

**Changing On The Fly:
Radical Sports Journalism and Social Justice in Hockey**

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Abstract

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This research-creation M.A. thesis involves engaging with an important emerging media trend that I call “radical sports journalism”. Radical sports journalism investigates how political power is manifested and contested both through and around sports. The last year has witnessed widespread protests in sports to various forms of oppression, yet why have such protests not permeated the hockey world in North America? As a media practitioner, researcher, and hockey enthusiast, I am very interested in how sports journalism and broadcasting can be mobilized to create circumstances for a better world. However, very little radical sports journalism has touched on hockey in Canada. This research involves interviews with athletes, sports scholars, and hockey commentators whose work looks at gender, sexuality, race and nationalism in hockey. I examine how Canadian nationalist ideologies are deployed, reinforced and contested through hockey. The final product of this research-creation project is a podcast series showcasing my interviews.

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Introduction

The sports world was set ablaze in August 2016 when Colin Kaepernick, then quarterback for the San Francisco 49ers in the National Football League (NFL), sat quietly on the sidelines during the American national anthem prior to a pre-season game. It was the end of a long, hot summer - one that had been rife with tension throughout the United States between Black communities and the police. Several videos had surfaced that summer, not to mention dozens more in the preceding years, capturing police officers gunning down unarmed Black men. The Black Lives Matter movement was bringing people out into the streets for demonstrations against police brutality across North America. “No Justice, No Peace” was often the slogan, a call to action to disrupt business as usual if the accused officers walked free. The anger in many American cities was palpable. And in the midst of all of this, one football player refused to stand for the national anthem.

It may have seemed to be a simple silent protest, but it ignited the wrath of much of the sports media world. A common refrain from conservative sports media commentators was that athletes who engaged in such protests should “stick to sports” (Kang). While Kaepernick might be the most recent athlete to incite a wave of social justice protests throughout the sports world, he is far from being the first athlete to take a stand (or in his case, a knee) against injustice. His actions can be traced to a legacy in sports articulated by famed athletes such as Muhammed Ali (boxing), Serena Williams (tennis), or Roberto Clemente (baseball).

Remarkably, Kaepernick’s actions spread quickly beyond the reaches of the NFL, and into other popular American sports such as basketball and soccer. However, there was one major North American sport that was conspicuously silent when it came to protesting players - hockey.

There was perhaps one notable exception in the National Hockey League (NHL). J.T. Brown, an African-American athlete with the Tampa Bay Lightning raised his fist during the American national anthem in a game in Miami on October 7th, 2017 (Sportsnet.ca).

One incident that illustrates the vast difference in the way that hockey players have responded to the groundswell of the *Take a Knee* movement can be seen in the wake of the 2014 police killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, just outside St-Louis. In November of that year, several members of the St-Louis Rams NFL team came out onto the field prior to a game with their hands in the air, a gesture in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement (Sports Illustrated). Meanwhile, that same month, the Ottawa Senators of the NHL were in St-Louis to take on the St-Louis Blues. It was the day after the announcement that the officer who shot Michael Brown would not face charges for his actions. As Black Lives Matter protests erupted outside the Senators' hotel, several team members began to post glib tweets, with one even putting up a "do not disturb" sign in his window (CBC News).

It is precisely this dichotomy between hockey and other major North American sports with regards to their relationship with social movements that peaked my curiosity for this research-creation project. Why is it that in football, basketball, and soccer, we often see a clear engagement with social movement politics, yet in hockey we see a disengagement? Why the "do not disturb" sign when Black activists are imploring us to disturb the systems that uphold white supremacy? Moreover, how can we begin to think about progressive political changes in sports when much of the mainstream sports media world tends to privilege voices that uphold the status quo?

As a media practitioner, researcher, and hockey enthusiast, I am very interested in how sports journalism and broadcasting can be mobilized to create circumstances for a better world, both inside and outside the playing arenas. To this end, this thesis examines the emergent trend of radical sports journalism in North America, and attempts to fill a void of critical political enquiry and reporting in hockey. Until now, there has been no significant academic inquiry or research into the impact of critical sports reporting specific to hockey. While much critical reporting and media production on activism in sports tends to focus on popular American sports (often football and basketball), little has been done to examine questions of race, gender, sexuality, and colonialism in the most popular sport north of the 49th parallel.

Some of my earliest formative memories were from hockey: the enthrallment of the Toronto Maple Leafs 1993 playoff run, playing street hockey in alleyways after school with my friends, and getting into play fights with my brothers as we tried to imitate our favourite NHL tough guys. But at some point in my late adolescence, my formative experiences shifted from sports to social movements. Participating in mass demonstrations against the Iraq War or the Free Trade Area of the Americas meant much more to me than playing or watching sports. My hope with *Changing On The Fly* is to begin to stitch these two parts of my identity back together. I don't think they needed to have been torn apart in the first place, but I previously had no language to articulate sports and social justice in the same breath.

The main themes addressed in this research creation project are: women in hockey and the rise of women's hockey leagues; race and racism in hockey; Indigeneity in hockey and Canadian colonialism; and resistance against homophobia in hockey. While there are many more themes that deserve to be explored as well, I identified these ones as being important based

mainly on my own conversations with other academics and activists in hockey, my own observations, and media pertaining to the subject.

Bringing a critical feminist and anti-racist lens to hockey is a timely and important endeavour. It is timely because of the *Taking a Knee* movement happening in other sports (and my hope is that this movement does break into the hockey world in a big way), and it is important because sports have been shunned and looked down upon by both academia and the Left for far too long. This second point was articulated poetically by the late Eduardo Galeano, who in his book of prose *Soccer in Sun and Shadow* wrote:

...many leftist intellectuals denigrate soccer because it castrates the masses and derails their revolutionary ardor. Bread and circus, circus without the bread: hypnotized by the ball, which exercises a perverse fascination, workers' consciousness becomes atrophied and they let themselves be led about like sheep by their class enemies. (33)

Indeed, it is important to ask why the Left has not focused the same amount of effort on spreading its liberatory ideals in sports as it has in other sectors of society, such as the workplace or schools. After all, sports is a place where millions of people worldwide congregate, whether it's united as fans in stadiums, or united as audiences in bars and living rooms. Imagine what NHL hockey arenas could look like if they were infused with the ideas of sexual and racial diversity, feminism, and peace, rather than stages for the military or fast food commercials? The radical sports writer Matt Hern puts it as such:

The retreat by folks who love sports, and folks who revile them, and everyone in-between, has turned the sports world into easy prey for hyper-consumptive,

violent, militaristic, sexist, and homophobic politics - and, ultimately, handed over the immense power of sports to some of the worst elements of our society. (9-10)

In making an intervention into the landscape of hockey media with this research-creation podcast, I am hoping to expand the public discourse on social issues in hockey, and bring a much needed awareness to the game. At the same time, I feel that this critical intervention must be done from a “by the fans, for the fans” point of view. As someone who is heavily invested in hockey (both as a fan and an amateur player), I feel a critical perspective would be better received from someone like me, rather than someone with no investment, or even worse, a disdain for hockey. The risk to this approach, however, could be a lack of criticality due to an emotional investment in the sport.

Through this research-creation project, I explore different podcast formats and genres that speak to the multiplicity and variety of currently existing digital audio programs. My aim is to bring something fresh and exciting to the current landscape of sports podcasts, which tend to be flat, boring talk shows. My series features sit-down interviews, live recordings, and hockey analysis and commentary. The creation question inspiring this project is the following: what would a podcast sound like that introduced a critical analysis into the world of hockey, but was also entertaining and appealing for hockey fans? My research question is: why have we not seen social justice interventions in hockey in the same ways that we’ve seen in other popular American professional sports over the last few years? My hope is that my podcast series can intervene into the sports media landscape, opening up space for critical discourse within hockey.

Chapter 1 - Literature Review

In this chapter, I will outline some of the key texts and theorists who have made contributions to connecting hockey (and sports more broadly) with social justice issues. I will discuss these texts based on the four key themes of my research creation project: colonialism, race, gender, and sexuality. Certainly there will be some overlap amongst text and theorists, as these issues demand an intersectional approach.

1.1 Canadian Nationalism, Colonialism, and the Indigenous Hockey Experience

One of the reasons for my passion in taking on this project is that I feel that hockey is such a common experience in Canada. Many Canadians love hockey, some hate hockey, but it is rare to find someone living in Canada who has not at least come across the sport in some area of their lives. Hockey's enduring popularity can be witnessed by the sheer audience numbers it draws. The most watched event in Canadian television history was the men's hockey gold medal game at the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver. There were an estimated 16.6 million viewers, meaning that nearly half the entire population of the country watched the full game, which ended with Sidney Crosby's (nicknamed "Captain Canada") iconic overtime game-winning goal (NHL.com). In some ways, hockey is a common language. And it is precisely because hockey offers us this common language that I feel it is important to use it as a lens through which to examine larger, and arguably more important, social issues dealing with oppression, power, and control.

