Original Research

Sport as a site of resistance against the hegemony of the state

Lee K. Sheppard[1], Steven B. Rynne[1] & Jon M. Willis[2]

[1] University of Queensland, Australia
[2] International Federation of National Teaching Fellows

Corresponding author email: l.sheppard@uq.edu.au

ABSTRACT

The notion of sport as a cultural offset has gained great popularity over the past few decades as a symbol of self-determination and empowerment for Indigenous peoples in Australia. This article involves an examination of Indigenous ways of using sport to culturally offset the effects of colonization from Indigenous perspectives. As such, this account offers insights into the elements that encompass Indigenous resistance: racial injustice; the enactment of a sometimes-negative oppositional culture; cultural maintenance; the reformulation of a positive Indigenous identity; the development of Indigenous political movements; and resistance to sport as a weapon in the arsenal of colonization. This consideration of sport as a site of resistance against the hegemony of the State is informed by Indigenous voices, including that of the first Author, so as to offer a more nuanced understanding of the intersections between sport, development, and Indigenous peoples in Australia.

SPORT AS A SITE OF RESISTANCE AGAINST THE HEGEMONY OF THE STATE

The notion of sport as a cultural offset has over the last few decades gained great popularity as a symbol of Indigenous self-determination and empowerment. When we speak of sport as a cultural offset in Indigenous Australia, we are talking about how Indigenous peoples have positioned sport "as a way of offsetting a variety of losses [such as socio-cultural, linguistic, political, economic, familial, and, importantly, a loss of connection to Country] that Australian [Indigenous] communities and peoples have experienced and continue to experience" today (Sheppard et al., 2019, p. 1). In this conceptualization, sport is positioned as a cultural offset, going some way to atoning for the historical and ongoing effects of colonization in settler states.

Iconic performances by Australian Indigenous athletes in national and international sporting arenas have helped to drive this notion. For example, Lionel Rose's 1968 boxing world title, Evonne Goolagong's tennis grand slam titles at Wimbledon, the Australian Open and the French Open, Nicky Winmar's defiant on-field stand against racist Australian Football League fans in 1993, Adam Goodes' Australian Football League battle cry, resistance to racist fan abuse and retirement (2013-2015), Johnathan Thurston's stunning National Rugby League career and achievements (2002-2018), Patty Mills' Championship ring in the 2014 National Basketball Association finals, his position as Flag Bearer for Australia at the opening ceremony for the 2021 Olympic Games in Tokyo, and his role in Australia's medal winning performance in men's basketball at those Games, and Ash Barty's tennis wins in women's singles at Wimbledon in 2021, the 2019 French Open and the 2022 Australian Open as well as doubles wins at the 2018 US Open and a bronze medal at the 2021 Tokyo Olympics. Each of these athletes have characterized their Indigeneity,

family, and community as sources of strength and determination. Importantly, they have generally been positioned in relation to the broader (i.e. non-Indigenous) Australian population as symbols of Indigenous progress, opportunity and reconciliation—even when their stories have not been representative of this (Morgan & Wilk, 2021; Tatz & Adair, 2009).

Offering some more critical and concentrated understandings, scholars have begun to consider cultural offsetting in the context of the mining industry whereby extractives companies negotiate access to land in exchange for funding sport, recreation and cultural activities (Sheppard et al., 2019; van Luijk et al., 2020). Sheppard et al.'s (2019) article in part spoke to the modern-day corroboree surrounding the annual Indigenous run sporting Rugby League events—the Koori Knockout in New South Wales and the Murri Rugby League Carnival in Queensland. According to Norman (2006), these sporting events "emerged from particular experiences that were both culturally continuous in a traditional sense and historically produced" (p. 170) and are forms of resisting the hegemony of the State. In this paper, we seek to critically evolve the view that in Australia, as elsewhere, sport is solely a site of colonization through elimination of traditional games, 'civilization' / assimilation through Western sports, and ongoing control of participation (Osmond, 2019). Rather, we aim to unpack the idea that despite Indigenous peoples' colonized state of being, they have actively used sport to forge their own positive future pathways to resist the hegemony of the State in various ways.

To achieve our aim, we make use of Broome's (Osmond, 2019) five core elements: (a) injustice in the context of racial injustice, (b) enactment of a sometimes negative oppositional culture, (c) cultural maintenance, (d) the reformulation of a positive Indigenous identity, and (e) the development of an Indigenous political movement in the context of sport. We will show that despite injustices imposed upon Australian Indigenous peoples, and the hardships they endured under foreign rule, Indigenous peoples have reclaimed their Ways of Doing and Being by incorporating European sports, originally introduced to assimilate them into a foreign society, or rejecting SfD interventions in ways that resist the hegemony of the State. We will also show that Australian Indigenous peoples are playing 'games' for their own purposes and enjoyment while appearing to comply with the rules and goals of their colonial oppressors. Resisting in subtle and sometimes overt ways, Indigenous peoples' involvement in 'play' and 'games' is therefore at once a performance of compliance, defiance, resistance, and existential joy.

