov, 2009; Cresswell, 2009; Schinke & McGannon, 2013).

Indigenous Decolonizing Methodology

Indigenous decolonizing research is a form of localized critical theory that is “grounded in the specific meanings, traditions, customs, and community relations that operate in each indigenous setting” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 6). Reflecting an epistemology of experiential knowing, Indigenous decolonizing research embraces the lived experiences and cultural worldviews of Indigenous and other non-Western peoples as legitimate, situated knowledge sources which have long been excluded from, or marginalized in, traditional (post-positivist, Westernized) research paradigms (Smith, 1999). Localized, contextually driven research methodologies are therein advocated as a means of privileging Indigenous ways of knowing without the imposition of Westernized perspectives (Ryba & Schinke, 2009). Researchers engaged in Indigenous decolonizing work recognize that research is not an innocent exercise, but an activity that has something at stake; the power to produce knowledge about people and represent their lives in meaningful or marginalizing ways (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). As such,

research is developed within local community contexts in order to engage a process of valuing, reclaiming, and foregrounding Indigenous voices and epistemologies (Bartlett et al., 2007; Schinke, McGannon, & Smith, 2013; Smith, 1999).

A participatory action research approach was used to engage Aboriginal community members as research team members to mobilize the project, as has been suggested in the literature (Bartlett et al., 2007; Schinke et al., 2009; Smith, 1999). This collaborative process illustrates the epistemological and political necessity for Indigenous people to be involved in research that affects their lives, as well as the need to reconfigure traditional power imbalances in research so that knowledge outcomes are meaningful, relevant, and beneficial (Kral, 2014). Stemming from these core tenets, a decolonizing methodology was facilitated which encompassed the following: (a) recognition that research is a transformative process, with the transformation coming from within the local community; (b) centralization of the cultural protocols, values, and practices of the community as integral research components that lend to the development of locally relevant knowledge; (c) honoring of Indigenous peoples' stories by representing these with integrity; and (d) sharing gained knowledge within the local Indigenous community in ways that lend to local enhancement (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Schinke, McGannon, & Smith, 2013; Smith, 1999).

Research Team

The research team consisted of three Aboriginal community researchers from Wikwemikong and four academic researchers from Laurentian University, most of who had worked together on community-based sport projects over the past 10 years. The Aboriginal researchers included the Chief of Wikwemikong, the manager of the Youth Centre where local sport and recreation programs are housed, as well as a community Elder. These three Aboriginal

researchers contributed experiential and cultural knowledge to the project, guiding forward an Indigenous decolonizing methodology that was rooted in local protocols, values, traditions, and ways of knowing. The university researchers contributed their general understandings of community based research methodologies (see Schinke, McGannon, & Smith, 2013; Schinke, Smith, & McGannon, 2013) in ways that supported the contributions of the Aboriginal researchers (e.g., by writing grant applications, assisting with data collection and analysis work, and developing academic manuscripts).

Participants

Participants comprised Aboriginal athletes who had relocated away from reserves in Northeastern Ontario to pursue sport opportunities that were unavailable in their local Aboriginal communities. Participants were recruited through the Aboriginal research team members, given their community connectedness. Twenty-one athletes participated in the study, ranging in age from 14 to 26 years (mean age = 19.3 years), with one participant outside of this range at 41 years old. Ten of the 21 participants were male and 11 were female. The participants came from seven different reserve communities, and their sport backgrounds consisted of ice hockey players (n = 17), an archer (n = 1), a volleyball player (n = 1), a pow-wow dancer (n = 1), and a boxer (n = 1). Though the researchers tried to target a variety of sport disciplines, the large proportion of ice hockey players reflects the prominence of this sport with the local Indigenous culture.

Data Collection

Upon receiving approval from the first author's university's research ethics board, the local reserve's Band Council, and the regional Aboriginal research review committee, data collection was initiated with an arts-based method – mandala drawings. Mandala is a Sanskrit word for “circle”, and it refers to an art form or image that is created within a circular context

(Henderson, Rosen, & Mascaro, 2007). Mandalas have been used to facilitate self-expression (Henderson et al., 2007), and in this vein, participants in the current project were asked to draw a circle and, within that form, create an image that reflected their experiences relocating for sport. Given that the circular motif is a sacred theme in Aboriginal culture, reflecting the dynamic life cycle of the world, including the human journey through life (Little Bear, 2000), the mandalas were engaged as part of a decolonizing research process that would centralize Aboriginal ways of knowing. The Aboriginal researchers indicated that the circular drawings would resonate with and be more engaging for the participants, who could make their own choices about how to best represent their acculturation experiences through their cultural worldview. The authors previously published samples of the Aboriginal athletes' mandalas in a methodological article exploring the use of arts-based methods in community-based research (see Blodgett et al., 2013), and accordingly, the drawings are not a focus in the current paper. Instead, this paper disseminates the themes that developed regarding the athletes' acculturation challenges, which were elicited through interviews based around the participants' mandalas.

Each participant's mandala was used to facilitate a conversational interview, which aligns with an Indigenous decolonizing methodology in multiple ways. First, it honors the tradition of storytelling as a means of transmitting knowledge, beliefs, and values within Aboriginal cultures (Kovach, 2010; Little Bear, 2000; Smith, 1999). The unstructured nature of the conversational interview invites participants to share stories that convey the complexity and depth of their experiences (Smith & Sparkes, 2009) and so, the fluidity in their acculturation. Second, a more dialogical context is facilitated wherein both researchers and participants can engage in a more participatory mode of knowing that "privileges sharing, subjectivity, personal knowledge, and the specialized knowledges of oppressed groups" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 14). Accordingly,

each interview began with the question “Can you tell me about what you have drawn in your mandala?” All pursuant questions were posed during the interviews in relation to the themes brought up by the participants. The questions encouraged the participants to reflect on the relationship between their drawings and their experiences as relocated athletes, eliciting richer descriptions of their acculturation. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

Data Analysis

A local Indigenous version of an inductive thematic analysis, developed and led from within the aforementioned Aboriginal community, was performed on each participant’s interview transcript. The intent was to identify common patterns of meaning (i.e., themes) through a local Aboriginal perspective rather than through a Western-academic lens, thus facilitating a decolonizing process that centralizes the Indigenous community’s ways of knowing (Bartlett et al., 2007; Schinke et al., 2009). In order to ensure that this inductive perspective was maintained throughout the analysis, the community researchers suggested that the process be performed on the reserve’s territorial lands with guidance from community assigned research assistants. The first author was thus invited into the Wikwemikong Youth Centre, and was assigned two research assistants to engage in the data analysis from the local perspective. The research assistants had previously experienced sport relocation, offering contextual insight around the participants’ transcripts, while also ensuring the cultural integrity of the analysis.

First, to become familiar with the data, the Aboriginal research assistants and the first author read through each interview transcript and discussed the terms and concepts that stood out. This dialogic process is part of an Indigenous consensus-building strategy that facilitates the sharing of ideas and the development of mutual understandings (Schinke et al., 2009). This strategy contributed to the assignment of appropriate expertise to the Aboriginal research

assistants, and enabling knowledge to be developed relationally, in line with a collectivist orientation and a collaborative research approach (Kral, 2014; Schinke et al., 2009). Second, the Aboriginal research assistants developed and inserted keywords/phrases around quotations within each interview transcript, using local terminology, in order to begin establishing topic patterns across the data set. As an example, the research assistants tagged a number of quotations with the phrase “just going for a skate,” which they described as an attitude amongst local Aboriginal hockey players of not expecting to be successful when trying out for or playing on teams in Euro-Canadian contexts. Through the use of this local terminology, the analysis centralized local Indigenous experiences and ways of thinking without the imposition of Western-oriented academic terminology (Bartlett et al., 2007; Schinke et al., 2009). Third, the research assistants and first author identified broader-ranging patterns of meaning, organizing the initial keywords/phrases into more-defined themes and sub-themes. Here, the knowledge of the Aboriginal research assistants was essential for contextualizing the themes and sub-themes and offering insight into what each meant in relation to the lived experiences of the participants. For example, the research assistants suggested organizing the quotations tagged as “just going for a skate” into the more encompassing sub-theme “confronting attitudes that Aboriginal people can’t ‘make it.’” They explained how the self-doubt that many Aboriginal hockey players (and also other athletes) experienced within Euro-Canadian sport contexts was tied to broader racist attitudes and stereotypes about Aboriginal people. Through this (and other) lines of discussion, the research assistants provided deeper insight into the ways in which the Aboriginal athletes’ experiences were framed by a system of cultural oppression. Moving forward with these insights, the analysis was presented to the Aboriginal researchers for further refinement. A group dialogue took place amongst the Aboriginal team members with the first author present, regarding the

terminology, organization, and interpretation of themes until consensus was achieved.

Results

The acculturation challenges of the Aboriginal athletes coalesced into two overarching themes relating to distinct aspects of the acculturation process: (a) culture shock (which occurred in relation to the host culture), and (b) becoming disconnected from home (which occurred in relation to the home culture). The sub-themes within each of these overarching themes are explicated below, using direct narrative quotations from the athletes to centralize their voices and stories. The mandala drawings of three participants are also provided as samples of how the visual process facilitated and enriched the narratives of acculturation, though a more in-depth exploration of this process has been published elsewhere (see Blodgett et al., 2013).

Culture Shock

Upon initial relocation, participants described experiencing culture shock, which was a sense of discomfort resulting from being immersed in an unfamiliar cultural context with different systems of meaning. Participants were jarred by the vast changes that the host culture imposed upon them, as well as their newfound status as “outsiders” as they attempted to integrate and engage with non-Aboriginal people. They were also shocked by the racism and prejudice they encountered. The sub-themes identified were (a) feeling overwhelmed by change, (b) living with non-Aboriginal billets, (c) lacking meaningful engagement from host culture members, (d) dealing with racism, and (e) confronting attitudes that Aboriginal people can’t “make it”.

Feeling overwhelmed by change. Almost all participants discussed the vast changes that relocation within a new cultural context brought into their lives, and how overwhelmed they were at the prospect of having to navigate this new world alone. One participant articulated this as she explained why she drew a stop sign and an array of vivid colors and scribbles around the

central image of a tree in her mandala:

I kinda went to the emotions that I felt when I first went there. I remember not wanting to be there, like once we were in [city] driving down the last stretch before we got to the school. I just remember wanting to turn around and go back. And I remember seeing three crosses on top of a hill; I guess they're supposed to be comforting, but it was really creepy to me. I guess I just felt really out of my element... The whole summer [prior to relocating] I'd been really excited and I was like 'yeah, it's going to be great' – because I thought it was going to be different. 'It's gonna work, it's gonna work.' And then getting there, it was kind of a shock. I hadn't really thought about being by myself and dealing with a lot of different things, like having different beliefs and everything being just so chaotic and uncomfortable. I hadn't thought about those things until I got there... Then it kind of felt like, once my parents were gone, I was by myself in the middle of [city] with nothing. That made me not want to be there, just because everything familiar was gone and I just felt like it was chaos all around me. That's how I picture it, like I'm stuck in the middle, I'm rooted with this tree into the ground and I can't move. (22 year old female)

A younger high school athlete similarly articulated this feeling of chaos as she reflected on her drawing of a highway, which was flanked by a “blur” of colors on each side:

That represents the sadness and emotions. You're looking back through the car window behind you and you're like 'oh my god, I'm driving away [from reserve] for the first time!' ...You don't realize how hard and different it is until you actually get there. When I got to my first day of school it was like, I've never rode a bus in my life because I always got driven to school. So I had to learn how to get on the bus and get the bus times. Then of course you're shaking all day and you're worried; 'What if my locker doesn't work?

What if I have to go to the office?’ And of course everybody is going around talking to their friends and you’re just standing there and you almost feel like everybody is moving around you and you’re the only one standing still. It’s like those movies where you just see everything as a blur and then there you are standing there like, ‘What am I doing here? I don’t even know what I’m doing. Where do I start?’ (15 year old female)

These participants highlighted the sense of chaos that took place around and within themselves as their cultural realities shifted, realizing that they needed to make an active effort to adapt to their new Euro-Canadian contexts. Their drawings of multi-colored “blurs” and scribbles provided a further sense of chaotic movement and activity, and thus helped to illustrate how the participants experienced acculturation as a dynamic, moving process which cannot be readily predicted. In this manner, the mandala drawings facilitated a richer, more experiential understanding of acculturation than provided through narrative accounts alone (Blodgett et al., 2013).

Living with non-Aboriginal billets. Adding to the experience of culture shock, many participants ended up living with non-Aboriginal billets (host families who offer room and board to athletes who are relocated away from their homes). To articulate the challenges of these new living arrangements, one participant reflected on the image she created of her family home:

The house is just kind of like, when you’re trying to sleep and you close your eyes and you just wish that you could wake up there, at home, and see – Like, I have a Bon Jovi poster that hangs above my bed at my old house that my dad put up when I was like seven because I was obsessed with Bon Jovi. I would look at that every morning. And it’s still there to this day. So it’s just the little things at home that just make it home... And to me, that home represents somewhere where you don’t always feel like you’re being

judged by what you're doing. You know, if you do something at home it's going to be natural... You don't feel like somebody different is just watching you. You don't have to worry 'I wonder what they're thinking? I wonder if I spend too much time in my bedroom? Do I have to go down and visit with them for a certain amount of time?' ... Moving here [to city] I was really, really uncomfortable all year. I just always felt like I was always being judged, no matter what I did. If I stayed in my room too long she [billet] would always make comments about how when her brother lived with her he would stay in his room really long. Like, 'He just sits on his Facebook all the time. I don't know what you do in your room.' And it's like oh, shit! So then I tried to come out and sit there, but I couldn't handle it. Sometimes I just need time to myself, especially when there's a lot of noise... It just was not home at all, because you never have to put on a fake mask for anybody at home; it's just, that's you. (15 year old female)

For this individual, living with a billet family in a new cultural context meant she had to mask her true self and change her behaviors in order to meet external expectations. The cultural norms and expectations of the host environment thus subverted her Aboriginal identity and ways of being, and made her cling more deeply to her notion of home. Another participant shared a somewhat different perspective:

Billeting; that's a headache, because you can't do what you normally do at home when you live in these other people's non-Native homes. That sucks. But I did find one family that was really laid back, and to this day I'm still really good friends with them. I actually lived there for three years. I even lived there when I was done hockey, which was nice. They just let me be, and I became good friends with them. But with other families, you're just not at home. The thing about dealing with that is you have to have an open mind to it

too. At times when it's tough, you have to embrace it. Because at the same time, these people do want you in their homes; otherwise they wouldn't say yeah. (24 year old male)

This individual realized that it was necessary for him to be open to the ways of his billets and acculturate towards this new cultural environment as a means of fitting in and creating a more viable living situation; even though it meant shifting away from or altering some of his Aboriginal ways of being. These findings illustrate the fluid nature of the acculturation process – sometimes the participants shifted towards the host culture in an effort to integrate and persist within that context, and sometimes they clung more deeply to their Aboriginal culture (as reflected in the first participants' image and discussion of home) in order preserve their sense of self and resist pressures to “put on a fake mask”.

Lacking meaningful engagement from host culture members. Extending beyond their experiences with billets, participants emphasized the difficulty they had engaging and building relationships with non-Aboriginal people more generally. In moving off-reserve, participants became abruptly aware of their positions as cultural minorities in relation to the larger Euro-Canadian collective, and how this created an uneven social dynamic (and implicitly a one-way acculturation experience):

As I wrote on the bottom [of mandala], the challenge I had was being the only Native on all the teams I joined. It's not that they were being rude or excluding me out. I'm just saying that I was the only Native out there and I was kinda nervous, because I'd never really mingled or socialized with non-Native people because I was always here on the reserve. And I'm usually a quiet person all around, like all the time. I find that's due to my cultural teachings and values. Like as a kid, you are taught to just sit there and watch and listen, and you just pay attention to your educators or your teachers or your elders or

your parents; you just sit there and listen and pay attention. That's how I was taught anyway, and that's how I've been my whole life. So, basically, in those first few weeks I just kind of did that; I just sat back and listened. That way, you get to know them [people in host culture] and see if they will accept you or not... But that challenge there, with me being the only Native, is that no one really knows who I am or what I actually see. But I know what they see. I know who they are. (26 year old male)

Although this athlete was able to learn about the people in the host culture around him and consider things from their cultural vantage, there was little reciprocation from those same people to learn who he was as an Aboriginal athlete. Participants thus struggled to build relationships with those in the host culture, feeling burdened by the responsibility being placed solely on them to forge relationships through a one-way cultural sharing process. This was reinforced in the mandala of another participant who depicted himself in a hockey arena alone, without any teammate support (see Figure 1):

It just pretty much shows me standing on one side of the blue line and the goalie on the other end – just me and the goalie. In [city] I played for the first time for a team that didn't consist of any Native players, so I felt like I was on my own. The first day I walked into the dressing room, you could just hear chatter. They [teammates] were all having a good time talking amongst themselves. And then as soon as I walked around the corner, it just went quiet. They're not saying anything but they're looking at you, like Who is this guy? Where did he come from? What is he doing here? But at the same time, I knew that I was going to be in that position, coming in as the only Native. And I knew it would be hard being an outsider and having to break into the group. (24 year old male)

The lack of engagement from host community members reinforced the participants' status as

outsiders in the host culture, pushing them back towards their Aboriginal communities to gain a sense of belonging.