Bruce Kidd and John Macfarlane argued passionately in their book *The Death of Hockey* that not only was hockey an integral part of the Canadian national identity, but also that Canada

is the most exalted and glorious hockey nation on Earth. Writing seemingly on behalf of all Canadians, they state, “Unsure as we are about who we are, we know at least this about ourselves: we are hockey players, and we are hockey fans, and once we could say we were the best” (4). However, in their ardor to fuse hockey and Canadian nationalism as one, Kidd and Macfarlane also stumble into a trope which is at the root of many social problems in Canada today. In pushing the Canadian claim over hockey, they also unveil how hockey is an integral part of the Canadian colonial project - one that pushes a *terra nullius* doctrine across the land:

Hockey is the Canadian metaphor, the rink a symbol of this country’s vast stretches of water and wilderness, its extremes of climate, the player a symbol of our struggle to civilize such a land. Some people call it our national religion. (4)

Canadian nationalism is just as intricately bound with the country’s vast landscape as it is with our favorite winter sport. Yet as a settler-colonial nation-state, Canadian claims to the land have been contested by Indigenous peoples in nearly every corner of the country. The more hockey came to represent Canada, the more it was also used as part of a conscious program to colonize and assimilate Indigenous peoples. In his book *Stickhandling Through the Margins: First Nations Hockey in Canada*, Michael A. Robidoux writes:

In early twentieth-century Canada, where aggressive treaty signings became the primary source of governmental control over First Nations peoples, sport complemented these strategies, effectively engaging First Nations people in dominant cultural practices. In other words, sports such as hockey became perfect assimilatory strategies that government and religious organizations (both often in the shape of residential schools) as well as employers could use to assist in

incorporating First Nations peoples and making them productive members of mainstream society. (4)

In their study of a hockey team at the Pelican Lake Indian Residential School between 1945-1951, Braden Te Hiwi and Janice Forsyth demonstrate how the sport was used to inculcate Indigenous children with “Canadian” values, enforce discipline, and improve the public relations of the residential school system at a time when it was widely seen as failing. They argue that within the residential school system,

hockey, when monitored and controlled by the proper authorities, could be a more effective tool for integration than schooling - at least for Indigenous youth.

Hockey was more than just a fun pastime; it was an ideological and practical instrument to be used for Indigenous subjugation. (101)

A key idea from Te Hiwi and Forsyth’s work is the concept of hockey as ideology in Canada - an ideological tool that can bring people together in revelry and fun, but also to control the First Nations of this land. The use of hockey in residential schools seems to be a double-edged sword, providing a much-needed escape from the daily abuses suffered by many of the boys (Forsyth and Te Hiwi, 107), but also to exhaust students with the goal of “ensuring that any remaining energy would be spent on the playing fields and not running away” (Forsyth, 28).

Forsyth argues that we must approach the use of hockey in residential schools with a nuanced analysis, evaluating the program as neither entirely benevolent nor malicious. She writes that,

Residential school survivors, not unlike other athletes, should take pride in their sporting accomplishments without fear of having those achievements used against

them when telling their stories about schooling. Indeed, their experiences can be understood as the expression of creative responses to conditions of marginalization and duress. (32)

The work of Robidoux, Te Hiwi and Forsyth is crucial in understanding the Indigenous hockey experience as being one linked with Canadian colonialism, but one which also continues to benefit Indigenous communities as a source of pride, camaraderie, and physical exercise. Hockey has been both a tool of unification and of conquest in Canada, and my research-creation podcast aims to build a robust, nuanced, and critical understanding of the sport's history.

1.2 Race, Racism, and Hockey

While there is certainly some overlap with colonialism and racism in hockey, the way the sport has been experienced by people of colour is unique from the experience of many Indigenous people in hockey, and therefore is important to approach with a different set of questions and analytical tools.

Yasmin Jiwani's work on the infamous Zidane head-butt at the 2006 World Cup of soccer is useful in understanding the ways that sports and racism collide. While her work is specific to soccer, there are many lessons that can be applied to hockey as well. Jiwani contends that "athletes of colour who are held up as 'race ambassadors' are used strategically by the state to deflect attention from critical debate and to obscure state violence" (11). In hockey, athletes of colour still make up a small minority of players. They are often held up as 'race ambassadors' as well - celebrated when they perform well, thrown under the bus when they have a bad game, but always identified by their otherness. Perhaps this could be evidenced clearly in the example of

P.K. Subban, one of the NHL's biggest Black superstars, and a former defenseman with the Montreal Canadiens. Subban was one of the most well-loved players on the Canadiens roster, but was frequently criticized by hockey pundits for his flashy on-ice celebrations. The team's management called his antics a "distraction" (Montreal Gazette). While harmless on the surface, such criticisms can be perceived by Black hockey players as thinly-veiled racist slurs. They are frequently told that their behaviour might be appropriate for basketball or football, but doesn't belong in hockey (*Soul on Ice*). This is consistent with Jiwani's findings when she writes that, "within sports coverage, Orientalist discourses and colonial imagery have often been used to describe athletes of colour" (20).

Several scholars on hockey have noted how Canada's multicultural aspirations and policies are often at odds with the nature of the sport, which tend to be overwhelmingly White, and not very welcoming to other races. Andreas Krebs writes,

English Canadian nationalism conceives of itself as, perhaps more than anything else, inclusive; diversity has become a matter of self-identity for the Canadian mainstream. Yet, hockey's overwhelming Whiteness and masculinity produce an embodied nationalism that is White and male. Furthermore, the mixing of this desire to be perceived of as inclusive, tolerant - *anything but racist* - with the White, male nature of hockey creates an absorption and minimization of difference. (85)

Every now and then, there will be cursory attempts made by the NHL to address multiculturalism and racial inclusion, such as their *Hockey is for Everyone* campaign, which "uses the game of hockey - and the League's global influence - to drive positive social change and foster more

inclusive communities” (NHL.com). However, these attempts often come in the form of overlooked social media posts, un-televised pre-game ceremonies, and liberal efforts to create an open atmosphere without addressing the root causes of racial oppression.

Contrary to those who would argue that sport is not the place to denounce broader issues of racism in society (see the earlier discussion of the “stick to sports” tendency), since sport (and most certainly hockey) is a terrain where we often see acts of racism produced, it is a fertile terrain to challenge racism as well. Importantly, Jiwani argues that sport can be seen a metaphor for society itself:

As a domain in and through which social integration can take place, sport becomes the metaphor for society itself: a place where social harmony, national aspirations and personal achievements take place. (16)

To suggest that sports are a-political, a world based solely on merit and physical prowess, is to deny that athletes of colour have faced injustices within athletics for hundreds of years, and that these injustices are inextricably linked to wider power structures in society. Matt Hern concurs with this view, writing:

You can’t participate in or spectate sports without constantly articulating values, running into difference, talking about what matters and why, and being forced to figure out who you have responsibility for and why. Our core political ideals are always being performed in the gym, rink, ring, field, or track and then tested materially and bodily. (21)

Once we begin to understand sport as being situated within broader power structures in society, we can also use it as a lens through which to challenge those structures. This is what radical sports journalism has sought to do, and what I have done with the podcast *Changing on the Fly*.

1.3 Puck Patriarchy: Struggles Against Sexism on the Ice

While women have been playing hockey in Canada for well over a century (McFarlane, Theberge), and despite the fact that women's teams have proven themselves successful at the highest levels of competition, they still continue to struggle for recognition within the sport today. Nancy Theberge notes that "historically, femininity and athleticism have been constructed in opposition, yielding the conventional wisdom that great sport was men's sport and the corresponding view that that women are intruders in the world of sport" (1). In light of this, it's somewhat surprising that the first recorded match of women's hockey dates all the way back to 1891 (Theberge, 1). Hockey is a sport rife with sexism and toxic masculinity, yet it would be wrong to see this as a defining nature of the game. Many are taking the approach of celebrating women's place in the game, while also challenging the overall patriarchal structures that govern hockey (as they govern much of the world around us).

The Canadian women's national hockey team won four consecutive gold medals at the Winter Olympics (2002, 2006, 2010, 2014). Their captivating 2014 overtime victory against Team USA attracted an audience of 13 million viewers in Canada (Vlessing). Despite these achievements and popularity for the women's game, female hockey players still face denigrating comments from men that their game is sub-par and less exciting to spectators. One common argument is that women's hockey is less exciting because it doesn't allow body-checking, and

hence is a less physically-intense style of play. This can be most recently evidenced in the comments by the comments of René Fasel, the president of the International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF). During the 2018 Winter Olympics in South Korea, he stated that body-checking should be kept out of women's hockey in order to preserve the sport's "attractiveness and beauty" (Montreuil & Pilote). It's quite difficult to imagine such language ever being used to describe men's hockey, and still points to a superficial belittling of elite female athletics.

Andreas Krebs elaborates on how this important rule difference in women's hockey is a reflection of traditional gender roles in Canadian society:

The fact that women are currently prohibited from engaging in the same level of violence that Canadian society *expects* of men points to the postwar resurgence of the ideal of ladylike behaviour and women's expected role as mother and caregiver, just as it points to the importance that violent retribution plays in the crafting of Canadian masculinity. (93)

Therefore, while violence becomes increasingly normalized in the men's game, female hockey players continue to be treated as precious objects with little or no agency. Interestingly, women players aren't necessarily arguing that their game *should* allow body-checking, but rather that fans (both male and female) should recognize the intrinsic value and entertainment of the game, regardless of the rule difference.

Another factor that has led to the denigration and belittlement of women's hockey in Canada is the lack of resources afforded to its development. This can be seen both at the

professional and amateur levels. At the professional level, it is evident in the extreme lack of media attention that the Canadian Women's Hockey League (CWHL) receives in comparison to the NHL. There is usually only a small handful televised CWHL games per season, compared to nearly every NHL game being televised by several major sports broadcasting networks.

On the amateur level, the community rink has become a site of struggle for women to gain access to ice time, resources, and ultimately, respect of their game. Theberge (2002) writes that arenas have become “‘men's cultural centres’, in that they offer a setting that celebrates masculinity and where the roles girls and women play are usually supportive: they watch their brothers’, sons’, and husbands’ games, staff the concession stands and take tickets” (292). But even when women do move from these supportive roles and into active roles as participants in the sport, they still face challenges. Theberge (2002) explains one of the systemic barriers that women face in order to gain ice time at many local arenas:

Another commonly employed policy that continues male privilege involves residency requirements. Many communities require teams using public facilities to include a minimum percentage of residents from the community. While the policy ostensibly is intended to ensure that access is provided to local ratepayers, it reflects the conditions in men's hockey, where the large number of participants ensures that teams have no problem filling rosters with local residents. In women's hockey, still struggling to become established and with teams needing to recruit from a broader geographical area than in men's hockey, residency requirements can function as a means of exclusion. (293)

However, with the recent successes of Canada's national women's hockey team at the Olympics, and with more hockey camps for young girls popping up across the country, perhaps this could change. Increased visibility and enthusiasm for women's hockey could lead to an increase in participation. While the historical barriers and discrimination are heavy forces to contend with, the future could look bright for women's hockey in Canada.