Injustice

In this section we first speak to three forms of injustice experienced by Indigenous elite athletes and then link this with the ways these same injustices are perpetrated by SfD providers in Australia—racial, epistemic, and cultural injustice. Garcia (2022) defined racial injustice as:

the act of being unjust to an individual or group based on race, particularly concerning legally recognized rights … it includes discrimination based on race or ethnicity in voting, employment, housing, and the administration of justice. In regard to criminal laws, it refers to conduct such as racial profiling.

In 1992 former Prime Minister of Australia Paul Keating's speech on International Human Rights Day in Redfern, New South Wales at the Australian Launch of the United Nations International Year for the World's Indigenous People, referred to racial injustice within sport (Keating, 1993). Prime Minister Keating (1993) asked Australians to "imagine if our [White peoples'] feats on sporting fields had inspired admiration and patriotism [but] did nothing to diminish prejudice?" (p. 11). The question is relevant as the following examples at the elite level show that racial injustice on the sporting field is evident in different ways.

Racial injustice in sport is evident when Indigenous athletes dare to express cultural pride, take a stand against the constant racist barrages they experience on the sporting field, or when non-Indigenous athletes ally themselves in solidarity with their Indigenous team mates to draw attention to the racial injustices experienced by Indigenous peoples historically and today. An example is the public backlash experienced by Cathy Freeman when she expressed her cultural pride by holding the Aboriginal and Australian flags during her victory lap at the 1994 Commonwealth Games in Canada and wrapping the Aboriginal flag around her at the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney (Gillespie, 2020; Osmond, 2019). Another example: Nicky Winmar's iconic stance of lifting his jersey and pointing "at his skin, while shouting, 'I'm black and I'm proud to be black'" in response to the racial abuse he and other Indigenous players in the AFL had been subjected to by non-Indigenous spectators and some AFL opponents for years (National Museum of Australia, 2021).

Two years later Indigenous AFL player Adam Goodes "was booed into retirement by the same nation who once celebrated him. What was his culpa? He called out a derogatory comment made by a young spectator" (Medibank, 2019). The injustice is evident within the systemic racism Winmar and Goodes experienced and

implicit in Collingwood president Allan McAlister's comment that "as long as they [Indigenous players] conduct themselves like white people, well, off the field, everyone will admire and respect them … As long as they conduct themselves like human beings, they will be all right. That's the key" (National Museum of Australia, 2022). Gorski (2011) refers to the language McAlister used as deficit ideology: "a worldview that explains and justifies outcome inequalities … by pointing to supposed deficiencies within disenfranchised individuals and communities" (p. 153). In this case the deficiencies purportedly inherent within AFL Indigenous players originate from an outmoded but still prevalent non-Indigenous racist paternalistic view of Indigenous peoples as uncivilized savages.

The final example pertains to the Australian Women's Soccer team—the Matildas—being called out as 'un-Australian' for choosing "to [only] pose with the Aboriginal flag in an anti-racism act 'relevant to our country" at the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo (Zaczek, 2021). Federal Member of Parliament Pauline Hanson's (a right-wing populist politician and leader of the One Nation political party) condemnation of the Matildas succinctly illustrates the hegemony of the State and the injustices implicit in the non-recognition and 'invisibilizing' of heterogenous Indigenous nations and their cultures when she stated "Indigenous flags don't represent all Australians. There's only one flag which truly represents all of us. Taxpayers don't shell out millions of dollars to send Olympic teams to represent two nations. We're one nation, Australia, indigenous and non-indigenous alike" (Francis, 2021). Hanson's comments impinge upon the rights of Indigenous peoples to remain culturally distinct from the broader Australian society. Her comments also imply that Indigenous peoples are somehow on equal terms and accepted by non-Indigenous society when this is not the case. Indigenous athletes are only on equal terms, accepted by non-Indigenous society, and celebrated for their feats on the sporting field if they toe the non-Indigenous line, and perceived as continuing to:

adopt the same customs, values and attitudes as colonial society; as well as to take on, in theory, the racialized social systems of the colonizer. [Essentially, Indigenous peoples are] ... expected to use the tools that were instrumental to structuring Indigenous oppression (Rigney, 2020, p. 52).

