Sport Evangelism: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Sport for Development and Free Play for Kids

by

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**Abstract**

Recent sport for development (SFD) scholarship undertaken from critical and poststructuralist perspectives (Darnell, 2012; Darnell and Hayhurst, 2011; Hayhurst, Giles, and Wright, 2016) has called for further research that problematizes SFD programming while considering the impacts of existing social, political, and economic structures. Specifically, scholars have suggested that research which attends to structures of oppression based on race, gender, and colonization is needed. This thesis takes up such calls through a critical discourse analysis (CDA) of Free Play for Kids (FPK), a prominent no-cost SFD program operating in Edmonton, Alberta. Before presenting the CDA I historicize relevant programs and discursive lines in sport and recreation in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century which work to construct particular subjects as 'in need'. This historicization is informed by critical theoretical perspectives (Hall, 1996; Kincheloe and McLaren, 2005) which call for deep historical understandings of existing social processes and contexts.

In conducting the CDA I identified three main themes which were dominant in media produced by and about FPK. The first theme centers around a welcoming and inclusive Edmonton, which is shaped by hegemonic representational forms of Canadian multiculturalism and reconciliation. I primarily draw on Mackey (2002), and Dene scholar Glen Coulthard (2014a) to argue that such discourses work to shape the logics of FPK and reinforce dominant framings of Canadian nationhood.

The second theme I identified is 'giving back' to the community and how that participates in ongoing neoliberal, and individualist discourses. I position FPK within neoliberal political rationalities (Brown, 2006) and follow Spade (2020) in arguing that the discourse of 'giving back' operates to depoliticize social movements. I also apply critical cultural studies insights to explore two subthemes: sporting celebrity, and the patriarchal 'father figure' who founded FPK.

Third, I explore discourses of positive youth development and 'sport evangelism' (Giulianotti, 2004) which are prominently used to promote and market FPK. I draw on existing critical SFD literature which has critiqued individualist (sport) development paradigms, and apply Coakley's (2011) critique of hegemonic, racist, SFD narratives. I then conclude by reflecting on the methodological design of the thesis and explaining the implications this research has for other SFD researchers and practitioners.

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# Contents

# Chapter 1: Introduction

This project focuses on discursive understandings of Free Play for Kids (FPK), a no-cost sport for development (SFD) program that has operated in Edmonton, Alberta since 2007. FPK exists in a longer history of various approaches to recreation provision and programming in Edmonton, and Canada more broadly. Thus, I have positioned my analysis of FPK within a historicization of relevant discourses and histories of recreation in its colonizing and exclusionary forms.

This project is of specific interest to me because I have been ideologically interpellated with dominant understandings of sport and recreation through my childhood, undergraduate degree, and previous work in sport and recreation programming. Through these processes I have come to a desire to challenge the 'dominant approach' to sport (Hartmann and Kwauk, 2011) which assumes that sport and recreation will automatically improve the life chances and experiences of those to whom it is made available, without broader structural changes to address inequality and oppression.

My analysis is informed by SFD literature, and I have interrogated the research data through critical theoretical perspectives and cultural studies insights. This first chapter includes an introduction to the research and research questions posed in this thesis.

**Statement of Research and Research Questions**

My research is primarily directed at developing a social justice informed sociological understanding of sport and leisure, and SFD more specifically. This thesis project is a critical analysis of the community sport program FPK, a no-cost program for youth in Edmonton. FPK is an SFD program that has worked with over 60 schools in Edmonton. In this thesis I study the political implications of such SFD programs. More specifically, I ask how dominant

political structures and understandings of sport and identity are reinforced by programs like FPK, which approach development through a lens of sporting empowerment.

To this end, the research questions that I seek to answer in this thesis are: (1) how can programs like FPK be understood in the context of longer histories of sport, recreation, and colonization in Canada? (2) How are hegemonic discourses which promote FPK related to existing structures of racism, settler colonialism, and classism in society?

**Significance of the Research**

SFD scholars (Darnell, 2012; Darnell, Chawansky, Marchesseault, Holmes, and Hayhurst, 2016) have put forth recent calls to interrogate how sport for development programs function within broader power relations related to race, gender, class, and colonialism. In responding to such calls, this thesis seeks to analyze a local SFD program and how it functions in relation to social structures of racism, classism, and settler colonialism in particular. This analysis is framed alongside a historical contextualization of the intertwining of recreation programming with such systems in Alberta.

**Thesis Outline**

Briefly, the organization of the thesis is as follows. In chapter 2 I provide a literature review of relevant SFD literature including general theories and models which have been used to understand SFD programming. In chapter 3 I outline my paradigmatic assumptions and the methodologies used in the subsequent chapters.

In the fourth chapter I historicize recreation in Edmonton and position my theoretical understanding of recreation programming as explicitly tied to measures of social control that can position marginalized groups as 'problematic' (Tink, Peers, Nykiforuk, and Mayan, 2019). In this chapter I provide historical context for recreation in Edmonton that is important for framing FPK and making sense of the current context in which no-cost SFD programs operate in Edmonton. In

doing so, I will overview other low or no-cost sport and recreation programs operating in Edmonton and how they have operated to produce some groups as 'problematic' or 'at risk'.

The fifth chapter includes a robust introduction to FPK, the program I critically analyze in the CDA. I also introduce the framing of the Non-profit Industrial Complex, a heuristic I use to understand FPK and its functions. I identified three main themes in the CDA of media produced by and about FPK. Each of these themes is presented in an individual chapter to make up the sixth, seventh, and eighth chapters. This CDA builds on the historical discursive themes in recreation which I outline in chapter 4. Finally, I conclude by reflecting on the effectiveness of the study and positioning the research in this thesis alongside a larger body of critical SFD work.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

This review of SFD literature informs my project methodologically and theoretically. I briefly overview the establishment of SFD as a field of study, followed by an overview of existing descriptive models for types of SFD programs, and then engage in a brief critical discussion of four conceptual approaches and theoretical perspectives from which SFD research is often conducted. The literature review concludes with a more thorough introduction to FPK, the program I analyze in later in the thesis.

**Sport for Development**

Sport for development (SFD) is an approach to community, national, and international development that uses sport as part of a broader development initiative, building on common understandings of sport as a tool for community bonding and individual development (Darnell, 2012; Hayton, 2018). Programs which take a sport for development approach intend to improve one or more outcomes related to "public health, the socialisation of children, youths, and adults, the social inclusion of the disadvantaged, the economic development of regions and states, and on fostering intercultural exchange and conflict resolution" (Lyras and Welty Peachey, 2011, p. 311) in the target communities or regions.

Kidd (2008) identified SFD as an "international movement of sport for development and peace" (p. 370) which grew out of the work of non-governmental organizations, non-profit organizations, intergovernmental organizations such as the United Nations, and governments in the Global North. While SFD programs often fall under the umbrella of international development, these programs also focus on local and community development. There is an important distinction to be made between SFD programs in the Global South and those that are based in and operate in the Global North. A significant amount of SFD research has looked at programs in the Global South, while less research has interrogated sport for development programs which are run

domestically in nations in the Global North, such as Canada. International SFD programs are often tied to (neocolonial) international aid efforts (Darnell, 2012), while domestic sport for development programs in Canada may focus on community development, social control, and be tied to ongoing processes of settler colonialism (Hayhurst, Giles, and Wright, 2016; Hayton, 2018).

The social, political, and economic process of development is approached differently based on the theoretical lens used. Development can be understood as occurring at individual levels (e.g. personal growth), structural levels (e.g. economic development), or in grand narratives of human progress. Here, I view development as "both a universal (economic) blueprint of social change and a neoliberal (some would argue neocolonial) 'method of rule'" (Hartmann and Kwauk, 2011, p. 286) in which established social relations are reproduced.

Historically, this form of development is understood as part of a broader hegemony in which Western European countries, and settler colonial nations like Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the United States are involved in resource extraction and exploitation of nations and peoples in the Global South (Kapoor, 2009). Critical studies of development interrogate how development occurs with the global system of capitalism. Capitalist development involves spreading and entrenching "the ideology of capitalism and the supposed benefits of economic liberalization, comparative advantage, free markets, deregulation and privatization" (Veltmeyer and Delgado Wise, 2018, p. 3). Nations undergoing this mode of development are increasingly incorporated into an exploitative capitalist system. SFD programs and studies take place within this context of development, and programs that seek to 'improve the life chances' of participants also operate to prepare participants to be productive subjects under capitalism. These insights from critical development studies inform a critical analysis of SFD which interrogate how these processes operate in the context of sport programming.

**Types of SFD Programs**

Scholars have developed multiple systems of identification for SFD program models, which are determined based on how a program operates, the development goals, and program evaluation methods. Here I briefly describe two different frameworks for understanding ideal types of SFD program models.

Coalter (2010, 2013) has identified two general forms of SFD programs: 'sport plus' and 'plus sport'. Similarly, Collins and Haudenhuyse (2015) have categorized programs that either work to provide inclusion *in* sport, or inclusion *through* sport. In all of these categories, sport is used as a 'hook' to bring participants (usually children and youth) to the program (Kelly, 2018). 'Sport plus' programming – and its parallel, inclusion *in* sport – is targeted at improving sport infrastructure and availability of sport programming for participants, and may include other forms of education pertaining to development at the individual or community level. Examples of 'sport plus' programs include Kamwokya Christian Caring Community, a netball program for children in Uganda which included HIV and AIDS support and education programming (Coalter, 2013); and Lyndsey and Grattan's (2012) case studies of SFD programs in Zambia.

Alternatively, 'plus sport' is a perspective that sees individual or structural development as the main goal, achieved in part through the implementation of sport programs (Coalter, 2013; Darnell, 2012). 'Plus sport' programs align with Collins and Haudenhuyse's (2015) category of inclusion *through* sport, wherein programs or policies "are aimed at using sports to 'include' deprived, poor or disadvantaged people" (p. 6) to reduce social exclusion. Inclusion *through* sport specifically refers to an improvement in participants' outcomes related to factors such as education, healthcare, employment, and housing. In this approach to SFD sport is one small part of a larger initiative to improve outcomes for participants. It is argued that in conditions of extreme social exclusion due to

poverty and increasing austerity, sport programs alone are ill positioned to fully address issues of inclusion in society (Collins and Haudenhuyse, 2015).

Scholars engaged in critical sociological study of SFD are primarily interested in the 'plus sport' approach (Darnell, 2012). 'Plus sport' programs operate both internationally and domestically, though in very clearly different geopolitical contexts. Prajak is one example of an international 'plus sport' program which operates physical activity camps in India, working with children who have run away from their homes (Coalter, 2013). Domestic 'plus sport' programs would include activities such as midnight basketball, an initiative in the United States ostensibly designed to 'reduce crime' in high crime areas by engaging young Black men in late night basketball games with police officers present (Hartmann, 2001). Midnight basketball can be understood as a 'plus sport' program because the goal was to provide "an alternative to the non-productive or even destructive activities of the street" (p. 342) through implementing basketball leagues and filling them with people perceived to be the most likely to commit criminal acts. Hartmann (2001) argues that "midnight basketball served as a symbolic means by which racial stereotypes about risk, fear, and crime were reinforced and legitimated… united around beliefs about the risk and nature of risk posed by African American young men" (p. 364).

Giulianotti (2011) has put forth an alternative classification in which he identifies three ideal types of SFD program models. Giulianotti's model is useful to consider as his model considers program structures and developmental goals of the program under study. While these ideal types were conceived through studies of SFD related international development and aid, the general characteristics are relevant to the sociopolitical contexts in which domestic SFD programming such as FPK – the program I analyze in chapters 6 through 8 – takes place.

First, the technical model includes structured competitive programs implemented by SFD practitioners. These tend to be measured and evaluated by program practitioners with positivist methods. Technical programs are funded by large donors who exert substantial control over the program's goals and directions, meaning the program is not necessarily relevant to the recipients on the ground. Technical programs operate hierarchically, in that donors and operators from outside the target communities exert large amounts of power and control over the program, while people rooted in the community have little input (Giulianotti, 2011).

Second, the dialogical model is based on "understand[ing] conflicts as socially constructed, strained relationships between different communities that are marked by lack of social contact, trust, and effective mediation" (Giulianotti, 2011, p. 218). By implementing sport programing, dialogic SFD initiatives attempt to mediate these conflicts which result from recent wars, poverty, gentrification, or other rifts dependent on geopolitical context. Programs that fit the dialogical model work by training community members to implement programs within their own communities, and thus are much less hierarchical in their organizational structure. Therefore, the people implementing dialogical SFD programs do have a connection to the target community. These types of programs are monitored through both quantitative methods such as participant demographic surveys, and interpretive qualitative methods including story telling, narrative, and participant interviews. To an extent, FPK can be understood as a program working from the dialogical model. While FPK works to train community members to implement programming, it also operates through mainstream team and semi-competitive sporting practices. In chapters 6 through 8 I discuss FPK's discursive representation in relation to Giulianotti's model.

Third, the critical SFD model describes programs that are less structured, involve new uncompetitive games and other cultural practices, and work autonomously from funders. These

types of programs operate from the belief that target communities best understand their needs and are best positioned to guide and run SFD programs. Critical programs are evaluated through participatory methods, such as critically reflexive self-evaluations of the program and practitioners (Giulianotti, 2011). Moreover, the critical approach acknowledges that SFD projects are just one part of a larger development process. The critical model is most in line with a critical pedagogy of SFD for which scholars have advocated (e.g. Darnell, 2012; Darnell and Hayhurst 2011; Hartmann and Kwauk, 2011). A critical pedagogy of SFD challenges racist, sexist, and colonialist hegemonic power relations "to consider that sport will/can be radically different in the future of SFD and that notions of development (i.e. why it is necessary, how we approach it, what we do about development inequality) will/can be different as well" (Darnell, 2012, p. 151).

While critical SFD scholars using sociological methods study structural conditions and the political implications of SFD programs, as well as investigating the process of how development happens, SFD research from sport psychology, sport management, and more descriptive sociological approaches tend to focus on questions around the content and individualized outcomes of these programs. The most common frameworks for studying SFD are positive youth development (PYD) (e.g. Holt 2016) and social capital (e.g. Sherry, 2010). These will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

**Theory and SFD**

SFD research has been informed by a wide range of theoretical perspectives. In their extensive literature review, Schulenkorf et al. (2016) identify positive youth development (PYD) and social capital as the two most common conceptual models or theoretical frameworks employed in SFD research. In the sections that follow I briefly review select literature from four perspectives, PYD, social capital, cultural studies, and postcolonial theory and how they each are mobilized within the SFD discourse. Theoretical insights from postcolonial theory and critical cultural studies

perspectives inform my analysis which strives to be anti-racist, anti-capitalist, and critical of the dominant individualist development paradigm.

*Criticisms of Positive Youth Development (PYD)*

The developmental understandings underpinning PYD are vastly different to sociological perspectives on development which I employ in my analysis. However, it is relevant to consider here as PYD has become a hegemonic frame for researching and implementing SFD programs, particularly community development focussed organizations implemented in the Global North. Indeed, PYD was the single most common framework or conceptual model used in studies of SFD programs from 2000-2014 (Schulenkorf et al., 2016). Additionally, PYD is mentioned dozens of times throughout a recent compendium on SFD research (Collison, Darnell, Giulianotti, Howe, 2019). For these reasons and owing to the prevalence of PYD in SFD research and program implementation, in this section I focus on critiques of PYD and its use in studying SFD programs.

PYD is an umbrella term, originating in psychology, for approaches to research and practice that focus on asset building activities for youth (Holt, Deal, Pankow, Pynn, and Jørgensen, 2019). As noted, PYD has been used extensively in research on and implementation of SFD programs. Given the origins of PYD in psychology, the developmental lens is individualized, and works from "the assumption that all youth have the potential for positive developmental change" (Holt and Neeley, 2011, p. 300). PYD frames development as an individual path for change, and while it accounts for individual difference, in general PYD does not take into consideration broader social structures of oppression.

For example, by interrogating PYD through critical race theory (CRT), Kochanek and Erickson (2020) suggest race is one such structure of oppression that PYD overlooks. They argue that PYD upholds the racist underpinnings of youth sport, as well as youth sport programs'

attempts at social control of racialized youth. Moreover, programs implemented from the perspective of PYD do not alleviate the racialization of poverty that explains overrepresentation of racialized youth in publicly funded SFD programs. In using CRT to critique liberalism, Kochanek and Erickson also argue that sport programs implemented from the perspective of PYD serve to uphold dominant ideologies related to social categories such as race, gender, and class. In this vein, social values that are taught through SFD programs are naturalized as 'normal', and little consideration is given to whether or not these values are culturally relevant to the program participants.

Similarly, PYD approaches to sport have been critiqued for reproducing a "functionalist neoliberal approach… rather than extending ideas about the many ways that youth development can be defined in connection with sport programs" (Coakley, 2011, p. 315). Individualized development through sport, in other words, is a way for youth to accrue skills that will make them productive and governable subjects within a capitalist system, assuming a level playing field between all participants and not accounting for structural conditions. Coakley's critique raises questions about what constitutes 'positive' development and the often-overlooked values that underpin PYD perspectives which normalize male, middle-class, able-bodied whiteness in recreation settings.

Finally, a critique of PYD is necessary for this project as justifications for programs such as FPK track with claims made from a PYD perspective. Namely, that sport programs, when delivered under certain conditions, will imbue children and youth with meaningful developmental improvements.

Next, I interrogate the use of social capital in SFD research. While social capital is taken up sociologically, Darnell et al (2016) note that both PYD and social capital have similarities in that they are less politicized, more functionalist and (post)positivist approaches to SFD research which seek to put forth solutions to inequality through SFD projects.

*Social Capital*

Social capital is the second most common theoretical approach used in studies of SFD (Schulenkorf et al., 2016). Social capital is a slippery concept that is understood differently by a range of theoretical perspectives. Some studies (e.g. Schulenkorf, Thomson, and Schlenker, 2011; Sherry, 2010) employing this framework see SFD programs and events as sites where individuals accrue social capital, fostering such things as inclusion and integration into a society. These studies often come from the field of sport management and may be invested in proving the efficacy or outcomes of a program or upholding the efficacy of sport itself as a development tool (Coalter, 2010). This less critical understanding of social capital theorizes that actors gain social capital through SFD programs without problematizing the power structures in which that takes place.

More critical studies of SFD which employ the concept of social capital also exist but are less common. Spaaij's (2012) study, for example, questions the extent to which a community sport program can help Somali refugees develop bridging and linking social capital to connect with mainstream Australian institutions. Such studies consider differing outcomes for participants based on race, ethnicity, gender, class, and education level, for example, bringing into question the narrative that sport is universal and always uniting.

Social capital can also be understood, in the Bourdieusian sense as "the sum of the resources… that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p. 119). From this perspective social capital is a resource that is unequally distributed along class or other social group distinctions. Groups that possess social capital can wield it to maintain and further improve their social power. When social capital is understood in this way,

"[p]oorer community groups tend to be at the mercy of forces over which they have little control" (Spracklen, Long, and Hylton, 2014, p. 116). Thus, it is not surprising that this understanding of social capital is rarely taken up in the types of SFD research that seeks to uphold sport as a site for empowerment and equality.

While I argue that SFD research undertaken from the above two perspectives are insufficiently critical of dominant development paradigms, there are useful insights from this research. Indeed, as Kochanek and Erickson (2020) suggest, PYD's starting point of asset building is a welcome alternative to paternalistic programs which focus solely on preventing risky behaviours. Additionally, some research on social capital has refuted reactionary and racist arguments against multiculturalism (e.g. Spaaij, 2012). Spaaij (2009) has also highlighted the limited contribution of sport programming to social mobility under neoliberal capitalism. However, much of the research conducted from these two perspectives does little to contribute to a critique of the structural conditions that necessitate low or no-cost SFD programming. In this vein, I now turn to two broad theoretical approaches that interrogate SFD from more critical perspectives.

*Critical Cultural Studies and Hegemony Theory*

Cultural studies approaches are very common in the literature on the sociology of sport due to the prevalence of sport as a form of popular culture. Generally, cultural studies focusses on how cultural processes interact with and are shaped by social relations, structures of power, and power/knowledge relationships (Johnson, 1986).

Hegemony is a concept that is commonly employed in critical cultural studies approaches within the sociology of sport. An understanding of power as hegemonic posits that "power is mobilized … through socially negotiated processes of domination and consent" (Darnell, 2012, p. 24). Hegemony has been used in sociology of sport research in a variety of ways, such as to

interrogate hegemonic masculinity in fantasy sport league participation (Davis and Duncan, 2006), to illustrate how sport media produces imagined diverse, multicultural sport fandom communities in a neoliberal city (Scherer and Davidson, 2010), and to understand the construction of ideal femininity and hegemonic masculinity within CrossFit spaces (Knapp, 2015).[1]

Critical studies of SFD initiatives and policies often employ the concept of hegemony in critical cultural studies analyses. In these studies, neoliberal notions of development including individual rights, freedom from government policy, and individualized integration into capitalist logics are understood to be hegemonically imposed by SFD programs onto program recipients.

Cultural studies approaches align most closely with Giulianotti's (2011) critical model of SFD programs, outlined above. In particular, these approaches overlap in their acknowledgement of the limitations of SFD. This is done through a consideration of social structures and complex political and development contexts that constrain and enable the agency of program participants. Additionally, these approaches acknowledge participants' voices through critical reflexivity when possible.