1.4 Toxic Masculinity and Homophobia in Hockey

In the final episode of the *Changing on the Fly* podcast, I chose to examine two topics that are closely interwoven in my own personal experience of hockey: toxic masculinity and homophobia. Borrowing from an intersectional feminist or critical race analysis, homophobia could very well also be linked to experiences of class, race, or colonialism. But I chose to thematically join these two issues because homophobia is rampant throughout much of amateur and pro hockey in North America, and I see homophobia as a shameful bi-product of toxic masculinity; one that renders hockey inaccessible for thousands of would-be queer athletes.

As a simple definition, I would categorize toxic masculinity as one particular performance of masculinity; one that is deeply misogynistic, sexist, and homophobic. We could understand toxic masculinity as an outcome of what some scholars have called a "crisis in masculinity". Kristi Allain writes that: "this so-called 'crisis states that since the 1970s, straight white men have perceived women, gay men, and immigrants as chipping away at their normative social position" (113). In these instances, when men feel that their masculinity is being threatened, they can easily revert to homophobic or oppressive actions as a way to try to cement

their position in the social order. Since sports, and especially hockey, are fast-paced, highly competitive, and often violent, tensions can run high, and male players continually feel the urge to assert themselves on the ice. Concomitantly, and unfortunately, toxic masculinity has become almost part of the fabric of the men's game.

However, it is not just on-ice play where toxic masculinity is brewed in hockey. Sports media can also be responsible for fomenting and disseminating toxic masculinity. Kristi Allain's study of the infamous Canadian hockey commentator Don Cherry is useful in understanding how toxic masculinity gets articulated through Canadian sports media. Allain argues that Cherry uses his televised platform of *Coach's Corner* to frame himself as a maker of "nostalgic remembering" - advocating a conservative style of masculinity that yearns for "simpler days" prior to the advancement of certain social gains for women or queer people (107). Allain writes, "Weekly on *Coach's Corner*, Cherry advocates for a particular style of hockey masculinity - a sense of masculine style linked to hitting, fighting, and physical confrontation" (119). Michael Atkinson concurs that indeed the masculine traits that Don Cherry vaunts have become integral to the culture and lore of the game:

Similarly, fans and media broadcasters draw attention to the toughness and durability of the masculine/violent player and his ability to withstand ongoing victimization, often mythologizing tough players of the past as masculine legends (e.g. Gordie Howe, Bobby Orr, Maurice Richard, and Dave 'Tiger' Williams).
(22)

Indeed, it is the ubiquitousness of toxic masculinity in the sport that has contributed to the fact

that there hasn't yet been an openly gay player in the NHL, and very few in high-level amateur leagues. While progressive attitudes have paved the way for safer places to come out of the closet in society at large, the same is not the case in the locker room or on the ice. In his study of the "coming out" experiences of gay male athletes across different sports, Derek Fenwick and Duncan Simpson write,

At the start of an athlete's experience in the process of coming out is the role of masculinity that involves the pressures of society that places masculinity at the forefront of sporting situations. Furthermore, gay slurs and homophobic comments made these gay athletes feel concerned about telling their teammates and loved ones about their sexuality. (147)

While these shaming practices continue to act as a barrier for gay men in hockey, it should be noted that the situation can be quite varied in women's professional hockey. Melissa Parker and Philip White write that, "Women who do play sports that are traditionally masculine risk being labelled as dykes, bitches, and lesbians. They might be perceived to be ambiguously heterosexually feminine because they do not overtly perform femininity all the time" (18). However, despite the risks that continue to exist for queer women, there are several prominent openly lesbian players in the CWHL, such as Charline Labonté, Julie Chu, and Caroline Ouellette. While there shouldn't be any doubts that some amount of homophobia exists in women's hockey, the lack of masculinist attitudes no doubt shapes lesbian experiences with the sport and fosters a safer space to come out of the closet.

Chapter 2 - Media Review

The last few years have witnessed a growth in output of radical sports journalism, but little of it has appeared in podcast form. This was certainly one of my motivating factors for wanting to make an intervention into this genre by way of a hockey podcast. Still, there are a few podcasts and documentary films which have inspired my work that I will discuss here.

2.1 Edge of Sports

Dave Zirin's *Edge of Sports Podcast* from *The Nation Magazine* is certainly one of the main influences in my work. Zirin has been hosting this podcast, which is an extension of much of his written work, since 2015. The style of the show is generally a 60-minute interview show, where he'll interview one or two guests about a particular topic pertaining to social justice in sports. The podcast has grown in popularity, partly due to high-profile guests on the show such as Noam Chomsky, rapper Chuck D of Public Enemy, or NBA basketball legend Kareem Abdul-Jabbar. Following his interviews, Zirin always ends the show with his own commentary or writings on current affairs in sports, such as ongoing in-depth coverage of the Colin Kaepernick affair, or the organizing efforts of college athletes to receive remuneration for their work. This is a style that I have chosen to emulate on my podcast, *Changing on the Fly* - combining interviews with commentary on current events in sports. I find that this tends to satisfy the desires of many different types of listeners - those who are seeking the timeless analysis that long-form interviews can provide, and those who are more interested in the news of the day.

Importantly, a key feature of Zirin's work on *Edge of Sports* is his insistence that sports are always influenced and impacted by a plethora of social factors surrounding them. In a recent discussion of why so many NBA players were speaking out against Donald Trump's Muslim ban, he put it as such:

Why is this happening in the NBA? And why now? I've asked coaches, players, and beat writers this very question. The consensus - and this is what makes the NBA different - is that this is all happening because of a perfect storm of factors. It's not just one thing. It's the influence of the Black Lives Matter movement. It's greater comfort with social media. It's the multicultural and global nature of the game that have inspired this majority-black sports league to stand up to the white nationalism of Muslim bans and border walls. (Zirin, *Edge of Sports Podcast*)

Here, Zirin is making an argument that a social movement, Black Lives Matter, has managed to perforate the walls of the sporting world, and manifest itself within basketball. And it is not just due to the racial demographics of the NBA, but also because of the communication patterns and social media habits of the athletes. Therefore, it makes it quite hard to argue that politics should be kept separate from sports when we see a proliferation of politics at so many levels. Similarly, in *Changing On The Fly*, I have also examined the confluence of a number of different social, political, and historical factors that have shaped the game of hockey.

2.2 Burn It All Down

Burn It All Down is an independently-produced feminist sports podcast which launched in May 2017. The show is hosted by a panel of five women sports writers: Shireen Ahmed, Brenda Elsey, Amira Rose Davis, Lindsay Gibbs, and Jessica Luther. The hosts come from a mixture of both academic and journalism backgrounds, and thus each bring a unique perspective to the show. The show itself is usually around one hour in length, and features a mixture of round-table unscripted commentary on sports issues of the day, as well as one-on-one interviews with female athletes.

Each episode always ends with a recurring segment, “the burn pile”, where each host brings up an incident of sexism in the sports world from recent headlines. Upon offering their analysis on the incident, all the hosts symbolically “burn” it, as the sound effect of a match being struck is played in the background. The segment is often humorous, but also serious, as it is a platform for women to re-centre themselves in the sports media landscape.

Burn It All Down has inspired my own podcast because it is a vibrant example of what feminist sports broadcasting can sound like. The show boldly asserts that sports is always a political terrain whenever it is analyzed through the lens of gender. This point was evidenced in the commentary of co-host Shireen Ahmed in the debut episode of the podcast, when she responded to the notion that one shouldn’t care about the personal lives of male professional athletes who abuse their wives:

If it’s issues of domestic violence, sexual violence, systematic oppression in

sports - people who say they don't want that [discussion of the personal lives of male athletes] are literally the most privileged. I have never watched a sport and not thought about it. Maybe it's because I'm a racialized Muslim woman, but I have never watched a sport without thinking along different lines. So I'm fascinated almost that these people exist. The 'oh I don't want politics in my sport! I don't want you ruining my sport' people. Because my sport has always been inherently political. (Ahmed)

Moreover, the fact that the show has five hosts adds to the flair and dynamism of its sound. Since *Changing on the Fly* is only hosted by myself, *Burn It All Down* offers an aspirational example of what my podcast could sound like with two or more hosts.

2.3 Game of Our Lives

Game of Our Lives is a podcast series about soccer, produced by Al Jazeera. The show was first released in the spring of 2018 to coincide with the lead-up to the World Cup in Russia. I have aimed to model *Changing on the Fly* somewhat on *Game of Our Lives*' format, which is a half-hour show that features multiple interviews, and segments with commentary on soccer news. A half-hour show is an ideal length for a podcast, as it provides a manageable amount of content that can typically be listened to during an urban commute - the favoured venue for consumption for many podcast listeners. I have also attempted to make the episodes of *Changing on the Fly* roughly half and hour in length, although some of them are more, and some are less.

Game of Our Lives is also an important podcast that contributes to the body of work

linking sports and socio-political issues. Soccer is arguably much more political than hockey, due to its global nature. This insight is underlined on the show's website, where it states: "Whether you call it football or soccer, you can't understand it without understanding the modern world — and you can't understand the modern world without understanding its most popular sport" (www.gameofourlives.fm).

The show is presented in a few different podcasting styles, which combine both journalism-style interviews and narrative storytelling. It is through the show's storytelling of the history of soccer in Italy that they illustrate the close linkages between nationalism and sport (which is also very important when examining hockey in Canada). The show's host, David Goldblatt explains:

Italian football and Italian politics have been closely linked for the last 70 years.

Back in the 1920s and 1930s, Mussolini and his fascist regime embraced the game and used it as a political tool. In the 1980s and 1990s, Silvio Berlusconi re-invented Italian football, and used it as a platform to launch his extraordinary political career. His party is named after a football chant, *Forza Italia*. (Goldblatt)

This critical examination of the linkages between soccer and nationalism in Italy could well be applied to hockey in Canada. *Game of Our Lives* is a wonderful example of a podcast that illustrates the inherently political nature of sports, and allows us to use sports as a window into other social issues.