The injustices imposed on Indigenous peoples are evident in historical Indigenous Affairs policies such as the policy of Assimilation that continues to permeate today even though 'the word assimilation is rarely mentioned, [there is] more than a trace of its essence [that] remains in official

pronouncements on national values, citizenship and the practical integration of Aboriginal communities.' (Haebich, 2008, p.7-8). Overall, historical Indigenous Affairs policies "were designed with the intent to erase the existence and/or visibility of [Indigenous] Australians and assimilate 'part-[Indigenous]' people into the mainstream, white Australia, to stop the survival of [Indigenous] cultural practices and values" (Bodkin-Andrews & Carlson, 2016, p. 787). To achieve its aims, governments continue to utilize sport as a tool to aid its "construction of invader Dreaming—particularly the perceived benefits of sport in healing the wounds of Indigenous people created by ideological policies of segregation, 'protection' and assimilation" (Rigney, 2020, p. 52). However, as the examples show, sport has done little to diminish discrimination and racial injustice on the elite sporting field.

In the context of SfD programs in Australia, readers need to understand that the majority are run by non-Indigenous Non-Government Organizations. These SfD providers' Ways of Knowing perceive that their racial membership—'Whiteness'—is the norm and that their sporting interventions will in some way result in their target cohort, the school-aged children of the colonized peoples of Australia, aligning themselves with the State's expectations (Ganley, 2006; Scheurich & Young, 1997). However, SfD providers market their sporting intervention programs to governments, prospective and ongoing corporate and philanthropic donors in ways that perpetuate epistemic and cultural injustices upon their target cohort.

For example, the marketing associated with SfD providers gives the impression that all Indigenous youths of both genders are 'at-risk' of dropping out of school. The term 'at-risk' has several definitions for Indigenous and non-Indigenous youths. However, the collective term youth and risk "draws our attention to the negative, [and] thus [prevents] us from keeping an eye on the positive … [and that the] terminology [youth at-risk] can keep youth trapped within predetermined perceptions" (Follesø, 2015, p. 241). Significant risk factors impacting Australian Indigenous peoples include "widespread grief and loss; impacts of the Stolen Generations and removal of children; unresolved trauma; separation from culture and identity issues; discrimination based on race or culture; economic and social disadvantage; physical health problems; incarceration; violence; [and] substance misuse" (Beyond Blue, 2022). However, Sheppard (in press) found that these risk factors emanate from historical and present-day political machinations that have impacted Indigenous peoples socio-economically, technologically, legally, and evident in the realm of sport which Tatz (1995) noted "is a mirror of many things. It illuminates political, social,

economic, and legal systems. [And] reflects the [Indigenous] experience, especially since 1850" (p. 43).

Therefore, SfD providers who use deficit language such as 'at-risk' to describe Indigenous youngsters are demonstrating a form of epistemic injustice. Bhargava (2013) defined epistemic injustice "as a form of cultural injustice that occurs when the concepts and categories by which a people understand themselves and their world are replaced or adversely affected by the concepts and categories of the colonizers" (p. 413). SfD providers are aware of the emotive nature of such language in the broader society and focus on the personal attributes of young peoples—such as what is wrong with an individual—instead of what may be wrong in their environment. This sets up "a false distinction between a supposed problematic minority versus a 'normal' majority" (te Riele, 2006, p. 129). Though SfD providers may not admit to knowingly perpetrating epistemic and cultural injustice upon their target cohort, their narratives emphasizing "'children at risk' can be [and are] understood as a struggle for power over how to define children, families, and communities who are poor, of color, and/or native speakers of languages other than English" (Sleeter, 1995, p. ix) by young people who are struggling to stay afloat.

The Enactment of Occasional Negative Oppositional Culture

Broome's "enactment of a sometimes negative oppositional culture" (Osmond, 2019, p. 289) is evident in how Indigenous school aged youths who are on the verge of disengaging, or have already disengaged from school, reject interventions that use sport to lure them back to school. Though these youngsters are generally viewed as 'problematic' by schools, SfD providers, governments, and the broader society, we contend that their opposition and rejection of sporting interventions is an act of resistance, enacted to culturally offset several factors stemming from intergenerational trauma and its impact on themselves and their families, subsequent difficulties in school, and participation in SfD programs as outlined below.

