Navigating Athlete Citizenship: The Negotiation of Rights, Roles and Responsibilities by Canadian Olympians

by

Rosannagh MacLennan

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Master of Science
Department of Exercise Sciences
University of Toronto

© Copyright by Rosannagh MacLennan 2018
Navigating Athlete Citizenship: The Negotiation of Rights, Roles and Responsibilities by Canadian Olympians

Rosannagh MacLennan

Master of Science
Department of Exercise Sciences
University of Toronto
2018

Abstract

Forms of citizenship expand beyond those based on nation-state to involve populations at both sub-national and transnational levels (Roche, 2002; Yuval-Davis, 2006; Sindic, 2011). This research examines the athlete citizenry including (1) institutionalized meanings related to rights, roles, and responsibilities of high-performance athletes; and (2) the range of meanings of athlete citizenship negotiated by athletes. Document analysis and interviews with athletes and key informants have been deployed to synthesize an *athlete citizenship* framework. Findings from this research are: (1) athletes express a sense of belonging to a transnational community of high-performance and Olympic athletes; thus, it is possible to derive a definition of *athlete citizenry* by examining the athlete community through broader models of citizenship; (2) further work is needed to uphold and expand athletes’ rights; (3) athletes with recent high-performance success tend to engage in social initiatives to derive ‘deeper’ meaning from their sporting experiences.
Acknowledgments

I am incredibly grateful for my supervisory committee who have supported my academic journey, inspiring, guiding, challenging and educating me. Each has pushed me to explore the sporting world in which I live through a scholarly lens. First, I would like to acknowledge and sincerely thank my supervisor, Dr. Margaret MacNeill, for your endless support to research a topic about which I am truly passionate. Every meeting we have had through my academic career I left motivated, excited and slightly overwhelmed (in a good way). Thank you for your insight, knowledge and endless support of my endeavours both within academia and in other areas of my life. I would not have been able to accomplish what I have in both the academic and athletic world without your understanding and encouragement.

To Dr. Bruce Kidd, your mentorship, guidance and excitement for this topic has been inspiring and energizing. Dr. Kidd is an incredible example of an athlete and scholar who has used his passion for sport to fuel meaningful work. Thank you for challenging me to think of the Olympic Movement in a new light, for pushing me outside of my comfort zone, and for providing the opportunity to study at the International Olympic Academy.

Thank you to Dr. Michael Atkinson who pushed me to explore this work through a new lens. Your recommendations altered the direction of my research for the better. Without this thoughtful advice, my dissertation would not be what it is today.

A grateful thank you to all the participants for sharing their stories, experiences and insights. Without their generosity of time and openness, this research would not have been possible.

To my coach, Dave Ross, thank you for challenging me to be the best athlete and person I can be and for always supporting my goals in sport and in school. You have always known the value of
pursuing goals in all aspects of life. Thank you for leading the way in a balanced approach to training, for igniting my passion for sport, for expanding what I believed to be possible and for helping to make my Olympic dreams come true.

To my family, thank you for your ongoing love and encouragement as I pursue both athletics and academics. You have always pushed me to follow my passion while instilling a thirst for knowledge. You have always been there to support me when I am overwhelmed and to remind me to focus on one step at a time. You have instilled courage, confidence, and determination to pursue extraordinary goals.

To my partner, Nick Snow, thank you for all that you have done to support me. You have encouraged me when I was struggling, talked through ideas when I could not find the right words, fed me while I worked and reminded me to get more sleep. You have constantly challenged me to be better and encouraged me to pursue my dreams. I know the last four years have been chaotic, but through it all, you have been there for me. I cannot imagine a better partner in life.
# Table of Contents

Acknowledgements iii  
Table of Contents v  
Lists of Tables vii  
List of Figures ix  
List of Acronyms x  
Participant Profiles xi  

1. **Introduction** 1  
2. **Review of Literature** 5  
   2.1 Olympism 5  
      2.1.1 Olympism in the Canadian Context 15  
   2.2 Citizenship 23  
      2.2.1. Models of Citizenship 24  
   2.3 Citizenship, Athletes and the Olympic Games 33  
      2.3.1 Athletes and Nation-States: The ‘Olympic Citizen’, Équipe Unifée, and The Refugee Olympic Team (ROT) 34  
      2.3.2 Athletes as a Bio-Citizen 37  

3. **Methodological Framework, Theoretical Lens and Methods** 40  
   3.1 Research Outline 40  
   3.2 Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) 41  
   3.3 Bourdieu’s Framework of Capital 44  
   3.4 Methods: Document Analysis and Semi-Structured Interviews 45  
   3.5 Reflexivity and Positionality 51
4. Defining the Athlete Citizenry
   4.1 Governance 55
   4.2 Boundary Work 61
   4.3 Rights 63
   4.4 Responsibilities 71
     4.4.1 Legal Responsibilities 72
     4.4.2 Performance Responsibilities 73
     4.4.3 Ethical and Moral Responsibilities 79
     4.4.4 Athletic Pursuit and the Responsibility to Olympism 84

5. Exploring Athlete Responsibilities: Opportunities and Social Engagement
   5.1 Forms of Engagement 90
     5.1.1 Corporate 91
     5.1.2 Non-Profit and Social Enterprises 91
     5.1.3 Athlete Advocacy and Activism 92
   5.2 Relational Dynamics 94

6. Athletes Representations of Core Engagement Values 98
   6.1 Authenticity and Credibility 98
   6.2 Identifying Opportunity 106

7. Towards an Understanding of Action 115
   7.1 Organizational Perspectives 115
     7.1.1 Defining Capital: Bourdieu and Sport 116
       7.1.1.1 Cultural Capital 117
         (i) The Embodied State: Higher, Faster, Stronger 119
         (ii) The Objectified State: Money for Medals 121
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>iii</td>
<td>The Institutionalized State: Olympian Status</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1.1.2</td>
<td>Social Capital</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1.1.3</td>
<td>Economic Capital</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>Athlete Perspectives</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2.1</td>
<td>Advocacy and Activism</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2.2</td>
<td>Non-Profit and Corporate</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>References</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Tables

Table 1: Participant demographics 47

Table 2: Athlete citizenship 55

Table 3: International, national and provincial/ regional sport governing bodies for Olympic sport in Canada 56

Table 4: Athletes’ rights and responsibilities 69

Table 5: Forms of sport social initiatives 90
List of Figures

**Figure 1**: Navigating opportunities for athletes and sport social initiatives 107

**Figure 2**: A proposed model of athlete citizenship 154
# List of Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CAS</td>
<td>Court of Arbitration for Sport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBC</td>
<td>Canadian Broadcast Corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COC</td>
<td>Canadian Olympic Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COC-AC</td>
<td>Canadian Olympic Committee Athlete Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COT</td>
<td>Canadian Olympic Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCG</td>
<td>Gymnastics Canada Gymnastique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IOC</td>
<td>International Olympic Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IF</td>
<td>International Federation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOC</td>
<td>National Olympic Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSO</td>
<td>National Sport Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSF</td>
<td>National Sport Federation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NT</td>
<td>National Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCOG</td>
<td>Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTP</td>
<td>Own The Podium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PASA</td>
<td>Physical Activity and Sport Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROT</td>
<td>Refugee Olympic Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SC-AAP</td>
<td>Sport Canada Athlete Assistance Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDRCC</td>
<td>Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNDHR</td>
<td>Universal Declaration of Human Rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNHCR</td>
<td>United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UDHR</td>
<td>Universal Declaration of Human Rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WADA</td>
<td>World Anti-Doping Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WADC</td>
<td>World Anti-Doping Code</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Participant Profiles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Profile</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Athlete A:</strong></td>
<td>A female team winter sport athlete. A member of national and international sport governing bodies. Ambassador for corporate and non-profit initiatives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Athlete B:</strong></td>
<td>A female individual winter sport athlete and a member of international sport governing body. Ambassador for non-profit initiatives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Athlete C:</strong></td>
<td>A female individual event athlete who has participated in both Winter and Summer sports. Ambassador for corporate and non-profit initiatives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Athlete D:</strong></td>
<td>A male individual summer sport athlete. Ambassador for corporate and non-profit initiatives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Athlete E:</strong></td>
<td>A male individual summer sport and former member of national sport governing body.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Athlete F:</strong></td>
<td>A female individual winter sport athlete and employee of Canadian non-profit organization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Athlete G:</strong></td>
<td>A female team winter sport athlete. Ambassador for non-profit organization and former member of national sport governing body.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Athlete H:</strong></td>
<td>A female individual winter sport athlete, ambassador for non-profit organization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Athlete I:</strong></td>
<td>A male individual summer sport athlete, former member of international sport governing body, member of national sport governing body. Ambassador for non-profit organizations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key Informant A:</strong></td>
<td>A male employee of a national sport governing body.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key Informant B:</strong></td>
<td>A female, former employee member of an international non-profit organization with experience in Canadian non-profit sector and national sport governing bodies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key Informant C:</strong></td>
<td>A male member of an international sport governing body.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key Informant D:</strong></td>
<td>A male employee of an International non-profit organization and former Olympic athlete.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key Informant E:</strong></td>
<td>A female employee of a Canadian corporation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key Informant F:</strong></td>
<td>A female employee of a Canadian non-profit organization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key Informant G:</strong></td>
<td>A male, former employee of an international non-profit organization. A former Olympic Athlete.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1
Introduction

The first Olympic Games I remember watching were the 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona. I was four. Watching the Opening Ceremonies, I was captivated. Something about the celebration seemed so magical. I remember the moment that Team Canada walked into the stadium behind the Canadian Flag and thinking, “I want to do that!” The Olympic Games were fascinating to me; my parents indulged this new-found interest through sharing stories from the news about Canadian athletes. Later that summer, when I was participating in a small, local regatta, I entered in a “wee-skiff” rowing race. Before the race, my parents shared Silken Laumann’s story of how she had incurred an injury only a few months before the Games. While many thought she would not heal in time to compete, she persevered, and her determination carried her through to win a Bronze medal. I decided I would race like Silken.

As I grew up, my fascination with the Olympic Games increased. The more I learned about the athletes and the values of the Olympic Movement, the more my desire to be a part of it grew. Little did I know how much this childhood fascination would influence my future athletic and academic careers. I have been inspired by successful athletes who engage in initiatives to address flaws in sport structures, or who advocate for causes meaningful to them. So much of my athletic career has been focused on trying to accomplish the next competitive goal, but there have been times when I wonder, what is the point, beyond a selfish enjoyment of training. I always thought that satisfaction, fulfillment, meaning and affirmation would come from success, defined by qualifying for new levels of competition and podium performance. I found once I had achieved these goals, the satisfaction and fulfillment never came. I was (and am) always looking for the next goal, to be better or to do more. When I accomplished my goal of qualifying to the 2008 Olympics, initially, I was ecstatic. In Beijing, I accomplished my goal of qualifying for the finals, and I should have left happy but this was not enough. I came home determined to stand on the podium at the next Olympic Games in 2012. After four years of intensive training, I
accomplished something beyond my wildest dreams: I became Olympic Champion. I was ecstatic, grateful and overwhelmed with emotion. Among those emotions were confusion and uncertainty as I looked forward and thought, ‘well, now what?’

Over the next four years I struggled with my identity, motivation and my physical and mental well-being. I felt performance pressures to prove that my victory was not a fluke and to justify the investment made by my sport federation and Own The Podium (OTP). I felt I needed to validate my desire to continue training by making it ‘more meaningful’ and more ‘impactful,’ rather than ‘just’ for personal enjoyment. Simply focusing on my own pursuit of sport no longer seemed enough. As a young athlete, it is easy to be sheltered from all that goes on in sport, or to have blinders blocking what is happening outside of sport in broader society. The longer I have spent in sport, the more I realize that sport is an intricate part of society, not only reflecting but contributing to the ever-evolving social structures. It has become harder to passively allow things in sport to happen. What was initially a journey to ‘make meaning’ of what I felt was a selfish endeavour became an education of the structures of sport and opportunity to engage in initiatives that have changed my perspective. This exploration sparked a curiosity that has guided my research to help understand what it means to be a member of the athlete community.

Athletes involvement in social initiatives is far from a new phenomenon; there are prominent historic examples of athletes working to address social ills through advocacy efforts both within sport and within broader society. While there has been a growing body of academic work about athletes’ roles in international development and peace efforts (see Darnell, 2012; Wilson, Van Lujik & Bolt, 2013; Levermore, 2010; Sherry, Schulenkorf & Chalip, 2015; Coalter, 2013), the athletes’ role in sport governance (see Thibault, Kihl & Babiak 2010; Kidd, 2008; Jackson & Ritchie, 2007), sports’ roles and responsibilities within the sporting community and broader sociopolitical issues (see Kidd, 2008; Darnell, 2012; Levermore, 2010; Hayhurst & Kidd, 2012; Smith & Westerbeek, 2007; Trendafiova, Ziakas & Sparvero, 2017; Babiak & Wolfe, 2013) and the rights of Canadian Olympic Athletes (see Kidd, 2012; Kidd & Eberts, 1982; Koss, 2011; Beamish & Borowy, 1988; Barnes 1996), literature is only beginning to understand how and why athletes engage in social initiatives (see Carter, 2009; Reid, 2002; Butterworth, 2014; Darnell
2012; Babiak, Mills, Tainsky, & Juravich, 2012; Agyemang, 2014). Canadian Olympic athletes are leveraging their skills, symbolic capital, privilege and goodwill to facilitate or contribute to initiatives about which they are passionate. As this trend grows, there are more media through which Canadian and global populations can follow the actions of, and interact with, Olympians. There is more attention paid to, and questioning of, athletes’ roles and responsibilities beyond the field of play. Navigating athlete citizenship is increasingly complex as rules, regulations and expectations of athletes’ behaviour is governed and dictated by a wide array of governing bodies and partners. Thus, it is important to ask, “what does it mean to be a citizen of the Olympic athlete community within the present sociopolitical landscape?”

This study will explore sport governance structures, boundary work, and the rights, roles and responsibilities of Canadian Olympic athletes to provide a definition of athlete citizenry and model of athlete citizenship. Currently, definitions of athlete citizenship reflect athletes as bio-citizens (Henne, 2012; Henne 2015), athlete social responsibility (Carter, 2009), athlete citizenship relating to professional athletes’ behavior (Agyemang, 2014), athletes as citizens within broader society (Butterworth, 2014), or Olympic citizenship (Kostakopoulou & Schrauwen, 2014). These offer a platform from which it is possible to explore the notion of athlete citizenship but are limited in their ability to fully encompass what it means to be a citizen of the athlete community. Once a definition for athlete citizenry has been established, I use insights gained from interviews with key informants to provide context for athletes’ rights, roles and responsibilities within the current Canadian high-performance structures, and to explore how and why athletes work towards positive social impact in sport and beyond.

This thesis is organized as follows: Chapter 2 includes a review of literature addressing Olympism, citizenship generally and specific notions of citizenship within the Olympic movement. Chapter 3 provides a research outline, the methods used to conduct the research, including document analysis and interviews with key informants, as well as how the data is used to understand this phenomenon. It also introduces Bourdieu’s framework of capital as a lens through which we can understand why organizations engage athletes in social initiatives. Lastly, this chapter provides insight on positionality and reflexivity. Chapter 4 establishes a broader
definition of *athlete citizenry* outlining governance, boundary work, right and responsibilities from analysis of key sport policy documents, reviews and athlete agreements. Chapter 5 outlines the various forms of social engagement in which athletes’ can engage and explores athletes’ responsibilities and opportunities in this space. Chapter 6 discusses the core values and foundational elements of athletes’ engagement including authenticity, credibility and the process for identifying opportunities. Chapter 7 works towards an understanding of action from both an organizational and athlete perspective. Chapter 8 provides conclusions from the outlined research and provides recommendations for work to be done in the area of athletes’ rights and responsibilities.
Chapter 2

Review of Literature

2.1 Olympism

The Olympic Ideal is what qualifies sport exercise in general as a means for educating the whole man\(^1\) as a conscious citizen of the world... The Olympic ideal is that exemplary principle which express the deeper essence of sport as an authentic educative process through a continuous struggle to create healthy and virtuous man in the highest possible way in the image of the Olympic winner and athlete. (Nissiotis, 1984, p. 64 cited in Parry, 2006, p. 198).

High-performance sport is aspirational. For athletes to achieve excellence, they are required to have discipline, dedication, skill, and passion. The values and morals that are required for sport are often those preached as necessary in broader aspects of life. While sport is practised at many levels, the most proficient athletes aim to participate in the Olympic Games as the pinnacle of competition. The Olympic Games are positioned as a celebration of humanity, using sport as the mechanism to unite and as a point of communication across diverse populations. Though sport is the tool, the focus of Olympism is on broader liberal and humanist values with ideals that promote excellence, effort, respect, and peace. Pierre de Coubertin established the Olympic Movement as an educational and development tool in response to political and social crises in his native France. The objective was a broad-based social movement where ethical sport would be

\[^1\] Rather than adapting the Olympic Charter, and thus the broader Olympic Movement, towards language of gender equality, to date, the Olympic Charter states, “the masculine gender used in relation to any physical person (for example, names such as president, vice-president, chairman, member, leader, official, chef de mission, participant, competitor, athlete, judge, referee, member of a jury, attaché, candidate or personnel, or pronouns such as he, they or them) shall, unless there is a specific provision to the contrary, be understood as including the feminine gender.” (p. 11, Olympic Charter, 2016)
the mechanism for physical, moral, and intellectual human development as well as for understanding and for peace (Kidd, 1996). The value in using sport is its seemingly transcendent nature; yet, the values espoused through sport and Olympism are in jeopardy within the context of contemporary high-performance sport. The will to achieve victory and glory both by athletes and nation states, corruption in governance and other factors existing within sport institutions today create disparity between what sport and the Olympics are espoused to be and reality. This chapter will define Olympism and speak to competing objectives of Olympism and high-performance sport policies in the Canadian sociopolitical context.

The Olympic Movement, celebrated bi-annually by gathering international athletes for sporting competition, is centered on the values of Olympism. Pierre de Coubertin, the founder of the modern Olympic movement, intended for the Games to be entrenched in virtuous values and morals to better society. Inspired to act in response to what he viewed as societal failures, Pierre de Coubertin believed that ethical sporting competition could contribute to the holistic development of “muscles, intelligence, character and conscience,” (Parry, 2007, pg. 194). He viewed sport as an educative process. Today, the Olympic Games are the pre-eminent sporting competition for most sports, highlighting human physical achievement. The athletes who compete in the Games garner significant attention globally. The Olympic Movement is governed by the International Olympic Committee (IOC). The Olympic Charter is the document that defines the rules and regulations and the values of the Olympic Movement. The Olympic values are intended to shape the role that sport and its participants play in Canadian society, though it is necessary to critically analyze the influence that the Olympic values and simultaneous emphasis on elite performance have on the current Canadian sport system. While victory and virtue are not divergent values necessarily, the emphasis on success defined by medals overrides the focus on the virtuous components of Olympism.

---

2 In this document, “The Charter” and Olympic Charter refers to the 2016 version of the IOC’s Olympic Charter.

The fundamental ideal of the Olympic Movement is to place sport at the service of humanity (Olympic Charter, 2016). The Olympic Charter serves to codify the principles of Olympism, the rules and bye-laws that govern the Movement, Olympic Games and all its members. The document is constitutional in nature as it lays out the rights and obligations for the Movement’s constituents: the IOC, International Sport Federations (IFs), National Olympic Committees (NOCs), and Olympic Games Organizing Committees (OCOGs).

The Fundamental Principles outlined in the 2016 Olympic Charter include:

1. Olympism is a philosophy of life, exalting and combining in a balanced whole the qualities of body, will and mind. Blending sport with culture and education, Olympism seeks to create a way of life based on the joy of effort, the educational value of good example, social responsibility and respect for universal fundamental ethical principles.

2. The goal of Olympism is to place sport at the service of harmonious development of humankind, with the view to promoting a peaceful society concerned with the preservation of human dignity.

3. The Olympic Movement is the concerted, organised, universal and permanent action, carried out under the supreme authority of the IOC, of all individuals and entities who are inspired by the values of Olympism. It covers five continents. It reaches its peak with the bringing together of the world’s athletes at the great sports festival, the Olympic Games. Its symbol is five interlaced rings.
4. The practice of sport is a human right. Every individual must have the possibility of practising sport, without discrimination of any kind and in the Olympic spirit, which requires mutual understanding with a spirit of friendship, solidarity and fair play.

5. Recognising that sport occurs within a framework of society, sports organisations within the Olympic Movement shall have the rights and obligations of autonomy, which include freely establishing and controlling the rules of sport, determining the structure of governance of their organization, enjoying the right of elections free from any outside influence and the responsibility for ensuring that principles of good governance be applied.

6. The enjoyment of the rights and freedoms set forth in the Olympic Charter shall be secured without discrimination of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

7. Belonging to the Olympic Movement requires compliance with the Olympic Charter and recognition by the IOC. (Olympic Charter, 2016, p. 11)

In creating the Movement, Pierre de Coubertin established a vision with ideals that are hard to specifically define. In their ambiguity, they aim to achieve the ultimate balance between body, mind, and will (or spirit) celebrating values of friendship, the pursuit of excellence and respect (Parry, 2006). Hans Lenk, outlines a more concise list of Olympic ideals: tolerance, equal participation rights, respect for partners, self and sporting opponents, a symbolic unity of human kind and global nation-states, and achievement (1986, p. 187). Each nation’s interpretation of the Olympic values may vary depending on hegemonic sociocultural discourse. As the Chair of the Olympic Academy of Canada, Kidd (1989) defined the Olympic ideals in terms of specific goals that the Olympic community should practise and aspire towards; the pursuit of excellence in
body and mind, education, equal opportunity, fair competition, international understanding, cultural expression, and the independence of sport.

The use of sporting competition as a tool to promote peace, understanding, and global unity is a concept that has been widely discussed and contested. The Olympic Games have become a symbol for peaceful assembly and an opportunity to compete equally on the field of play. There is nothing quite as symbolic of the Opening Ceremony, with the parade of nations. The Rio 2016 Olympic Games, for example, had a record breaking 207 nation-states participating plus a Refugee Olympic Team (IOC, n.d.). What has allowed sport, and the Olympic Games, to attain such status as a symbol for international unity is the broad acceptance of rules of sport, and, the multi-compatibility and multi-identifiability of the Olympic ideals (Parry, 2007).

International Federations are charged with creating the rules, regulations and objectives of their respective sports. Rules of sports do not change with locality or the population playing; the rules are internationally accepted. As stated in Shachar (2011), “this is the remarkable quality of the global sporting system in general and the Olympic Games in particular […]. The first laws ever to be voluntarily embraced by men from a variety of cultures and backgrounds are the laws of sport” (p. 2119). While he goes on to state that the rules of sport were not created at the expense of any population, it can be argued that the Olympic Movement is based on a bedrock of Eurocentric ideals and, through its evolution, has continued to be dominated by European and Western sports and sporting ideals (McNamee, 2006; Donnelly, 2015). The strength in international sport as a tool to bring people together is the presupposition of rules and (ideally) the mutual-agreement for all participants to abide by the rules and regulations of that sport (Parry, 2007).

The aim to inspire global unity and peace through the Olympic Movement has its foundations in the Ancient Games’ Olympic Truce allowing safe pilgrimage of Greek citizens and the cessation of battle for the duration of the Games (Boykoff, 2016; Parry, 2007; Lenk, 2012). For many
years, the IOC claimed its position as an apolitical entity; however, the Olympic Movement is inherently political with athletes marching behind national flags, and representing nation-states. The Movement emblemizes peace and has a symbolic impact through political neutrality. It creates a system that values and aims to promote, “competitive sporting activity under conditions of mutual respect, fairness, justice and equality, with a view of creating lasting personal human relationships of friendship and international relationships of peace, toleration and understanding,” (Parry, 2007., p, 204-205) but may be limited in terms of immediate political function. The IOC has the capacity to have an indirect or social influence on global issues, relations, and peace building through the creation of opportunity and dialogue. The willingness to exercise its position in global matters wavers depending on leadership and sociopolitical climates (Boykoff, 2016; MacAloon, 2016).

The IOC often claims a position of non-intervention; yet, there have been numerous times when this position has been challenged and several scenarios during which the IOC inserted itself into global politics (Kidd, 2010). For example, the IOC and the Olympic Movement played a critical role in the cessation of apartheid in South Africa through isolation and removing the status of South Africa within the Olympic Movement, only to be reinstated upon the cessation of apartheid practices in 1992. The introduction of the Olympic Truce in 1990 demonstrates insertion of the IOC into global affairs in matters of war and peace (Boykoff, 2016). Under the leadership of Jacques Rogge from 2001 to 2013, these practices were limited as the IOC maintained that it should focus on its core business as a sport administrator, attempting to attenuate notions of responsibility and criticisms of its practices. During this time, relationships with international agencies working in social, cultural, and political fields were hindered with exception of the United Nations (MacAloon, 2016). With increasing pressure, questions of integrity, and new leadership, it was acknowledged that to regain legitimacy as a Movement, the IOC and its constituents need to act and uphold the values espoused by the Movement. As MacAloon states, “[b]eing a Movement means moving,” (p. 779), and working towards positive change on the things that the Olympic Movement celebrates and claims are central to its existence. Under Thomas Bach’s presidency, the IOC has created renewed dialogue with other movement groups and built strategic relationships to increase impact and its own capacity for advocacy. For example, in 2009, the United Nations granted the IOC status as a permanent
observer and strengthened their partnership through an agreement focusing on sport for development and peace in 2014 (IOC, 2009a). As a continued means to strengthen the IOC's connection to its values, the IOC and its constituents developed a strategic plan incorporating proposals from various intergovernmental organizations and agencies focused on human rights. The strategies defined in the *Olympic Agenda 2020*[^4] are intended to strengthen sports’ position globally as a force for good, for example, the inclusion of “sexual orientation” to the sixth Fundamental Principle and changes in the candidature procedures:

*Take all necessary measures to ensure that development projects necessary for the organization of the Games comply with local, regional, and international legislation, and international agreements and protocols, applicable in the host country with regard to planning, construction, protection of the environment, health, safety and labor laws.*

(MacAloon, 2016, p. 777)

Such amendments and inclusions demonstrate the IOC’s renewed desire and willingness to participate in global politics and affairs.

The IOC takes pride in urging participating nations and athletes to abide by the values of Olympism. Some, such as MacAloon (2016) and Bayle (2016) call for more action by the IOC to live up to the values of Olympism represents. Pierre de Coubertin’s ideals have been adapted to remain relevant. The language used within the IOC and the Olympic Movement has evolved to reflect current socio-political and corporate contexts. Bayle (2016) argues that, while the Olympic Games remain the predominant focus of the IOC due to its mass media appeal and commercial power. The actions taken towards social responsibility are dependent upon the host nation and governance structures. The IOC makes little effort to critically consider or measure

the value of its social efforts and the actions taken are little more than marketing tools to regain positive favour (Bayle, 2016). Some efforts have been made for transformation; however, the IOC’s capacity for political function and mechanisms to enforce the mandates they have codified remain limited (MacAloon, 2016; Lenk, 2012; Bayle, 2016). This dichotomy is highlighted by the selection of Beijing as the host city for the 2022 Winter Olympic Games despite continued concerns of human rights, transparency, and environmental practices under the new Host City Contracts (MacAloon, 2016; Human Rights Watch, 2008).

The ideals of Olympism were historically constructed to enhance ‘internationalism’ and ‘universalism’. To be successful in achieving these ideals, the Olympic Charter and the Olympic Movement must address two levels of interaction: micro and macro relations. At a micro level, the emphasis is on individuals and the relational dynamics established between individual participants. A fundamental principle of the Olympic Charter is that all humans have the right to play sport free of discrimination of any kind. Sport is not specifically stipulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR, 1948) as a human right. The UNDHR does state the right to rest and leisure and the right to freely participate in cultural life of the community, both of which can include sport. The UNDHR also stipulates the right to freedom from discrimination (UNDHR, 1948). The right to sport is set out in other UN documents, principally the International Charter on Sport, Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport (UNESCO, 2015). The Olympic Movement is a sporting movement that emphasises sport as a fundamental right and the possibility of participation in sport free from discrimination. This establishes a precedent and environment to protect individuals, but it also creates a set of obligations by which each member of the Olympic Movement must abide to create opportunities for relationships built on friendship and respect.

At a macro level, the Olympic Movement officially aims to create lasting international relationships, peace, tolerance, and understanding (Parry, 2007; Parry, Robinson, Watson & Nesti, 2007; Lenk, 2012; Olympic Charter, 2016). For a nation-state to ‘buy-in’ to the Olympic Movement, it must feel that the values and ideals espoused by the Movement are relevant within its sociocultural, economic, and political environments. Thus, it is critical for the IOC to balance
a fine line between the ‘universality’ of its goals and ensuring relevance to various nation-states and cultures. Some, such as Culpan and Meier (2016), criticize that there is no indisputable, unchanging definition of Olympism. Others, such as Parry (2007) and Lenk (2012) argue that the ambiguity allows for differential interpretation of these general universal ideals in a manner compatible with a nation-state’s system of values, norms, and culture. The openness of interpretation allows 207 nation-states (IOC, n.d.) to perceive compatibility with the Movement creating support for and participation in the Movement and the Olympic Games. The IOC has developed the Fundamental Principles in a manner so that each nation-state or NOC can interpret the meaning of the principles and implement them in a way that is locally relevant.

According to the IOC, sport provides a context in which humankind is confronted with an opportunity for self-discovery, as well as an opportunity to develop and display moral character and strength. It creates an environment of perceived equality through assumptions of shared understanding of the rules, shared space, and tradition regardless of that participant’s nationality. The Olympic Games provide a platform through which these basic tenets of the Olympic Movement are tested and put on display to set an example, either positive or negative, to the athletes’ country and to the world. The Olympic Movement celebrates and promotes morals, values, and ethics based on respect at many levels, including: respect for self, “an individual’s concern for happiness based on the thoughtful view of a meaningful life, living up to the standards you set for yourself and being the kind of person you want to be” (Reid, 2002, p. 141); respect for others, “athletes have the duty to respect others’ humanity, but also to understand and respect the particular relationships involved and the purpose of the activity” (Reid, 2002, p. 169); and respect for the game, “the attitude adopted towards the rules, conventions and ideals of a sport reflects an athlete’s understanding and concern for a valued practice and community that is engaged in it.” (Reid, 2002, p. 142) (Reid, 2002; Lenk 2012). These include ethical principles of dignity, integrity, and fair play.

Through the Olympic Movement, Pierre de Coubertin aimed to create an educational opportunity where, through sport, populations could be taught virtuous traits necessary in building a successful society (Lenk, 2012). As the Olympic Games are about achieving human excellence,
or ‘areté’, Ried (2002) suggests that in relation to sport, de Coubertin’s intention was to instill Plato’s virtues of piety, temperance, courage, and justice. Within the realm of sport, this equates to self-awareness, discipline (moral and physical), courage, and justice (Robinson, 2007). In founding the modern Olympic Movement emphasizing and placing value on these Eurocentric virtues, and through the codification of virtue through the Olympic Charter, de Coubertin and the IOC have set the parameters from which Olympic stories are framed and glory is bestowed. The Olympic Games are the stage to demonstrate these virtues and it is the athletes, through playing sport, who are supposed to embody these characteristics. In the Olympic Charter, NOC are responsible for selecting sportspersons for their elite technical athletic skills to create a sport competition of high calibre and also, those who express “moral purity” (Coubertin, 1925 in Lenk, 2012.). The ethical components or moral purity in sport are exemplified in mandated fair play and informal demonstrations of sportsmanship; though, selection to or exclusion from teams are primarily predicated on physical performance and compliance with rules. As outlined by the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada (SDRCC), “[r]esponsible NSOs recognize the importance of a sound team selection policy to ensure that the best athletes are indeed selected for optimal performance of the team,” (CRDSC-SDRCC, 2017). Recommendations made by the SDRCC recognize technical and administrative aspects, but make no mention of moral clauses.

The brand of the Olympics Games as a sporting Movement entrenched in aspirational and moralistic values (Kidd, 1996) is still prevalent and valuable. While nation-states differ in their interpretation and practice of those ideals, they influence how sport is practiced, how people behave, and how policy is structured. The Olympic Games are the pre-eminent sporting spectacle and the pinnacle competition of many sports, thus winners receive glory and awards. Nations use the Olympics to demonstrate strength and dominance (Kidd, 2013) putting pressure on athletes to focus on performance. There is tension between Pierre de Coubertin’s original vision for what the Olympic Movement was intended to represent and celebrate, and the realities of modern competitive sport. In his original writings, Pierre de Coubertin outlines a philosophy that is “a delicate balance of mind and body, the joy of a fresher and more intense life, the harmony of faculties [and] a calm and happy strength,” (de Coubertin, 2000, p. 534 in Beamish 2013). The Olympic motto, “higher, faster, stronger” is one exalting physical excellence creating a spectacle that garners global attention; yet, it is the values of Olympism and the Olympic Movement’s
ideological dimensions that work to connect humankind through sport. In an increasingly
globalised world, a universal philosophy that transcends national and state ideologies renders the
Olympic Movement relevant. The Olympic Movement uses sport as a mechanism to
communicate values and ideals that are simultaneously relevant globally with local expression. It
is these universal principles and ideals that work to bring value and relevance to a Movement
through changing social and political climates.