In questioning the usefulness of hegemony in the SFD context, Lindsay and Grattan (2012) have argued that the importance of hegemony as a theoretical concept is overstated in SFD literature. Lindsay and Grattan conducted semi-structured interviews with participants of a sport for development program in Zambia. The authors found that the program was locally driven and culturally relevant to the community it served. Thus, they suggest that hegemony as a concept lacks explanatory potential when examining power relations within that SFD program. However, as Darnell and Hayhurst (2012) argue, an understanding of SFD programs as hegemonic can still leave room for local resistances to powerful structures of capitalism and imperialism.

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[1] Hegemony has a long history in sociology of sport. This list is by necessity a very brief sample of a few applications of hegemony within sociology of sport research.

Indeed, "the hegemonic process is one of negotiation, compromise, and struggle" (Jhally, 1987, p. 74) in which power is neither absolute nor static. Hayton (2018) observed this process of negotiation between program clients and volunteers in his study of an SFD program in North-East England. The program, SUNEE, targeted "hard to reach" individuals such as houseless community members, "ex-offenders", and people "at risk of re-offending" (p. 875). The sport programming was implemented by university student volunteers who were framed as 'privileged helpers' and were perceived as belonging to a higher social class than the clients of the program. Clients resisted volunteers' attempts at behavioural control and knowledge sharing, though a temporary feeling of communitas was produced which worked to bond SUNEE clients and volunteers to a degree. Hayton understands the pushback by clients as "subaltern resistance to the hegemonic structure of the program" (p. 885) which sought to rehabilitate clients through sport programming.

When researching from critical cultural studies perspectives, scholars should "connect and communicate such understandings of [SFD] in ways that challenge or contribute to broader structures of knowledge and power on a global scale" (Darnell and Hayhurst, 2012, p. 121). This is in line with Darnell's (2012) call for a critical pedagogy of SFD, discussed earlier, which works to challenge social hierarchies, social inequalities, and dominant meanings of sport.

*Postcolonial Theory*

Sociologists of sport researching a wide range of social conditions have increasingly turned to different threads of postcolonial theory to inform their analyses. For example, Carrington's (2010) book *Race, Sport, and Politics: The Sporting Black Diaspora* interrogates histories of anti-black racism in elite sport through what the author describes as a "post/colonial" lens; Burdsey's (2016) critical discourse analysis employs postcolonial theory to interrogate questions of inclusion and multiculturalism at the London 2012 Olympics; and Joseph's (2014) ethnography of recreational

cricketers from the Caribbean takes up insights from diaspora theory to enter debates about place and belonging within the Canadian mainstream.

Similarly, SFD programs have been examined from postcolonial perspectives, which "assert that the historical experience of colonialism deeply structures the present, impacting institutions, opportunities, and choices of everyone" (Saavedra, 2018, p. 208). Through a postcolonial lens, SFD programs are impacted and produced by the local and global histories of colonialism, wherever these programs take place. Much of the SFD research from postcolonial perspectives is undertaken by researchers located in the Global North analyzing programs that are implemented in the Global South.

Postcolonial theory has been used to analyze discursive representations of SFD programs. Darnell's (2014) Saidian analysis of a *Sports Illustrated* article suggests that SFD programs and the participants in these programs are discursively produced as orientalised Others. Truths are produced about the recipients of SFD programs and the cultures from which they come through representations in popular media. Darnell (2007) has also shown how whiteness operates to produce SFD volunteers as benevolent deliverers of programming to 'in need' recipients located in the Global South. By analyzing testimonials on the website of the SFD organization *Right to Play*, Darnell shows how recipients of *Right to Play* programming are produced as vulnerable, voiceless subjects in need of assistance and development from volunteers from the Global North. The popular framings Darnell analyzes run counter to a postcolonial approach which highlight the voices and experiences of oppressed peoples (Saavedra, 2018). Postcolonial perspectives analyze SFD discourse and tie discursive themes to the structures and practices of SFD programs. So these discursive analyses are explicitly tied to the material realities and lived experiences of participants in SFD programs.

While less common, insights from postcolonial feminist theory have also been taken up in SFD research to make sense of fieldwork in a variety of SFD programs (e.g. Hayhurst, 2016;

Hayhurst et al., 2016). Postcolonial feminist perspectives analyse power relations between the global

North and South and can be applied to SFD to critically interrogate western notions of development

(McDonald, 2018). McDonald further contends that "[f]eminist postcolonial perspectives challenge

the masculinist bent of much postcolonial musing on power" (p. 199). For example, postcolonial

feminist theory challenges colonially imposed gender binaries, gendered division of labour, and, in

the context of sport research, the valorization of aggression and violence within hypermasculine

hegemonic sporting practices.

Darnell and Hayhurst (2011) have argued for a 'decolonizing praxis for SFD' which is

shaped by postcolonial feminist theories and can help to question mainstream development goals

and who these goals serve. The decolonizing praxis the authors argue for is anti-racist, anti-sexist,

and global in scope. Darnell and Hayhurst (2011) argue that "the invocation of sport in development

is beholden to politics and the challenge remains for sport/development scholars to embrace such

politics towards a decolonizing sporting praxis" (pp. 193-194). For example, an anti-racist approach

to SFD refuses to see program participants – whether in the Global North or Global South – as

passive recipients of sport programming and education. Rather, it chooses to engage participants

and privilege their perspectives.

Hayhurst et al.'s (2016) study of two SFD programs – one in Vancouver, Canada, and one in

Perth, Australia – is an example of an empirical study that has applied postcolonial feminist insights.

Using participatory action research, the authors worked with Indigenous women in the two

programs to understand how they engaged with and resisted mainstream notions of development

espoused by the SFD programs. These notions of development, Hayhurst et al. argue, are that

"sport… functions as a biopedagogical apparatus through which norms and ideologies related to

Eurocentrism, citizenship, neoliberalism, employability, self-reliance and 'healthy living and bodies'

are disseminated and perpetuated" (p. 550). This function of sport is primarily aimed at shaping

program participants to be productive subjects under a capitalist system. Analyzing SFD programs from a postcolonial feminist perspective problematizes the individualist approach of development and empowerment which are put forth by many SFD programs. However, like most research from postcolonial perspectives, Hayhurst et al.'s critique is directed at the systems of exploitation and settler-colonization that the SFD programs operate in, rather than the programs themselves. While the critique is ultimately structural, a vision for a more just theory and practice of SFD is also put forth. Hayhurst et al. argue for a vision of SFD that centres the voices of participants and their lived experiences of colonization.

Within these postcolonial readings of SFD, sport and empowerment are understood as discursive formations in which sport is seen as a "universal good" that brings people together across cultural lines (Darnell, 2012). Hartmann and Kwauk, (2011) call this the 'dominant approach' to SFD which assumes that participation in sport "will automatically and inevitably serve the development goals of socialization, education, and intervention" (p. 289) while existing social relations of oppression and inequality remain intact. This 'dominant approach' is the same understanding of sport that underpins PYD and uncritical social capital research on SFD. Of the varied theoretical perspectives taken up by SFD researchers, postcolonial theory most directly questions the 'dominant approach' by de-centring western perspectives and historicizing development processes. These critiques bring into question the essentialist understandings of sport as apolitical and universal that underly dominant SFD practices (Darnell, 2012).

**Framing Free Play for Kids**

In chapters 6 through 8 I present a critical discourse analysis (CDA) of media produced by and about FPK. Preceding that analysis, I provide a robust and in depth historicization of FPK and its creation. Here I briefly describe the program and its aims. FPK is a sport for development program that works with over 60 elementary schools in Edmonton (Free Play, 2020). Initially named

Free Footie, the non-profit organization was founded in 2007 as a no-cost soccer program for elementary school students. It has since added basketball, football, and hockey to its range of no-cost sports programs. These programs provide participants with equipment, coaching, and transportation to and from games. This makes FPK's claim to being a no-cost program more robust than some other community sport programs, as barriers to transportation and equipment access are largely removed.

That FPK started out as a free soccer program is not surprising. As Forde and Kota (2016) note, soccer, in particular is invoked alongside notions of hope by global governing bodies such as FIFA, and by numerous SFD organizations. Further, the idea of soccer as a "global game", positions it well as the sport of choice for FPK, whose target community are mostly "refugees, newcomers, or indigenous [sic] youth" (Free Play, 2020). While FPK is primarily implemented through sporting activities,

> the focus of [the] program isn't on sport or athletics. It's about creating *a safe, inclusive space where kids of all backgrounds and abilities can make friends, build community, and feel good about themselves.* It's also about helping to improve their social, emotional, mental, and physical health (Free Play, 2020, emphasis in original).

In addition to no-cost sport programming, FPK offers a Pathway to Leadership program which allows youth in grades 7-12 to work as junior coaches and referees with the goal of providing certification, work experience, and developmental opportunities to older youth (Free Play, 2020). Having identified the founding, goals, and main programming components of FPK, I now turn to the cultural, historical, and political contexts in which the program operates.

As Kapoor (2009) argues, understanding development and colonialism, and resistance to these forces requires an understanding of the local political and historical contexts at play. FPK

exists as part of a longer historical movement of sport and recreation programs in Edmonton aiming to instill children with certain ideologically informed values. Thus, in chapter 4, I preface my analysis of FPK by tracing a brief history of sport for development programs in Edmonton, examining sport and recreation as it was used by the Young Men's Christian Association and Young Women's Christian Association in the first half of the 20th century. I then analyze the playground movement in Edmonton in the 1920's and 1930's. I also historicize and examine the use of sport and recreation in the 'Indian Residential School' system to explore early iterations of the use of sporting practices as a colonizing tool.

One entry point in my analysis will be to investigate the relevance of the present political context in Alberta to the operation of FPK. In April of 2019, the United Conservative Party was elected to a majority government in Alberta and swiftly implemented an austerity regime involving many neoliberal reforms impacting funding for healthcare, education, and other areas of social services in the province. Neoliberalism is understood here as "a philosophy and a set of economic and political policies aimed at cutting expenditure on public goods such as education, health care, and income assistance in order to enhance corporate profit rates" (King, 2006, p. xxvi). This approach to governance is tied deeply to the ideological understanding of the individual as solely responsible for their personal wellbeing. This understanding further informs development as a notion of individual improvement and, in the case of SFD, sporting empowerment. Under neoliberalism, as Hall (2011) suggests, this "idea of the 'free, possessive individual'" predominates, while "the state [is seen as] tyrannical and oppressive" (p. 706). In this context of cuts to public spending, I analyze the ideological and discursive connection of FPK to the process of funding non-profit recreation programs through private sponsors, community donations, and government grant programs such as the Government of Alberta's Community Initiatives Program. In doing so my aim

is to critically interrogate the discursive links between FPK as a program that receives substantial funding, and dominant ideological perspectives.

I will be using a CDA to analyze the politics of FPK and the historical and sociopolitical context in which the program operates. I explain my approach to CDA in detail in the next chapter along with the paradigmatic assumptions underpinning this thesis.

# Chapter 3: Methodology

**Paradigm**

In this chapter I outline the paradigmatic assumptions which inform my work. I also include an in depth explanation of the approach to critical discourse analysis (CDA) used in this thesis. A paradigm, in the view of Guba and Lincoln (1994), is a frame through which a researcher looks at and understands the world. Paradigms encompass multiple assumptions including ontological, epistemological, and axiological beliefs. These assumptions should fit with the theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches applied in the research to make up a coherent paradigm (Lincoln et al., 2011). While these assumptions are not taken to be true uncritically, they are tools to guide the research.

The research and analysis presented in the subsequent chapters is conducted from a critical paradigm, which focuses on unearthing and critiquing unequal power relations within broad historical, social, political, and cultural structures. The work produced from a critical paradigm can be seen "as a form of social or cultural criticism" and takes the position that "all thought is fundamentally mediated by power relations that are social and historically constructed" (Kincheloe and McLaren, 2005, p. 304). Further, researchers using a critical paradigm approach their work with the aim to uncover and challenge these inequitable power relations (Kincheloe and McLaren, 2005). Thus, from a critical paradigm we can understand reality as something "shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender values" (Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba, 2011, p. 100). Employing a critical paradigm in my research will allow me to focus on how power operates in the realm of recreation programming generally, and FPK in particular, to construct dominant discourses and ideologies which impact the material conditions and experiences of people.

**Ontological, Epistemological, and Axiological Assumptions**

*Ontology*

Ontology takes up the question of what reality is and asks us to consider how we view reality (Mayan, 2009). In a critical paradigm, reality and the truths that come to be recognized out of it are socially constructed and tend to benefit those who fit within dominant norms, putting these groups in privileged positions (Lincoln et al., 2011). Therefore, a critical ontology rejects the realist ontology of positivist scientific research approaches. From this realist ontological perspective, research is conducted through quantitative study with the goal of "predict[ing] and control[ling] nature" (Lincoln et al., 2011). Generally, positivist work does not consider societal power relations and structures of oppression that are central considerations when undertaking work from a critical paradigm. While critical work does not necessarily seek to overcome these power relations, as this is not possible through research alone, it does work to challenge how these power relations produce and reproduce inequalities.

Historicization is important in a critical paradigm to develop a broad understanding of how the present form of reality and the power relations operating within it have been shaped by these forces. The deductive approach of much critical work requires the use of historically informed theoretical perspectives (Kincheloe and McLaren, 2005). Therefore, my project will require a nuanced and well-informed understanding of the histories of settler colonization, development, and recreation provision that has contributed to shaping the present political realities of no-cost sport and recreation provision in Edmonton, Alberta. I undertake this historicization in chapter 4.

*Epistemology*

Epistemology asks about the relationship between the knower and the known, that is the researcher and the people or context being researched (Mayan, 2009). Similar to my ontological assumptions, the epistemological position I take within a critical paradigm rejects the objectivist view of positivist research. This objectivist perspective states there is one absolute truth being discovered

or uncovered by research (Lincoln et al., 2011). Due to the subjectivity of knowledge and knowing, epistemological assumptions are closely related to ontological assumptions. Ontology and epistemology are somewhat folded into each other and become deeply intertwined within a critical paradigm (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Kincheloe and McLaren, 2005).

Within a critical paradigm "what can be known is inextricably intertwined with the interaction between a *particular* investigator and a *particular* object or group" (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p. 110, emphasis in original). Therefore, my subject position as a researcher is important in interrogating what knowledge is produced and what that knowledge means. As noted by many scholars (e.g. Darnell, 2012; Hayhurst, 2016), the majority of SFD research, including mine, is conducted by white, middle-class researchers located in the Global North. The participants in the programs being studied are usually Black, Indigenous, and people of colour, whether these programs are located in the Global North or the Global South.

Importantly, since I am working from a critical perspective, I see my research as within "wider issues of power and from the particular biography, pathways, decisions and theoretical orientations of the researcher" (Markula and Silk, 2011, p. 209).  Further, my research also takes place within interlocking structures of capitalist, white supremacist, and patriarchal dominance. These structures not only constrain the actions and opportunities of social groups, but also assert dominant ways of being and knowing that result in colonizing forms of recreation provision which I wish to critique. Therefore, due to the epistemological assumption that knowledge is always subjective, I will need to be reflexive and critical of my interpretations of the data and analysis throughout.

*Axiology*

Axiology is a third philosophical perspective that informs the paradigm a researcher works from. "Ethics, esthetics, and religion" are all considerations of axiological thinking (Lincoln et al.,

2011, p. 116). Axiological questions address "the often-unexamined, unrecognized, or mistakenly universalized values that influence our work" (Peers, 2018, p. 268). Axiological thinking in research allows the researcher to ask themselves the question 'what is important about this research?' Social justice and reducing inequities through research are important components of a critical axiology (Lincoln et al. 2011).

Thus, thinking through the axiological assumptions within a critical paradigm, the primary value is working towards social justice, and challenging societal oppression and resulting inequities. One way I aim to do this in my research is through critiquing the dominant paradigm of development, which I argue maintains western neocolonial hegemony both abroad, and in the settler colonial state of Canada, and the ways this development paradigm manifests in FPK.

Additionally, having been involved in working with SFD type programs funded by wealthy donors and large businesses, I wish to contribute to the existing body of literature that opposes the aforementioned 'dominant approach' to sport (Hartmann and Kwauk, 2011). I have worked extensively as a tennis instructor, teaching people of all ages, and have worked in both no-cost programs, as well as high-cost programs. For example, as a community instructor I taught weekly tennis classes for students in some of the same 'vulnerable schools' which FPK works with. One program I worked in was funded by the Canadian Tire Jumpstart charity and culminated in a no-cost day of tennis for hundreds of children at Rogers Place, the new Edmonton Oilers hockey arena located in downtown Edmonton.

Through events such as this I have witnessed the contradictions of no-cost sports programming. These programs no doubt bring joy to some children who are provided access to both spaces and activities they would otherwise be denied. Indeed, having access to sport and recreation is pleasurable for many people, and FPK is certainly one such program that brings joy to many of the children who participate in their programming. However, in the personal example

described above, this program took place on the exact site – Rogers Place, the Edmonton Oilers new hockey arena – that, through gentrification, has displaced or otherwise impacted hundreds of people living in the downtown core (Scherer, Davidson, Kafara, and Koch, 2020; Scherer, Mills, and Sloan McCulloch, 2019). Therefore, I am acutely aware of how no-cost SFD programs and their operation are in no way natural or unproblematic. It is with this perspective in mind that I seek to critique the reproduction of oppressive social relations which takes place under neoliberal (sport) development.

**Methodology**

CDA is the methodology I employ for the analysis presented in chapters 6 through 8. CDA is a form of textual analysis used to "critically investigate and address social problems by examining the *ideological workings* of discourse" (Liao and Markula, 2009, p. 31, emphasis in original). Before laying out what a CDA is, there are two important terms to define as they pertain to this CDA. Discourse, from the perspective of a CDA, can only be understood by "analysing sets of relations" (Fairclough, 2010, p. 4). Fairclough argues that discourse cannot be defined in itself, rather it should be understood only in the ways that it relates to interconnected social processes. That is, how does language operate dialectically to (re)produce or challenge established social relations. Discourses, then, through discursive practices – in the form of communication events – construct "events, actions and the social agents, objects, institutions etc. that they involve" (Fairclough, 2010, p. 19). Discourse analysis can then be used to tease out when these discourses become subordinated, or dominant and hegemonic. Power is another important theoretical idea to outline. Maintaining coherency with my critical paradigm, I understand power as hegemonic, being held by social groups who can exercise power to maintain dominance in contested social and cultural spheres (Jhally, 1987).

While CDA is not one singular approach and varies based on the theoretical underpinnings, I adopt Fairclough's (2010) methodology. What follows is an outline of this particular approach to CDA. I have chosen this approach because it is an established framework for textual analysis (Liao and Markula, 2009; Markula and Silk, 2011) and allows for an analysis of both the ways language (re)produces unequal power relations and, potentially, challenges those power relations. Much of the SFD research I draw on to inform my analysis has shown the limitations of SFD programs' contribution to social change (e.g. Darnell, 2012, 2014; Hayhurst and Szto, 2016). However, given the attempts these programs purportedly make to better the lives of participants, it is important to allow room in my analysis for understanding how language challenges existing inequitable power relations, not simply reinforces them.

CDA is applied from a specific political perspective (Markula and Silk, 2011) and, much like a critical paradigm, aims to critique dominant or oppressive discourses that are racist, sexist, and classist, and the oppressive societal structures in which these discourses operate. Focusing on discourse is a valuable method for understanding power because "the complex realities of power relations are 'condensed' and simplified in discourses" (Fairclough, 2010, p. 4). For Fairclough (2010), there are three primary criteria that must be present in a CDA. First, CDA "is not just analysis of discourse [or texts], it is part of some form of systematic transdisciplinary analysis of relations between discourse and other elements of the social process" (p. 10). What Fairclough refers to as transdisciplinary, I understand as interdisciplinary. That is, work that combines insights and approaches from several disciplines throughout the research process. The analysis presented in the next three chapters is interdisciplinary, bringing together insights from development studies, sociology of sport, leisure studies, and settler colonial studies to name a few.

Second, CDA involves "some form of systematic analysis of texts" (Fairclough, 2010, p. 10). In fulfilling this criteria, I have used criterion and theoretical sampling (see below) to assist in

systematically creating an archive of data for analysis. Importantly, discourse from the perspective of a CDA is represented by and condensed within communication events such as images, video, sounds, body language, as well as written and spoken word. In subsequent chapters I present analysis of texts including promotional videos, media articles, and other webpages.

Third, CDA "is not just descriptive, it is also normative. It addresses social wrongs in their discursive aspect and possible ways of righting or mitigating them" (Fairclough, 2010, p. 11). This criteria positions CDA well within a critical paradigm, due to the overlapping goals of analyzing and critiquing oppressive social structures and inequitable power relations. It also links CDA to my axiological commitments of challenging individualist development paradigms which predominate under neoliberal capitalism, and the inequities resulting therein.

CDA involves an iterative three step process (Liao and Markula, 2009). Each step is not entirely discrete, rather they are interconnected and inform one another, potentially taking place multiple times throughout the analysis. First, description of the communication event involves describing all semiotic imagery and language in as much detail as possible. Second, intertextual analysis requires the researcher to examine possible meanings embedded in the texts. Importantly, from a critical perspective I do not view texts as having one singular meaning (Fairclough, 2010). However, texts may represent a dominant meaning that is taken as the common sense reading. This dominant meaning often serves to uphold hegemonic understandings of existing social relations and power structures (Hall, 1980). Completing an intertextual analysis requires a connection to existing discourses. Generally, there are two types of intertextuality – manifest and constitutive (Liao and Markula, 2009). Manifest intertextuality explicitly draws on other sources to reproduce discourses. For example, a media article discussing Canadian multiculturalism might quote the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act*, the federal government multiculturalism policy, to illustrate an imagined

inclusivity of the Canadian nation state. Constitutive intertextuality is often more difficult to identify and involves the use of signifiers which represent established discourses. For example, a Canadian magazine in the 1950's may have shown a classroom full of white children, while a 21st century Canadian magazine might represent diversity and multiculturalism with images of a multiracial classroom of happy children.