The disintegration of Indigenous cultures and Ways of Doing under non-Indigenous colonial rule has resulted in Indigenous youths no longer necessarily having access to or receiving guidance from "strong male and female leadership" role models (pers. comm. Indigenous Youth Justice Worker). Sheppard (in press) notes that the absence of 'strong male leadership' was an issue raised by Indigenous community peoples, one of whom stated "a lot of these youngster's fathers were absent, dead, in prison, or not in the picture". The breakdown in kinship attachments

contributes to social death which Card (2003) describes as "a major loss of social vitality [and] a loss of identity and consequently a serious loss of meaning for one's existence" (p. 63).

The loss of culture, identity, kinship ties, and disintegration of families were factors behind these youngsters giving up and choosing their own path through necessity—including their involvement in sporting activities. For instance, though youngsters in Cherbourg (a former government reserve where Indigenous people were forcibly removed to, now a self-governed shire council) had a passion for playing sport during their childhood. By the time they were tweens, many had begun to walk away from participating in sporting activities because of the lack of support from their parents or caregivers who never made "any time for their children at all—they would rather play pokies, drink, gamble or do drugs—leaving their children to their own devices" (Sheppard, in press).

According to Ryder and White (2022), children trapped in the intergenerational trauma cycle will often repeat learned behaviors they believe are 'normal' Ways of Doing. Their behaviors then become 'problematic' in a school setting because these youngsters, at first, are unaware that the dysfunctional nature of their Ways of Doing will not be tolerated within an education system run and based upon Eurocentric rules, regulations, and values, that are mostly staffed and enforced by non-Indigenous teachers.

Thus, factors between the home and school environments overlap and "impact [youths in crisis] capacity to attend and engage in school [because of the] social issues that youngsters experience in their home environment" (Walker, 2019, p. 59). Other factors also include "at the school level and an individual's previous experiences with school, teacher-student relationships, racism, self-perception of academic ability, transition experiences from primary to secondary school and previous achievement at school" (Walker, 2019, p. 59). For example, a non-Indigenous Youth Justice Worker in Cherbourg noted:

The negative experiences of education ... that [then] impacts ... their willingness to even [engage in school] ... the barrier is actually that our kids don't necessarily fit into mainstream school ... or if they do get into mainstream school, their behaviours are often such that it's challenging for them to remain there ... The kids I guess that we deal with [have] significant trauma in their background, which obviously impacts significantly on their behaviours. Their behaviours right from when they're little, they [school staff] would have seen in a school setting. [With] some of the kids it leads ... to regular suspensions, so it's some of those

policies and procedures I think around those kids. Some kids then miss significant periods of school because of those suspension periods.

Suspension of youngsters was an issue spoken about by an Indigenous Youth Justice Worker and a non-Indigenous Alternative Education representative in Townsville (a major regional town on the North East coast of Australia) who noted that schools were too restrictive and unwilling to re-enroll students who had been kicked out of several schools due to behavioral problems. Factors related to the home environment and intergenerational trauma went unacknowledged by non-Indigenous teachers who—according to an Indigenous community member in Murgon (a small rural town north of Cherbourg)—had spoken about some of their Indigenous cohort who were struggling to stay afloat in school as 'lazy' because they would either 'nod off', or showed 'disinterest' in the education setting. However, these youngsters:

Were not lazy! They [often went] every day with having no showers - sometimes for days - not having breakfast or food for the day, not being able to get a good nights' sleep because of what is going on in their house. They walk out of their houses every morning with all these bags on their backs [that is, problems weighing them down] and it obviously affects their ability to engage in education (Sheppard, in press).

Therefore, it is unsurprising that many of these youngsters turned to their peers in similar situations as a source of:

support, security, membership, autonomy, self-expression and common experiences [where they] inevitably look to their peers for approval and support ... [because they share the same interests] and [also provide] mutual defence. [And because their peers provide] nurture in these groups for the gap left by family breakdown (Yavuzer et al., 2014, p. 62).

The non-Indigenous Youth Justice Worker in Cherbourg concurred stating that in their community "peer pressure is definitely a factor, with … those older cohort of kids [aged between 13 to 17 years]. That's developmentally kids at that age, yeah, your friends are really important." However, the influence and pressure exerted by their peers often led them to comply with their peers to gain their approval and support through behaviors such as dropping out of school (Yavuzer et al., 2014). Many of these children and their peers were exposed to, live with, and continued to be affected by violence in their home environments and exhibit psychological and behavioral issues such as:

depression; anxiety; trauma symptoms; increased aggression; antisocial behavior; lower social competence; temperament problems; low self-esteem; the presence of pervasive fear; mood problems; loneliness; school difficulties; peer conflict; impaired cognitive functioning; and/or increased likelihood of substance abuse ... eating disorders, teenage pregnancy, leaving school early, suicide attempts, delinquency and violence as potential consequences of child abuse and/or childhood exposure to domestic violence (Richards, 2011, p. 3).