2.1.1 Olympism in the Canadian Context

The *Olympic Charter* defines the mission and the role of the NOC as the following:

1. *The mission of the NOCs is to develop, promote and protect the Olympic Movement in their respective countries, in accordance with the Olympic Charter.*
2. *The NOCs’ Role is:*
   2.1. *to promote the fundamental principles and values of Olympism in their countries, in particular, in the fields of sport and education, by promoting Olympic educational programmes in all levels of schools, sports and physical education institutions and universities, as well as by encouraging the creation of institutions dedicated to Olympic education such as National Olympic Academies, Olympic Museums and other programmes, including cultural, related to the Olympic Movement;*
   2.2. *to ensure the observance of the Olympic Charter in their countries;*
   2.3. *to encourage the development of high performance sport as well as sport for all;*
   2.4. *to help in training of sports administrators by organising courses and ensuring that such courses contribute to the propagation of the Fundamental Principles of Olympism;*
   2.5. *to take action against any form of discrimination and violence in sport;*
   2.6. *to adopt and implement the World Anti-Doping Code;*
2.7. to encourage and support measures relating to the medical care and health of athletes. (Olympic Charter, 2016, p. 59-60)

Not only does the Canadian Olympic Committee (COC) need to oversee and safeguard high-performance sport in Canada, it must deploy the power of the Olympic rings in the country. As a member of a national sport governing body states:

*If you interpret the Charter as being central to the mission of the National Olympic Committee, then I think you have to interpret the values that are espoused by the Olympic Movement internationally as the responsibility of the National Olympic Committees. Those values, I think, can cause you to have to think beyond what sport represents, if that makes sense. It’s the values of fair play, integrity, and peace and those make sense in the world in a larger context than they do only in the context of sport. [...] I think the Charter and values it espouses should cause all NOCs to think about what they can do with the power of the Olympic Movement and what they can do with the rings that transcend sport that can cause imitative or cause broader conversations that should be important to the world, not just sport. (Key Informant A)*

In making the Olympic values relevant to Canadians, it is the COC’s role to interpret the values in a manner that is consistent with those valued by Canada and that coincide with ‘Canadian identity’. With a diverse population, Canada’s identity is hard to define. Robidoux, (2002) and Anderson (1983, republished in 2016) argue the idea of defining a nation’s identity requires the construction of a shared history and is often reflective of those responsible for establishing this narrative. Canada is comprised of diverse populations with a range of identities. A part of Canada’s identity is based on the notion that all have the right to maintain and celebrate their connection to their ethno-cultural and national minority origins (Jenson, Harvey, Kymlicka, Maioni, Shragge, Graefe & Fontan, 2001). Officially, multiculturalism is a celebrated component of Canadian identity; the notion, ‘diversity is our strength’ is frequently stated by
current Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Justin Trudeau (Trudeau, 2015; Mark, 2017). As with any community, there may not be one core identity to which everyone in that community can relate.

Sport is thought to be a means through which national stories, identity, and pride are produced (Joseph, Darnell & Nakamura, 2012; van Hilvoorde, Elling, Stokvis, 2010; Horne, Tomlinson, Whannel & Woodward, 2013). Contemporary societies often use recreation, sport, and leisure as a means to make claims for nationhood and to establish an identity for their population. Particularly with national teams, an athlete’s or team’s victory is celebrated as a national experience. It is used, through media, to bolster the sense of national pride and as a means to connect a population. Sport provides a mechanism to produce stories and experience nationality through creating a sense of unity and national cohesion (van Hilvoorde et al., 2010). Canada has used sport as a mechanism to promote citizenship, values, national identity, and, albeit contested, unity. While sport and recreation have been celebrated as a part of ‘Canadian DNA,’ it is also important to reflect on how this translates to reality in terms of access to sport and recreation. The current federal legislation, the Physical Activity and Sport Act (PASA) of 2003, seek:

(a) to promote physical activity as a fundamental element of health and well-being;
(b) to encourage all Canadians to improve their health by integrating physical activity into their daily lives; and
(c) to assist in reducing barriers faced by all Canadians that prevent them from being active (Minister of Justice, 2003)

The objectives of PASA are to increase participation, build capacity within the Canadian sport system, and to support the pursuit of sporting excellence (Minister of Justice, 2003) though there has been an overwhelming emphasis on high-performance sport. As one result, there is a gap in programs for low-income citizens. Many Canadians continue to face what Donnelly and Harvey (1996) describe as systematic superstructural, infrastructural, and organizational barriers to sport
and recreation. This is evidenced merely by looking at the Canadian Olympic Team (COT). The Canadian Olympic Team is not a proportional representation of Canada’s diversity. This indicates a gap between the celebration of inclusion and promotion diverse national identities through sport, and the policies or practices in place that create opportunities for participation in sport and high-performance sport. For sport to live up to its potential, it is necessary to ensure that all citizens have equal access and opportunity to participate in sport.

Canadian Olympic athletes are influenced by Canadian Sport Policy principles:

_The government of Canada’s policy regarding sport is founded on the highest ethical standards and values, including doping-free sport, the treatment of all persons with fairness and respect, the full participation of all persons in sport and the fair, equitable, transparent and timely resolution of disputes in sport_ (Minister of Justice, 2003).

How athletes interpret and value what is codified is shaped by sociocultural norms and the systems of value in sporting institutions. Athletes are influenced by sporting culture and institutions domestically and abroad. Domestically, this includes federal and provincial governments, NSOs, Own The Podium (OTP) and the COC. Athletes navigate the policies forged by, and agreements with, these entities. Additionally, Canadian media works to shape sporting culture: how sport is perceived nationally, and to inform athletes on acceptable behaviours and practices. A prominent sport journalist for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), Scott Russell, wrote an article for Canada’s sesquicentennial outlining the perceived celebrated values of Canadian sport. In Russell’s article, _Canadian Way: Our greatest gift to sport_ (2017), he describes Canada’s contributions to global sport emphasizing intangible, value and morally based contributions. These ‘contributions’ influence, and, he argues, perhaps define Canadian athletes’ approach to sport. In the article, retired swimmer and activist, Mark Tewksbury describes, “I think that we, as Canadians, bring a principled approach to sport. […] Our sport system is not perfect, but we take fair, clean, ethical sport very seriously.” Russell
describes that the pride that Canada takes in sport goes beyond the medal count and encompasses the values based approach to sport that has become the “trademark Canadian way” (Russell, 2017), inscribed in the objectives of Canadian Sport Policy (Minister of Justice, 2003). While Canadian athletes celebrate the practice of ethical sport, our current views and culture have been shaped by a public outcry and shame felt in response to the 1988 doping scandal and Ben Johnson’s disqualification. In response, Canadians have become influential in anti-doping efforts and ethical sport with athlete representatives and advocates both on the IOC Athlete Commission (Hayley Wickenheiser- Ice Hockey), and the WADA Athlete Commission (Beckie Scott- Cross-Country Skiing). Beyond the sporting approach athletes take, Canadians are leaders globally in creating more ethical and inclusive sport systems. As Kidd describes in the article, “Canadians have been at the forefront of the struggle against doping and gender-based violence, and exemplars of gender equity, athletes’ rights and sport for development and peace,” (Russell, 2017).

The story of Canadian sport celebrated in this article reflects what are perceived to be ‘Canadian values’, including excellence, resilience, courage, equality and respect. This is one example of how sport offers a story to articulate a national identity, and offers an opportunity to unite and create cohesive communities through pride and the celebration of shared ‘Canadian values’. Though unity and diversity may be celebrated facets of Canadian identity superficially, Joseph et al.’s book, Race and Sport in Canada: Intersecting Inequalities (2012) highlights how Canadian sport works to simultaneously demonstrate, reinforce, and conceal Eurocentric discourses, exclusionary origins, and prohibitive sporting infrastructures. Claims and celebrations of strength in diversity along with the proclamations that Canada is a place of idyllic understanding, acceptance, and where racism no longer exists, work to reinforce mythical egalitarian discourse. Joseph et al. (2012) argue that, as a reflection of national life, sport contributes to constructing and preserving of social structures and racial practice. Rather than acknowledging and addressing inequitable access, claims of acceptance and opportunity reduce the pressure to address remaining barriers to sport participation and advancement that exist based on socioeconomic status, gender and race. The current discourse surrounding Canada’s multicultural status work to obscure and normalize racial practices, as well as the structures in place to reinforce practices. Sport can also provide a platform to garner attention, challenge, resist and re-
imagine the understanding and dominant discourse of race in Canadian society and sporting culture.

At an institutional level, sport policy in Canada has been influenced and shaped by the *Olympic Charter* and the Olympic Games. Many sport and recreation policies in Canada emphasize participation, the pursuit of sport for sport’s sake, development of moral character through sport, and fair and clean sport (Beamish, 2013 in Thibault & Harvey, 2013; Minister of Justice, 2003). Despite the focus on the spirit of sportsmanship enshrined within Canadian sport policy, the financial resources that are allocated to sport have increased. As a result, there has been a heightened demand to gain tangible and measurable return on investment: medals on the international and Olympic stage. This priority is emphasized by the 2005 creation of Own The Podium, a non-profit organization that determines the allocation of significant funds with the primary mandate of delivering medals at Olympic and Paralympic Games. Canada’s targeted funding approach is largely funded by the Government of Canada with additional funding sources through the COC, Canadian Olympic Foundation (COF) and the Canadian Paralympic Committee (CPC) (Goss Gilroy Inc., 2017). Athletes are required to sign a legally binding document, the *Canadian Olympic Team Athlete Agreement* (*COT Athlete Agreement*) to participate in the Olympic Games as a member of Team Canada. The more humanist values of the Olympic Movement are incorporated into the athlete agreement. This document makes mention of compliance with the *Olympic Charter* and embracing the philosophy of Olympism with a prominent focus on training expectations, performance and athletic success. For example, the 2016 *COT Athlete Agreement* outlines athletes’ commitments to Olympism:

5.01  *All members of the Team are expected to embrace the philosophy of Olympism and to conduct themselves accordingly until the end of the duration of the Games.*

5.03  *I further represent that I have and will pursue my athletic goals in a spirit of fair-play and respect for myself and my opponents, on and off the field of play, and I*
undertake and promise to continue to act and compete in that spirit of Olympism through the period of this Agreement and indefinitely beyond the Duration of the Games. (COT Athlete Agreement, 2016).

Within the 2016 COT Athlete Agreement, athletes ensure compliance with the values of Olympism, speaking to respect and fair-play. Within the appendix of the agreement, it is stated that

“Olympism” refers to the respect for dignity of all men and women both individually and collectively, with proper regard for the harmonious development of all persons including the athletes themselves, towards the goal of achieving the best that one can in the body, spirit, and mind. (COT Athlete Agreement, 2016, p. 17)

In Canada, there is significant value placed on how athletes conduct themselves both on and off the field of play as representatives of the country; the allocation of funds for medal performances also communicates the value placed on standings. Athlete agreements made with the COC require the inclusion of clauses about behaviour that are ambiguous (in line with the ambiguity of the definition of Olympism). Other national team athlete agreements outline expectations of athletes’ performance objectives which are aligned with policies and objectives of funding agencies including Sport Canada. The agreements also include codes of conduct or minimal standards of behaviour complying with ethical and moral norms. The following excerpt from an NSF athlete agreement illustrates expectations of training, performance and behaviour in trade for the opportunity of membership:

As a member of [Sport federation] National Team (NT) [...] you have an extraordinary opportunity to represent Canada at the highest level of sport. [...] With this comes the
responsibility of top performances in training and competition, with the ultimate goals of
podium and top-8 international rankings for Canadian athletes.

As ambassadors for Canada and for [sport federation], all NT members (including
athletes, coaches, officials, support team and any traveling friends/family) are expected
to behave and conduct themselves in an exemplary manner while traveling or
participating as a part of NT competitions, training camps or activities. [...] 
Inappropriate behavior includes, but are not limited to: alcohol and/or drug abuse, loud
or confrontational behaviour, swearing, negative or inappropriate behaviours and
inappropriate use of social media (GCG Athlete Agreement, 2016)

The Canadian sport system emphasizes, and is communicated as, embodying the values of
Olympism and humanistic approaches to sport, yet athlete contracts and funding allocations
continuously place emphasis on performance. This dichotomy highlights what Beamish (2013)
describes as the conflict between modernity and humanism:

Even though the humanist premises and transcendental image of the spirit of sport that
de Coubertin wanted to instil as the foundation for the Modern Olympic Games remain
moving and inspiring principles, the realities of contemporary, high performance sport
are impossible to deny. World Class sport today requires athletic performances at the
outer limits of human potential. (p. 236-237).

Beamish goes on to argue that, to shift in emphasis back towards the earlier humanist
foundations would require the sport system to “dismantle the entire socio-political foundation
and edifice of international sport and the national systems of athlete development as they have
evolved over the last half century” (Beamish 2013, p. 237). Sport is used as a mechanism to
construct and communicate national ideology, and as a process of socialisation. Sport has
symbolic power; however, the polarity between what Allison (2012) describes as ‘the spirit of sport’ and the ‘tendency of sport’ creates dual meanings. While the spirit of sport celebrates ethics, fair play, honesty and character, the tendency of sport is “towards excess” (p. 25). At present, the trend and emphasis, I argue, will continue to be placed on high-performance sport measured by medal opportunity and medals won while sport continues to contribute to an amplified cognisance of nationality. Sporting culture and infrastructures are a reflection of broader practices of national life. Sport offers a place and an opportunity to re-think and re-imagine what it means to be a Canadian, and globally, what it means to be a citizen.

2.2 Citizenship

Citizenship is about more than the passport an individual holds; it goes far beyond nationality. The terms of citizenship determine in part who has access to goods, services, and resources and how they are distributed within a community. Rules of citizenship determine who can participate, who can decide about matters of diversity, distribution, inclusion and exclusion. (Jenson & Harvey, 2001, p. 1).

One objective of this research is to gain insight and understanding of what it means to be a citizen of the Olympic Movement from the perspective of athletes. Athletes inhabit a shared but transient community. Through the allocation of time, resources, and place, sport creates a haven for people to come together. To understand citizenship in the Olympic context, it is critical to first gain an understanding of “citizenship” and what it means to be a citizen. This section will outline numerous models of citizenship, including traditional, legal/political, global and universalist models, then move to review emerging notions of citizenship pertaining to Olympic Athletes, including ‘Olympic citizens’, Équipe Unifée, the Refugee Olympic Team and the athlete bio-citizen.
2.2.1 Models of Citizenship

"Citizenship is a status bestowed on those who are full members of a community. All who possess the status are equal with respect to the rights and duties with which the status is endowed. There is no universal principle that determines what those rights and duties shall be, but societies in which citizenship is a developing institution create an image of an ideal citizenship against which achievement can be measured and towards which aspiration can be directed. (T.H. Marshall, 1950 in Manza & Sauder, 2009)

As a pioneer in citizenship literature, Marshall argues that a requirement for citizenship is “a direct sense of community membership based on loyalty to a civilization which is a common possession. It is a loyalty of free men endowed with rights and protected by common law,” (1950, p. 151). Citizenship is about solidarity, what binds a population together and creates a form of bond to ensure a sense of responsibility or accountability for the group’s well-being. It determines who gains access, the rights and responsibilities or duties of its members and is dependent on respect for other members. (T.H. Marshall, 1950; Roche, 1987; Roche, 2002; Sindic, 2011; Gushwan, 2014; Shachar, 2011; Van Zoonen, 2005; Jenson et al, 2001, Arnot, 1997). Traditional, liberal and legal ideas of citizenship centre around membership in a political community, or nation-state based on borders and are bound to national identity. Citizenship presupposes egalitarian discourse: that all citizens have equal rights of access to the benefits afforded to them by membership and allowing for individual freedom (Jenson et al. 2001; Gushwan, 2014). To enable these rights that facilitate liberty, citizens have responsibilities or duties. These duties are centered around moralistic values: legal frameworks, standards of participation, ethical values, social conformity and working towards the common good (Jenson et al, 2001; Roche, 1987; Roche 2002; Sindic, 2011; Guschwan, 2014; Yuval-Davis, 2006; Arnot, 1997). This coincides with T.H. Marshall’s classic definition of political citizenship focusing social and political participation and the reciprocal relationship between the individual and state (T.H. Marshall, 1950; Arnot, 1997).
Citizenship allows members to orient themselves in relation to other members. The idea of ‘imagined communities’ was established by Benedict Anderson, expanding on Marshall’s traditional notion, to describe the commonality between members formed by shared assumptions and expectations, despite the impossibility of all members being known to each other (Anderson, 1983; Roche, 1987). Boundaries between citizens and non-citizens are delineated based on shared identity, values, ideals, positions and cultural systems rather than physical contact. Communities are constructed based on perceptions of belonging and shared affinity. For example, the Olympics are posited as a mechanism for nation building. A country’s team is sent to represent all citizens and the values of that country. During the Olympic Games, Canadians across the country cheer on Canadian athletes with a sense of pride, regardless of whether or not they know the athlete(s) personally. The athletes and citizens at home, have a shared sense of belonging to the same country, and thus are connected.

Legal citizenship rooted in membership of a nation-state is a critical component of the modern Olympic Movement. Rule 41 of the 2016 Olympic Charter mandates that “any competitor in the Olympic Games must be a national of the country of the NOC which is entering such competitor.” Traditions deeply entrenched in the Olympic Movement also centre around nation-states including: the selection of athletes by NOCs, the athlete parade of nations, medal ceremonies with national flags of medalists and the national anthem of the victor. Athletes act as representatives or ambassadors for their respective countries and gather under the auspices of sport and peaceful competition. By extension, athletes are supposed to embody the values of their country and provide a sense of pride to other members of that nation-state, strengthening the sense of social cohesion.

Traditional models of citizenship are centered around three dimensions: (1) status, (2) rights and responsibilities, and (3) identity. Citizenship of a nation grants individual rights, civil rights, political rights, and social rights (Marshall, 1950). To gain the protections and liberties granted by citizenship, citizens must live within legal parameters. Citizens are granted the ability and the responsibility to act as political agents by exercising political power. Citizens also have a shared sense of belonging, an identity that connects the population based on a psychological solidarity.
or subjective attachment. As van Hilvoorde, et al. (2010) describe, the tendency to strive for a psychological sense of belonging is derived from the human need for connection and socialization. This connection is desired for biological reasons (survival and reproduction) as well as social well-being and the ability to thrive in a community. The desire to belong obliges citizens to abide by particular moral and legal standards. Each element is connected to, and effected by, relational dynamics between citizens and the institutions that govern civil, political and social structures. (Roche, 1987; Roche, 2002; Yuval-Davis, 2006; Sindic, 2011; Jenson et al. 2001). The degree to which a citizen identifies with the group and feels empowered to act, impacts the degree of political and civil engagement and their willingness to contribute to the ‘common good.’ This model of citizenship often delineates between public and private spheres; however, a liberal feminist critique emphasizes that these two realms are elaborately entwined. The feminist critique challenges assumptions and invites us to consider how public structures, physical, social and legal, influence the gendered experience. The feminist critique of citizenship challenges hegemonic ideals to be more inclusive by recognizing women’s status as citizens, working to acknowledge, analyse and address how laws and policies have direct implications on personal circumstances (Leydet, 2014). At the same time, issues that have been traditionally viewed as ‘personal’ are often more effectively influenced through collective or political action, for example child-care, welfare and marital rights (Leydet, 2014). Through collective action, citizens are empowered to advocate for their well-being. It may be easier to conceptualize status, rights, responsibilities and identity as distinct and independent; however, this ignores the complexity. We understand the notion of citizenry within current socio-political contexts and the diversified understandings of community.

T.H. Marshall outlined a universalist model of citizenship based on legal status, granting specific civil, political and social rights which were given to all (Roche, 1987). This model risks alienating or improperly servicing portions of the population, and imposing dominant views and ways of life on all members. The universalist model, emphasising the provision of equal social rights, has been instrumental in securing social cohesion during times of economic and personal instability (T.H. Marshall, 1950 cited in Leydet, 2014). The equal provision of rights and services does not consider varying needs among people so in response to inequalities, there has been a call to recognize diverse groups within a citizen population and their differing needs. This
encourages the view that “equal respect may justify differential treatment and recognition of special minority rights,” (Leydet, 2014, p. 5). This model has attempted to accommodate for diversity across multiple platforms but the emphasis on difference, differential identification and institutionalized disparity creates citizen silos. This could decrease the sense of belonging to the broader community (Leydet, 2014). Both universalist and differentialist models of citizenship are flawed because it is a significant challenge balancing equal rights and equal respect while accommodating diverse needs. Nation states are internally pluralistic, often comprised of a diverse array of cultures, languages and ideologies. It is necessary to find a balance between the social and political structures in place that create commonality and cohesion between and among citizens, preserving the integrity of the community, while simultaneously acknowledging and accommodating the varied needs of a diverse group of citizens, ensuring their rights and freedoms.

Many traditional ideas of citizenship, including Marshall’s, presume membership to a nation-state or characterize (explicitly or implicitly) citizenship as nationality. In this contemporary era, several factors challenge this conception including the diversity within a nation-state or internal boundaries, increased mobilization and migration of populations and globalisation. An increasingly connected world has led to the adoption of universal principles of human rights that each political community interprets within the sociopolitical context. These principles become embodied in law and practices of various institutions, both legal and governmental (Leydet, 2014). Leydet (2014) continues that more diversity among a population means that it may be more challenging to establish a psychological connection as a community based on culture, so it must be based on democratic process. Through democratic process, a community can achieve solidarity through the provision of social justice. Social services and the willingness of citizens to contribute to the common good are based on a shared sense of community. To achieve balance, it requires both solidarity and reciprocity. As citizens or populations feel a shared history or aspects of connection, physically, legally or psychologically, they also feel a sense of responsibility to other members of the community for mutual benefit.
Globalisation poses another significant challenge because historically, a basic tenet of citizenship is belonging to a sovereign state. Status as a citizen is the legal membership within territorial or political boundaries allowing the provision of rights and expectation of duty. With increased migration and numbers of diasporic populations, governing bodies in nation-states can choose whom it accepts as new citizens and whom it does not. Additionally, there are more non-citizens living within the boundaries of a nation-state and thus there are differences in the rights afforded neighbors living in the same community with different status. Globalisation also raises questions regarding those who have dual-citizenship, displaced populations, refugees and those seeking asylum. There may be legal means of differentiation; but what is the morality or humanity if those who are vulnerable receive or experience fewer rights? This raises a valuable debate between legal status and moral equality that is worthy of attention. The growing number of conflicts and human rights abuses has resulted in a dramatic growth in diaspora populations globally. The global refugee crisis reaching is an all-time high and is garnering significant attention, has challenged the IOC to review standards of eligibility that have historically required athletes to be a citizen of the nation-state that registers them for the Olympic Games. Prior to the 2016 Summer Olympic Games revisions were made to accommodate and create the opportunity for the inclusion of refugees. In response to the global refugee crisis, the IOC created the “Refugee Olympic Team:”

[Having no national team to belong to, having no flag to march behind, having no national anthem to be played, these refugee athletes will be welcomed to the Olympic Games with the Olympic flag and with the Olympic anthem. They will have a home together with all the other 11,000 athletes from 206 National Olympic Committees in the Olympic Village. This will be a symbol of hope for all the refugees in our world, and will make the world better aware of the magnitude of the crisis. (IOC, 2016b)]

The establishment of the Refugee Olympic Team challenges traditional notions of the nation-state and citizenship as a fundamental component of the Olympic Games. As representatives of refugees globally, the objective is to create a human connection through sport. While athletes were members of the Refugee Olympic Team in 2016, they may self-identify as refugees (see for
example, http://www.therefugeenation.org) or as migrant diasporas. The Refugee Olympic Team that participated in the 2016 Olympic Games was comprised of ten athletes competing in three sports. The athletes’ countries of origin (Ethiopia, South Sudan, Syria and the Democratic Republic of Congo) have experienced conflict, forcing many to seek asylum in other countries or in refugee camps (Donnelly & Saunders, 2016). While there were efforts to introduce a new flag and anthem for the Refugee Olympic Team, these athletes competed under the Olympic Flag and the Olympic Anthem, nationless symbols designed to demonstrate the universality of Olympism which represents all people rather than a particular group.

The notion of a ‘global’ or ‘universal’ citizen stems from the establishment of the UDHR emphasising the status of “human” as opposed to the status of national. These dictate fundamental principles and freedoms that every human should have, regardless of location, culture or sociopolitical context. Other facets contributing the notion of a global citizen include globalisation, global economic practices and enhanced mobility (Roche, 2002). The concept of a ‘universal citizen’ is based on one’s commitment to a common humanity; however, Parekh (2003) offers an alternative view, the ‘globally oriented citizen.’ Rather than identifying as a citizen of the world, Parekh describes identifying as a member of a nation-state while being world-minded. He argues that the world is a unified system in which citizens of nation-states must work together, valuing the interests of nation-states while being mindful to the global community and the planet. Parekh’s concept of a ‘globally oriented citizen’ coincides with Parry’s interpretation of the Olympic ideal and Pierre de Coubertin’s idea of the ‘self-actualizing athlete’ where sport and the Olympic Movement are a means to educate the whole person as a citizen of the world (Parry, 2007, p. 196). This idea does not diminish the importance of nation-state but rather, emphasizes their role (and thus their citizens’ role) in working together towards aspirational ideals of global harmonization and practice.

Roche defines the citizen as “an entity in principle, capable of recognizing, knowing about, and acting appropriately in respect of rights and duties. A notion of citizen as a moral subject, a rational actor and possessor of relevant and effective powers and skills” (1987, p. 371). This idea of citizenship is predicated on the sense of belonging and reciprocal sense of responsibility,
duty or accountability to other members of the group. Jenson & Harvey (2001) also outline a
notion of citizenship based on moral qualities and how this influences behaviour. To create
social cohesion among a population, they claim it is critical to build tolerance and concern for
the collective well-being of that group. With this comes a citizen’s feeling of responsibility and
willingness to perform the expected duties. A distinction is made by Arnot (1997), between
minimal and maximal views of citizenship. Minimal views of citizenship “refer to an
individual’s civic status and associated rights based on rule of law” (p. 289). This view would
emphasize conformity to core values, social norms and yield minimal engagement. Maximal
views of citizenship suggest a connection between those who hold strong personal affiliations,
psychological or emotional connections and a sense of agency. Compare, for example, an
athlete’s engagement within the sporting community. A form of minimal citizenship can be
likened to the athlete who has status as a team member and participates within the confines of
existing structures and ideals. This athlete would comply with existing rules, governing bodies
and practice sport within these parameters. Alternatively, maximal views of citizenship can be
likened to the athlete who is compelled to take action, working to inform, influence and shape
the structures in place to affect their experience of sport. Identifying with a group allows for a
sense of belonging which allows the individual to stake a claim or standing within a group and as
such, feel empowered to act.

New forms of citizenship involve diverse populations at both sub-national and transnational
levels based on facets related to identity and ideational sense of belonging (Ong, 2007; Henne,
2012; Roche, 2002; Yuval-Davis, 2006; Sindic, 2011). Thus, it is important to shift from
traditional ideas of citizenship predicated on nation-state and political systems, to account for
alternative forms of engagement and community. It is critical to understand citizenry within
current social, political and technological constructs that allow for the creation of a variety of
communities, not solely based on national or legal status. Cultural citizenship, for example,
pertains to the sense of belonging to a community based on identity, narratives, lifestyle, norms,
emotional attachments and values (Roche, 2002; Sindic, 2011). New forms of trans-national
citizenship are being enabled through technological advancements with digital landscapes
becoming a place for the establishment of new communities. People have the capability to
connect to those abroad, digitally or physically, and communities are no longer limited by
geographical space. Additionally, enhanced capacity for mobility and increasingly transient populations render geographical borders less restrictive and thus, trans-national communities can be built based on shared sense of belonging, values or status among a particular demographic.

The broadening notions of citizenship invoked by diverse groups of people require the provision of the necessary elements in defining citizenship: boundary work, rights and responsibilities and governance (Yulal-Davis, 2006; Butterworth, 2014; Shachar, 2011). Notions of citizenship have evolved and broadened to account for societal (national and international) shifts towards new forms of citizenship. Citizenship is inherently a concept of membership and, as such, necessitates the delineation between who belong and who do not. Governance structures establish the requisite conditions upon which subjects are granted access and allowed to maintain their status. Boundary work delineates those who qualify, hold status and enjoy benefits, and those who do not (Henne, 2015). The importance of boundaries lies in the liberties and privileges gained by having membership as well as the requirements in place to maintain those liberties. Boundaries also work to establish a link between the citizens, ensuring they feel an emotional or psychological sense of belonging that allows individuals to feel empowered and encourages them work towards a common good (Yuval-Davis, 2006; Henne, 2015; Parry 2007; Butterworth, 2014).

The rights of citizenship are the liberties, benefits, privileges and protections granted by membership and maintenance of status (Kidd & Eberts, 1982; Henne, 2015; Butterworth, 2014; Shachar, 2011). Kidd and Donnelly (2000) expand on this and state that a right is a “moral or legal entitlement that others are duty-bound to respect,” and are often associated with a class of people (p. 132). In Canada, the rights of citizens are codified by provincial and federal legislation. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982) outlines rights in the following categories: Fundamental freedoms; democratic rights; mobility rights; legal rights and equality rights. The document also outlines protections and enforcement stating legal procedures citizens can take if their rights are not upheld. Conversely, responsibilities of a group entail the common duties required and the work to ensure that rights and freedoms are granted to all members. Each citizen has the responsibility to respect the rights of others, to abide by the law
and to participate in democratic process. The rights and responsibilities defined by a group reflect that group’s values and culture (Ried, 2002; Sindic, 2011) and aim to create social cohesion to benefit the community. In Canada, there is significant emphasis placed on respecting and celebrating the diversity of its population. Canadian citizens have the right to maintain an identity based on their ethno cultural origins and thus create multiple layers to their identity based on their experiences and interactions. As discussed previously, Joseph et al. (2012) argue that, even though Canada celebrates diversity, acceptance and multiculturalism, the reality remains that there are systematic, organizational and infrastructural power imbalances that render a wide range of experienced rights, freedoms and barriers. The Canadian Olympic Team is intended to represent the population of the country on the international stage; yet, the socio-economic and racial construct of the Canadian Olympic Team is not representative of the socio-economic make up and diversity that exists within Canada. Rather than reflecting the socio-economic and racial make-up of the country, the Canadian Olympic Team is a reflection of “inherent inequitable access or barriers to sport participation and/or advancement,” (Lawrence, 2017, p. 150). Lawrence concluded that within the Canadian Olympic Teams that competed in the 2014 Olympic Winter Games in Sochi and the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, there was an over-representation of white and privately educated athletes with sport specific variances. Idyllic notions of multiculturalism in Canada work to obscure the reality of privilege and centering of dominant groups and thus, idyllic multiculturalism creates complacency in addressing socially constructed power relations (Joseph et al., 2012).

Sport reflects and reinforces social structures and power relations in place within national and global contexts. Sport is simultaneously positioned as a tool to resist and re-imagine dominant discourse. The notion of the citizen has expanded to encompass a broad range of definitions while maintaining consistency in the parameters for a group; boundary work, rights and freedoms, responsibilities and governance. The establishment of a citizenry is closely connected with identity and a sense of belonging. The Olympic Movement is argued to be a global systematization of ethical and political values in sport, thus establishing a (theoretical) shared sense of values and duty among its constituents. The commonality established within the Olympic Movement and values of sport creates a transnational community of athletes. Athletes globally are subjected to public attention and a broad range of pressures in sport and otherwise.
They are expected to gain entry through corporeal evaluations, comply with moral and ethical values of sport and, on a global stage, represent their nation. Navigating this territory of citizenship is increasingly complex with rules, regulations, and expectations dictated by a broad range of governing bodies and stakeholders. Thus, it is important to understand the athlete citizenry within the current socio-political structures.

2.3 Citizenship, Athletes and the Olympic Games

Olympians are supposedly subjects who transcend other group affiliations. To be an Olympian is some quasi-utopian state of being that brings those individuals together in ‘brotherhood’, a kind of utopian collective on a world scale. (Carter, 2012, p. 62).

Models of citizenship have evolved and broadened to adapt for cultural, digital and sociopolitical shifts. The primary commonality among all forms of citizenship are relations of power and subjectification. To be a citizen, one becomes a subject of power. Power is defined by Horne et al. (2013) as the ability and position of an individual or group to engage in decision making and taking action. The individual or group in power has the capacity “to make and implement decisions and more broadly to determine the agenda for decision making,” (Horne et al., 2013, p. 127). Athletes become subjects of the sport system as power can exist within non-political structures and bodies, such as the governing bodies of sport. As Horne et al. (2013) describe, the notion or title of ‘governing bodies’ indicates an institutional structure and the capacity for decision making within the sporting context, influencing and impacting those associated with sport. The IOC claims to have sovereignty over global sport, IFs and NOCs. Carter (2012) describes the process through which the IOC forms subjects or ‘global cosmopolitan citizens’ who embody the spirit of Olympism (p. 55). “For true sovereign power is not merely the taking of life, but also the bestowing of life,” (Carter, 2012, p. 58). The IOC, as a sovereign power within the sporting movement, demonstrates asymmetrical power relations between the IOC and its ‘subjects’. Within the Olympic Movement, the bestowal of an Olympic
accreditation by the IOC grants individuals’ status and permits them to participate in the Olympic Games (Olympic Charter, p. 96). Thus, the IOC is granting ‘life’ within the sporting world to those they deem legitimate.