2.4 Somatic Podcast

The *Somatic Podcast* is a kinesiology and sport sociology podcast, produced by two PhD students in the USA, Sam Clevenger and Oliver Rick. This podcast is predominantly interview-based, although sometimes contains artistic soundscapes and music. Firmly rooted within the university community, the show tends to be very academic, with most of the guests coming from academic rather than strictly athletic backgrounds. The *Somatic Podcast* describes itself as exploring “the everyday, ordinary experiences, spaces, cultures, practices, and communities concerning our bodies in motion”.

One episode in particular that helped to shape my work with *Changing On The Fly* is “Somatic Podcast Ep 6 - Sport Studies and Podcasting” (www.somaticpodcast.com). The episode features an interview with Brett Hutchins, a professor of Communication Studies at Monash University in Melbourne, Australia. Hutchins discusses his own podcast, *MediaSport*, and argues that the medium of podcasting itself is a valid platform for knowledge dissemination within the university context. Academic podcasts, he argues, are a legitimate and desirable way of showcasing research and knowledge production, and should be viewed in the same way we would see academic journal articles or books: “When it comes to traditional research outputs, I think interviews and audio-based explanations and discursive exchanges are a way of working through the ideas that we find in research” (Clevenger and Rick).

This episode of the *Somatic Podcast* offers a way to think about academic research in the context of *Changing On The Fly* that is at once rigorous, but also accessible to a wide audience. The hosts of the show note that “good researchers can speak to multiple audiences at once,” and that Hutchins’ interviews “are meant to reach everyone from undergrad students to experienced

researchers” (Clevenger and Rick). Much in the same way, I endeavored to create a hockey podcast that can speak to researchers in academia just as much as it can to Montreal Canadiens fans at the Bell Centre. Ultimately, putting knowledge from research into a podcast form is also a useful way to spread ideas beyond the university walls, and allow them to take hold among diverse audiences.

Finally, Hutchins offers that podcasting can be a way to humanize the researcher, and make the research process more dynamic. Hutchins explains that,

It [a podcast] just adds a nice complementary dimension to whatever book you might have sitting on your desk. A person wrote it. A person living in the world, with ideas, with experiences that brought them to this research problem and this evidence that they’re working with, or this set of theories. And I think that’s very valuable. (Clevenger and Rick)

Amplifying and disseminating the voices of scholars, pundits, and athletes in the audio form can lift ideas off the page with a renewed vigour and enthusiasm. It is my hope that the ideas presented in *Changing On The Fly* might resonate more with the listeners because they are hearing them directly from the source.

2.5 Soul on Ice

Soul on Ice: Past, Present, and Future is a feature-length documentary film released in 2015. The film’s director, Damon Kwame Mason, explores the experiences of Black athletes in hockey through interviews with players, parents of players, and coaches. I interviewed Mason for the *Changing On The Fly* podcast, and his work has been very influential in shaping how I

understand race and racism in hockey.

Importantly, *Soul on Ice* debunks the often-repeated racist notion that Black people don't belong in hockey. While it might be seen as generally socially acceptable for Black athletes to play basketball or football, white supremacy has manifested itself in sentiments of white ownership over hockey. As the film shows (and as I documented in the "Race and Racism in Hockey" episode of *Changing On The Fly*), Black athletes in hockey often face taunts of "why don't you go play basketball?" as a method to protect White dominance in the sport. Not only is this suggestion for Black athletes to leave hockey for basketball racist, it is also historically flawed. *Soul on Ice* demonstrates that Black athletes have been a part of hockey in Canada almost since the beginnings of organized play.

In the film, Mason as the narrator tells the story of the Coloured Hockey League, a league formed in Nova Scotia in the late 19th century by Black athletes who were not allowed to compete with their White counterparts due to segregation. Mason demonstrates how this league not only thrived in its time, but also was responsible for several key innovations that would forever shape the game of hockey. It was in the Coloured Hockey League that the slapshot and the butterfly style of goaltending (whereby goaltenders can drop to the ice to stop pucks) were first practiced, and it is truly impossible to imagine hockey being played today without these elements.

Soul On Ice is an important documentary that re-centres the experiences of Black athletes in hockey. It argues that the small numbers of Black people in hockey is not for lack of talent, but rather because of historical prejudices and systematic discrimination that have kept Black

people and other people of colour on the sidelines. It served as an inspiration in my work as a critical media text that examines just how intricately linked race and sports can be.

Chapter 3 - Theoretical Framework

The French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu is one of the foremost scholars of the sociology of sport, and someone I lean on heavily for my theoretical perspective. One common phrase hurled about by those who wish to see a strict division of sports and politics (Donald Trump being a great example with his admonishment of Colin Kaepernick) is “stick to sports”. The thinking goes that political opinions, and especially expressions of social justice, should be kept outside the arena walls, and far away from sports media. However, Bourdieu argues that we must not only take sports seriously as a field of academic inquiry, but also that sports are inherently political, as they are a reflection of wider social systems: “This space of sports must then be related to the social space of which it is an expression” (154). He goes on to argue that we cannot examine sports in a vacuum, and that they must be understood within and alongside other social systems such as race, class, and gender: “the space of sports is not a self-contained universe. It is inserted into a universe of practices and of consumptions that are themselves structured and constituted in a system.” (155). Importantly, to tie in Bourdieu’s work with one of my research questions, he also argues that a sociological analysis of sports entails studying *all* sports alongside each other:

In order to be able to constitute a sociology of sport, one must first realize that a particular sport cannot be analyzed independently of the totality of sporting practices; one must conceptualize the space of sporting practices as a system within which each element receives its distinctive value. In other words, to understand a sport, whatever it may be, one must locate its position in the space of sports. (153)

To bring this back to my project, one of my central research questions is: why have social justice protests (such as kneeling during the national anthem) not permeated the hockey world in North America? Using Bourdieu's theoretical perspective of "locating [a sport's] position in the space of sports", I examine through my podcast how hockey's similarities and differences from other major North American sports (namely, football and basketball) have influenced its political culture.

As my research project also looks at how Canadian nationalist ideologies are deployed through hockey, I lean on the work of Stuart Hall and Roland Barthes. Hall examines ideologies as a primary method through which systems of power are normalized:

They work most effectively when we are not aware that how we formulate and construct a statement about the world is underpinned by ideological premises; when our formation seems to be simply descriptive statements about how things are (i.e., must be), or of what we can "take-for-granted. (19)

Hall also argues that "racism is one of the most profoundly 'naturalised' of existing ideologies" (19). Using this as a starting point, I examine how certain practices which serve to reinforce Canadian nationalism, such as racist stereotyping of Indigenous peoples, or the celebration of toxic masculinities, have become normalized in hockey. Barthes is also useful for examining how ideologies mask themselves, and render social processes normal. In Barthes writing on national myth as ideology, he states,

The bourgeoisie is defined as the social class which does not want to be named. 'Bourgeois, 'petit-bourgeois', 'capitalism', 'proletariat' are the locus of an

unceasing haemorrhage: meaning flows out of them until their very name becomes unnecessary. (116)

Similarly, Canadian nationalist values and capitalist ideologies have deeply embedded themselves within hockey culture in this country, and this is something I interrogate through my podcast.

Chapter 4 - Methodology

Above all, this project was a work of journalism. It involved a level of adaptability, flexibility, research, and interviewing that all good pieces of journalism demand.

I say that it was a work of journalism rather than traditional academic research because, like journalism, my project felt unpredictable at times. When working with live subjects, there is no way that the outcome can perfectly resemble the vision of the project at the onset. Changing on *The Fly* became a slightly different project than the one I had initially envisioned, but since I had a clear outline for the podcast, it also didn't stray too far from my research question and goals.

One of the main elements of my project that demanded a high level of adaptability was my selection of interviewees. Only a select few of the people who I had initially planned on interviewing for the podcast in my research proposal ended up in the final cut. My strategy for finding interview subjects was to cast the net far and wide: send out many emails to many potential guests, knowing that only a few of them would respond to me with a "yes". Some of the interviews didn't work because of timing or due to the lack of availability of the guests. Others didn't work because I had hoped to interview several people in the NHL, including Jordin Tootoo (Chicago Blackhawks), Brian Burke (Calgary Flames), and J.T. Brown (Tampa Bay Lightning). Attempting to secure these interviews meant having to go through the public relations apparatus of these professional hockey teams, which is quite hard to do if you are not an established hockey reporter. The Chicago Blackhawks never responded to my email requests, the Calgary Flames emailed me back but never committed, and the Tampa Bay Lightning sent me a swift and curt email telling me the interview wouldn't be possible.

The latter is also very telling of public relations in the NHL and in North American professional sports more broadly. I was trying to interview J.T. Brown of the Lightning about his raised fist gesture in solidarity with Colin Kaepernick in October, 2017. The team's quick refusal of my interview request speaks not only to the guarded nature of professional athletes, but also how teams try to deflect attention away from political gestures. Such gestures are seen as distractions in the world of sports, rather than integral to the game themselves.

I did, however, manage to obtain one interview with a former NHL'er, but I did not end up using it due to a lack of clear consent. This was with Fred Sasakamoose, who is widely considered to be the first Indigenous person to have ever played hockey in the NHL. Sasakamoose is 84 years old today, and lives in a remote community in central Saskatchewan. I was able to reach him by phone, but due to cultural and age differences between us, the communication wasn't very clear. He did give me his verbal consent to doing an interview by phone, but when I sent him the consent form by mail to sign and return to me, he refused. In a follow up phone conversation, Sasakamoose stated that the reason he refused to sign the consent form was that he was worried his signature would get used in malicious ways. He told me that his original signed NHL contract with the Chicago Blackhawks was being sold online for thousands of dollars, against his consent, of course. Moreover, I believe that there is a colonial history of broken treaties and dishonored contracts between settlers and Indigenous people in Canada that could make an Indigenous elder think twice before signing a university form. And finally, due to the sensitive nature of the interview, where Sasakamoose talked about the abuse he suffered in a residential school, I wanted to be extra diligent about getting his clear consent. But since that clear consent was not achieved, the interview ended up on the cutting room floor.