The psychological and behavioral impacts were evident from a yarn Sheppard (in press) had with the non-Indigenous Alternative Education representative in Townsville whose cohort consisted of youngsters that SfD providers purportedly targeted. The youngsters were disenfranchised, expelled from school—a number of times—or totally banned from schools in the area. The cohort comprised "those in the care of the State; on youth court orders; suffered from depression; and … [came] from dysfunctional families" (Sheppard, in press). In Australia, SfD providers target the Indigenous cohort regardless of whether there is an identified need for support or not. Eventually, youngsters enrolled in SfD programs who have the greatest need come under the scrutiny of SfD staff who start to identify "those five to ten percent who are completely disengaged … who hate school [and then] look at that as a percentage [before deciding to] palm them off to the YMCA" (Sheppard, in press). The inability to engage the youngsters who need them most speaks to the failure of SfD programs to build far-reaching community capacity and deliver on their promise. Therefore, the rhetoric of using sport as a vehicle to solve specific or perceived problems created by colonization differs from reality and inadvertently creates exclusionary environments. Youngsters excluded from schools, lured back to an education setting with the promise of sport, and then disenfranchised by the SfD provider leads them to reject the hegemony of the State and its imposition of systemic violence that pervades their life. Rather than follow the rules, these youngsters disengage from school because they see no 'real' advantage of education in their lives.

Overall, the trauma created by the aforementioned factors is the reason why many youths of color choose to enact a negative oppositional culture that rejects non-Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Doing. The subsequent psychological and behavioral issues learned in the home environment and exhibited by youths in crisis in the school environment intersect and are thus factors that contribute to their disengagement and rejection of both home, school, and SfD programs. Thus, the rejection of sporting interventions by youths in crisis is their way of culturally offsetting the impact of colonization, by withdrawing from

involvement in non-Indigenous forms of sport that further assimilationist agendas.

Cultural Maintenance

In Australia, Indigenous peoples' cultural identities and belonging are founded upon their physical, material, and spiritual ancestral connection to Country, kinships, cultural mores and traditions—Law and Lore—, all of which contribute to and define their identities (Hampton & Toombs, 2013; Mooney et al., 2016; Rigsby, 1999). Following the first wave of British colonial settlers on the continent now known as Australia in 1788, the original and heterogeneous peoples' cultural practices, languages, and values across the continent came under inexorable pressure from the foreign State who—as noted previously by Bodkin-Andrews and Carlson (2016)—purposely designed Indigenous policies intended to expunge the existence and visibility of Indigenous peoples in an attempt to absorb them into mainstream White Australia.

For example, in 1937, Australian state and federal governments agreed to adopt the process of assimilation that involved "two distinct forms of integration. The first … 'biological absorption', or the desired removal of Indigenous physical characteristics. The second … 'social integration', whereby Indigenous cultural or social practices would yield to non-Indigenous social and cultural practices" and purportedly ended in the 1960s (Chesterman & Douglas, 2004, p. 48-49). We contend therefore, that the Assimilation Policy took no account of the resilience and strength of values of Indigenous peoples' diverse cultures, nor accept that they would seek to maintain their traditions and languages.

The break-down of Indigenous societies in Australia not only left an indelible mark upon their consciousness but also scarred their "memories forever and [changed their] future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways", evidenced in such things as a denial of Indigeneity or a failure to identify (Alexander, 2013, p. 6). Indigenous identity frameworks continued to deteriorate due to the settler-colonial logics of elimination in the form of structural violence and the increasing use of interventions such as sport—purportedly for 'their own good' (Bretherton & Mellor, 2006; McCoy, 2009). Structural violence manifests as: the institutionalized established patterns of organized society that are rationalized, sanctioned and prevent the realization of an individual's full capabilities; a constraint of human potentiality via economic and political structures; and the systematic harm of people—such as marginalized persons (Barak, 2003; Bretherton & Mellor, 2006; Parazelli, 2008).

The intergenerational effects of grief, trauma, loss of Traditional Country(s), loss of language, culture, participation in Traditional Games and other traditions, the forceful separation of children from their families, racism, genocidal events, and marginalization are attributable to colonization and the State's Indigenous policies (Banner, 2005; Bretherton & Mellor, 2006; Buchan & Heath, 2006; Cunningham & Beneforti, 2005; Moore, 2016; Senate Community Affairs Committee Secretariat, 2018). The effects of intergenerational trauma have manifested in anxiety-based maladaptive behaviors among Indigenous peoples (Purdie et al., 2010) that could be attributed to Indigenous youths not having a 'sense of self'—a component of racial identity and the sole element that positively and consistently relates to one's self-esteem which acts as a protective factor (Kickett-Tucker, 2009).