In recent years, there has been the emergence of the notion of the ‘athlete citizen’ (Henne, 2012; Henne 2015; Roche, 2002; Kostakaopoulou & Schrauwen, 2014; Butterworth, 2014; Agayemang, 2014). The Olympic Games are the pinnacle competition for most sports. They garner significant global attention and as a result, so do the athletes who participate. There are new media through which local and global audiences can watch and interact with athletes. There is heightened attention to athletes’ behaviour on and off the field of play and increased scrutiny of that behaviour. With more attention being paid to athletes’ behaviour, the question, ‘what role do athletes have in society?’ is being asked more frequently. The roles of athletes go beyond competing as members of the Olympic Movement. Despite evidence of the IOC and other governing bodies becoming removed from their own original ideals, athletes are still expected to embody the values espoused by the Olympic Movement and sport. Discussions related to athletes and citizenhood are frequently centered around nation-state, identity, the athlete as a bio-citizen, and/ or athletes’ rights and responsibilities. The Olympic Movement is directly tied to, and built on traditional notions of citizenship. Athletes march behind, wear and wave their country’s flag. In recent Olympic Games, exceptions have been made in which athletes have changed their citizenship to gain entry to the Olympic Games or have competed under the Olympic flag.

2.3.1 Athletes and Nation-States: The ‘Olympic Citizen,’ Équipe Unifée and The Refugee Olympic Team (ROT)

Olympic athletes are uniquely positioned as representatives of their nation-states. The Olympic Charter stipulates that any competitor in the Olympic Games, must be a citizen of the NOC that enters them into the competition. The athletes are expected to embody the values that
their respective countries celebrate and identify with. An athlete’s success is celebrated. Athletes are elevated to the status of national hero and their victory contributes to sense of national pride (Shachar, 2011; Kostakopoulou & Schrauwen, 2014). Traditionally, the connection between athlete and nation-state has been strong. The emphasis on performance and desire for countries to portray power and global position through sport performance has led to the development of what Shachar (2011) calls, the ‘Olympic citizen.’ More frequently, countries are actively recruiting athletes to bolster standings and showcase dominance and power on the world stage. There is a natural migratory flow that includes athletes, but this trend focuses on the strategic pursuit, selection, and often remuneration of athletes who transition to represent an NOC of a country of which, they are not currently a citizen. These athletes are actively recruited and the process for granting citizenship is often expedited. Shacar (2011) argues that this presents a paradox: athletes are positioned as representatives of their nation-state bringing pride and enhancement of the nation’s reputation yet; these ‘Olympic citizens’ may have little connection with the country that they are representing. Their performance may enhance the nation’s standings in terms of medal count but how authentically can this athlete contribute to a collective sense of connection, identity, and loyalty. Traditional ideas of citizenship are connected to identity and territory but the fluidity with which some athletes identify with new nation-states brings with it a more flexible understanding of citizenship and belonging.

There are numerous reasons an athlete may adopt a new citizenship or pursue representing a different NOC including financial benefit, enhanced training, competition opportunity, enhanced living conditions and/or the opportunity to participate in the Olympic Games (Shacar, 2011). While athletes may have a strong desire to represent the country in which they live, if the opportunity to compete at the Olympic Games presents itself competing under a different national flag, athletes are confronted with a choice between their allegiance to their country and living their dream.

Within the Olympic Charter, legal status of a country is a pre-condition to participating in the Olympic Games. However, there have been exceptions to this rule. Notably, in both the Summer and Winter Olympic Games in 1992 Équipe Unifée, or the Commonwealth of
Independent States, competed as a team. This team consisted of athletes from the former Soviet Union, whose countries had not yet become affiliated with the IOC. As members of Équipe Unifée, athletes marched behind the Olympic Flag and the Olympic Hymn was played for champions (Carter, 2012). In 2016, the IOC made an exception to include the ‘Refugee Olympic Team’ (ROT) for the first time. This invites new meaning to the term, “Olympic Citizen.” The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) defines a refugee as someone who has been driven to flee their home or community because of violence or persecution and states that currently, there are record breaking populations of forcibly displaced people (UNHCR, 2016). The goal of introducing the Refugee Olympic Team was: (1) to bring awareness to the growing refugee crisis, (2) to provide the refugees with sufficient skill the opportunity to compete at the Olympic Games despite them not having citizenship or an NOC to represent, and (3) to provide a symbol of hope to refugees worldwide (IOC, 2016b). Ten athletes were invited to march behind the Olympic flag at the Rio 2016 Olympic Games. The athletes enjoyed the same rights and status as any other Olympic athlete representing an NOC (Nesson & Stoloff, 2017). The IOC described their decision as a means to offer an ‘Olympic family’ and build a temporary ‘home’ for the Refugee Olympic Team athletes within the Olympic Village among fellow athletes (IOC, 2016a). The introduction of the Refugee Olympic Team challenges the tradition that the Olympic Games are built on nationalistic pride and, instead, places the emphasis on humanity and inclusion.

The notion of the ‘Olympic Citizen’ and the emergence of the Refugee Olympic Team highlight what Nesson et. al (2017) call the dichotomous experience taking place currently between globalization, nomadic humanity, and the decreased emphasis on national boundaries. Simultaneously there is an emphasis on nationalism and nativist policies. They further challenge the current understanding of community membership and the privileged status of birthright by de-emphasizing the importance of nationalistic citizenship. This debate leads to the idea of an athlete citizenry, diverse in its make-up and connected by the pursuit of sport regardless of their nation or community of origin.
2.3.2 Athletes as a Bio-Citizen

Sport is an arena in which bodies are surveyed and analyzed. Henne’s (2015) description of the athlete as a bio-citizen is predicated on the fact that athletes are subjected to scientific testing and biomedical surveillance. Athletes work to enhance their physical skill and it is that physical skill that permits them entrance to the field of play at national and international levels. Through the athletic process, athletes are expected to maintain bodily purity and are subjected to bodily scrutiny, testing, and binding regulatory codes (Henne, 2015). Countries race, literally and metaphorically, to be at the forefront of sporting performance to demonstrate power and prominence. The motto of the Olympic Games “Citius – Altius – Fortius,” (Olympic Charter, 2016, p. 25), translated to English as ‘higher, faster, stronger,’ is encouraging athletes to push the limits of physicality to appease the demand for spectacle. The success of the Olympic Games is its focus on human achievement. To succeed, there has been more scientific and medical intervention. Athletes representing their countries have held status as symbolic leaders and heroes who are perceived to possess certain traits and ideals. As a movement founded on moral education, the Olympic Movement creates what Blackburn (2001) calls a moral and ethical environment influencing how people live. It also influences perceptions of behaviour, what is perceived as acceptable, laudable or disgraceful behaviour. Sport governing bodies have policies that comply with ideologies of fair play and equality. As a result, doping has tended to be antithetical to the values that the Olympic Movement champions. The ethical and moral standards of the Olympic Movement have led to the emergence of the anti-doping organizations aimed at regulating participants, ensuring they conform to the ideals of what an athlete ‘should’ be. Henne (2015) argues that elite athletes hold a privileged status and are rewarded based on performance and they help define the limits of human capability. The bodies of athletes who have doped are a violation of the terms of fair play; they have not earned the status of elite athlete. As a result, these athletes are not entitled to the benefits afforded elite athletes. Doped athletes are labelled ‘unclean’ and contradict the narratives attributed to elite performance about hard work and discipline. Sport governing bodies subject athletes to bio-medicalized forms of surveillance to delineate between those who qualify and those who do not qualify as Olympic athletes (Henne, 2015).
Henne (2015) uses the term *athlete citizen* to

*distinguish how high-level sports competitors constitute a transnational caste of subjects whose bodies are subject to distinct regulatory technologies. Such technologies serve to determine who is and who is not allowed to become and remain an elite athlete.* (p. 6)

This definition offers a starting point from which broader notions of athlete citizenship can be defined. The common tenet allowing athletes membership to this community is based on athletic skill and compliance with the policies enforced by the World-Anti-Doping Agency (WADA). The rights and responsibilities outlined (compliance with anti-doping codes and testing policies) are centered on an environment of ethical behaviour focused on competition, winning and clean sport. While this work underpins certain components of the athlete citizen, it is too narrowly focused on bio-citizenship. To establish a more comprehensive definition of the *athlete citizenry*, it is necessary to broaden the scope to include other facets of international sport and how they correspond with the necessary elements of citizenship.

The current technological, social, and political constructs have required an evolution in the understanding of citizenship beyond legal status and geographical boundaries. Broadening the understanding of citizenship accommodates for sub-national and transnational communities based on shared values, ideas, and sense of belonging, inviting us to consider the Olympic Movement and its athletes. Within the Olympic Movement, athletes represent nation-states of which they are citizens. Olympic citizens are established by the movement of athletes between countries in pursuit of their Olympic dream and/or the active recruitment of top athletes by countries, creating a fluid state of citizenship within the Olympic Movement (Shacar, 2011). There are athletes who have competed, and will compete, under the Olympic flag for various reasons, as a neutral entity challenging the policy that athletes must be representatives of a nation-state. The IOC speaks about the Athlete Village as a community of athletes coming
together as one inviting us to consider the *athlete citizenry* within broader citizenship models. In scholarly work, the discussion of athlete citizens is confined to the athlete as a bio-citizen, contingent upon medicalized standards of belonging (Henne, 2015). My objective is to expand Henne’s (2015) definition of the ‘athlete citizen’ to account for governance structures, boundary work, rights, and responsibilities that create the athlete community, providing a definition of *athlete citizenry*. Once a definition for *athlete citizenry* has been established, the experiences of Canadian Olympic Athletes and Organizational key informants will provide context for athletes’ rights, roles and responsibilities within the Canadian high-performance context.
Chapter 3  
Methodological Framework, Theoretical Lens and Methods

3.1 Research Outline

The broad purpose of this research is to explore what it means to be a citizen of the Olympic athlete community from a physical cultural perspective. Specifically, this research seeks to explore the range of meanings attributed to sport and the Olympic Movement by high-performance athletes and officials in Canada in order to question how understandings of athlete citizenship are socially and historically produced or reproduced. This study uses qualitative methods to understand meaning attributed to sport and the Olympic Movement within Canada that is socially and historically reproduced and negotiated; to more broadly define the athlete citizenry; and to provide insight on athletes’ engagement in social initiatives from athlete and organizational perspectives. Accounts from Canadian Olympic Athletes and members of organizations with which they engage in social initiatives are described and interpreted using an interpretive phenomenological approach (IPA).

Athlete citizenhood is examined at two levels: (1) institutionalized meanings related to rights, roles, and responsibilities of athletes within the current high-performance system; and (2) the range of meanings of athlete citizenship negotiated by athletes as they engage in social initiatives within and around sport. Document analysis and interviews with key informants in sporting organizations have been deployed to get at institutional meanings. Analysis of key documents (listed below) contributes to the development of a typology of approaches to athlete citizenry. The development of an athlete citizenry framework provides a base to explore Canadian athletes’ lived experiences through in-depth, semi-structured interviews. Interviews with nine (9) Canadian Olympic Athletes and seven (7) key informants from sport governing bodies, non-profit organizations or corporations that work with athletes, have been conducted to
uncover how and why athletes, sport organizations, non-profits and corporations engage in social initiatives within sport and outside of sport.

This chapter describes how IPA has been used to describe and interpret athletes experience of engagement in social initiatives from an athlete and organizational perspective. It will also explain how Bourdieu’s framework of capital has been used a lens to understand why organizations engage athletes in social initiatives. Next, this chapter describes the methods of in document analysis, recruitment of participants, semi-structured in-depth interviews, and analysis. Lastly, this chapter describes my positionality and reflexivity as a member of the Olympic athlete community, and how this status has granted access and knowledge that shapes the research process.

3.2 Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

Canadian Olympic athletes are exposed to a broad range of pressures, sport and otherwise. During and after their career, some athletes engage in social initiatives through advocacy efforts or working with causes to contribute to positive social change. This research qualitatively explores and works to understand the notion of athlete citizenry, gaining insight on athletes’ rights, roles, and responsibilities. It explores athletes’ engagement in social initiatives from both athletes’ and organizational/ institutional perspectives providing descriptions of the experiences and interpretations of the subjects’ experiences. As such, this research has been conducted with an IPA. IPA seeks to answer questions regarding the meaning of being, and that humans are capable of finding meaning in their lives within the cultural, social and historical frameworks in which they live (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007).
Heidegger makes the human individual a part of reality, rather than an ego dualistically separated from the world, thereby reconciling relativism and realism (or objectivism). (Rennie, 1999, as cited in Larken, Watts & Clifton, 2006)

The interpretive phenomenological view posits that reality is not a concrete structure; instead, realities are based on individual life-worlds, shaped by personal history, broader sociocultural influences and interpretations of those experiences (Donnelly, 2000). Husserl (1980) states that, rather than having automatic reactions to stimuli, living subjects respond to external stimuli based on their perceived meaning. Thus an individual’s interpretation or perception of an experience is critical in developing a broader understanding of the phenomenon (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). Phenomenological research aims to explore the lived experiences of subjects, working to discover and understand the human experience (Creswell, 2013; Laverty, 2003; Smith & Osborn, 2007; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). IPA provides a variation on Husserl’s phenomenology, recognizing that individuals experience a world in relation to sociocultural constructs, framing their perceptions and understanding (Finlay & Ballinger, 2006). Laverty (2003) describes the unity that exists between a person and the world, “meaning is found as we are constructed by the world, while at the same time, we are constructing the world from our own background and experiences,” (p.8). Thus, in this research, it is crucial to build an understanding of the sociocultural context in which Olympic athletes live, influenced by current high-performance structures, cultures of their teams and their views on the values of sport and Olympism.

Hermeneutic approaches view the knower and the known as fundamentally interrelated, and thus assume that any interpretation necessarily involves an essential circularity of understanding a hermeneutic circle in which the interpreter’s perspective and understanding initially shapes his [sic] interpretation of a given phenomenon, and yet that interpretation, as it inter-acts with the phenomenon in question, is open to revision and elaboration, as the perspective and understanding of the interpreter, including his biases and blind spots, are revealed and evaluated. (Tappan, 1997: 651).
Hermeneutic approaches have descriptive and interpretive elements with the aim of interpreting human activity to seek intended or expressed meanings (Laverty, 2003). IPA is related to hermeneutics and requires a closeness between researcher and the researched to gain an ‘insider’s perspective;’ however, the researcher is not able to wholly place themselves within the subject’s life-world. Interpretive phenomenology presupposes a two-stage interpretive process or double-hermeneutic in which the researcher aims to both understand and interpret the subject’s explanation of their experience (Pringle, Hendry & McLafferty, 2011; Smith & Westerbeek, 2007; Larkin et al., 2006). Here, understanding requires the researcher to identify or empathize with the subject while trying to make sense of the experiences that they share. The researcher is an inclusive component of the world or experience that they are describing (Larkin et al., 2006).

As Smith and Osborn (2003) describe, IPA is rooted in the belief that there is a connection between a person’s thinking, feeling, emotional state, and language. Understanding and meaning may be drawn by considering the interaction holistically, looking past the spoken work to account for all aspects of the subject’s being.

IPA has been selected for this to explore, and gain, a holistic understanding of athletes’ engagement in social initiatives, from both the perspective of athletes and from an organizational/institutional perspective. Each athlete’s experience and each relationship built between an athlete and organization is unique and highly individual. This research provides in-depth accounts that contribute to an understanding of athletes’ engagement in social initiatives. As Pringle et al. (2011) and Creswell (2013) state, broad generalizations are not the objective, nor are they feasible through this form of academic work. Commonalities among the athlete experience may provide insights with broader implications for future athletes navigating the territory of athlete citizenship.
3.3 Bourdieu’s Framework of Capital

“Olympism became the endemic principle by which physical, social, symbolic, cultural, economic and academic capital (Bourdieu, 1986) was traded within the field of the Olympic Games,” (Young & Wamsley, 2005, p. 283)

The symbolic meaning of the Olympic Movement, demonstration of athletic skill at the Olympic Games, ties to nationhood, cultural significance, and the values attributed to sport provide athletes with the opportunity to build value and power. This study applies Bourdieu’s framework of capital as a lens to better understand why organizations engage athletes to work towards their social objectives and social change.

Bourdieu posits that the meaning bestowed on sport is influenced by class habitus; participation in sport and the form of sport chosen by a particular individual or group is influenced by social class (Lawrence, 2017). Sugden and Tomlinson (2000) argue that, within Bourdieu’s framework, the participation in sport is informed and influenced by access to financial resources; social status of those participating; cultural meanings of a sport and one’s relationship to those meanings (p. 318). Sport is positioned as a potential means of escape and mobility for skilled sports performers. Thus, sport and the Olympic Games are intrinsically tied to the production and reproduction of social structures (Sugden & Tomlinson, 2000). In looking at social structures and relations of power, Bourdieu suggests that status ascribed to an individual is dependent on resources, or capital which he defines as:

\[ \text{\ldots accumulated labor (in its materialized form or its \textquote{incorporated,} embodied form) which, when appropriated on a private, i.e., exclusive, basis by agents or groups of agents, enables them to appropriate social energy in the form of reified or living labor. It is a vis insita, a force inscribed in objective or subjective structures, but it is also a lex} \]
insita, the principle underlying the immanent regularities of the social world. It is what makes the games of society – not least, the economic game – something other than simple games of change offering at every moment the possibility of miracle. (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 81)

In referencing stakes in a social field, Bourdieu suggests that ‘capital’ is used to describe one’s position in a social field and expands beyond traditional notions of economic resources. Bourdieu’s framework of capital encompasses three other forms of capital: social capital, cultural capital, and symbolic. Social capital is the kinds of valued relations or social network. Cultural capital is the knowledge one has. Symbolic capital is the prestige or social honour bestowed on an individual (Jenkins, 1992). Through Bourdieu’s framework of capital, it is possible to gain an understanding of Olympic athletes’ value and power and thus, a valuable lens through which to understand why organizations engage athletes in social initiatives.

3.4 Methods: Document Analysis and Semi-Structured Interviews

Cultural studies focus on the systematic analysis of cultural practices, experiences, and institutions (Hargreaves & McDonald, 2000). Two methods of data collection have been used to understand athlete citizenship in the Canadian high-performance context and athlete engagement in social initiatives. The two forms used include document analysis and semi-structured interviews with sixteen (16) participants. Document analysis is defined by Bowen (2009) as the systematic procedures to review and evaluate documents requiring the data to be both examined and interpreted to establish meaning, understanding and produce empirical knowledge (p. 28). Downe-Wambolt, suggests that
content analysis [...] is concerned with meanings, intentions, consequences, and context. To describe the occurrences of words, phrases, or sentences without consideration of the contextual environment of the data is inappropriate and inadequate. The analyst must be cognizant of the context or environment that produced the environment, (1992, p. 315).

A systematic review of key documentation has been conducted to provide historical, sociocultural, political and economic information on Canadian high-performance sport. Key documents, listed below, have been identified to provide an understanding of the institutional and social constructs of sport and how they influence policy, practice, and experiences of athletes. Document content analysis has been used to augment interviews to inform the context within which the participants live, and the studied phenomena occur (Bowen, 2009). The information and content derived from primary documents has been coded, identifying governance structures, boundary work, rights, rules, regulations, and responsibilities, to uncover a range of definitions of citizenship. This review also provides insights into the conditions and structures that influence Olympic athletes. The following primary documents included in this research are:

- Olympic Charter (2016)
- Consolidated Minimum Requirements for the Implementation of the Basic Principles of Good Governance for NOCs (2016)
- Review of Sport Canada’s Targeted Excellence Approach (Gilroy Goss Inc., 2017)
- The Future of Athlete Agreements in Canada (AthletesCAN, 2015)
- Rights and responsibilities: Dispute prevention and resolution for Canadian athletes (CRDSC-SDRCC, 2011)
- Conditions of Participation- National Olympic Committee (2016)
The contents of the primary documents have been organized into themes to contextualize data collected in key informant interviews. Information was organized into the following themes: cultural and social constructs of sport; policies, procedures, rules and regulations; rights and responsibilities, and governing structures. A broadened definition of athlete citizenry and model of athlete citizenship, I propose, has emerged.

In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 16 individuals to gain deeper knowledge about the experiences and forms of citizenry held by Canadian Olympic Athletes during advocacy efforts and engagement in social initiatives. Athletes were recruited through direct personal e-mails based on pre-existing knowledge of the athletes’ engagement in sport social initiatives. Through the process, athletes were asked to make recommendations of other athletes that they knew who had experience in various sport social initiatives and may be willing to participate in the research. Athlete participants were asked to recommend representative(s) from non-profit organizations, corporations of sport governing bodies that they worked with (or against) to advance a social initiative to provide organizational perspectives. Anonymity has been maintained to protect the identity of participants. Only generalized background demographic detail is provided to situate the athletes and organizational members.

Table 1: Participant demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Athlete A:</td>
<td>A female team winter sport athlete. A member of national and international sport governing bodies. Ambassador for corporate and non-profit initiatives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athlete B:</td>
<td>A female individual winter sport athlete and a member of international sport governing body. Ambassador for non-profit initiatives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athlete C:</td>
<td>A female individual event athlete who has participated in both Winter and Summer sports. Ambassador for corporate and non-profit initiatives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athlete D:</td>
<td>A male individual summer sport athlete. Ambassador for corporate and non-profit initiatives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athlete E:</td>
<td>A male, individual, summer sport athlete. Former member of national sport governing body.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athlete F:</td>
<td>A female, individual, winter sport athlete. Employee of Canadian non-profit organization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athlete G:</td>
<td>A female, team, winter sport athlete. Ambassador for non-profit organization and former member of national sport governing body.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athlete H:</td>
<td>A female, individual, winter sport athlete. Ambassador for non-profit organization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athlete I:</td>
<td>A male, individual, summer sport athlete. Former member of international sport governing body. Member of national sport governing body. Ambassador for non-profit organizations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Informant A:</td>
<td>A male employee of a national sport governing body.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Informant B:</td>
<td>A female, former employee of an international non-profit organization with experience in Canadian non-profit sector and national sport governing bodies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Informant C:</td>
<td>A male member of an international sport governing body.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Informant D:</td>
<td>A male employee of an International non-profit organization and former Olympic athlete.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Informant E:</td>
<td>A female employee of a Canadian corporation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Informant F:</td>
<td>A female employee of a Canadian non-profit organization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Informant G:</td>
<td>A male, former employee of an international non-profit organization. A former Olympic Athlete.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Nine Canadian Olympic athletes were recruited to participate in this research. As a high-performance athlete, and through attending multi-sport competitions, I have made contact with a broad range of individuals and groups who are involved with sport social initiatives. Knowledge and access to these individuals and organizations from my networks offered the launching point for the recruitment of participants. Eight of the nine Olympic athlete participants are acquaintances and were recruited directly based on pre-existing knowledge of their engagement in social initiatives. One athlete was introduced to me by another athlete participant. While I had previously met and interacted with eight of the athletes, none of the participants are previous teammates in the same event or my direct competitors. The population of athletes in this study have all competed in one or more Olympic Games. All have won one or multiple medals at an Olympic Games. Included in this research are a combination of summer and winter athletes, individual and team sports, and both active and retired athletes (however, as this study concludes, all athlete participants have retired from their athletic careers). The study includes six female and three male athletes. All athletes acknowledge experience in advocacy efforts. All athletes have also had experience engaging in social initiatives in collaboration with corporations, non-profit organizations or both. One athlete has founded a non-profit organization providing insight into both the athlete and organization’s perspective.

There are seven participants who provided insight from an organizational or institutional perspective. These ‘organizational’ subjects included individuals with knowledge of non-profit and corporate engagement, as well as athlete advocacy. Three participants are from non-profit organizations. One participant works for a corporate based social initiative. Three participants are members of sport governing bodies (one of whom had previous experience in the non-profit sector). During the athlete recruitment and interview process, the athlete participants were asked to identify an individual from an organization they engaged with when working in social initiatives to provide the organization’s perspective. Three participants were recruited in this research by athlete participants. Three subjects were contacted directly due to previous knowledge of their engagement with athletes. The seventh participant was recruited by a member of my supervisory committee. For this, I am very grateful.
Each subject participated in one, one-on-one, semi-structured interview lasting between 60 and 90 minutes. Interviews were conducted in locations selected by interviewees including their homes, offices, or training locations. Interview guides were created, tailored to each subject with broad, open-ended questions; however, semi-structured interviews allowed for conversational flow and the ability for other topics to emerge (Thorpe, 2012). While each interview differed, there was a focus on areas of interest seeking to understand: (1) how athletes’ identities and roles are constructed through their engagement in social initiatives, (2) how athletes and different entities work towards positive social change, and (3) the motivations for engagement. For athlete participants, accounts of the athletes’ lived-experiences and information about the motivation for engagement and relational dynamics between athletes and organizations or sport governing bodies have been gathered. Interviews with members of organizations, corporations or sport governing bodies were used to gain insight on their reasons for engaging with athletes, the values, practices, interactions and relational dynamic from the organizational perspective.

The interviews have been digitally recorded and transcribed by the researcher, enabling the opportunity to review the conversations through multiple mediums to provide familiarity. IPA places the researcher as an inclusive piece of the world they are seeking to understand, and thus the

emergent ‘reality’ (ie, the resultant explanation and/or understanding of the nature of the subject-matter) can thus be seen to be dependent upon the processes of intellectual construction that shaped the ’structure of the encounter. (Larkin et al., 2006, p. 107).

Through the process of analysis, understanding the complexities of each lived experience has been a primary goal (Smith et al., 2007). To do this, informed by Wojnar and Swanson (2007), I have read through the interview transcripts and listened to the interviews to become familiar with the content. The content has then been organized into sub-topics:
• Forms of engagement (corporate, non-profit, activism and advocacy);
• Towards an understanding how athletes engage in social initiatives (the process, relational dynamics and necessary factors, from both an athlete and organizational perspective);
• Towards an understanding of action (organizational and athlete perspectives).

Significant phrases and segments were identified that are meaningful in providing an understanding of the current high-performance sports context, athlete citizenship, or about how and/or why athletes and organizations/corporations work towards positive social impacts. The interpretation of data is important to make sense of the data, “abstracting beyond the codes and themes to the larger meaning of the data,” (Creswell, 2013, p. 187). It is possible to reflect and gain an understanding of roles, rights, and responsibilities of athletes by identifying themes that emerge, supported by the data. The themes that emerged in each category of information varied. For example, themes that emerged when working towards understanding how athletes engaged in social initiatives include authenticity/sincerity, credibility, and the process of identifying opportunity. The themes that emerged when working towards an understanding of action were dependent on the perspective. From an organizational perspective, the ideas of capital and value were significant. From the athletes’ perspective, the motivation for action emerges from a feeling of necessity and sense of responsibility or desire.

3.5 Reflexivity and Positionality


The motivation for this research stems from my passion for the Olympic Movement and high-performance sport. It also stems from my respect for athletes’ pursuit of excellence and focus on social engagement. I want to understand the desire and motivation that compels athletes to act.
The Olympic Games are the peak sporting event for many sports, and many athletes strive to earn the opportunity to represent Canada on the Olympic stage. The Olympic Movement celebrates the idea of placing sport at the service of humanity; however, the legitimacy of the Olympic Movement is brought into question when the actions of those within the Olympic Movement are inconsistent with the values espoused by the Movement. Pierre de Coubertin writes about the ‘self-actualizing athlete,’ those who embody the virtues of self-awareness, discipline, and courage, continuously striving to be better. The process of mediatisation and the social valour that accompanies victory places emphasis on corporeal performance. The current context of high-performance sport places increasing demands on athletes; yet some Canadian athletes dedicate time, energy and attention towards advancing social initiatives.

Through the interview process, athletes have shared their experiences and motivations of engagement in athlete advocacy efforts and engagement in social causes. The members of non-profit organizations, corporations, and sport governing bodies have provided their perspectives about athlete engagement and positive social impact. This research is designed to gain knowledge about these experiences and to provide valuable insights about why and how athletes partake in advocacy efforts and work with organizations to contribute to a cause. To answer these questions, I have been able to use my ‘insider’ experience as an Olympic athlete who has personally dabbled in various forms of social engagement to inform the development of interview guides and the process of analysis and interpretation of the data. As such, it is important to provide a brief history of my personal experiences.

My childhood fascination with the Olympic Games has influenced my life athletically and academically. Watching the Olympic Games sparked a dream that I followed around the world, competing for the Canadian Senior Trampoline team for twelve years. To date, I have competed in eight World Championships, three Pan Am Games and three Olympic Games. Through my athletic career, I have become more informed and educated about the systems and structures in place that influence my sporting experience. As an athlete representative for trampoline within Gymnastics Canada and as a member of the Canadian Olympic Committee’s Athlete Commission, I have learned the importance of empowering athletes in the sport system and
ensuring the protection of their rights. I have also been introduced to many different opportunities to engage with organizations and companies— at times so many that it was overwhelming. With time, guidance, and self-reflection, I was able to identify the initiatives that were meaningful to me; those that use the power for sport for education (Right To Play), those addressing children’s participation in sport (Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities) and those addressing brain health (Women’s Brain Health Initiative and Rowan’s Law).

My athletic and academic formation and engagement in social initiatives has led me to evolve as an athlete and a person. My position within this community has provided means of access, first to meet with the subjects and then to establish a rapport during the interview process. While it is impossible to bracket my personal experiences, particularly as my interest in this subject matter stemmed from my own exploration and curiosity of this space; considerable effort has made during each conversation to keep an open mind, and to look carefully at the data for the stories provided by the participants. As an athlete in the Olympic community, I am excited about contributing a definition of *athlete citizenry*, providing a more complete understanding of what it means to be an athlete in the Olympic community, and empowering athletes in Canada through the knowledge gleaned from this research.
Chapter 4
Defining the Athlete Citizenry

Citizenship is about what connects a group of beings to build solidarity and a sense of reciprocal responsibility. To gain entrance, one must comply with a set of norms or attain a status. In traditional notions of citizenship, this could be the granted legal status. For Olympic athletes, the mechanisms establishing status are based on physical performance and compliance with the codes that govern them. Beyond objective qualification, athletes must have a subjective sense of belonging to this group. To feel connected, athletes must self-identify and accept the meanings, norms, and values that comprise the group. The status achieved through being an elite athlete is defined within a system of broader sociocultural norms. Athletes of this caliber garner attention and are subjected to attention and evaluation regarding their integrity. Those who attain status as an elite athlete are afforded rights and freedoms codified in the Olympic Charter and by other governing bodies. These governing bodies work to protect the rights of athletes while also holding athletes accountable. Attaining status grants the privilege of participating in sport as an athlete, but this status as an athlete can also carry over to other, non-sport work with the symbolic capital that being an elite athlete affords. In this section, I provide a definition of athlete citizenry and demonstrate how elite athletes comprise a discernible transnational community.

I offer the following definition of athlete citizenry:

*A transnational group of individuals who possess a sense of belonging to, and abide by the standards and principles of, a high-performance sporting community, involving specific status, roles, rights, and responsibilities, and granting participation in sport and beyond sport as a sports person.*
Contemporary understanding of citizenship, within current sociopolitical and cultural contexts, is no longer limited to a legal status of a nation-state. Citizenship requires loyalty to a community based on commonality. The necessary components of citizenship are governance, boundary work, rights and freedoms, and responsibilities. To further understand the athlete citizenry, it is prudent to define the tenets of citizenship within the context of high-performance sport.

Table 2: Athlete citizenship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Governance in sport</th>
<th>The systems and structures in place that oversee rules and regulation, engagement, accountability, mechanisms for inclusion or exclusion, and provision of services overseen by governing bodies. (Adapted from Geeraert, Alm &amp; Groll, 2014; Donnelly, 2015)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boundary Work:</td>
<td>Mechanisms and standards used to delineate members versus non-members. In sport, these include sport-specific qualification standards and compliance with the rules of sport.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rights:</td>
<td>“The benefits and protections that legislators and courts have recognized as belonging to individuals who are members of athletic organizations and recipients of government sport services,” (Kidd &amp; Eberts, 1982, p. 17), and athlete development programs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibilities:</td>
<td>The duties members must perform to maintain membership. Formal responsibilities include abiding by laws, rules, and regulations that govern sport; training and competitive duties, compliance with moral and ethical practices of sport, and upholding broader notions of Olympism including friendship, respect and unity.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.1 Governance

Governance refers to the institutions or entities that oversee citizenship including the systems and structures put in place to preside over a population. These entities can empower its members by recognizing and legitimating their rights while providing services entitled to citizens. Governance is centered around the establishment of relationships and leads through policy and legal framework ensuring citizen engagement and accountability. The structure of institutions and choices made within the governance networks affect daily life and all aspects of citizenship.
while also ensuring citizens adhere to societal norms and perform required duties (Roche, 1987; Jenson et al. 2001; Horne et al., 2013). Bodies of governance are also the location or mechanism of boundary work, and maintaining and managing citizens. The relationship between governance and citizens is one of reciprocity (Guschwan, 2014). It requires collaboration and adherence to the statutes governing them to ensure maximal benefit.