Another important element of my methodology for this project was attempting to record the interviews at the highest possible sound quality. Often, this meant doing the interviews in-person. A microphone directly recording a person's voice will always bring out the richest tones, and can attain a higher level of intimacy with the listener. Jessica Abel encourages podcast producers to get up close and personal with their interviewees, offering that "when the mic's closer, your recordings sound richer, with more frequencies present, with less hum of the room" (31). Since podcasts are often listened to through earbud headphones on a mobile device, having a voice recorded on a good quality microphone rather than through a crackling phone line or Skype almost brings the interview into the listener's head. Michael Bull describes how the consumption of podcasts through mobile listening creates an intoxicating mixture of proximity and privacy, while also allowing the listener to be "warmly wrapped up in their own personalised space" (349). Mia Lindgren also argues that podcasts "explore our lives through sounds and spoken words, intimately whispered into our ears. The personalized listening space created by headphones further accommodates the bond created between voices in the story and the listener" (24). Since I believe that this intimacy with the listener can add to the relatability and credibility of the content, in-person interviews were a personal goal for this project.

For the interviews that I was not able to do in person due to the interview subjects being outside of Montreal, I took certain steps to try to ensure the best sound quality possible. For example, I interviewed Braden Te Hiwi for the Colonialism and Hockey episode over Skype from his office in Thunder Bay, Ontario. Skype can sometimes provide high quality sound for podcasting purposes (and it's used frequently on many different interview-based podcasts), but the quality is very much dependent on the speed of the internet connection on the end of both the

interviewer and interviewee. A reduced speed on the end of the interviewee can cause digital artifacts to appear in the sound file, or for the sound to drop out at times.

Moreover, the level of sound quality on Skype is also dependent on whether the interviewee is speaking into the built-in mic in their computer, or whether they have an external USB microphone. The latter can be considered broadcast quality, while the former certainly isn't. In Braden's case, he did not have an external microphone, and the connection speed on his end wasn't optimal, so I had to cut out parts of the interview that were inaudible.

For the interviews I did with Jason Brennan and Justin Louis (both in the Colonialism and Hockey episode), I experimented with a new online recording platform called Zencastr. I had never used Zencastr before, and it was recommended to me by the hosts of the *Burn It All Down* podcast, who use it to produce their show.

Zencastr is an online recording platform designed specifically for independent podcast producers, and makes for easy at-home recording. Rather than Skype, which records both the interviewer and interviewee onto one single file at the end of the person making the call, Zencastr records the interviewer and interviewee onto two separate sound files at each end of the call. This means that the interviewee is recorded directly through the microphone on their end (whether it is a USB mic or built-in computer mic), and so the audio isn't susceptible to digital artifacts or latency. While I found that my interviews recorded using Zencastr were of superior quality to Skype, they were still not as good as in-person recordings.

Another major consideration in audio recording for podcasts is location. I had access to the sound studios at Concordia University, which are sound-proofed and have high-quality condenser microphones, ideal for voice recording. However, to come back to the idea of

flexibility, which I discussed earlier in this chapter, I had to record the interviews in locations that were convenient for my interviewees, not necessarily for myself. Still, an interviewee on a podcast might not be familiar with the parameters for ideal sound recording, and a typical location that people often suggest meeting up for an interview is a cafe or another public space, such as a park. The problem with cafes and most public spaces for audio recording is that there is far too much background noise. Even relatively quiet public spaces can have inconsistent background noise. For example, a child might come into the range of a microphone in a park just for a split second, just as your interviewee is getting to the most interesting part of their interview. Therefore, finding an ideal location for an interview outside of a studio is a challenging task that demands some creativity.

My interview with Shireen Ahmed (in the Race and Racism in Hockey episode) was recorded in a group study room in the Webster library at Concordia University. These group study rooms are ideal for sound recording because they are small, relatively sound-proof, and have carpeted floors, which absorb a lot of resonance. I had become aware of the advantages of recording in these study rooms through my other podcasting work at Concordia, and so I was happy to put this to use for my research-creation project, and I was quite happy with the result.

My interview with Damon Kwame Mason (also for the Race and Racism in Hockey episode) was recorded inside a car in the parking lot of a Tim Horton's in Scarborough, Ontario. This might seem like an odd location for an interview, but recording in cars is actually an industry secret that was passed on to me years ago in a sound-recording workshop at the Main Film coop in Montreal. Similar to the library reading room, the car where I did the interview was small, well sound-proofed, and had fabric upholstery to help absorb resonance. When Mason

suggested that we meet at a Tim Horton's, I knew that the interview could not be conducted in a noisy restaurant, but inside a car in the parking lot would be a much better option. In the end, it also worked quite well.

Both recording in library spaces and inside cars are practical innovations that allow for simple yet high quality D.I.Y. audio recording. They were both an important part of my methodology in seeking to produce a professional-quality podcast while adapting to the needs of my interviewees, and the realities of thinking-on-your-feet journalism. These makeshift studios allowed for flexibility and high-fidelity, both of which are key to producing podcasts that attain a desired level of intimacy with the listener. Similar to how podcasting has become a mobile medium whereby audiences can listen to their shows on smartphones as they move throughout the city, the podcast production process can be mobile, getting beyond the limitations of a studio, and making use of technological innovations that allow for recording in unconventional spaces.

Another methodological approach that has influenced my work is sensuous ethnography, as defined by Laurence de Garis. This approach suggests that ethnographic research and observation should not limit itself to visual data, but rather it should entail a performative aspect that involves all the senses (sounds, smells, textures, etc.). De Garis suggests that sensuous ethnography is particularly suitable for sports ethnographers, who can benefit by “getting out of the library and venturing into the ring” (73). While he is careful to not state that “getting into the game” is the only way to understand sports, he does suggest that relying on multiple senses can offer a deeper epistemological meaning to athletics,

...playing and watching baseball are extremely different sensuous experiences.

Consider the feel of a worn leather glove, the rubber on the handle of an

aluminum bat, the pine tar on a wood bat. Think of the smells of the game: the smell of a wet clay infield at the start of a game, the aroma of boiled hot dogs at a Little League field, the smell of lime on the base paths. Consider the sounds of the game: the pop of the catcher's glove as a pitcher warms up, the crack of the bat, the chatter of players in the field and dugouts. Baseball's sensuous phenomena are usually deemed appropriate for other literary genres but have rarely been subject to rigorous analysis. (De Garis, 73)

Drawing from De Garis' poetic description of the baseball senses, we can see how hockey is also a game defined in part by its many sensory outputs. It is a game of harsh sounds and putrid smells. Consider the non-stop high-pitch scratches of skate blades on the ice, or the thundering low-end sounds as players slam each other into the boards every few seconds. I would argue that these sounds are an integral part of the sport. The deeper meaning of hockey can certainly be lost if a researcher were to just observe sports either on TV, or from a removed perspective. Indeed, if you were to watch a hockey game on TV with the sound off, the experience would be quite different.

Leaning on De Garis' sensuous ethnography, and applying it to my work as an audio producer, I considered what hockey environments might sound like in a podcast. While *Changing On The Fly* is much more a showcase of interviews and commentary, it does also make reference to the sonic environment of hockey. This can mostly be heard during the intro music for each podcast episode, where I have sampled sounds from hockey arenas of players on the ice, and crowd reactions. I did this as a sonic marker to signal right away to the listener that *Changing On The Fly* is a hockey podcast. It is also an attempt to situate the listener in a hockey

environment and provide some familiar cultural references before diving into a political discussion on the sport.

The audio clip of the play-by-play announcer in the intro is Mark Lee of the CBC. Lee was the announcer for Marie-Philip Poulin's iconic overtime goal which won Canada the gold medal in women's hockey at the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi. I chose that clip for two reasons. One is that many Canadians have fond memories of watching televised hockey broadcasts, and these broadcasts, like *Hockey Night in Canada* have come to make up part of the Canadian national identity. Richard Gruneau and David Whitson write,

A double-header on Sunday afternoons, of pleading with our parents to allow us to stay up to watch *Hockey Night in Canada*, of flipping hockey cards in the schoolyard, and of arguing about which was the better team, the Leafs or the Canadiens. These memories of sights, sounds, and feelings are the stuff of nostalgia. But they are also the stuff of identity - part of the attachments that both of us have to the places, times, and social influences that shaped our developing conceptions of self. (1)

In referencing these nostalgic sounds, I wanted to appeal to the common experience of the hockey-watching Canadian public. But perhaps more importantly, the other reason why I chose this specific clip of Poulin's goal is that I want to immediately signal to the listeners that *Changing On The Fly* is a feminist podcast. I hope to challenge the narrative of the most iconic moments of hockey nostalgia being from the men's game (for example, Sidney Crosby's "golden goal" at the 2010 Vancouver Olympics, or Paul Henderson's overtime goal at the 1972 summit series against the Soviet Union) by centering the experiences and histories of the women's game.

All of the sound clips that I used in *Changing On The Fly* are not incidental. They serve as markers that I hope can situate the listener in a familiar hockey environment, and De Garis' work illustrates how this wider environment is integral to the game itself.

Another interesting element of De Garis' work on sensual ethnography is that he suggests that "as a methodological directive, a sensuous ethnography entails seeking out ways to touch, taste, and smell, as well as to see" (73). In this sense, I sought out ways to immerse myself in hockey in order to better understand the game, not only as a researcher, but also as an active participant in many levels of the sport.