Dealing with racism. Many participants were shocked by the existence of racism in the Euro-Canadian culture, and this may have further contributed to the experience of acculturation as one-sided, as outlined above. Providing an insightful example, one participant shared the following account:

I was playing hockey with my [city] team. It was the last 30 seconds of the game, and this guy skates by me and goes, ‘You’re a dirty f’ing Native!’ That was my first ever experience of racism. Like, my dad kind of talked about it and how he went through it in high school, but I thought that’s not really present today at all and I can’t believe that. And then when this guy said that comment to me, I didn’t know how to take it. At first I was kind of mad. But then when I got to the dressing room I just burst out crying. It really offended me and it made me like, I don’t know – To be completely honest it actually does make you question yourself. Like why was I born Native? Or what if I was born white? You know, would I be as pretty as other people, and not what I look like now? That kind of thing. You know, it just really surprised me. This happened last year, but I could still cry about it. It’s like a knife through the heart because it’s something you can’t change about yourself. I can’t change the way I look or like my background, my Aboriginal background. You can’t change that. And for someone to call you dirty or make you ashamed of it, it’s like, oh my god! Especially if you’re living in a white society right now, you can’t really go and turn your back on those people because then you’re like ‘What am I doing here if I don’t even like any of the people around me?’ (15 year old female)

This incident served as a jarring and painful reminder to the participant that she was living in a white-dominated culture where her Aboriginal identity was marginalized. Another athlete described a more subtle incident where he felt undercurrents of racism at work in the Euro-Canadian sport context:

I remember an instance where there was a big all-star game going on, where we would have got to play a team from Russia. I think I was fourth in the entire league in scoring, and I didn't get asked to go. There were probably 20 people on the team. They had asked the top three guys to play, then bypassed me, and then picked everybody else below me. My coach came to apologize to me after for me not being there. He never gave me a real answer, he just apologized to me. He just gave me some answer like 'Oh, we didn't know where you were going to be.' Well he never once approached me to ask if I wanted to go or anything like that. And you know what, I can accept losses and accept not being picked, or whatever. But when there's no justification as to why I wasn't picked, it doesn't make sense... If it was somebody else on another team, say a white guy, I really believe that he would have been picked. Because if you're a leading scorer, you're a leading scorer and you should be recognized for it... So I was shocked by it all. But like, what was I going to do? Part of it too, I think, is that Natives are a very humble people. I think maybe too humble many times. I think that was an instance where I was too humble, because I never questioned the coach as to why I didn't go to that game. But it didn't seem right. It still doesn't seem right. But I can't just go out and say its racism because I don't have any facts. You can't prove it. (24 year old male)

These stories reveal the (unequal) racial power dynamics that are at play within the Euro-Canadian context, which must be continually challenged and negotiated by the Aboriginal

athletes if they are to meaningfully adapt and express their identities in the host context.

Confronting attitudes that Aboriginal people can't "make it". Related to the challenge of *dealing with racism*, a number of participants explained how, in their new cultural environments, they were surprised to discover an underlying attitude that Aboriginal people are not supposed to "make it" outside of the reserve. This was highlighted when one participant centralized the word "failure" in his mandala and shared the following story:

I made it to the [elite hockey league] training camp and was competing for a spot. It's something way different than just going to any other tryouts. This is the best level of hockey in the country for my age. This is a stepping stone to get to pro hockey for a lot of people. So it was a huge accomplishment for me to be there. But at the same time, there was a blindness going in there. I was going into that camp blind, not knowing what to do, not knowing how to talk to these people. I knew I was playing with people that were going to be playing in the National Hockey League and be millionaires, so you can see why I was almost in awe of where I was. It was a whole new experience for my family too, so they didn't know how to tell me what to do. I was really in a territory that no one around me knew. Here I am, a little Native kid from [reserve]. When you're coming from [reserve] you're not supposed to make the [elite hockey league]. So to be where I was, I was intimidated. And that eventually related to failure.

I ended up getting sent down to the junior team. But throughout that year I did get called up [to play in elite hockey league]. But I was still intimidated being at that level. I knew this was another make-or-break right here. They told me 'you might be getting signed and you might be sticking.' So I was like, wow! This is what I wanted. But it turns out I didn't get signed. And now that I look at it, I wish I had really pursued it with the coaches

and the people in the office to prove to them I know I belong here and I know that I should be here, today and the rest of the season, and next year, and the year after that. I wish I would have told them that. I think that would have really opened their eyes because I think they knew that I could play hockey. It's just off the ice that was a little different, with me being intimidated and a little afraid, and not being as aggressive as other players that were there with the team. They all had an attitude about them, like I'm here, this is where I should be, this is what I'm going to do, this is my life. For me it wasn't like that. I was standoffish and scared. I was playing with a bunch of people who were in these environments their entire lives growing up surrounded by people who knew what it meant to be at the elite level. I didn't have that. (24 year old male)

In stories such as this, the participants were challenged by a view of themselves as deficient by the standards of Euro-Canadian society, and began to internalize this oppression by doubting themselves in their host context. These insights demonstrate the power of the host culture to impose its (oppressing) view of reality onto outsiders, and moreover, provide an understanding of why many participants experienced lapses where they withdrew from the host culture.

Becoming Disconnected from Home

In addition to experiencing culture shock in their host contexts, participants identified challenges pertaining to a growing sense of disconnection between themselves and their cultural roots as they moved away from their home communities. It was emphasized how the physical distance separating the participants from their families and homes triggered feelings of isolation, while also stirring up negative reactions among their on-reserve peers. Participants also felt disconnected from their Aboriginal culture as they immersed into the Euro-Canadian context, challenging their sense of identity and belonging. The sub-themes identified were (a) being

distanced from family, (b) losing loved ones while away from home, (c) missing the Aboriginal culture, and (d) dealing with on-reserve rejection.

Being distanced from family. The majority of participants emphasized the intense bouts of homesickness that plagued them as they moved away from their families to pursue new sport opportunities. In his mandala, one participant literally centralized the importance of family connectedness and support in his relocation experiences, explaining:

I drew my dad, my sister, my brother, and myself in the center of the circle, and on the outside I put the things that we've shared, like some of the values that we were taught. I wrote 'Dad gave us opportunity' by allowing us to live in [city] as opposed to [reserve]. Then at the bottom it says that 'this enabled us to reach our full potential' as to the goals that we wanted to achieve; which was hockey for me and my brother. Basically, the things my dad gave us while we were in [city], most people that live on the reserve probably never get a chance to have those opportunities. Not even just in sports, but maybe educational wise too. My take is that he just wanted us to reach our full potential in whichever way that was. And I think that's why it's important to have family around you, to have support from your family. Because if you don't, no one is going to be there to support you and push you to achieve what you want. (23 year old male)

This participant went on to explain the struggle he had once he was physically disconnected from his family and alone in his sport environment:

I played in the [elite hockey league] for three years, and then one day I just didn't want to go back. I didn't want to play anymore because I wasn't enjoying what I was doing. So I chose to come back to [city near home reserve] and play at home. At that time I was 19 and I'd been living away from home since I was 16. So I guess maybe a lot of it was that

I missed my family. I think that's what I had a hard time adjusting to when I moved away – there was no one there, no family. Everywhere I went I was six or seven hours away from my home, so it wasn't like it was close or anything like that. And when you're playing in the [elite hockey league], it's such a high level that you only get six days to come home at Christmas and then you're not home again for the rest of the season. So it was challenging, because you're so young and you're looking for support and guidance, but there isn't really anyone to give it to you, so you have to try and guide yourself... It wasn't until I moved back home that I started enjoying hockey again. And I think that's because I had all the people around me who supported me – my family.

Building on this experience, another participant used her mandala to visualize her heart's connection to her family (see Figure 2):

Those three houses [on mandala] are pretty much the heart of my family, just because we're so close together. There's my house, then my next door neighbour is my grandma, and then next door is my auntie and uncle. So we're all in one little area. And I put a heart because I'll always love being there, in [reserve], surrounded by the people who have supported me and pushed me to become the best that I can be. That's where my heart will always be. Like, when I moved away to [city] it was hard because I was by myself for the first time and my family wasn't there anymore. It was really, really tough, going from all the support to – well, I know they supported me, but I didn't feel that. I felt alone. My heart was pulling me back to this place [shown on mandala], and it was a very emotional experience.

The participants' mandalas herein helped to reveal a core belief within Aboriginal culture (Blodgett et al., 2013) – that one's greatest resource lies in family relationships and community

connections rather than in external successes (Pattel, 2007) – and thus provide a deeper understanding of how the participants were conflicted, on an ongoing basis, by being physically disconnected from their kin. This finding highlights the athletes' experiences of being pulled within and between each culture at various times in order to address tensions which had no static resolution (i.e., the collectivist need to be near family in the Aboriginal culture, and the simultaneous the need to pursue their individual sport dreams in the Euro-Canadian context).

Losing loved ones while away from home. A number of participants talked about the unexpected challenge of having family members pass away while they were away from home. They again emphasized feeling torn between their need for kinship during these hard times and their individual goal and desire to continue on their athletic journeys, as exemplified in the following account:

I put the raindrops [in mandala] as people that I miss the most and that passed away... My uncle passed away this year, right around the time I was supposed to go to [city] for a tournament. It was kind of hard, because he had supported me. He helped me raise money to get up there to [city], he always told me that I was a good hockey player, and he used to come watch me all the time. So when he passed away, I just didn't know what to do. I had to make decisions to go back home or go to the hockey tournament. I felt that was hard and it got to me later at a point that I just felt I couldn't do it anymore. That was probably the toughest thing. (14 year old female)

Though this athlete initially struggled with the idea of giving up her hockey opportunities to go home and grieve with her family, she later decided to continue pursuing her dreams:

I thought about [uncle] and how he'd be so proud of me and that he was supporting me before [his passing]. I knew that he'd want me to do this. I think I felt that when I tried

out this year for [team]. I felt that I was thinking of him more and trying harder because I thought that he'd be watching me and cheering me on.

Conversely, another participant explained how he opted to return to his family and give up his hockey career after losing his father unexpectedly:

I put 'confused' [on mandala], because I did have the chance to pursue pro hockey. But I turned it down to stay closer to my family because my father had died. I wish I would have pursued pro hockey, but at the same time, it's my family; you only have one. We were a very tight family, my dad, my mom, and my brothers and sisters. So when he died it was obviously an overwhelming experience. (24-year-old male)

Both of these cases illustrate the complex psychological activity involved in navigating the acculturation process for these athletes, as they worked actively and fluidly to re-construct more meaningful realities that helped them understand and cope with the sudden loss of loved ones.

Missing the Aboriginal culture. Some participants described being challenged by the absence of the Aboriginal culture as they relocated off-reserve. With the Euro-Canadian culture pervading their everyday reality (i.e., a culture rooted in white European influences, traditions, and values), these individuals began to feel disconnected from their traditional Aboriginal ways of life⁵. As explained by one participant:

The one thing that I noticed over the years is that I miss hearing people speak the [Ojibway] language. I'm so familiar with that – I don't want to call it noise, but those words – that when I'm not around it for a long time I do miss it. As soon as I hear

⁵ Although Euro-Canadian and Aboriginal cultures are complex and dynamic, it is generally recognized that the core values and philosophies underpinning these cultures are in opposition (see Little Bear, 2000). In contrast to the linear, static and objective ways of thinking and existing in Euro-Canadian culture, Aboriginal cultural philosophies are rooted in a holistic and cyclical view of the world, where interrelationships are of paramount importance, emphasis is placed on processes rather than products, and space is a more important referent than time.

somebody speaking it I just stop and listen to try and absorb it. I find that with pow-wows, too; I miss hearing that beat. When I get to go to a pow-wow it's like I just want to absorb everything. It's like a replenishment of the Anishnaabek in me. When you don't have it for a long time and then you have it for a brief period, you want to absorb as much as possible to last until the next time. So that's the cultural thing that I noticed I miss when I'm not at home in [reserve], being around the language and around the drum beat, and those kinds of things. You look forward to when it does come. Living in [city] I felt like I was missing that cultural aspect. (41 year old female)

Similarly, another participant highlighted her need to stay connected to her Aboriginal culture through her mandala (see Blodgett et al., 2013):

The red, I guess it just symbolizes the Aboriginal skin colour. I'm just proud of that colour now, I'm proud to be Aboriginal. At first it hurt me and it made me angry, like when I first moved off the reserve and was dealing with things like racism. Then I actually started to learn about the history of my people and what we went through, which is what this [image of teepee] shows. I learned a lot of stuff, and it kind of made me proud to be who I am again. Now I embrace it, my culture and my people. I want to stay connected to that, even when I'm not living on the reserve. I love coming home for that reason. (19 year old female)

These participants often felt inundated by the dominance of the Euro-Canadian culture in their host contexts, and took active measures to ensure that it didn't pull them away from the Aboriginal culture and identity that they drew strength from. Accordingly, they periodically (and fluidly) withdrew from the host culture and immersed themselves in home environments that strengthened their ties to their Aboriginal heritage and renewed their sense of identity.

Dealing with on-reserve rejection. After moving off-reserve and pursuing higher levels of sport outside of the Aboriginal community, many participants noted that they were confronted with rejection from some of their peers back home. Thus, in addition to feeling internally disconnected from their home, there was another disconnect occurring outwardly at the community level. This was exemplified in the following story:

When I moved back on reserve for school in grade 8, after being in [city] with [team name], there was issues with this one girl who used to be my friend. At school she wouldn't look at me, wouldn't talk to me, and if I was with my friends she wouldn't come to us. Then one day she was like 'Oh, you think you're so good. Just because you moved away and are playing for [team name] you think you're just the best around here, don't you?' I got up and was about to walk away when she grabbed my shoulder and was like 'What, you want to fight?' It just triggered me, and that was my first fight. It was pretty crazy, because we used to be good friends. We used to play on the same team down here [on reserve]. (17 year old female)

Similarly, another athlete described how local attitudes changed towards him after he relocated off-reserve, symbolized by a wavy line in his mandala (see Figure 3):

I drew a bumpy road. Because people [on reserve] have said that I won't make it or whatever, and I get criticized. There's just a lot of jealousy. People think that I think I'm better than them. I don't think I'm better; I'm not better than anybody. But that's what they think. And that's why I don't really hang around with people here anymore. So there's always low points that come with being successful. (16-year-old male)

These accounts reveal that, even though the Aboriginal community is a source of support and substantiation for the participants during their relocation, there are some on-reserve community

members who regard their relocation as a betrayal and push the athletes further outside the community. The athletes thus had to deal with being positioned as outsiders not only in the Euro-Canadian context, but also to some of their Aboriginal communities.

Discussion

The current project provides insights into how Aboriginal athletes describe challenges stemming from within their home cultural community (i.e., *becoming disconnected from home*) in addition to those related to the host cultural community (i.e., *culture shock*). These dualistic themes highlight the intense, intricate, and fluid psychological process that is involved in navigating multiple cultural realities (Chirkov, 2009; Rudmin, 2009), as the athletes made sense of the changes and challenges which pulled them towards and pushed them away from each cultural context at various times (Schinke et al., 2013; Schinke & McGannon, 2013; Stambulova, 2013). Previously, only challenges related to acclimation within the host culture were considered in research regarding the experiences of elite Aboriginal athletes in “mainstream” contexts (e.g., Campbell & Sonn, 2009; Schinke et al., 2006). The current project thus demonstrates how Aboriginal athletes navigate various challenges from shifting positions *in* and *between* their two cultural realities, moving to various degrees along the insider-outsider hyphen as their sense of identity and place within each culture is challenged. For example, in their narratives pertaining to the sub-themes *missing the Aboriginal culture* and *losing loved ones while away from home*, the participants described experiences which created the need to reconnect to their Aboriginal culture and strengthen their positions within their home community. Alternatively, in their narratives pertaining to the sub-theme *dealing with on-reserve rejection*, the Aboriginal athletes described being pushed outside their home community, thus shifting into positions in between the Aboriginal and Euro-Canadian cultures, without a sense of fully belonging to or identifying

with either culture. In further instances, such as those pertaining to the sub-themes *being overwhelmed by change* and *living with non-Aboriginal billets*, the participants were pulled towards the Euro-Canadian culture. In these latter moments of assimilation, the participants expressed a desire to identify with and integrate within their host community in order to create a more meaningful reality that would facilitate their sporting success. Through these in-depth accounts, the project provides *experiential* insights into how the acculturation challenges of Aboriginal athletes are navigated dynamically from in and between the Aboriginal and Euro-Canadian contexts (Berry, 1999). These findings coincide with Schinke et al.'s (2013) research with immigrant athletes, where the authors identified *navigating two world views* as a key source of acculturation challenges and an indicator of the fluidity of this process, extending this knowledge within the Aboriginal population. While we have centralized challenges in and between two cultural contexts that are differentiated by race and ethnicity, we recognize that the Aboriginal athletes are situated within a number of other cultural contexts/locations, such as an elite sport context, a socioeconomic status, an educational context, and a sexual orientation. These social locations are intersecting (McGannon, Schinke, & Busanich, 2014), and undoubtedly contribute to the Aboriginal athletes' acculturation experiences, though it was beyond the scope of this project to examine these.