Sport governing bodies and sport as an institution influence, and are influenced by, broader socio-political and cultural environments. Governing bodies lead by creating policies, rules, and regulations that work to manage and organize the members of sporting society. While largely autonomous, sport governing bodies operate within broader legislative frameworks (Carter, 2013). The structures put in place delineate eligible from non-eligible athletes based on performance criteria and compliance with rules and regulations. Governing structures also manage the provision of resources and services available to members. Beyond entities within the sport institution, there are numerous other stakeholders that athletes are governed by not listed below, including media, sport partners and individual partners. Each of these may outline additional parameters for participation and support.

Table 3: International, national and provincial/regional sport governing bodies for Olympic sport in Canada

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jurisdiction</th>
<th>Governing Body</th>
<th>Governance Structures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>International</td>
<td>International Olympic Committee (IOC)</td>
<td>- Olympic Charter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Olympic Games.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>International Sport Federations (IFs)</td>
<td>- Sport Federations recognized by the IOC as administering their sport at the global level.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Responsibilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA)                   | -  Responsible for integrity of sport(s) they preside over.  
-  Sport specific regulations.  
-  Sport specific qualification standards.     |
| Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS)             | -  Implementation and WADA Code (WADC).  
-  Serves to promote, coordinate and monitor anti-doping initiatives.                                      |
| Federal Government (Sport Canada)                | -  Policies to enhance participation and performance in sport.  
-  Athlete Assistance Program (AAP).  
-  Long Term Athlete Development Model (LTAD).  
-  Own The Podium (OTP).  
-  Provide funding to multiple entities to coordinate the delivery or sport services.                          |
| Canadian Olympic Committee (COC)                 | -  Constituent of IOC.  
-  Organize Canada’s participation in the Olympic Games.  
-  Oversees Olympic Movement in Canada.  
-  Promote development of athletes, coaches and sport officials.                                               |
| National Sport Federations (NSF)                 | -  Constituent of IF.  
-  Sport federation recognized by the COC responsible for the organization of their sport(s) in Canada in accordance with applicable IF rules.                |
| Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport (CCES)       | -  Serves to promote, coordinate and monitor drug-free sport, equity, fair play, safety and non-violence.                                                                                                   |
| Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada (SDRCC)| -  Provision of national sport dispute resolution service.                                                                                                                                                        |
| Provincial Government                            | -  Policies to enhance participation and performance in sport provincially.                                                                                                                                   |
Provincial/Regional | Canadian Olympic and Paralympic Sport Institute Network (COPSI) | - Provision of sport, science, life and health services to athletes.
Provincial Sport Organizations (PSO) | - Entities recognized by provincial government and NSFs working to create sporting opportunities within province.

Sport is predominantly an autonomous, self-governing institution (Donnelly, 2015). Sport has long held a prominent position in national and global society because of its mythopoeic nature and status as a cultural industry. As Butterworth (2014) describes, the mythopoeic rhetoric of sport stems from ancient Greece and the development of an athletic metaphor founded in agonism (Coalter, 2010; Parry, 2007). The modern Olympic Games work to captivate the value-rich rhetoric as an institutionalized cultural celebration attracting significant global media attention. In recent years, there has been an emerging demand for good governance and responsible autonomy.

In sport, numerous highly visible scandals and examples of poor conduct -- including the 2002 Salt Lake City Olympic Winter Games bid scandal, FIFA corruption scandals and most recently, the Russian doping scandal spanning 2015 to present day-- have severely tarnished the reputation of the IOC and other sport governing bodies. The IOC and the Olympic Movement preach high standards of ethical and moral conduct; social responsibility is a central tenant of Olympic ideals. Because of these scandals and others, it is critical to question the segregated and commercialized position of the sport industry. A study conducted by Geeraert, Alm, and Groll (2014), found that the significant gaps in governance within many sport governing bodies entail accountability, a lack of independent ethics committees, a lack of executive term limits and minimal inclusion of athletes in decision-making processes. In many cases, sport governing bodies do not have sufficient means of monitoring and evaluating performance compared to objectives and distribution of funds. Fundamental governance issues within the IOC were identified to be the lack of equitable representation and democratisation, corruption, and limited transparency and lack of accountability (Donnelly, 2015).
Good governance includes higher standards of accountability, transparency, effectiveness, management, and democratic representation (Donnelly, 2015). Good governance is critical in the functioning of any entity regarding their ability to achieve objectives, protect their people and foster social cohesion, and the enhancement of credibility (Geeraert, Alm, & Groll, 2014). Sport’s status as inspirational and as a meaningful tool to emblemize sociocultural values is undermined by the failures of sport governing bodies. Sport and the Olympic Movement are often criticized for the disparity between what is practiced and what is preached, or what Kidd (2010) calls the ‘say do gap.’ The 2000 Olympic Reform called on its members for higher standards of individual conduct to reflect practices of good governance. The Olympic Movement is a powerful moral authority, and as such, its governance has implications on larger social spheres than just sport. In 2008, the IOC congress approved a document, *The Basic Universal Principles of Good Governance of the Olympics and Sports Movement*. In a speech made during the Opening Ceremony of the 2009 Congress in Copenhagen, then president Jacques Rogge stated

*we cannot expect others to adhere to high ethical standards if we do not do so ourselves.*
*We cannot expect proper conduct on the field of play if we do not have good governance within the Olympic Family.* (IOC, 2009b)

The current IOC president, Thomas Bach, goes on to state that the Olympic Movement should ensure that ethical principles and good governance are practiced and respected at all levels of sport organisations. The document outlines numerous areas of focus including transparency, accountability, and responsibility, providing a document with minimum requirements for the implementation of good governance for its constituents, though questions of adherence remain (Bayle, 2016). The creation and implementation of good governance documents is critical. It is also necessary to have autonomous entities that can monitor, evaluate and hold governing bodies accountable to the minimal standards of governance they have outlined for themselves.
Adherence to the principles of good governance is an ongoing struggle both internationally and nationally.

Globally and nationally, there has been a heightened focus on accountability and an increased desire for stakeholder representation (Thibault et al., 2010). The IOC and Canadian sport governing bodies repeatedly state that athletes are the ‘heart’ of the Movement and thus, are the centre of all decisions made. Athletes have taken on roles in governance on Athlete Commissions at the IOC and COC, and through athlete representation positions within International Federations (IFs) and National Sport Federation (NSF). Elected representatives and appointees are positioned as representatives of the athlete community, working to ensure that the views and perspectives of athletes are considered when making decisions that directly impact them. Power structures within sport governing bodies and cultures of dominance do not always allow for athletes to be fully empowered within their roles.

Research has found that Canada’s sport system, the COC and NSFs have worked towards becoming more inclusive and ensuring that athletes are participating in organizational policy and decision-making processes (Thibault et al., 2010). In Canada, the COC Athlete Commission is a group of athletes elected by their peers. The members of the COC Athlete Commission work to, “contribute to the achievement, and the development of philosophies, policies, and strategic plans of the COC,” (COC, 2012, p. 1). The COC Athlete Commission’s Terms of Reference also include that, among COC Athlete Commission responsibilities is the responsibility to “pursue the development and maintenance of systems which will define and secure Athletes’ rights,” (COC, 2012, p. 1). The establishment of Athlete Commissions and athlete representation have been critical for enhancing democratization of sport organizations and the empowerment of athletes. The inclusion of athletes enhances the credibility and legitimacy of sport governing bodies. Athletes are in a vulnerable position relative to the governing bodies (Donnelly, 2015; Beamish & Borowy, 1988). The effectiveness of athlete commissions is jeopardized if athletes are subjected to power imbalance between the governing entities and the athletes within the Olympic Movement. The power imbalances, short life-span of athletes and fear of reprisal work to oppose athletes speaking out, acting to place a chill on this population, in favour of focusing
on training and performance (Kidd, 2010; Koss, 2011). To ensure the effectiveness of sport governing bodies, it is necessary to emplace good governance structures that seek transparency, accountability, fiduciary responsibility and include athletes. To empower athletes, it is necessary to ensure that they are informed, supported and heard. Athletes’ voices are a critical component of good governance in the sport industry.

4.2 Boundary Work

Sport governing bodies work to delineate those who have earned status and those who have not and thus, those who belong and those who do not (Carter, 2012). In sport, the boundaries for inclusion involve physical performance within defined parameters. To achieve elite athlete status, athletes must achieve specific qualification standards, defined by the sport governing bodies, while adhering to the rules and regulations set forth by the Olympic Charter, the World Anti-Doping Code, and International Federations.

When trying to delineate between high-performance athletes and other athletes, Beamish (2013) offers a definition:

*High-Performance Sport encompasses athletes who achieve, or, who aspire to achieve, or, who have been identified as having the potential to achieve excellence in World Class competition. The High-Performance Sport System is comprised of those activities, programs, agencies, institutions and personnel who have, as one of their primary objectives, the preparation of athletes who have achieved, or, who aspire to achieve, or who have been identified as having the potential to achieve excellence in World Class competition.* (Beamish 2013, p. 1)
He then states that to “achieve excellence” is to earn medals at international sporting events including World Championships, Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Athletes must continuously reach new levels of performance to earn the status of elite athlete. Athletes must attain sport specific requirements and standards to gain membership on a team. Athletes must demonstrate that they are on the ‘podium pathway’ or comply with (or show the potential to attain) a ‘gold medal profile,’ to receive financial support through Sport Canada (Sport Canada, 2016). The IOC and IFs set the minimal requirements to compete at the Olympic Games. Some Canadian NSFs set more stringent standards that Canadian athletes in that sport must meet to compete at the Olympic Games to ensure a higher level of performance and increase the likelihood of higher ranks. Once status has been earned, athletes must maintain their status by continuing to achieve the standards and comply with the rules and regulations that govern their sport.

Governing bodies set parameters and oversee the mechanisms that grant athletes entry to each level of sport. At the Olympic level, the Olympic Charter bye-laws state that:

As a condition precedent to participation in the Olympic Games, every competitor shall comply with all the provisions of the Olympic Charter and the rules of the IF governing his sport. The NOC which enters the competitor is responsible for ensuring that such competitor is fully aware of and complies with the Olympic Charter and the World Anti-Doping Code. (Bye-law to Rule 44-4, p. 80)

And

All Participants in the Olympic Games in whatever capacity must comply with the entry process as prescribed by the IOC Executive Board, including the signing of the entry form, which includes an obligation to (i) comply with the Olympic Charter and the World
As athletes rise through national and international levels of sport, the central tenets of boundary work are comprised of sport performance and compliance with the rules of sport and the governing bodies that oversee them. Athletes are expected to adhere to codes of conduct and display behaviours based on fair play and good sportsmanship.

Beyond the structured parameters that dictate membership, there are also psychological aspects that help to distinguish between insiders and outsiders. As Sindic (2011) explains, psychological aspects of status imply that the notion of belonging involves more than external and objective frameworks, there is a subjective sense of belonging to a group and shared sense of identity. The sense of being a part of a community creates an environment and conditions through which social cohesion is built, mutual responsibility is felt and relations of reciprocity are constructed. The more one feels a part of a group, the more inclined they are to respect other members, abide by governing systems, and work for common good.

4.3 Rights

Rights are defined by Barnes (1998) as “a just claim or recognized interest: it is a moral or legal entitlement that others are duty-bound to respect,” (p. 47). Canadian athletes are entitled to global and national rights defined in both the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, like all Canadian citizens. There are also considerations to be made regarding their sport-specific endeavours regarding equality, eligibility and discipline, doping, and natural justice. Kidd (2012) states that most basic athletes’ rights have been established but there is still significant work to be done to protect athletes’ rights nationally and globally. Donnelly (2015) argues that as the international governing body of
the Olympic Movement, the IOC should guarantee the rights of athletes. The process of gaining status confers power to an entity to define what rights are granted, and who receives them. The entity has the responsibility to monitor and evaluate regarding whether the rights (and reciprocal duties) are upheld. For example, in outlining the authority of the 2016 COT Athlete Agreement:

3.01 This agreement includes reference to the Olympic Charter, certain guidelines and policies of the COC and applicable rules of requirements of my NSF. In the event of any conflict between any of the foregoing, the order of precedence shall be firstly, the Olympic Charter, secondly, this Agreement, thirdly, applicable guidelines and policies referred to in this Agreement, and fourthly, the rules and requirements of my NSF.

This clause confers ultimate authority to the IOC and the Olympic Charter, stating that for all the matters addressed within the COT Athlete Agreement, the IOC and the Olympic Charter take precedence over any other agreement with governing bodies, employers, sponsors, managers, coaches or advisors. Athletes’ rights are a widely discussed and contested topic both within Canada and internationally. Athletes’ rights are predominantly shaped by broader human rights legislation. Kidd and Eberts (1982) have defined athletes’ rights as “the benefits and protections the legislators and the courts have recognized as belonging to individuals who are members of athletic organizations and recipients of government sport services,” (p. 17-18). Rights are entitlements that have associated duties to respect the rights granted. As Kidd and Donnelly state, “rights are located in the fundamental philosophical and social questions about the nature of citizenship, the nature of society and the relationship between the two,” (2000, p. 133).

The Olympic Charter, as the governing document of the Olympic Movement, uses language that parallels and reflects broader human rights movements. The IOC often practices non-interference; though, inaction, when faced with situations that are antithetical to the ideals of the Olympic Movement, is hypocritical. The IOC and the Olympic Movement have a responsibility to address ethical and sociocultural conditions of the Olympic Games and the Olympic
Movement. Kidd (2010) calls for a transition from non-interference to taking on the responsibility to protect the values for which the Olympic Movement stand, to empower its members and to ensure security. The UNDHR are an agreed upon set of values and liberties that should be available to all humans globally. There is variance in nation-states’ granting of rights; however, there have been improvements with the implementation of charters and protocols to monitor and enforce the provision of universal rights (Kidd & Donnelly, 2000).

Nationally, Canada has instituted the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (CCRF, 1982), which outlines the rights granted specifically to those who have legal status in Canada. The CCRF outlines fundamental rights and freedoms including democratic rights, mobility rights, legal rights, equality rights, language rights and minority language education rights (CCRF, 2002). Beyond UNDHR and rights afforded to Canadians through the CCRF, athletes’ rights are premised on common law, contract law and federal and provincial statutes (Kidd & Eberts, 1982; Beamish & Borowy 1988). It is necessary that athletes’ rights comply with broader legislations of human rights and freedoms, ensuring that athletes’ rights are not inhibited by clauses within the athlete agreements. Conformity to common law ensures that rules and regulations implemented by sport governing bodies do not contradict or oppose laws of the land. All actions and arrangements should adhere to the requirements of natural justice and fairness, limiting discretionary power and ensuring equality before the law (Kidd & Eberts, 1982, Beamish & Borowy, 1988; Sport Canada 2016). As Kidd and Ebert’s (1982), outline, “the conduct of human societies must be based on established rules, not discretionary powers,” (p. 19). In their foundational work, Kidd and Ebert’s, outline the importance of clarity, limiting arbitrary power (and implementing clear policies and procedures for scenarios where discretionary power is necessary), and fairness of disciplinary action. Discussions regarding athletes’ rights have focused on the following areas: team selection, disciplinary action, restrictions of freedom of speech, gender equity and classification, LGBTQ rights, employment/ labour protections, athlete representation, and anti-doping. Kidd (2012) argues that basic athlete rights, including rights to opportunities, protection against discrimination, representation and participation in decision-making and to challenge unfair decisions (p. 2) have been established. However, there is still significant work to be done to uphold athletes’ rights in place and to attain broader rights, including athletes’ commercial rights and economic rights.
Athletes are critical to the Olympic Games, but nowhere in the *Olympic Charter* does it specifically outline the rights of an Olympic athlete. Rights and responsibilities are closely linked, but the structure of the *Olympic Charter* and athlete agreements require athletes to deduce some rights based on clauses. Based on the fundamental principles, you can presume that an athlete has the right to participate in sport free of discrimination of any kind and that athletes have the right to participate in clean and fair sport. It also states that the IOC will provide services relating to medical care and the health of athletes and that it will oppose political or commercial abuse of sport and athletes (*Olympic Charter* p. 16-17, 2016). There are other components of the *Olympic Charter* that limit or oppose athletes’ fundamental human rights, for example the right to free speech. Often athletes are encouraged to refrain from speaking out on political matters or in a manner bringing criticism to the IOC, organizing committees, host cities or National Olympic Committees (COT Athlete Agreement, 2016; *Olympic Charter*, 2016). To protect the rights of athletes and/or “preserve the values of sport”, the IOC, its partners, and their subsidiaries have established mechanisms of surveillance and enforcement. Despite evolutionary methods, full protection of these rights poses a continuing challenge for the IOC and its constituency. In addition to efforts holding governing bodies accountable, current discussions around athletes’ rights within the Olympic Movement focus on doping, commercial rights of athletes, athletes right to free speech and gender testing (see for example, the *Statement from WADA Athlete Committee (2017)*[^6] and *The Future of Athlete Agreements (AthletesCAN, 2015)*[^7].

The nature of the athlete-NSF or athlete – government relationship is, historically, one of inequitable power. Athletes must sign athlete agreements to be granted the opportunity to compete at the international level, representing Canada and to receive support, financial or otherwise. Athlete agreements are legal documents that “govern the daily relationships and mutual obligations between athletes and their National Sport Organizations” (*AthletesCAN*,


2015, p. 1) and other governing bodies. In the *Sport Canada AAP Policies and Procedures* (Sport Canada, 2016) document, it stipulates that athletes must agree to all the terms required by Sport Canada to receive funding. Athletes are (theoretically) able to negotiate sport specific terms of the athlete-NSF agreement but governing structures exert dominance over athletes, coercing athletes to serve the interests of sport governing bodies. Athletes feel they have little or no bargaining power; their input to matters that impact their daily practice is restricted (*AthletesCAN*, 2015). As outlined in *The Future of Athlete Agreements* (*AthletesCAN*, 2015) published by AthletesCAN, the volume of obligations required by athlete agreements suggests that the contract should be negotiated between the two parties, accommodating and respecting the needs of both sides. Research by AthletesCAN has found that athlete agreements continue to contain a growing list of non-negotiable expectations and demands on the athletes, while the list of responsibilities of the NSF is limited (2015). AthletesCAN argues that athlete agreements are often presented to Canadian athletes as a mandatory step to become a team member and to qualify for funding. Athletes experience pressure to sign the agreement regardless of what the document contains or their understanding of the document. There is little, or no, opportunity for the athletes to negotiate the terms of the agreement, producing and reproducing an imbalance of power leaving athletes vulnerable and sport governing bodies in control. AthletesCAN (2015) found that, in attempting to negotiate the terms of the athlete agreement, there is a more significant risk to the athlete than the NSF. The process of renegotiation may negatively impact an athlete’s access to funding and their ability to train or compete.

Athlete agreements with the NSFs and the provision of AAP are not directly related; yet, NSFs will use the provision of funding and the AAP as means to gain power over the athlete by threatening to withhold financial support (*AthletesCAN*, 2015). There have been significant improvements from the work of advocates (Harvey, Horne, Safai, Darnell & Courchesne-O’Neil, 2014; Kidd, 2012), but athletes still have little say in the structure, implementation, or decision-making practices in the sport system in which they are significant players. The power of the sport system is often centralized within the governing bodies (Donnelly, 2015; Geeraert et al., 2014).
Rights and protections currently granted to athletes are outlined within the *Sport Canada Athlete Assistance Program: Policies and Procedures Document (SC-AAP)* (Sport Canada, 2016), *COT Athlete Agreements*, the *World Anti-Doping Code (WADC)* and NSF athlete agreements. Interestingly, the only document or area where the athletes’ rights are deliberately stated are those related to doping control procedures and *Rights & Responsibilities: Dispute Prevention and Resolution for Canadian Athletes* (CRDSC-SDRCC, 2011). *SC-AAP Policy and Procedures* (2015) document provides a sample outline of an athlete agreement that necessitates that athletes are

[… provided appeal procedures that is in conformity with the principles of natural justice and procedural fairness including access to an independent dispute resolution process with respect to any dispute the athlete may have with the NSO [National Sport Organization]. *(Appendix, p. 5)*

The documents noted above contain sections regarding the benefits of being granted team status. For Sport Canada’s Athlete Assistance Program (AAP), this includes financial and tuition support. Team agreements outline the provision of health and training services, team uniforms, and clearly outline the appeals procedures (Sport Canada, 2016; *COT Athlete Agreement*, 2016). Agreements contain a section of athlete benefits and services but in many agreements, there is no section that specifically outlines an athlete’s rights within the agreement. These rights must be extrapolated from other sections, for example, the National Sport Federation’s Responsibilities section. To gain full understanding of the relationship and exchange, and for athletes to determine what they are entitled to, the agreements must discern the organization’s responsibilities to the athlete. From the clauses in this section, it can be determined that athletes have the following rights:

---

8 The Athlete Assistance Program (AAP) is a government subsidy that provides top ranked national team athletes in Olympic events financial support for living, training and competition.
• Right to clear and timely communication of selection procedures that conform to generally accepted principles of natural justice and procedural fairness;
• Right to communication in the athlete’s preferred official language;
• Right to appeal procedures that conform with the principles of natural justice and procedural fairness (Sport Canada, 2016; COT Athlete Agreement, 2016; GCG National Team Handbook, 2016).

Athletes are required to sign agreements with numerous different parties, many of which outline responsibilities and benefits. For athletes to gain a full understanding of their rights, it would be a valuable addition to include a section in the athlete agreement that documents and outlines athletes’ rights fully. Currently, the document that provides the most comprehensive outline of athletes’ rights is Rights & Responsibilities: Dispute Prevention and Resolution for Canadian Athletes (CRDSC-SDRCC, 2011). The document’s association between rights and responsibilities reflects that granting rights creates duty or responsibility for an athlete or entity. The SDRCC outlines the following reciprocal rights and responsibilities:

Table 4: Athletes’ rights & responsibilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Athletes Rights</th>
<th>Athletes Responsibilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Access to the policies, rules and regulations that apply to them</td>
<td>- To ask for or know where to find the polices, rules and regulations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- To have the opportunity to learn about an agreement or contract before signing it</td>
<td>- To read and understand the agreement or contract before signing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- To appeal an unfair decision or decision taken incorrectly</td>
<td>- To keep copies of all documents/correspondence that could be used as evidence in a case of conflicts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- To compete in a clean, doping-free sport</td>
<td>- To support anti-doping efforts and comply with the Canadian Anti-Doping Program</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(CRDSC-SDRCC, 2011)
This document provides clarity for athletes, though it is limited in scope. Kidd and Donnelly (2000) argue that

> clear, succinct statements of rights, effectively communicated, can contribute significantly to raising the awareness of community responsibilities and obligations. And they can influence the developing legal sense of rights. (p. 141)

The other area in which an athlete’s rights are clearly outlined is with respect to anti-doping procedures; however, enforcement and accountability have been a significant challenge. In areas such as media rights, commercial rights, and medical rights, athletes are still advocating to ensure that their rights are protected. A more comprehensive list of athletes’ rights should be distributed by all governing bodies, easily accessible electronically, and included within athlete agreements to empower and protect athletes. Athlete agreements are written in a manner that is not accessible to all athletes. As legal documents, they are often highly technical with legal jargon, terms and sentence structures that are highly complex, requiring the assistance of a lawyer to gain a full understanding of the athlete agreement. Alternatively, it would be worthwhile for organizations to either create parallel documents outlining the agreements in layperson’s terms or write the agreements to be legally binding but more accessible and easily understood.

The creation of athlete commissions and development of athlete representation has worked to provide a legitimate athlete’s voice within organizational structures internationally and domestically. Athletes are elected by their peers to serve as representatives and as the voice of athletes within the governing bodies. These representatives work and act as a conduit between the governing body and their fellow athletes, giving voice to the athletes on decisions that directly impact them such as funding, team selection and program policy (COC, 2012). When structured properly, athlete commissions and representatives have enabled athletes to help build
a stronger sport system. They work to strengthen the security and protection of athletes, and to enhance training environments and competitive environments for performance (Athletes CAN, 2015; Thibault et al., 2010). The inclusion of athlete representatives is a positive move; however, as Houlihan (2004) argues, athlete representatives are offered limited opportunity to influence decisions and policy, and they remain relatively disempowered in shaping sport structures and the Olympic Movement. It is critical that athletes are informed of the rules, organizations, structures, and the sport landscape to be effective. As important, it is necessary that sport governing bodies educate their athletes, afford athletes the opportunity to represent themselves, listen to the athletes, and ensure meaningful representation.

4.4 Responsibilities

Athletes’ responsibilities are premised on respect: respect for self, respect for others, and respect for sport (Ried, 2002). The provision of responsibilities and freedoms means that that person or entity is simultaneously granting someone/thing the right to hold them to account (Bayle, 2016). Sport relies on agreements among constituents and participants to abide by the rules, otherwise sport is not possible. Sport requires a degree of compliance to the rules to free participants to achieve performance. There is an expectation that, once granted status as an elite athlete, an athlete has the right to the opportunity to perform unhindered. There is an agreement to respect the freedoms and performance of other athletes and thus, all members and participants agree to adhere to a set of rules, regulations, and standards of behaviour governing that work to maintain the ideals of sport (Ried, 2002).

The Olympic Charter and athlete agreements outline various spheres of athlete responsibility: legal, performance, ethical, and moral. Olympism is presented as a universal social philosophy based on humanist principles of peace, justice, responsibility, and freedom (Olympic Charter, 2016). As such, all participant countries must sign a contract agreeing to adhere to these universal principles that are framed in a manner that can be interpreted in a way that reflects
local ideals. Depending on an NOC’s interpretation of the Olympic Charter and its values, there may be additional responsibilities or pressures placed on Olympic athletes as representatives of their country and as ambassadors of the Movement. The four identified spheres of responsibility within the athlete citizenry that are interconnected and influence the actions and behaviours of athletes are: legal responsibilities, performance responsibilities, ethical and moral responsibilities, and the responsibility to uphold the values of Olympism.

4.4.1 Legal Responsibilities

Similarly to all citizens, athletes are obliged to abide by the law. Athletes must agree to refrain from “any conduct that is criminal or contrary to the laws applicable to [them] including but not limited to, laws governing in Canada and in [host country],” to be granted status on the Canadian Olympic Team (COT-Athlete Agreement, 2016). Adhering to the law is a reasonable expectation and is a seemingly simple requirement. When an athlete partakes in illegal activity, they are scrutinized by the public because they are public figures. As one athlete states:

*When you are an Olympian and a human, your dirty laundry gets aired. Like, if that guy over there gets pulled over for a DUI, it’s not going to be in the news. When Michael Phelps gets pulled over for a DUI? Well, he fucked up big time. I’m not going to excuse that, it’s terrible and absolutely illegal, but it’s going to make the news. [...] You can say Tiger Woods gets paid millions of dollars to be a good social ambassador so he shouldn’t fuck up. Most amateur athletes aren’t but we are still in the spotlight.* (Athlete E)

Adherence to the law is a logical precondition for participation at the Olympic Games and membership of the athlete community. The question remains, should athletes who have previously broken the law be granted the opportunity to participate in the Olympic Movement?
The imbalance of power favours sport governing bodies, yet the work of athletes and advocates using legal parameters that exist within democratic societies ensure that athletes globally have the right to natural justice (Kidd, 2012). Internationally, the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) enables athletes to resolve conflicts or address breaches of fair practice and violations of athletes’ rights. While this has empowered athletes significantly, there is still more work needed to ensure that policies and practices are consistent within Canada and globally.

4.4.2 Performance Responsibilities

The Olympic Games are considered the pre-eminent sporting competition for many sports. Success in high-performance sport is evaluated on Olympic, Paralympic and World Championship medals (Dowling & Smith, 2016). Countries select their team based on corporeal performance and their potential to succeed on the international stage. Excellence is a core value in the fundamental principles of Olympism. High-performance sport celebrates athletes reaching new physical capabilities. Contemporary perceptions of excellence are predicated on concrete measures of performance. Pierre de Coubertin’s original inclusion of excellence was not predicated on winning, but rather the pursuit towards reaching ones’ potential (Kidd, 1996; Robinson, 2007; Parry 2007). The Olympic Games are premised on a humanist value system; yet, contemporary high-performance sport and the Olympic Games’ position as the pre-eminent sporting competition for many sports both emphasize the importance of performance. The Olympic Games are a sporting spectacle that gains attention through human physical achievement. People watch to see athletes push the limits of human capability. Within this modern construct, performance responsibilities have become the dominant focus of the modern Olympic Movement. The emphasis on physical performance by sport governing bodies, media, and audiences creates a highly pressured performance demand on athletes. Beamish (2015) outlines how Canadian Sport Policy has often reflected the moral and ethical values of sport; yet, funding and support structures focus on achievement or potential to achieve. Primary funding bodies codify performance into their objectives, policies, and directives. For example, Sport Canada’s Athlete Assistance Program specifies that athletes who are funded through this program are expected to rank among the top 16 athletes in their event at the World
Championships or the Olympic Games (Sport Canada, 2016). Own The Podium, another primary funding organization, states excellence as one of the core values; excellence is podium driven (Own The Podium, 2016). An NSF’s funding is predicated on their ability to demonstrate medal potential for the next Olympic Games by demonstrating where athletes lie relative to “podium pathways” and “gold medal profiles”. Emphasis on results and performance is codified throughout Canadian sport institutions.

Contractually, members of the Canadian Olympic Team agree to “conduct [them]self in a manner as to attain and maintain my personal best possible physical fitness and health,” and to “carry out my duties to the Team and compete in the Games to the best of my ability,” (COT Athlete Agreement, 2016). The Olympics are a universal movement based on values and morals; sport is the vehicle through which Olympism is disseminated. Like the values of Olympism, the values of sport are influenced by a nation’s culture, tradition, and projected future (Parry, 2006). The emphasis placed on performance and results, shaped by sociocultural and political norms of an athlete’s country or sport system, influence an athlete’s willingness to comply with legal, ethical and moral standards as well as their willingness to engage in initiative beyond sport. Training and competition performance is often a major factor in any decision-making process. The emphasis and priority placed on performance is highlighted in this statement by a member of an international sport governing body:

An athlete’s “job” at the Olympics is to do as well as you can. That is going to take somewhere between 100% and 110% of your focus. Your call. You want to be 17th and say, but I got my line off to the media or do you want to set a bigger example, a la Jesse Owens in Berlin, going and winning, [...] that’s a statement. You can make your other ones later. But your primary responsibility is on the field of play. (Key Informant C)

The notion that athletes should perform first, act or speak second is common. Ultimately, an athlete’s career is short. It is believed that athletes require discipline and focus to maximize
performance, rendering a larger platform from which they can speak. Speaking out prior to
competition can be a distraction to the athlete and to their teammates. For those who do wish to
engage, new forms of media provide athletes with direct access to audiences and create a
platform from which athletes’ voices can be heard. There are examples of athletes who have
spoken out about political, social or team issues. Many athletes temper their voices and choose to
refrain from speaking out. For example, as a former athlete, this member of a non-profit
organization describes the anticipation and opportunity that came during the 2014 Olympic
Winter Games in Sochi, Russia regarding discrimination around sexual orientation:

_I just look to Sochi and I think there was such a chance to make a statement on an issue,
as an athlete, and also what it is like to be a gay or lesbian athlete living in Russia and
how hard that is. I just think people really dropped the ball, people weren’t really willing
to speak out._ (Key Informant H)

Governing bodies have traditionally worked to maintain their dominance over messages and
media of communication, particularly within the political sphere of sport. New platforms of
communication create a stronger opportunity for athletes to voice their opinions. It is ultimately
an athlete’s decision as to whether or not they exercise their right to free speech, but there are
numerous factors that an athlete must consider including performance and potential
repercussions.