In 2015, just prior to beginning my Masters research project, I began volunteering with Les Canadiennes, Montreal's women's professional hockey team in the CWHL. This mostly involved selling beer at their home games, acting as an usher, and organizing fan outings. After volunteering for a full year, I no longer had enough free time to commit, but I would still come frequently to watch the games, and cheer on the team as a fan. Building off De Garis' sensuous ethnography, these experiences gave an immersive experience and provided many insights into the world of women's hockey. Being there, I was wrapped up in the sounds of the arena, I got a sense of the demographics of Les Canadiennes' fan base, and generally learned to love the fan culture and community-based orientation of the sport. While I did not begin this volunteer work with the intention of using it as part of my research, it would certainly prove to be useful a year later once I began the university program.

It was actually through this experience with Les Canadiennes that I began to develop the ideas for episode 4 of *Changing On The Fly*, "Power Play - How Women Can Change Sports Journalism and Hockey". This volunteer work would eventually bring me into contact with Meg

Hewings, the General Manager of Les Canadiennes, and someone who I greatly admire as a hockey activist. I invited Hewings, among others, to take part in a live recorded panel discussion at Concordia which would become the basis for episode 4. Moreover, the questions I posed as the moderator of the panel were drawn largely from conversations I had with people involved in Les Canadiennes, or more broadly in women's hockey. Therefore, "getting into the ring", as Laurence de Garis would put it, was an important part of my methodology, as it allowed me to develop relationships and sources in the hockey community that would be invaluable for a sports journalism project like *Changing On The Fly*.

Chapter 5 - Discussion

In this chapter, I will discuss some of my research findings from my project, and relate them back to both my research question and my creation question. Again, my research question is: why have we not seen social justice interventions in hockey in the same ways that we've seen in other popular American professional sports over the last few years? And my creation question is: what would a podcast sound like that introduced a critical analysis into the world of hockey, but was also entertaining and appealing for hockey fans? While I did not explicitly pose my research question to each of my interview subjects, I selected people who could speak to my four themes of social justice in hockey with the hopes of illuminating some of the social, political, and economic factors behind the sport. In this sense, all the material does relate back to the central research question of the project by demonstrating which voices have been marginalized or left out of hockey discourses. I will discuss each of my podcast episodes separately, as each addresses these questions in different and unique ways.

5.1 Episode 1 - Colonialism and Hockey

In the very first episode of *Changing On The Fly*, I wanted to get right at the heart of the connecting arteries between hockey and Canadian nationalism. For a long time, I've wondered how Indigenous people in Canada view hockey. Is there a fundamental tension between calling hockey "Canada's national sport", and the fact that Canada is a settler-colonial nation with a history and present of genocide and displacement of Indigenous communities? Or between hockey's problematic usage of Indigenous mascotry, and the fact that the sport remains wildly popular in many Native communities? This episode was an attempt to research some of these

complexities of the sport, all the while bringing it back to my main research question on the lack of social justice protests in hockey.

It is really through hockey that we can see the hegemonic power of the Canadian state. Sport in any society can be a conduit of national values and ideology. In Canada, this is particularly true with hockey. As Canadians continually look to the south with a fear of having all our cultural institutions eclipsed by all things American, hockey continues to be a source of pride for Canada on an international level. While we can't beat the Americans at the cinema box office, we can (usually) beat them on the ice.

In this work I contend that hockey in Canada is deployed as what Louis Althusser would call an Ideological State Apparatus (ISA). Althusser specifically names sports as an ISA, which is to say that they function to reproduce power in society, namely through ideological means (143). This can certainly be evidenced in hockey's appearance in Indigenous communities across the country. Michael A. Robidoux writes,

During the 1970s, the seemingly innocuous proposition by the federal government to fund Aboriginal sport in Canada was rife with assimilatory initiatives, and had less to do with funding Aboriginal sport, and more to do with transforming local sporting practices to fit into the mainstream Western system. (24)

Hockey has become a powerful tool of assimilation in Canada, and was weaponized against Indigenous people through its introduction into the residential school system.

My interviewee in this episode of the podcast, Braden Te Hiwi, has some very interesting insights into hockey's role in Canada's residential schools from his own research. During our interview, Te Hiwi recounted the story of the tour that the Sioux Blackhawks (the hockey team

of the Pelican Lake Indian Residential School) were taken on around southern Ontario in 1951. During the tour, the team got to stay in fancy hotels, meet with politicians, and play at the famed Maple Leaf Gardens in Toronto. While Te Hiwi is careful to note that the story of this tour is outside the commonly held narrative that residential schools were places of deprivation and trauma, it was nonetheless organized for the purposes of assimilating these Indigenous boys into settler Canadian society. According to Te Hiwi, it was to teach the boys about the development and benefits of civilized society.

When asking ourselves today why hockey might not share the same political culture with American sports, or why more Indigenous athletes in hockey don't speak out against colonial injustices, these histories of assimilation and sport in residential schools should not be discounted. This is not to suggest that Indigenous people are by any means quiet about the injustices done unto their communities. Indeed, they are most often at the forefront of contemporary struggles over land claims and the environment. Still, hockey has proven itself to be a powerful force in shaping Canadian identity, and assimilating many into the fold. Gruneau and Whitson argue that despite Canada's cultural diversity, "hockey continues to have a powerful grip on the imaginations and collective memories of Canadians" (3). Perhaps it is the case that if hockey is seen as a common language in our country, there shouldn't be efforts made to disrupt the little that a country of several solitudes has in common.

My second guest on this episode, Justin Louis, is the co-founder of the Indigenous clothing company Section 35. I interviewed him about a line of clothing that Section 35 released called "Kill Mascots, Save the People". The line features parody images of famous professional sports teams that use Indigenous logos, such as the Cleveland Indians or Chicago Blackhawks. In

the last few years, there has been a large movement (primarily in the USA) of people who are calling on sports teams who use Indigenous mascots and images to change their logos and team names. This campaign has revolved around the social media hashtags #NotYourMascot and #ChangeTheName, and its most visible target has been the Washington Redskins of the NFL.

In my interview with Louis, I asked him why the Chicago Blackhawks in the NHL have not been subject to the same denunciations that other teams have. Because hockey is an old and well-established sport in North America, and the Chicago Blackhawks are one of the “original six” teams of the NHL (the team was founded in 1926), Louis explained that there seems to be a generational divide among Indigenous people who love the logo, and those who find it offensive. A younger generation of Indigenous people, including people who would wear Section 35’s “Kill Mascots” clothing, are critical of the logo for being a racist stereotype. But an older generation of Indigenous people across North America seem to see it as a source of pride. In my interview with Louis, he elaborates on the reasons for this divided opinion: “[The Blackhawks logo] is not as caricature-like or an over-exaggeration of a Native person. The name is not a reference to a racial slur. But at the same time there is still a mis-representation and de-humanizing element to Native imagery there. Hockey has been a part of our community for so many years. In a different time it was cool to have some representation of Indigenous imagery. It was nice to have one of us on a jersey. People in our communities like the logo and aren’t offended by it”.

Indeed, Fred Sasakamoose, the first Indigenous player in the NHL’s history, who ironically played for the Chicago Blackhawks, was one of those who loved the logo. Of the logo, Sasakamoose said: “I was an Indian with an Indian on my sweater. But it suited me! It was made for me” (Jones). Louis also suggested in our interview that this divided opinion on the

Blackhawks logo might be one of the reasons it has “slipped under the radar” and avoided being the target of protests. There certainly have been isolated protests against minor league hockey team logos with Indigenous mascots in Canada in recent years (Tierney), these protests have not made their way up to the NHL in any way comparable to protests against the Washington Redskins in the NFL or the Cleveland Indians in the MLB. Therefore, we can conclude that a divided opinion in Indigenous communities in North America about the Blackhawks logo has been a factor for the lack of protests on this issue in hockey.

5.2 Episode 2: Race and Racism in Hockey

One of the most common colloquial responses to the question of the lack of social justice protests in hockey is the fact that hockey is a much whiter sport than other major sports in North America, which tend to have higher percentages of athletes of colour. The fact that hockey is a very white sport is stating the obvious, and doesn't get into the nuances of the historical, social, and political factors that have shaped the game throughout its development. Both my guests on Episode 2 of *Changing On The Fly* had sharp insights into why hockey's political culture (or lack thereof) is so different from other sports.

Shireen Ahmed posited that hockey's culture is “shrouded in a sense of purity, in the sense of not politicizing things”. Indeed, sporting cultures are shaped to large extents by their corporate governing bodies, and Ahmed argues this is true for hockey. She reminds us that the NHL's long-time commissioner, Gary Bettman, has gone to great lengths to try to keep the league out of political matters. However, she also cites an inconsistency in this attempt to keep the league a-political, as one of its leading media voices is Don Cherry. Cherry has often used his

platform to attack “left-wing pinkos” and to espouse conservative values. His bravado and highly-charged rants certainly make it hard to claim that hockey is an a-political sport. Still, what Cherry might demonstrate is that hockey culture is shaped by its fans, media, governing bodies, and amateur as well as professional players, and that the political culture of the game is highly contested between all these different forces.

When the Take A Knee movement first started to escalate in the NFL, there was plenty of speculation in the sports media as to who would be the first hockey player to join the protest. Many pundits were wondering if it would be one of the few prominent Black players in the NHL, such as P.K. Subban or Wayne Simmonds. However, in my interview with Ahmed, she is quick to reframe the question. She questions why it is that we have higher expectations for Black athletes to engage in these protests than we do of White athletes, stating “I don’t expect anything from people of colour because they’re always on the frontlines doing the work. I expect a lot more from [White] allies. We shouldn’t be expecting or demanding the ones who are marginalized the most to be doing the work”.

This is an important assertion. If the hockey media were to heed Ahmed’s call, then they wouldn’t be turning to athletes of colour each time a question of racial justice enters into the sport’s landscape. Instead, they would be interrogating White hockey players as to why they are leaving white supremacy unchallenged, or why they aren’t standing up for their teammates of colour. But since there is very little precedent for hockey players of any race making political statements, and since the league is overwhelmingly white, these factors play off each other to maintain a code of silence on socio-political issues involving race.