More generally, the current research also supports the conception of acculturation that has been advocated by critical scholars such as Chirkov (2009), Rudmin (2009), and Bhatia (2002): that acculturation is a fluid and dynamic psychological process involving cognitive movements in and between different cultural standpoints. Moving away from overly simplistic conceptualizations of acculturation as a linear movement towards one culture and away from another, the current project supports a richer understanding of acculturation as an open-ended

process which includes progresses, relapses, and turns (Chirkov). This was evidenced in the way the Aboriginal athletes engaged fluidly in cultural negotiations and renegotiations which were never fully resolved in one context or the other (Schinke & McGannon, 2013; Stambulova, 2013). The athletes continued to vacillate in and between their cultural counterpoints at different times, in light of new experiences and understandings, all the while working to construct a more meaningful reality. Implications can be gleaned for practitioners to promote more inclusive and meaningful sport contexts that support and engage the fluid identities of acculturating relocated athletes rather than subverting them (see also Kontos & Arguello, 2005; Richardson et al., 2012; Schinke et al., 2006; Schinke & McGannon, 2013; Schinke et al., 2013; Stambulova, 2013). Moreover, since acculturation processes also affect those in the host culture, there are insights that can be gleaned in terms of the impact the Aboriginal athletes had on host community members. This was revealed when a number of athletes discussed instances where they were able to educate people in the host community about Aboriginal culture and history, and help break down negative stereotypes and misconceptions:

A lot of them [host culture members] had questions about the Aboriginal culture. I'd try and answer them but I'm like, you know what, you have to be with me in order to see that. So that's basically what I did with my friend; I took him with me to pow-wows and I invited him over to all my family gatherings, like for a birthday or a barbeque, or just to hang out with my family on the reserve. He was a non-Native, Caucasian kid, so he had no knowledge of what Natives were about whatsoever. So I had to tell him the basics. But a lot of it can't be put into words. It was the only way that I could show him is if he actually hung around with me and stayed with me. (24 year old male)

The words above illustrate how the Aboriginal athletes were able to share insights and

experiences through their cultural lens, which influenced the thinking of their hosts and ultimately facilitated heightened cultural awareness within Euro-Canadian contexts. This finding provides insight into the potential of authentic cultural sharing processes to break down racist attitudes, cultural misperceptions, and discriminatory behaviors in host community members (see also Battochio et al., 2013). It also demonstrates the interactional, two-way influence of acculturation, highlighting how host culture members undergo a cultural change process (though likely to a lesser degree than the Aboriginal athletes) through their interactions with relocated athletes. However, it should also be recognized that our focus was placed on learning from the stories of the Aboriginal participants, and as such, further study is required to consider the social nature of acculturation more closely via group discussions or a broader interview strategy where acculturation is considered from the vantage of the hosts as well as those who relocate from one cultural community to another.

Finally, it is important to note that the current project makes a significant methodological contribution and advancement within the critical acculturation literature. The project responds to the need for non-deductive, interpretivist methodologies to be engaged (Sparkes & Smith, 2014) as a means of opening up meaningful local descriptions of acculturation that are rooted in the experiences of culturally diverse people (Chirkov, 2009; Cresswell, 2009). Most research pertaining to acculturation has been rooted in deductive, positivistic methodologies, which are concerned with discovering universal laws rather than exploring acculturation as a context-bound phenomenon (Chirkov; Cresswell; Rudmin, 2009). These methodologies have misaligned with conceptions of acculturation as a sociocultural process, and have thus been insufficient for providing insight into the complex dynamics of acculturation as experienced by diverse people in various sport contexts. An inductive and localized Indigenous decolonizing methodology, rooted

in CSP (Ryba & Schinke, 2009; Schinke & Hanrahan, 2009) was used in this project to open up a more experiential and culturally grounded understanding of acculturation. This methodology, which was developed and led by the local community utilizing a participatory approach, centralized local Aboriginal processes and ways of thinking, and ultimately facilitated knowledge outcomes that resonated more deeply with the lived experiences of participants (see Blodgett et al., 2013; Ryba & Schinke, 2009; Schinke, McGannon, & Smith, 2013). The resonance of these locally derived research processes were articulated by one participant at the end of her interview: “I never really told anybody about any of the stuff that I was going through before. Nobody knows how hard it was. I always lied, like ‘oh, everything’s good,’ even though it wasn’t.” These words reveal how the mandala drawing and interview processes helped her share her story in a way that was personally meaningful, resisting the tendency to give a superficial and clichéd account of her experiences. Similarly, another athlete expressed surprise at how deeply she was able to share her relocation challenges through the mandala and interview processes, stating, “I never talk about this, like, not even with my mom.” These words demonstrate how the contextually informed and participant led inquiry helped us to elicit untold stories and insights from the Aboriginal athletes, and more meaningfully consider the ways in which their cultural identities and participation in sport are shaped/misshaped by Canadian culture. Indigenous stories have remained largely untold and/or marginalized within the sport psychology, and need to be brought forward through contextually driven research processes that are sensitive to local voices and worldviews (Ryba & Schinke, 2009; Ryba, Schinke, & Tennenbaum, 2010; Schinke, McGannon, & Smith, 2013; Schinke, Smith, & McGannon, 2013).

Conclusion

What must be articulated at the crux of this article is how imperative the CSP agenda and

the Indigenous decolonizing methodology was in enabling rich, localized accounts of acculturation to be shared by the Aboriginal participants, beyond culturally resonant knowledge. Through the use of mandala drawings and conversational interviews, as well as an indigenized analysis process, the research was epistemologically and methodologically aligned with the realities of the Aboriginal participants and designed to elicit their experiential knowledge more sensitively. These contextually driven processes challenged conventional Westernized research approaches that subvert the experiential knowledges of cultural minority groups. Researchers should continue to explore diverse, interpretivist methodologies (such as ethnography or narrative inquiry) to elicit culturally aligned accounts of acculturation as experienced by various athlete groups and bring forward a wider breadth of localized understandings. Such understandings would help direct the efforts of sport psychology practitioners to foster more inclusive sport contexts that support the identities (which are fluidly changing) of all athletes.

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Appendix C: Article published in *International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology*

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Abstract

Cultural sport psychology (CSP) is a relatively new research genre that challenges mainstream sport psychology's assumptions to facilitate contextualized understandings of marginalized topics and cultural identities. Conceptual writings on CSP have grown in the past 10 years, and with that, empirical literature explicitly positioned within CSP. In this paper, the landscape of CSP is outlined to more clearly explicate and contextualize the goals and tenets of this mode of inquiry, with the overarching intent of making further recommendations for CSP research. As CSP is broad, a small body of sport research conducted on race and ethnicity (two facets of cultural identity) is reviewed. Suggestions are made to extend the limited body of research on marginalized cultural identities via a CSP approach, focusing on reflexive processes and participant engagement. Through these strategies, CSP research is put forward as a way to further open the possibility of advancing social change and social justice.

Keywords: cultural sport psychology; race; ethnicity; praxis; reflexivity; participant engagement

Introduction

Sport psychology researchers have challenged the lack of inclusion of culture and/or

cultural identities within sport psychology for many years (e.g., Butryn, 2002; Duda & Allison, 1990; Fisher, Butryn, & Roper, 2003; Gill, 2001; Krane, 1994, 2001; Martens, Mobley, & Zizzi, 2000). Recently there has been a further push toward a more culturally inclusive sport psychology, with scholars advocating for culture's rightful place within the discipline (McGannon & Schinke, in press). Known as *cultural sport psychology* (CSP), scholars within this broad genre challenge mainstream sport psychology's assumptions in order to facilitate contextualized understandings of marginalized topics and cultural identities (McGannon & Schinke, in press; Ryba, Schinke, & Tennenbaum, 2010; Ryba, Stambulova, Si, & Schinke, 2013; Schinke & Hanrahan, 2009; Stambulova & Ryba, 2013). Reflecting an openness to multiple theories, methodologies, and content areas less common in sport psychology, CSP research may be taken up in a variety of ways grounded in a variety of underlying epistemologies (e.g., social constructionism, cultural studies, various forms of critical research; Ryba & Schinke, 2009). Despite stemming from different epistemological views, in a general sense, CSP research emphasizes an exploration of the unique point of view of cultural community members and the psychological and performance implications that result from such cultural standpoints. For those grounding their CSP work in social constructionism and more critical forms of CSP research, there is a further emphasis on exploring how cultural and personal meanings are (re)shaped through social and cultural practices and discourses (McGannon & Schinke, 2013; Ryba & Schinke, 2009). Although CSP is a relatively new trajectory within sport psychology, such work is facilitating dialogue around new and expanded understandings of the sociocultural challenges that limit physical activity participation and performance.

A central reason for focusing on marginalized topics and cultural identities within CSP is due, in part, to the increasing globalization of society which has widened the exchange of diverse cultural identities (Schinke, McGannon, Battochio, & Wells, 2013). Physical activity and sport psychology practitioners are increasingly working with people from a variety of cultural backgrounds, and thus need to develop multicultural competencies that will help them to acknowledge and support diverse identities in sport and physical activity contexts (Gill & Kamphoff, 2010; Ryba et al., 2013; Schinke, McGannon, Battochio, & Wells, 2013). Considerable scholarship supports the view that culture shapes how people think about, interact with, and make sense of the world around them. People cannot step outside of their culture, thus to ignore it would be to disregard a key characteristic that constitutes individuals' identities, experiences and behaviours (see McGannon, Curtin, Schinke, & Schweinbenz, 2012; Smith, 2010; Sue, 2004). The consequences of denying or ignoring cultural identities in applied sport and physical activity settings can have detrimental impacts on many participants. These detriments include decreased physical activity participation (McGannon & Schinke, 2013), alienation and distress (Schinke et al., 2008; Smith, 2013) and reduced physical performance and/or failure to meet one's performance potential (Schinke, McGannon, Battochio, & Wells, 2013). Moreover, when cultural identities and issues of diversity are overlooked in research, consequences include the exclusion of minority participants' worldviews and experiences (Fisher et al., 2003; Ryba & Wright, 2005), the perpetuation of stereotyped understandings of their lives (Andersen, 1993; Ryba et al., 2013), and the reinforcing of cultural power and privilege differentials (Blodgett et al., 2014; Butryn, 2002; Ryba & Schinke, 2009). Each of the aforementioned constitutes a social justice issue that stems from the imposition of mainstream (white, Euro-American) worldviews within contexts where diverse cultural standpoints need to

be included. Each of these issues drives the CSP agenda.

Although in its infancy, the rationale for CSP is firmly established. Three special journal issues in sport psychology have been devoted to CSP. *Athletic Insight* showcased articles on culturally relevant practice (Schinke, Michel, Danielson, Gauthier, & Pickard, 2005), the *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology* highlighted articles using decolonizing methodologies to address issues of power and sociocultural difference in research (Ryba & Schinke, 2009), and the *Journal of Clinical Sport Psychology* opened up lines of discussion concerning cultural awareness and competence in clinical, counselling and applied sport psychology (Schinke & Moore, 2011). More recently, the *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology* published the International Society of Sport Psychology's position stand on culturally competent research and practice (Ryba et al., 2013), challenging sport and exercise psychology professionals to rethink research and practice through a culturally reflexive lens. Two sport and exercise psychology textbooks have also brought together CSP scholarship to examine how sport psychology is (re)presented via a sociocultural lens and to challenge the domain's taken for granted assumptions and practices⁶ (Ryba et al., 2010; Schinke & Hanrahan, 2009). The recently published *Athletes' Careers Across Cultures* brought together a collection of essays using a sociocultural lens to explore the development of the athletes' careers literature across national boundaries (Stambulova & Ryba, 2013). Finally, *The Psychology of Sub-culture*

⁶ Traditionally, the sport psychology domain has been taken up ethnocentrically, rooted in white, Euro-American, male ways of thinking and doing (Gill & Kamphoff, 2010; Ryba & Schinke, 2009; Ryba & Wright, 2005). For instance, research and professional practice have predominantly focused on elite, white, male athletes in high performance contexts, with little attention given to diverse participants in non-elite contexts. In addition, an over-reliance on post-positivist research paradigms and practices have privileged 'scientific' and objective knowledges that are congruent with white, Euro-American, male worldviews, but subverting of others. The assumptions and practices underpinning the domain have thus largely excluded the identities and ways of knowing of culturally diverse participants, such as racial and ethnic minorities, women, those with physical disabilities, and people who identify as LGBT (Gill & Kamphoff, 2010).

in Sport and Physical Activity: Critical Perspectives showcased scholarship highlighting lesser known and/or marginalized sport and physical activity contexts (e.g., abuse in sport, sport disability) and the participants within them, using critical approaches that explicitly engaged a social justice agenda (Schinke & McGannon, in press).

Although there is currently a mass of conceptual and empirical literature developing within the CSP genre, to date no papers have taken stock of developments within this literature, where we might proceed, and how we might continue to move the domain forward. In this manuscript, we outline the general landscape of CSP, integrating work from (1) cultural psychology, where there is a focus on cognitions from the vantage of post-positivist approaches, and (2) cultural studies, where scholars engage in critical approaches (e.g., decolonizing methodologies, discourse analysis, narrative analysis) aimed at dismantling commonly-accepted sociocultural practices and assumptions and elucidating the role of power in the (re)production of knowledge which marginalizes/excludes cultural identities (McGannon & Schinke in press; Ryba & Schinke, 2009). The purpose of outlining the foregoing aspects of cultural work within CSP is to explain and contextualize the tenets of the CSP mode of inquiry, with the overarching goal of continuing to move this research forward. To accomplish this purpose we first delineate cultural praxis as the underlying central tenet of CSP. We suggest how a more explicit focus on praxis advances an agenda of social change, most notably through participant engagement strategies and reflexive processes. Second, because CSP is broad, to further illustrate the current ‘state of affairs’ within this literature, we review a small body of sport research conducted on race and ethnicity⁷ (two aspects of marginalized cultural identities) that have been emphasized by others

⁷ Given the vast social categories that comprise cultural identities (e.g., nationality, sexuality, gender, socioeconomic status, physicality, etc.) we have chosen to narrow our review to cultural research that explicitly explores race and ethnicity. Herein, race and ethnicity are focalized as two facets of culture, though we recognize that there are

(e.g., Butryn, 2009; Parham, 2005; 2013; Peters & Williams, 2009). Through this review, we advocate for more critical forms of CSP research grounded in cultural studies approaches.

Although there are other subsets of work within CSP, such as cross-cultural scholarship, such work is not discussed due to the vastness of the literature and our focus on research that takes up culture in a more critical and relational manner. To conclude, we synthesize some aspirations and future directions for CSP research that is rooted in the tenets of cultural praxis.

Centralizing praxis in cultural sport psychology

Building on earlier work in CSP (Ryba & Schinke, 2009; Ryba & Wright, 2005; Schinke, McGannon, Parham, & Lane, 2012; Stambulova & Ryba, 2014), we conceptualize praxis at the core of the CSP research genre in an effort to articulate an agenda that moves from academic knowledge production to social justice and change. Praxis, which emerged from the work of Brazilian educationalist Paulo Freire and his influential text *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2005; originally published in 1970), refers to the dialectical process of reflecting and acting upon our socially unjust world in order to transform it. Freire elucidated how this transformative process can only occur when oppressors (e.g., researchers) and the oppressed (e.g., research participants) come together with the goal of creating change. Extending praxis into critical research, Lather (1987) explained that praxis-oriented research is aimed at challenging social inequalities through knowledge production processes that empower and engage marginalized participants. As such, scholars engaged in praxis resist traditional scientific norms that maintain tacit power imbalances between researchers and participants. Alternatively, knowledge production processes are carried out *with* participants rather than *for* or *on* them (Lather, 1987; Singer, 1994). Through these

multiple other dimensions of culture which are inextricably intersected in people's identities and experiences. We do not equate culture to race and ethnicity alone.

efforts, scholars are challenged to reconsider the knowledge they produce in the theoretical realm by connecting it with the interests and needs of marginalized people (Blodgett, Schinke, Peltier et al., 2011; Fisher et al., 2003).

In sport psychology, cultural praxis grew out of early writings that drew upon cultural studies to highlight how issues of power and privilege were being perpetuated in and through the practices of the domain. Specifically, these writings problematized how traditional forms of sport psychology research and practice excluded certain individuals (e.g., non-white races and ethnicities, women, people who identify as LGBT, those with physical disabilities, those with low education levels) while privileging others (e.g., people who identify as white, men, heterosexuals, those who are physically skilled and able bodied, and people who occupy educated positions such as researchers or consultants; Butryn, 2002; Fisher et al., 2003; Gill, 2001; Krane, 2001). The privileging of some people over others was the result of a taken for granted way of 'doing' sport psychology steeped in a post-positivist, white, Euro-American, male, performance-based discourse (McGannon & Schinke, in press; Ryba & Schinke, 2009; Ryba & Wright, 2005). By drawing attention to what was taken for granted as 'truth' through a cultural studies lens, sport psychology researchers and practitioners were encouraged to step outside of the disciplinary box. As a result of such critical reflection, space was opened to include multiple cultural identities and plurality of differences (e.g., race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, dis/ability, physicality, nationality), and explore the ideological, moral and ethical implications of Westernized knowledge (McGannon & Schinke, in press; Ryba & Schinke, 2009).