The third and final step of a CDA is to connect discursive themes to ideological dominance in social relations. Here, my analysis interrogates how language about FPK reinforces, normalizes, obscures, and – in limited cases – challenges oppressive social structures and social relations. While programs like FPK eschew a hardline pay-to-play model, I argue they do little to alleviate the structural conditions which produce the material realities in which some families can afford recreation programming while others cannot.

**Data Collection**

My data, which I analyze and discuss in chapters 6 through 8 has been collected primarily from online sources such as media articles and the FPK website. The source material I collected forms an 'archive' of material to be analyzed. Traditional archival sites are buildings which hold documents, but the internet is a growing archive with many valuable textual sources (Johnes, 2015). Using the sampling strategies described below, I have made what Stanley (2017, p. 35) calls an "archive of the other archive" containing data sources that are useful and theoretically relevant. As Stanley suggests, all archival research and textual analysis needs to go through the process of making an archive with relevant documents. Going through this process was a useful organizational tool and assisted me in managing and tracking the size of my archive.

Due to the iterative process in collecting and analysing data in qualitative research, I utilized multiple sampling techniques throughout my study (Sparkes, 2014). First, I employed criterion sampling which is used "to review and study all cases that meet some predetermined criterion of

importance" (Patton, 1990, p. 176). Sampling was guided by the criteria that the sources must either have been produced by or about FPK. Second, theoretical sampling allowed me to limit the archive to relevant sources. Theoretical sampling allows for inclusion of sources which illustrate "slices of life, incidents, [or] time periods… on the basis of their potential manifestation or representation of important theoretical constructs" (Patton, 1990, p. 177). Therefore, my sample did not necessarily include all the discursive material produced by or about FPK, rather I only sampled the data sources that provided me with rich and relevant data. In this case, relevant data was primarily related to discursive themes of race, gender, and class in the context of FPK, and recreation provision in Edmonton more broadly.

My search for sources began on the FPK website which provided links to a large number of mainstream media sources. From there I searched each mainstream media source's website (e.g. CBC, Global Edmonton, *The Guardian*) using the key words 'Free Play for Kids' which provided media sources from 2021, and 'Free Footie' which provided media sources from before FPK's name change in 2021. Where necessary the search was narrowed using 'Edmonton', 'sport', and 'soccer'. I also conducted a search of the University of Alberta library's data base with the same search terms. Lastly, I was aware of select community league and neighbourhood newsletters which included interviews with FPK staff, so I collected print and online copies of those interviews where possible.

Using theoretical sampling techniques meant that I did not aim to create a specific sample size to complete my 'archive' as there is no set sample size for CDA studies (Markula and Silk, 2011). However, all sources used in my analysis were created after the founding of FPK in 2007, up until August of 2021 when the analysis began. My sample includes many forms of discursive material such as media articles, promotional videos, webpages, and social media posts. The archive I analyze spans 14 years and includes a breadth of media types including – among others – articles in

mainstream media outlets, podcasts, promotional videos, and government press releases. The themes I identify and discuss here therefore vary considerably but there are interconnected threads.

These themes reflect a critical analysis of media produced by and about FPK, rather than a definitive reading. This analysis is informed by the critical theoretical perspectives described in chapter 2, and specifically I approach my analysis from the view that the discursive themes I identify are historically and socially constructed and linked to sedimented power relations which should be subject to critique (Kincheloe and McLaren, 2005). Through this analysis I present themes reflected in dominant discourses.

**Evaluation Criteria**

There are many differing perspectives on how to judge the quality of qualitative research. These perspectives may vary within and across paradigmatic perspectives. Qualitative research does not need to be judged on validity or reliability because these are tools to measure objectivity and are exclusively appropriate for research undertaken from a positivist or post-positivist paradigm (Markula and Silk, 2011). Within a critical paradigm, there is a breadth of proposed criteria to evaluate the quality of qualitative research. Many of these criteria focus on the researcher-participant relationship in terms of ethics and co-construction of the research findings. As my research did not include participants, many criteria were important to consider abstractly, but were not directly applicable to my research project. Markula and Silk (2011) outline a significant number of criteria that have been developed specifically for work done from a critical paradigm. Of these, my work can reasonably be held accountable to the evaluative criteria of credibility, authenticity, criticality, and integrity. To fulfill these criteria my research needed to involve a reflexive approach at all stages of data collection, analysis, and representation (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004).

My work can also be judged by the constructive criteria outlined by Markula and Silk (2011), which include research design, data generation, and analytic techniques. Included in this is the quality of my archive and the analysis of the texts in the archive. Each of these constructive criteria work to evaluate the methodological coherence of the research project and following these criteria assisted me in maintaining a logical thread between my paradigmatic, epistemological, and ontological positions, and my methodological decisions throughout the project.

Finally, the researcher's approach to representation is an important evaluative measure of critical research. Considerations of representation tie to my epistemological assumptions that knowledge and research are subjective and relate to my positionality as a researcher (Lincoln et al., 2011). To maintain coherence with my epistemological assumption, I presented my research with an active voice, positioning myself as part of the research. These criteria can and should be used to judge the quality of my research. I have regularly referred to these criteria throughout my research during data collection, analysis, and writing as these criteria were ongoing components in the lengthy process of researching and writing this thesis.

**Ethics**

Ethical approaches to research are a vital component of good qualitative research (Markula and Silk, 2011). The critical theoretical insights I will be drawing from see capitalism and colonialism as deeply unethical systems (e.g. Hall, 1996). With this in mind, I argue that I must challenge and critique these unethical and oppressive systems for my research to be ethical.

An ethical approach to critical research requires reflexivity at all stages of the research process. Reflexivity is "a process of critical reflection both on the kind of knowledge produced from research and how that knowledge is generated" (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004, p. 274). One benefit of reflexivity was to ensure sufficient data had been collected to enhance accountability of my work,

while also acknowledging the subjective process of the production of the research. For example, one of my main aims was to approach the CDA of FPK presented in chapters 6 through 8 as an opportunity to critically analyze and develop a robust critique of an SFD program that is often uncritically celebrated. However, I had to reconcile this critique with the fact that FPK does provide a much needed, and much appreciated, space for no-cost recreation. As such, I had to ensure that I attended to all the most prominent discursive themes in my analysis. Reflexivity here was useful to ensure I was collecting and analyzing data thoroughly to produce research and writing that stood up to the quality criteria of credibility, authenticity, and integrity in particular. Additionally, throughout the process of research and writing I had an ethical commitment to consider how my research and writings could (re)produce or challenge inequities. As Fairclough (2010) notes, when writing up a critical discourse analysis we are ourselves producing discursive material about the subject matter under study, and the discursive representations can be liberatory or oppressive in their own right. Reflexivity was again helpful to ensure I produced ethical critical research that critiqued and challenged existing inequities.

**Conclusion**

In these first three chapters I have conducted a literature review of select areas of SFD research and introduced the paradigmatic assumptions and methodological approaches which frame this thesis. In my review of the SFD literature I have outlined SFD programs as sites for intervention in development projects both internationally and domestically. SFD projects have been studied from a variety of perspectives. Positive youth development and social capital approaches are most common and tend to approach SFD programs uncritically, highlighting individual or interpersonal development in program recipients. Conversely, critical cultural studies and postcolonial theory informed approaches interrogate the social structures which necessitate no-cost and low-cost SFD programs and aim to critique how these programs can reproduce and legitimize

oppressive social structures. In line with my paradigmatic, ontological, and epistemological

approach, as well as my axiological commitments outlined above, I will draw on these latter two

approaches to inform my research.

## Chapter 4: Historicizing Sport, Recreation, and Colonization in the 19th and 20th Centuries

**Introduction**

In Canada, recreation and public provision of recreation have been contested and debated in political and social spheres. This has led to recreation services being provided by both civil society and the state. As such, SFD type programs must be understood within the historical and political contexts in which they operate. I further contend that historical contexts of sport and recreation programming are important in understanding modern initiatives such as Free Play for Kids (FPK). To this end, it is necessary to explore some general trends in no-cost sport and recreation programming in Edmonton throughout the 20th and 21st centuries, while also examining the social, cultural, and political contexts in which these programs operated. In doing so, I can trace a history of SFD type programs while looking at discursive similarities, as well as similarities and differences in program delivery, program funding, and philosophical underpinnings of these programs. Some scholars (e.g. Kidd, 2008; Schinke, McGannon, Watson, and Busanich, 2013) suggest the SFD movement as it exists currently is a relatively new undertaking in which sport is used as a starting point for various social and individual based development initiatives. However, sport programming has been used to shape and influence individuals and populations for a long time. The discursive themes of modern SFD programming are influenced and shaped in part by these historical trends of sport and development initiatives becoming intertwined.

To accomplish this historicization, it is important to consider the ways that histories of settler colonialism and recreation impact one another. In historicizing recreation practices I explore how no cost and SFD recreation programming has produced working-class and racialized people – in particular, Indigenous peoples – as 'at risk' or 'in need' of development, and the ways these discursive representations intersect with gendered power relations and power structures.

Importantly, these discourses are not static, rather they shift over time with new discursive formations arising at different times based on political and social contexts (Hall, 1996).

In this chapter I trace a through line of no-cost and low-cost recreation in Edmonton through the early 20th century drawing on existing historical scholarship as well as postcolonial and critical theories. In doing so, I argue that SFD models and discourses have a long history in recreation programming in Edmonton and Alberta more broadly. While these programs operated with different goals and philosophies at different conjunctures, they are historically and politically related to existing discourses about 'in need' subjects who are targeted by recreation programming with the aim of incorporating those subjects into a particular normalized way of being.

First, following Foucauldian understandings of discourse, I briefly outline important theoretical points laid out in Tink et al. (2019) and Tink and Peers (2021). This discussion frames the rest of the chapter. Then I briefly historicize the development of Edmonton within political realities of settler colonialism and racial capitalism. Next, I trace a brief history of low and no-cost recreation programming in Edmonton. This discussion focusses on the production of ideas about recreation as they relate to and differ from present day SFD programming. To do so I draw on two examples of no or low cost recreation programs in Edmonton, namely, the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) and Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) role in recreation, and the playground movement involving parks run by local groups and the City of Edmonton. My analysis focuses on discursive themes in public recreation, and I place these ideas within a broader national and political context of the developing settler colonial state of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. I tie the discourses of 20th century public and civil society recreation to 21st century SFD initiatives like FPK.

I then briefly historicize the genocidal 'Indian Residential School' system and contrast the use of sport within 'Indian Residential Schools' with the philanthropy of recreation programming in

dominant settler society. Last, I draw together histories of SFD type programming with a contemporary example of an SFD program tun by the Government of Alberta which seeks to address perceived social ills in Indigenous communities.

**Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical frame that underpins this chapter is generally derived from Foucault's approach to genealogy, discursive analysis, and conceptualizations of subjectivity. Specifically, I draw on two related pieces that importantly historicize recreation provision in Canada using Foucault's frameworks. First, I use conceptual points made in Tink et al.'s (2019) Foucauldian analysis of the relationship between recreation and public health in Canada. Their analysis is not an in depth investigation of any particular event or case study, rather it focusses on discursive "threads used to unsettle contemporary understandings" of recreation practices (p. 447). Along similar lines, I look at select examples of recreation programming in Edmonton and follow specific discursive lines in recreation discourse which have worked to construct particular groups as in need of reform and assimilation.

Second, I draw on Tink and Peers' (2021) genealogy of sport and recreation in Canada. A genealogy "is an investigation of the present through a detailed examination of the past" (Tink and Peers, 2021, p. 206) and seeks to challenge objectivist notions of history which have crafted and produced a particular narrative. In this way, my analysis of no cost and low cost recreation programming as sites of social control will be informed by a genealogical-like analysis of how recreation practices have produced and constrained ideas about the ideal subject. In doing so, I understand subjectivities to be constructed and represented through discourse in particular historical contexts (Hall, 1996).

Taking this theoretical approach allows me to denaturalize the existence of FPK and other similar programs in their current forms, and I argue that FPK exists in a historical context of SFD-

type programs produced under broader political formations of settler colonialism and racial capitalism in Canada. In other words, I can illustrate how discourses about fitness, health, and subjects 'in need' of particular forms of recreation programming are socially constructed within the context of neoliberal capitalism, settler colonialism, white supremacy, and multiculturalism in 21st century Canada. Further, many of the themes I discuss in chapters 6 through 8, a CDA of FPK, exist in part because of narratives of individual exceptionalism and Canadian state benevolence which are broken down by Tink and Peers (2021). This approach to studying the history of no cost and low cost recreation programming can disrupt such narratives of progress. My historicization of recreation begins by briefly situating Edmonton within the relevant histories of settler colonization.

**Contextualizing Edmonton**

Like other Canadian cities and towns, land in Edmonton has been made available through violent, genocidal, colonial processes of displacement. For example, in 1888, the Papaschase Cree reserve was formally disbanded, and the land was taken over by the Crown. The Papaschase reserve was located south of the North Saskatchewan River in what would eventually become Strathcona, before Strathcona and Edmonton were amalgamated in 1912. In the second half of the 19th century as settlers realized the need to expand the city, the reserve was moved further south, away from the river and the traditional lands of the people of the Papaschase band (Miller, 2011). Eventually the reserve was disbanded following dishonest and manipulative negotiations conducted by settler administrators. Donald (2004) argues that this story of removal, which was central to the founding of Edmonton, has been written out of official and unofficial histories of the city. This process of removal was part of a broader – though not entirely successful – attempt to displace Indigenous

peoples from the area that would come to be known as Edmonton through the implementation of the reserve and pass systems.[2]

Indeed, this process of removal was not a one off. Many scholars of settler colonialism have pointed out that removal and dispossession of Indigenous peoples is fundamental to the settler colonial project (e.g. Simpson, 2014, Tuck and Yang, 2012). For example, Oceti Sakowin historian Nick Estes (2013) describes elimination as the main mode of racialization of Indigenous peoples, and a process that was absolutely necessary in the establishment of capitalist property relations in North America. This is also a foundational component of the implementation of racial capitalism. That is, to understand that capitalism is always already racial, and for capital to operate requires ongoing processes of accumulation by dispossession (Melamed, 2015). Beyond this, racial capitalism should also be thought of "as a system of expropriating violence on collective life itself" (Melamed, 2015, p. 78).

In tandem with processes of settler colonialism and the development of racial capitalism in western Canada, Edmonton became the capital city of the newly created province of Alberta in 1905, and the following year was estimated to have a population of 14,088. By 1921 Edmonton's population had grown to 58,821 (Population history, 2021). Betke (1982) suggests that organized sport opportunities underwent significant growth in the period of urbanization in the 1920s. Edmonton is commonly understood as a 'gateway' city to the resource rich north of Alberta which drives the provincial economy (Smith, 2019). Clearing land for agricultural production and living

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[2] Through the process of dispossession, members of the Papaschase Cree Band were reclassified as Métis by the federal government. In 1999 the Papaschase Cree Band was re-formed and began to seek reparations for the dispossession and treaty breaking led by the federal government in the 1880's (Miller, 2011). For a more thorough overview of this history and ongoing legal claims see
https://www.arcgis.com/apps/Cascade/index.html?appid=50ec10596bd4402099ecaf66c27673f1.

space is one part of the establishment of settler colonial structures and social relations, and the use of land for extraction of resources is another.

Until an oil and gas based economic boom of the 1970s and subsequent growth and development, Edmonton was a relatively small city surrounded by a substantial rural population. Hiller (2007) argues that Edmonton has become an 'arriviste' city, characterized by tenuous new economic growth and power, but occupies an unstable position within the nation state in terms of power and influence. The development of the neoliberal city, shaped by policies which produce a "normative political rationality that involves a specific organization of the social, the subject, and the state according to market criteria" (Koch, Scherer, and Kafara, 2020, p. 809) has brought forth a concomitant shift to non-profit provision of SFD programming as public spending and social safety nets are slashed. Importantly, sport, recreation, and health promotion programs in Alberta often receive significant portions of their funding from resource extraction industries which have maintained profitability in part through government subsidies born out of neoliberal policies. In this way, charities come to be seen as useful when and where they can make profits for corporations through advertising and strategic partnerships, as well as when they can be used to justify additional tax cuts and reductions in public expenditures (King, 2006). Through this process corporations can sanitize their public image and foster good faith by associating themselves with initiatives such as SFD programs that are generally perceived to be positive influences (Hayhurst and Giles, 2013). In this chapter I explore earlier recreation trends throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and in chapters 6 through 8 I analyze some themes related to this shift to non-profit recreation programming.

**Civil Society Recreation Provision in Edmonton**

Recreation provision in Alberta, like elsewhere in Canada, has been the subject of political debate at all levels of government. Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries different social and political groups have taken on varying levels of responsibility for recreation provision. Throughout

much of the 20th century, amateur sports organizations and clubs ran leagues and events, and restricted participation, excluding various groups of people. For example, many sports clubs and leagues were created along ethnic lines with the intention of excluding settlers from Eastern Europe, and participation in many clubs and teams was limited to men (Wall, 2012). Amateurism was another common means of exclusion. In 1880 the National Amateur Lacrosse Association implicitly prevented Indigenous athletes from participation through implementation of amateurism rules. This took place in part due to intersections of race and class. While white upper and middle-class men could afford to play lacrosse without pay, Indigenous athletes, who tended to be less affluent, needed to receive a match fee to cover travel and other expenses (Downey, 2018; Paraschak, 1998). In the 1920s the sport of lacrosse was promoted, albeit unsuccessfully, in Edmonton to promote a nativist 'Canada-first' agenda which prioritized the interests of 'Native born' white Canadians rather than those of recent immigrants and Indigenous peoples (Kossuth and McMurray, 2015).

Wetherell and Kmet (1990) argue that leisure, including sport and recreation, was one aspect of Albertan society that worked to reinforce a white, middle-class, anglophone hegemonic cultural dominance between the late 19th to the mid-twentieth century. The norms, morals, mores, and social relations established by this group came to be dominant and were maintained through processes of cultural persuasion and consent. Other cultural practices were discouraged or prohibited and were supplanted with those of the Anglo settler culture. This included incorporating and assimilating acceptable outsiders such as eastern and northern European immigrants into the Anglo culture, while non-European immigrants and Indigenous peoples were excluded, though in differing ways. Wetherell and Kmet (1990) suggest that this hegemonic process in Alberta was not directed by one ruling bloc, but "was sustained by various elite groups" (p. xx) working in politics, education, and business. To return to the applicability of leisure in this social context, sports such as baseball, hockey, and soccer did particularly important ideological work, reinforcing "the outlook that

manliness, fair play, and team sports were characteristically British" (Wetherell and Kmet, 1990, p. 125). Many civil society groups such as community leagues, labour unions, YMCAs and YWCAs played an important role in promoting sport and recreation opportunities and shaping this vision of leisure in Edmonton.

McFarland's (1970) study of public recreation in Canada follows recreation policy development and funding commitments by all levels of government. Prior to the Second World War, state funding for recreation was limited. One exception was the Pro-Rec program funded largely by the government of British Columbia, which, by 1938 had 27,000 registered participants who participated in games and mass calisthenics exercise sessions (Macdonald, 2011). Pro-Rec was largely considered a success at all levels of government and by 1943 the federal government of Canada created a "National Physical Fitness Fund" under the *National Physical Fitness* Act, citing Pro-Rec as an inspiration (Heagerty, 1943).[3] In Alberta, organized recreation was largely available through institutions such as community leagues built and maintained by volunteers, as well as the YMCA and YWCA which charged memberships fees, but also provided free recreation and training programs to unemployed men, while provincial funding for leisure and recreation was extremely rare in the 1920's and 1930's (Wetherell and Kmet, 1990). McFarland (1970) identifies trends of strong commitment to funding and promotion of recreation programs at the municipal, provincial, and federal levels in the middle of the 20th century following the second world war. This period of funding was part of the strong welfare state of the post-war era, and according to Wetherell and Kmet (1990), increased state funding for recreation was vital for creating opportunities that were

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[3] The *National Physical Fitness Act* was intended to increase physical activity opportunities for potential soldiers in WW II. The act also signalled a potential for increased public provision of sport and physical recreation opportunities after the war, as improvements in population health through exercise became widely accepted across the political spectrum (Macdonald, 2011). However, the *National Physical Fitness Act* was rather short lived and was repealed in 1954. In 1961 the *Fitness and Amateur Sport Act* was introduced to reassert the federal government's commitment to funding grassroots sport and recreation programming.

absent in the recreation sphere dominated by private agencies. This included a greater accessibility of recreation facilities and programming outside major cities. Given that the majority of Alberta's population lived in rural areas, this was a necessary development. One major project involved building hockey arenas in rural communities in the 1960's leading up to the Canadian Centennial. Centennial arenas were built in towns in Alberta such as Swan Hills and Stony Plain. For projects such as this, hockey was the obvious choice given its hegemonic cultural role in shaping "identities associated with locality, consumerism, ethnicity, class, race, and gender" (Gruneau and Whitson, 1993, p. 7) in 20th century Canadian sport landscapes. However, towards the end of the 20th century and into the 21st century the implementation of neoliberal economic policies has shaped recreation funding. Federal governments' funding priorities have shifted towards elite sport with significantly less funding going towards programs with a participation based model (Green, 2007; Macintosh and Whitson, 1990). In this next section, I trace some aspects of the history of recreation in Canada in general, and Edmonton more specifically by looking at discursively relevant examples of recreation programming provided in civil society, and I discuss some of the discursive themes used to justify and promote these forms of recreation.