My other guest on Episode 2, Damon Kwame Mason, looks to history as a practice for answers as to why there are so few people of colour in hockey, and hence why the culture of the sport is so unique. Mason argues that documenting the histories of people of colour in hockey will lead to diversifying the sport in the future. In our interview on the history of the Coloured Hockey League in Nova Scotia, he says: “We [Black people] invented the slapshot. That’s a sense of pride right there. Time is going to be kind to the game of hockey, but where we are right now, we just need to be kinder to its history”. What we can understand from this statement is that hockey journalists need to do a better job of documenting the histories of people of colour in the sport, and this in turn could lead to more involvement of people of colour in the future.

I certainly hope to be able to follow Mason’s call to improve the coverage of these histories in hockey, as a more diverse sport could also lead to more social justice activism on the ice. One of the goals of *Changing On The Fly* is to intervene in modern hockey discourse in order to inspire and provoke more activism down the road.

5.3 Episode 3: Toxic Masculinity and Homophobia in hockey

In this episode of the podcast, I explore two intertwined issues in hockey: toxic masculinity and hockey. The first guest on this episode, Kristi Allain of St-Thomas University in New Brunswick, discusses her research on Don Cherry and his role in shaping masculine identity in Canada. As Shireen Ahmed also brought up in Episode 2, Don Cherry’s role in shaping hockey culture in Canada, and infusing it with his own conservative values, cannot be underestimated. Gruneau and Whitson would concur: “Perhaps the strongest of all our feelings of commonality came when we watched Hockey Night in Canada on Saturday nights. Even at an

early age the TV program made us feel like part of a national community” (2). Allain mentions in the interview that Cherry is sometimes referred to as the “Prime Minister of Saturday night”. What makes Cherry’s influence on hockey chilling is that he has the power to influence notions of Canadianness. This is simply because Canada’s national identity is so linked to hockey, and Cherry is hockey’s most famous media personality.

In this podcast episode, Allain discusses Cherry’s ardent support for fighting in hockey, and his belief that violence is the only proper expression of masculinity in the sport: “We’ve seen Don Cherry repeatedly suggest that it’s academics and people in journalism who are ruining hockey. They’re not authentic fans, and they’re not real Canadians. Because real Canadians know that this is the kind of masculinity that is linked to national identity, and the kind of thing that we need to protect”. Therefore, Cherry’s influence on the political culture of hockey, through his platform of *Hockey Night in Canada*, seems to be an important factor in instilling conservative and patriarchal values on the game. If his voice is so loud, perhaps it is also serving to silence would-be voices of dissent.

5.4 Episode 4: Power Play - How Women Can Change Sports Journalism and Hockey

While men’s hockey has been quiet when it comes to political protests, the same cannot be said of women’s hockey. As one would expect in a patriarchal society, women have more to fight for, and female hockey players have made their voices heard in struggles for gender equity in recent years. The most visible example of a large scale social justice protest in women’s hockey came in March 2017, when the American women’s national team went on strike just

prior to a major international competition, demanding improved conditions and better payment for their labour.

All three of my guests on the panel discussion for this episode had fascinating comments about this strike, and what it has to say more broadly about the political culture of women's hockey. Robyn Flynn, a hockey reporter with TSN 690 radio, said:

It's true that you don't have your Colin Kaepernick's, but the CWHL just had their first transgender player this year, and the NWHL (National Women's Hockey League) had their first last year. There are little movements like that. In general, I just find women's hockey to be such an inclusive space. The difference is that you don't even need to speak up against injustice because it's simply a more just space.

This last point is very interesting, and speaks directly to my research question. There haven't been many protests in women's hockey (besides the USA women's strike), but perhaps this is because the groundwork has already be done to introduce more progressive values into the sport. Given that men's hockey is dominated by personalities like Don Cherry, it is refreshing to see that more tolerant environments are possible in the sport on the women's side.

The most salient thing that Safia Ahmad, the Communications Manager of Les Canadiennes, said was that "the strike broke the stereotype for me of women being passive. It serves as a great template in the future for women to speak up". Therefore, the incredible labour activism of the USA women's hockey team could be a watershed moment, inspiring other similar actions by women's and men's teams in the future.

Finally, Meg Hewings, the General Manager of Les Canadiennes hit the nail on the head in discussing the strike, and the lack of activist culture in hockey:

You might see it more in individual sports, but it's an extremely difficult thing to do collectively in team sports, especially at the national level where there is so much competition internally for those spots. And it's your dream to be in that moment. So for them to step back and to say 'these are the things we believe in, and we don't feel we've been treated well by Hockey USA.

The pack mentality of team sports seems like it can either be a help or a hindrance for athlete activism. Mohamed Ali, one of the most famous athlete activists of American history, did not have to consider as a boxer what his teammates would say about his decision to refuse the draft, since he had none. Colin Kaepernick and other football players who took a knee in recent years had many teammates, and one can only surmise that the conversations with those teammates in the locker room about that gesture were intense. So activism can happen in both team sports and individual sports, but as Hewings rightly suggests, there is that added challenge in team sports of having to negotiate how a decision to act could impact the collective.

The discussion in this episode of the podcast was an illuminating one for me personally, as it demonstrated my bias as a researcher. In pondering the lack of social justice protests in hockey, I hadn't realized that I had mostly been considering the men's game, and that women's hockey already had an important history of advancing progressive politics. In moving forward with the *Changing On The Fly* podcast, I hope to draw on victories and lessons from women's hockey, and bring them to audiences in men's hockey, who could rightly learn from how it's being done on the other side.

5.5 Production Findings

I will now discuss some of the findings directly related to production and technical questions arising from my research creation project. A discussion on these findings, rather than on the content of the podcast episodes themselves, is important, as production and technical issues impact how sound media is received by the audience. These issues contribute to shaping the listener experience.

In the production phase of the podcast, I used several different sound recording devices. Each was dependent on the particular situation in which I was recording. The interviews with Cheryl Macdonald, Kristi Allain, Damon Kwame Mason, and Shireen Ahmed were all recorded with my own personal Zoom H4N digital audio recorder. All of these interviews were recorded in stereo using the built-in microphones on the recorder. The Zoom H4N is known as a “handy recorder”, as it is particularly useful for field recordings. It is lightweight, ergonomic, and easy to manipulate. The built-in microphones on the Zoom H4N are relatively high-quality condenser microphones, but since they are quite small, the dynamic range of sound they are able to capture is more limited than in a studio environment with larger diaphragm microphones. Still, the quality of the audio captured with this recorder is quite good, and perhaps forgivable to the audience, who know that the interview is being recorded in the field rather than in studio.

While some independent podcasters use the H4N to record narration for their podcasts, I knew that this couldn't be an option for *Changing On The Fly*. I had initially recorded the generic intro to my podcast using the H4N, but upon receiving feedback from my thesis supervisor, I realized that the recorder made my voice sound “flat”. Recording with the H4N lacked the frequency range, and hence the dynamic feel that can be achieved with higher-quality

mics. I re-recorded my intro narration using a studio microphone (which I will discuss later), and the sound was far superior.

In cases where in-person recording was not possible for my interview subjects, I recorded over Skype or Zencast using an Apogee 96K microphone to pick up my own voice. The Apogee 96K is a USB mic, which is advantageous for home recording, as it can connect directly to a computer (rather than having to be run through an analog studio mixing board). As a result of this, and also its affordability, USB mics like this have become quite popular for independent podcasters. I used the Apogee 96K in my interviews with Braden Te Hiwi, Justin Louis, and Jason Brennan. I was not very satisfied with the resulting quality of my own voice recording. You can hear a clear difference in Episode 1 between the narration recordings, done in studio on analog condenser microphones, and the sound of my voice in the interviews. However, while it would have been an ideal scenario to record every single one of my interviews in-person and in studio, this was simply not an option. Being flexible as a journalist and podcast producer also means sometimes having to make compromises on quality in order to secure the interviewees that you need.

For all of my narration recordings in each of the podcast episodes, I recorded them in the sound studio of Concordia's CJ building, using two different analog condenser microphones: the AKG c414 mic (in Episode 4), and the Rode NT2A mic (in Episodes 1-3). The choice of which of these microphones I used was arbitrary, depending entirely on their availability. In the case of both of these microphones, I also used a pop screen, which is crucial in recording voice for narration, as it helps to eliminate the sibilance caused by consonant sounds such as S's and P's. Both of these microphones have larger diaphragms than the Apogee 96K or Zoom H4N, and

therefore pick up a large dynamic and frequency range in the voice. There isn't much of an audible difference on my recordings between the AKG and Rode mics, but I was quite happy with the professional-sounding results of each.

Finally, for the live panel discussion in Episode 4 of my podcast, I tried something that I had never before attempted as a podcast producer, and recorded everyone on wireless lapel microphones (which clip onto your clothing). Because wireless technology can be unpredictable, I also took a recording of the room sound with my Zoom H4N as a backup. I decided to use lapel mics rather than hand-held mics for two reasons. One is that I wanted the guests to be able to speak freely and unhindered by a microphone stand in their way. I figured that having lapel mics would be the least intrusive way to do this. Putting a microphone between you and a guest can sometimes change the dynamic, as the microphone is a visual marker that the conversation is being recorded, and the performance has begun. At the very least, lapel mics can minimize this dynamic, allowing the interview subject to gesticulate more freely with their hands, and perhaps forgetting that they're even on mic.

The other reason I opted to use lapel mics is that I thought their pickup patterns would be optimal for recording a round-table discussion. During the event, myself and the three guests were sitting in a semi-circle facing the audience, but at times the guests would shift positions to face each other and respond to points that another panel participant had brought up. From my experience as a live radio host, I was constantly having to remind guests in studio to lean closer into their microphones when talking, as even the slightest move away from a microphone can impact the recording quality. People who aren't used to speaking into microphones every day may not be aware of this fact. Since a lapel mic is clipped onto the subject's clothing, generally

at about chest level, the distance between the mouth and the microphone doesn't change very much. Therefore, everyone's recording levels stayed relatively constant, and I didn't have to remind anyone to lean closer to a microphone.