Cultural praxis within contemporary CSP continues to follow the above critical cultural studies tradition, operating as a 'heuristic' (Ryba & Wright, 2010, p. 14) to draw attention to the

status quo in sport psychology through a blending of theory, lived culture, and social action with a reflexive sensibility (McGannon & Johnson, 2009; Ryba & Wright, 2010; Schinke et al., 2012). Through cultural praxis researchers and practitioners strive to consider their own, as well as others', cultural identities. The intent is to draw attention to issues of sociocultural difference, power, ethics, and politics which are often concealed, and facilitate a more contextualized understanding of marginalized identities (Ryba & Schinke, 2009; Ryba et al., 2013; Schinke et al., 2012).

Ryba and Wright (2010) further suggested that cultural praxis not only embraces multiple and overlapping cultural identities and difference, but that such differences make up psychological 'realities' that have real consequences in the everyday lives of people (e.g., athletes, coaches, practitioners, researchers). As such, issues concerning self-identity come to the fore, with psyche and self-identity conceptualized as *simultaneously* social and cultural and the product of multiple discourses and narratives. Problematized is the way in which people are reduced to decontextualized mechanisms within the mind (e.g., self-related concepts such as self-efficacy, cognitions) in mainstream sport psychology (see McGannon & Mauws, 2000; McGannon & Spence, 2010; Smith, 2010 for a more in-depth explanation). Subjectivity – of athletes, practitioners and researchers – is thus brought forward as being fluid, multiple and ever changing. Who we 'are' is understood as being the product of multiple discourses (pertaining to race, sexuality, gender, physicality, nationality, etc.; McGannon & Spence, 2010) and our membership in local, social and cultural groups (Ryba & Wright, 2010) and social interchanges with others (McGannon & Schinke, 2013). Beyond the narratives and discourses that people draw upon to frame and fashion their self-identities are sport practices and institutions which can also shape how we think, feel and behave (McGannon & Mauws, 2000).

Within CSP, cultural praxis crystallizes research as more than a purely academic endeavour, but one that also needs to address contemporary issues that are meaningful within the lives of marginalized sport participants (Ryba & Wright, 2005; Schinke, McGannon, & Smith, 2013). CSP grounded in cultural praxis thus becomes rooted in change enhancing, contextualized processes that open up space for culturally marginalized sport participants to be included and share the often-untold stories that shape their lives (Schinke, McGannon, & Smith, 2013). Through such work, researchers are better able to identify and explore issues of power and sociocultural difference in and through sport. To summarize, the research to date suggests that cultural praxis may serve as the ‘how to’ of conducting CSP research as rooted in (1) localized, participatory processes – that affirm participants as the experts of their own lives while encouraging them to provide deeper insight into the social injustices that constrain their lives (particularly in relation to their sport participation; Blodgett, Schinke, Peltier et al., 2011; Blodgett, Schinke, Smith, Peltier, & Pheasant, 2011); and (2) reflexive processes – that bring critical awareness to the ways in which researchers actively co-construct knowledge and shape the way marginalized identities are understood (McGannon & Johnson, 2009; Schinke et al., 2012). Through these processes, CSP researchers can begin to advance a socially transformative agenda wherein issues surrounding the identities and lives of marginalized sport participants are at the fore. Additionally, the power differentials that permeate traditional research efforts – particularly those relating to the privileging of whiteness⁸ and the researcher’s perspective – are

⁸ It is important to note that ‘whiteness’ does not refer simply to skin colour or any fixed set of physical attributes, but to the power dynamics related to what we consider to be ‘white’ in a particular social space (Butryn, 2010). As the meaning of whiteness is constantly shifting, contingent upon socio-historical and political contexts, it can be viewed as an organizing principle in social and cultural relations (Butryn, 2010; McDonald, 2005; McIntosh, 1988). Similarly, the term ‘white’ is contingent upon socio-historical and political contexts, but is used in this paper to refer to North Americans of European ancestry who carry with them the privileges of whiteness.

counteracted (McGannon & Johnson, 2009; Ryba & Schinke, 2009; Schinke et al., 2012).

The cultural void in mainstream sport psychology

As early as 1990, Duda and Allison noted that there had been virtually no consideration of race and ethnicity as meaningful categories of human experience within sport psychology. These authors urged for a more systematic incorporation of cultural aspects within the domain. More than a decade later, Ram, Starek, and Johnson (2004) conducted an analysis of 982 manuscripts published in the three leading North American sport psychology journals between 1987 and 2000 to reassess how far the field had advanced in becoming more culturally inclusive. The authors found that while approximately 20% of the manuscripts made reference to race and ethnicity, less than 2% included a discussion of race and ethnicity in a substantial and conceptual manner. The authors concluded that there had been little effort to include the identities and experiences of marginalized groups in sport psychology scholarship since the call put forth by Duda and Allison, thus indicating a sustained cultural void in the field. Extending this analysis between the years 2001 and 2006, Peters and Williams (2009) tracked the amount of cultural work being conducted in the field through publications in *The Sport Psychologist*, the *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, and the *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*. The authors found that, still, a 'grossly inadequate' amount of research (less than 5% of articles) focused on cultural backgrounds as a key component of their framework. More recently, Kamphoff, Gill, Araki, and Hammond (2010) examined the scholarship presented in the Association for Applied Sport Psychology's conference programs, postulating that these conferences would be more open to non-traditional research than scholarly journals. Unfortunately, their findings echoed a continued dearth of cultural scholarship. Taken together, the foregoing scholarship affirms the fact that sport psychology has primarily been taken up through mainstream agendas and approaches, with

the focus on performance enhancement in ways that are rarely critical and/or seldom tackle how performances are shaped by the sociocultural (Smith & McGannon, in press). In turn, the experiences and identities of culturally diverse people have continued to be relegated to the margins (Gill & Kamphoff, 2010; Ryba & Schinke, 2009).

Ram and colleagues (2004), Peters and Williams (2009), and Smith and McGannon (in press) noted that in rare instances when culture is considered in sport psychology, it is typically presented as a categorical grouping strategy in post-positivist forms of research, expressed as an independent variable (see also Andersen, 1993). Although such research has brought attention to the importance of culture in shaping sport experiences, it has largely been taken up through non-critical and non-reflexive approaches that lend to ‘a scientific storehouse of ultimate knowledge’ (Ryba, 2009, p. 37) on cultural groups. These efforts have glossed over the multiplicity of people’s identities, failing to account for the ways in which their sense of self and lived experiences are multiple and thus subject to change in relation to the sociocultural contexts around them (Smith & McGannon, in press). In this manner, a categorical understanding of culture has proven inadequate for engaging in research where the intent is to explore the multifaceted experiences and identities of diverse people and contribute meaningful, in-depth understandings of their lives. A richer and deeper understanding of culture is herein revealed within CSP. Culture is viewed not as a static entity but, as alluded to in the introduction, part of shifting discourses that produce situated meaning (McGannon & Spence, 2010) and identities related to nationality, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, physicality, and socioeconomic status (McGannon & Schinke, in press; Ryba, 2005, 2009; Ryba & Schinke, 2009). In other words, culture ‘is the messy process of negotiated meaning in context’ (Singer, 1994, p. 338) rather than the tidy and objectively identifiable category it is often assumed to be

in conventional sport psychology research (Peters & Williams, 2009; Ram et al., 2004; Ryba, 2009; Smith, 2010; Smith & McGannon, in press).

In light of the foregoing points, it is evident that cultural research 'is a site of complex interactions of power, knowledge, and representation' (Ryba & Schinke, 2009, p. 268). Such research cannot be undertaken as a simple or neutral process of categorical representation, as the very words we use to label and describe people are political and have concrete consequences in people's everyday lives (Fisher et al., 2003; Smith & McGannon, in press). As a result, there remains a need to centralize discussions about cultural diversity within sport psychology in order to understand the complex and rich identities and experiences of diverse groups and individuals (Andersen, 1993; Hanrahan, 2004; Parham, 2005, 2013; Schinke et al., 2008). Additionally, there is a need to confront the normative status of whiteness as a set of ideologies, discourses, and identities that underpin the foundations of sport psychology and explore the ways it perpetuates the marginalization of various racial and ethnic groups (Butryn, 2002, 2010; Ryba & Schinke, 2009). Through a better understanding of how whiteness operates invisibly within methodological processes, sport psychology researchers may become more aware of how research is always culturally situated. Although research is often taken up ethnocentrically, driven by the power and norms of one group, possibilities exist to facilitate more inclusive and contextually driven sport psychology processes that are aimed at challenging commonly accepted discourses and understandings of/in people's lives.

Considerations from critical whiteness studies

Race and ethnicity have often been considered meaningful variables for understanding the experiences and identities of minority cultural groups. What is disconcerting is how the normative status of whiteness has protected white people from being identified and explored

racially and ethnically. Walton and Butryn (2006) explained that just as gender is often a code word for referencing women, race and ethnicity are terms that are typically used to reference non-white people. However, the meanings and implications of race and ethnicity need to be considered in the context of how white people construct and perpetuate whiteness as an invisible norm that not only privileges their lives, but also intrudes into the lives of other cultural groups in the form of oppression (Butryn, 2010; McIntosh, 1988; Sue, 2004). Outside of sport psychology, this need has opened up interdisciplinary scholarship conducted in the field of critical whiteness studies, which has been produced since the early 1990s. The collective aim of critical whiteness studies has been to make whiteness visible and, thus, more immediately subject to critical analysis and deconstruction through an explicit focus on power dynamics (Butryn, 2010; King, 2005; Sue, 2004). Of concern are the ways in which inequalities are (re)produced and experienced in modern forms of racism which are much more covert and subtle than in the past. For example, the modern promotion of colour-blind sport contexts, where racial and cultural differences are ignored under the guise of an anti-racist ideology, has been criticized for covertly contributing to racist practices and inequalities (Butryn, 2002; Sue, 2004). It is argued that through efforts to overlook cultural differences and treat everyone 'the same', a colour-blind ideology works to preserve whiteness as an invisible norm, thwarting critical awareness of how it privileges those who identify as white and oppresses the lives of others (Butryn, 2002). Through a better understanding of the ways in which whiteness operates, whiteness studies is aimed at opening up questions about what to do about white privilege and racism and how we can move toward social justice.

However, as critical whiteness studies is an epistemologically divided terrain comprised of diverse and divergent projects tied to shifting sociocultural formations and ongoing struggles

over meaning, there is no coherent definition or agenda aligning the domain (Birrell, 1989). Thus, there is no singular, agreed-upon process for making whiteness more visible and subject to critical analysis (Butryn, 2010; McDonald, 2005). Scholars have assumed various paradigmatic standpoints in their work, including various strands of cultural studies, post-structuralism, feminism, and queer theory, which have resulted in ambiguities, inconsistencies, and contradictions. Yet, as Riggs (2004) noted, critical studies of whiteness 'require a range of approaches to both epistemology and ontology to prevent the subject areas from solidifying into a homogeneous, institutionalized subject area, an outcome that would thus only serve to reinforce the hegemony of whiteness' (p. 5). McDonald (2005) further indicated how competing understandings help sport scholars to recognize that whiteness is multiple and dynamic in its meaning and uses, as it is a social construction rather than a fixed race or ethnicity. This view of whiteness aligns with the way culture and associated identities are conceptualized within CSP as a part of multiple and shifting discourses that are always under dispute across various social spheres, and always tied to struggles over power (McGannon & Spence, 2010).

The processes and effects of whiteness extend into sport and the way it is experienced by both white and non-white people, and is a major area of study for sport sociologists (e.g., Birrell, 1989; Burdsey, 2011; Douglas, 2005; Fusco, 2005; Hartmann, 2007; King, 2005; McDonald, 2005; Walton & Butryn, 2006), and to a much lesser degree amongst sport psychology researchers (e.g., Butryn, 2002, 2009, 2010; Hall, 2001). For example, within sport sociology, Burdsey (2011) examined British Asian cricket players' experiences of racism, and found amongst the players a tendency to downplay the repercussions of some forms of prejudice. The authors explained that the 'colour-blind' ideology is so entrenched in contemporary Western sport that it actually has the capacity to compel minority participants to minimize and silence their

own experiences of racism and prejudice. Moreover, the authors indicated that a colour-blind ideology lends support to dominant group claims that the effects of racism are overstated. Taking a different approach within sport psychology, Butryn (2009) developed autoethnographic vignettes to reflexively illustrate moments of tension related to whiteness and white privilege in his own academic career. Using personalized accounts, Butryn highlighted how race and whiteness operates in the various spaces of sport psychology (e.g., in athletic departments, teaching settings, research settings, conferences, sport organizations, etc.) and has various effects (e.g., privileging his own status in the classroom, marginalizing certain identities and perspectives in conference settings).

Beyond the work of Butryn there has been little to no work explicitly focused on whiteness studies within sport psychology. However, more peripheral efforts linking whiteness studies within the domain have been made through the larger focus on cultural inclusivity. This work is notably evidenced in the 2009 special issue of the *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology* on decolonizing methodologies, which focused on approaches to sport and exercise psychology from the margins (Ryba & Schinke, 2009). The intent of this collection of scholarship was to make taken for granted norms and power issues related to whiteness and the centralization of Euro-American worldviews more visible within research processes. In addition, this scholarship served to show that there are many ways to think about and engage sport psychology research as opposed to through one myopic lens. These efforts have been further supported and extended by scholars who have pushed for a more critical and culturally informed sport psychology developed within diverse (non-white) contexts (e.g., Fisher et al., 2003; Ryba et al., 2013; Ryba, Schinke, & Tenenbaum, 2010; Ryba & Wright, 2005).

Together, the above works highlight important implications for CSP researchers. They

reveal that as much as marginalized sport participants' experiences and identities are shaped by their own cultural backgrounds, they are also shaped by the taken for granted discourses, meanings and practices associated with whiteness (Ryba & Schinke, 2009). Thus, when research processes are implicitly rooted in white ways of thinking and doing, the experiences and identities of diverse participants come to be understood and represented within a larger system of racial and ethnic hierarchies (Butryn, 2009, 2010). This system ascribes power and authority to those who identify as white by normalizing their worldviews, and subordinates the identities and worldviews of 'others' by making them appear 'exotic' or outside the norm (Butryn, 2010). Rather than attempting to examine the sport experiences of diverse cultural groups through an explicit focus on the cultural context in front of the academic lens, there is an equal need to shift the gaze inward. Through this reflexive shift, researchers may begin exploring the impacts of their own cultural identities in the research process and address the traditionally white context of sport psychology (McGannon & Johnson, 2009; Schinke et al., 2012). Moreover, researchers may better understand their role in the reproduction of knowledge that can contribute toward empowering, silencing, or oppressing marginalized cultural groups. In turn, in the spirit of CSP, reflexivity serves as a tool to raise awareness, which is an important step in beginning to redress the social injustices (i.e., the exclusion of diverse identities, the perpetuation of cultural stereotypes, and the reinforcing of cultural power and privilege differentials) that have accrued from the imposition of white paradigms and epistemologies into diverse (non-white) research contexts (Butryn, 2009; Schinke et al., 2009). In becoming more aware of how researcher subjectivities shape the way CSP is done and the stories that get told about people's lives, attention can be focused onto the discursive and contested nature of culture. More meaningful discussions can be opened up about how culture works multi-directionally (on the part of both

researchers and participants) to shape and reshape lived experiences and the meanings that are constructed around them (McGannon & Johnson, 2009; Smith, 2010; Smith & McGannon, in press).

Towards ‘sport psychology as cultural praxis’

Through the above reflexive insights gleaned from the research to date, scholars are better equipped to move towards a more inclusive, cultural praxis-oriented research agenda rooted in the subjective identities and experiential knowledges of marginalized participants. Within sport psychology, cultural praxis has emerged from critiques of the dominant scientific model for seeking objective analyses of human experience in sport and removing the person from the process of knowing (see McGannon & Schinke, in press), as well as isolating research efforts from the larger sociocultural context in which they are embedded (Martens, 1979, 1987; Sage, 1993). Particular concerns regarding the ethnocentric bias of traditional sport psychology paradigms and the disenfranchising effects on minority (e.g., non-white, female, LGBT, physically disabled) sport populations have led to the push for a new sport psychology that is intersected with cultural studies noted earlier, termed ‘sport psychology as cultural praxis’ (Fisher et al., 2003; Ryba, 2009; Ryba & Wright, 2005; Ryba et al., 2013; Schinke et al., 2012).

Moving into the content area of athletes’ careers, Stambulova and Ryba (2014) recently explained how a cultural praxis paradigm would consider career theories, research, and applied efforts as interwoven and permeated by culture, and would thus stimulate more contextualized and culturally congruent projects. Through such efforts, sport psychology researchers are opened up to questions about athletes’ subjective experiences of being gendered, racial, ethnic, sexual, disabled, etc., as well as issues of marginalization, representation, and social justice (Ryba & Wright, 2005; Stambulova & Ryba, 2014). Thus, centralized at the intersection of CSP and

cultural praxis (and linking with critical whiteness studies) is a re-examination of athlete identities beyond the traditional notion of identity as a singular and stable category or entity (McGannon et al., 2012). Instead, individuals are understood as having multiple, intersecting identities within various discourses of class, gender, race, sexual orientation, religion, etc., with each of these identities shifting in meaning and expression within various contexts (McGannon & Mauws, 2000; McGannon & Johnson, 2009; Ryba & Wright, 2005; Schinke et al., 2012; Smith & McGannon, in press). This understanding of identity as multiple and fluid pushes sport psychology researchers to move beyond traditional disciplinary boundaries and open up to approaches that embrace diversity rather than subverting it (McGannon & Schinke, in press). Through these contextualized processes and understandings, the experiences and worldviews of sport participants who have long been marginalized may be included amongst those from the mainstream, and more inclusive sporting spaces and practices can be facilitated that lend to positive social change.