The _2016 COT Athlete Agreement_ fosters a sense of responsibility to the team. Not only are
athletes responsible for their own performance, but athletes must also behave in a manner that
considers the team in its entirety, as described by a member of a national sport governing body:

_I think that our athletes should have the opportunity to speak their voice irrespective of
what we think and I think they do for the most part. I think it’s who we are as a people_
and a country. [...] But, let’s not lose sight of the fact that, while you are on the Olympic Team, you are one of many. Our job, in those moments, is to ensure that we don’t create distractions but rather mitigate it. If you chose to take this moment to take a public stand on something, it might feel right for you, and in the end, I’m not really sure there is much we could really do but we would always encourage our teammates to stay together as one team, and to stay on message, for the benefit of the team so that one athlete or one group of athletes aren’t creating disruption so that everyone can focus on being as good as they can in the moment. (Key Informant A)

When signing the COT Athlete Agreement provided by the COC, the document encourages athletes to recognize and consider the implications to the team when making public statements in the media or on social media. Athletes contractually agree to refrain from bringing public disrepute, disparagement or censure to the IOC, OCOGs, COC, NSF, Team or other athletes. Athletes are informed they must raise their concerns to the Chef de Mission. While this is a valid expectation of a contract, athletes still have the right to free speech. The clause dissuading public criticism is based on defamation law, but may also work to deter athletes from speaking out in cases where they have the grounds and evidence to substantiate criticisms. Athletes who have publicly voiced their criticism of the sport bodies that govern them risk being sanctioned and often experience backlash or incur a significant personal cost. Sport governing bodies have the right to regulate the activities that they govern. As argued by Barnes (1996), it is appropriate for governing bodies to “control conduct that is dangerous, dishonest or disruptive to the proper administration of the sport,” (p. 79). Speaking out against governing bodies may be seen as disruptive; but, at times it is necessary for athletes to be ‘disruptive’ to ensure the proper ‘administration of the sport’ by the sport governing bodies and to hold them accountable for their actions or behaviours. An athlete who spoke out during the Olympic Games against his sport federation in support of a teammate stated this of his experience:

---

9 The Canadian Encyclopedic Digest defines defamation as, “any written, printed or spoken words or any audible or visible matters or acts which tend to lower a person in the estimation of others or cause a person to be shunned or avoided or exposed to hatred, contempt or ridicule.” (2010)
I got heavily criticized for it from the COC but I wouldn’t change a thing because I have the right to an opinion and I am not simply a performance robot that you click on and send off to compete then get told to say the right things little monkey [...] One of the most fulfilling moments I had was getting feedback from other athletes saying that it was the right thing to do. Some people didn’t and I am ok with that too. [...] For me, if you believe in something you should stand up for that. I stood up for another athlete and I paid the consequences for that quite significantly but I wouldn’t change it for the world.

(Athlete D)

Barnes (1998) argues that the “disciplinary process relates to the imposition of sanctions because of wrong-doing or misconduct. Disciplinary actions imply an allegation of moral blameworthiness”, (p. 78). In this particular situation, the “moral blameworthiness” is questionable. Does moral blame fall on the athlete who spoke out or on the sport governing body for their alleged wrongdoing? This athlete witnessed a situation and valued the right to speak out against what he considered injustice and mismanagement by a sport governing body. He believed that it was worth the risk of breaching his contract to, paradoxically, uphold the Olympic ideal of sport being at the service of humanity.

The factors that influence an athlete’s intention and actual participation in social initiatives described by Babiak et al., (2012) include the demands required by sport, the demands required by engagement, and a balance between the two. Athletes consider their perceived behavioral control, capability, skill and time. The athletes included in this research ensure that their engagement in anything beyond sport, for example social initiatives, either adds to or at least does not detract from training, competition and performance. Athletes continually evaluate and measure the balance of energy, time and demand. For some athletes, it is critical to maintain focus solely on sport to maximize performance. For others, pursuing engagement in something beyond sport is more beneficial. Some athletes spoke of how engaging in a social cause allows them to derive new meaning, inspiration, and motivation from something that can be seemingly
selfish and monotonous. The potential positive impact on an athlete can be a bolstered sense of identity, the alleviation of sport and competition pressures, and emotional and psychological well-being. Most of the athletes know the importance of self-awareness, reflection, and balance:

\[\text{Know your limits. [...] Understand clearly the focus that it takes. Don’t go to the Olympics with any other banner than “I am here to race.” Anything you think you want to do or want to say, the best thing you can do is win then say it because you have a louder voice. [...] When you win a medal, when you have success, you have media exposure. Now is your time to really do something. [...] I do believe as an athlete you always do have to take performance into consideration but then I have also been in Africa and coaches think it’s a really bad idea and I just say they don’t understand. This is part of me. It’s me connecting, reconnecting not just with these people, these children, but with myself. It’s also understanding that you have limitations, you have a capacity, but understand what true inspiration is and the potential of that. There is a balance with it all. (Athlete C)}\]

This balance is highly individual and evolves through an athlete’s career. The Olympic Movement has become a sporting spectacle focused on corporeal achievement. Performance is the primary consideration for athletes. Globally, the rewards and glory that are bestowed upon victors are at an all-time high with less attention focused on more humanistic and moralistic value of the Olympic Movement. Additional pressure is placed on athletes as nation-states use the Olympic Games as a platform to demonstrate strength and dominance (Kidd, 2013). There are initiatives domestically and globally working to address some of the social responsibilities highlighted in the Olympic Charter; but, it is hard to ignore the reality of contemporary high-performance sport, the infrastructure in place and the race (physical and metaphorical) to push the boundaries of human capability.
4.4.3 Ethical and Moral Responsibilities

Sport is a globally accepted system of ethical practice. For sport to exist, IFs must establish the rules and regulations of the sport and facilitate the understanding of these rules. The practice of sport necessitates mutual agreements of shared values and commitments between opponents. Sport requires ethics that are globally accepted and a commitment to abide by the values fair play (Parry, 2006). Ethics and the obligation to abide by rules are fundamental to sport and are reflected in the values of Olympism. The values of Olympism are founded on respect and include ethical principles of dignity, integrity and fair play. Athletes agree to “observe and comply with all terms and conditions of the Olympic Charter and applicable IOC and COC policies,” (COT Athlete Agreement, 2016). The COT Athlete Agreement requires athletes to conduct themselves in a manner that respects the philosophy of Olympism, the spirit of fair play and non-violence. Athletes must conduct themselves accordingly on and off the field, for the duration of the games and indefinitely. With a heightened focus on performance, the competitive pressures to excel have led athletes, and in some cases, entire teams or nation-states, to partake in activities that counter the values of Olympism, breach sport contracts, and dismiss the obligation to abide by rules. Babiak et al., (2012) argue that the degree to which an athlete feels morally bound dictates behavior, negatively and positively. When athletes feel less morally obliged, they are more likely to partake in practices that breach norms of ethical conduct acceptable within sport. Alternatively, many athletes think that it is critical to be engaged in speaking up against those who act unethically or immorally because the issue has direct implications on their lives. Doping is a prominent and current ethical issue facing athletes today:

Nobody should care more about anti-doping than athletes. For athletes, it’s your livelihood. You are either enabled and empowered to compete fairly in sport, as you should be, or you’re being thwarted out of what is potentially your rightful place in the world. (Athlete B)
The ethical and moral responsibilities arise from the mythopoeic nature of sport, previously described as the value-rich rhetoric of sport stemming from the idea of agonism (Parry, 2007; Coalter, 2010). Coalter (2010) describes mythopoeic concepts as

*those whose demarcation criteria are not specific, but are based on idealistic and popular ideas [...]. Such myths contain certain elements of truth, but elements which become reified and distorted and ‘represent’ rather than reflect reality.* (p. 296).

Sport is often regarded as ‘neutral’ and the participation in sport viewed as a means through which an individual can develop social and moral skills. The traditional and mythological narratives of Olympism promote liberal humanist principles and good sportsmanship. The humanistic and moralistic qualities attributed to sport can create platforms from which social initiatives can be built, advocated, and communicated. The moral character that is often attributed to athletes because of these ideals often lend value to social initiatives and social programming (Kidd, 2010). Contemporary high-performance sport culture is grounded in neoliberal and capitalistic discourse emphasizing individualistic achievement at the expense of sports more humanistic values (Margolis & Walsh, 2003). Sport privileges conformity and sport governing bodies are, arguably, undemocratic and hypocritical in their promotion of ethical practice and universal human values, often exerting power and dominance:

*Something I know about the IOC is that they don’t like to be challenged and they really see themselves as the highest authority and the highest decision-making body. If you challenge them, they will fight back.* (Athlete B).

NOCs have a role in educating athletes on their rights generally and their right to free speech. When asked about the current practice and what that responsibility is, one athlete’s response was:
I think it’s huge. I don’t think the COC or other NOCs do an adequate job actually. I think they are more interested in keeping athletes as entertainment value that they can market and keep this positive halo around so that they can generate sponsors and funds. I do believe they have zero interest in athletes speaking up for what’s right or doing the right thing. I think they have more responsibility and they need to take it more seriously. (Athlete B)

Sport as an institution, and the Olympic Movement specifically, is perceived to exalt ethical practice, altruistic development, fair play, integrity, and dignity. The discrepancy between what sporting organizations communicate, and the practices implemented, creates skepticism about the sincerity and legitimacy. The discrepancies and power structures work to temper an athlete’s ability to speak and act freely. For example, as one athlete describes:

_There were times during my national team stint that I have stood up to the coaches, and it didn’t help my situation, we will say, so I feel like when I first started the national team program, I was way more of an advocate. When I finished, I toed the line more. That isn’t something I am proud of but that is something that the [national team] does to you._ (Athlete G)

Athletes’ experiences in sport are highly variable. The opportunity for progressive thinking and action is present; however, there are concurrent forces and powers in play that work to instill conformity and compliance. Some athletes feel empowered to lend their voice to injustice or state their opinions when they differ from those in authoritative positions; others feel they are not able to and fear reprisal. In their experience, voicing opinions that oppose those in power subjects them to less favourable treatment, or in some cases, jeopardizes their position on a team. Athlete G’s experience was one of fear and different from other athletes who, through the progression of their career, experience increased confidence to speak more freely. As subjects
experiencing sport and the Olympic Games firsthand, athletes are often leveraged to portray a story. Athletes are also often exposed to, witness, and experience the flaws and faults that exist within sport first hand. As the celebration of the Olympic Games begins, the sport-media nexus attempts to parlay messages of Olympism that can sometimes leave athletes with a dilemma: to speak or not to speak. For example, a Canadian snowboarder used his Instagram account to communicate his views regarding the sustainability of the 2014 Olympic Winter Games:

_We’ve arrived… Question is. Do I smile and nod or talk about the truth. No recycling of any kind in the village. Construction quality so poor that windows are cracking, river systems being destroyed, fleets of trucks idling for no reason, a plume of exhaust streaming from the Olympic flame. The furthest thing away from sustainability one could ever imagine. 80% of what is built here will never be used again. Best question of the day. “People say this is the “perfect games” what do you think about that”……
#roadtohappiness (Instagram: @theywantml, February 15, 2014)_

As Kidd (2011) argues, “the structure, symbolic representation and constructed appeal of sport create other openings for progressive advocacy […]. The moral claims of sport legitimize it as a site of struggle,” (p. 157-158). As athletes either witness or experience the dichotomy between the claims of sport and its authorities versus the tendency of those governing bodies, many athletes are compelled into action to protect the values of sport. For example, one former athlete describes how this divergence initiated a career of activism:

_My activism career started more with the IOC and speaking out against the corruption that I saw, the total disconnect between our values as athletes and the values of the leadership at that level. (Key Informant H)_
Athletes train to compete in physical competition. For the Olympic Games, the objective is to reach the peak of their physical capabilities, but athletes cannot train and compete in a vacuum. Through their careers, athletes become increasingly aware of sports’ structure, and as key stakeholders, some feel compelled to be actively engaged in the process and production of sport beyond the field of play. Through their athletic and personal development, they become active citizens, working to engage and be involved in the decisions that affect them. Many athletes speak about being inspired by the values of the Olympic Movement and feel it is important to celebrate and live up to the ideals described by Pierre de Coubertin and the Olympic Charter:

*It was the whole idea of the Olympic ideal that I LOVED and it so inspired me to change as a young person and it inspired me to become an Olympian, to live up to those ideals of higher, faster, stronger, respecting yourself, respecting your competitors, being a part of humanity and celebrating humanity. Well, that’s not really how the IOC works. It’s a big business, it’s a machine that rolls over anyone and anything that speaks up against it and I’ve seen that in action. I have seen Olympics in my athletic lifetime that should never have been given them because of their human rights records and there are many things that really just left a bad taste in my mouth about the Olympics. Also just being there, you know, you realize like, god, this is it? (Athlete C)*

Sport, and in particular the Olympic Movement, are marketed and celebrated for their morality and ethical spirit, for example, see the IOC’s commercial, *Together*\(^\text{10}\) (2016). The Olympic Charter asks athletes to embody the values of Olympism. The definition of Olympism and interpretation of those values differ globally; yet, there are foundational moral and ethical standards that are, at least notionally, agreed. Athletes may strive towards bettering themselves and executing their training and competition in a manner that complies with the parameters defined; others go beyond trying to live up to the highest levels of ethical and moral standards. Athletes, and sport as an institution, are not capable of reaching their full potential with respect

\(^{10}\) See [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dXragjwuK-E](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dXragjwuK-E)
to social responsibility until social problems and contradictions existing within and around sporting culture and institutions have been addressed.

4.4.4 Athletic Pursuit and the Responsibility to Uphold Olympism

Internationally, the most proficient athletes aim for the Olympic Games as the pinnacle competition for their event. To compete, NOCs are tasked with selecting a team. The selection criteria are primarily focused on sporting prowess; but, the Olympic Charter states that NOCs have the responsibility to make “selection based not only on sport performance of an athlete but also on his ability to serve as an example to the sporting youth of his country,” (Olympic Charter, 2016, p. 66). This statement begs the question, ‘an example of what?’ Presumably, Olympism but the values espoused by Olympism are perceived and interpreted in different ways globally. The Olympic Movement is comprised of social responsibility rhetoric. The philosophy of Olympism emphasizes the role of sport in global affairs and a range of values that constituents can accept. The language used expresses broad humanist values of peace, common good, responsibility, and freedom while simultaneously leaving room for signatories to interpret these values in a manner relevant to local particularities. The practices in place to uphold the values of Olympism fluctuate to reflect broader sociocultural and political climates.

Sport evokes an emotional connection between the public and athletes, particularly within the Olympic Movement when athletes become representatives of their country. Athletes within the Olympic Movement are positioned as beings who are expected to embody the values espoused by the Movement.

I do think sport gives people perspectives that they wouldn’t have otherwise and you are living a life that is really different than most people. You experience incredible highs and lows and you know what team and camaraderie is and it’s a whole other spectrum of
experience that you just don’t get anywhere else. Built into that are values and fundamental belief systems that would certainly compel, and does compel, a lot of athletes to feel a social responsibility. (Athlete B)

High-performance athletes are often called upon to act as ambassadors for the Olympic Movement and other social initiatives because they take on the meanings associated with their nation-state and sport. The value that athletes are perceived to have that contribute to a social initiative include perceived credibility, symbolic capital, cultural capital, recognition, positioning, visibility, media attention, and access afforded to them (Babiak et al., 2012). Athletic success, and the resulting notoriety that athletes receive, can create positive associations and can position athletes to act as a catalyst for change. The impact can either be direct, for example impacting policy or practices, or indirect through communicating key messages and enhancing awareness. An athlete’s status can garner attention to enhance public awareness. There are numerous factors that establish athletes as ‘symbolic leaders.’ Through their athletic endeavours and resulting media attention, athletes can emerge as popular heroes, acquiring elevated status and receiving popular sentiment. As a result, their image can have an inspirational effect (Klapp, 1963)

Athletes have legal, ethical, and performance responsibilities that are a precondition to compete in sport, though the interpretation of sporting values such as fair play, may differ depending on cultural contexts. What remains to be determined is whether athletes have a responsibility to ‘give back.’ Some athletes hold a transactional view. Because they have received support, financial or otherwise, they are obliged to contribute as much as they have received. Other athletes view their position as an athlete as their job and individuals do not have the responsibility to give back because of the nature of what they do. While the opinion of athletes regarding their engagement in social initiatives varies between responsibility and opportunity, many believe it is the right thing to do. As described by a member of a national sport governing body:
I like to think that [athletes] are engaged in the Olympic Movement in part because of those values that the IOC Charter espouses. [...] The NOC has a responsibility for advancing Olympism and Olympic values. I would like to think that most of our athletes would like to take up that charge with us [...]. We have a fortunate position, I suppose, to have the responsibility of speaking for the movement in Canada and we take that very seriously. I think the athletes can have a role but as the NOC, I don’t know that we can expect it. We cannot dictate it. We leave each athlete to their place and to their opinion. I just like to think that when we take up a position, that more often than not, it makes sense because we are in tune with our athlete body. (Key Informant A)

Social engagement and the responsibility to ‘do good’ is not inherent in sport, though it is embedded within the values of Olympism and the Olympic ideal. Regardless of an athlete’s intentions or desire to contribute, athletes are recognizing the value that social engagement can provide including skill development, potential remuneration, as well as building social, cultural, and political capital (Babiak et al., 2012; Carter, 2009; Darnell, 2012). Athletes may also experience psychological and emotional benefits, particularly when the athlete has a personal connection to the work that they are doing. Regardless of an athlete’s view, it is critical that athletes remain cognisant of their public profile and potential as role models. As a member of the Canadian Olympic Team, they become public figures. More attention is paid to their behaviour both on and off the field of play. New mediums are available through which an athlete’s conduct is surveyed, analyzed and scrutinized by a broad population:

You cannot shirk that responsibility because you have kids looking up to you and you will have people listening to what you are saying and you should be aware and conscious of that if you really believe in something. (Athlete B)

The Olympic idea is theorized, by Parry (2006), as an opportunity for athletes to pursue new levels of physical and intellectual excellence. It exemplifies the human struggle towards higher
achievement in an ethical manner. Pierre de Coubertin expresses the desire for the harmonious development of humans

\[\text{towards excellence and achievement; through effort and competitive sporting activity; under conditions of mutual respect; fairness and equality with a view to creating lasting personal relationships of friendship; with international relationships of peace, toleration, and understanding. (Parry, 2006, p. 199).}\]

Contemporary high-performance sport emphasizes the corporeal experience with the Olympic Games as the largest global display of human physical achievement. The IOC and its constituents struggle to balance the lofty ideals of Pierre de Coubertin with the realities of modern high-performance sport.

Concepts of citizenship have evolved to account for cultural, digital and sociopolitical shifts in contemporary society creating new forms of community. Citizenship is no longer solely entrenched within the political or legal boundaries, evaluated based on compliance and engagement in civic duty. With these progressive parameters, it is possible to explore and redefine the concept of \textit{athlete citizenshiphood}, broadening it beyond biological and technical parameters associated with doping (Henne, 2012). It is necessary to identify the governance structures, boundary work, rights, and responsibilities of this transnational population to expand the definition of \textit{athlete citizenship} provided by Henne (2012). Some of these components are easily identifiable and definable, such as the governing structures (though specific roles, authority, and practices may be contested) and boundary work. Others, such as athletes’ rights and responsibilities, require more clarity. Athletes’ rights have historically been achieved through intensive advocacy and activism work (Kidd, 2012). While basic athletes’ rights are written into policy nationally and globally, it is necessary to continue efforts to uphold and expand athletes’ rights. It is necessary to clearly define athletes’ rights, ensure that they are upheld, educate athletes and expand athletes’ rights to empower and protect athletes during their
sporting journey. Athletes’ responsibilities are often more clearly defined within policy and contractual agreements. They are primarily focused on legal parameters, performance standards, ethical, and moral expectations. Within the Olympic Movement, Pierre de Coubertin invites athletes to focus beyond corporeal performance to uphold the values of Olympism. How Olympism is interpreted varies broadly. Some athletes believe that as an Olympic Athlete and representative of their country, they have a responsibility to ‘do good’ beyond the field of play; others view their position and status as an opportunity. Whether a responsibility or an opportunity, gaining an understanding of this space can help inform athletes on the different forms of work that they can do to work towards positive social impact and provide insight on how they can become involved in various forms of social initiatives.
Chapter 5
Exploring Athlete Responsibilities, Opportunities and Social Engagement

An athlete must be dedicated to training and recovery to achieve success within the current structure of global and Canadian high-performance sport. The focus on excellence, often defined by results and medal counts, necessitates a significant amount of physical and mental energy which consumes an athlete’s being. Pierre de Coubertin’s vision for the Olympic Movement places sport at the service of humanity inviting us to explore what roles and responsibilities athletes hold beyond sporting performance. Carter (2009) defines ‘athlete social responsibility’ (ASR) as the “process of identifying ones’ role and responsibilities as an athlete to be more than simply competing and training. ASR is the process of developing a strong sense of responsible citizenship in sport,” (p. 10). Olympic athletes are expected to embody the ideals of the Olympic Movement, though the depth, definition, and reach of athletes’ responsibility are interpreted differently across nations, teams, and athletes. Policies, funding structures, and the high-performance sport programs place emphasis on corporeal performance, influencing athletes to focus on physical training (Goss Gilroy Inc., 2017; Thibault & Harvey, 2013). With new communication media to follow and interact with athletes, attention is increasingly being paid to athletes’ lives beyond the field of play (Coche, 2017; Hutchins, 2011; Green, 2016). The experiences of athletes who engage in social initiatives are highly individual and nuanced. Regardless of whether athletes feel it is their duty or responsibility to engage in efforts towards positive social change, some athletes work to contribute to something beyond their training and sport endeavors (Carter, 2009). It is necessary to dig into the various forms of engagement into which athletes participate and contribute, to understand how and why athletes engage. This chapter explores the various forms of athlete engagement in sport social initiatives, including corporate, non-profit/social enterprise, athlete activism, and advocacy.
5.1 Forms of Engagement

Athletes, at some point in their career, may be called upon or feel compelled to get involved in a community initiative that works towards positive social change within sport or outside of sport. In exploring the landscape upon which athletes engage, the identifiable forms of athlete engagement in social initiatives, derived from a review of the literature and participant interviews, include corporate, non-profit, activism and advocacy (Carter, 2009; Darnell 2012; Kidd 2008; Kidd 2012; Koss, 2011). These sectors of social engagement are neither mutually exclusive, nor do they operate in silos. It is important to note that the lines between each of these classifications are often blurred. Occasionally there are collaborative efforts across multiple sectors with aligned objectives that are directed towards one goal.

Table 5: Forms of sport social initiatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corporate:</td>
<td>Partnerships or relationships established between athletes and private entities that work to further social goals, often related to corporate social responsibility initiatives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Profit &amp; Social Enterprises:</td>
<td>Partnerships or relationships established between athletes and non-profit organizations or social enterprises that work to advance a cause or contribute to social impact.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy</td>
<td>Athletes publicly supporting a cause, recommendation of policy or action (Heil, 2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activism</td>
<td>Athletes working individually or collaboratively to impact a cause, policy, program and/or culture, or to incite political reform.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.1.1 Corporate

An athlete’s engagement in social initiatives in partnership or collaboration with a corporate entity is often directly related to that corporation’s corporate social responsibility (CSR) objectives. A broad definition of CSR is the ongoing commitment by organizations, corporations, or governments to contribute to economic or social development (Chen, Moore, Renaud & Dube, 2007). The practice of CSR, a private entity’s responsibility beyond profit maximization, arises from the debate between capitalism and socialism. The criticism of capitalism heightened the social consciousness of consumers, necessitating product and corporate differentiation based on enhanced ethical desires of stakeholders. As a result, a moral marketplace has emerged, where consumers are being influenced by their moral and ethical values and perception of the values held by companies (Babiak et al., 2012). This shift has led private entities to partake in socially responsible initiatives and has compelled many entities to abide by ever-evolving ethical and moral standards of practice.

Whether through sponsorship, established partnerships, or collaboration, there are a variety of examples of athletes working with corporations and private entities to further social goals. These relationships can either contribute to business strategies working to enhance the bottom line or brand equity, strategies that allow the corporation to comply with ethical and moral standards set by industry norms or as a means to go beyond financial interests of the corporation to have a social impact. Within these partnerships, athletes can provide a point of personal connection, to share a story or message, creating connections through which others can engage.

5.1.2 Non-Profit and Social Enterprises

There is a broad range of organizations with social missions that guide programming, organizational activities, and policies. Regardless of market orientation, the factor that differentiates non-profit or social enterprises from corporate and private entities is the emphasis on economic profit. Corporate and private entities are primarily financially driven. Non-profit and social enterprises are governed by a socially based bottom line (Quarter, Mook & Armstrong, 2009). The roles taken on by athletes supporting non-profit initiatives may be similar
to the roles taken on by athletes within corporate based social initiatives; however, the structure of the organization, its profit-orientation, and objectives of social programming differ. Partnerships or relationships established by athletes and non-profit organizations are aimed towards enhancing the organization’s social mission. Some athletes work with pre-existing organizations, other athletes chose to establish their own organization. One example is an organization founded by Canadian Olympian Brad Spence, called *Creative Impact Foundation*\(^\text{11}\). The organization connects athletes and artists with children who are battling illness to collaborate on a helmet design that the athlete will wear in competition. The objective of the *Creative Impact Foundation* is to raise funds to support brain injury research, provide its participants with the opportunity to connect with others in their community, use art as a therapy tool for youth to assist in healing and coping during their illness, and to inspire through art and sport. Rather than aligning with pre-existing organizations to work towards positive social change, some athletes choose to create their own organization or event that aligns with their values, interests, skills, and experiences.

### 5.1.3 Athlete Advocacy and Activism

Athlete advocacy and activism are far from new phenomena. Advocacy and activism differ from the previous forms of engagement because they do not necessarily involve a partnership with an entity but rather a connection to a particular cause or objective of social change. Both advocacy and activism are efforts directed at addressing injustice and power imbalances that exist or to address or prevent undesirable circumstances. Advocacy and activism are overlapping ideas with distinct features. Advocacy involves the public support of a cause or the recommendation of policy or action (Heil, 2016). An example of athlete advocacy is the COCs One Team initiative. Athletes have publically lent their voice to support the LGBTQ initiative, promoting inclusion and respect in schools across Canada with the objective of creating safer spaces and sporting environments for all (Olympic.ca, 2017). Whether individually or collaboratively, athletes often champion causes, publicly taking a stance and voicing their opinion. Alternatively, activism is described by Joyce (2014) as “individual effort to achieve social transformation,” (p. 15). Joyce

\(^{11}\) See www.creativeimpactfoundation.com
argues that activists work towards political and/or social changes that focus on an existing undesirable circumstance, threat, or disadvantage, or work to prevent future changes that create undesirable circumstances, threat or disadvantage. A recent example of athlete activism is the COC Athlete Commission working to increase the funding that national team athletes receive monthly through Sport Canada’s Athlete Assistance Program by 18%. The ongoing efforts of Canadian athletes resulted in the first increase in the AAP funding in 13 years (Government of Canada, 2017).

The interrelated governing elements of sport are structures, institutions, and organizations. Structures encompass all relations and arrangements of parts that combine to create a unified system (Loy & Booth, 2000; Hodgson, 2007). Institutions are the “established and embedded social rules” (Hodgson, 2007, p. 96) or laws and practices that influence social interaction and customs. Organizations are a body of people that have a particular purpose (Hodgson, 2007). Dominant discourse, outlined by these governing structures would encourage athletes to ‘accommodate their “selves” to pre-established forms and pre-established roles” in alignment with hegemonic structures (Loy & Booth, 2000, p. 20). Athletes, and other members of society, work to determine the function and consequences of the structures in place and can ‘step outside of taken-for-granted routines’ (Loy & Booth, 2000, p. 20). Thus, athletes may be compelled towards taking action to influence the organizations, institutions, and structures in which they participate.

Darnell (2012) identified two forms of athlete advocacy and activism; athletes working for political, structural or cultural reform within sport and those who act upon an urge to contribute to social initiatives and causes external to sport. Athletes working for change within sport are working to address the social ills such as doping, corruption, fair selection, physical and/or emotional abuse, and protection of athletes’ rights, that arise from sport, sport culture or the institutions that govern sport. Some athletes have taken a public stance on the issue in the media or on personal platforms, while others are working to establish means of protecting athletes’ rights to clean and fair sport. Working towards reform within sport includes efforts towards ensuring sport is transparent, free from corruption or undue influence, inclusive, democratic, and fair. There are athletes who engage in social initiatives outside of sport, mobilizing their profile,
skills or status attained within sport to address a wide range of political and social issues such as climate, health, education or women’s rights.

There is a long history of athletes working towards social change. Within sport, athletes have a vested interest in the structures and policies in place because they are directly impacted. Outside of sport, athletes have the right to be engaged citizens, working on a variety of different initiatives. The degree of engagement is highly variable and individual, and is often dependent on time, skills, and the relational dynamic between the athlete and involved entities.

5.2 Relational Dynamic

Athletes’ engagement in social initiatives can create opportunities for athletes, causes and organizational entities, both corporate and non-profit. What these efforts and initiatives look like and entail, differ depending on the relational dynamic between the athlete and the organizational entity, the strategy, and the objective. The most significant difference in the relational dynamics among these three sectors expressed by athletes in this research is the power dynamic and contractual agreements. The power relation between athletes and non-profits is often expressed by both athlete and those within the organizations which athletes, as evenly distributed. For example, as an employee of an international non-profit describes:

Athletes have a unique position, and we want to be able to work with athletes to work in the community to create social change as the bottom line. We can also offer athletes an opportunity to give back to the community. [...] We can work with [athletes] to be able to use that platform to create change and that can be hard for athletes to understand at first, but once they start to do it, then it comes almost naturally. [...] If [organization] is here on the left, and the athlete is here on the right, and we have to move all the way to the right, what’s that [we are] going to get out of that, but if both parties meet in the middle, both parties will get great benefit. Typically, athletes with big platforms will move less so we have to move more, but you also get athletes with big platforms who do move more. (Key Informant D)
In this example, efforts to work for change are collaborative, and those involved are working to “meet in the middle” with a mutual objective or outcome in mind. The athlete is working to contribute to the organization’s objective, while the organization is accommodating the athlete’s needs, skills, and strengths.

Collaboration is also expressed as necessary when building a sustainable and effective relationship between an athlete and corporation, or private entity, to work for social change. Relationships established between athletes included in this research and corporate entities often involve an exchange, whether value in kind or financial remuneration. This exchange of value can alter the power dynamic unless a strong relationship and path of communication is established between the athlete(s) involved and the corporate entity. The perception of imbalance varies depending on the relationship and the individuals involved. As a gold standard, regardless of exchange, the relationship remains collaborative. For example, with the opportunity for the athlete to provide insight, knowledge, and guidance where their expertise and experience fit, while gaining valuable experience from their engagement. Here, an individual from a corporation describes the dynamic between the athlete and the corporation working towards positive social change:

*She has her contributions to ideas, such as some of our messaging. She has great ideas that we are going to incorporate because she comes from such a place of knowledge and passion and nobody has the monopoly on good ideas. It is really a collaboration, our partnership with [athlete] is a real collaboration. It’s give and take. It’s symbiotic.* (Key Informant E)

This quote provides insight on an example of a strong relationship in which the athlete contributes beyond publicly stated support for the initiative. The relationship between athlete and the organization with which they are working is highly variable and dependent on the individuals involved. As with all social engagement, there is a range of active and passive engagement. There is also a range of the depth and the reach that an athlete and organization will have. Depth and reach are influenced by the individuals, the organizational structure, the cause, the objectives and the strategies in place.
An athlete’s engagement in social initiatives with corporate and non-profit entities often entails the athlete working in alignment with the organizational objectives. Alternatively, athlete advocacy and activism work to address asymmetries of power or to address undesirable circumstances that currently exist or will exist. Athletes involved in advocacy and activism efforts will often experience some level of resistance from governing bodies, institutions, or hegemonic discourse. One athlete describes her experience in a sport where doping was prevalent:

I was getting increasingly frustrated by the fact that I was doing everything I could to become competitive and have more success but there was always going to be me coming up against this glass ceiling. I had heard enough and seen enough that I knew it wasn’t rumours, I knew what was going on. [...] We realized too, at that point, that the [International Federation], who were charged with policing and monitoring the anti-doping in our sport were really not doing an adequate job and we believed it was intentional because either they didn’t care or they weren’t motivated enough to really expose the superstars of the sport. There is a true conflict of interest when the IFs are charged with anti-doping because they are also the ones trying to attract sponsors and TV. (Athlete B)

This athlete has spoken publicly against doping in the sport, stating that there were many athletes who were partaking in doping practices and that the IFs and WADA were not doing enough to address the issue. After stating that the action taken to protect clean athletes was insufficient, this athlete experienced significant backlash:

The [Anti-Doping Agency] at the time really came back and spoke quite publicly against what I had said and said I didn’t know anything. (Athlete B)

Joyce (2014) describes activism as the combination of

the early twentieth-century connotation of passionate political belief and the Progressive era connotation of personal engagement in transformation. [...] Activism had come to
mean personal engagement in activities that bring about political and social transformation. (p. 15)

The nature of activism and advocacy has evolved as a result of post-industrial economic and cultural changes. It has also been influenced by the introduction of new forms of media, information, and communication technologies (Joyce, 2014). Activism and advocacy efforts are more likely to be met with resistance because they often involve provoking change. Athlete activists or advocates are working to confront structures in place and authoritative figures that influence their sporting experience. What is in the best interest of athletes is not always aligned with the interest of the governing bodies. Athletes partaking in activism and advocacy work are more likely to perceive themselves in a position of less power than the governing bodies or institutions that they are opposing.