Of course, the downside to recording with lapel mics is that they are susceptible to mic-handling noise from the microphone brushing up against the subject's clothing. This unfortunately happened a bit on Episode 4 with Meg Hewings' microphone. If it had been a pre-recorded interview, I could have stopped the interview and asked her to re-adjust the position of her microphone. But since it was a live panel recorded in front of an audience, it would have disrupted the flow of the event to stop in the middle due to a somewhat minor technical consideration.

Finally, I used two different kinds of lapel mics for this event, two Sennheiser mics, and two Sony mics. This wasn't a conscious decision, but was due to using the only equipment available to me free of charge from the CJ equipment depot and the Feminist Media Studio. The Sennheiser mics were much better quality than the Sonys, and the quality difference is noticeable in the recording. I was able to apply some effects in post-production in order to even out the quality between all the microphones. Since there was a slight buzz on the Sony mics (perhaps due to interference on the wireless frequency band), I applied a noise reduction effect on both Meg Hewings and Safia Ahmad's recordings. I was also able to add compression to voices recorded with the Sony mics in order to bring their levels up closer to the Sennheiser tracks. These post-production techniques were able to improve the quality, but not make the quality uniform on all the tracks. It was a lesson to me that when recording multiple voices in the same

session, all should be done using the exact same kind of microphone. Otherwise, with a noticeable difference, it creates a jump in the flow and could be distracting for the listener.

In terms of my post-production process, I did all my audio editing using the program Adobe Audition. This software is one of the industry standards for radio and podcast production. It is also the software that I first learned how to edit audio on, and so I was already very comfortable with it going into this project. For the audio playback, I was editing using the studio monitors in the CJ sound studio, as well as my own high-quality headphones at home. While editing using studio monitors is good for reducing listening fatigue that can easily come with prolonged studio sessions, editing with headphones is also important as it allows you to pick out subtle sounds that you might not notice on other speakers.

One thing that I learned is quite important throughout the production process of *Changing on The Fly* is to listen back to your audio files on several different systems. Notably, it's important to listen to drafts of your podcast using earbud headphones. According to a 2017 study done by the Knight Foundation, 93% of podcast listeners are listening to their shows on a smartphone (Knight Foundation, 5). Since many manufacturers provide earbud headphones with their smartphones, it is important to hear your own podcasts as they'll likely be heard by the majority of their listenership. However, since earbuds also have a very limited dynamic range, I also listened back to my drafts on bluetooth speakers, a home entertainment system, and high-fidelity headphones. Each of these gave me a different sonic perspective on the work, and shifted my editing approach as a result. For example, by listening to one of my drafts through high-fidelity headphones, I was able to notice that the volume levels of some of my interviewees

weren't nearly as high as my narration levels, and so I adjusted the levels accordingly to even everything out.

In reflecting on my creation question for this project, and in striving to create a podcast that was both critical of hockey culture but also appealing to hockey fans, I think the live episode of *Changing On The Fly* (Episode 4) was quite successful. Hosting a “live” episode of a podcast, recorded in front of a live audience, is a popular way for podcasts to reach new audiences. Several large podcasts such as *Edge of Sports* or NPR's *Codeswitch* have recorded some of their best episodes in front of live audiences. It offers a way for podcasts to get out of the recording studio, and offer a more energetic and dynamic sounding episode to the listeners, as we can often hear the live audience reacting to the material. I wanted to record Episode 4 of *Changing On The Fly* in front of a live audience because it was a good opportunity to get three guests together in the engaging environment of the Feminist Media Studio at Concordia. Having myself along with three guests all together in a room allowed me to model this episode in the style of the *Burn It All Down* podcast (discussed in the Media Review section), which always has several different voices weighing in on an issue. I've always found that more voices make for more engaged and exciting listening experiences for radio and podcasting. The diversity of opinions and the chemistry between interview subjects in a round-table discussion is simply something that just can't be attained in a one-on-one interview setting.

Moreover, I feel strongly that social justice issues in sports is a topic that should be a part of our contemporary public discourse in Montreal. Hosting this episode as a live event was an attempt to further provoke feminist debates in hockey, and to make it a part of that public discourse. Serving free food in the reception area at the Feminist Media Studio was a way to get

attendees to discuss and debate the ideas of the panel in a vibrant and comfortable environment. The “liveness” of the event allowed for more engagement with the subject matter than a simple podcast episode recorded behind closed doors.

Finally, to expand on the topic of increased engagement with the subject matter of *Changing On The Fly*, some discussion on my chosen distribution platform is important. I have chosen to make all the episodes of the podcast available to the public via the popular audio distribution website Soundcloud. Eventually, the podcast will also be posted on a website, and available for subscription through podcast platforms such as Apple Podcasts and Stitcher. I have chosen to post the episodes on Soundcloud because it allows for a text accompaniment to the audio files, something that podcast hosts refer to as “show notes”.

Show notes are an important part of podcasting, as they also allow for listeners to engage with the audio content in different ways than are possible on the radio. For example, there is less of a need to frequently repeat the names of interview subjects in a podcast, as the listener can easily read the list of interviewees in the show notes for *Changing On The Fly*. In addition to that, I have also provided links to articles which could deepen the analysis and expand the understanding of the listener beyond what is simply presented in the audio content of the podcast. Since URLs of links to articles are far too long to repeat on the mic during a podcast episode, it is generally sufficient to tell your listeners to “look for the link in the show notes”. This kind of hypertextuality is an exciting part of podcasts, and will hopefully provide resources to listeners of *Changing On The Fly* to get involved in the issues being discussed on the show.

Conclusion

Sport is hostile territory. As much as we can look at inspiring examples of small movements for social justice within the realm of athletics, it's important to not forget that sports have been sites of harassment, injury, and exclusion for many marginalized people. My love of hockey is my calling to intervene in a conversation about social justice in the sport, but I too must not forget that many people detest the sport for their own good reasons. The important point to reiterate here is not to convince people of hockey's inherent value - it has no such thing. Rather, it is to demonstrate how this sport is crucially important to us in Canada, and can be used as a jumping off point to discuss wider socio-economic, political, and cultural issues in this country. As Matt Hern offers, "We should all - whether we watch, obsess, cheer, play, or not at all - take sports seriously, as worthy of real respect, because if we don't, we will continue to allow them to be dominated by some of the most regrettable politics imaginable" (10).

My work with *Changing On The Fly* is an attempt to make hockey worthy of real respect, not because of the national values that we bestow upon it, but because I truly believe that sports can be used as a tool to create a more just and equal society. Just as hockey can bring out the worst in us (violent behaviour, homophobic attitudes, hyper-competitiveness), it can also bring out the best in us. Hockey can teach us so much about physical health, team spirit, and respect. Yes, these virtues are often tropes that can just as easily be used as marketing ploys by the NHL, but they are also values that I believe we would want to see reflected in a more just world.

Reflecting on my research question, there are several reasons for why the political culture of hockey has developed differently than those of other North American sports. Colonialism and residential schools, media commentators like Don Cherry, and the sometimes prohibitively-high

cost of playing the sport are all factors that have cast some shadow on the sport, and perhaps made it less attractive for people from marginalized backgrounds. Then again, there are always important nuances. Despite the fact that hockey was weaponized as a tool of cultural genocide in residential schools, it remains widely popular in Native communities today. Despite Don Cherry's blithering sexist commentary, the women's game continues to grow and develop a stronger fan base every year. This tells us that sports are dynamic structures, with the ability to be influenced from below by grassroots activism from athletes, fans, and media-makers.

Luckily, recent years have brought us a proliferation of radical sports journalism that allow us to see sports through the lens of radical politics. Far from being simply a way for "jocks" to talk about social justice, radical sports journalism is engaging in the messy yet necessary task of unveiling the inherently political nature of sports. To suggest that modern sports are devoid of politics is an untenable position. The great Trinidadian Marxist scholar CLR James authored what could be considered a very early piece of radical sports journalism. His memoir *Beyond a Boundary* reflected on cricket in Trinidad and Tobago through an anti-colonial lens. James wrote that, "The British tradition soaked deep into me was that when you entered the sporting arena you left behind you the sordid compromises of everyday existence. Yet for us to do that we would have had to divest ourselves of our skins" (66). Indeed, when we lace up our skates and step onto the ice, we bring with us our full identities, and identities are political. Radical sports journalism like *Changing On The Fly* must be a platform for articulating these linkages between identity, politics, and athletics.

When I began the Masters in Media Studies program at Concordia in 2016, the world of hockey seemed eerily silent when it came to social justice issues. But in the two years since,

we've seen J.T Brown raise his fist, the US women's national team go on strike, and now, as I finish my Masters, Devante Smith Pelly, a Black player with the Stanley Cup-winning Washington Capitals, is pledging that he will not visit the White House with the rest of his team, in protest of Donald Trump's racism and sexism (Traikos). These are all small but highly significant steps in what might hopefully be a growing trend over the next few years in the sport.

I don't expect that a podcast like *Changing On The Fly* will be well received by the majority of hockey fans. Rather, to borrow from Anna Tsing, I'd like to think of this podcast as a "hair in the flour". Tsing describes this metaphor as such: "A hair in the flour is a disturbance of everyday subservience and routine. A hair in the flour ruins the legitimacy of power" (206). I offer it to the world not with the expectation that hordes of hockey fans will all of the sudden become radical activists, but rather as a match to spark a conversation. I see it as part of a modest media landscape of radical sports journalism that can serve as a tool in the kit of that one athlete who is hoping to change their sport from within, but may not have the necessary vocabulary or set of ideas. A podcast seemed to me like the ideal form for this project to take, due to the accessibility and mobility of the medium. Therefore, I hope that it finds receptive ears among hockey fans who yearn for a better, more just, and more equal world, and a hockey culture more accepting of those values.

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