From theory to practice: Integrating cultural praxis into CSP research

Moving beyond a theoretical discussion of cultural praxis within sport psychology, little effort has been made to put the tenets of cultural praxis into action in empirical CSP scholarship. The research of Bredemeier and colleagues (Bredemeier, 2001; Bredemeier et al., 1991; Bredemeier, Carlton, Hills, & Oglesby, 1999), which developed out of concerns over the marginalization of women's experiences within sport and society, stands as one of the first practical examples of cultural praxis within sport psychology. These authors employed a feminist research approach to elicit the experiences of lesbian sportswomen and women in physical activity settings, using their stories to inform professional practices and also serve as inspiration at a personal level. Shifting focus onto race and ethnicity, Blodgett and colleagues more recently engaged in research as

cultural praxis to re-conceptualize youth sport programming on an Aboriginal Reserve through local cultural practices (Blodgett, Schinke, Fisher et al., 2010), and develop Indigenous research recommendations from the experiences of Aboriginal community members (Blodgett, Schinke, Peltier et al., 2010, 2011; Blodgett, Schinke, Smith et al., 2011). These projects were aimed at challenging social inequalities through the development of knowledge that was (1) connected to the theoretical and methodological aspirations of Indigenous decolonizing research, (2) rooted in the local sociocultural realities and experiences of Aboriginal participants, and (3) aimed at community enhancement. Beyond these few projects, however, a chasm is evident between conceptual writings calling for CSP research that explicates cultural praxis at its crux, and actual CSP practice.

In order to advance cultural praxis at the applied research level, we have explored how race and ethnicity (two aspects of cultural identities) have been taken up in cultural sport research, through an emphasis on marginalized participants. This body of research reflects a movement away from the ethnocentrism of mainstream sport psychology and has been foundational in paving the way for CSP rooted in cultural praxis. This work generally draws upon and aligns with feminist research paradigms (particularly feminist standpoint epistemology) that aim to place marginalized identities at the centre of research rather than on the periphery in recognition of the fact that peoples' marginalized statuses and 'otherness' provide unique perspectives from which to critique the ethnocentric norms and uneven power dynamics in sport and research (Gill, 2001; Krane, 1994, 2001). Recognizing that knowledge is socially and culturally situated and that there are multiple 'truths' emanating from different sociocultural and political situations (Krane, 2001; Smith & McGannon, in press), such research challenges academics to move beyond ventriloquism, where we talk on behalf of others and re-present their

stories from an outsider and/or 'expert' perspective (Blodgett, Schinke, Smith et al., 2011). Instead, academics focus on creating, and in some cases co-creating, spaces where people who have been traditionally marginalized can share their stories and actively engage their knowledges in the struggle for social change. This is evident in Blodgett, Schinke, Peltier et al.'s (2010) research, where Aboriginal community members authored a vignette that centralized an Indigenous perspective on research and outlined local, culture-specific research expectations in their own words. The researchers noted how that vignette was taken up at the community level as a tool for educating outside academics about Aboriginal cultural needs and expectations, and ensuring that local initiatives are carried out in ways that are meaningful and beneficial to the community. Social change was therefore supported through scholarship as the Aboriginal community members reclaimed the power and authority to centralize their (non-white, non-European) views of research and demand that future projects be carried out in a culturally informed manner.

While cultural praxis has not been explicitly articulated in much of the sport research on race and ethnicity, the notion is implicitly present in the underlying intent to develop knowledge that is rooted in the experiences of the participants and aimed at facilitating positive changes within their lives (e.g., Harley, Odoms-Young, Beard, Katz, & Heaney, 2009; Jowett & Frost, 2007; Lawrence, 2005; Lee, 2005; Thangaraj, 2010). For example, Jowett and Frost (2007) explored the narratives of black football players regarding their perceptions and experiences of race and ethnicity in their relationships with white coaches. These authors highlighted the potential of their work to raise ethnic and racial awareness within the coaching community and foster more meaningful cross-cultural coach-athlete relationships. Though these authors did not indicate any applied efforts to put their knowledge into action, the research itself contributes to

larger social change efforts by leveraging and centralizing the experiences and perceptions of culturally marginalized athletes, therein challenging and decentring the ethnocentric focus of traditional sport psychology. Harley and colleagues (2009) also investigated the role of cultural contexts in the physical activity experiences of African American women, focusing on the factors that served as challenges for participation as well as contextually derived strategies for maintaining long-term physical activity participation. These researchers sought to develop culturally informed health promotion strategies from the insights of the participants to reduce the burden of sedentary lifestyles and chronic disease amongst African American women. The aforementioned projects each embraced the knowledges of marginalized ‘others’ and facilitated a movement toward research that is linked with ‘real world’ action through the centralization of these traditionally subjugated knowledges. In doing so, they have revealed and advanced concerns and tenets that are central to cultural praxis-driven CSP research (i.e., that race and ethnicity are more than categorical variables, that issues of power and oppression are intertwined in research with marginalized cultural identities, and that cultural research is more than a purely academic endeavour).

While the aforementioned research emphasizing the experiences of marginalized participants has been foundational as an early form of CSP, there remains potential for such research to become more deeply and critically aligned with a cultural praxis agenda. Notably, much of the research conducted on race and ethnicity has remained rooted in academic agendas and methodologies that are consistent with mainstream approaches, rather than being developed from within the local cultural contexts. Thus, while the cultural identities and needs of sport participants have been centralized in terms of research content, they have been marginalized in the research processes. This body of research could be enhanced through an explicit engagement

with critical theoretical and/or methodological perspectives, which would inform and support particular (i.e., localized) research approaches when working with marginalized groups (McGannon & Schinke, 2013). In keeping with the interpretive and cultural turns⁹ that inform the critical CSP movement (Ryba et al., 2010), we acknowledge that the notion of a *critical approach* is not straightforward, value-free, nor singular in meaning. Critical approaches are difficult to define because they have historical and political roots within the social sciences, there are multiple critical theories, the critical tradition is in flux, and laying out a set of fixed characteristics for what constitutes ‘being critical’ is the antithesis of such approaches (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000). Scholars have also problematized the various strands of the critical theory, research and practice movement from its inception and into the present (Canella & Steinberg, 2011). Despite the differences in orientations as to what constitutes a critical theoretical or methodological orientation, in line with cultural praxis goals, critical research has a built-in activist and social justice component. It draws attention to marginalized identities and inequalities through a focus on contemporary sport cultures as sites of (re)construction of embodied selves and lives (Birrell & McDonald, 2000; McGannon & Schinke, in press). That is, sport contexts are focalized as sites where people’s lived bodies, and the experiences they have in those bodies, produce situated and fluid knowledge about what it means to be gendered, raced,

⁹ The interpretive turn can be understood as an epistemological and ontological shift away from positivism, wherein it is recognized that there is no singular reality or meaning that is objectively ‘out there’ to be discovered. Interpretivism posits that there are multiple realities and meanings which are contextually contingent and socially constructed. Thus, knowledge must be brought forward in ways that centralize local contexts of meaning making and draw attention to the subjective and socially constructed nature of meaning. In relation, the cultural turn can be understood as a shift towards the centring of culture in knowledge production. Moving away from traditional research approaches that present people and their knowledges as independent and autonomous, the cultural turn emphasizes their cultural embeddedness (Ryba et al., 2010). The cultural turn thus links to the interpretive in demanding culturally contextualized meaning making processes, where the aim is to facilitate meaningful understandings of diverse (often marginalized) identities and experiences.

aged, classed, sexually oriented, dis/abled, etc. Research processes and agendas are therein rooted in the local and embodied knowledges of sport participants so that deeper understandings of diverse identities can be gleaned, and more meaningful understandings of where/how inequalities affect their lives can be articulated. Opportunities can thus be opened up about how to facilitate social change that is meaningful within the lives of local people.

Pathways for future CSP research: Reflexive and participatory processes

How researchers choose to represent marginalized identities and experiences as well as acknowledge their own intersecting subjectivities within CSP research processes and products can be complex and have profound implications related to power and domination. Sparkes (2002) pondered the place of the author and researcher more than 10 years ago through the following questions: Whose story is being told in the research? Who is doing the speaking? Who maintains control over the narratives produced and the purposes they serve? Who gains from the research? Reflexive narrative strategies rooted in the philosophical assumptions of interpretivism (i.e. the belief that reality is relative and multiple), and which are gaining ground in qualitative sport research as alternatives to scientific or realist tales (Smith, 2010; Sparkes, 2002), may be useful for addressing issues of researcher reflexivity, subjectivity and participant representation in future CSP research. For example, some sport researchers have employed autoethnographic texts by inserting self-conscious voices and commentary into master narratives in ways that reflexively connect personal experiences to wider social, political and cultural meanings and understandings (e.g., Butryn, 2009; Dzikus, Fisher, & Hays, 2012; Fisher, 2010; McGannon, 2012). This process foregrounds researchers' subjectivities with the intent of facilitating more experiential understandings of particular phenomena and opening up deeper conversations about the social and cultural structures that shape experiences and knowledge. Alternatively, some

researchers have employed poetic representations as a means of analysing social worlds and generating different ways of knowing about (and feeling) these worlds through others' experiences (e.g., Carless & Douglas, 2009; Sparkes & Douglas, 2007). Through these narrative genres of representation, while the experiences of the marginalized are centralized, the researcher is explicitly situated as a storyteller who has the ability to shape what people come to hold as 'truth' – including how one's own beliefs, values and identities impact the research process. Furthermore, in keeping with the transformative intent of cultural praxis, self-narratives can be a form of social action in that stories have action and behavioural implications, thus impacting the lives of the story teller (Smith, 2010, 2013). In sum, it is useful and important to consider how researchers' own subjectivities both shape the way marginalized cultural identities get researched and how they are ultimately represented, written up and understood (McGannon & Johnson, 2009; Schinke et al., 2012). Through this reflexive self-awareness tool, researchers can begin to more overtly acknowledge the potential of their research and its processes to either challenge or (re)produce traditional power dynamics, and ultimately impact research participants (McGannon & Johnson, 2009).

Building upon reflexive processes, participant engagement strategies are also useful to work toward decentralizing the academic researcher and bring forward more localized ways of thinking about, and engaging in, CSP research. Drawing on the experiential and culturally situated knowledges of participants, authority over the process of knowledge production shifts away from the mainstream conceptions about life, and toward local indigenous spaces, where marginalized peoples can centralize their own life perspectives and culturally inculcated goals (Brydon-Miller, Kral, Maguire, Noffke, & Sabhlok, 2011). Through such efforts, power differentials between the researcher and the researched are more overtly acknowledged and

challenged. In turn, CSP research becomes a mutual initiative open to benefiting the lives of research participants' rather than a hierarchical one that may primarily benefit the researcher (Frisby, Reid, Millar, & Hoerber, 2005). As noted by Schinke, McGannon, and Smith (2013), there are various ways of engaging in and conceptualizing particular cultural communities within research processes, reflecting diverse contexts, research dynamics, and purposes. Accordingly, there is no singular or universal set of methods or criteria for facilitating a participatory mode of inquiry within CSP research. Rather, a relativistic approach is advocated, wherein multiple truths are acknowledged up front, and as such a variety of research strategies are embraced and developed within the local cultural context and research agenda (Schinke, Smith, & McGannon, 2013). This relativist approach is exemplified in the research of McHugh, Coppola, and Sinclair (2013), which was aimed at exploring a culturally relevant definition of sport from the perspective of Canadian Aboriginal youth. These authors recognized that Westernized definitions of sport may limit research on and sport opportunities for this population. By engaging a decolonizing and participatory research framework, the researchers centralized relationships with Aboriginal youth and community members at the crux of their research. Through these relationships, research methods (e.g., photovoice, talking circles) and criteria (e.g., Aboriginal research ethics) became steeped in the local context and research purposes, enabling Aboriginal participants to take greater control in developing their own emic meanings of sport. One of the pertinent implications of facilitating these localized meanings was that they centralized the often overlooked expertise of Aboriginal youth, and so doing, opened up a more meaningful understanding of how to enhance sport opportunities for (and by) these youth (see Blodgett et al., 2014 for another example of a localized understanding of Aboriginal sport experiences). Though other possibilities for participatory CSP research processes will emerge in

other contexts (e.g., Blodgett et al., 2013; Frisby et al., 2005), there is a common emphasis on reconfiguring power and orienting research within a local community for social change, in line with cultural praxis goals (Brydon-Miller et al. 2011; Frisby et al., 2005).

CSP research can be enhanced through further engagement with critical methodological and/or theoretical approaches that centralize culture at the core of research processes rather than just in content. Through the centralization of culture throughout the research process, reflexive and participatory philosophies and strategies can be further embraced. These processes help bring forward issues of power and sociocultural difference, which are often overlooked through more mainstream (post-positivist, non-reflexive) research approaches in sport psychology (Smith & McGannon, in press). Through a more overt awareness and explicit acknowledgment of what is at stake in research concerning marginalized cultural identities in relation to the identities of the researcher, CSP researchers can facilitate a more critical interchange between academic commitments and 'real world' concerns, and develop research projects that are culturally empowering rather than marginalizing. Rooted in cultural praxis, these knowledge production processes become linked to larger social change efforts and facilitate more culturally inclusive domains that encourage sport and physical activity participation.

Conclusions: Advancing cultural praxis-centred CSP research

CSP is a relatively new trajectory within sport psychology that has been advocated at a conceptual level and is currently growing in terms of empirical research. Despite this vibrancy and flurry of research activity within the genre, when one takes stock of CSP writings to date, it is clear that more empirical work can be conducted in order to continue to elucidate conceptions of cultural identities as fluid, local and socially constructed. Such work is necessary in order to continue working toward the broader goal of cultural praxis within CSP, which is achieving a

more socially just, inclusive and ethical sport psychology, which results in the continued recognition and embracing of diversity and difference – in cultural identities, research and practice. From the small body of research conducted on race and ethnicity reviewed, it is evident that sustained efforts need to be made to facilitate more progressive and critical forms of scholarship that align with the conceptual writings of CSP. As indicated in the conceptual writings, there remains untapped potential to redress areas of non-inclusiveness in the domain, rather than simply describing culture from a static or external perspective. Based on conceptual writings within the CSP genre to date, we have proposed that the foregoing endeavour be facilitated and accomplished through an emphasis on research as cultural praxis. More specifically, through applied processes involving participant engagement and researcher cultural reflexivity, the goal of developing knowledge that holds ‘real life’ potential for change within marginalized sport participants’ lives can be further highlighted.

The following conclusions synthesize current trends discussed and offer further suggestions for conducting CSP research with a cultural praxis agenda.

- (1) CSP research involves an active and reflexive re-thinking of the term *culture* and its meaning and the implications that result from such meanings. Doing so will expand upon perspectives that present and/or take for granted that culture is a static, external entity or independent variable. Within CSP and cultural praxis, culture is inescapable because it is recognized as infused with people’s identities, which are the intersection result of broader discourses and narratives that circulate outside, and within, us, simultaneously (i.e., one is not reduced to the other). Given this socially constructed definition of culture, CSP researchers need to be aware that all sport participants have multiple, intersecting cultural identities, relating not only to race and ethnicity, but also to gender, sexuality, nationality,

physicality, and socioeconomic status. These identities are always in flux in terms of how they are expressed, transformed, and made meaningful in different times and spaces.

- (2) Endeavouring to move beyond the universalist and ethnocentric research approaches of mainstream sport psychology, CSP demands that culture be centralized not only in research content or theory, but also in methodology. The intent is to open up more meaningful and encompassing understandings of the experiences and identities of diverse sport participants, through research processes that are aligned with local ways of knowing and doing. . For this purpose, we propose critical interpretivist methodologies rooted in local cultural contexts where there are also conceptions of identities as multiple, fluid and intersecting. Through critical methodologies (e.g., participatory action research, decolonizing methodologies, critical Indigenous methodologies, discourse analysis, narrative analysis), the complexity of identity as a sociocultural construction can more readily be explored. Moreover, participant engagement becomes a primary process through which the subjectivities and experiential knowledges of local people can be embraced.
- (3) Following from the above point, CSP research methodologies presume that the researcher is subjectively enmeshed in knowledge production processes and outcomes, not impartial or detached. As such, regardless of the exact methodology chosen, researchers should engage in reflexive processes that bring attention to the ways in which their own cultural backgrounds infuse with their research and shape the way they (re)produce knowledge about diverse participants. At its crux, reflexivity is about reflecting on power – the power researchers have to think about, engage with, and (re)present the lives of others (in ways that can be either meaningful or marginalizing). These reflexive efforts recognize

the collaborative and dynamic nature of knowledge production that is at the core of transformative research (or research as praxis), as new and more meaningful understandings emerge through dialogical negotiations.

(4) CSP research grounded explicitly in cultural praxis tenets and goals needs to be anchored by an agenda of social change and social justice (McGannon & Schinke, in press).