Instead, to overcome the fall-out of colonialism, Indigenous peoples' resilience and resistance to the hegemony of the State in the face of such adversity continues to emanate from the unique protective factors inherent in their cultures and communities (Purdie et al., 2010). Aspects of Indigenous cultural resilience and maintenance include storying, narratives, and yarning that Davis-Warra (2017) refers to as 'stories of strength' where strength-based yarns are ways to share information related to the strength and resilience of Indigenous peoples. Yarning aids cultural maintenance because it not only develops accountability to one another but also relationality with one another (Fredericks et al., 2011, 2014). Yarning helps Indigenous peoples to strengthen and grow a strong sense of pride in their collective resilience while forging identities with each other (Davis-Warra, 2017). Other forms of cultural maintenance are referred to by Davis-Warra (2017) as 'kinnections, kinnected' which is a:

relational term connecting individuals to specific people and places. Kinnectedness refers to the notion of social mapping and connecting of people to places, names and communities across Australia. For Indigenous Australians this is an integral part of being and living within Indigenous communities—being able to map kinnections—people and families who place you (individually) within context of the broader social or Indigenous community map (p. 11).

In the context of sport, Indigenous resistance is expressed in

the form of empowering narratives of Indigeneity that emerges through the remembrance of and retelling of a communities sporting stories to give meaning to their past and present social worlds (Bond et al., 2015). Sport not only provides "an outlet to overcome the problems created within Australian society by racism" (Cottle & Keys, 2010, p. 3), it also stokes Indigenous peoples' sense of self-worth and dignity, and can be viewed as a means "of community bonding, self-expression, and heroic exploits—often also because there was nothing else to do!" (Besley et al., 2013, p. 64). This is particularly compelling in Indigenous settlements and Missions that as sites of control were the antithesis of resistance (Osmond, 2019).

For example, while visiting Cherbourg's Ration Shed during a preparation field trip (8 to 15 October 2017), Sheppard (in press) found the history of the former Mission lining the walls in words and pictures—from pre-European contact through to today. It was the history of the former Barambah Mission now known as Cherbourg, as seen through the eyes of community peoples who had lived under the strict controls of the 1897 Aboriginals Protection Act to present day. The pictorial journey represented to the community "the appropriation, transformation, reappropriation of Indigeneity—whether it be objects, identity, children, land or sovereignty … is linear, with each stage directed towards the future. Indigenous reappropriations represent futures redirected" (Sissons, 2005, p. 11).

The Ration Shed also maintains an online pictorial account of the community, including its involvement in sport to show how "many of [their] young men and women [had] excelled in sports and how ordinary people could build a sense of dignity and self-worth amid a regime that denied them of it" (The Cherbourg Memory, 2021). The Cherbourg community used these sporting narratives as a vehicle of resistance to culturally offset the past and redefine the community's future. As Murray et al. (2014) succinctly observed, though the "Janus face of sport—[is] a form of domination [it is also] an important instrument in identity formation—[and] was a key feature of life at Cherbourg" (p. 221).

Reformulating a Positive Indigenous Identity?

The quintessential question is 'are SfD programs aiding the reformulating of a positive Indigenous identity'? Sheppard (in press) found that non-Indigenous-run SfD providers employ Eurocentric rules, regulations, and values. A non-

Indigenous ex-SfD worker who, when asked whether their previous program's goals incorporated or included the community's cultural values stated:

Not that I'm aware of. In fact, at [the SfD program] we were continually told that we didn't 'do culture', that was for 'them' not 'us'. We were also directed to make this known when engaging with people around the program. I'm not really sure. [The SfD program] operates in such a grey area anyway. It is hard for the community (Indigenous or otherwise) to understand exactly what the mission is, what ethos is, what the academies are supposed to be doing in general. So, I think it's purposely vague, that way there is less chance to be pulled up on it. I think mostly the community members [they] engaged with on this probably didn't question it because I'm not Indigenous myself … I think sport has the potential to give people some meaning and value in their life. But this is secondary to a person's feeling of value and worth that come from their cultural identity and how their culture and values are celebrated in the wider community. Sport can't help if a community's values are constantly being devalued and ignored and subjugated.