*YMCAs and YWCAs*

The discourse of muscular Christianity is helpful to understand the push for sport and recreation in Canada in the early 20th century. Physical fitness and athleticism came to be seen as moral pursuits for a good Christian man to undertake. Muscular Christianity developed out of the ideas of upper class British men such as Thomas Hughes, who extolled the virtues of sport for the development of the individual. Most importantly for these proponents, sport could be used to teach values of obedience, discipline, hard work, and fairness that could be used in different contexts like workplaces and interpersonal relationships (Kidd, 2006). Muscular Christianity was most notably taken up by wealthy British settlers throughout Canada (Bennett, 2016). Given the hegemonic

position of this group in much of Canada, including Alberta, values of muscular Christianity

constituted the dominant values of society. Protestant churches in Alberta were very active in

promoting sport and recreation through a lens of muscular Christianity in the period of 1880-1920

(Wall, 2012). Through this discourse, sport and physical recreation came to be viewed as respectable

and moral forms of recreation which could justifiably occupy the leisure time of white children and

young adults who might otherwise engage in activities that were less readily accepted by 'respectable'

society.

YMCAs and YWCAs were two of many institutions which Kidd (2006) suggests were

influenced by the ideas of muscular Christianity. YMCAs and YWCAs provided numerous sport and

recreation facilities and opportunities throughout Alberta from their establishment prior to the first

world war through the interwar years. These included hockey rinks, swimming pools, gymnasiums,

and sports fields, especially in Edmonton, Calgary, and Lethbridge. Amateur sports teams and

leagues were also run through the YMCA in these major cities (Wetherell and Kmet, 1990). Other

available activities at YMCAs included youth hostels, and various social clubs which provided a

meeting space for youth to meet others and travel throughout Alberta at low costs. All of these

activities fit with muscular Christianity and YMCAs' goals of developing complete individuals with

good temperament through "formal, institutional structures [which] promoted sociability"

(Wetherell and Kmet 1990).

YMCAs, YWCAs, and their underpinning philosophies also influenced a wide range of

related outdoor recreation pursuits. One YWCA facility in Banff provided outdoor recreation and

camping opportunities for no-cost, and in 1910 the YWCA ran the first summer girls only camp in

Canada (Wetherell and Kmet, 1990). This outdoor recreation space was made available through the

creation of the Rocky Mountain Park (now Banff National Park). Mason (2014) demonstrates how

the creation of the park in 1885, the expansion of its boundaries in 1887 and 1902, the forced

removal of Nakoda peoples onto a reserve, and the implementation of the pass system were

instrumental in restricting hunting rights and establishing the park as a site for settler recreation.

Summer camps became common throughout Canada in subsequent years and remain

popular in the 21st century. While private for-profit camps were targeted at children of wealthier

families, YMCAs, YWCAs, and various Christian churches operated lower cost camps for middle

and working-class children. Wall's (2005) work on children's summer camps in Ontario focuses on

'playing Indian' wherein children and adults participated in games, storytelling, and naming and fire

'ceremonies' to engage in racial fantasy and learn stereotypical and monolithic versions of

Indigenous cultures. Wall suggests this desire to temporarily escape whiteness stems from a white,

middle-class, anti-modernist anxiety over cultural change in the 1920's through the 1950's. Beyond

simply problematic representations, this notion of 'playing Indian' worked pedagogically to situate

white youth as the natural occupiers of the land, having taken over from a seemingly vanished

Indigenous population (Wall, 2005). This discursive framing relies on the assumption that

Indigenous peoples will inevitably disappear to open space for the settler population and that this is

a just development. Through summer camps specifically, "[n]egative images of violence and savagery

rationalized [colonization] from the humanitarian perspective, while positive stereotypes, by freezing

Aboriginal peoples in time, suggested that such noble, pre-modern creatures couldn't hope to

survive in a modern civilized society" (Wall, 2005, p. 539). Similarly, in Alberta the Calgary YMCA

operated Camp Chief Hector on the Stoney Indian Reserve. The camp was built during the late

1920s and first hosted summer camp programming in 1930. The site for the camp was negotiated

with the Nakoda peoples who lived on the reserve. When building Camp Chief Hector, "it was

decided that teepees hand sewn by the Indians [*sic*] themselves were not only reasonable to erect, but

also conserved the real Romance [*sic*] of the Indian [*sic*] territory in which the camp is situated"

(Origins of Camp Chief Hector, 1980). Camp Chief Hector, like those studied by Wall (2005), worked to construct romanticized notions of Indigenous peoples, and sought to produce young settler boys within a frame of idealized forms of masculinity. Beyond this, the camp also worked to assert settler ownership of the land by constructing a permanent camp site on the Stoney Reserve.

The image of summer camps and outdoor recreation is further complicated by Mason's (2014) analysis of 'Indian Days' at Banff National Park. The Banff-Bow Valley region in the national park was a common site for settler recreation, but also an important region for Nakoda people's economic and cultural life. 'Indian Days' occurred each summer from 1911-1980 and involved festivals where tourists and campers in Banff observed Nakoda peoples camping in teepees, practicing archery, parading in regalia, and engaging in other cultural activities. In some ways, these festivals operated similarly to summer camps, teaching settlers stereotypical and temporally cemented versions of Nakoda culture. However, Mason argues that 'Indian Days' also "provided atypical socio-economic, political, and cultural opportunities for Nakoda individuals and communities" (p. 138) that would not otherwise have been possible. These opportunities, though, were still limited by ongoing and increasing encroachment on land by settler governments and citizens.

The assumptions and values of muscular Christianity permeated the YMCA and related recreation initiatives. By engaging in physical recreation and sport with others, it was believed that laziness and apathy associated with urban living could be overcome. Meanwhile, 'immoral' recreation pursuits could be avoided, and active young men could develop into "human beings best fitted to cope with the conditions of *modern living*" (YMCA, quoted in Wetherell and Kmet 1990, emphasis added). These values also became entwined with settler colonial logics of elimination and replacement in relation to residential schools, as I discuss below. Within the social structures of settler colonialism and racial capitalism, it is helpful to consider the ideological work done by

summer camps (Wall, 2005) and putatively progressive religious movements (Kidd, 2006) to create

and perpetuate these settler colonial narratives. Ultimately, the discourse of muscular Christianity

and the values that came to be associated with it provided important philosophical underpinnings to

a wide range of recreation programming. Kidd (2006) argues that muscular Christianity also

informed many progressive social reform movements throughout the early 20th century including the

playground movement, to which I now turn.

*The Playground Movement*

      The playground movement in Canada originated with the National Council of Women's call

for urban playground spaces in 1900. Cities across Canada, including Halifax, Montreal, Ottawa,

Winnipeg, and Regina allotted space for urban playgrounds many of which were supervised by

teachers and physical educators. This movement focussed on providing green spaces in urban areas

especially for white working-class children to play and socialize in ways that were deemed morally

permissible. The playground movement in Canada grew out of, and was heavily influenced by, a

similar movement in the United States. Playground staff and administrators often attended

conferences in the U.S. to share ideas and further develop playgrounds in Canada. Social reform

activists, philanthropists, and members of service clubs were all important drivers of the growth of

the playground movement, which is widely seen as the precursor to modern municipal parks

departments in Canada and the U.S. (McFarland, 1970). Additionally, different and sometimes

competing visions of the U.S. playground movement closely align with scholarly discussion on the

Canadian movement. For example, McArthur (1975) viewed the playground movement in Chicago

as a unifying Progressive Era (1890-1920) quest for social justice. Many scholars identify supervised

playgrounds as a site where dominant notions of gender were reinforced and resisted (e.g. Gagen,

2001; Spencer-Wood and Blackburn, 2017). And Mobily (2018) interrogates the American

playground movement through a lens of eugenics, arguing that the American playground movement

was built upon ableist theories entrenched in the reform minded politics of the Progressive Era. That is not to say the U.S. and Canadian playground movements were exact parallels. Local particularities, actors, and politics shaped the playground movement differently in different cities, while American nationalism informed the U.S. playground movement, as opposed to notions of Britishness underpinning the movement in Canada (Murnaghan, 2013).

Scholarship on the playground movement in Canada has also produced and identified differing narratives about the movement and its ideological goals. McFarland (1970) discusses two contemporary ideas about the playground movement, both of which can be understood alongside discourses identified in the SFD literature. First, playgrounds were seen as "preventing social disorders such as delinquency and drunkenness" (p. 38). White working-class children were provided recreation opportunities with the intention to keep them 'off the streets' and engage in recreation that was morally acceptable by the standards of middle-class white men. These themes of 'crime prevention' and 'social order' are identifiable in more recent SFD programs such as midnight basketball (Hartmann, 2001) discussed in the introduction, as well as FPK, which I explore in later chapters. These 'benefits' were used to justify the cost and continued operation of supervised playgrounds, while social reform minded philanthropists were generally convinced of the supposed benefits of supervised playgrounds. Further, these discourses of 'crime prevention' and 'social order' were leveraged by advocates who supported an expansion of public provision of playground space (McFarland, 1970).

McFarland (1970) identifies a second justification put forth by proponents of the playground movement. Recreation was understood as fundamentally good for the individual, regardless of other social factors, and access to recreation opportunities therefore was conceptualized as a fundamental right for every individual. Within the playground movement recreation opportunities went well

beyond sports, including activities such as "[s]tories, crafts, reading, sewing, and music" (McFarland, 1970, p. 38). Although these activities would have taken place outside of sport programming, and likely targeted different groups, we can see in the playground movement echoes of the philosophy of the 'dominant approach' to sport (Hartmann and Kwauk, 2011). Recreation opportunities provided through programs associated with the playground movement came to be seen as fundamentally good, without necessarily considering how oppression and exclusion were reinscribed or intentionally (re)produced oppression. Indeed, the playground movement was designed to educate Canadian children within a narrowly defined set of values. Here the discourse of muscular Christianity – an ideology inherently linked to settler colonialism – is expressed in the playground movement through physical activity which was conceptualized as one vital aspect in developing a complete person. Within these philosophical underpinnings of the playground movement ableism, reproduction of binary gender roles (Adams, 2011), and eugenicist ideologies were all expressed to varying degrees.

In a competing interpretation to the view described above, Tink and Peers (2021) read the history of the playground movement alongside the development of eugenics in Canada throughout the 20th century. In doing so, they view the playground movement as a project underpinned with eugenicist ideas and values, which have been obscured by dominant and popular histories of the playground movement. Dominant histories of the playground movement have centred individuals such as Mabel Peters, known as "the Mother of the Canadian Playground Movement" (Markham, cited in Tink and Peers, 2021, p. 207). Markham's historicism of the playground movement is influenced by white second wave feminisms which have been critiqued for focussing almost exclusively on the lives of and issues related to middle-class white women while overlooking other factors such as sexuality, race, ethnicity, class, and age (Parry, Johnson, and Wagler, 2019.) Tink and Peers' genealogical reading, rather, focusses on the eugenicist ideas underpinning the playground

movement and social reformist movements that developed alongside it. These reform movements included fights for white women's suffrage, as well as advocacy for education and healthcare. These movements were also shot through with eugenicist ideas and practices, with a primary focus on protecting and advancing the 'white Canadian race'. The playground movement was one aspect of an ideological project "committed to purging Canadian society of its immoralities (e.g. crime, drunkenness, idleness)" (Tink and Peers, 2021, p. 211). These 'immoralities' were commonly attached to groups that were targeted by eugenicist policies such as Indigenous peoples and disabled people.

Edmonton was later than some other larger Canadian cities to take up the playground movement. The first supervised playground site in Edmonton was created at Patricia Park in 1922, while Toronto and Montreal had supervised playgrounds since as early as 1901 or 1902 (McFarland, 1970). By 1919, advocates of the playground movement in Edmonton argued that there was a "lack of breathing space and playgrounds for the children" (Munro, 1919). Retamales and Reichwein (2014) consider the Edmonton playgrounds which were run by the Gyro Club, a particular iteration of the playground movement in Edmonton, as institutions structured around production of social and cultural capital for all involved. Gyro Club members, who were mostly businessmen and healthcare professionals, developed social capital by creating networks with others of similar class status. White, working-class families and their children, who were the target community of Gyro Parks, ostensibly accrued social capital through engaging in acceptable forms of recreation activity rather than engaging in activities that were criminalized or generally deemed undesirable. As noted above, these activities were designed to educate children and encourage them to "assimilate… into citizenship and patriotism" (Retamales and Reichwein, 2014, p. 107).

In this way, the Gyro Club and the parks they operated came to be seen as a product of progressive and inclusive social reform. Not only did progressive values inform the types of play, which in some cases rejected hypermasculine notions of competitive sport, but these more expressive forms of play, Retamales and Reichwein suggest, allowed for cultural expression. Indeed, Gyro playgrounds "implicitly created integration among diverse children" (p. 109) through folk dances and games. From this understanding, the Gyro Club can be used to signify a welcoming and progressive narrative of Edmonton. At first glance, this vision of Gyro playgrounds contradicts Tink and Peers (2021) contention that the playground movement was informed with principles of eugenics and exclusion. However, these facile notions of inclusivity – contact with those deemed 'Other' and access to play spaces – obscure how oppressive and unequal social relations are left intact. While sharing social capital through the development of municipal parks is commonly understood as benevolent and progressive, it also works to further establish middle-class settler aspirations by folding in additional groups and providing acceptable, though regulated methods of play.

Further, the development of the settler state, including the creation of formal institutions of governance, accumulation of property, and resource extraction were dependent on the absence of Indigenous peoples. Many things are left unquestioned in the progress narrative of Gyro Parks, such as a critical understanding of settler colonialism and land theft in Edmonton which opened up urban space for Gyro Parks to operate and settler citizens of Edmonton to live. In a settler colonial context patriotism and nation building projects, which the playground movement decidedly was, cannot be separated from the logics of elimination on which the settler state is built.

We could also question who served to benefit most from the sharing of social capital that Gyro Playgrounds were and are supposed to have produced, while concurrent social reform

movements that were more redistributive or radical in their aims were pushed to the side. As successful and wealthy members of society, philanthropists and social reform minded volunteers, including the middle-class members of the Gyro Club, had a vested interest in maintaining social order and established social relations. If playgrounds really did promote social order and contribute to the development of good moral subjects, then these philanthropists who accumulated their wealth through means such as business ownership and resource extraction served to benefit from the presence of a productive compliant workforce and children learning to incorporate into it. In 1919, workers in Edmonton took part in a general strike in solidarity with the general strike in Winnipeg. Demands included a shorter work day, better working conditions, and, at the more radical ends of the labour movement a call for nationalization of industry (Kealey, 1984). This strike was part of relatively large socialist and communist movements in the post World War I era, not just in Edmonton, but across Canada, which put forth far more radical visions of change than the political aims of the moral reform oriented proponents of the playground movement. The playground movement and its associated reforms, then, were not a natural and inevitable outcome in 1920's Edmonton. Rather, recreation based reform was one of many forces in a political atmosphere in which revolutionary change was widely believed to be possible (Finkel, 2019).

In addition to discursive similarities in 20th and 21st century SFD type programs noted above, we can also trace a through line when looking at program design and funding. Throughout the development of the 20th century playground movement municipal government support took a variety of forms including land provision, providing utilities, and grant funding (McFarland, 1970). To supplement this government funding, the Gyro Club's model of delivery focused on wealthy donors and business people funding programs and supporting them through volunteer work. These donors and volunteers included middle-class professional membership of the Gyro Club. Additionally, experts trained in sport and recreation created and delivered programming for a

particular target community, namely white working-class children in the core of Edmonton. These are components of Giulianotti's (2011) description of technical SFD programs wherein target communities have little say in the programming on offer. I look more at these models and the shift to non-profit programming in chapter 5. Despite competing visions of the playground movement, the reform minded approaches were important in the development of urban park spaces and the creation of municipal parks and recreation departments in Canada. The playground movement is one example of urban based reform through recreation. In the next section I discuss similarities and distinctions in discourse around sport and recreation in the residential school system.

**Sport and Recreation in 'Indian Residential Schools'**

The 'Indian Residential School' system was one component of the genocidal settler colonial nation building project of Canada.[4] Settler colonialism is understood here as an ongoing structure and relationship that continues to affect Indigenous peoples through dispossession and destruction of autonomy, land, and established social relations. A settler colonial relationship is "one characterized by *domination* … to facilitate the *dispossession* of Indigenous peoples of their land and self-determining authority" (Coulthard, 2014b, p. 57, emphasis in original). *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future*, the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada, estimates that 150 000 Indigenous children attended approximately 139 residential schools from the period prior to confederation of Canada in 1867 up until the closure of the last residential school in 1997 (TRC, 2015). In total, 25 of these institutions were located in Alberta, more than any other province in the country.

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[4] My use of the word genocide is informed by Woolford's (2015) argument that genocide should be understood "not as a series of traits or characteristics… but as a dynamic process that ebbs, flows, and intensifies at specific historical moments and in specific places, while lessening its force in others" (p.11). Residential schools were one such intensification. An extended discussion of genocide and residential schools is beyond the scope of this chapter. For a robust discussion of the sociopolitical concept of genocide and its applicability within the context of Canadian and USA settler colonialism generally, and residential schools in particular, see *Settler Colonial Genocide in North America* (pp. 21-46) in Woolford (2015). See also, Samudzi (2021).

The residential school system included institutions throughout Canada, making up a diffuse system funded by the federal government and before 1951 run predominantly by various Christian churches including the Anglican, United, and Catholic Churches. After 1951 and the amendment of the *Indian Act,* the federal government took on more responsibility for operating residential schools through the department of Indian Affairs. Residential schools, therefore, were not entirely uniform over time or location. As such, it is helpful to consider a multi-level conceptual framework like that put forth by Woolford (2015). First, we can look at the "macrolevel of destructive intentions" (p. 45). That is, a focus on settler colonial processes and logics of elimination (Wolfe, 2006), and the policies through which these logics were and are enacted. Second, Woolford uses a mesolevel analysis of the governmental bodies which oversaw institutions in which the destructive intentions take place. The residential school system is one such institution, with individual schools fitting into Woolford's "lower mesolevel." Finally, a microlevel of analysis investigates agency at individual levels. This includes an analysis of the agency of those resisting oppression as well as individuals who enacted the destructive intentions of settler colonial logics of elimination whether with benevolent intentions or not (Woolford, 2015).

With this framework in mind, in the remainder of this section I draw on existing scholarship in sport history and sociology which has focussed on sport and physical culture in residential schools from a range of theoretical and methodological approaches. I discuss this literature in relation to SFD discourse. To be clear, in doing so, I do not suggest that the intentions behind sport and recreation in residential schools are a direct parallel to the intentions of modern SFD programs. Rather, I suggest there are common and overlapping political and discursive effects, and philosophical underpinnings which I explore here. Historicizing the residential school system in the context of SFD programming also has contemporary significance. It is important to note that in political discourse throughout the duration of the residential school system, schools were often

represented as benevolent institutions (Alexander, 2016). Indeed, this veil of benevolence persists in 21st century mainstream political discourse as residential schools are still seen by some politicians as a 'civilizing force' for good. For example, in November 2020 Erin O'Toole, the leader of the Conservative Party of Canada remarked that the intent of the residential school system was to "provide education" but resulted in unfortunate negative outcomes (CBC, 2020). Such perspectives are common, particularly among reactionary and right-wing forces in Canadian politics.

The use of sport and recreation in residential schools provides an important contrast to the philanthropic approaches of sport and recreation in dominant settler civil society. Residential schools were administered under the *Indian Act*. Therefore, when this legislation was amended, policies and practices in schools evolved. Opportunities to engage in sport and physical recreation were extremely limited for students at residential schools prior to the 1950's. In this period, physical education was typically limited to strict military drill and other highly controlled movements which restricted free expression (Forsyth 2007, 2020). In 1951 the *Indian Act* was amended, and residential school curricula were ostensibly brought more in line with those of the education systems of the province's in which they were located. In addition to the 1951 amendment, Forsyth (2021) notes a few factors were impactful in opening more sport related opportunities to students at residential schools. These include the passage of the *National Physical Fitness Act* in 1943, and a perceived need for the Canadian state to thwart post-war Indigenous activism. To do so, Indian Agents recommended increased education and greater opportunities to participate in sport and physical recreation, including increased contact with settlers (Forsyth, 2021).

These recommendations were informed by the broader purpose of residential schools which, as part of Canada's Aboriginal policy of that time, were intended "to eliminate Aboriginal governments; ignore Aboriginal rights; terminate the Treaties; and, through a process of

assimilation, cause Aboriginal peoples to cease to exist as distinct legal, social, cultural, religious, and

racial entities in Canada" (TRC, 2015, p. 1). By the 1940s education for citizenship became an

important component of residential school curricula to fulfill these assimilationist aims (Miller,

1996). The intentions of residential school administrators to use sport as a tool for assimilation are

well documented. Indeed, Te Hiwi (2021) cites Duncan Campbell Scott's, the director of the

department of Indian Affairs, perspective on recreation. Scott argued recreational activities could be

used "to substitute reasonable amusements for this senseless drumming and dancing" (quoted in Te

Hiwi, 2021, p.49). Sports and games were one cultural form which government officials felt would

be effective in destroying and replacing Indigenous children's cultural connections.