Through participant interviews, it is possible to explore different forms of athlete engagement in social initiatives; corporate, non-profit, activism, and advocacy. Here, they are presented as four separate forms of engagement. In reality, athletes do not choose one form of engagement; athletes are often involved in various forms simultaneously. While differentiated here, there is overlap and interactions between the different forms of engagement; they do not exist independently. As Darnell (2012) argued, athletes engage in initiatives both within sport, influencing the institution in which they participate and exist, and outside of sport, working to address broader social initiatives. A key defining aspect is the relational dynamic that exists between the athlete and the entity with which they are working. While the definitions of athlete engagement in social initiatives are fluid, there are foundational values and processes in all forms of athlete engagement.
Chapter 6
Representations of Core Engagement Values

Sport elicits passion and emotional bonds between the public and athletes (Ratten, 2010). Olympians are often called upon to act as ambassadors for the Olympic Movement and beyond. As mentioned previously, the process through which athletes become engaged and the motivations for engagement are highly individual. Through the interviews with participants, two core values emerged: authenticity and credibility. Another theme emerged as athletes and organizations alike describe the process of identifying opportunities. As this athlete relations manager expresses, “it’s about finding the right athlete, for the right opportunity at the right time” (Key Informant D)

Athletic success can position athletes to act as catalysts for change. Rather than laying out a step-by-step, how-to guide on how to become engaged in a social initiative, this research seeks to explore the idea of how athletes engaged in social initiatives more broadly. While this is not an extensive list, nor all-inclusive, these particular ideas or themes have been expressed as key factors in creating a base for effective and meaningful work towards social change.

6.1 Authenticity & Credibility

Authenticity. If your relationship with the cause is not anchored in authenticity in some way, shape, or form, it will detriment the cause and [the athlete’s] brand. (Key Informant B)

A common thread through the interview process has been the notion of ‘authenticity.’ The concept of authenticity speaks to an assumed dimension of ‘truth’ and sincerity regarding ones’ actions and behaviours, ensuring that they are aligned with core values, motives, desires, and beliefs (Newman & Smith, 2016; Gino, Kouchaki, & Galinsky, 2015; Mazutis & Slawinski, 2013; Varga & Guignon, 2017). Varga and Guignon (2017) argue the notion of authenticity, as it relates to character, has evolved from a shift away from viewing society as interacting
components that create a whole, towards a focus on a social system of unique individuals and the modern conception of ‘self’. They also highlight the need to explore what it means to be oneself. Is it possible to separate actions and decisions that a person makes from oneself? (Varga & Guignon, 2017). Authenticity, as a characteristic, requires individuals to be self-reflective, to monitor one’s moral-psychology, identity, and self-truths. To be ‘authentic’ is to act in a manner that genuinely expresses ‘who’ you are. The ‘authentic self’ is not built in isolation; it is constructed within and influenced by the structures in which they live. Dominant ideologies establish a set of ideas that are embodied by society as common sense and integrated into one’s habitus, accommodating for pre-established forms and roles (Loy & Booth, 2000). Simultaneously, humans are more than mere reflections of, and participants in, dominant structures. They are active participants in influencing and shaping social structures. They do this by reflecting on, experiencing or recognizing taken for granted norms and working to address them (Loy & Booth, 2000).

The effort towards change is effortful and enduring, regardless of the form it takes. Thus it is critical to anchor efforts and relationship to cause in core values and beliefs. This statement is as true for athletes as it is for organizations and entities working towards change. A shared passion or desire to make a difference or challenge the status quo also creates a foundation on which partnerships and relationships can be built. This athlete describes the importance of having a connection to the work:

_Do something that resonates; don’t just do something because everyone else is doing it, not who approaches you. You have to look inside yourself and ask, what is my connection? Why am I going to do this? And how am I going to be able to speak about this so that people understand why I care. If you can’t answer that, it’s not the right thing for you. It’s not going to be that meaningful._ (Athlete C)

Authenticity, sincerity, and connection are critical for numerous reasons including effectiveness, public perception, enjoyment, and perceived energy expenditure. Some athletes expressed that a connection to the cause was necessary, for engagement but that feeling of connection was personal, rather than decision or indication of the cause’s ‘worthiness’:
There are organizations that I tried to be engaged with, I wanted to, but I just didn’t feel that strong connection to it. That’s not to say that it’s not incredibly valuable and worthwhile, I just didn’t personally feel like, I didn’t feel a need to do it. I thought it was really interesting but for me to be engaged, I need to feel like, exactly that, not that I want to be involved, that I need to be involved and that is meaningful to me. (Athlete D)

Ensuring authenticity and connection to a cause requires athletes to be reflexive. The athletes interviewed in this study spoke about the opportunities presented to them, particularly after they have achieved world-class athletic success. As one athlete reflects:

> It’s funny, after you win the Olympics, no one calls you with sponsorship, they call you to help them with their causes, which is awesome. For me it’s probably the greatest thing about winning, the power you have to bring attention to issues that you care about and I have thought a lot about what I should do, all of these great causes. (Athlete F)

While some athletes view this opportunity as “awesome,” others find the experience overwhelming, and even burdensome. Athletes are attributed meaning and symbolise values that align with organizational objectives and thus, are sought after. Athletes may have the desire to get involved with a social initiative. If they do, it is important that athletes be mindful of what their goals are when engaging with a cause and how they may have the most impact. This member of a sport governing body expresses that it is also necessary to consider the intentions of the organization:

> So, if we have public organizations calling on our athletes to be spokespeople against an issue, I think that my counsel to athletes would be, in the same way it would be my counsel to a friend, ask yourself, why am I being called upon in this moment? Why wasn’t I being called upon before? There is a little bit of usery in that regard and sometimes everyone can get caught up in it. When organizations are surfacing for athletes in moments like that, because it feels to me like they could be exploitative. As I’ve said, if that’s not true of the athlete, and they do have an opinion, as far as I’m concerned, they are always free to express it as long as it is within the context and the values that we hold to be important. (Key Informant A)
Athletes need to consider what their desires are. They also need to question, if they are being asked by an organization, why are they being asked at this time? Does the organization see a fit or is it an opportunistic proposal based on visibility? Whether an athlete is being sought or is seeking an opportunity to engage in social causes, the process demands self-awareness to differentiate between complying with pro-social behaviour and the public’s expectation to do good and true desire to contribute in a particular area. The process of selecting a cause, organization, or initiative is not a process of deeming one cause worthier than others; it is a process of identifying ones’ passion, values, beliefs, and where they feel the desire to allocate energy. As one athlete describes:

There have been some organizations that have asked me to do things and I’ve declined because I can’t because either it’s a time issue, it’s a focus issue or for whatever reason it doesn’t captivate me. I think that there are so many athletes out there with so many wonderful stories and so much passion for their sport but also being involved and maybe some other athletes should do that. [...] It’s about fit, and you know, if it’s something important to me, I will make time for it. If it’s not, I have trouble because I want to be helpful, I want to give back, it’s hard to say no. More times I have said yes to things that I wasn’t quite engaged in then I don’t do a great job and later there is someone, rightfully saying, I wasn’t engaged. I should have probably said no. [...] They were disappointed and I learned a good lesson. I learned you have to be engaged no matter what and if you aren’t, don’t do it. (Athlete D)

When asked what makes it so difficult to say no, he goes on to explain:

I don’t know, what makes it hard? I think I’m just like everyone else. I want to be liked. Sometimes people take it quite personally. It’s their passion and they have a hard time to adjusting. I had an interaction recently where someone got quite angry at me on social media about not being engaged in the thing that they were engaged in and ‘how dare I?’ you just don’t want that interaction. You want to find that person and say, ‘I get it! It’s great, it’s awesome what you are doing but I just can’t do it!’ (Athlete D)
An authentic connection to a cause, driven by passion can create a powerful foundation from which to act. When there is a disconnect between one’s actions and expressions or internal state, the psychological and social result can be costly. A disconnect occurs when there is a misalignment between an athlete and a cause or an athlete’s and organization’s values. Gino et al. (2015) connect inauthenticity and dishonesty in that both experiences violate truth and therefore elicit a negative psychological response. As an athlete, trying to conform to a group or entity that does not align with that athlete’s values or experiences can cause distress. A misalignment in values, or as expressed by Athlete D, a disconnect between passion, fit, or focus will become evident in the relationship and the efforts put forward. This notion is also voiced by members of organizations with which athletes work:

You have to be very clear about the motivation on both sides. If your spokesperson is not really authentically committed to the issue and the cause, it will come through in what they say, how they say it, how often they say it and how long they are involved, it will come through. If the company is not really committed to making a difference in that space, in spite of all the other demands made on that company all the time, the pressures and demands, that will come through. It will be short lived. It will not be right. The authentic engagement on both sides and willingness to do the hard work and speak with the experts, work with the experts, that makes the difference. (Key Informant E)

Athletes identify numerous aspects to consider when becoming engaged with a cause. When athletes draw on their passions, lived experiences and ‘true’ desires to contribute in a particular space, it can have powerful impacts on athletes and organizations. It can lead to longstanding, collaborative efforts based on mutual understanding and respect. When describing the corporation’s relationship to an athlete, with whom they work, this employee describes:

[She is] so genuinely committed to the cause, so genuinely interested in making a difference, so honest and gives so much of herself in what she is doing for her [cause]. We have the upmost respect for her, not only as an athlete but as a human being, for her heart and her generosity of spirit. To me, that is the heart of our relationship, what makes it unique is that she gives so much and is so honest and so deeply committed, she will
push herself in a way that is unprecedented. She is also the most decent human being I have ever met. (Key Informant E)

Authenticity, sincerity, passion, and commitment shine through, drive efforts and create powerful platforms for change. Her advice to other organizations for engaging athletes in a social initiative is:

Look for authentic engagement, the serious commitment from both sides. If you are an athlete, or if you are an [organization], looking for that serious commitment to really make a difference in that area and because hopefully the partnership will be long and successful. That real commitment to that common agenda is what will sustain you through the years and the evolutions and the ups and the downs as there are in many long-term partnerships or relationships. There are ups and downs. I think that is key. I would say from the viewpoint of athletes, and any high-profile people that might get involved, I think there is some skepticism of the motivation of the corporation for what they are doing, that they are actually going to try and exploit the celebrity of that particular person for their organization’s reputation, brand, etc. I do think that it is important that you really do see and know that there is that authentic commitment, that it isn’t about either party trading in on the strengths of the other, making sure that it is really authentic on both sides. (Key Informant E)

A commitment to authenticity is a commitment to ‘being true to oneself’ and acting in alignment with this ‘truth’, yet truth is subject to an individual’s construction and interpretation of their experience(s). “[A]ll social reality is ‘pre-interpreted’ in that it only has form as (and is constituted by) the outcome of social actors’ beliefs and interpretations,” (Jary & Jary, 1995 in Donnelly, 2000). Truth requires you to ‘own’ your thoughts, behaviours, emotions, needs, and wants (Gino et al., 2015). This explicit expression of one’s self-truth, to align with cause, requires one to expose oneself, establishing openness into an individual’s being. Authenticity and sincerity require athletes to be vulnerable. Depending on the cause, there is a level of risk, perceived and real. To create an alignment between the athlete and a cause, athletes are asked to share something about themselves. When this information is aligned with dominant discourse and is merely communicating experiences to demonstrate alignment, there is little perceived risk.
This expression of self-truth becomes more challenging or ‘risky’ when associated with causes or stories that are not “socially palatable,” challenge hegemonic norms, dominant structures, or address stigmatized issues. Darnell (2012) draws attention to the fact that, the more an athlete’s stance deviates from socially acceptable practice, the more exposure to personal risk. However, it can also be quite powerful. As this employee of a corporation working towards social change explains about her experiences with a particular athlete:

[She] was a first for us, and has a very special role with us. It took courage, she exposed herself and put herself out there in a way that was very unique. I don’t think our campaign would be as successful without her early leadership, without her authentic leadership. (Key Informant E)

In this scenario, the athlete works with the corporation to address an issue that is socially stigmatized. She explains how the athlete’s testimonial and openness were able to transform the campaign, enabling the organization and cause to reach and connect with a broader audience, creating momentum for change. The perceived vulnerability of the athlete in this scenario is high, but so is the potential opportunity to challenge hegemonic norms and stigma. Some of the most significant shifts in dominant discourse come from those who have had the courage to share their own experiences, shedding light on injustice, maltreatment, and truths.

Sport can provide a platform from which athletes can use their voice; the choice to do so is theirs. Another core value considered important in engagement in a social initiative is credibility:

I feel really gifted to have the voice to use and then sometimes you have to know when to shut up too. I think credibility is something you can lose really fast and that’s a balance I have tried to maintain and that’s probably been the most difficult one. I don’t want to take advantage of the platform. [...] The most important thing to me is to maintain credibility so I can use my voice in a way with integrity. (Athlete C).

Two aspects of credibility are trustworthiness and expertise. The trustworthiness of a source is often a subjective factor related to integrity, moral values, fit, and previous behavior (Alcaniz, Caceres, Perez, 2010). Expertise pertains to the knowledge one has about a particular topic. It is
defined as “exceptionally high levels of performance on a particular task or within a given domain,” (Bourne, Kole & Healy, 2014, p. 1). When deciding to engage in a cause, it is crucial for athletes to be informed about the cause as well as the organizations with which the athlete will be working. When entering into or building collaborative partnerships, determining the organization’s objectives, strategy, motivation, credibility, and effectiveness can help inform and shape the relationship. It will also influence the work.

Alternatively, if during this process there is information that sheds light on discrepancies on either side, the process of gathering information can dissuade an athlete or organization from working together. Acquiring information and understanding the context and complexities of a cause allow both parties to be informed and enhance the effectiveness. The ways through which an athlete can gain the necessary expertise include: lived experience (naturally occurring or created opportunity), academic formation, and educational tools. Education and expertise are particularly critical when lack thereof can do more harm to a cause than good. For example, harm can occur by reinforcing stereotypes or stigma, or areas of power inequality.

There are numerous things to consider when exploring the opportunity (or perhaps in some cases the necessity) to become engaged in a cause or advocacy effort. At times, the process can be overwhelming, but ultimately, it’s a matter of aligning values, beliefs, and experiences. As one athlete states:

Just do something! Don’t try and move a mountain, first of all. Don’t try and do something huge. Do something that resonates. Don’t just do something because everyone else is doing it, not who approaches you. You have to look inside yourself and ask, what is my connection. Why am I going to do this and how am I going to be able to speak about this so that people understand why I care. If you can’t answer that, it’s not the right thing for you. It’s not going to be that meaningful. There are so many great organizations in every realm in every area out there that would love the support of any kind, be creative! (Athlete C).

Authenticity and credibility become a platform from which efforts can be made, and voices can be heard. Those who can claim a legitimate standing in a cause are more likely to gain credibility
and attention for an issue. The effectiveness and potential to impact change is enhanced through connections, expertise, personal experience and an ideological match (Wilson, 2013) which works to create opportunities.

6.2 Identifying Opportunity

The collaborative engagement of an athlete and organizational resources can accomplish objectives, advance agendas, and add value (financial, social, and/or cultural). There is no one size fits all mold for social engagement and collaboration between athlete and organization (corporate or non-profit) for social change, nor is there one path or means for activism or advocacy. Rather than trying to lay out the different ways in which an athlete can engage in a social initiative, this paper seeks to provide generalized concepts to guide athletes and organizations alike.

The athlete needs to be visible; an organization needs to be aware that an athlete is interested. There is a misconception that an athlete needs to be highly successful (i.e. have an Olympic medal) to add value to an initiative. This is not the case. In building her own initiative, this athlete discovered that no matter what level, there is a role that athletes can play:

*We decided to go for high profile athletes, which made sense initially. Let’s go for high profile athletes because that will give us exposure and then we will be able to have sponsors, which allows us to hire people, which allows us to have more events then reach more girls. [...] Over time, we have seen that it’s not just about the high-profile athlete, it’s actually more important that they care about and connect with the girls and maybe they aren’t swamped as top, high profile athletes who get all those requests. We have changed a bit to ambassadors that are national level athletes [...] who are local, club leaders and they are equally as valuable to us. [...] The value of athletes for cause is great, I think a lot of people recognize that which is why we get a lot of requests. I would say go for the medium and low-profile athletes and find the people who really connect deeply to the cause. [...] It is valuable to have those who are more available. They need it*
and we need them. You can help that person so much and they can help you so much.

(Athlete F)

The capacity of an athlete to work towards change is not measured by their public profile, but the ability and availability to meet the needs of the organization, contributing towards objectives. The requirements of an initiative are often diverse, and thus the profile of the athlete with the best fit is not uniform across all causes. This is described by an athlete relations manager for a non-profit organization:

*We have a lot of different opportunities to engage with the community and wider public so we need athletes who are able to do all of that. If we were to have, say, 20 pro athletes who have huge profiles but no time, that’s a limiting factor, that limits us. If we were to have 20 national team athletes, but nobody you have really heard of and aren’t doing sponsorship things but have a lot of time on their hands, well that gives us one area we can focus on but leaves a void in the other.* (Key Informant D)

To an organization, the appeal of successful athletes can be alluring but not necessary. It is more critical that those involved have a connection, are engaged and fit the needs or objectives of the initiative or organization.

*Figure 1. Navigating opportunities for athletes and sport social initiatives*

To build a partnership, or to work together, there must be an overlap between the need of the organization and the interest of the athlete. The strength is in collaboration, a communicative process through which opportunities are identified based on an athlete’s strengths, skills, and desires and the organization’s needs and objectives. If opportunities are created that are mutually
beneficial, there is an increased likelihood of sustainability and satisfaction of both the athlete and the organization. It is necessary to find the overlap and work to expand these opportunities to meet the needs and desires of both sides, while working within the confines of athlete availability and organizational resources.

One of the questions that organizations will have is, how do you expand the overlap, or maximize the effectiveness between the needs of an organization with the wants and needs or skills of the athlete. Whether it is education or communicating with the athletes what the needs of the organization are or vice versa, coming up with creative or compromising solutions that address both. (Key Informant G)

The process of identifying the skills and knowledge that an athlete has that can add value to the organization is one that requires self-reflection and a level of self-awareness. Expertise can be based on lived experience, academic formation, or informal education and is likely what connects the athlete to an initiative. The strengths of an athlete (and conversely the weaknesses) will shape the modes and means of engagement. Organizations can gain value through leveraging the strengths and skills of athletes. A member of a sport governing body and previous employee of a non-profit organization outlines some of the critical questions:

It is important to ask the athlete what they want out of this, it has to be a win-win, or there is no sustainability. Let’s be strategic, build it around what you want out of it as well as the gaps in our business. I run my business on a very strategic framework. This is our strategy, where is it now? What is the “why”? What is the winning aspiration? What do you want to get out of it? Where do you want to do it? What is your interest? How do you want to do it? Do you want to do it through your own voice through social media because you are really good at the PR type framework? Do you want to do it by contributing your skill to the charity because you are really good at something, like finance? However you want to do it, we need to keep you invested in it and then look at the skill gaps. Here is what we need, here are the gaps, and you as an athlete, what gaps are you interested in filling? Then they will feel like they are contributing as well as getting benefits. (Key Informant B)
Establishing both the organizational needs, the athlete’s skills and desires, and developing a framework to collaborate may take time but it can create relationships and efforts that are more meaningful. With more strategic development, the efforts are likely to be enduring, effective, and valuable to both sides.

The most visible examples of athlete engagement are externally facing, athletes using their platform to gain visibility and communicate messages, as a means to encourage followers and communicate key messages (Darnell, 2012). The value that athletes provide in this framework is attributed to perceived credibility, symbolic capital, recognition, providing a competitive advantage, visibility, and access (Babiak et al., 2012). The mediatisation and grandeur of the Olympic Games has led to the emergence of “heroes,” who are perceived to have celebrated ideals. Once athletes have acquired this elevated status through sporting success, it is possible for the athlete to have social force. Their image and story have inspirational effects on audiences, or those who identify with these “symbolic leaders,” (Klapp, 1963). The sport and entertainment marketing industries are continuing to expand. The values espoused by the Olympic Games are a tool used to capture audiences (Kidd, 2013). Athletes no longer represent only themselves and their nations; they have come to represent the symbolic cultural meanings of high-performance sport and the Olympic Movement. Organizations or groups of people borrow on this symbolic capital to communicate their messages and platforms.

Athletes are widely accepted as role models and ambassadors because athletes are perceived to comply with and embody cultural and social ideals. This assumption highlights the continuing need for authenticity, self-awareness, and self-truth because there is significant pressure to comply more rigidly with behaviours and identify with traits that are celebrated (Dacin & Dacin, 2011; Alder & Alder, 1989). Athletes in their prime may enjoy this ‘perch’ from which they can advocate. This placement in society requires continuous work to maintain, and while there are examples of athletes who can maintain their relevance within current cultural constructs, for many, there is the opinion that athletes have a particular time frame during which they have certain aspects of ‘celebrity’ or public appeal, for example:

I do think Olympic athletes have a shelf life, if that isn’t too rude of a word. You are famous for the quadrennial. It’s your moment and you have your moment of fame and
you’re in the spotlight for the next quadrennial if you compete in that Olympics, you still have that sunlight on you but at some point, an athlete retires from their competitive career and that is a difficult transition for many athletes. (Key Informant F)

Each quadrennial brings new Olympic athletes onto the public agenda via media coverage. While some athletes can maintain status despite retirement or variable performances, others fade from media attention. Athletes work to maintain their public status and cultural relevance, or they alter the work that they do. For Athlete H, this has meant maximizing what she could do while ensuring the work was directed and purposeful. When asked about what has changed in her roles through the process of retirement, Athlete H states:

Maybe the how, but not why. Why comes back to my values and my purpose and trying to maximize my effort to have an impact. The roles have changed, but I wanted them to change, I am happy that they changed. I didn’t want to just be an ambassador, I wanted to build skills so now I get to do more. Right now, I am writing a grant proposal and maybe others might not want to do that but its great because it’s a new skill for me and it’s taking this idea of how you create an initiative and bringing down to the detail and communicating it effectively […]. It’s less of a the… the platform isn’t the same. I don’t have that same access, I am not speaking to the media three times a week for a World Cup Competition but I am totally comfortable with that. (Athlete H).

The reasons that athletes engage remain the same across my cohort of participants through their transition. The roles often shift from more externally facing roles to internally facing roles. Many known examples of athlete engagement are those that are externally facing, capitalizing on the platform and visibility that athletes have. The intent in these roles is to be in public spaces. There are also athletes who work within organizations, after their transition or by choice during their athletic career, with aims to provide value within the organization:

For some, athletes are the stamp on the outside of a box while you have nothing to do with the inside of it, while there are many people inside making the wheels go around and organizing everything. (Key Informant G)
Athletes in this study acquired transferrable skills during their athletic careers, for example, communication, strategic planning, and media relations. The development and implementation of these skills can lead to enduring and sustainable relationships that may flux or evolve through the relationship. Internally facing engagement would make use of, or develop skills that are oriented to organizational infrastructure and programming. It may involve working within an organization to steer strategic direction, shape program implementation, developing campaigns to increase awareness or raise funds. There are numerous examples of Canadian athletes who attain positions, created organizations, or collaborate with those within organizations to accomplish their goals while developing or using skills acquired through life experience or academic formation. Though these positions are not as publicly acknowledged, they are equally, and sometimes more, valuable in reaching organizational objectives. Both external and internally facing roles are used across corporate, non-profit, advocacy, and activism efforts towards social change.

Sustainable relationships are built on the overlap between the athletes’ skills and needs and the organization’s needs. It is important to investigate and invest (financially or with time) to develop the relationship and the skills. Sustainable relationships also allow for an athlete’s role to evolve, accommodating for structural flux and changes in an athlete’s career. This investment and flexibility benefits the organization and will provide an opportunity for athletes to expand their skills, identity and ease the process of transition from active to retired athlete.

Numerous factors influence the form that athlete engagement takes. These factors include an athlete’s capabilities and the balance of demands placed on them, and is also influenced by the opportunities available, or created for them. As one subject stated, “if there is an athlete who is truly interested in contributing, making a difference and committed to the cause, there will be a way for them to be involved,” (Key Informant D). Two factors became highly evident in determining an athlete’s availability: time and energy. When speaking about the amount of time and energy, athletes in this study focused on time and energy relating to training and performance as opposed to socioeconomic factors which are also relevant to decisions about engagement in social initiatives.
It is necessary to outline an athlete’s capability and capacity to dedicate energy and time towards a cause, particularly when an athlete is active. This allows athletes and organizations to manage expectations. The availability of an athlete fluctuates over the course of a season and an athletic career, and influences the depth and type of engagement an athlete can have. Many athletes have spoken about energy management as being critical to performance in sport:

*Everyone has a different mentality around energy management. Our team was very protective and careful with our energy and time. They encouraged us to manage our energy, and for me, that was valuable since I tend to overextend. At the same time, it is really valuable to have community involvement.* (Athlete F)

The challenge for Olympians is the emphasis placed on the year leading into an Olympic Games. During this year, training, preparation, and performance are critical to qualify for the Olympic Games. Athletes garner the most attention in the year preceding the Olympic Games and, if an athlete performs, immediately after the Olympic Games. This challenge in timing was voiced as a challenge for athletes to navigate:

*When it rains, it pours with athletes and quadrennials and the attention is all concentrated in that one, pre-Olympic year when your training matters the most then all of a sudden you have all these requests. If you are cause-minded, it is harder to turn down the requests because it is an opportunity to contribute. I really had to work at it all the time, prioritizing, assessing and evaluating my energy.* (Athlete F)

The emphasis on podium performance in the current context of high-performance sport necessitates that athletes dedicate significant amounts of time and focus on training, competition, and recovery. While excellence is predicated on medals won, athletes remain limited in what they can pursue outside of sport because of the belief that the energy and focus elsewhere may negatively impact sport performance. For example, this athlete describes the mentality around energy conservation held by the coaches of her team, and the perspective that she took while competing:
The Canadian team was very protective and careful about energy [...]. I really had to work at it all the time, to prioritize, assess and evaluate the energy. I remember it was a big part of what my coach and I would work on together, managing my energy. Having to apply discipline, just letting go. I think there was some made up system that I had where I could feel that I only had a certain amount of credits. It’s like a little energy management tool, like a bank account. Maybe you only have 20 bucks of energy. You need 18 to train, which leaves you two to have some fun, some family and [non-profit organization].

(Athlete F)

Energy management is highly individual. For some athletes, to focus on performance and the pursuit of excellence requires an all-consuming attention, leaving little opportunity to engage in initiatives outside of training and competing. For many of the athletes included in this study, energy management was the primary factor limiting their engagement. To perform at a high level, it takes the gathering, storing, and release of energy, regardless of your intentions or desire. Athletes must be reflexive about what they want, how they want to engage, the skills they have and the energy they have.

Knowing what your limitations are is important. I am one person. I don’t believe in moving mountains or changing the world or saving the world; it’s impossible. Anyone who says that they are going to do that is a fraud because the world doesn’t work that way. I believe in shifting, I believe in impacting change through others and motivating, encouraging or empowering others with funds or support or awareness and I think I can move one little grain of sand in my lifetime. If I can do that, I am pretty happy, just being part of the shift that is happening. (Athlete C)

The impact athletes have on social causes varies, depending on the organization, initiative, and the athlete. In some cases, athletes have had a direct effect on the cause, whether producing structural, institutional or organizational change, or, if the initiative is aimed at a particular population, directly on the target demographic. In other cases, athletes have had an indirect impact through sharing stories, through raising awareness, advocacy efforts, and raising funds necessary to implement the programs or facilitate change. Rather than providing a how-to guide for athletes to engage with social initiatives, this chapter presents athlete and organization
representations of core engagement values. The core values that emerged are authenticity, sincerity and credibility and also the process of identifying opportunity. These elements require both the athlete and the organization to be reflexive of their character, objectives, skills, and desires. The process of identifying opportunities can ensure that the objectives and desires of both athletes and organizations are met. Ensuring authenticity, sincerity, and credibility requires a further exploration of why athletes and organizations engage in social initiatives and work towards social change.
Chapter 7
Towards an Understanding of Action

The significance of sport and philanthropy exists in the role that sport plays in the cultural fabric of our society. Sport is intrinsically about aspiration and becomes inspirational in the eyes of onlookers. It requires discipline, passion, dedication, and athletes that excel at the highest level of sport have a platform and an opportunity to be able to inspire, motivate and leverage their celebrity to make a difference in causes and issues that are important to them. (Roy & Graeff, 2003, p. 160).

There is a long history of athletes engaging in social initiatives associated with the Olympic Movement. To understand and make sense of this phenomenon, it is critical to explore the reasons why athletes engage in social initiatives and why organizational entities work with athletes towards social change. Sport’s mythopoeic nature, compliance with liberal democratic ideals that promote humanitarianism and good sportsmanship, and ties to nationhood are all qualities that lend themselves to creating a platform from which initiatives can be built; the character of the athletes lending value to social initiatives and programs (Kidd, 2010). This chapter explores why organizations engage athletes for social initiatives and why athletes engage in social initiatives. Focusing first on the organizational perspective, I will deploy Bourdieu’s framework of capital as a lens to inform our understanding of why organizations engage athletes when working towards social objectives. Then reasons, and motivations for athlete engagement in social initiatives, from the athletes’ perspective will also be presented and analyzed.

7.1 Organizational Perspective

A heightened social consciousness of consumers has driven a need for organizations to establish a meaningful identity and symbolic value that differentiates organizations in the marketplace (Bigné Alcañiz, Chumpitaz, Cáceres & Currás Pérez, 2010). Historically, sport has been associated with festivals, attracting spectators and inviting them to engage in a spirit of
celebration. Spectators are typically drawn in by the excitement and uncertainty of sporting contest (Hargreave, 1987). Participating in, and/or spectating sport is captivating; the experience elicits emotions and passion. Olympic sport is regarded as a means to articulate national pride while stimulating connection, bolstering identity, and providing pleasure (Van Hilvoorde et al., 2010). Sport and athletes have contributed towards social objectives, the formation of stories, and the communication of messages. McNamee (2006) argues that the virtues required to be successful in sporting competition include courage, persistence, determination, discipline, and integrity; thus, the prevalent belief is that sport serves a positive function in culture and society. Members of the Canadian Olympic Team, particularly successful ones, become public figures and have the values associated with sport and the Olympic Movement attributed to them (Darnell, 2007). The celebration of virtue and victory provides athletes with value and leads to the emergence of heroes. Athletes become the embodiment of desired and celebrated cultural ideals: exceptionalism, competence, character, and courage (Werner, 2013). Together, the connection to national pride and the attributed values can be used to manufacture capital and symbolic meaning that companies and organizations can use to represent themselves, communicate messages and sell products and ideas.

### 7.1.1 Defining Capital: Bourdieu and Sport

Symbolic meaning, elevated status, and embodiment of cultural ideals can provide individuals with various forms of value and power. Corporations and organizations can leverage this value and power to mobilize resources and work towards an objective. As stated previously, Bourdieu expands the notion of ‘capital’ from monetary resources to encompass a broader definition of value. Bourdieu’s expanded definition of capital includes cultural capital and social capital. Through the process of training, competition and the mediatisation of their athletic pursuits, athletes build various forms of capital that can be harnessed for social initiatives.
7.1.1.1 Cultural Capital

Bourdieu traditionally defines cultural capital in terms of academic formation and intellectual skills that provide benefit and value (Bourdieu, 1986). The concept of cultural capital has also been explored and expanded to encompass other forms of culturally desirable traits that produce benefits. Sport is a cultural commodity. Sport creates a relatable platform through which audience members can vicariously experience fundamental aspects of social life: “success and failure, good and bad behaviour, ambition and achievement, discipline and effort and so on,” (Hargreaves 1987, p. 12). At the international level, it creates a platform to celebrate nationhood and develop pride (Hilvoorde et al., 2010; Roche, 2002). By the dramatic essence, attributed values and the ability to elicit emotions through symbolic representation, sport can draw attention. The Olympic Games, one of the most prominent global sporting competitions, has distinguished itself and gained popularity based on the values of Olympism and pursuit of human excellence (Kidd, 1996). As the guiding philosophy for the Olympic Movement, Olympism creates the ideological infrastructure that supports and legitimizes the Olympic Games as a celebration of humanity beyond the corporeal experience.

The cultural significance of sport and the Olympic Games, the huge media audiences and the values attributed to athletes create an opportunity to produce benefits. Athletes are seen to embody ideal traits (Jones, 2011; Werner 2013) and possess valued positions within society (Carter, 2009) creating opportunity for the athlete and potential for the movement as a whole. This member of a sport governing body describes what he believes are the responsibility of the Olympic Movement and, by proxy, the responsibility of this organization to develop athletes so that they live up to the values of the Olympic Movement:

*What we have to do is identify opportunities that make sense to us strategically because we think of ourselves as an organization that has the ability, our winning aspiration is to transform Canada through the power of sport. That’s a big way of us saying that the rings should transcend what sport represents on the field of play and do bigger things for goodness. What we have to try and decide, either what is important to the country and what can sport do for the country, or by extension, what can our athletes do with us for the country? [...] If you believe, as I do, that sport is a laboratory for leadership, then we*
have a great collection of possibilities in our midst every day and we think we can, and should, have a larger responsibility to develop more leaders, to develop [athletes], when [they] decide to step away from sport, to be something more as a symbol of national pride even when [they] are done competing. (Key Informant A)

He describes how sport is a reflection, of broader society, and how sport, through the Olympic Movement is a platform from which athletes become a symbol, representing something more than themselves. As athletes take on symbolic meaning, they are ascribed value and desirability. Even in posing the question, ‘what can our athletes do with us for the country?’ he is demonstrating his belief that athletes can, and should, be expected to do more and to contribute in some way, to broader social efforts.