Through such an agenda, CSP inquiry becomes more than a purely neutral academic endeavour, but rather one that attempts to address, and if possible, transform real sociocultural issues within the everyday lives of marginalized participants. This agenda of social change and social justice is opened up through the aforementioned reflexive and participatory processes, as both processes explicitly challenge researchers to reconsider the type of knowledge they produce by connecting it more forcefully with the lived experiences, needs, desires and identities as defined by participants.

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Appendix D: Article published in *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*

Blodgett, A. T., & Schinke, R. J. (2015). "When you're coming from the reserve you're not supposed to make it": Stories of Aboriginal athletes pursuing sport and academic careers in "mainstream" cultural contexts. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*. Advance online publication. doi:10.1016/j.psychsport.2015.03.001

Abstract

Objectives: This project responds to the call for athletic career development and transitions research that centralizes the constitutive role of culture in athletes' experiences (Stambulova & Alfermann, 2009; Stambulova & Ryba, 2014). Within, we explore the cultural transitions of Aboriginal hockey players (14-22 years old) relocated into "mainstream" (Euro-Canadian) cultural contexts to pursue dual careers as students and athletes.

Design: The research was framed as a cultural sport psychology initiative. The project was rooted in local Indigenous decolonizing methodology, which was brought forward via a participatory action research approach.

Methods: Mandala drawings and conversational interviews were employed as open-ended data collection processes that enabled the participants to share their stories and meanings through their own cultural perspectives. Vignettes were then used to present their accounts.

Results: The participants' careers as athletes and students were precariously navigated within larger cultural tensions to: (a) deal with a loss of belonging in the Aboriginal community; (b) break down negative stereotypes and attitudes that Aboriginal people are not able to "make it"; and (c) give back to the Aboriginal communities they relocated away from.

Conclusions: Through a culturally resonant mode of knowledge production, the research

uncovers contextual understandings of the cultural transitions experienced by Aboriginal athletes, revealing how this transition intersects with and shapes their dual careers. The project offers insight into the central role of culture in shaping athletes' dual careers, and provides impetus for more idiosyncratic approaches to be adopted in future research.

Keywords: Cultural sport psychology; Praxis; Indigenous; Student-athlete; Dual career

Introduction

Reflecting the increasing globalization and mobility of society, there is a growing trend of athletes moving across national and cultural borders to pursue sport aspirations as well as broader life opportunities (Ryba, Stambulova, Si, & Schinke, 2013; Stambulova & Ryba, 2013a). These border crossings can be understood as critical and cultural turning points, or transitions, in athletes' careers. As Wylleman and Reints (2010) explained, transitional events (in general) define athletes' careers because they confront athletes with questions about what/who they are and what/who they want or ought to be, and bring forward new demands and challenges related to their development. Specific to the cultural transition, Adler (1975) noted that individuals who move across borders are likely to experience new demands and challenges related to cultural change, reflecting their attempt to comprehend, survive in, and grow through immersion in a second (host) culture. Individuals must make sense of a new culturally-constructed reality which is different from the one they were originally socialized within, and attempt to create a meaningful position for themselves *in* and *between* their home and host contexts (for contextual examples in sport, see Blodgett, Schinke, McGannon, Coholic et al., 2014; Schinke, McGannon, Batochio, & Wells, 2013). Their career decisions and development, within and outside of sport, therefore unfold within larger (shifting) cultural dynamics that are part of a cultural transition (Ryba, Stambulova, Ronkainen, Bundgaard, & Selanne, 2014).

Given that athletes are people who are pursuing other goals and activities in life in addition to sport (Stambulova & Ryba, 2013b; Wylleman & Lavallee, 2004), their relocation is not always driven exclusively by sport aspirations. More commonly, as intimated above, athlete relocation is predicated on dual career aspirations. Ryba et al. (2014) defined the dual career as “the challenge of combining a sporting career with studies or work, which remains a source of concern for most high-performance athletes” (p. 1). At the crux of this definition is the assertion that integrating dual careers is a highly precarious activity. A number of national studies have affirmed this assertion by highlighting the difficulties and constraints athletes experience as they seek to combine sport with educational/vocational careers and successfully manage transitions within each career context (e.g., Aquilina, 2013; Christensen & Sørensen, 2009; Cosh & Tully, 2014; Debois, Ledon, & Wylleman, 2014). However, researchers have scarcely accounted for the cultural transition that is catalyzed by athletes who relocate across physical and/or discursive borders to advance their dual careers. The few exceptions include Ryba and colleagues’ (2014) examination of the dual career pathways of transnational athletes in Nordic countries; Agergaard and Ryba’s (2014) research on transnational career development in professional sports, drawing on women soccer players’ experiences; and Ryba, Haapanen, Mosek, and Ng’s (2012) exploration of acute cultural adaptation experienced by Finnish swimmers during short-term relocation. Each of these studies, in addition to recent conceptual writings (Ryba & Stambulova, 2013; Stambulova & Alfermann, 2009; Stambulova & Ryba, 2013b, 2014), highlights the pertinence of cultural transitions in shaping athletes’ careers. There remains a need to further explore how the cultural transition process is experienced by athletes in diverse contexts, and how it intersects with and compounds the intricacies of navigating dual careers.

It is important to explore how cultural transitions coincide with relocated athletes’ dual

career experiences because “implicit in the conflict and tension posed by the transitional experience lies the potential for authentic growth and development” (Adler, 1975, p. 14). Reciprocally, if these transitions are not navigated and coped with effectively, they open up potential for a host of negative consequences including social and cultural withdrawal, career disruption, identity foreclosure, premature sport dropout, neuroses, mental breakdowns, and stunted growth and development (Adler; Stambulova, Alfermann, Statler, & Côté, 2009). More than a determinant of athletic success, an athlete’s ability to cope with transitional demands and challenges has pertinent implications for their well-being and development on psychological, psychosocial, and academic/vocational levels (Wylleman & Lavallee, 2004). Thus, by exploring the cultural transitions of relocated athletes, more meaningful knowledge can be developed around how to support diverse athletes in their dual career pursuits (recognizing their distinct needs and broader life circumstances) and facilitate positive developmental outcomes. These efforts would contribute to the larger movement within sport psychology to become more culturally attuned and embracing of diversity, as advocated under the auspices of cultural sport psychology (CSP; Blodgett, Schinke, McGannon, & Fisher, 2014; Ryba et al., 2013).

CSP and the Cultural Praxis of Athletes’ (Dual) Careers

CSP is a contextually informed mode of inquiry that is developed within local cultural contexts to generate knowledge more deeply aligned with the lives of diverse (often marginalized) sport participants (Ryba et al., 2013). The overarching intent of CSP research is to challenge the ethnocentric biases of traditional sport psychology paradigms which have long excluded the experiences and subjectivities of various participants, such as those from minority racial and ethnic groups who relocate into “mainstream” sport contexts to pursue careers. This CSP agenda intersects with and can be used to inform dual career research on the cultural

transitions of border-crossing athletes, where emphasis is on recognizing the sociocultural contexts of athletes' lives and accounting for diversity in career development (Stambulova & Alfermann, 2009). Indeed, it is generally acknowledged within the career transition literature that athletes' career development and transitions are always culturally situated, and that knowledge is therefore contextual rather than universal (Ryba & Stambulova, 2013; Stambulova & Alfermann, 2009; Stambulova & Ryba, 2014). Much cross-cultural scholarship has affirmed this cultural perspective by highlighting differences as well as similarities between athletes' careers and transitions in different countries (see Stambulova & Ryba, 2013a). Moving beyond the cross-cultural scholarship, however, there has been little consideration of culture as an internal process (more than an external entity) that fundamentally shapes athletes' sense of self and the way they create meaning around their dual career experiences and transitions.

From a CSP lens, it is necessary to shift away from simplistic categorical understandings of culture and to re-conceptualize culture as part of shifting discourses and exchanges that produce situated meanings (Blodgett, Schinke, McGannon, & Fisher, 2014; Ryba & Schinke, 2009). This re-conceptualization better accounts for the fluidity and multifaceted nature of athletes' identities and lived experiences, and how these are subject to change in different sociocultural settings (Ryba & Schinke, 2009; Schinke, McGannon, Parham, & Lane, 2012). When integrated into dual career research, this understanding can foster insight into how athletes' thoughts and actions regarding their careers and transitions are (re)negotiated and (re)articulated within shifting sociocultural dynamics and discourses (Ryba & Schinke, 2009).

To begin advancing more in-depth CSP projects, it has been suggested that researchers move away from the (post)positivist paradigms that have long been favored within career research, and engage in interpretivist modes of inquiry (Stambulova & Ryba, 2014; Ryba &

Schinke, 2009). Drawing attention to the subjective and socio-culturally constructed nature of meaning and knowledge, these latter approaches demand that contextualized research processes be engaged to facilitate localized understandings of diverse sport participants. To date, only a handful of studies have employed such idiographic cultural approaches to elicit the cultural nuances in athletes' careers and develop local insights into how their experiences can be enhanced (e.g., Carless & Douglas, 2009; Nicholson, Hoye, & Gallant, 2011; Ronkainen, Ryba, & Nesti, 2013; Schinke et al., 2006). Furthering these initial efforts, it has been recommended that scholars integrate local interpretivist approaches with a praxis sensibility in order to blend theory/research with applied work and lived culture (Blodgett, Schinke, McGannon, & Fisher, 2014; Ryba & Schinke, 2009; Ryba et al., 2013; Schinke et al., 2012). In particular, Stambulova and Ryba (2013b, 2014) explicated the need for more comprehensive career research which considers theory, research, and action as interwoven and culturally saturated – a paradigm they refer to as the *cultural praxis of athletes' careers*. The paradigm is articulated as a set of conceptual and applied challenges that encourage researchers to embrace sociocultural differences, and generate knowledge that is meaningful in the lives of marginalized sport participants. These challenges have been engaged in recent dual career projects to elicit the meanings of transnational Nordic athletes (Ryba et al., 2014) as well as to embrace the local context of Swedish dual career programs (Stambulova, Engstrom, Franck, Linner, & Lindahl, 2014). Similarly, cultural praxis was taken up in the current work as part of a CSP approach to stimulate culturally resonant knowledge around the dual careers of Aboriginal athletes.

The Current Project: Aboriginal Athletes' Dual Careers

The current project is part of a larger community-based initiative being carried out with Aboriginal community members to identify meaningful pathways for supporting youth and

young adults in pursuing their sport dreams. Moving beyond a singular sport focus, in this article we have shifted attention onto the stories of Aboriginal athletes¹⁰ who have moved off reserves and entered into “mainstream” Euro-Canadian¹¹ contexts to pursue dual careers as athletes and students. The purpose was to explore how the cultural transition process intersects with and shapes the sport and educational transitions experienced by Aboriginal athletes, and therein compounds the intricacies of navigating dual careers. The research was broadened beyond its initial focus on the sport career in recognition of the need to allow participants to share their cultural transitions holistically, from a cultural perspective that emphasizes the interrelated dimensions and complexities of their lives (Smith, 1999). This perspective aligns with the holistic lifespan approach advocated in the career research, which explicates the importance of viewing an athlete as a person who is doing sport and other things in life simultaneously (Wylleman & Lavallee, 2004; Stambulova & Ryba, 2013b).

The project was conceptualized within the *cultural praxis of athletes' careers* paradigm (Stambulova & Ryba, 2013b, 2014). In particular, it was designed to respond to several of the challenges posed within this paradigm for more critical and culturally aligned projects: (a) adopting a holistic perspective; (b) situating research in relevant sociocultural contexts; (c) engaging an idiosyncratic approach that is sensitive to diversity in career patterns and experiences; and (d) embracing the tenets of participatory action research. These cultural praxis challenges were taken up via a CSP research approach that was developed and led from within

¹⁰The participants are referred to as “athletes” rather than “student-athletes”, given that they were originally recruited for this research based on their athletic identities. However, it is important to note that their identities as students were, in various instances, equal to or more salient than their athletic identities..

¹¹ Euro-Canadian refers to the dominant national culture of white Canadians who are of European ancestry. The culture of Aboriginal peoples is also considered a Canadian culture, though a markedly different one, which has historically been marginalized and denigrated through the colonizing efforts of Euro-Canadians.

the Aboriginal community, by local community members. This particular strategy was engaged to generate knowledge that resonates more deeply with the cultural realities of Aboriginal athletes and that creates possibilities for enhancing their lives (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Smith, 1999). Through knowledge production processes that were carried out *with* Aboriginal community members rather than *for* or *on* them, the CSP approach was explicitly aimed at addressing issues of sociocultural difference and representation (Blodgett, Schinke, McGannon, & Fisher, 2014). The participants were encouraged to share their dual career stories through their own cultural perspectives and meanings, and bring forward, rather than gloss over, the complex and dynamic nature of their lived experiences. The intent was to emphasize the constitutive role of culture in shaping their dual career transitions, and facilitate knowledge which can be used to address their needs and better support their dual career development (Blodgett, Schinke, McGannon, & Fisher, 2014; Ryba & Schinke, 2009).

Methodology

A participatory action research (PAR) process was developed to engage three Aboriginal community members as core research team members who would mobilize the project from within the local cultural community. PAR processes are strongly recommended in Indigenous research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Smith, 1999) and have also been endorsed in the cultural praxis of athletes' careers (Stambulova & Ryba, 2013b, 2014). Stemming from the PAR process in the current project, an Indigenous decolonizing methodology was facilitated which centralized local Aboriginal ways of thinking and doing, and engaged a more critical interchange amongst academic commitments and the "real life" needs of community members (Smith, 1999). The methodology encompassed the following tenets: (a) recognition that research is a transformative process that originates within the community; (b) centralization of the cultural protocols, values,

and practices of the community as integral research components; (c) honoring of Indigenous peoples' stories by representing these with integrity; and (d) sharing knowledge within the local community in ways that lend to local capacities (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Smith, 1999).

Participants

Participants were recruited through the Aboriginal research team members, given their connectedness within the local Aboriginal community. The participants consisted of 13 Aboriginal hockey players (aged 14-22 years) who had relocated away from reserves in Ontario, Canada to pursue sport and educational opportunities within Euro-Canadian communities. Eight of the participants were female, and five were male. At the time of the interviews, the participants' initial relocation had occurred from one to five years prior. Nine of the participants had initially transitioned into a secondary school (i.e., high school) as they entered the Euro-Canadian context, while four of the participants had initially transitioned into a post-secondary school (i.e., college or university). However, a number of the participants' educational statuses and situations had changed in the time that had elapsed since their initial relocation. At the point of the interviews, four of the participants had advanced from secondary school and were now pursuing post-secondary education in the Euro-Canadian context; one individual had completed his secondary education and moved back to his reserve community; one individual was taking a "breather" from hockey and had temporarily moved back on-reserve to continue her secondary education; and another individual, who had initially transitioned into a post-secondary school, had temporarily moved back on-reserve to re-evaluate her dual career paths. Many of the participants therefore discussed the development of their dual careers in the Euro-Canadian context from dynamic, moving positions rather than one static location. The participants also highlighted simultaneous progressions within their hockey careers during the course of their

relocation. When asked to identify the level of hockey they were currently or most recently competing at, three participants indicated the Junior A level (one level below the Canadian Hockey League); two competed on university or college teams; seven competed at A, AA, or AAA levels (nationally recognized competitive levels, where AAA is considered elite); and one competed at B level (competitive level that is below the A categories).

Data Collection

Upon receiving approval from the university's research ethics board, the reserve's Band Council, and the regional Aboriginal research review committee, data collection was initiated. Participants were asked to draw a circle and, within that form, create an image that reflected their experiences pursuing dual careers as students and athletes within the Euro-Canadian context. These circular drawings, known as mandalas, were used to elicit pertinent aspects of the participants' experiences and support them in sharing their stories from a cultural perspective (Blodgett, Coholic, Schinke, McGannon, Petier, & Pheasant, 2013). Once visualized, the mandalas were used to facilitate conversational interviews with the participants. This unstructured and open-ended form of interview aligns with an Indigenous decolonizing methodology in two key ways. First, it honors the tradition of storytelling as a means of transmitting knowledge, beliefs, and values within Aboriginal cultures (Kovach, 2010; Smith, 1999). Second, a more dialogical context is facilitated wherein both researchers and participants can engage in a more participatory mode of knowing that "privileges sharing, subjectivity, personal knowledge, and the specialized knowledges of oppressed groups" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 14). This participatory process enables participants to share their stories from their own perspectives and exercise greater control over the knowledge that is produced. Each interview began with the question "Can you tell me about what you have drawn in your mandala?" All

pursuant questions were posed during the interviews in relation to the themes and experiences brought forth by the participants. The interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim.

The narratives the Aboriginal athletes shared around their dual career transitions in the Euro-Canadian context are the focus of this article, rather than the mandala drawings. The drawings have been explored in previous articles related to the larger project (Blodgett et al., 2013; Blodgett, Schinke, McGannon, Coholic et al., 2014). Moving forward, a narrative focus was critical for enabling us to share highly contextualized stories that foreground the complexity, fluidity, and cultural situatedness of the athletes' experiences. Narratives have been engaged in previous career research related to sport, emphasized as a means of facilitating richer understandings of athletes' psychological processes and how they create meaning within particular sociocultural contexts (e.g., Carless & Douglas, 2009; Ronkainen et al., 2013; Ryba et al., 2014). In this project, narratives were centralized as part of an interpretivist CSP approach that would elicit more in-depth and subjectively nuanced understandings of the athletes' dual career transitions and their meanings.