Administrators who advocated for the use of sport programming in residential schools drew

on the similar understandings of sport held by proponents of the playground movement, for

example. Thus, to a limited extent, sport and recreation were discursively mobilized in similar ways

in residential schools as it was in settler society. For instance, muscular Christianity influenced the

choices that administrators made when implementing sports into schools. In the context of the

residential school system muscular Christianity and the connected focus of

> team spirit and cooperation, fair and ethical play, striving to do one's best, and
>
> always accepting the decisions handed out by the coach and referee were as much
>
> about cultural development and fitting into Canadian society as it was about
>
> fostering submissive obedience (Te Hiwi and Forsyth, 2017, p. 86).

Team sports such as basketball, baseball, hockey, and football were most commonly played due to

the view that they could instill traits such as hard work that would be useful outside of sports.

However, Indigenous children were viewed fundamentally differently to settler children, and the

settler colonial project of assimilation was intended to be far more totalizing than developmental

projects which targeted working-class and immigrant youth. Sport represented a powerful method

for teaching colonial morals and ways of being instilled with "'obedience to discipline' and thus contributing to the process of moving the children along the path to civilization" (RCAP, 1996, p. 316).

In addition to technologies of domination which took place in residential schools such as abuse, discipline, and neglect, Norman, Hart, and Petherick (2019) argue that sport and physical culture worked as technologies of the self where students learned to perform gender in normative colonized ways. Participation in sports and games operated subtly to teach 'correct' forms of masculinity and femininity, ultimately seeking to supplant traditional, though dynamic, Indigenous gender formations. One goal of the settler colonial project is to destroy and replace established social relations including gender relations and conceptions of gender itself. This process worked to establish a colonial masculinity which is, in part, defined and constructed in opposition to rejected Indigenous gender formations (Morgenson, 2015). In the TRC final report, survivors of residential schools often point to sport opportunities as a relative reprieve from the oppressive conditions of the residential schools. Some survivors also point to the strict gender separation that was enforced and maintained through technologies and politics of containment, as such opportunities were mostly limited to boys (Forsyth, 2020; Norman et al., 2019). Daniel Nanooch, for example, explained that

> They had a fence in the playground. Nobody was allowed near the fence. The boys
>
> played on this side, the girls played on the other side. Nobody was allowed to go to
>
> that fence there and talk to the girls through the fence (TRC, 2015, p. 45).

Additionally, residential school sports teams were exclusively for boys and young men who attended the schools. These sporting events were discursively mobilized to demonstrate the apparent effectiveness of the residential school system in training young Indigenous boys to adhere to settler notions of masculinity. Sports and games were an enjoyable escape from the residential school, in

some cases a literal opportunity for boys to leave the school to travel and participate in competitions. In this way, sport created an opportunity for "students… to enjoy certain pleasures within a broader logic that nonetheless sought to re-make their identities" (Norman, et al., 2019, p. 118).

Although sports and games were occasionally enjoyed by students at residential schools, the fact that sports were available should not be viewed as a 'positive' or a 'benefit' of this genocidal settler colonial project. Indeed, as Forsyth (2020) suggests, "it is too easy to conclude that sports were positive elements of the school system, suggesting that the system and these institutions were not as bad as contemporary understandings make them out to be" (p. 33). This is especially important considering the conservative and nationalist backlashes which have sought to defend the legacy of the residential school system following announcements of unmarked graves on the grounds of institutions across Canada in the summer of 2021 (Hiltz, 2021). Such reactions often rely on the fact that sports were present in residential schools, drawing upon the dominant societal understanding that sport and recreation are inherently positive opportunities for children and youth. Rather, sport, recreation, and physical education in residential schools should be understood as one tool within the context of a settler colonial project that sought to destroy Indigenous social structures and ways of being and knowing.

Thus far, in approaching residential schools from Woolford's (2015) macro and meso levels, I have discussed sport and recreation in relation to government policy and institutional attempts to control and produce particular types of Indigenous boys and girls. Woolford's micro level focusses on individual agency within the macro and meso levels to analyze processes such as identity formation relating to gender and race. Following Mason's (2014) contention, which draws on postcolonial theories, we should avoid "rendering colonial histories too simply as uncomplicated

narratives of domination and resistance" (p. 15). Thus, we can understand residential school students' participation in sport and recreation as a contested site where colonial logics were shaped, enforced, and challenged. Throughout interviews conducted for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report (2015), many former students noted that participation in sport and games was not just a way to survive the abuse of residential schools but was also an opportunity to excel and experience success. For example, Paul Andrew recalled that "There were times when I felt dumb and stupid. But put me in a gym, there was not too many people better than I am" (TRC, 2015, p. 112).

In other cases, sports teams from residential schools competed against white settler teams. These interscholastic competitions are a rich site for analysis of the ways identities were shaped and negotiated within a colonial power structure. Norman et al. (2019) suggest that this is one important aspect in the formation of "*the* Indigenous masculine subject" (p. 113, emphasis in original) which becomes intelligible within a colonial system. In a very early case, a hockey team from Dunbow Residential School in Alberta impressed reporters and local settlers when they competed and won against teams made up of settlers in 1898 and 1899 (Holman, 2012). In another instance, Te Hiwi and Forsyth (2017) historically analyze the ideological work done by media about the Sioux Black Hawks, a hockey team from Pelican Lake Indian Residential School in Ontario who played against teams made up of white children in the late 1940's into the early 1950s. The Sioux Black Hawks were used by government officials to represent the successes of the residential school system in creating 'civilized' men out of Indigenous students. These were relatively early instances of teams from residential schools travelling to play other sports teams, but by the 1960's this practice was more common (Forsyth, 2007, 2013, 2020).

Similar sporting competitions also took place outside of the residential school system but are important to consider because of overlapping economic, political, and representational contexts. In 1927-1928 Cree and Ojibwe hockey teams undertook a 2 month tour of North America playing 18 games against each other and against white settler teams from large cities and small towns in Ontario and the Northeast United States (Holman, 2012). Much of Holman's analysis focuses on newspaper reports of the games and the ways in which stereotypical images of Indigenous men were reproduced for settler audiences. Hypermasculinized and highly physical hockey games reinforced essentialist and idealized images of Indigenous masculinity which settler audiences came to expect. However, the hockey players also engaged in a more subversive version of 'playing Indian' than that practiced by the settler children at summer camps described earlier. Specifically, the hockey players took on fake names such as Mungwash and Cranehawk and engaged in sporting spectacle through the use of buckskin jerseys and headdresses, thus "using the popular cultural idea of noble savage to their own advantage and having fun at their paying customers' expense" (Holman, 2012, p. 194). Creating a sporting spectacle was particularly important in order to drum up interest in spectators to sell tickets and finance the tour. This form of 'playing Indian' allowed the hockey players to challenge and play with dominant understandings of race in Canada and the United States (Holman, 2012).

Such competitions, whether they involved residential school students or young Indigenous men, were highly racialized, and victories by Indigenous teams over white teams challenged dominant discourses about white settler superiority, while victories by white settler were claimed as victories for colonization (Holman, 2012). Ultimately, these contests contributed to the contested terrain of sport in residential schools, and Indigenous sport more broadly (Forsyth, 2007; Paraschak, 2013). These particular instances can be understood within Woolford's (2015) concept of the "settler colonial mesh" which in certain contexts allows for some pushback and agency while still

constraining outcomes within the settler colonial system. In the next section I briefly analyze a

recent SFD initiative conducted in an Indigenous community to further draw together the

relationship between residential school sport and contemporary SFD practice and discourse.

**Contemporary Colonization Through SFD**

SFD programs in Canada generally operate in regions close to target populations which have

been deemed problematic and in need of development. These locations include the downtown core

of cities, targeting populations such as unhoused people (Hayhurst, Giles, and Wright, 2016; Koch et

al., 2020) and newcomers to Canada (Barrick, Bridel, & Miller, 2021). Other SFD programs operate

in rural areas, particularly Indigenous communities located on reserves (e.g. Coleby and Giles, 2013).

In any case, the general philosophy of SFD programming, namely individual skill development and

health promotion, are intended to address perceived social problems. The particular ways through

which these benefits are advocated shift along with contemporary political and social realities.

While the SFD adjacent logics of sport in residential schools were explicitly focused on

elimination of life and ways of being, modern SFD programs continue to operate in Indigenous

communities while drawing on different discursive formations to promote and justify their existence.

Hayhurst and Giles (2016), for example, demonstrate how neoliberal policies and the decline in the

welfare state have made room for large transnational corporations and non-profit organizations to

exert a large influence on the SFD sector in Canada and elsewhere. Rhetoric of inclusion and

diversity is placed at the forefront of such SFD programs, while large corporations and other

wealthy donors are able to sanitize their image through public relations imaging.

Galipeau and Giles (2014) analyze the Alberta's Future Leaders program (AFL) which

involves mostly white settler mentors visiting Indigenous communities throughout Alberta and

working with youth. The AFL program is an exemplar of the continuation of SFD programs which

employ colonizing and racist ideas about participants, while also operating to normalize ongoing

settler colonization. In the AFL program, sports, games, and other activities are used to train youth to become 'future leaders' and 'productive members' of society. This initiative "was created in response to issues related to crime, alcohol abuse, and high rates of suicide in Aboriginal communities in Alberta" (Galipeau and Giles, 2014, p. 149). Importantly, and as is common with SFD programs, these perceived social issues are understood to be located within the target communities, rather than being produced through social structural forces.

Galipeau and Giles identify two dominant discourses produced about the AFL program by program participants, mentors, and staff. First, that the AFL program could "prevent or halt negative life trajectories" (p. 158) by introducing Indigenous youth to positive role models, in this case middle-class, university educated, white mentors. The second discourse Galipeau and Giles identify is fundamental to dominant logics of SFD programming, namely that development of youth leadership is both inevitable and universal when learned through sport, recreation, and arts programming. In the particular context of Galipeau and Giles' cross cultural analysis, white mentors and AFL staff drew on the discourse of universality of childhood and sport regardless of cultural context. This discourse echoes Coakley's (2011) critique of positive youth development in SFD, wherein white, middle-class, and individualist development markers are deemed inevitable through sport. Further, both these discourses entrench definitions of development which focus on "compensate[ing] for what [is] missing in the lives of 'disadvantaged youth'" rather than "the need for social justice, rebuilding strong community-based social institutions, [and] reestablishing the resource base of the communities where young people lived" (Coakley, 2011, p. 313), each of which undergo continuous destruction through processes of settler colonization.

As Galipeau and Giles argue, in the context of the AFL program these discourses operate to assert white mentors as good role models for problematized Indigenous youth, reflecting dominant

settler colonial power relations. Beyond just reasserting individual power relations, these discursive formations also work to normalize and naturalize racial capitalism and settler colonialism in the present. Galipeau and Giles suggest a welcome solution of increased cultural relevancy through cultural trainings for AFL program staff and hiring Indigenous youth to run programming. However, these solutions alone are an exemplar of recognition based forms of 'decolonizing' SFD programs as opposed to more radical notions of development and decolonization which prioritize problematizing and breaking down established social and property relations with the aim of changing the social conditions that produce the need for programs like AFL (e.g. Darnell and Hayhurst, 2011; Tuck and Yang, 2012). Ultimately, this recognition based solution keeps intact these unjust social structures and power relations. As I argue in the subsequent chapters, this is a major function of the discursive practices used by SFD programs in the present.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter I have briefly historicized select trends and discursive themes in recreation, focussing primarily on examples around Edmonton, Alberta, or thematically tied to Edmonton through the 20th century to the present. In doing so, I have not sought to provide an exhaustive history of no-cost recreation histories in Canada, and Alberta more specifically. Rather, I have argued that the political and discursive themes, and philosophical underpinnings of historical recreation programming are important for understanding recreation, and specifically SFD programming in the present. Further, these trends need to be contextualized and analyzed within a framework of racial capitalism and settler colonialism to make sense of who is constructed as 'in need' of development through sport and recreation, and who is in a specific position to provide that development or 'sharing' of resources. In the next chapter I explore these ideas in relation to FPK, a contemporary sport for development program operating in Edmonton.

# Chapter 5: "The Positives are Endless": Introducing Free Play for Kids

**Introduction**

In this section of the thesis I will present a critical discourse analysis (CDA) of Free Play for Kids (FPK), an Edmonton based no-cost, not-for-profit community sport initiative. Throughout the analysis I present three discursive themes that I have identified and then tie each theme to dominant ideologies and material outcomes in Canadian society. In analyzing each discursive theme, I draw on different critical theoretical perspectives, scholarship from settler colonial studies, leisure studies, and SFD work informed by critical cultural studies and postcolonial theory. Each of the three themes and corresponding analyses are subsequently presented in three chapters. The analysis I present in this section of the thesis is a response to Darnell (2012) and other SFD scholars' calls for analyses of power as they relate to SFD programs and existing social structures. To begin, I briefly discuss the emergence of the 'non-profit industrial complex' (NPIC) and its relevance to SFD. I then introduce FPK to demonstrate that the program is a major player in Edmonton's SFD scene. Finally, I explain my methodology, including analytical approach and data collection techniques.

**Non-Profitization and SFD**

In the 21$^{st}$ century there has been a strong development of critical analysis of non-profit organizations and what has come to be known as the NPIC. Rodriguez (2017), writing about the non-profit sector in the USA, describes the NPIC as a "set of symbiotic relationships that link together political and financial technologies of state and owning-class proctorship and surveillance over public intercourse, including and especially emergent progressive and leftist social movements, since about the mid-1970's" (p. 22). Critical theorists of social movements argue that the non-profitization of progressive social movements zap such movements of potential for radical change, essentially functioning to maintain the status quo. Spade (2020) argues that the NPIC works to "legitimiz[e] unjust systems" (p. 25) and positions a highly educated middle-class as the only group

capable of analyzing and solving social injustices, while paternalistically imposing 'solutions' on an 'in need' population.

The SFD sector is a decidedly non-profit endeavour that operates with support from various private funders, charities, and multiple levels of government. SFD programs are supported by municipal grants right up to international aid organizations depending on the scope and goals of the program (Coalter, 2010; 2013; Darnell, 2012). SFD can be concomitantly understood as a "social movement" (Kidd, 2008) that has coalesced around vague ideals of social justice. In an international context these 'progressive' ideas of development through SFD, funded by international aid grants, are tied to neocolonial and neo imperialist projects (Darnell, 2012). In domestic SFD projects this is not *necessarily* the case, but as was shown in the previous chapter, these programs often help to uphold and advance settler colonial projects of land dispossession and resource extraction from Indigenous communities without providing purported and promised benefits to the community. In other instances, SFD projects work as poverty management programs and provide basic social services that have historically been provided for some people by the state. Only very recently have select recreation scholars argued that public sport and recreation programs have historically functioned and continue to function as biopolitical methods of control which aim to produce normative subjects while governing who lives and who dies. For example, Tink's (2021) genealogy traces the history of how municipal recreation facilities function as a "biopolitical technology of white supremacy" within a broader context of racist logics governing the Canadian nation state (p. 91).

**Free Play for Kids**

In an earlier chapter I briefly introduced FPK, the subject of this CDA. Here I provide a more robust description of the history and establishment of the program, its goals, and the connections to other local sport non-profits and sport organizations. FPK is a non-profit

community sports program that was founded in 2007 in Edmonton, Alberta. Tim Adams, the

founder and current executive director of FPK, started the program after he began volunteering as a

soccer coach at a local school. On FPK's website, Adams describes himself as a "father figure," a

man who recognized that 'disadvantaged' children needed someone to teach them not only soccer

skills, but also life skills if they were to develop into 'productive' adult members of society (Free

Play, 2020).

For the analysis presented here, I situate FPK within the nexus of the NPIC. I argue that

FPK should be understood as a part of the NPIC for two reasons. First, FPK and those involved in

the organization understand it as a liberal, multicultural, social justice-oriented project. While FPK is

not the public policy, political organizing type of non-profit which is typical to the NPIC (Tang,

2017), the way that staff and board members describe FPK frames the program as an explicitly

political, though as I argue below, depoliticized, project. Second, FPK is funded through

government grants, private philanthropy initiatives such as Canadian Tire's Jumpstart program –

which has been FPK's largest single donor since 2013 – and private donors including small

businesses and individuals who donate a set amount of money to sponsor a team.[5] FPK, like other

non-profits in the NPIC, is beholden to these funders in what it can advocate for, the types of

political change it can voice support for, and the claims it makes about the work the organization

does (Kivel, 2017; Rodriguez, 2017; Tang, 2017). The messaging FPK produces about itself,

therefore, is necessarily palatable and acceptable within mainstream discourses of social change.

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[5] FPK's website profiles, or rather gives advertising space to, over a dozen businesses who sponsor one or more teams.
Sponsorship includes the company's logo being printed on the team's shirts and selection of the team name.
Sponsorship here, should be read as a business partnership rather than being a sponsor of a charitable cause, though it
could be argued that those are one and the same in this context. Below, I explore the discursive themes and political
outcomes related to this form of non-profit private partnership.

It is in this vein that FPK should be viewed as a social justice non-profit. The language of entrepreneurialism permeates FPK and the businesses which sponsor it. For example, business owners who sponsor FPK are lauded for their success and their kind-hearted willingness to 'give back' by donating money earned through 'creative' or 'innovative' means like wealth management or communications businesses (Free Play, n.d.). The discourse of 'giving back' situates a class of business owners who sponsor FPK as benevolent and important members of civil society, not dissimilar to the middle-class white men of the Gyro Club of Edmonton in the 1920's, discussed in chapter 4. I explore this theme in detail in the second theme of the CDA presented below. Another factor which situates FPK as a social justice-oriented non-profit is its purported goal of solving the social injustices which it identifies as problematic – namely lack of access to sport, and children living in unsafe communities – through charitable provision of sport and recreation, teaching skills which will produce 'productive' citizens, and more complete integration into a particular version of Canadian mainstream society. The logic of producing 'productive' citizens is discursively mobilized through ideas of positive youth development and sport evangelism. That is, the idea that sport will inevitably produce positive individual and community development outcomes thus contributing to 'fixing' individuals and communities who are constructed as deficient or problematic due to issues such as poverty and criminalized activities (Coakley, 2011; Giulianotti, 2004). I explore these themes in more detail in the eighth chapter.

The vision of social change outlined above replicates that of the NPIC. That is, if more people donated more money and volunteered more time to the charitable giving which sustains social justice-oriented non-profits, those injustices would be solved without the need for structural changes (Ray, 2018). In the CDA presented in subsequent chapters, I explore these themes of youth development and business sponsorship in more detail and tie them to "the social and political issues entrenched in the production and content of (media) texts, as well as the social relations,

assumptions and ideological positions that support them" (Burdsey, 2016, p. 18). Before doing so, it is necessary to introduce FPK in more detail.

*The Development of FPK*

FPK, originally named Free Footie, started out providing no-cost soccer programming for elementary school aged children. In 2018 FPK expanded its programming to include hockey and has also added basketball and football, thus leading to the change of name in 2021. FPK encompasses characteristics that make it both a plus sport and a sport plus program, using Coalter's (2010) ideal types. FPK's aim "is to provide vulnerable kids with the opportunity to play in a safe, accessible, and inclusive environment at no cost to them or their families" (Free Play, 2020). This portion of FPK's mission illustrates a sport plus approach in that the goal is to improve access to sport and play by removing financial cost and other barriers. This is a relatively common goal of similar SFD programs operating in Canada, as lack of access to sport and recreation is understood to be a major deficiency in program participants' lives, while other issues such as access to healthcare and education are somewhat less of a priority than SFD programs which operate in the Global South. Difficulties in accessing recreation programming typically link to lack of financial resources including limitations on money to pay registration and equipment fees, time required to get participants to and from programs, and transportation costs. For its part, FPK does do more to limit these barriers than many programs discussed in SFD literature. This is accomplished by providing transportation to and from recreation facilities so participants can get to facilities without predominantly working-class parents, who often don't have a personal vehicle, taking time off work to transport their child (Whiting, 2021).

To an extent FPK can also be viewed as a plus sport program due to its focus on other outcomes related to performance in school, social health, and inclusion. While FPK is primarily implemented through sporting activities there are also other considerations which go into program,

such as community building, and developing social and emotional health of children involved (Free Play, 2020). FPK's programming also goes beyond no-cost sport programming. FPK runs a Pathway to Leadership targeted at youth in grades 7-12. The program encourages youth to work as junior coaches and referees with the intention of providing certification, work experience, and developmental opportunities to older youth who have 'aged out' of the playing ages offered by FPK (Free Play, 2020).