The Olympic Games are a sporting spectacle that demonstrates the potential of human capabilities, enveloped in claims of idealistic values and can be leveraged as an ideological platform. Olympic sport continues to be featured on multiple media platforms capturing large audiences. As the Olympic industry, and broader sport industry, expand, garnering public attention, athletes gain status through their athletic accomplishments. Athletes have been heralded as “symbolic leaders,” defined by Orin Klapp as selected members of society who emerge and are perceived to hold celebrated values and ideals (Klapp, 1949, p. 45). Athletes today are still expected by sport governing bodies and broader society to embody the ideals of Olympism and good sportsmanship, which are interpreted in a manner that allows the Movement to be locally relevant. A member of a sport-governing body describes how the placement of Olympic athletes within society, along with the expectations and assumptions of their values, works to elevate athletes in a manner that can potentially provide athletes with cultural power.

It could be said that any of our athletes who have competed on a national team, but certainly those who have competed at the Olympic level, in that moment, they become public figures at some level, certainly known to our country. They have a responsibility in that inherently, we all do: Olympism [...] It can leave room for individualism in its context but all have a responsibility to hold that up and prop that up. [...] We think of our athletes as the highest expression of the brand. The reason we call on athletes to be out in front is because they are the living, breathing, walking, talking expression of our
brand. [...] That is a very unique position for the Olympic Movement, and a powerful one. (Key Informant A)

Here, he voices the unique opportunity presented to Olympic athletes, particularly within the Olympic window. He also describes the responsibility that comes with being a member of that community and that comes with the opportunity of competing at the Olympic Games. The cultural production of Canadian Olympic athletes differs from the media and entertainment nexus that produces ‘cultural elites’ or celebrities. The values attributed to sport, the Olympic Movement and athletes provide a more rooted connection to social causes (perceived or legitimate). Athletes no longer only represent themselves, they have come to hold symbolic and cultural meanings (Szto, 2011), their images inspirational and status elevated, receiving popular sentiment. Olympic athletes become national emblems (Von Hilvoorde et al., 2010) and through media portrayals, audiences believe they know their national sports heroes (Darnell, 2005). Through this process, athletes build capital and a platform from which they can employ their social force by garnering attention, providing a point of differentiation and inciting interest or intrigue.

Bourdieu identified three forms of cultural capital: (i) embodied, (ii) objectified and (iii) institutionalized. Each form of cultural capital will be explored within the context of Olympic sport and how each contributes to the understanding why organizations work with athletes for social change.

(i) The embodied state: Higher, faster, stronger

Sport is a physical pursuit. Many athletes set their sights on the Olympic Games but to gain entry, athletes much reach the highest levels of performance and prove their athletic prowess. The Olympic motto, higher, faster, stronger, is representative of sport’s focus on the corporeal experience: skill, speed, strength, power and endurance. Athletes are required to invest significant amounts of time in training and bodily upkeep to have the opportunity to compete at the Olympic level. Pierre Bourdieu defines the embodied state as:
The work of acquisition is work on oneself (self-improvement), an effort that presupposes a personal cost [...], an investment, above all of time, but also of that socially constituted form of libido, libido sciendi, with all the privation, renunciation and sacrifice that it may entail. (p. 83)

Athletes are positioned as the embodiment of the Olympic Movement, the values of Olympism, and the values of sport. Athletes acquire cultural capital through their training, their sporting experiences, and their rise to the highest level of competition. Sporting values and Olympic values are perceived to become a part of an athlete’s habitus and through this process, athletes are positioned as influencers:

Athletes can do things a lot of people can’t. They can open doors for you; they can inspire people. They’re on a different platform than your day-to-day person out there and whether it’s right or wrong, people look to athletes and see what they are doing. They follow what they are doing and I think at the bottom of it all, they look to athletes for inspiration. Some people might look to others but many look to athletes, the way that sport is looked at in our community, across Canada and globally. Sport is on a high platform. That’s why you see, every four years, people stop and watch the Olympics. Everybody knows what is going on, the majority of people are following it and are looking at sport and feel their country’s pride. They see that as a big resemblance of them on the international stage. I think that’s why people look towards athletes in general. They also see them as doing something they could never do or something they tried but at a lower level. It’s amazing to see. When you look at the Olympics, higher, faster, stronger as their tagline, and see the athletes always trying to push that, they are doing what, jumping higher, running faster, being stronger. It’s amazing to see it, and it continues to give people that ‘wow’ factor. That translates into people saying, I am so impressed by what you do and all the things you do so people continue to follow what they are doing. That’s a long way of saying that athletes have a unique position and we want to be able to work with athletes to work in the community and create social change as the bottom line. (Key Informant D)
This athlete relations manager who works with athletes as ambassadors for a non-profit organization, speaks to the inspirational effect that athletes can have by being an Olympic athlete; the sense of pride that athletes can bring a nation and the assumed translation between athletic performance and assumptions about who that person is. Athletes are positioned as inspirational figures; their lived experiences comply with neoliberal values that emphasize individualistic achievement (Margolis & Walsh, 2003). Progressive performance standards require athletes to push their bodies further, exploring the limits of human capabilities. With that, there are assumptions made about character traits that athletes possess. A member of corporation working with an athlete towards social change explains:

"By virtue of being an athlete, people believe you are strong. It takes great determination, perseverance, and dedication over many years. [Athlete] is known to be a fighter and a champion and a warrior and all of the imagery of what it takes to be an athlete of Olympic caliber." (Key Informant E)

Athletes are perceived to embody the process of free will, dedication, determination, and perseverance enabling them to achieve new levels of athleticism and performance (Cooky & McDonald, 2005; McNamme, 2006). Their bodies and athletic feats are put on display, telling a story, and ascribing value both physically and morally that can be used to influence others or a situation to work towards a particular objective.

(ii) The objectified state: Money for medals

Cultural capital in the objectified state is defined in relation to material objects and media. It exists symbolically and materially and is “effective capital only insofar as it is appropriated by agents,” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 85). The Olympic Games provide a stage to celebrate competitiveness, placing glory on the victors. While the Olympic Movement preaches the view of placing sport at the service of humanity (Olympic Charter, 2016), marketing of the Olympic Games and the Canadian sport-media nexus place value on physical performance (Darnell, 2007; Darnell 2005). With progressive performance standards, success in sport is often defined by records broken, and medals won. The emphasis on high performance is embedded within contemporary societal ideals, reinforced by Canadian sport policy and funding structures
Canada places significant value on medal performances, celebrating and elevating the athletes who achieve them, medals granting privilege and access.

Beyond contemporary values of high-performance sport and definitions of success, athletes possess objectified cultural capital because of the power, influence, and attention they garner on the field of play. The capital built can be used when an organization has the capacity to translate this into symbolic or economic capital. The participants from organizations agreed that the organizations can leverage an athlete’s status to achieve organizational objectives. For example, a member of a corporation working with an athlete towards social change describes how athletes, particularly those who are high profile, can garner broader attention to a cause:

*The authentic engagement of everyone, including those who are high profile, and in particular, those who are high profile, it draws attention to the issue that people may not have paid attention to if they weren’t hearing the words out of the mouth of someone they admire and respect […]. It has tremendous power for good and for not good, and in the case of our campaign, our spokespeople are using their position, their success for the greater good in a very profound way.* (Key Informant E)

Numerous members of organizations that work with athletes for social change included in this study express that the platform awarded to athletes creates an opportunity for impact, and that impact can be positive or negative. The values ascribed to athletes through media portrayals, marketing campaigns, and various forms of communication, give athletes perceived credibility. This perceived credibility is leveraged by organizations to symbolically or overtly convey messages. It can influence perceptions and actions of those who follow the athletes, targeted markets, and broader society.

(iii) The institutionalized state: Athlete, OLY

The institutionalized form of capital exists in the form of qualification. While traditionally focused on academic credentials, in sport qualification standards can be used as a form of institutional recognition. As with academic qualification, Olympic qualification works as “a certificate of cultural competence which confers on its holder a conventional, constant, legally
guaranteed value with respect to culture,” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 86). Olympic qualification standards and the competitive process which

\[\text{out of the continuum of infinitesimal differences between performances, produces sharp, absolute, lasting differences, such as that which separates the last successful candidate from the first unsuccessful one, and institutes an essential difference between the officially recognized, guaranteed competence and simple cultural capital, which is constantly required to prove itself.} \ (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 86)\]

The recent introduction ‘OLY’ as a designation earned by Olympians by participating at an Olympic Games, similar to the designation of ‘MSc’ for a Master of Science, through the IOC is a demonstration of how sport produces cultural capital.

Institutional structures, in this case, sport governing bodies such as the IOC, IFs and the Canadian sport system, create the boundaries that differentiate Olympians from non-Olympians. Those who meet the standards receive elevated status and power. The material and symbolic capital attributed to a particular status are inversely correlated with the number of individuals possessing that status. Theoretically, as an athlete rises in the ranks competitively, gaining access to new levels of competition, their symbolic capital will increase. The physical demands and focus (not to mention access to resources and some amount of luck) necessitated by the next level of competition will limit the number of athletes capable or willing to reach that new level. As a result, the perceived symbolic capital of Olympians is superior to non-Olympians, medalists to non-medalists. Objectified cultural capital is gained through qualification and performance. In reflecting on the influence that an athlete’s status grants, a member of a sport governing body, who has previously worked with athletes on advocacy efforts, explains that athletes are not necessarily aware of the influence they hold.

\[\text{The interesting thing is the power that an athlete has, especially athletes who have done well. Actually, you have way more influence than most athletes think they do in influencing government on their cause.} \ (\text{Key Informant B})\]
When asked to elaborate on why athletes may be granted this power and influence, in this case with government:

Because you’re a homegrown success story. That doesn’t happen often. You are also still here in Canada. [...] Athletes are extremely endearing to Canada. The government has thrown a lot of money in sport in the last 6-8 years, so they like to see success stories come out of sport. (Key Informant B)

Canadian sport policy prioritizes high-performance sport and the production of medals, allocating more resources to those sports and athletes identified as having value and significance to Canadians (Kikulis, 2013; Goss Gilroy 2017). Kikulis (2013) argues that athletes at the Olympic Games are the highly visible part of the Canadian sport system. Through investing in high-performance sport, the Government of Canada is working to produce success stories that are more tangible and relatable than other forms of institutional success. An athlete’s victory is celebrated and shared; their success is the country’s success. Athletes are the subject of these stories, the face of success and the embodiment of values and national pride. Through their athletic pursuits, they are bestowed institutional capital. As Van Hilvoorde et al., (2010) argue, high-performance sport offers a platform to communicate messages, elicits emotions, and passion that connect society to complex notions of national identity, esteem, and loyalty. All of which can create an opportunity in the social sphere.

7.1.1.2 Social Capital

Olympic athletes are granted a perch from which they can use their voice, leverage relationships, and gain access. Once granted the status of ‘Olympian,’ athletes are granted access to new social circles. Social capital is “the aggregate or potential resource which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition,” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 86). For athletes, social capital can be used in numerous ways for positive social impact, for example:

Because of the platform that athletes have, they can sometimes get us meetings that we wouldn’t be able to get [...] Athletes with a large number of sponsors and who are
willing to open the doors to those sponsors that is incredibly helpful to us because [we] don’t exist unless we have funds coming in on a regular basis. There are two pieces to the advocacy side. The first, get people to think of sport in a different way; the next is to impassion people to make a difference and donate. Positive public speakers, lots of opportunity in the media to get messages out there is helpful. Contacts through connections. (Key Informant D)

Through their physical performance on an Olympic stage, facilitated by the vast media attention, stories shared, and values attributed to them, athletes build spheres of influence. Using their personal connections and credibility, they can garner attention, build awareness, and support for organizations or causes. Aligning with more traditional forms of social capital, athletes can leverage relationships built to access higher power individuals or those who have the economic capital to contribute. Athletes can use their platform to communicate messages to an audience through various forms of media, for example:

Celebrity has value because they are recognizable, so people pay attention. Using celebrity can make sure that more people pay attention and make sure that the conversation is even louder and has more attention put on it. It helps that they’re stories of people who are celebrities because they have more news value so people will pay attention. (Key Informant E)

The Olympic Games provide a widely visible platform for athletes to garner media and public attention that build ‘celebrity.’ The cultural relevance of sport and the spectacle of the Olympic Games create an opportunity for athletes to become role models or symbols with the capacity to influence others. Individuals who have accomplished outstanding achievements build capacity to influence those who follow them to adopt behaviors and lifestyles (Bush, Martin & Bush, 2004). This influence can also translate to informing social conscience, awareness, and action. Access to social media audiences is also valuable. It allows the messages to be communicated to broader demographics. It also creates the opportunity for audiences to communicate back. The volume of social capital is only one facet; the value of social capital is predicated on an athlete’s ability to effectively mobilize their network to support and act, requiring social skills, social grace, and the ability to communicate. It is necessary to invest time
and effort to maintain connections and ensure the relationships are strong and enduring to maintain social capital

7.1.1.3 Economic Capital

Bourdieu posits that economic capital is the root of all forms of capital, that the value of cultural and social capital lies in the capacity to convert social status and power into economic capital, as explained by this key informant:

*That inspiration goes in all directions. Then it goes to the other side, I mean athletes are used in a whole brand mechanism. That’s why you have a price which is valued higher than a normal person. That is why you get sponsorship and TV rights, people want to be associated with you, and we use that in the same way. We use it to raise money so we can run more programs. We use the value of the athletes to raise money, bring awareness to the cause, which adds credibility, which also raises more money. (Key Informant G)*

Capital is premised on systems of exchanges of social relations, symbolic value and material goods. This key informant describes how, through sport, athletes build ‘worth’ in various forms that can be used directly, or converted to fulfill organizational or social objectives. While some athletes donate money directly to a cause, most Canadian Olympic athletes, have limited surplus financial means that can be delivered directly to a cause. This should not prevent them from engaging in efforts towards positive social change. Establishing a relationship, enabling the synergistic use of athletes and organizational resources, based on shared passions and respect can create significant value not only for the organization or social initiative, but also for the athlete.

Sport is prized in Canadian society because of its ascribed values, ties to nationhood and its ability to elicit passion and emotion (Darnell, 2007; Kikulis, 2013; Ratten, 2010). The sport-media nexus creates a platform for sport, and athletes, to attract broad attention (Nalapat & Parker, 2005; Darnell 2005). Through this, athletes build status, power, and value. Organizations and causes can leverage athletes symbolic and cultural capital to achieve social objectives through the exchange and conversion of all forms of capital.
7.2 Athlete Perspectives

The pursuit of high-performance sport, particularly at the Olympic level, can be an all-encompassing journey. At some point in their career, athletes may feel compelled to get involved in social initiatives, working for social change. (Carter, 2009). This section will explore the reasons why athletes engage in social initiatives through activism, advocacy, or in partnership with non-profit and corporate organizations. Through all forms of engagement, there were three themes that emerged from the athletes’ interviews: necessity, responsibility, and desire to derive meaning.

7.2.1 Advocacy & Activism

As a 12-year-old living in Moscow in 1973, I watched Canada’s Glenda Reiser win the 1,500m at the World University Games, and, as children do, decided that would be me. Raised to believe I could do whatever I set my mind to, off I went. But the journey was to be far more complicated than I could ever have anticipated. Each time I felt I was making progress in my quest for excellence, a barrier would appear. I felt like Sisyphus who was sentenced to roll a rock up a hill. Each time it reached the top, the rock rolled back down again. His crime had been to challenge Zeus. Mine was much less grandiose: I wanted only to reach my maximum potential free of restrictions created by the sport system. (Peel, 2013 p. 20)

Sport’s hierarchical structures, and sporting culture can (and do) reinforce conformity to hegemonic structures. Hierarchical structures dictate rules, coerce submission, and enforce compliance through sheer force of power (Joseph et al., 2012; Loy et al., 2000). Sport can simultaneously create opportunity to contest and challenge these norms, encouraging athletes to become agents of social change (Koss, 2011; Butterworth, 2014; Cottrell & Nelson, 2010; Kaufman & Wolff, 2010; Kidd 2012). In Fifty Years of Sport and Social Change, 1968-2008: “To Remember is to Resist.” Field and Kidd provide a collection of essays documenting and celebrating the role that sport and athletes have had in progressing advocacy efforts. The tools that have been used to advocate for change are outlined by Kidd (2012) as activism in the form
of advocacy, lobbying, media relations, research-based report carding, court challenges, and demonstrations (p. 157). Athlete involvement in social initiatives through activism and advocacy processes are entrenched in Canadian and global sport history. Some prominent international examples historically include Alice Millat’s lobbying efforts for competitive opportunities in the Olympic Movement resulting in women’s inclusion in the 1922 Olympic Games; the banning and isolation of Apartheid South Africa from the IOC and sporting competition which contributed to global pressures in the anti-apartheid movement (Donnelly, 2008, Harvey et al., 2014); and Tommie Smith and John Carlos’ Black Power salute, raising their fists in a peaceful demonstration of solidarity with people fighting for human rights, from the Olympic podium during 1968 Games (Harvey et al., 2014). Within Canada, examples of athlete advocacy include Anne Peel’s advocacy efforts for better competitive opportunities and equal funding for women in sport, and Mark Tewksbury’s public criticism of corruption in the IOC and calling for reform and pursuit of gay rights in sport (Field & Kidd, 2011).

Athletes are engaged in various advocacy positions. Activism efforts have led to significant improvements within sport, empowering athletes within the Movement including democratic athlete representation in governing bodies, enhanced funding, fair selection, discipline and dispute resolution procedures, and equality. While these changes demonstrate positive progress, the work is far from done. Athletes must continually pursue activism efforts to address issues of integrity and legitimacy in sport. Darnell (2012) highlights the potential cost to athletes including organizational alienation, exclusion, reductions in funding, and personal fatigue. The costs to an athlete are potentially significant; however, the process of activism and advocacy is critical in advancing social change (Kidd, 2012).

Sport, and in particular Olympic sport, is imbued with highly moralistic and idealistic values. The IOC and governing bodies preach high standards of integrity and legitimacy in their practices. Kidd (2012) argues, “the moral claims of sport legitimize it as a site of struggle,” (p. 158). Currently, there is no, legally binding document detailing the full extent of athletes’ rights and thus, the interpretation and protection of athletes’ rights, and practices ensuring fair play in sport, are highly variable. Some athletes experience distress or frustration when their athletic pursuits and right to fair play are thwarted, the values of Olympism are violated, and governing bodies assert powers stifling the athlete experience. Encouragement to ‘follow the party line’ is
expressed as a means to protect the sanctity of the Olympic Games and the experience of athletes; yet, as Kidd (2013) expresses, athlete rights and the ‘promise of empowerment’ are rooted in the values and ideals of the Olympic Movement as expressed by Pierre de Coubertin. Athletes are confronted with a dichotomy between the right to free speech and Rule 50 of the Olympic Charter, which states, “no kind of demonstration or political, religious or racial propaganda is permitted in any Olympic sites, venues or other areas,” (Olympic Charter, 2016, p. 91). When discussing this clause in the Olympic Charter, previous IOC president Jacques Rogge argues that it is intended to preserve the universality of the Olympic Games. He stated:

A person’s ability to express his or her opinion is a basic human right and as such, does not need to have a specific clause in the Olympic Charter because its place is implicit. [...] But we do ask that there is no propaganda nor demonstrations at Olympic Games venues for the very good and simple reason that we have 205 countries and territories represented, many of whom are in conflict, and the Games are not the place to take political, nor religious stances. [...] If athletes genuinely want to express their opinion, that’s fine, but let’s not forget there is also the right to not express an opinion. Athletes should feel no moral obligation to speak out. They deserve the right to focus on their preparations and should not be made to feel obliged to express themselves if they do not wish to. The IOC and the National Olympic Committees have the duty to protect them from any kind of pressure. [...] Athletes are mature and intelligent people. They will know what they can say or not say. If they have doubts, the IOC and the NOCs are here to guide them. (World Games, 2011)

This statement supports the position taken by the COT Athlete Agreement (2016); however, the vague nature of Rule 50 and potential risk for incidents deemed to be in violation, produces pressure on athletes to temper their views. The position of protecting athletes and performance is often taken to justify persuasions to temper opinions, but not all agree with this position. For example, this former athlete believes that, with respect to advocacy, activism, and speaking up:

It does take a lot of energy, but I think it can be a source of energy. You know Bruce Kidd says Olympism is about that picture, the round human being. It’s not just sport for sport’s sake, it’s sport for how it relates to the community you are living in. What do you give
back to the community? I think that we are sold on the argument that we have to kind of ‘protect’ the athlete and we don’t want to distract them but I think that’s kind of bullshit. I think that we are doing a great disservice to these adults, really babying them and protecting them and then we are going to unleash them into the real world when they are how old? Really? (Key Informant G)

Some athletes interviewed in this study perceive the argument of protecting the athletes and the ideals of the Games as a disguise to a means to protect the interests and power of the governing bodies while suppressing athletes. Consideration for performance should be given; however, as this participant expresses, athletes have both the right and responsibility to be socially engaged citizens within the sport community and outside of sport. Additionally, status as an athlete should not preclude them from conversations of broader social concern simply because of timing.

The IOC’s position is that Olympic Games are a time for sport, and sport alone; the Olympic Games are not a time for politics, nor for protest. As one athlete states, there is no ‘convenient’ time for an athlete to act (Athlete D). If the right time to speak up happens to coincide with the Olympics Games, it is necessary to do so:

When I stood up, they could argue with me, they’d pull me aside later and say, I don’t support what you did but I support your right to do it. They said your timing was off. No, no, that’s bullshit. It doesn’t… there’s not a beautiful timeline and a form you fill out and put it in a complaint box. That doesn’t exist. (Athlete D)

The time to act is the time that an athlete feels compelled to action. It is not necessarily a matter of choice.

Sport as an institution is hierarchical and claims to position ‘athletes at the heart of the Movement,’ (IOC, 2017) but the practices in place are controlling and exploitative. Governing bodies hold power over athletes, and athletes express that sport federations use access as a means to assert control. Governing bodies control access to training, competition and resources, and determine how these resources are deployed. This asymmetry is maintained because athletes are compelled to comply in order to achieve their sporting aspirations. Pressures to remain passive
and accepting are premised under the guise of protecting performance. This coercion is a means to protect the Olympic Games as a marketable event. One athlete reflects on her view of sport governing bodies and their interests in athletes participating in advocacy within sport:

_I do believe that they [the IOC and COC] have zero interest in athletes speaking up for what’s right or doing the right thing. I think they have more of a responsibility and that they need to take it more seriously because they don’t, because the dollar signs. [...] They should let athletes be who they are and say what they want to say and even this concept that the IOC has, which is Rule 51, I think, where they aren’t allowed to protest or show any means or signs of visible political statements or anything, to me its all... I don’t know. You have reduced athletes to commodities, who are there for your entertainment value, who are not really allowed to have opinions or personalities or make statements. It’s hard._ (Athlete B)

When asked what she would do to change the position and power that athletes have:

_What would I do to change it? I don’t know, I don’t know if I could change it. It’s such a machine now. It’s such a powerful machine, that would be hard. I mean it’s hard convincing them to give more power to athletes. I think it has to come from the athletes. It has to be the athletes who are rising up and saying something. I do think that the athlete committees have gotten stronger over the years and are a little more empowered and more skilled at negotiating for things that they want and things that they need and that is thanks to some really good leadership. [...] They need to continue making that progress and bring that voice to the table._ (Athlete B)

This statement raises the question of legitimacy and priorities; do sport governing bodies care more about living up to the ideals they claim to hold, or celebrating the values of Olympism only through superficial symbolic expression? Athlete B’s opinion is that sport governing bodies, such as the IOC, have more interest in maintaining an athlete’s position as a commodity, ensuring the marketability, profitability, and appeal of the Olympic brand, rather than working to comply wholly with the values and ideals that they express in the Olympic Charter. Athletes in this study also speak about being inspired by the athletes before them, the values of the Olympic
Games and values of sport. When confronted by situations or structures that deviate or completely counter the values that are supposed to govern sport, some athletes are compelled to act. For example, this former athlete did not become an activist by choice, but out of necessity to maintain an authentic connection to who he was, despite the risk to his status:

The athlete contract, in a way you are bound to silence. If you speak out against the team or if you speak about the organizing committee, you can put yourself in danger. [...] It’s almost an intimidation tactic to not do anything. It does take courage. Sometimes you get courage from being backed into a wall and there is no choice. [...] I have to be honest, I was quite reluctant to do it but it got to a point where I couldn’t live my life and have a good conscience and not speak out about it. It was really hard, everyone around me told me not to, if you speak out, you will lose sponsorship but I felt like I had nothing left to lose anymore. I call myself a reluctant activist because I was a bit reluctant at first and I was surprised that I went down that road. Once you start, for me, once I started living with some integrity then it became impossible not to speak out so then I started my activism career. (Key Informant H)

The experience of injustice or feeling invalidated can drive athletes to take action to protect themselves, their teammates and/or their experience in sport. This former athlete felt that his only choice was to partake in activism efforts to reconcile the disparity between his lived experience in sport and his core beliefs and values. He also discusses the momentum that he felt build once he got involved in activism work, despite dissuasion and resistance.

Confronting governing powers and structures from within the system is challenging. Donnelly (2015) argues that contemporary sport structures are autonomous entities that often operate and articulate with limited agency of the athletes. There are few systems in place that hold governing bodies accountable to the athletes and the power dynamics provide little opportunity for athletes to engage in a meaningful way. Even still, athletes leverage their positions, skills, status, and access to communicate messages. Athletes work towards improving sport structures, their athletic experiences, and to protect themselves or their teammates. For example, this athlete expresses that his decision to speak out against his sport governing body was based on his moral conscience and belief that his NSF should be held accountable for its actions. In his view, doing
the right thing does not always coincide with what is easy, but that should not deter athletes from doing the right thing.

*It was so important to me. It was important to me at the time and it is still important to me now. It was important that we don’t just stand up for ourselves when it’s easy and convenient. You know, it was inconvenient, it wasn’t fun. It was a terrible experience but doing the right thing isn’t always easy but I was ok with that. I guess my point is that it can’t always be well, I’ll do it as long as there’s flowers after or a parade where everyone pats me on the back. You will never get anything truly meaningful done and I’m not trying to say that I was some sort of martyr for doing it, it’s just something that was important to me.* (Athlete D)

When athletes act or speak to topics that are in alignment with hegemonic discourse and/or governing bodies, the response is likely to be favorable (Darnell, 2012). Some of the most critical and meaningful initiatives have been those that position athletes in direct opposition to entities in positions of power (Harvey et al., 2014). Athletes included in this research have challenged those in positions of power, trying to ensure the rights and interests of athletes are protected. At times, what is in the best interest of the organization is not necessarily what is in the best interest of the athletes. When confronted with these circumstances, athletes have to decide whether they acquiesce to dominant structures or speak up to protect themselves and/or their teammates. Athletes who are more informed, have stronger results, or athletes who have more experience on the team, may feel more secure in their ability to take a stance that may oppose their governing bodies. Athletes with elevated status may also feel a sense of responsibility. For example, one athlete describes a scenario in which she and her teammates believed that their national sporting federation was not acting in the best interest of the athletes. They questioned decisions being made and the allocation of resources. The athletes believed that there were unjust practices, and thus it was her and her teammates’ responsibility to respond to protect their experience and performance in sport:

*One more key experience was around the whole chaos period on the team, right after the [Olympics]. We lost the head of our organization, we had an interim CEO who was basically abusing the athletes and holding our funding over our head and taking it away*
from half of the team. Myself and three other teammates, we actually went through an appeal process, got a lawyer and started to ask for some answers about where the dollars were being spent how decisions were being made, because they had hired extra staff, but took away all of our funding to get to World Cups. [...] That was an important experience: that you can always do something if something isn’t right, you have the responsibility to act on it. You don’t know what the outcome will be but that was a very different experience than giving back but an important one. A lot of responsibility comes from my parents too. They taught me that if something isn’t the way something should be or you expect it to be, you have to push forward. I can remember this uncomfortable feeling of wanting to retreat and they always encouraged me to keep going, push forward and find a solution, you have to take this on. That is part of responsibility I think. (Athlete H)

Sporting experiences are about more than simply performances. When sporting experiences are being hindered, this athlete voices that it is necessary to take action to address the situation and find a solution. Athletes express that it is challenging and stressful to speak up or act to address structures and conditions that exist that they feel are wrong. This discomfort stems from the imbalance of power. Theoretically it may be ‘easier’ to passively accept the situation, but Athlete H expresses that inevitably, passive acceptance and inaction can also cause stress.

Many believe that the aspirations of the Olympic Movement are merely rhetorical ideas that are embedded within marketing and communications strategies (Kidd, 2016). The level of physical performance to achieve success is consistently increasing and athletes are required to keep up. The experience of athletes is diminished when there is an affront to the values of sport that go unrecognized or unaddressed, creating a question of legitimacy and credibility. Athletes’ experiences are impeded when confronted with situations that violate the integrity of sport and challenge the foundation upon which sport is built. Doping violates the Olympic Charter, the WADA Code and rules of sport. Athletes recognize that their opportunity to compete in fair sport has been thwarted by those who dope and question the true intentions and interests of sport governing bodies if proportionate action is not taken. Athlete B was confronted with the reality of doping in her sport, voiced frustration at the lack of action and questioned the integrity of sport.
I had been [competing] my whole life basically, competing internationally since I was about 20 years old on the world cup circuit. Not doing all that well but progressively getting better until I was around the top ranks of the skiers but also really aware, acutely aware of the amount of doping. [...] I was getting increasingly frustrated by the fact that I was doing everything I could to become competitive and have success internationally but it was always going to be me coming up against this glass ceiling. I had heard enough and seen enough that I knew it wasn’t rumours. I knew what was going on. Then I had a tipping point when [multiple members of another team] were caught for banned substances and then more subsequently got caught so it was basically the whole team. It was a systematic program practiced by the whole team. [...] We realized too, at that point that the [IF] who were charged with policing and monitoring the anti-doping in our sport were really not doing an adequate job and we believed it was intentional because either they didn’t care or weren’t motivated to really expose the superstars of the sport. There was a true conflict of interest when the IFs are charged with anti-doping because they are also the ones trying to attract sponsors, TV and everything else. (Athlete B)

This athlete describes her experience reaching, what she calls, a tipping point pushing her to take a public stance on doping within her sport and the governance structure’s inadequacy at the time to address the issues of doping in her sport.

A common theme that has emerged from the athletes’ experience in advocacy and activism is that they are confronted with situations in which they feel that action is essential to protect their rights or hold governing bodies accountable. The athletes’ experiences described here highlight the complexity and turmoil athletes experience when confronted with scenarios in which there are irreconcilable deviations between the values of the athlete and sport and the practices of other members of the sport community or the leadership. Rather than actively choosing to pursue a path of advocacy or activism, some athletes feel it is necessary to pursue efforts to resolve what they believe to be injustice. When working to oppose the powers that govern them, athletes experience resistance. They express that their actions stem from a deeply rooted desire and sense of responsibility to do what was right to protect themselves or their teammates’ sporting experience. Some athletes speak to the necessity of ‘leaning in’ to the discomfort of advocacy
because speaking truth to injustice and power enables them to experience the value filled sport they desire. It also contributes to shifting sport culture closer to alignment with Olympic values and leadership towards acting with integrity.

A factor to consider is that the athletes included in this study have had significant athletic success. As a result, they may have felt emboldened to act when they did, and in the manner that they did, because they did not feel their positions on team were at risk or fear reprisal. Athletes who are still working to rise in the sporting ranks may feel that they must align themselves with the sport governing bodies. While basic athlete rights have been realized (Kidd, 2012), there is still a strong perception among athletes that they must comply with the ever-growing list of mandates and responsibilities without challenging their validity. As Kidd (2013) states, ‘Olympism assumes a freely choosing, politically engaged subject’ (p. 3). Athletes should be enabled to influence their sporting experience through the active engagement in sport governing bodies, educating athletes, the opportunity to contribute to decision making, and allowing their voices to be heard. The leading example of one athlete taking action can insight others to do the same. Changing social structures or culture takes time, effort, and energy. It can create discomfort and the process can be slow, with resistance. With these challenges, it is necessary for the athlete to be connected to initiative.

_It takes some trailblazers. I think that’s where the real connection and real passion is. Listen- activism and social change, it takes a lot of energy and it’s a lot of beating your head against a wall trying to make changes that don’t happen very easily so you have to be really connected to endure that kind of barrier._ (Key Informant H)

Advocacy takes strength and conviction from athletes. Creating change often requires significant allocation of time and energy. It requires athletes to be knowledgeable of rules, policies and organizational structures. The recommendation to have an athlete representative is written into Sport Canada Policy (2016). Athlete representatives are positioned as a conduit for communication between athlete and the sport governing body. Their role is to communicate, advocate, and represent the voice of athletes within sport organizations. Effectiveness in the role of athlete representative is only possible if the athlete is supported and enabled by the sport governing body. Advocacy and activism take strength and conviction and can effect meaningful
change (Kidd 2012). This athlete explains that it was her experiences in sport that instilled the courage required when pursuing advocacy.