SfD programs that place little-to-no emphasis on incorporating Indigenous culture cannot aid in reformulating a positive Indigenous identity. Instead they discourage Indigenous youths from seeking and maintaining positive racial and ethnic identity - recognized as protective factors that form the basis of self-identity and pride in their "cultural values, kinship, and beliefs" (Woo et al., 2019, p.2). In Indigenous Australia, cultural identity and belonging are founded upon ancestral connections to Country (physically, materially, spiritually) and kinship (Hampton & Toombs, 2013; Mooney et al., 2016; Rigsby, 1999). Cultural mores and traditions (Law and Lore) contribute to and define Australian Indigenous people's identities (Hampton & Toombs, 2013). Taylor (1997) noted, a group's identity and an individual's definition of self is partly shaped by recognition or absence. Misrecognition or non-recognition of identity inflicts harm and is a form of oppression that imprisons individuals in a distorted, false, and reduced mode of being. The non-recognition of culture disables the protective factors inherent within it that play a central part in Indigenous youngster's wellbeing and resilience (Macedo et al., 2019).

On the other hand, Indigenous-run SfD provider, the National Aboriginal Sporting Chance Academy, exercises their limited agency by using sport to foster collective

identities and cultural continuity in ways that reject deficit language. They also actively seek to move away from grievance narratives that frame Indigenous youngsters in deficit discourses that result in the creation of stereotypical inferior identities/victimhood by focusing on their social realities (Bamblett, 2011). The National Aboriginal Sporting Chance Academy (2021) does so by designing its SfD program in ways that "respond to community need, are flexible, and culturally safe" using a whole-of-community approach and are not reformulating a positive Indigenous identity but re-engaging, supporting, and maintaining cultural pride and identity by exercising their Indigenous sovereignty that:

arises from Indigenous Traditional Knowledge, belonging to each Indigenous nation, tribe, first nation, community, etc. It consists of spiritual ways, culture, language, social and legal systems, political structures, and inherent relationships with lands, waters and all upon them. Indigenous sovereignty exists regardless of what the nation-state does or does not do. It continues as long as the People that are a part of it continue (Indigenous Environmental Network, 2020).

Development of an Indigenous Political Movement

The development of an Indigenous political movement speaks to Indigenous peoples using sport as a platform— locally and globally—to express cultural pride, identity, belonging, and to push for social changes in various ways that resist the hegemony of the State and offset the impacts of colonization. For example, Cathy Freeman's expression of cultural pride to affirm her identity was borne from the alienation and shame she felt as an Indigenous youngster growing up in Australia (Jepson, 2020). Carrying the Aboriginal flag was not "so much a political statement, but a statement depicting a First Australian proud to recognize her people and her culture" (Wightman, 2020). Freeman's stand was two-fold: to draw attention to the injustices imposed upon her; and the hardships and struggles of her ancestors (Jepson, 2020). The same is true of Nicky Winmar, Adam Goodes, and the Matildas who, aware of their high profiles on the local and global sporting stage, used sport as a platform to call for social change in Australia surrounding racism and systemic violence impacting Indigenous peoples in Australia generally and on the sporting field. Winmar and Goodes' stands were in response to the racism and systemic injustice reserved for Indigenous peoples in Australia and was not intentionally political in nature. Wightman (2020) observed:

It was the public who interpreted the act as political. I find it peculiar when people say that we should not mix sport and politics. It shows scant disregard for history and the platform and power required to make change. Further it is rarely pure politics, rather sport provides a stage for social change that has seldom been achieved by politicians.

Ultimately, Freeman, Winmar, and Goodes were exercising their sovereignty to negate settler-colonialists' overwhelming belief that Indigenous peoples need to assimilate, integrate and disappear as culturally distinct peoples into the invader's society.

CONCLUSION

This research began with the idea of investigating the extent to which SfD programs functioned as cultural offsets for the damage done to Indigenous lands, communities and cultures by the mining industry who invested in SfD programs as part of their social justice agenda in Australia. The notion of sport as a cultural offset has over the last few decades gained great popularity as a symbol of Indigenous self-determination and empowerment. In this conceptualization, sport is positioned as a cultural offset, going some way to atoning for the historical and ongoing effects of colonization in settler States. Offering some more critical and concentrated understandings, scholars have begun to consider cultural offsetting in the context of the mining industry whereby extractives companies negotiate access to land in exchange for funding sport, recreation and cultural activities (Sheppard et al., 2019; van Luijk et al., 2020).

Our research, informed by a decolonizing lens, and the Indigenous Ways of Knowing of the first author and her Indigenous informants, led inexorably to the question of whether non-Indigenous sport in general functioned as a colonial device to reprogram Indigenous sociality into forms more palatable to non-Indigenous policy makers. We used Broome's (Osmond, 2019) five core elements of Indigenous Australian resistance as a framework to unpack the ways that Indigenous people experience sport as a tool of colonization, and how their resistance manifests in the context of sport.