This particular mission and approach has led to FPK becoming well known within Edmonton sport and recreation circles. Indeed, FPK has become ubiquitous in grassroots soccer throughout Edmonton, and is often promoted at professional sporting events, particularly soccer games due to its long-standing connections to the Edmonton soccer community. For example, in October 2018 I attended an event put on by River Valley Vanguard, a fan group that supports FC Edmonton, the city's professional soccer team. During the event money was collected from attendees to be donated to FPK, at the time still named Free Footie. Additionally, FC Edmonton soccer players attend FPK events as volunteer coaches, and in the summer of 2021 proceeds from some FC Edmonton events were donated to FPK. FPK was also the beneficiary of a 50/50 raffle put on by FC Edmonton later that summer. Promotional materials for such events point to the perceived fundamental good of promoting sport through charity. In terms of its actual programming, FPK works with a large number of youth who attend schools in both of Edmonton's school districts – Edmonton Catholic Schools and Edmonton Public Schools. Currently, 26 schools partake in FPK programming, though in total over 60 different schools[6] have been involved with FPK and in 2020 (before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in Canada) FPK planned to run 120 teams for approximately 2,000 children in Edmonton (Free Play, 2020). In total in the 2019/2020

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[6] Recently, FPK has transitioned to providing daily programming for a smaller number of students rather than weekly programming to a larger number of students (see Whiting, 2021).

school year approximately 4,000 children and youth took part in FPK programming either through sport participation or volunteering with the Future Leaders Program. In total Edmonton has over 300 schools, so FPK has worked with almost one fifth of all schools in Edmonton. However, a large amount of these schools would not fall under FPK's purview of 'high need' schools. A 'high need' school is determined using Alberta's Social Vulnerability Index (SVI). When determining schools to work with, FPK uses the SVI to assess "average income of the area, the number of single parent families, the number of newcomers, and how often families move" (Free Play, 2020).

There are a range of non-profit youth sport organizations which have similar aims of providing no-cost sport programing for 'high need' children and youth in Edmonton. FPK is – in part for the reasons described above – the most visible, and an outlier in that it has had consistent programming for almost 15 years. Alternatives include KidSport Edmonton which provides means tested grants for individual children to participate in sport activities if their family cannot afford the costs of programming. Unlike FPK, KidSport does not provide the comprehensive programming that FPK does. Other programs which do provide no-cost programming often run less consistent, shorter sessions for smaller numbers of children. For example, Little Aces, was a tennis non-profit organization in Edmonton which ran 6 weeks of tennis programs for approximately 200-400 elementary school aged children for one session each year for four years.[7] Additionally, FPK has received relatively large grants to support its programming and enhance funding from private donors. In both the 2019/20 and 2020/2021 fiscal years FPK was awarded $105,000 in grant money – the maximum possible amount – from the provincial Government of Alberta's Community Initiatives Program (CIP) (Government of Alberta 2021a, 2021b).[8] In these two fiscal years no other

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[7] I worked as an instructor and in an administrative role with Little Aces to implement this programming.
[8] FPK did not receive a CIP grant in the 2021/22 fiscal year. This may have been due to large cuts in the grants awarded by the provincial Ministry of Culture which were reduced from 2157 recipients awarded over $85 million in 2020/21 reduced to 581 recipients awarded approximately $26.5 million in 2021/22. These cuts were part of a spate of cuts in government funding to non-profit and community groups in the provincial government's 2021 budget. Civil society

no-cost sport organizations in Edmonton received such a grant from the Alberta Ministry of

Culture, which funds a range of programs and organizations including sport, arts, and tourism

events and programming.[9] FPK also received a $544,000 grant from the Government of Canada's

Canadian Heritage Sport Support Program for the period of 2019-2022.

Due in part to the consistency of its programming, made possible through relatively

consistent funding, FPK has also come to be seen as an exemplar for local SFD type programming

in Edmonton. Tim Adams has represented FPK on local media platforms on dozens of occasions to

promote the program and *his* vision for social change and using sport for youth development

through FPK (among others, see Global (2018a; 2018b), and Hampshire (2015)). Further, in the

leadup to the 2021 Edmonton municipal elections Tim Adams and FPK partnered with and

endorsed unsuccessful mayoral candidate Michael Oshry. One cornerstone policy of Oshry's

campaign was an expansion of "the successful model used by [FPK]" which would see "City-funded

facilities free for everyone [aged] 18 and under from 3:30-5:30[pm] every school day, with supervised

programming run by qualified/certified staff" (Oshry, 2021). This would follow FPK's model by

partnering with local programs, providing transportation to and from recreation facilities, and

prioritizing programming for 'high-need' schools.

Interestingly, Oshry's policy and FPK's endorsement of it represents a departure from

traditional rhetoric of social justice oriented non-profit organizations that make up the NPIC; that is,

the discourse of 'working yourself out of a job.' As critics of the NPIC point out, this rhetoric tends

to be lofty and performative, since non-profit organizations essentially work to reproduce and

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organizations such as the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues voiced largely ignored opposition to these cuts (Omstead and Jeffrey, 2021).

[9] Many sport organizations did receive funding through the CIP, but these were limited to groups hosting major sporting events (e.g. Alberta Basketball Associations received $75,000 to cover hosting costs for an international 3 on 3 event), or local competitive sport clubs which received funds for facility or equipment renewal and upgrades.

maintain the status quo (Rodriguez, 2017; Spade, 2020). However, with an endorsement of the expansion of their programming in this way, FPK's explicit focus becomes providing no-cost sport programming for more children while turning its back on any sort of approach advocating for structural changes which might alleviate the need for FPK.

Based on the discussion above, it is clear that FPK is a prominent player in non-profit SFD in Edmonton. A CDA of FPK is justified and helpful then for multiple reasons. This analysis allows me to interrogate how FPK is promoted by other entities – businesses, government, other non-profits – and how it promotes itself. More importantly, this CDA also allows me to analyze the political and social structures and ideas which underpin the promotion and representation of FPK in popular media sources, including what forms of social change are advocated for. Additionally, I can critically assess how these ideas reproduce and reinscribe dominant ideas about 'in need' program recipients. With these intentions in mind, n the following chapters I turn to my CDA in which I analyze and discuss three themes I have identified in media produced by and about FPK. That is, those that I argue are given the most weight and discursive power. In my analysis of this archive the three themes I identified are: (1) A welcoming and inclusive Edmonton; (2) 'Giving back' to the community, neoliberalism, and individualism; and (3) Positive youth development and 'sport evangelism'. Each theme is presented as a short chapter with a discussion and conclusion. In chapter 8 I undertake a more robust discussion to tie together each of the three discursive themes.

# Chapter 6: A Welcoming and Inclusive Edmonton

**Introduction**

The first theme identified in this CDA is the way that Edmonton, and Canada more generally, are represented as welcoming and inclusive places with FPK being one particular community-based program exemplifying such unity. In doing so, media by and about FPK reproduces two common themes of national mythmaking in Canada. The first is multiculturalism, framing Canada as a benevolent country which has taken in racialized people from around the world, treating them equally. Second, the dominant reconciliation discourse is represented in the ways FPK is discursively produced as a program that helps 'in need' Indigenous children. In this section I present select evidence of each of these discourses and draw on critical research and analyses of multiculturalism (Galabuzi, 2011; Mackey, 2002) and reconciliation and the politics of cultural recognition (Coulthard, 2014a; Nichols, 2014). In doing so I aim to enter into a discussion on the ways that the discourses present in media about FPK work to reproduce and strengthen dominant discourses about Canada and Canadian nationalism (Hall, 1980).

**FPK as a Manifestation of Canadian Multiculturalism**

Canadian multiculturalism does not just refer to one thing. Multiculturalism is an official policy discourse that was taken up when "then Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau announced in 1971 that Canada was a multicultural nation … with two official languages and no official culture" (Barrick, Bridel, and Bard Miller, 2021, p. 4). This policy discourse has shifted in the 50 years since its implementation and has been critiqued from a range of political and sociological perspectives. Multiculturalism is also a mythologized representation of Canada and what it means to be Canadian. In this way, multiculturalism can be understood as a dominant discursive representation of a 'kind' and 'welcoming' Canadian state (Mackey, 2002). The construction of multiculturalism and benevolence as synonymous with Canada has developed in part from this policy discourse and as

such, has also been critiqued by scholars for how it reproduces and reinscribes inequities and injustices. Such an image of Canada is reproduced in media about FPK through 'success stories' and representations of program participants.

FPK selects 'high need' schools with which it partners to offer its no-cost sports programs. With limited resources FPK cannot work with every school, nor is there a (perceived) need for no-cost sports programming in more affluent schools. 'High need' schools are those with higher rates of students who are from low-income families. As noted previously, FPK determines which schools are 'high need' through Alberta's Social Vulnerability Index. Due in part to the racialization of poverty, the relative lower income of newcomers to Canada, and ongoing effects of settler colonialism, FPK's target community is made up of predominantly Indigenous and refugee children. In positive representations of FPK this population makeup is taken as a positive example of Canada and Edmonton's inclusiveness and commitment to liberal multiculturalism. One example is a story about FPK's Pathway to Leadership Program for older youth in Grades 7-12. In such stories, we are told about youth who moved to Canada, escaping "staggering amounts of war and poverty" (Dalmar, 2021). Such stories strengthen the dominant understanding of Canada as a welcoming and non-racist, multicultural country. Additionally, FPK is framed as playing a substantial local role, with the Future Leaders Program "open[ing] up doors for disadvantaged communities to access the growing plethora of leadership" (Dalmar, 2021).

FPK is fundamentally and repeatedly framed as a program which enacts the multicultural values of "warm and fuzzy, modern, liberal, tolerant Canada" (O'Callaghan, 2018) by providing opportunities for participants to achieve success as professional athletes, coaches, or assimilated citizens (Simons, 2018). In the depictions which frame Canadian multiculturalism as the driver of social equality there is no accounting for the reasons why – if multiculturalism is so equitable and

just – FPK's target community is disproportionately made up of "refugees, newcomers, or indigenous [*sic*] youth who cannot afford the 'pay to play' model" (Free Play, 2020).

Such representations of distant poverty-stricken lands, like those described above, are dominant in mainstream media as well as SFD promotional materials (Darnell, 2014). Additionally, these representations, when proliferated as the dominant discursive frame, reproduce a discursive construction of Canada as a welcoming, wealthy, equitable, and benevolent country, while overlooking the role Canada has historically and continuously played in destabilizing colonized societies around the world (Shipley, 2020). This works to frame Canada, the site of charitably funded initiatives like FPK, as a country that is not overwhelmed by poverty, in opposition to those countries which participants in FPK programming may have come from as refugees.

Far from being a system which celebrates peoples from around the world taking part equitably in a welcoming and open society, Galabuzi suggests that Canadian multiculturalism has historically worked to "manag[e] difference and diversity in a liberal democratic society that has otherwise imagined itself as cosmopolitan and tolerant of difference" (2011, p. 59). In a sport context, hockey has been important in this process. In 2018 Free Hockey was incorporated into FPK's programming. In dominant media framings this made sense because "hockey… is this classic Canadian cultural connection" (Adams, quoted in Global News, 2018b). Hockey represents the sporting tool that FPK uses to fold in newcomers and Indigenous children in its programming to make a 'cultural connection.' In this framing, people perceived to be in, but not necessarily of the nation state are introduced to hockey, framed as a major part of the true cultural context of Canada. Indeed, after being interpellated into Canadianism through hockey, children who are framed as 'not from here' will be able to "have a conversation with a Canadian kid" (Adams, quoted in Global News, 2018b). Here, a central problem with Canadian multiculturalism is discursively reproduced

wherein one group of, likely white, children are constructed as "'mainstream' or simply '*Canadian-Canadians*'" while racialized youth and newcomers to Canada in particular are constructed as different or outsiders (Mackey, 2002, p.16, emphasis in original). Similarly, Szto (2016) has demonstrated, through an analysis of tweets about *Hockey Night in Canada* Punjabi, the ways that hockey is reasserted "as a white man's game" (p. 6) through viewer reactions which framed hockey as a popular cultural site where whiteness was 'natural' and Punjabi commentary was both surprising and comical.

The dominant narrative of hockey in Canada, that it is the national game which has historically been played and shaped by white, male settlers but is increasingly diversifying, are reproduced in representations of FPK's Free Hockey program. As Ellison and Anderson (2018) argue, "women, non-white, and Indigenous players of the past were not just a side story, they were integral to the history of the game" (p. 2). The dominant discourse of hockey illustrates the facets of multiculturalism which Mackey (2002) critiques, specifically that multiculturalism reproduces a white Canadian identity and culture as the normative mainstream into which an (often racialized) other is folded in, while oppressive institutions and laws are maintained.

Given this context, I argue that the media I have analyzed should be understood as reinforcing the dominant discursive frame of Canada as a benevolent, welcoming, multicultural state. So far I have made this argument within the context of multiculturalism in media about FPK, and I now turn to analyzing how this discursive frame can be understood through a critique of settler colonialism. Both of these discourses operate, though in distinct ways, to uphold an image of benevolence while obscuring the white supremacist nationhood of the Canadian state.

**FPK and the Politics of Reconciliation**

In addition to the reassertion of difference and the folding in of outside others into a 'multicultural' mainstream, Canadian multiculturalism has been critiqued for, at different

conjunctures, attempting to erase the presence of Indigenous peoples, reproducing stereotypical and monolithic notions of diverse cultures of many Indigenous peoples, and presenting Indigenous peoples as an equally positioned partner in the 'national multicultural mosaic' (Chazan, Helps, Stanley, and Thakkar, 2011). In an earlier chapter I analyzed how Indigenous children were discursively constructed as problematic, deficient, and 'in need', and examined specific examples of how recreation was framed as a solution to these perceived problems. Importantly, such discourses and representations are subject to both continuities and breaks (Hall, 1997). FPK is framed as a recreation program with a modern solution to similar perceived social problems.

With this in mind, in my analysis I identified an intertextual discourse of reconciliation within the politics of FPK. Reconciliation has emerged as the dominant discourse in regard to relations between the Canadian state and Indigenous peoples and nations. However, dominant reconciliatory discourses are often centred around performative and symbolic change and a lack of commitment to the calls to action outlined in the 2015 *Truth and Reconciliation Commission* (Jewell and Mosby, 2020; TRC, 2015). For example, recent symbolic reconciliation events in Edmonton include changing the name of Edmonton's CFL franchise as well as renaming neighborhoods and sites previously named after early settlers and missionaries who were involved in genocidal land theft and the residential school system (Mertz, 2021; Snowdon, 2021). Such representational changes are not meaningless, as ceasing to celebrate genocidaires and ending the use of racial slurs in sports team names is an important part of reconciliatory work and has long been fought for by activists. Though, as Anishnaabe journalist Jesse Wente argues, name changes are "the low hanging fruit" (quoted in Ayed, 2020) of the ongoing reconciliation project and part of the representational politics of reconciliation which have become dominant. Symbolic reconciliation discourses also proliferate in representations of FPK and become important to consider given the high proportion of FPK

program participants who are Indigenous, and the frequency with which Indigenous peoples are targeted for SFD initiatives (Coleby and Giles, 2013; Hayhurst, Giles, and Wright, 2016).

In 2018 FPK announced the release of a Treaty Six soccer ball designed by Cree-Métis artist Dawn Marie Marchand.[10] The thinking behind creating and implementing this ball, from FPK's perspective was that "a ball could be way more than just a thing you kick, it can be an educational tool… we're just sharing our history and roots, and what the Indigenous community means to Edmonton and to our Free Footie community" (Adams, quoted in Leavitt, 2018). This statement illustrates the way that FPK rhetorically uses an ill-defined and homogenously conceptualized 'Indigenous community' to position itself as a kind hearted and compassionate site for sharing a history of the creation of Treaty Six and reconciliatory action more generally. With this in mind, it is helpful to critically read the Treaty Six ball and related media releases, like the quote above, as pedagogical 'texts'. The design of the ball is described as including "12 horses running in two directions on the ball with the [Edmonton] city skyline in the background. The 12 horses represent the various groups of Indigenous people [*sic*] living in and around the city" (Leavitt, 2018). While we are told little else about what the imagery means, the dominant reading of the Treaty Six ball suggests that reconciliation is a successful project as the ball depicts 12 happy horses running in the open fields surrounding Edmonton. From this dominant reading, one could assume that all of the land surrounding Edmonton is currently within the control of and accessible to the "12 groups of Indigenous people [*sic*]" who are depicted on the ball, and that Edmonton itself is open and accessible to Indigenous peoples as well. Of course, this is not the case, as Indigenous peoples in Edmonton and the surrounding areas were increasingly confined throughout the late nineteenth and

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[10] Marchand became the Indigenous Artist in Residence at the City of Edmonton shortly after designing the Treaty Six ball. She was in this position at the time of the interviews analyzed here.

early twentieth centuries onto reserves located far away from Edmonton in order to open up space for development and growth of the city (Donald, 2004; Shipley, 2020).

Importantly, we are told that the artist, Marchand, believes "There is still a long way to go in the process of reconciliation… and the process must begin with truth and connection" (Leavitt, 2018). Otherwise, no critical commentary is made on the limits of reconciliation. It should be noted that such artistic representations of reconciliation are complex and nuanced. Reconciliatory art likely provides some positive identificatory affect for some Indigenous children (and adults). This particular category of art, and the Treaty Six ball specifically are not without value then. It is, however, still important to consider the political relations and logics that are upheld through such reconciliatory logics.

FPK itself is also imagined as a reconciliatory type of program which can help to improve the lives of Indigenous children. One blurb on FPK's website explaining the program describes some program participants as "Indigenous youth … whose families have lived here for generations but still need some extra support" (Free Play, 2020). Here, the violences of settler colonialism, when framed within a discourse of reconciliation, is limited to problems that can be solved with a little extra support from a community sport program and settler led paternalism. What is also left unsaid is why and how these Indigenous youth have been put in positions where they need "some extra support". The social structures producing these conditions are glossed over, while individualized solutions involving charitable sport programming are asserted as a necessary and inevitable solution.

Coulthard (2014a) argues that in Canada and elsewhere an "industry has emerged promoting the issuing of official apologies advocating 'forgiveness' and 'reconciliation' as an important precondition for resolving the deleterious social impacts of state violence, mass atrocity, and historical injustice" (p. 106). While Coulthard refers to apologies by politicians and national level

initiatives of reconciliation, the Treaty Six ball and the framing of FPK as a reconciliatory program

operate similarly at a much smaller, local level. Programs like FPK build the discursive strength of a

dominant reconciliatory politics through their promotional materials and media releases. The

function of such a reconciliatory politics is to put

> the abuses of settler colonization firmly *in the past*. In these situations reconciliation
>
> itself becomes temporally framed as the process of individually and collectively
>
> *overcoming* the harmful 'legacy' left in the wake of this past abuse, while leaving the
>
> *present* structure of colonial rule largely unscathed. (Coulthard, 2014a, p. 22, emphasis
>
> in original).

Ultimately, this dominant vision of reconciliation "presumes the legitimacy of the settler state and

acknowledges the possibility to reconcile within the political framework of the settler state" (Chen,

Mason, and Misener, 2018, p. 1011). The Treaty Six ball is one example of this particular framing of

reconciliation which is dominant in the archive I analyzed. Educating people through the use of the

Treaty Six ball becomes the end goal of reconciliation, situating settler colonial violences in the past,

overcome by treaties and present reconciliation. Meanwhile a politics that aims to challenge still

existing colonial rule is subordinated or ignored entirely. Within media framings of the Treaty Six

ball, no mention is made of other conceptions of relationships between Canada and Indigenous

nations which advocate the view that land theft and ongoing genocide must be resolved (e.g. Riddle,

2020; Simpson, 2014; Tuck and Yang, 2012). Therefore, I argue FPK should be understood as

contributing to the entrenchment of a dominant performative politics of reconciliation rather than

one that seeks to grapple with and solve the historical and ongoing structures of settler colonization.

Seemingly somewhat conversely to discourses of reconciliation, FPK follows historic and

contemporary SFD programs in framing participants as potential criminals who require intervention.

FPK is vaunted for its ability to 'keep kids busy' after school "so there's no time for them to get into trouble" (Free Play, 2020). Additionally, in 2013 FPK's founder was awarded with a 'Crime Prevention' award and a 'community policing' award for his work in creating FPK (CBC, 2013). This crime prevention discourse, I argue, should be understood as a continuity in racist settler colonial narratives about criminality. Such a framing of FPK cannot be separated from a media context which has produced a moral panic about Indigenous crime rates, functioning to produce Indigenous criminality as a common sense "sociohistorical and political economic phenomenon at a distinct historical juncture" (Koch and Scherer, 2016, p. 37).[11] Similarly, Nichols (2014) has argued that prisons, and the carceral logics which criminalize Indigenous peoples in Canada should be understood, at least analogically, as the new residential schools. Nichols suggests 'crime prevention' policies and criminalization "are first and foremost devised to maintain a system of state violence, racialized hierarchy, and … continuous colonial reterritorialization" (p. 442). Discourses of criminality and crime prevention, then, are examples of constitutive intertextuality within media about FPK. It is not explicitly stated who might become a criminal, when viewed within the context of settler colonial oppression, mainstream media discourses, and paternalistic approaches to SFD, but it is clear who this discourse of crime prevention has in mind.

It is not altogether surprising to see these discourses in FPK promotional material and media about FPK. Indeed, even if there was a desire within the organization to advocate other conceptions of reconciliation or radical politics, within the logics of the NPIC, presenting a palatable message is fundamental to maintain the support of various funders (Rodriguez, 2017). However, it is important to consider the ways in which a program that purports to view recreation and social supports

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[11] Koch and Scherer make this argument about the production of Indigenous gang violence as a particular moral panic and media trope.

radically differently from the mainstream, relies on two dominant discourses which reproduce and obfuscate inequality and exclusion within local and national communities.

**Conclusion**

  In this first theme I have sought to analyze discourses which position FPK as part of a welcoming, multicultural, and reconciliatory city and country. Idealistic representations like those outlined above require critical analysis to demonstrate the functions that such discourses have in reproducing existing inequities. I have argued that manifestations of dominant, representational methods of reconciliation and multiculturalism are reproduced in media produced by and about FPK. The 'communication events' I have analyzed and discussed above are important local mobilizations of national discourses that work to uphold dominant ideologies and material realities of settler colonial racial capitalism and corollary inequities that produce a perceived need for programs like FPK. In the next theme I look at how contemporary neoliberal political realities produce individualized narratives about the work FPK does.