Data Interpretation

Building on an inductive thematic analysis conducted as part of the larger research project (Blodgett, Schinke, McGannon, Coholic et al., 2014), the participants' accounts of transitioning into the Euro-Canadian context to advance their sport and educational careers were developed into vignettes. As a narrative strategy that presents research findings in "compact sketches" (Ely, Vinz, Downing, & Anzul, 1997, p. 70), the vignettes aligned with the local Aboriginal tradition of storytelling as a means of sharing knowledge (Kovach, 2010). The vignettes also served to present the participants' stories holistically, by emphasizing the interconnectedness of various themes within larger, more complex life narratives (Ryba et al.,

2014). More pointedly, vignettes have been advocated as a research strategy that supports cultural praxis (Blodgett, Schinke, Smith, Peltier, & Pheasant, 2011). Blodgett and colleagues explained that when vignettes are developed as first-person accounts, they create space where marginalized cultural community members can share the stories that shape their lives in their own words. As part of a transformative process, these stories are likely to resonate more deeply with community members, in ways that may espouse local change efforts.

In this project the participants' accounts were developed into *composite* vignettes. This particular form of vignette depicts a mix of accounts (i.e., multiple experiences from multiple people) amalgamated into a single narrative (Spalding & Phillips, 2007). Rather than presenting individual stories, where particular sets of themes and experiences are emphasized and others de-emphasized, the vignettes were constructed as more encompassing group-level stories. A mix of experiences and voices from each of the 13 participants were drawn upon and woven together, forming three composite vignettes that depict a range of intersecting themes and fluid meanings around the participants' cultural transitions and dual career development. The vignettes should not be read as a series of quotes or stories from individual participants. Instead, the vignettes should be understood as single synthesized accounts. The reason we selected this composite approach is that it enabled us to draw together the rich and insightful elements of each participant's story, and merge them into more powerful, all-encompassing shared accounts.

The first author took the lead in developing the vignettes, given that this project was part of her PhD research. As the first author's academic supervisor, the second author provided critical feedback throughout the vignette development stages. The second author asked critical questions about how and why particular themes were being brought forward, and engaged in discussion with the first author about how the themes fit together in the vignettes to reveal

insights into the athletes' dual careers. To begin developing the composite vignettes, the first author reviewed each interview transcript, highlighting key words, ideas, and stories that seemed to represent the participants' stories pursuing dual careers in the Euro-Canadian context. The highlighted elements were copied into a new working document. Second, quotations denoting similar stories or themes were grouped together to form major content areas for the vignettes. In this stage the author drew upon the inductive thematic analysis that was developed with Aboriginal community members on-reserve as part of the larger initiative (Blodgett, Schinke, McGannon, Coholic et al., 2014), using it to cross-reference some of the emerging content areas. However, given that the thematic analysis was not developed with a focus on dual careers, new and revised content areas were developed beyond this initial analysis. Third, the author reviewed each of the major content areas, deleting redundant text and amalgamating multiple shared accounts into more concise stories. Direct quotes and contextual examples were maintained from the interview transcripts as much as possible in order to preserve the participants' voices and meanings; the author was conscious of not altering the particular content or key terminology used by the participants. The summarized accounts were then grouped into three overarching narrative themes, forming the basis of three vignettes. As the final step, the author linked together the ideas contained in each of the vignettes by writing around them (e.g., adding connective words) so that full and flowing narratives were produced.

Ely and colleagues (1997) acknowledged the interpretive and constructive processes that are inexorably engaged when any researcher attempts to present the stories of others. It is herein recognized that the vignettes reflect, in part, an interpretation of the first author who is a white Euro-Canadian academic. This disclosure makes overt the collaborative nature of knowledge production that is at the core of praxis (Blodgett, Schinke, McGannon, & Fisher, 2014).

Results

Three vignettes are presented, reflecting three overarching and interrelated themes in the participants' cultural transition experiences which shaped their dual careers. These themes are identified as the vignette titles: (1) *Aboriginal community backlash against the pursuit of Euro-Canadian dual careers*; (2) *Dual career transitions as pathways for breaking down cultural stereotypes*; and (3) *(Un)balancing dual career priorities for the Aboriginal community*. It is important to note that the vignettes are not linear in nature, and are not distinct from one another. They are fluid and overlapping narratives, reflecting the complex and dynamic nature of the participants' lives and the way they sinuously (re)negotiate and (re)construct meaning around their dual careers in different moments. Although there is a textual beginning and ending to the vignettes, giving the impression of a neat and linear narrative structure, these textual counterpoints do not actually reflect static beginnings or endings in the participants' cultural transition process. They reflect single moments that the participants fluidly moved in and out of. For example, the final lines of the third vignette should not be viewed as a successful "ending" to the participants' stories. Instead, they should be interpreted as one moment where the participants were able to construct meaning around their dual careers that gave them a sense of success. They vacillated between different moments of success and struggle, ongoing, as they continued to navigate and re-construct meaning around their careers as Aboriginal athletes in a Euro-Canadian context.

Introduction to the First Vignette

The first vignette explores the cultural backlash the Aboriginal athletes experienced from within their home communities as they pursued their dual careers in the Euro-Canadian context. Many community members regarded the athletes' move outside of the Aboriginal community as

a form of cultural betrayal, and were openly hostile to the athletes, stating that they wouldn't "make it". The accounts captured in this vignette reveal how the athletes' cultural transition process was underscored by a loss of belonging and connectedness within the Aboriginal community. The athletes had to navigate their dual career transitions with little cultural social support, as outsiders who had to prove themselves to the on-reserve community.

Aboriginal community backlash against the pursuit of Euro-Canadian dual careers

When you leave the reserve, you quickly find out that some people take a negative attitude towards you. Like, when I came home for Christmas break, some of my old friends that I used to play minor hockey with when I was younger, they started getting that negative attitude towards me. They think that I'm thinking I'm too good for them and I'm better than they are. I had issues with this one girl in particular. When I came back to the reserve one year, she wouldn't look at me and wouldn't talk to me. Then one day she was like "Oh, you think you're so good. Just because you moved away and are playing in the city, you think you're just the best around here, don't you?" I got up and was about to walk away when she grabbed my shoulder and was like "What, you want to fight?" It just triggered me, and that was my first fight. It was pretty crazy, because we used to be good friends. We used to play on the same team.

There's just a lot of jealousy back home on the reserve, and that's what my parents and a couple of my teachers had to explain to me. People think that I think I'm better than them. I don't think I'm better; I'm not better than anybody. But that's what they think. And that's why I don't really hang around with people here anymore. I mean, I do have a few friends on the reserve still, and there are lots of people who support me. But there are also people who don't really care about what I'm trying to do. I think those people just feel like they're stuck in the community, so they don't want to support people like me moving away to pursue other

opportunities. Some people on the reserve have actually said to me, straight up, that I won't make it or whatever, and have openly criticized me. Like I've had people tell me, "There are people smarter and better than you, so why are you still trying?" Or I've had people say "There's a one in a million chance that you're going to make it anywhere." The thing is, these people know that you're really, really good at hockey or you're excelling in school, and they just want to bring you down because maybe they aren't doing the same.

So there's always low points that come with trying to be successful. Those kinds of comments got to me a few times in the past, because you do think about them. They're voices that get into your head and create all this doubt, and they add to the uncertainties that you already have about yourself being in the city managing a higher level of hockey with more intense schooling. There were times when I broke down and was actually like I can't do this anymore, I'm going to stop. Because it sucks to know that people are thinking negatively about you, and you start to think that maybe you should just go back home and do what everyone else is doing on the reserve. I cried about it and got upset. But both of my parents – my whole family, actually – they were always there reassuring me of why I was in [city] and what I was trying to do with my hockey and school. Even though I knew why I was there, they were the ones reassuring me, telling me that my decision to move away was right and that I would get over the comments. They actually helped to change my thinking. As frustrating as it was to hear other people say negative things, I actually got this drive to prove those people wrong, like *they're* making the mistake. I was just kind of like, I can prove everybody wrong, I'm going to go somewhere. I put a bit more pressure on myself to work harder then, so that I could be like, "See?! I made it."

But that pressure didn't always help my situation. I started thinking okay, I'm here now and I can't fail, because if I fail then I go back on everything I've done to prove everybody

wrong. That pressure was part of the reason why I closed myself off from the people around me at school. I locked myself in my room, I became very introverted and I didn't talk to anybody. I went to practice, school, and then to sleep. I didn't hang out outside of school or hockey, or do anything else. I started pushing everybody away that would try to talk to me. When people at school tried to talk to me and ask questions, especially about my culture, I took it as if I was being attacked and then I pushed myself away from them even further and just kind of clung to home as opposed to letting go. I was just trying so hard to not fail.

Introduction to the Second Vignette

The second vignette explores how the participants' cultural transition was challenged and shaped by culturally oppressing attitudes within the Euro-Canadian community. After describing how they felt inherently uncomfortable and out of place in the Euro-Canadian context, the participants noted there was a general attitude around them that Aboriginal people aren't capable of succeeding in the mainstream, which further compounded their transitional struggles. The athletes had to work against and alongside this oppressing attitude as they developed their dual careers, while also dealing with the pressure of having to prove themselves to some of the on-reserve community (as revealed in the first vignette). Working within these cultural dynamics, it is revealed how the athletes fluidly re-framed their dual career transitions as pathways for dismantling negative cultural stereotypes.

Dual career transitions as pathways for breaking down cultural stereotypes

It's funny because at first I was like I'm going to make it, I'm going to make it. The whole summer before moving to [city] I'd been really excited and I was like yeah, this is going to be great – because I thought it was going to be different. But then getting there, it was kind of a shock. I hadn't really thought about being by myself and dealing with a lot of different things,

like having different beliefs and feeling like an outsider. Because in the beginning it was all about hockey; that's what I was going to the city to do, and that's all I was thinking about. You really don't realize how hard and different the transition is until you actually get there and reality kicks in. Once my parents dropped me off at the school and drove away, it felt like I was by myself in the middle of [city] with nothing. Everything familiar was gone and I was so out of my element, it made me not want to be there. It's like in the movies where you see everything moving around you as a blur and then you're just standing there stuck in one place, like "What am I doing here? I don't even know what I'm doing." I was coming from a small community and small school, where it was all Natives, and moving to a big city and school where it was basically all white people and unfamiliar faces. I had to adapt to a new place, new people, new culture, and I had to do it fast. So I was dealing with a lot of different things, and everything being so chaotic and uncomfortable. I felt torn between if I should stay or if I should go.

At the same time, there was still a lot of pressure that I felt to succeed where I was. I'd get messages from the Elders back home being like "You're such a good role model." And I'd get messages from different families and different community members being like "I'm glad my children have someone like you to look up to." Kids on the reserve would even talk to me and be like "I want to be like you." Because I'd already felt the pressure of trying to prove to everybody that I could do it, them saying those things really made me feel – instead of encouraged – like I can't fail now or I'm going to let everybody down. And it was hard. Nobody knows how hard it was. I always lied, like "oh, everything's good," even though it wasn't.

First year for sure I felt like a huge failure because my grades were too low, and I was struggling to keep up with all my work. Then I got cut from the hockey team that I was trying out for. I had gone into try-outs thinking I was going to get cut anyway, thinking that I wasn't

capable of playing at that level. My self-confidence was down, so I didn't try as hard as I could have. But it still sucked when I got cut because I've played hockey forever. I knew my level of hockey was much better than playing intramurals or even the lower rep divisions. I also knew I should have been doing better in school, because I did go to [city] for school as much as hockey. I was really embarrassed by all of it and felt like a failure. Like it sucked that I wasn't in school *or* hockey to the extent where I wanted to be. But now I'm trying not to be embarrassed by it because I hear so many other stories and it's like, at least I'm trying to do something. There are a lot of people, even not on reserves, who don't try.

My dad didn't want me to go back to school after that first year because I was really stressed and depressed. But I went back again to prove to everybody that I could do it. I didn't want to be the person to give up and have to go back to the reserve. I guess I didn't want to be another negative stereotype of a Native who tried to go away and didn't make it. I know it definitely surprised a lot of people at school to see me come back, especially my coach. People just weren't expecting me to come back and thrive in that environment. When you're coming from the reserve you're not supposed to make it.

And that's part of the reason why I did go back after that first year, even though things were pretty bad: I want to change how people view Natives. Knowing that I'm Native, knowing the stuff that happens on the reserve – and a lot of the stereotypes are true, and it's sad – it's like I want to be different. I want to prove to people, even the kids on the reserve, like you don't have to be a rez kid. You can go out and you can do something. I tell my friends all the time to go after what they want and to go to school, because I know a lot of people who still haven't graduated high school; or they graduated and they're just not doing anything with their diploma. So I want to be a role model for other people on the reserve to get out there and do what they

want. Like if I can do it, they can too. It wasn't always easy for me – I had challenges and there were times when I didn't always make the right decisions. But I got myself back on track and made it this far. Now I have all these experiences that I can share with other people.

I had a father talk to me about his son. His son is in grade 11, and he's already been approached by about four or five different universities for golf and for hockey. And they're from a reserve. I'm so happy for this kid, but the dad is stressed out because he doesn't know what to do because he gave up his own athletic dreams. He just doesn't want the same for his son. So I told him some of my experiences, and I guess that made me happy, that I'm that person that someone can turn to and look up to. Like, my experiences weren't just all for nothing. That just made me think that for me to have gone through all those challenges and to have risen above it, anyone can do that if they just know someone else went through it.

Introduction to the Third Vignette

The third vignette focuses on how the athletes' sense of self, and thus their dual career objectives, fluidly shifted during the cultural transition process, aligning more deeply with the Aboriginal community. The athletes described how they were learning about themselves and growing holistically as people, beyond athletes, through their transitional experiences. In particular, it was revealed how their immersion in the Euro-Canadian culture strengthened their awareness of themselves as Aboriginal community members (in paradox to the first vignette), and re-shaped their visions of success as giving back to the Aboriginal community. This vignette reveals how the participants (un)balanced their dual career priorities in relation to Aboriginal community needs and aspirations, drawing meaning from a larger cultural agenda.

(Un)balancing dual career priorities in relation to Aboriginal community needs

The whole transition was really hard, especially at first, because you're so much of an

outsider. I honestly wanted to call my mom and tell her to visit me for a month until I got used to it all. But you have to go through it yourself. You're going off to this place to pursue your dreams and have better opportunities, so you have to learn to get comfortable by yourself. You have to learn how to make decisions on your own, how to control situations on your own, and you have to learn not to panic and that everything's going to be okay. And then you have to learn to study on your own, get that project done on your own, and get yourself to your hockey practices and games. You don't have your parents there to guide you through everything, no one saying "okay, do your homework".

It was difficult at times to stay on top of everything and feel like you were succeeding. I found that I was often focusing on hockey more than school, and I would forget about my studies. Then everything would start to go downhill. I realized that if I wasn't doing well in school or if I was behind in homework, my hockey also suffered and I would feel more overwhelmed. Just mentally and physically I was drained. I had the constant feeling that I wasn't 100% into school or hockey, and it was really hard. I remember I got into a big fight about it with my mom once. She was upset that my marks were suffering and was telling me that I needed to be more realistic about my future and focus on my education. She was the one who always wanted me to focus on schooling rather than hockey, whereas my dad has always wanted me to play hockey. I shared my dad's mindset in that it was all about hockey for me – at least in the beginning – so I was irritated when I felt like my mom was trying to push me away from that. Even though I know she supported me, there was a lot of stress and mixed emotions around the school versus hockey thing. The confusion fed into my doubts about what I was doing here, because I already felt out of place, and then I also didn't have a clear sense of direction.

But if I could go back and change anything I wouldn't, because moving away was

probably the best decision that I made. It's been an opportunity for me to grow as a person and mature. I feel like the challenges – going away from home for the first time, not knowing anyone, having to adjust to the different level of hockey and a different school, having to figure out what I wanted for myself – all those challenges have gotten me to where I am now. If I had stayed on reserve, I know I wouldn't be where I am today or the person I am. You know, you actually find out who you are and what you can do when you move away. For example, in high school in [city] I found out that I could draw and that I love talking in front of people. Like if we're giving presentations or doing readings, I always volunteer to be the first one to go. That's kind of how it is with hockey too; I'm finding out what I can really do on the ice and how I play. You just start building that confidence in yourself as a person as you go through all these changes and new experiences, and you start looking at everything differently.

Now I know where I want to be and what I want to do with my life. In the beginning it was mainly just about hockey. But now I find myself prioritizing my education over hockey, and thinking about my career. Because in the next few years, hockey is going to be done for me. I've always played hockey and then went to school; It was always hand in hand. But now I feel like this is pushing me to push myself to become a better student and a better person. It made me want more. Like once I saw that I was able to excel in school, even just in high school, it made me want to continue on and do more. I want to be the best that I can be because then I can really go back home and help the community. I know that in the end I want to be a teacher, so I'm pushing myself to hopefully graduate with that degree. Once I have that degree I can help educate other young people on the reserve and show them what they can achieve.

I think that's one of the biggest things from this whole journey: You just come to realize what you want in life, and what actually meant something to you and what was just a passing –

like some things just come and go and then there's something that is always going to be there, which is your home. I moved to two different places, I played on different teams, I met different people, and everything was moving and changing around me, but home was always there. That's why I want to come back to the reserve after I'm done my career in [city], to try to give back to the community. I'll never just leave home and never come back. I want to support and help.