We unpacked the way that Indigenous elite athletes experienced injustice using the concepts of racial, epistemic, and cultural injustice. Racial injustice in sport is evident when Indigenous athletes dare to express cultural pride (e.g. Cathy Freeman), epistemic injustice is evident

when they take a stand against the constant racist barrages they experience on the sporting field (e.g. Nicky Winmar and Adam Goodes), and cultural injustice is evident when non-Indigenous athletes ally themselves in solidarity with their Indigenous team mates to draw attention to the racial injustices experienced by Indigenous peoples historically and today (e.g. the Matildas). We applied the same analysis to young Indigenous people's involvement in SfD programs and found the experience of injustice mirrored in these programs. We noted, with Rigney (2020, p. 52), the ways that governments continue to utilize sport as a tool to aid their "construction of invader Dreaming—particularly the perceived benefits of sport in healing the wounds of Indigenous people created by ideological policies of segregation, 'protection' and assimilation".

Through an analysis of the operation and deficit discursive environment of SfD programs operating in rural and regional Queensland, Australia, we were able to show the impact of centuries of colonial dispossession and epistemic and cultural violence: how injustice in schooling, youth justice, and sport programs led to young Indigenous people developing cultural formations that opposed their oppression, including opposing and rejecting sports programs designed to lure them back to school. For these children, a combination of traumatic home environments and unsupportive school settings combined to alienate them from all except their peers who provided much-needed support, and the opportunity to feel safe, to be a part of a social group, to make choices for themselves, to express themselves, and to share experiences.

In the same communities, Indigenous resistance is expressed in the form of empowering narratives of Indigeneity that emerged through the remembrance of and retelling of a community's sporting stories. These stories found positive meaning in a shared past that was often characterized by genocidal violence, a thread of resistance and resilience that bound people together. That thread of resistance and resilience informed the way that people wove contemporary sporting prowess—a local football team's success at the Murri Carnival, a local teenager scouted for a major football or netball team, the success of an Australian Indigenous athlete on the World Stage—into a continuing story of Indigenous strength and survival.

Through Sheppard's PhD field research (in press), we discovered something surprising: not only were SfD programs failing as cultural offsets because of their immersion in colonialist methodologies, but Indigenous

peoples were making use of sport in their own ways to culturally offset the impact of colonization, rather than allowing their involvement in non-Indigenous forms of sport to further assimilationist agendas. We found that despite Indigenous peoples' colonized state of being, they have actively used sport to forge their own positive future pathways to resist the hegemony of the State in various ways.

Although remaining a highly contested and often traumatic space, sport, for Indigenous Australians, has become a site for the affirmation of collective identity, an opportunity for Indigenous Australians to excel and to give credit for their excellence to the strengths of land, culture, community and family. In one of her post-game speeches at the 2022 Australian Open, tennis champion Ash Barty exemplified this attitude:

Not content to remain just a tennis player at the top of her game, Barty proved the consummate sportswoman and role model yet again in her post match interview, expressing the importance of her Indigenous heritage.

"I'm a proud Ngarigo woman, a very very proud Indigenous woman," she said to cheers from the Open crowd. ... "I love my heritage; I love to celebrate my heritage. It's what connects me to all of you here today. It's what connects me to the land. ... I think it's a beautiful way to express who I am... (and) to stay connected with so many people and First Nations people around Australia." (Butler, 2022)

Barty's celebration of her Indigeneity and its strength at the point of her greatest Australian sporting triumph—winning the 2022 Australia Open—exemplifies the point that we made earlier in this paper: that Indigenous Australians continue to play 'games' for their own purposes and enjoyment all the while appearing to comply with the rules and goals of their colonial oppressors. Like Ash Barty, Indigenous Australians resist in subtle and sometimes overt ways, always combining elements of compliance, defiance, resistance, and existential joy.

This paper makes several contributions that are useful for Indigenous people worldwide. Our use of a decolonizing approach and particularly an Indigenous standpoint approach to understanding sport as a colonial device is novel, and the frameworks we use (Broome's five core elements of Australian Indigenous resistance, as well as the concepts of racial, epistemic, and cultural injustice in sport)

are a useful addition to the analytic repository. Our analysis of sport as a site for Indigenous resistance to colonization could just as easily be applied to Iroquois involvement in Lacrosse, the Olympic careers of Hawaiian swimmer and surfer Duke Kahanamoku or Mohawk marathon runner Tom Longboat, or Māori and Pacifica engagement with Rugby Union.

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