# Chapter 7: 'Giving Back' to the Community, Neoliberalism, and Individualism

**Introduction**

In this chapter I explore the second theme identified in this CDA. I have grouped together 'giving back', neoliberal political rationalities, and individualism due to the overlapping logics underpinning each of these discourses and political perspectives. Specifically, I interrogate the discursive construction of 'failed' and 'in need' subjects juxtaposed against successful and benevolent business owners, helpers, and celebrities who have achieved success within the neoliberal framework. First I outline the ways that, through the discourse of 'giving back', businesses and people who give charitable donations more generally, are constructed as kind and caring actors who can solve the problems of social inequity and lack of access to safe recreation spaces. I argue that the method of charitable giving should be understood as an individualistic, paternalistic, and ineffective method of social change. I then explore two distinct but related forms of individualism which grow out of the discourse of 'giving back' in the context of FPK – sporting celebrity, and the 'father figure'.

**Charitable 'Giving Back' and Corporate Social Responsibility**

FPK relies on donors and grants which sponsor sports teams, cover operating costs, and pay for facilities and equipment. These donors include local businesses, provincial and federal funding agencies, as well as large corporations' charitable programs such as Canadian Tire's Jumpstart. A substantial portion of FPK's website is dedicated to 'Success Stories' featuring businesses that sponsor FPK, describing the story of how the business owner was made aware of FPK and came to sponsor the program (Free Play, n.d.). Clearly present within these 'Success Stories' and related media are themes of 'giving back' and individual responsibility, which need to be understood within the context of contemporary neoliberal political realities.

FPK's website features a range of small and medium sized businesses, large corporations, as well as volunteer initiatives which have sponsored the cost of various aspects of FPK's programming, from transportation costs, to sponsoring a team for a season. The website also profiles individuals who work and volunteer as coaches or in other roles within FPK. Here I present examples of how these groups are framed as 'giving back' and connect these representations to discursive and ideological underpinnings.

An important aspect of the discourse of 'giving back' is the reference to "building community" through sponsoring and running FPK. For example, the owner of a coffee shop which sponsors FPK describes his vision of community building through his business. "It all comes back to community, the reason [the coffee shop] was founded in the first place … 'I grew up playing team sports and I know the value it can have on the fabric of community'" (Poul Mark, 2020). Here, for profit businesses are framed as a community builder in much the same way that no-cost sport programs are. The Alberta Treasury Branch (ATB), a crown corporation and bank, is another success story on FPK's website. ATB is framed as giving back through donating funds to cover transportation costs, volunteering at events, and providing funds to sponsor the Treaty Six ball described in the previous chapter. ATB's Director of Corporate Giving and Strategic Partnerships suggests that ATB sponsors FPK because "it rolls into our overall commitment to community. We donate to programs like this because it strengthens communities where we operate" (Regel, quoted in Salegio, 2020a). Although it is not clear how, ATB's support of FPK is also framed as contributing to social justice: "It's evening the playing field for them… It's so powerful" (Regel, quoted in Salegio, 2020a). Statements such as this function in important ways within the logics of neoliberalism and the NPIC. Implicit in the idea of 'leveling the playing field' is the assertion that if one has access to programs like FPK and does not achieve success – whether defined as getting a

'good job', education, escaping poverty – then that particular individual is responsible for their own social position because the playing field was levelled for them.

In such representations, discourses of community and 'giving back' are not ideologically neutral. Neoliberal ideas have become the hegemonic frame for political thinking around social service provision, normalizing the idea that access to recreation and safe spaces to play, in this case, should be funded by the generosity of businesses. What follows from this logic is the idea that one is a 'failed subject' if they cannot participate in the pay to play model. While FPK rightly questions the dominance of the pay to play model, the implicit logics in the discourse of 'giving back' uphold the legitimacy of such an approach to social service provision. This is not to say returning to a pre-neoliberal approach to recreation provision is a satisfactory solution. As Peers and Tink (2021) have convincingly argued, historically and in the present context simply providing more funding and advocating for inclusivity does not necessarily create accessible, ethical, and socially just recreation programming unless underpinning ideologies are challenged and replaced. In the discourse of community and 'giving back' through business sponsorship, dominant ideologies, shaped by dominant neoliberal political rationalities are reinforced and work to assert 'community oriented' businesses as pillars of the community, without which recreation programs like FPK could not happen. Fursova (2018) suggests that "neoliberalization of non-profits morphs the sector into *neoliberal para-state* apparatus that is more concerned with re/producing specific neoliberal subjects rather than facilitating the development of vibrant and participatory civil society" (p. 121, emphasis in original). From this view, and considering the dominance of individualist ideas, the discourse of community should be approached sceptically and critically when produced by SFD non-profit organizations and their funders.

While businesses like those described above constitute one aspect of the 'giving back' discourse, staff and volunteers are also represented as giving back in similar ways. One coach, in her work with FPK is "giving back to the community in the best way she knows how: through coaching sport" (Dalmar, n.d.). In another example, a coach felt he "had to go back to the community and I had to give back to the community, so then I started coaching" (Saleh, quoted in Orich, n.d.). In these representations coaches are understood to be giving back through teaching sports skills, but also life skills which are framed as an inherent outcome of organized youth sport participation. In the next chapter I explore this latter point, but first I connect 'giving back' to dominant ideologies.

'Giving back' is a common theme used within the NPIC to represent those who support and fund the work of non-profits. Trans activist and scholar Dean Spade (2020) argues that 'giving back', much like the NPIC itself, functions to depoliticize initiatives which oppose poverty and injustice. In the case of FPK, relevant social issues – lack of access to safe spaces and sport and recreation opportunities – are depoliticized through this discourse of 'giving back'. As a result of depoliticized social issues, business owners, staff, and volunteers involved with FPK are discursively constructed as good people who generously give their time and money to help those who are inversely constructed as 'in need'. The neoliberal policies which have exacerbated these social issues, and the ongoing violences of settler colonization and Canadian multiculturalism are obscured or ignored, while those who benefit are separated from the social issues and resultant suffering. Spade (2020) suggests that through the framing of 'giving back', we come to believe we are doing enough, and that social change will be reached if each person engages similarly. This is not to say that FPK staff and volunteers are not doing important work. Indeed, recreation scholars have made recent important critical interventions to demonstrate that recreation practitioners' work to make recreation more accessible and inclusive is absolutely necessary, even if it does not go far enough to create inclusive recreation spaces (Tink, Peers, Nykiforuk, and Kingsley, 2020). Rather, my structural

argument is that the discourse of 'giving back', produced by the proliferation of the NPIC and its underpinning philosophies, serves to depoliticize the social issues that FPK and similar programs purport to solve.

FPK also receives funding from the charitable wings of large corporations including retail giant Canadian Tire's Jumpstart program, and National Hockey League franchise Edmonton Oilers' Community Foundation. Canadian Tire's Jumpstart program is promoted as the largest funder of FPK. The Jumpstart logo is front and center on FPK's website, and Jumpstart's "generous" funding is mentioned in multiple media interviews. Canadian Tire, a major retail chain, founded Jumpstart as a registered charitable organization in 2005. Since its founding, Jumpstart has provided funding to various youth sport programs throughout Canada, as well as direct funding to cover costs of organized sport for individual children. FPK is an unsurprising partner for Jumpstart given that both organizations share similar ostensible goals – providing no-cost organized sport opportunities to 'high need' children. In a discourse analysis of Jumpstart commercials Lynch and Yerashotis (2019) suggest that the Jumpstart charity has formed an important part of Canadian Tire's branding efforts to appeal to consumers' national pride and sense of brand benevolence, with the aim of getting Canadians to shop at a Canadian store rather than competing American brands. Jumpstart, then should be understood within the frame of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) wherein corporations use charitable organizations and causes to improve their reputation and soften their public image with the goal of increasing profitability. Jumpstart is the main tool of CSR for Canadian Tire, wherein Canadian Tire is implicitly framed as a "virtuous compan[y] interested only in preventing children (through sport sponsorship) from growing up to be unskilled, non-productive, un-contributing, and sad citizens" (Lynch and Yerashotis, 2019, p. 680).

FPK's other major corporate funder is the Oilers Community Foundation (OCF). In February of 2021 FPK was featured on Sportsnet's *Hockey Day in Canada* to highlight the program and the OCF's generosity (Oilers Community Foundation, 2021). The money FPK received was accrued through record high 50/50's during Oilers games. These games took place after the resumption of the 2019/2020 NHL season following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic wherein the rhetoric of community and 'support from home' were central to the promotion of the 50/50s. FPK used the money to build and operate an outdoor hockey rink for their Free Hockey program. In the media piece, viewers are told that the OCF "took so much of that money and put it back into the community and various charities, including Free Play for Kids" (Principe, quoted in Oilers Community Foundation, 2021). In watching this segment, the viewer is invited to watch a feel-good story involving a diverse group of 'in need' children learning to play hockey. Discourses of community and 'giving back' are present, and the OCF is not the only group framed as 'giving back'. Indeed, regular hockey fans can feel that they have played a part in giving back through purchasing 50/50 tickets.

Like other examples outlined above, brief media segments such as this one work to depoliticize the social issues FPK seeks to solve. Further, it works to launder the reputation of the Edmonton Oilers, and its owner, Daryl Katz, through positive representations of the work done by the OCF. The *Hockey Day in Canada* segment educates viewers on the power of SFD organizations funded by a profitable NHL team. At the same time, as a result of their new arena deal that left the City of Edmonton funding a facility whose increased profits go directly to the Oilers Entertainment Group, the Edmonton Oilers have been a major factor in gentrifying downtown Edmonton, exacerbating homelessness, and disrupting social service provision, all of which have contributed to making more difficult the lives of less affluent people living in the downtown core of Edmonton (Koch, Scherer, and Kafara, 2020; Scherer et al., 2020; Scherer et al., 2019).

These discursive themes which I have described above cannot be separated from a dominant neoliberal rationality (Brown, 2006) which shapes the political and cultural context in which FPK and the NPIC more broadly has flourished. Neoliberalism promotes a free market ideology, individual responsibility, as well as "a specific and consequential organization of the social, the subject, and the state" (Brown, 2006, p. 964). These characteristics of neoliberal rationality powerfully limit and shape discourses about political and social spheres, including the logics of FPK, SFD, and youth sport more broadly. Modern developments of CSR linked to SFD can be understood as an outgrowth of neoliberal policies and political rationalities (Hayhurst and Szto, 2016), and in part take the place of initiatives that may have been responsibilities of the welfare state before the onset of neoliberalism. Specific to recreation, Macintosh and Whitson (1990) have demonstrated how elite sport became a funding priority with the aim of establishing national pride and prestige – both at home and abroad – while grassroots sport and recreation experienced substantial decreases in funding in the 1980's and into the 1990's as Canadian governance followed the neoliberal consensus.

This also helps to explain how the language of entrepreneurialism permeates media about FPK to construct generous business owners, who are presumed to have become successful through hard work and determination, as the reasonable and normative funding sources of no-cost youth sport. These same business owners are then discursively constructed as benevolent and integral members of the community. This framing of benevolence can then be used by proponents of neoliberal policies to demonstrate to all levels of government the necessity to cater to businesses and their interests – for example, low taxes, reductions in and privatization of social services – even when those interests are counter to the purported beneficiaries of SFD programs like FPK. In this way CSR, and the discourse of 'giving back', positions businesses as pillars of the community while reinforcing the rhetoric which is used to uphold neoliberal political rationalities that perpetuate and

exacerbate poverty and social inequality, social problems that domestic SFD programs ostensibly purport to solve.

Having discussed the general themes of individualism and 'giving back' as it relates to neoliberal political realities, I now turn to two prominent subthemes which relate specifically to individualist and neoliberal ideologies permeating media about FPK.

**Sporting Celebrity**

Sporting celebrity is a particular type of individualism tied up with consumption of elite sport, a widely popular cultural form, which SFD practitioners have used to promote their programs and development efforts. Following a critical cultural studies perspective, I understand celebrity as a media constructed image of a public figure wherein the celebrity is promoted and becomes associated with a variety of causes or events outside of their typical role, in this case the role of professional athlete (Darnell, 2012). The existing dominant ideologies and discourses in a particular social and cultural context are also important in shaping celebrity (Turner, 2014), as is true in FPK.

Promotion of SFD through sporting celebrity is a common thread across domestic, and especially international SFD programs, and other humanitarian initiatives (Mwaniki, 2017). FPK describes itself as an organization which focuses primarily on creating access to sport programs regardless of the level of play. However, it does not hesitate to lean into the power of sporting celebrity as a promotional tool both to attract donations and demonstrate the success of the program. Indeed, FPK has a unique tie to sporting celebrity. Alphonso Davies, widely regarded as one of the best Canadian soccer players ever, began playing soccer in FPK programs shortly after arriving in Edmonton as a refugee. When Alphonso Davies was signed by Bayern Munich, a major German football club, there was a substantial increase in local, national, and even international media about FPK. As a result, sporting celebrity in general was identified as an important theme to consider in this CDA.

While Davies does not work in any official ambassadorial role with FPK, his celebrity is used to promote the program, and to a certain extent shaped through the same media sources. In 2018, the year Davies was signed by Bayern Munich, the vast majority of media coverage of FPK mentioned FPK as the program where "Davies got his start" in soccer after coming to Canada as a refugee and before moving onto a "lucrative professional career" (Crosby, June 15, 2018). Media sources about Davies describe him as "an ideal ambassador for [soccer]", and FPK specifically, due to "his infectious grin and bounding energy" (Simons, 2018). Davies' transfer to one of the biggest clubs in Europe also spring boarded Tim Adams' television appearances and an interview in *The Guardian* to promote the work of FPK. Sporting celebrity here served one of its key roles, "mobilizing awareness, in and through the sport/media complex, of the importance of particular development issues" (Darnell, 2012, p. 133), and FPK's method of addressing such issues.

SFD practitioners suggest that sporting celebrity is most effective in promoting SFD initiatives when the athlete is popular globally and has some form of local connection (Bardocz-Bencsik, Begović, and Dóczi, 2021). Additionally, Davies' refugee status as a child ties in with the earlier theme of FPK as a manifestation of Canadian multiculturalism. Alphonso Davies is seen as the ultimate success story:

> That's the part of the story I love, beyond the football, is what it can represent for Canada. You know, there is so much anti-immigration, anti-refugee talk going on in the world right now and Alphonso's story is the perfect Canadian story. This shows what we are as a country. He comes here as a refugee, finds a community, finds his passion, and gets supported. Now he's going to be making $20 million [*sic*].[12]  That's the Canadian dream. (Adams, quoted in Global News, 25 July, 2018a).

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[12] Bayern Munich paid $20 million CAD to Vancouver Whitecaps for Alphonso Davies. His current contract is estimated at $5.5 million USD annual salary.

This quote not only exemplifies the idealistic narrative of Canada described in the previous theme, but also represents the individualism tied up in sporting celebrity and success narratives. The quote above references discourses of meritocracy and individual success which are presumed to be the positive outcomes of SFD programs and Canadian multiculturalism. Captured within this theme of sporting celebrity is the common and important critique that SFD programs are an individualized solution to structural problems of poverty, racism, imperialism, and settler colonialism which are reproduced through racial capitalist logics (Coakley, 2011, 2016; Darnell, 2012; Darnell and Hayhurst, 2011, 2012).

Additionally, the above quote from Tim Adams reproduces dominant ideas of Canada regarding meritocracy and success, referencing the 'Canadian dream' wherein any individual is imagined to be able to achieve wealth and possibly fame with enough skill and hard work. In the case of Alphonso Davies, this is represented as possible only through the benevolence of Canadian multiculturalism. Given what Davies represents – a successful individual who escaped poverty and violence to build a new life with his family in a welcoming and generous Canada – he is an ideal example of sporting celebrity whose success can be used to promote and raise awareness of FPK and its particular vision of liberal individualist social change through SFD.

**The 'Father Figure' of FPK**

Sporting celebrity represents one form of individualism in media about FPK. Another form is that of the founder of FPK, who is represented as a 'father figure'. Although this subtheme focuses on an individual, I am not primarily concerned with individual representations or making any argument around Tim Adams' actions or personal beliefs. However, Adams is the main interlocutor through which FPK is represented in the vast majority of media stories by or about FPK, especially before 2020, so his words and framing do influence some of themes I have

discussed thus far. Rather, I am interested in the functions of the framing of a patriarchal 'father figure', the dominance of that image in the archive I analyze, and how the cultural context FPK operates in producing individualist narratives. Approximately half of the archive consisted of mainstream media sources of which all but one included a quote from Tim Adams. Additionally, about halfway down the main page of FPK's website, a viewer interested in learning about FPK is introduced to Adams and the story of how he became the 'father' of FPK (Free Play, 2020).

Tim Adams started FPK – at the time Free Footie – in 2007 after meeting children who would change his "whole life path" (Adams, quoted in Free Play, 2020). This first group of children had uniquely difficult situations, according to Adams:

James was a former child soldier. Sarah looked after her brother while her mom worked as a prostitute [*sic*] in Fort McMurray. Eric's parents abandoned him in West Edmonton Mall… I quickly went from coach to social worker, then to friend, and finally to father figure. (quoted in Free Play, 2020).

Here, Adams is represented as someone who filled in for absentee parents, depicted as bad and deficient people, whether it is because they engaged in sex work, used drugs, or some other reason. When separated from ongoing effects of colonialism and structural racism, these dominant narratives of absent and 'dysfunctional' parents are depoliticized. Considered with these social structural conditions in mind, the above framing reproduces racist and classist representations of the very people which FPK purports to be helping. In such representations Adams is described as a particularly exceptional person, a tireless and morally pure "madman" (Whiting, 2021) fighting for justice, who left his stable job as a journalist to take a risk on helping – saving – racialized children who are constructed as 'in need' of outside help. Further, the naming of Adams as a 'father figure' in this context works to construct him as a patriarchal white savior. The white savior is a (settler)

colonial trope which constructs benevolent whiteness in opposition to an 'in need' racialized recipient of help (Montez de Oca, 2012).

In my fourth chapter I framed sport in the 'Indian Residential School' system as an exemplar of how sport has historically been used in Canada alongside genocidal colonial processes to construct Indigenous children as 'in need' as one justification to destroy existing social relations in Indigenous nations. Scholars (e.g. Blackstock, Trocmé, and Bennett, 2004; Fortier and Wong, 2019; Landertinger 2017) and activists have long argued that the child welfare system in Canada is one continuation of the residential school system, essentially reshaping the processes of child removal that residential schools enacted in the 19th and 20th centuries. Additionally, the rhetoric of absentee parents, and fathers in particular, has been explicitly tied to white supremacist politics and the creation of public policy in North America that further harms black and Indigenous children (e.g. Spillers, 1987). Given this, the framing of a white, middle-class SFD practitioner as a 'father figure' and saviour of racialized children is further troubling. To be clear, my argument here is not that Tim Adams is individually racist. I am, however, suggesting that the construction of Adams as a 'father figure' should be understood within the context of ongoing child removal shaped by settler colonial processes. The positive media construction of white saviours juxtaposed against problematic and 'deficient' racialized, and particularly Indigenous, parents also has troubling implications for public policy and the continued removal of Indigenous children from their families.

Implicit in dominant representations of Adams is the promotion of a particular theory of change, wherein SFD work is driven and led by one individual. This is not to say that Tim Adams or FPK overtly promote or necessarily believe in this image. Indeed, throughout the archive analyzed for this chapter, Adams clearly stresses that the FPK staff, volunteers, board of directors, sponsors, and affiliated teachers play a major role in the functioning of the program. Rather I am suggesting

that idolatry media about the founder of FPK works to produce a depiction of one tireless man who works for change through organizing a community to come together. My point is structural in regard to the way success is recognized and rewarded, and the discourse of individualism that is produced in media representation of that success. Whether that success is recognized through media appearances, awards,[13] or some other mechanism, an individualist narrative is created about Tim Adams and FPK. Importantly, the dominant image produces Tim Adams, an outsider of the target community, as the leader of change. This is in opposition to development work that is led and guided by the target community. SFD programs which are led and driven by outsiders can be classified as technical programs which, Giulianotti (2011) argues, are hierarchical and operate to maintain existing social relations and social conditions. Members of the target community – parents, older students, past program participants – do contribute to FPK, but the dominant vision produced in media by and about FPK is one of outsiders leading the project, rather than by members of the target community, as is argued for by SFD scholars (e.g. Coalter, 2013; Giulianotti, 2011; Hayhurst, 2016).