I'm proud to be Aboriginal and proud of where I come from now. At first it hurt me and made me angry, like when I first moved off the reserve and was dealing with things like racism and just being different. Then I actually started to learn about the history of my people and what we went through. I learned a lot of stuff, and it made me proud to be who I am again. Now I embrace it. It makes me stronger and prouder as a Native person, because I know all the struggles our people have gone through and how we are survivors.

Discussion

The vignettes above centralize the dynamic and constitutive role of sociocultural and psychological processes in Aboriginal athletes' dual career experiences, enabling deeper insights to be gleaned into how their cultural transitions intersect with and shape their sport and education transitions. In particular, it is revealed how the Aboriginal athletes had to navigate their sport and educational careers within the Euro-Canadian context through shifting and overlapping cultural tensions to: (a) deal with a loss of belonging in the Aboriginal community (vignette one); (b) break down negative stereotypes and attitudes that Aboriginal people are not able to "make it" (vignette two); and (c) give back to the Aboriginal communities they relocated away from (vignette three). These culturally dynamic themes are explored below in terms of how they contribute new knowledge about the dual careers of Aboriginal athletes.

In the first vignette, the athletes described the backlash they received from some of the

Aboriginal community members in their home reserves as they transitioned into the Euro-Canadian context to pursue dual careers. These community members seemed to regard the athletes' move off- reserve as a form of cultural betrayal, believing that the athletes saw themselves as "too good" for the community. The community members openly criticized and marginalized the athletes, stating that these individuals would not succeed outside of the reserve. It becomes evident in these accounts that the athletes' cultural transitions were underscored by a loss of belonging in the Aboriginal community, wherein they were re-positioned as cultural outsiders. The participants therefore had to deal with a significant loss of cultural social support as they navigated their school and sport-related transitions in the Euro-Canadian context.

This finding is important given that cultural/community social support has been emphasized as one of the most prominent factors in Indigenous athletes' success in "mainstream" contexts (e.g., Campbell & Sonn, 2009; Nicholson et al., 2011; Schinke et al., 2006). These scholars noted how such support provides Indigenous athletes with a critical sense of substantiation and cultural connectedness which they often lack in non-Aboriginal contexts. Given that the athletes in this project made various references to being "different" and "outsiders" in the Euro-Canadian context, it is clear how detrimental this loss of support and connection to the Aboriginal community was for their dual career development. As noted in the first vignette, the athletes did consider giving up on their careers as athletes to "go back home and do what everyone else is doing on the reserve." They felt pulled against their career pursuits, needing to regain a sense of cultural connectedness and support (Schinke et al., 2006). This finding aligns with and extends dual career research which has highlighted the importance of social support for enabling athletes to cope with the demands of transitioning to higher levels of school and sport (e.g. Aquilina, 2013; Stambulova et al., 2014). In these studies, student-athletes

have been found to rely on a large network of people for support, including parents, coaches, peers, teachers/academic staff, and other professionals (Aquilina, 2013; Stambulova et al., 2014). However, with the exception of parents, these sources of support are all located inside the culture the athletes are residing in. For athletes who have relocated across cultural borders to pursue dual careers, the current project demonstrates how belonging and social support from within their home communities may be critical for shaping their careers and providing a foundation for success (see also Nicholson, Hoye, & Gallant, 2011).

The emphasis on cultural support and belonging builds on Agergaard and Ryba's (2014) career transition research with transnational soccer players, where maintaining social connections within their societies of origin was identified as a core transitional need. The soccer players were found to engage in various practices of belonging with their home communities, rather than focusing only on their immersion in the host culture, in ways that facilitated their embeddedness within multiple contexts and supported their transnational identities and careers. Reflecting this "multiple embeddedness", the Aboriginal athletes' dual careers unfolded in the complex interplay between developing a Euro-Canadian sense of belonging and simultaneously maintaining Aboriginal cultural belonging (Agergaard & Ryba). The athletes articulated how the backlash and loss of cultural support they experienced as they moved outside of their home communities created pressure for them to have to "prove themselves" by achieving success in the Euro-Canadian contexts. They envisioned their success as a way to re-gain belonging in the Aboriginal community, by making community members proud of them, while also establishing their place in the host culture. The athletes fluidly repositioned themselves and their careers in and between their dual cultural contexts, reconstructing meaning around supporting and sustaining attachments to each locale rather than linearly integrating into the host culture

(Agergaard & Ryba).

In the second vignette the athletes explicated how their cultural transitions were shaped by larger intersecting attitudes and stereotypes stemming from within the Euro-Canadian community. As they immersed in the host culture, the athletes became increasingly aware of a pervasive attitude that Aboriginal people are not capable of succeeding off-reserve, characterizing them as inept or inferior in relation to the Euro-Canadian society. The athletes therefore struggled against and alongside Euro-Canadian cultural attitudes that threatened their sense of what/who they are and can become and undermined their career development in the host culture, consistent with the findings of previous research with relocated Aboriginal athletes (Campbell & Sonn, 2009; Schinke et al., 2006). What has not been revealed previously is that these marginalizing attitudes are at times also endorsed from within Aboriginal communities, as illustrated by the criticisms the athletes in this project received from on-reserve peers. In trying to navigate these dynamics within both sociocultural contexts, the athletes fluidly re-framed their dual career transitions as pathways for breaking down negative cultural stereotypes. They emphasized a need to persist in advancing their careers as a way of actively countering the oppressive attitudes of the Euro-Canadian community members, as well as proliferating more constructive and empowering messages within the Aboriginal community. In relation to the latter, the athletes specifically articulated how they were advancing their careers to leverage themselves as local role models within the Aboriginal community, taking responsibility for inspiring local community members to pursue their career aspirations.

The second vignette reveals how Aboriginal athletes are pressured to develop their dual careers within a larger struggle against cultural marginalization. Schinke and colleagues (2006) discussed the pertinence of these culturally marginalizing dynamics for relocated Aboriginal

athletes, though they emphasized how some athletes opt to withdraw from or disrupt their sport careers in order to return home and regain a sense of substantiation. The current project provides novel insight into the additional and conflicting pressures these athletes experience to break down culturally oppressive stereotypes and attitudes by persisting and advancing their dual careers. To our knowledge, this particular insight has not been previously explored within the dual career research. Importantly, the athletes continued to struggle with doubting their own ability to adapt and succeed in their Euro-Canadian contexts, even as they worked to break down those very ways of thinking. The participants therefore navigated their dual careers precariously, vacillating between their own internalized oppressive thoughts and a coinciding conviction to dismantle those ways of thinking through their athletic and educational persistence. The fluid and open-ended process of (re)negotiation that is at the crux of the cultural transition is highlighted (see also Ryba et al., 2012; Schinke, McGannon, Battochio, & Wells, 2013), implicating a non-linear career path with ongoing ups and downs, progressions and lapses (Debois et al., 2014).

In the third vignette the athletes described how their dual career priorities and meanings fluidly shifted through the cultural transition process (Aquilina, 2013; Ryba et al., 2014; Stambulova et al., 2014). At multiple points in this vignette, as well as in the second vignette, the athletes stated that they initially prioritized their sport careers as their core pathway for success, with less focus on educational attainment. Though at other points the athletes made references to their academic careers being prioritized alongside their sport careers, many of their specific stories gave clear precedence to their sport orientation, as commonly found with student-athletes (Cosh & Tully, 2014; Stambulova et al., 2014). However, as the participants moved through their initial culture shock and various acculturation challenges, they described themselves learning about who they are as people, more than just athletes, and developing stronger identities as

students and Aboriginal community members. The instability and dynamicity of the cultural transition process helped the participants to better appreciate their home cultural community as a core source of strength and support. In contrast to the first vignette, the athletes fluidly renegotiated their dual career objectives around a resolve to re-connect with and give back to their Aboriginal communities (Nicholson et al., 2011; Smith, 1999). They began prioritizing their academic and community identities over sport development, seeing their academic-vocational careers as more meaningful and viable pathways for contributing to their home communities.

In this vignette it is revealed how the participants had to navigate their careers as students and athletes in relation to a third intersecting identity – being an Aboriginal community member. The multiplicity of their subjectivities is brought forward, illustrating how various sociocultural identities and locations work together to shape meaning and experience (Schinke & McGannon, 2015) and therein shape the dual career. The athletes fluidly worked to (un)balance their dual career priorities in relation to their Aboriginal community identities, drawing meaning from a larger agenda of community transformation that was shaped by their cultural transition. The term “(un)balanced” is used to highlight the fact that the participants did not need to invest equal amounts of time and commitment into their dual careers to achieve a meaningful balance (Aquilina, 2013; Stambulova et al., 2014). Stambulova and colleagues acknowledged that a constant equal focus on sport and school is often impossible without athletes compromising other areas of life, as well as their health and well-being. The current research affirmed this insight as the athletes indicated in the third vignette that they felt mentally and physically drained whenever they tried to invest equally in their dual careers. By trying to focus equally on sport and education, the athletes were compromising their Aboriginal community identities and careers, therefore subverting an aspect of their lives that is critical to their sense of wholeness

and well-being (Smith, 1999). An optimal career balance for these athletes implied a shift in prioritizing school and community over sport, wherein they could achieve meaningful goals, have a satisfying and culturally connected life, and maintain their health and well-being (Stambulova et al., 2014). This (un)balancing of dual careers highlights how the athletes moved in and between multiple layered sociocultural identities and positions throughout their cultural transitions (Schinke & McGannon, 2015), which dynamically shifted their career trajectories.

This research contributes to the *cultural praxis of athletes' careers*, as has been advocated by Stambulova and Ryba (2013b, 2014) as well as scholars working more generally within the area of CSP (Blodgett, Schinke, McGannon, & Fisher, 2014; Ryba et al., 2013; Ryba & Schinke, 2009; Schinke et al., 2012). Building on the existing empirical dual career scholarship that has been taken up through the cultural praxis paradigm (e.g., Stambulova et al., 2014; Ryba et al., 2014), the project provides insight into the unique sociocultural dynamics that shape the careers of Aboriginal athletes in Euro-Canadian contexts. Via a PAR framework that facilitated and mobilized a local Indigenous decolonizing methodology, the knowledge production process became deeply rooted in the lived realities of Aboriginal community members. Accordingly, highly contextualized stories that conveyed the complexity, fluidity, and cultural situatedness of the athletes' dual career development and transitions were able to be brought forward, more sensitively aligned with their lives. The knowledge gained from these stories can now be put into action to better support relocated Aboriginal athletes in their dual career pursuits and facilitate positive developmental outcomes, recognizing their distinct cultural needs and transitional circumstances.

Limitations

We recognize that it would have been ideal to explore the accounts of the high school

athletes separately from the college and university athletes. Given the different developmental stages of these two groups, it is likely that these participants would have distinct career experiences and objectives, as well as distinct life perspectives and aspirations that reflect different levels of maturity. However, at the time the project was conducted, many of the participants had moved from one group to the other (i.e., from high school to post-secondary education, or out of post-secondary school), and therefore shared narratives that moved between these different stages. Rather than trying to categorize participants in one group or the other and present their stories as separate and static accounts, we decided to focus on the themes and stories that moved within and across both groups (Schinke, McGannon, Battocchio, & Wells, 2013). Though this strategy helps highlight the dynamic nature of the participants' dual careers, we recognize that pertinent differences between the groups have not been accounted for.

This project was also limited in focalizing Aboriginal athletes in one dominant sporting context: hockey. We acknowledge that the dual career pathways of athletes in more dominant/advantaged sports are likely different from the experiences of athletes in more marginalized sports, given nuances in sub-culture (Schinke & McGannon, 2014). Aboriginal athletes who relocate into Euro-Canadian contexts to pursue careers in more marginalized sports (such as badminton, archery, or pow-wow dancing) are likely to face unique challenges, have different access to resources, and have different perspectives from hockey players. This limitation relates to a larger need for research that explores how various sociocultural positions intersect with and shape athletes' dual career pathways (e.g., positions related to socioeconomic status, gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, education, sport etc.; Schinke & McGannon, 2015). By focusing exclusively on one sociocultural aspect, as done in the current project through the focus on the cultural transition, the intersectionality of athletes' lives is glossed over.

Conclusions

Through an innovative interpretivist methodology, the current project provides one example of how the *cultural praxis of athletes' careers* can be achieved, and how such research facilitates more subjectively aligned understandings of athletes' dual career transitions and development. It builds on previous dual career scholarship taken up through the cultural praxis paradigm (e.g., Ryba et al., 2014; Stambulova et al., 2014) by engaging a novel Indigenous methodology. Through the Indigenous decolonizing methodology, which was brought forward via a PAR process, the research opened up space where Aboriginal athletes could more deeply and meaningfully share their stories of navigating dual careers in the Euro-Canadian context. These stories, in contrast to more conventional (compartmentalized) forms of data production and presentation, helped to centralize the complexity, fluidity, and cultural situatedness of the athletes' lives, rather than suppress it. The stories also facilitated a more holistic understanding of the athletes as people who are doing sport but also pursuing other things outside of sport (i.e., education, community development), recognizing the interconnectedness of these careers within larger sociocultural processes. Researchers should continue to engage diverse interpretivist and idiographic research approaches that intersect with praxis to elicit culturally sensitive accounts of athletes' career development and transitions. Through such efforts, more meaningful understandings of how to enhance diverse athletes' careers and support positive transitional outcomes are likely to be revealed.

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Appendix E: Participant consent form



Study Title: The Relocation Experiences of Aboriginal Athletes Pursuing Sport Dreams

Investigators: Amy Blodgett (Laurentian) - 705-688-4966, ax_blodgett@laurentian.ca
 Robert Schinke (Laurentian) - 705-675-1151 ext. 1045, rschinke@laurentian.ca
 Duke Peltier (Wikwemikong) - 705-859-1536, peltiers@amtelecom.net

We are studying the experiences of Aboriginal athletes who move off-reserve to pursue sport dreams. The first purpose of this study is to provide information on the challenges that athletes face when they relocate for sport and the motivational strategies that they use to achieve success in sport. The second purpose is to share the inspirational stories of Aboriginal athletes who may be role models to other young Aboriginal people.

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in an art activity where you will express your sport experiences creatively (in a drawing called a “mandala”). You will then be asked to partake in an interview where you will talk about your experiences as an athlete who has moved off-reserve to pursue sport. If at any point you feel uncomfortable sharing certain personal experiences, you can choose not to share those aspects. In the future, if you would like to do so, you may have the option of sharing your inspirational stories with Aboriginal youth as a role model.

Your name and all personal identifying information will be removed from your personal story to ensure anonymity and confidentiality, unless you indicate a desire to include this personal information. You will be given a pseudonym (a different name than your real name) and a participant number such as Participant 1. Any information that you indicate as being confidential will be removed from the project data and kept between you and the research team. The data from this project will be maintained for five years from the time of project completion and will then be destroyed. All paper transcripts will be destroyed by shredding, all digital information will be deleted from the audio recorder, and all data stored within computer hard drives will also be deleted.

Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Simply indicate your decision not to participate at any time during the project, either in person or in writing, and your decision will be respected.

If you have any questions about the study or about being a participant, you can contact any of the investigators at the information indicated at the top of the page. You may also contact Dr. Jean Dragon, the Laurentian University Research Officer, at 705-675-1151 ext. 3213 should you have any concerns pertaining to this project and the conduct of the researchers.

I agree to participate in this study, and I have received a copy of this consent form.

Participant's signature

Date

*If participant is under 16 years of age, a parent/legal guardian must also provide consent for the youth to be involved in the study by signing below.

Parent/Guardian's signature

Date

Appendix F: University research ethics board approval



APPROVAL FOR CONDUCTING RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

Research Ethics Board – Laurentian University

This letter confirms that the research project identified below has successfully passed the ethics review by the Laurentian University Research Ethics Board (REB). Your ethics approval date, other milestone dates, and any special conditions for your project are indicated below.

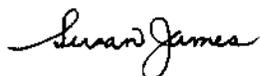
| TYPE OF APPROVAL / New <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> / Modifications to project / Time extension | |
|--|---|
| Name of Principal Investigator and school/department | Amy T. Blodgett (Human Studies) |
| Title of Project | The Relocation Experiences of Aboriginal Athletes Pursuing Sport Dreams |
| REB file number | 2013-03-04 |
| Date of original approval of project | March 17, 2013 |
| Date of approval of project modifications or extension (if applicable) | |
| Final/Interim report due on | March 17, 2014 |
| Conditions placed on project | Final report due on March 17, 2014 |

During the course of your research, no deviations from, or changes to, the protocol, recruitment or consent forms may be initiated without prior written approval from the REB. If you wish to modify your research project, please refer to the Research Ethics website to complete the appropriate REB form.

All projects must submit a report to REB at least once per year. If involvement with human participants continues for longer than one year (e.g. you have not completed the objectives of the study and have not yet terminated contact with the participants, except for feedback of final results to participants), you must request an extension using the appropriate REB form.

In all cases, please ensure that your research complies with Tri-Council Policy Statement (TCPS). Also please quote your REB file number on all future correspondence with the REB office.

Congratulations and best of luck in conducting your research.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susan James". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Susan James, Acting chair

Laurentian University Research Ethics Board