The individualist discourse which constructs Tim Adams as a generous and caring 'father figure' also frames him as a white saviour, who imbues his wisdom and success onto 'in need' children who are represented as deficient without Adams' (and others') intervention. Following Cole's (2012) elaboration of the white saviour – that is, a white 'helper' who "supports brutal policies in the morning, founds charities in the afternoon, and receives awards in the evening" – Anderson, Knee, and Mowatt (2021) have argued that white saviourism is deeply entrenched in sport and recreation in general, and domestic SFD programs in particular. Their contention is affirmed in FPK, through representation of Adams as the white saviour 'father figure' who supports

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[13] For his work with FPK Adams has received the Alberta Justice and Solicitor General Crime Prevention Award in 2013 (see CBC, 2013), and the Kiwanis Foundation Citizen of the Year Award in 2021 (see Kiwanis, 2021).

brutal policies in the morning (e.g. gentrification, increased policing of less affluent people), founds charities in the morning, and wins (crime prevention) awards in the morning. Anderson et al. (2021) choose to anonymize discursive representations of each step in Cole's (2012) framework of white saviourism so as to "to identify manifestations of [white saviourism] with less risk of defensiveness in cases of personal connection" (Anderson et al., 2021, p. 536). Given the structure of this CDA which focuses on one program, anonymization has not been possible, however, I would suggest that pointing to specific instances of the manifestation of white saviourism and individual benevolence can produce similarly effective critique.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter I have presented a range of ways that individualist narratives proliferate in the archive I analyze here. The discourse of 'giving back' functions to individualize capacities for social change and construct specific groups – businesses, donors, white saviour 'helpers' – in opposition to those who are constructed as 'in need' and 'deficient'. Importantly, when this discourse is produced alongside neoliberal political rationalities, those who are constructed as 'in need' are implicitly framed as failed subjects who have been unable to achieve normative notions of success despite the work of programs like FPK which purportedly 'level the playing field'.

Once again, this is a structural critique of the political effects and contexts of the discourses I have outlined above. Particular to discourses of 'giving back' and white saviourism, SFD practitioners, myself included, need to question how inequities are reproduced in dominant framings and practices. While I have focussed on critiquing the particular manifestation of discourses of 'giving back', individualism, and white saviourism in the context of FPK and those involved, the focus of this critique is the way that these discourses construct SFD programs and the participants of those programs as 'in need' or somehow 'deficient'. Such discursive constructions cannot be separated from the political contexts of settler colonialism and representational Canadian

multiculturalism outlined in the chapter above. In the next chapter I turn to discourses of positive

youth development and sport evangelism, the final theme in this CDA, and tie together the three

discursive themes identified in the analysis.

# Chapter 8: Positive Youth Development and Sport Evangelism

**Introduction**

The third and final theme I identify in this CDA is the intertwining of discourses of positive

youth development (PYD), a particular approach to studying youth sport in general and SFD

programs in particular, and the promotion of FPK through the lens of 'sport evangelism' (Coakley,

2011; Giulianotti, 2004). Sport evangelists "view sport in essentialist terms and assume that it

inevitably leads to multiple forms of development, including remediation for individuals perceived to

need reformative socialization and revitalization for communities perceived to need an infusion of

civic awareness and engagement" (Coakley, 2011, p. 307). This ideology of sport evangelism is often

closely tied to PYD and is used to justify and promote SFD initiatives. As discussed in the literature

review in chapter 2, PYD has come to be the hegemonic approach to academic study of SFD and a

popular lens through which advocates of SFD promote such programs. It was therefore

unsurprising to find the discourses of PYD and sport evangelism present in media by and about

FPK. However, it remains important to draw out these themes and interrogate them critically due to

the prominence of these perspectives in SFD research and practice.

In 2019 FPK – then still named Free Footie – published an impact report (Free Footie,

2019) which highlights a variety of sport evangelist claims about the impact of the program. For the

impact report parents and teachers of program participants were surveyed about a variety of

perceived outcomes of participation in Free Footie programming during the 2018/19 school year.[14]

In general, this report summarizes what I suggest could be understood as a dominant understanding

of 'the power of play'. The power of play is the primary thrust of the sport evangelist discourse. This

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[14] This report should be understood within the frame of the NPIC. The 2018/19 Impact Report is clearly intended as a marketing document to attract funders. As such I read it critically as highlighting the most important information whether from the perspective of FPK, or what they perceive as most important to prospective funders. In the analysis that follows I connect the information in the report to dominant discourses and ideological perspectives on youth sport.

discourse is encapsulated by the idea that through playing organized sports children and communities can realize that "play is unbelievably valuable" (Aheer, quoted in Gateway Gazette, 2019). In making communities aware of the power of play, FPK "connect[s] kids with strong role models and through play, teach[es] them leadership, respect, and commitment" (Aheer, quoted in Gateway Gazette, 2019). This framing of FPK and 'the power of play' was articulated by Leela Aheer, who was then Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism & the status of Women in the Alberta provincial government, when announcing a Community Initiatives Program grant to be awarded to FPK. Within FPK's 2018/19 Impact Report and other media sources there are two threads I analyze here which are exemplars of the discourse of sport evangelism and PYD.

**Confidence, Leadership, Self-Esteem**

The survey of parents and teachers in FPK's Impact Report presents results indicating that survey respondents perceived increased confidence, leadership, and self-esteem in program participants (Free Footie, 2019). In addition to FPK's Impact Report, confidence, leadership, and self-esteem are repeatedly mobilized discursively in media produced by and about FPK. For example, soccer is described as "a great medicine" (Barlow, quoted in Thompson, 2020). These are all purported benefits to sport which are raised by sport evangelists to promote SFD programs. Improving confidence, increasing self-esteem, and developing leadership skills are advocated for by neoliberal SFD proponents due to the belief that these self-improvements will improve individual's abilities to overcome barriers in life (Coakley, 2011).

These particular assumed benefits, therefore, are not ideologically neutral, and operate in relation to FPK's programming, where the explicit goal is to use sport to produce good, productive citizens. Such individualized outcomes should be understood in relation to two themes discussed earlier. First, children who participate in FPK are framed as potentially deficient, and likely to be

criminalized in the future if not for FPK. Here there are conflicting discourses, as PYD approaches which are commonly used to 'sell' FPK are explicitly asset focussed (Holt, Deal, Pankow, Pynn, and Jørgensen, 2019), while racist 'crime prevention' discourses focus attention on populations perceived as deficient or problematic (Hartmann, 2001). Second, the individualized focus of development goals within FPK's messaging should be viewed within the critical perspective of neoliberalism discussed in the previous theme. While this individualized frame of SFD has become hegemonic, it is not the only way, or the 'natural' way to frame development goals.

Additionally, universal discourses – "every kid's the same" (Archer, quoted in Salegio, 2020b) – are present, and should be problematized. As Kochanek and Erickson (2020) argue, the universalizing perspective of PYD tends to overlook race as a social structure, reasserting whiteness, maleness, heteronormativity, and individualized capitalist values within youth sport programming. In this way, structural conditions like those described above – colonization, structural racism, gutting of social services – are broadly overlooked, even if gestured to, by individualized development goals like increased confidence, leadership, and self-esteem.

## Sport and Inclusivity

The inherent inclusivity of sport is also a prominent component of FPK's Impact Report and other media. When discussing inclusion here I have in mind Collins and Haudenhuyse (2015) conceptions of inclusion *in* sport, that is "participation in sport regarding groups that are less likely to participate", and inclusion *through* sport, which describes "programs… aimed at using sports to 'include' deprived, poor, or disadvantaged people" (p. 6). For example, 92% of parents responded yes to the question "Do you think your child felt more included because of Free Footie?" Also included in the report is a quote from a parent whose "son has special needs" (Free Footie, 2019) and had a positive experience playing in Free Basketball programming. Through prominent

representations of inclusivity, FPK, and sport more generally, is implicitly framed as inclusive to all children regardless of their race, gender, 'ability', and sexuality. The inherent potential for sport to be inclusive is generally taken for granted by sport evangelists. This is not to say that FPK practitioners do not put in effort to create an inclusive environment, as they surely do. Nor are these representations of inclusivity to be disregarded as trivial. It is certainly true that FPK, and programs like it, provide an opportunity to participate in organized sport for children that want to play, but may not have a place to do so otherwise. In many cases, these experiences are no doubt positive. Rather, as SFD scholars (e.g. Darnell, 2012; Darnell and Hayhurst, 2012; Hayton, 2018) have noted, the point here is structural in the way that representations of inclusivity and individual opportunities do little to change the social structures that produce inequities and social exclusion. Here, the discursive power afforded to sport is in part developed out of its perceived inherent inclusivity and positive outcomes. Youth sport scholars (Kingsley and Spencer-Cavaliere, 2015) have also noted that dominant sporting practices, even those that purportedly go to extra lengths to be inclusive like FPK, reproduce hegemonic white, middle-class, heteronormative discourses, and values.

Alongside the Impact Report question about inclusion is a picture of three smiling children posing with hockey sticks taped up with Pride Tape, rainbow coloured hockey tape. Pride Tape is an anti-homophobia initiative created in Edmonton and supported by the Edmonton Oilers. Hypermasculinity and homophobia is hegemonic in men's youth and professional hockey, but in 2016 with the onset of the partnership between the Edmonton Oilers and Pride Tape, mainstream media praised the initiative as an example of previously unrealized inclusivity in hockey and this vision was echoed in media about FPK and Pride Tape (Davidson, 2019). In a media appearance to promote FPK's Free Hockey programming, Tim Adams appeared alongside Kris Wells, the founder of Pride Tape.

> It's that message of inclusiveness, that's really what we want to get out. Being a good
>
> teammate… means you take care of each other, you respect each other you look out
>
> for each other. So that was a message of Edmonton and Pride Tape and Free Footie
>
> (Wells, quoted in Global News, 2018b).

The discourse of inclusivity is being drawn not only from an image that sports, and team sports in particular, are character building and inclusive. The inclusivity discourse also draws on the dominant framing of Edmonton as a welcoming multicultural city in multicultural Canada. Pride Tape has been supported by the Oilers Community Foundation, which as I discussed earlier, has been a financial supporter of FPK. As recent research has demonstrated, the Edmonton Oilers' new stadium located in downtown Edmonton has negatively impacted and contributed to the displacement of the – due to ongoing effects of settler colonization – predominantly Indigenous houseless population in Edmonton (Scherer et al., 2020). Further, Davidson (2019) demonstrates how the Oilers Community Foundation has divested from supporting important social services and directed funding instead to minor hockey initiatives like Pride Tape. Davidson's analysis of Pride Tape demonstrates that showy, well-funded, and often heartwarming representations of inclusivity can reinscribe and obscure the ways that extreme poverty and inequality persist in Edmonton.

While FPK itself is not responsible for the displacement of houseless and less affluent people who live in Edmonton's downtown core, SFD initiatives and the goodwill they bring to professional sport franchises cannot be separated from the sport evangelist discourse of inclusivity. Ultimately, the discourse of inclusivity is, I argue, extremely limited when looking at the context of social inequality which is either ignored or justified in dominant discourses about society. In an intensely individualized capitalist social context where people are held individually responsible for perceived 'failings' – such as living in poverty, using drugs, being criminalized from a young age – inclusivity in youth sport programs cannot be achieved.

Highlighting and deconstructing this discourse of sport evangelism is important due to the prominence it has in SFD initiatives as well as (youth) sport more generally. Specific to FPK, the prevalence of sport evangelist discourses also has explanatory power when considering why and how FPK has been supported and championed by a wide range of prominent people including some of the most left-wing elected officials in the province, received funding from social justice-oriented business, and been awarded government grants from a reactionary right wing provincial government and centrist federal government.

**Discussion**

I have argued that media produced by and about FPK reflect dominant discourses about Canada, volunteerism, individualism, and youth sport in general. Additionally, I have problematized and critiqued each of these discourses to interrogate how they reproduce and reinscribe unjust power relations and social structures. My analysis has been informed by critical media theory and a range of critical theoretical perspectives. Ultimately, the critique I have made is structural and focuses on the social structures and conditions in which FPK operates its programming. In some cases this critique has focussed on specific ways that discourses about dominant political structures (e.g. neoliberal political rationalities, multiculturalism) are mobilized through media produced by and about FPK. In such instances, the critique has focussed on how such social, political, and economic structures constrain and shape discursive representations made by programs like FPK.

In making this critique, I have presented three general themes each with separate analyses. Each of these themes, though, interact in different ways to reproduce and reflect dominant ideologies, and in some instances challenge dominant discourses. In most cases I have gestured to how these themes relate, and in others this needs to be drawn out further. Through a CDA I have not sought to identify a tidy and entirely coherent set of discourses underpinning the politics of FPK. In some cases I identified and discussed conflicting discourses. However, each of the three

main themes I identified cannot be understood completely independently. The first theme, analyzing discourses of multiculturalism and reconciliation, should also be viewed through a critical analysis of neoliberalism and the individualist, merit-based rhetoric which is weaponized to frame racialized program participants and their families as problematic, deficient, and 'in need' due to some sort of failing. In presenting the analysis of these themes I have sought to demonstrate the limitations of dominant approaches to multiculturalism and the recognition-based politics which are espoused by dominant, representational modes of reconciliation. I have also demonstrated how these discourses are mobilized through the local program and context of FPK.

Throughout this CDA I have discussed the mechanisms through which the dominant discourses identified here present a depoliticized understanding of the work FPK does. To summarize these processes, representational modes of multiculturalism and reconciliation are divorced from material realities of racial capitalism and settler colonialism, discourses of 'giving back' position paternalistic charity logics as the solution to problems around lack of access to safe sport and recreation programming, and neoliberal individualist SFD paradigms overlook social structural conditions which constrain individual 'success'. It is helpful to consider critical theoretical conceptions of SFD (Darnell and Hayhurst, 2011) and mutual aid (Spade, 2020) which provide an analysis rooting the social issues people face within existing political, social, and economic structures and an alternative underpinning for SFD work. Specifically, this would involve a practice of SFD which prioritizes dismantling inherently unjust colonial relations as a fundamental and necessary goal. Thus recognizing "sport's implications in colonizing relationships" (Darnell and Hayhurst, 2011, p. 185) as a site for reproduction of hegemonic ideologies and unjust power relations rather than reifying individualist and sport evangelist claims. Additionally, an SFD approach drawing on the philosophical underpinning of mutual aid would be "based on a shared understanding that the conditions in which we are made to live are unjust" (Spade, 2020, p. 8) rather than a nebulous

conception of society wherein people are poor and 'in need' due to unknown social forces and/or individualized failings.

There are also two tensions between the themes described above. In the first theme I identified a discourse of 'crime prevention' and tied this to ongoing settler colonization. 'Crime prevention' discourses inherently draw on racist deficit narratives, namely those that position racialized, and specifically black and Indigenous children, as potentially criminal. Such deficit narratives are clearly in opposition to the asset focussed discourses of PYD identified in the final theme (Holt et al., 2019). As noted in my methodology section, CDA attempts to connect discursive themes to dominant ideologies. These dominant ideologies can produce tensions and contradictions, especially in this particular example wherein PYD has emerged as a dominant approach to youth sport, while racist deficit narratives persist as the dominant ideological frame in discussing youth development more generally.

Second, discourses of inclusivity are present in media though in slightly different ways in the first and third themes. While in some cases inclusivity refers to a vaguely defined and unproven inherent inclusivity of sport (Coakley, 2011; Collins and Haudenhuyse, 2015), in other cases inclusivity specifically refers to a process of national mythmaking in Canada. These two types of inclusivity are distinct – local and national – but closely related and impacted, though in different ways, through the same social, political, and economic structures that I have sought to critique throughout this thesis, and which reify existing inequalities.

**Conclusion**

As noted in my brief historicization of FPK, the program itself is well known in sport and recreation spheres in Edmonton. It is also clear that FPK, and programs like it, provide vital programming that is not to be disregarded nor should the significance of these programs be diminished. However, my critique has sought to problematize and challenge dominant discourses

which are used to represent FPK, as well as its staff, participants, and sponsors. My aim in this critique has been to bring the tools of CDA and critical theory to bear on the uncritical celebrations which are often present in dominant representations of FPK, and SFD more broadly. In such celebratory and uncritical accounts, dominant and harmful discourses proliferate, while reinforcing and legitimizing unjust social structures which shape, and are shaped by, these discourses. A pursuit of just recreation practices is necessary and vital, and criticism of such discursive representations is just one piece of the critical analysis necessary to achieve more just recreation practices.

# Chapter 9: Conclusion

In this thesis I have sought to provide a critical analysis of a prominent local SFD organization informed by a historicized understanding of sport, recreation, and settler colonization in Canada. My analysis has drawn on a range of critical theoretical perspectives and areas of research, including international development studies, settler colonial studies, and critical cultural studies. I have argued that sport and recreation, in historical and contemporary iterations, has operated to construct specific groups of people as 'at risk', 'in need', or otherwise problematic. Further, I have demonstrated how these discourses work to uphold existing inequities in the settler colonial state of Canada. Ultimately, one of the goals of this thesis has been to critically interrogate the limitations of recreation practices in an unjust social context.

## Summary

The second and third chapters of this thesis included a literature review of SFD research and situated the subsequent chapters within a critical paradigm which seeks to highlight and critique unequal power relations embedded in social practices and processes. From this critical paradigmatic perspective, local histories of development, racism, and colonization are important to understand present contexts of SFD and the discourses they give rise to. With that in mind, in the fourth chapter I presented a historicization of discourses arising from sport, recreation, and leisure events and practices, such as the playground movement and the use of sport in 'Indian Residential Schools', that I argued provide important context to understand modern SFD programs like FPK. Discourses about 'in need' and 'at risk' program participants take shape in specific political and historical contexts, working to shape discursive constructions over time and it was necessary to draw these discourses out to fully inform the analysis presented in the rest of the thesis.

In the fifth chapter I provided an overview of FPK, placed FPK within the frame of the NPIC for the purposes of my analysis. The three subsequent chapters each presented an analysis of the discursive themes identified in this CDA. Chapter 6 brought forth critical perspectives on Canadian multiculturalism and dominant reconciliation discourses found to be dominant in media produced by and about FPK. I argued that the politics of FPK uphold these dominant discourses which work to legitimize and strengthen the white supremacist settler colonial state of Canada and the inequities that result from this system.

In chapter 7 I analyzed the individualist discourse of 'giving back' within the context of neoliberal political rationalities. I also drew on cultural studies perspectives to explore two subthemes of sporting celebrity, and the patriarchal founding and framing of FPK. Finally, in the eighth chapter I engaged in conversation with existing SFD research and critical perspectives on PYD to interrogate discourses of inclusivity and individual development that were hegemonic within media produced by and about FPK.

## Reflections on Methodology, Purpose, and Research Questions

In my methodology chapter I noted that reflexivity is an important part of research in a critical paradigm, and thus was necessary throughout this project. In order to practice reflexivity I regularly referenced the evaluative criteria outlined in my introductory chapter. Focussing on these criteria – credibility, authenticity, criticality, and integrity (Markula and Silk, 2011) – helped to ensure that I undertook rigorous research that aligned with my methodological and paradigmatic intentions.

The methodology chosen for this CDA created some limitations. For example, how could my research privilege the voices of those marginalized by the social structures of a racial capitalist, settler colonial state? Ultimately, this wasn't possible within the study design used here. The discursive themes drawn out in chapters 6 through 8 largely reflected dominant ideas espoused by

white, middle-class journalists, business owners, and SFD practitioners. This fit with my methodological aims of analyzing dominant and powerful discourses about SFD. There was, however, some conflict with my paradigmatic aspirations. Therefore, to ensure credibility, authenticity, criticality, and integrity I was reflexive throughout my analysis which helped to inform my analysis and critique of the dominant discourses and power relations identified in the CDA. To ensure this research was undertaken in line with a critical paradigm, it was absolutely necessary to draw on the above evaluative criteria to identify and critique unjust power relations (Guba and Lincoln, 1994).

Another limitation of the methodology was that it limited my access to the on the ground experiences and practices of people involved in FPK. An ethnographic approach could have provided a useful and interesting addition to this project, but was unfortunately not possible due to the limited social contact required during the COVID-19 pandemic, which was ongoing throughout this research. Such an approach might have helped enhance my discussion of issues such as inclusivity and social control in FPK. Additionally, CDA has been critiqued for only focussing on negative discourses (i.e. those that reinforce unjust power relations), and failing to mobilize knowledge (Breeze, 2011). An ethnographic approach, then, might have provided evidence to allow some focus on discourses which challenge unjust power relations, and/or may have provided further evidence of the unjust power relations I discussed in my CDA.

**Implications for SFD Practitioners**

Ultimately, the critique I put forth in chapters 6 through 8 focussed on FPK as an exemplar of the structural limitations to working within dominant SFD logics in the NPIC. In taking this critical approach my research has not necessarily sought to "assess particular problems and propos[e] solutions for solving them" (Darnell et al., 2016, p. 140) which at present is the hegemonic

approach in SFD research. Therefore this research has not sought to find the best or most effective approach to designing and implementing a no-cost recreational program. Rather, the arguments presented in this thesis are intended to draw attention to the ways power relations are encapsulated in discourses and demonstrate how such discourses shape existing power relations in turn (Fairclough, 2010). It is important that these discourses and associated power relations are understood and critically approached when implementing no-cost recreation programming. Approaching SFD programming through a critical lens, informed by a structural critique of unjust social, cultural, and economic practices can help to inform the ways hegemonic recreation practices perpetuate inequities, and help to imagine ways that recreation practices and society more broadly "will/can be radically different in the future" (Darnell, 2012, p. 151).

**Implications for Researchers**

The research questions for this thesis were shaped out of SFD scholars' calls for critical analyses of race, power, and colonization in specific manifestations of SFD programming (Darnell, 2012; Darnell and Hayhurst, 2011; Darnell et al., 2016). Specifically, this research sought to "explicitly politicize [SFD] research and practice… and ask questions that draw attention to the roots of inequality" (Darnell et al., 2016. p. 139). As such, the research presented in this thesis expands on critical theoretical perspectives which problematize the SFD field in an effort to question dominant individualist development paradigms and recreational practices. The research presented in this thesis adds to a growing body of research on domestic SFD programming in Canada which has applied critical theoretical perspectives to oft uncritically celebrated SFD concepts and programming.

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