*It’s amazing, you forget the intensity, I already forget it. I take tremendous pride in that and I feel so strong in all that I do because I believe in that strength. Sport allowed me to discover that and the ability to stand up to it, and fight for it. I have always thought that if I feel fear, that is a very good reason to do it because if you don’t, that fear takes over and that is how you can move on and grow.* (Athlete H).

Athletes are compelled to act in response to injustice or scenarios that deviate from the values espoused by sport and the Olympic Movement. Lack of integrity jeopardizes the values of sport, and those values are worth fighting for. For athletes to truly be engaged in the sporting process, sport organizations need to empower athletes to take leadership positions, educate the athletes on rules, systems, structures, and also listen to athletes.

### 7.2.2. Non-profit & Corporate

In Canada, there is a tradition of athletes acting as ambassadors for social initiatives and causes both sport-related and outside of sport. Babiak et al. (2012) describes the motivation for pro-social behaviour as either altruistic or based in self-interest. Altruistic motivations involve an emotional or personal connection to a cause that compels an individual into action. Egoistic or self-serving motivation places the emphasis on the return for pro-social behavior (Babiak et al., 2012). This explanation of social motivation provides a simplistic understanding of social engagement. The interviews conducted with athletes for this study demonstrate that this binary approach is not sufficient to accommodate the complexities of human motivation. Altruism and egoism are not mutually exclusive, they often co-exist. Athlete participants’ desire and motivation to act varied not only from athlete to athlete, but also within one individual depending on the causes. There were numerous themes that came to light through the interview process. I wanted to gauge whether athletes felt it was their responsibility to engage in social initiatives, or if they felt it was an opportunity but not necessary. When asked whether they felt a sense of duty to engage in social initiatives, the response was mixed. For example, one athlete expresses their sense of responsibility in a transactional manner:
We don’t have a right to be funded, we don’t have the right to have tax-payer’s dollars, it’s a privilege and it’s a privilege that we should as a society, extend athletes. We should acknowledge, we have to acknowledge that there is value from that funding but with that, there is a responsibility. I feel like if you’re not going to be involved in the community, if you’re not going to be involved in giving back, that’s fine, then don’t accept the funding. I think that, with funding, should come that social engagement. If you’re going to take the funding, you’re going to be an athlete, you’re going to give back and you can’t take the dollars and run. You have the option to not take the dollars and do whatever you like, but as soon as you take the funding, whether it be provincial, federal or even community, then there should come an obligation to give back. (Athlete D)

This athlete believes the provision of funding and support should involve a ‘social contract’. Beyond training and competing, athletes should have a responsibility to engage in community and social initiatives as a component of that athlete agreement. Social contract theory according to Friend (n.d.) posits that individuals consent to give up some of their freedoms as they submit to authorities for reciprocal rights or privileges. In the absence of governance structures, human actions are derived from personal power and conscience, or a ‘state of nature.’ Social contract theory suggests individuals consent to give up ‘natural freedom’ to gain benefits from a community (Friend, n.d.) such as protection and access to support. Athlete D suggests when an athlete accepts support they are giving up the freedom to pursue sport without any social responsibility. In accepting support for sport, for example the Athlete Assistance Program offered by Sport Canada, Athlete D argues there is a reciprocal responsibility to contribute back to the community, even though it is not a stipulation of AAP funding. The view that athletes have a responsibility to ‘give’ because they have ‘received,’ is shared by other athletes included in this study:

* I do feel like I have gotten so much out of sport and received so much out of sport personally I felt like I should give back in the same sense that one might choose to carbon offset if they use a lot of carbon. (Athlete E)
Athlete participants acknowledge that they lead a life that is different to the ‘norm’. Pursuing sport is often a pursuit of passion, at times perceptively a selfish one. Athletes speak about a sense of privilege and gratitude they feel for having the opportunity to compete as a member of Team Canada. They express gratitude for the chance to pursue sport at the highest level, and for that opportunity they feel a sense of duty. This athlete likens the opportunity to pursue sport at the Olympic level to winning the lottery:

*There is something to be said about having the opportunity to live your passion and how that changes our outlook. [...] I feel incredibly privileged. I mean to succeed at the Olympics is a huge risk, most people don’t. In a way, you create success but, in a way, you are also winning the lottery. It changes the way I approach my opportunities. [...] For the most part, we are reflections of our community and we receive a tremendous amount of support, whether it is support of the community or actual resources, and I think we identify as being Canadian you know? Through our experience of representing Canada, and that privilege, I think it is a unique perspective and a unique experience.*

(Athlete H)

To reach the highest levels of sport, athletes work hard but there are other factors that contribute to success. Athlete H acknowledges that there were many moving pieces and circumstances that had to align to enable her to achieve success on the international stage. Success stories are highlighted and celebrated, but for every story of success, there are stories of failure, near misses, unfortunate circumstances, socio-economic or other barriers preventing some individuals from achieving their athletic potential. Acknowledgment of those who supported their athletic pursuit, and the circumstances enabling them to reach the highest level of competition instills gratitude. Gratitude creates a sense of responsibility to ‘do good’ and contribute back to the community that provided support.

Members of the Canadian Olympic Team are public figures in the moment they compete. They are positioned as representatives of the team and the country. Through sport, they increase their profile, particularly if they achieve podium results. Athlete A voiced a sense of responsibility based on the status of Canadian Olympic Team member:
The truth is that you have a voice and you should use it for good. I think that especially here in Canada, the Olympic Movement has become more profiled over the last few Olympic Games. The COC has done a good job at raising the profile and to tell the stories so with that, I think comes a responsibility to also speak up and stand for things that you believe and make a difference. It’s one thing to be an athlete and win medals for your country and you do your country a service that way, but I think there is also a bit of a social responsibility to give back to your community and help others out. I guess I was raised that way, my parents were involved in the community so it’s just something you should do as a citizen. (Athlete A)

The sense of responsibility that some athletes express is tied directly to being an athlete, whether resulting from the provision of funding or support, a sense of gratitude and privilege, the opportunities gained through being a team member, the position athletes hold publically, as representatives of Canada, or a duty to uphold Olympism. The opinion of other athletes differed. The desire and duty to contribute has nothing to do with being an athlete:

*I don’t agree [that athletes have a responsibility to give back]. I mean I think we all have a responsibility whether you are an athlete or not. I don’t necessarily agree with that. I think athletes do give a lot and often get very little in return. I mean they do get some, they do get support and they get funding but most athletes treat training as a job. My neighbours go to work and he doesn’t feel that because his job, he should give back to society. Maybe on a personal level, yes, he would because that is who he is. Athletes may give back because that is who they are but I don’t think that athletes have a responsibility more than anyone else has a responsibility. (Athlete B)*

A person’s duty to be a ‘good’ citizen or to contribute to social initiatives, in this athlete’s view, is not tied to a profession but a personal desire. She disagrees with other athletes and does not believe that athletes have a responsibility based on their position or status as an athlete. Another athlete expressed a sense of responsibility stemming from their humanity; as citizens of this world, humans have a responsibility to act:
I feel a responsibility as a member of this planet, this human race, the animals that we are. I really believe that we are connected. I believe that struggle and suffering do not stay with one person or one place. I believe that we are interconnected. Sometimes we get to connect through joy, most of the time it’s through struggle. […] It is my responsibility as a human being to not just sit inside my thoughts and think my thoughts and have these ideals but not to actually act on them. […] I don’t believe in just wishing for better and hoping for better, I believe in action. Action speaks louder than words in my books, and that’s why I try and act. (Athlete C)

She expresses that the interconnection between humans and the shared experience of human emotion is what drives her sense of responsibility towards social action rather than her position as an athlete.

The sense of social responsibility was expressed as having been developed from duty and desire. Beyond the sense of responsibility to ‘do good’, athletes’ motivation can be derived from forms of value that engagement in social initiatives can yield. Babiak et al. (2012) describes that in return for pro-social behavior, athletes receive recognition and positive feedback bolstering their public image. Athletes in this study acknowledge other forms of benefits including sponsor desirability, skill development, potential remuneration, social networking, and other opportunities. They spoke about these benefits as just that, added benefits of engagement, not the primary motivation for action.

The motivations expressed by athlete participants align with Pierre de Coubertin’s idea of the ‘self-actualizing athlete’; those who learn through practice and reflection, working to acquire knowledge, skills and values, empowering athletes to place sport at the service of humanity (Kidd, 2012, p. 3). Carter (2009) describes a phase in an athlete’s career that she termed, the “defining” phase. During this phase, an athlete’s focus is narrowed in on training and performance. As Kidd (2016) argues

*Government, sponsors and the media reward and punish on the basis of medal count, no matter how courageous, moving or ethical the performance, so the whole culture of high*
performance sport is preoccupied with the recruitment and training of champions. (Kidd, 2016, p. 12)

High-performance sport’s emphasis on performance can narrow an athlete’s focus on training and performance. A singular focus can influence and narrow an athlete’s sense of identity, tying both identity and worth to performance success rather than the more subjective experiences in sport. This athlete’s view is that expanding an athlete’s focus beyond sport and performance can contribute to an athlete’s psychological well-being, mental state and even performance:

My general perspective is that there is no obligation on the athlete. We are supposed to represent our country and that is plenty. They go and train all year long and really represent Canada internationally and to the highest level of success they can. That is their commitment, that is the social contract for athletes. I feel like, for the athlete though, it’s so valuable if they give back! I think that it’s the jackpot for them in terms of their worth, in terms of their ability to have perspective outside of their sport, [...] to be able to have your identity and self-worth, just a tiny bit less tied up in your results. Obviously, we are invested in our results, we do tie a lot of our identity into that but you can take this percentage and you can allocate it to community service and you get injured, or you bomb at an event, there is nothing better than being part of something bigger. Or when you need to call on something bigger because you aren’t motivated or, why should I train to go fast. I have been doing this my whole life and sometimes it’s not that inspiring. [...] It gave me a lot of strength. I think it’s up to the athlete whether they want to tap into that reserve of support and meaning. (Athlete F)

This athlete’s view is that allocating some energy to something outside of training and competition, that ‘gives back’, can provide new forms of athletic motivation and inspiration while enabling athletes to augment their sense of identity. As Gairdner (2015) describes, thousands of hours are dedicated to pushing an athlete’s physical, and often mental limits to achieve magical sporting moments that demonstrate the limits of human potential. This insular dedication to sport and performance, particularly during formative years of identity development, is often at the exclusion of developing other areas of life. An athlete’s identity is shaped by the world around them: the sociocultural constructs of high-performance sport (Gairdner, 2015).
With emphasis placed on results, an athlete’s self-worth is often defined in sport; their ‘value’ is purely physical. Through the process of engagement with a social initiative, particularly one that is meaningful to the athlete, it is possible for athletes to bolster their sense of identity and create a definition of self-worth that expands beyond corporeal performance.

Athletes are often goal-oriented beings, driven by progress and constantly pursuing what is next. Through their career athletes evolve. This former athlete, who is now a member of an international sport organization, describes the phenomenon of diminishing returns that athletes experience through their athletic career:

_The first time you win a little regional championship, it’s the biggest thing you have ever felt. Then you go to nationals and you medal. The next time, it’s the first time you win a World Cup. It’s like, ‘I can’t believe this!’ It gets bigger and bigger and bigger. So, you evolve as an athlete. Now after you have won 40 World Cups, it’s not so exciting to compete anymore. You can imagine the difference between the first time you competed and the 100th time you competed at the same event. So, you evolve and in a way, you evolve as a person too. You start looking for bigger stimuli, bigger purpose I would say. Your purpose could be bigger, ok, now I have to win the Olympics, or I have to- whatever it is._ (Key Informant H)

In explaining the diminishing stimulus that athletes experience as they progress through their careers and compete in more competitions, he identifies a gap that comes to exist. He describes his experiences of sport and explains how, for him, the excitement and fulfillment that he experienced at a particular level of competition reduced. As a result, he would either pursue higher levels of competition and new goals or he would seek out other forms of stimulus and new reasons to train and compete. As his athletic career progressed, he no longer got the same level of fulfillment or satisfaction from sport alone and needed to turn to social engagement to provide meaning. Another athlete describes a similar experience; after years of training, the training feels monotonous and requires new forms of inspiration and meaning (Athlete C).

When an athlete qualifies for a national team, athlete agreements stipulate that athletes will prioritize training and competition (NSF Contract, 2016). To receive funding from governing
bodies, an athlete must satisfy sport specific requirements and achieve high levels of athletic performance. As a result, athletes can become focused on their own pursuit of sport to ensure financial stability and to maintain their status on team. This athlete expresses that at times, the sport experience requires a narrow focus that at times can seem self-serving:

[T]he pursuit of a singular goal in sport is a bit obscure. It’s very selfish. Like, you are going to work on [you]. You’re not going to work on world issues, you are not solving problems, the community is not going to benefit from your weight session. It certainly didn’t benefit from my [practice] this morning. It was selfish. I am trying to get better so I can win. [...] There’s nothing wrong with that. It’s ok to be selfish as long as you have the social conscience. Take up opportunities that help other people. (Athlete E)

The highly focused practice of pursuing sport is supported and validated, but if athletes perceive their sporting pursuits as selfish, they may strive to alleviate the discomfort that arises from an intense focus on self.

Contemporary high-performance sport promotes the ideology that, to be successful, an athlete needs to dedicate all of their time, energy and focus on sport; anything less is insufficient. Narrowing focus to training and performance enhances the likelihood of success and can elicit positive feedback in the form of increased attention from coaches and increased allocation of resources which contribute to athletic success (Carter, 2009). This all or nothing culture reinforces self-focused tendencies at the expense of other people and other pursuits. Every ounce of energy and attention is focused on recovery, diet and training, particularly when working towards qualifying for or competing in the Olympic Games. This all-encompassing goal becomes the object of athletes’ attention, but only some stop to wonder, ‘what happens after?’ This athlete describes her experience following that path towards a goal, reaching it, and what happens after:

I became an ambassador after [the Olympics] and I remember thinking, your whole life is this objective and it takes all of your time and energy, all of your focus and it completely fills your life. In my case, I accomplished it, it wasn’t openly talked about, the depression, the post-Games blues but there was this emptiness, like, I have to do
something, you know? This has been all about me and I felt this overwhelming gratitude and burden. It was heavy on me, how much I received and I wanted to give back. (Athlete H)

When a goal is accomplished, feelings of satisfaction and fulfillment follow. For a while, athletes gain satisfaction through improvement. They get immediate feedback and temporary satisfaction when they improve their skills or improve their results. The temporary relief and euphoria that are experienced when reaching that next level of performance is quickly replaced by a feeling of dissatisfaction and an urge to do more and to be better. There is a constant demand. In the case of this particular athlete, she was acutely aware of the energy and resources that went into achieving that pinnacle moment of success and felt compelled to make it mean something more, to leverage the opportunity to do something for others. This drive to be better may lead to athletic success, but this drive often in the process, athletes can lose perspective and can leave an athlete to experience the constant weight of pressure. This process of ever-increasing demands followed by a lack of fulfillment becomes monotonous, even discouraging. Athletes describe losing motivation and meaning in their pursuit to be better, as this athlete describes:

It’s like life, the more you do one thing, it becomes monotonous, no matter how awesome it is, it’s monotonous. You really have to work to get outside yourself and find the wonder in something, find something new, find that beginner’s mind again because we all become experts in our field and then you don’t learn. When you don’t learn, you don’t grow and if you’re not learning and you’re not growing, you’re not inspired. I think it’s pretty normal what happened to me after you have been competing so long, it just makes you wonder, why am I doing this. You know, I had so many crappy days. I probably had 1% good compared to 99% hard. Just feeling like you can’t do what you’re supposed to be really good at. [...] At the time, for a lot of years, I had been trying to find meaning in what I was doing. I did find a lot of meaning in what I was doing as an athlete but at that point, I had been doing it for 16 years at the highest level and it was just feeling... I was at the Olympics and it was pretty meaningless. [...] It gave me purpose and allowed me to continue for two more Olympics. At that point, I had won the Olympics, I had won medals, I had a lot of success and was pretty bored with the whole thing but found a new way of doing it. It was incredible, it really is incredible when you can turn your métier
High-performance training programs are demanding, physically and mentally. As with anything, there are ebbs and flows of motivation to train and compete. As a young athlete, progression is often fast, athletes experience more immediate returns from the investment of time and effort, creating a constant positive feedback loop. As athletes gain expertise, the amount of time required for even the subtlest improvements is significantly higher. This effort is necessary to gain a competitive advantage, but the process is arduous. Early in their career, athletes are driven by competition, pursuing new levels of performance and their desire to win. Athlete participants express that at some point in their career, they develop a desire for greater meaning. Getting involved in something outside of training and competition works to alleviate what another athlete describes as the ‘disease of me’ where all that an athlete cares about is sport and their performance (Athlete A). Research supports the notion that athletes who achieve and maintain a healthy or balanced perspective on their sporting career, are more likely to achieve higher levels of performance in sport and experience greater self-actualization (Orlick, 1998; Stirling, 2007).

Current Canadian funding structures and the emphasis placed on medal performances at the Olympic Games create high-stress environments. As one former athlete explains, “you can balance the pressure in a massive event if your whole life is not riding on the success at that event.” (Key informant G). Athletes in this study speak about the passion they have for their sport that drives internal motivation. With an emphasis on performance and excellence defined by medals, often, focus shifts towards performance outcomes. Through engagement, athletes can attribute self-worth, value, and purpose to something beyond sport and competitive results. This can provide athletes with a grounded perspective. It provides an alternative outlet that allows for the creation of motivation and the ability to derive new meaning from a seemingly monotonous exercise. Athletes in this study often express how engagement in social initiatives creates the potential for performance enhancement and can help alleviate some performance pressures. For example, this athlete expresses the psychological value gained from engaging in social initiatives:
I have seen in my experience that involvement, social involvement in a cause that matters to you, it pads the bottom, your rock bottom and your lows when you are injured or struggling. It really insulates that with a lot of meaning to life and community and support. It can also make the highs better because it is something more than just yourself. [...] To be a part of something bigger than yourself is a power you can harness. I have really seen it help a lot of people. It has helped me through a lot of lows in my career, helped me refocus faster. It has been valuable to put sport into context and to put myself into context. There is more than how fast I go today, which helps me [move] more relaxed and get better results anyways. It can help you perform even better. (Athlete F)

This athlete describes how his experiences engaging with social initiatives helps accentuate the feelings of satisfaction and fulfillment when achieving success. His engagement in social initiatives also allows him to accept, process, and move forward from poor performances. When preparing for and competing in major events, athletes can experience fear, anxiety, and uncertainty. This athlete describes how having ‘something’ beyond sport provides meaning to sport and simultaneously alleviates fear. Engagement in social initiatives enables some athletes to maintain process orientation and grounded perspectives that allow them to focus on their performance rather than outcomes and potential repercussions.

There is a divergence between the culture of high-performance sport, the Olympic Games and the values of Olympism. Wamsley (2004) argues the Olympic Games are the “anti-thesis” of the ideals and values espoused by the Olympic Movement because the focus is on medal counts, rankings, and dominance as a definition of excellence rather than focusing on the more humanistic values espoused by Olympism. The moral integrity of the Olympic Movement is often challenged by the practices of governing bodies (MacAloon, 2016; Geeraert et al., 2014; Culpan & Meier, 2016), and the ‘win-at-all-cost’ mentality and prioritizing victory over virtue (Beamish, 2013; Lenk, 2012; Kidd 2016). Athletes in this study have been inspired by the Olympic Games and the Olympic ideals. This athlete describes how, regardless of broader practices by other athletes and governing bodies, she felt it was worthwhile to strive towards the ideals that govern the Olympic Movement:
It was the whole idea of the Olympic ideal that I LOVED and it so inspired me to change as a young person and it inspired me to become an Olympian, to live up to those ideals of higher, faster, stronger, respecting yourself and respecting your competitors, being a part of humanity and celebrating humanity. Well, that’s not really how the IOC works. It’s a big business, it’s a machine that rolls over anyone and anything that speaks up against it and I have seen that in action. I have seen Olympics in my athletic lifetime that should have never been given them because of their human rights records and there are so many things that really left a bad taste in my mouth about the Olympics. [...] It made me look inside myself and look at what I was doing and why I was doing it. I needed greater purpose and for me that greater purpose meant connecting. That disillusion came from being in the game too long and realizing that man, this is not like this. You watch the Olympics, the vignettes and the 16 days of glory and you’re all pumped and wow, that’s it. (Athlete C)

Athletes not only witness the discrepancy between the celebrated ideals and practices of the Olympic Movement, they also live it. While inspiration is derived from the values of universality, respect and the idea of placing sport at the service of humanity, the factors that comprise Olympism; the pressures and demands of high-performance sport work to dissuade athletes becoming the ‘self-actualizing athlete’ described in Pierre de Coubertin’s writings. The notion of the self-actualizing athlete is heavily neoliberal, focusing on individual responsibility, action and self-improvement (Kidd, 2012). It also encourages the athlete to learn through training and reflection, acquiring knowledge and skills through the process, and empowering them to become engaged citizens. Initially, this discrepancy may not be noticeable as athletes set their sights on reaching the next level in sport, but somewhere along this journey, athletes yearn for the sense of fulfillment and satisfaction that the ‘self-actualizing athlete’ can experience. Passion for sport is important, but a deeper meaning created through engagement in social initiatives can allow for a more holistic experience of sport and augment its value. When asked factors that motivated and empowered athletes to get involved, one athlete replied:

It was the feeling of personal satisfaction and the feeling of really living up to those Olympic ideals even though the IOC doesn’t always live up to them. You know, I like them. I really like them. I really like celebrating humanity and being connected at the
deepest level to the human condition, not just sharing the joy but sharing the struggle and connecting that way as well. It gave me greater purpose as an athlete to continue doing what had become really monotonous and helped me find meaning in the pursuit of excellence where I couldn’t find it in trying to achieve results anymore. (Athlete C)

This athlete was inspired by the Olympic ideals and the values of sport. Through her athletic career, she recognized that the pursuit of sport, alone, was not sufficient to feel fulfilled or that she was living up to the Olympic ideals. It was when she looked outside of sport and engaged in social initiatives that were meaningful to her, that she was able to wholly experience the values espoused by sport and the Olympic Movement.

This chapter explores why organizations engage athletes to work towards social objectives and why athletes engage in social initiatives. Bourdieu’s framework of capital is used as a lens to understand the organizational perspective. Athletes garner attention, gain elevated status and are perceived to embody the values espoused by sport and cultural ideals providing them with cultural, social and economic capital. Organizations leverage this capital and symbolic meaning towards achieving social objectives. Each athlete’s experience in sport differs. Through all forms of engagement, three themes have emerged from the athletes’ interviews: necessity, responsibility and the desire to derive meaning. Athletes expressed scenarios in which they felt a need to take action to address issues. At times, these actions were taken reluctantly to confront injustices experienced within sport or in broader sociocultural or political contexts. The necessity to act is experienced when the distress of inaction is greater than the potential risk and stress of taking action. Athletes interviewed also express a sense of social responsibility, though the origin for this sense of responsibility differs. For some athletes, the sense of responsibility is in response to feelings of gratitude and privilege granted through their experiences of sport. This can be interpreted as a form of informal social contract, with the acceptance of support comes a simultaneous responsibility to contribute back to the community. For other athletes, this transactional responsibility stemmed from the feeling of being indebted and, therefore they must give back as much as they have been given. The sense of social responsibility was also expressed as a human responsibility, rather than a responsibility attributed to athletes by virtue of their position; everyone has the responsibility to be a good citizen. Within the Olympic Movement, athlete participants also describe a sense of responsibility to live up to the values of sport, and the
values of the Olympic Movement. Athletes engage in social initiatives to create new meaning from their training and competition, to bolster their sense of identity, build skills, and alleviate the pressure of a singular focus on sport performance.
Chapter 8
Conclusions

Sport and the Olympic Games have great social and cultural significance because they derive symbolic power and ties to nationhood. The Canadian and global sport landscape is a complex nexus of hegemonic structures that include national and international sport governing bodies, governments, and media. Within this nexus, sport-governing bodies tend to maintain power over athletes through contractual and ideological dominance, leaving athletes feeling disempowered in their sporting experiences. Through analysis of key primary documents and semi-structured interviews with athletes and members of core high-performance organizations affiliated with athletes, this research provides an embedded understanding of the Canadian and global sport landscape. This research offers what it means to be a citizen of the Olympic athlete community from the perspective of highly successful Canadian Olympic athletes. The findings and recommendations offered may enable athletes to understand the complexity of the Canadian sportscape and to offer knowledge of athletes’ rights, roles and responsibilities.

The objective of this research is to explore what it means to be a citizen of the Olympic athlete community within the current sociocultural landscape of high-performance sport in Canada. The questions explored inform an understanding of athlete citizenhood within a Canadian Olympic context and include:

- What are the socially and historically constructed meanings attributed to sport and the Olympic Movement in Canada? and
- What are athletes’ rights, roles and responsibilities within the current structures of high-performance sport in Canada and the traditional notions of Olympism?

This research also provides insight into athletes’ engagement in social initiatives from an athlete and an organizational perspective, exploring core engagement values and motivations for
engagement. Key findings from this research are: (1) athletes express a sense of belonging to a transnational community of high-performance and Olympic athletes and thus it is possible to derive a broader definition of the *athlete citizenry* through examining the athlete community through broader models of citizenship; (2) fundamental rights have been established for athletes, yet few athletes know and/or experience the full rights that have been established through athlete activism or advocacy, charters, legislation and decisions by CAS and/or the SDRCC; and (3) athletes with recent high-performance success tend to engage in social initiatives to derive ‘deeper’ meaning from their sporting experiences. Recommendations are provided below to address the findings of this research.

Athletes express a sense of membership to a transnational community of high-performance or Olympic athletes. Models of citizenship have evolved to accommodate social, cultural, political, and technological changes, thereby allowing for the creation of new forms of communities in and around sport. Based on broader models of citizenship, I offer an expanded definition of *athlete citizenship* originally provided by Henne (2012, 2015). Henne’s definition of athlete citizenship emphasizes the athlete as a bio-citizen. I argue that broader models of citizenship focus on what connects a particular population, that is, what builds solidarity, cohesion, reciprocal rights, and responsibilities based on governance structures and boundary work. This research demonstrates that the community of Olympic and high-performance athletes adhere to broader structures of citizenship. Thus, I offer the following definition of the *athlete citizenry*:

*A transnational group of individuals who possess a sense of belonging to, and abide by the standards and principles of a high-performance sporting community, involving specific status, roles, rights, and responsibilities related to the granting of their high-performance participation in sport and beyond as a sportsperson and sports-statesperson.*

This broadened definition of the *athlete citizenry* is strengthened through understanding governing structures, boundary work, athletes’ rights, and athletes’ responsibilities and is
illustrated fully in *Figure 2* on page 206. The governance structures of sport are complex, multi-level systems that are in place to oversee rules, regulations, engagement, accountability, mechanisms to derive belonging, and the provision of services (Geeraet et al., 2014; Donnelly 2015; Loy et al., 2000). Governing structures that delineate Olympic athletes include sport qualification standards, and compliance with the rules and regulations of sport. The population of Olympic athletes is differentiated from broader populations based on physical prowess and athletic performances rather than traditional legal or territorial borders. Boundaries demark the division between those who have status and those who do not. Boundary work within sport are the mechanisms and standards that delineate those who qualify to be a member of a particular team or compete at a particular level. These mechanisms and standards establish a status that, in sport, is grounded in corporeal abilities and compliance with governance codes. Achieving status as an Olympian requires individuals to attain athletic performances that comply with, or go beyond, minimum standards defined by international and national sport governing bodies.

Beyond physical performance, athletes must abide by the rules and regulations of their particular sport to participate.

Athletes who attain status are granted rights and assigned responsibilities. Athletes’ rights include the benefits and protections that legislators, courts and governing bodies have recognized as belonging to individuals who belong to an athletic organization, recipients of sport services by the government (Kidd & Eberts, 1982) and athlete development programs. Historically, activism and advocacy efforts have granted athletes’ rights. Basic athletes’ rights have been established, including rights to opportunity, protection from discrimination, fair selection, participation in decision making, fair and clean sport and to challenge arbitrary or unfair decisions (Kidd, 2012); although the uniformity in athletes’ experience of these rights and the extent to which they are protected and enforced is variable. Athlete responsibilities are the duties that members of national teams must perform to maintain their status as members of an Olympic team and representatives of the nation. Athletes’ responsibilities are stated within athlete agreements and policy documents. Through examining athlete agreements and Canadian sport policy documents, athletes’ responsibilities can be categorized into four areas: legal, performance, ethical and moral. Within the Olympic Movement, athletes have a responsibility to uphold the values of Olympism, though emphasis is placed on legal, performance, ethical, and moral responsibilities.
As athletes and citizens, it is understandable that athletes have the responsibility to abide by the laws of the land in which they reside and compete, and to strive for optimal performance. The athletes in this study agree that the responsibility to act ethically and morally, as well as upholding values of respect, fair and clean sport are all key aspects in being an athlete citizen of the Olympic community. The responsibility to uphold the values of Olympism is less clear.

![Diagram of athlete citizenship](image)

Figure 2: A proposed model of athlete citizenship.

Models of citizenship have evolved to allow for the creation of new forms of communities in and around sport. Athletes who have achieved status as an Olympian express a deep and highly
valued sense of membership to a transnational community. This research uses citizenship models to provide an understanding of what it means to be a citizen of the Olympic athlete community through exploring governance structures, boundary work, and reciprocal rights and responsibilities of athletes providing a foundation from which future research can be conducted to further understand these aspects of athlete citizenship. Future research should focus on Olympic athletes’ education, different interpretations of Olympism, and the roles and responsibilities that flow from these frames of understanding.

To move towards an understanding of the Olympic athlete citizen as committed to action, it is necessary to explore why organizations engage athletes in their work towards social objectives, as well as understand the reasons why athletes engage in social initiatives. Bourdieu’s framework of capital (cultural, social, and economic) is used in this research to offer a multi-dimensional lens to understand athletes’ engagement in social initiatives. Olympic athletes have cultural capital built from the cultural significance of, and attention to, sport and the Olympic Games. The symbolic meaning and ascribed characteristics provide associative meanings and an ideological platform. Through athletic performance and resulting attention, athletes gain an elevated status and are positioned as influencers. Olympians gain social capital through granted access, social networks, personal connections, elevated visibility, and audiences through various forms of media. This offers the potential to bring awareness and support to an organization or a cause. Some athletes contribute economic capital directly to a cause while others build worth or value in various forms that can be used to build economic capital for an organization or a cause indirectly. Sport holds social and cultural prominence within Canada as a result of its’ entertainment value, connection to nationhood narratives and ability to elicit passion (Darnell, 2007; Kikulis, 2013). The mythopoeic nature of sport (Coalter, 2010; Parry, 2007; Butterworth, 2014), values of good sportsmanship, and compliance with liberal democratic ideals (Margolie & Walsh, 2003; Kidd, 2012) are qualities from which a platform can be built. Athletes, through the sport-media-promotional nexus, attract broad attention and through this, athletes build status, power and value. Organizations leverage athletes through the exchange and conversion of all forms of capital, in alignment strategies to achieve social objectives.
The motivation for an Olympic athlete to engage in social initiatives is variable and complex. Through the athlete interviews, three themes emerged. Athletes express that they are compelled to act out of necessity to incite change, a sense of responsibility (as an athlete, through a social contract or a broader human social responsibility) and/or a desire to derive ‘deeper’ meaning from their sporting experience. Athletes in this research express that when they felt it was necessary to act, it was at times reluctantly. An athlete’s belief that it is necessary to act is expressed as a response to experienced or witnessed injustice, imbalance or abuse of power, or to reconcile a dichotomy between what they believe are the moral or ethical values of sport and what is being practiced or implemented. When athletes believe that the distress of inaction would cause greater harm or potential risk than the stress of taking action, athletes express that they feel it is necessary to do something to address the situation. Another theme that emerged was the sense of responsibility. The foundation for this sense of responsibility varied significantly among athletes and other key informants. Athletes receive support through various avenues. Based on this support, a sense of duty or obligation arises. Some athletes express that they feel they are indebted because of the support that is received. Athletes also express the notion of ‘human responsibility,’ or the social responsibility that comes with being human. By being citizens of this planet, humans have a duty to be good and do good. The values of Olympism are idealistic and celebrate humanity. The values of sport and the Olympic Movement instil a sense of humanity and responsibility in some athletes. Sport and performance may draw athletes into the Olympic sphere, but for some athletes, it is the passion and values espoused by the Olympic Movement that captivate them, and they feel a sense of responsibility to live those values fully.

The current high-performance structures emphasize a win at all cost mentality, encouraging and celebrating athletes who focus solely on the pursuit of sport. Athletes in this study describe experiencing pressure to allocate focus on training, performance and recovery leading to what one athlete calls, the ‘disease of me’. As Reid argues, “athletes don’t dedicate their lives to sport, they dedicate their sport in the pursuit of meaningful lives,” (2002, p126).’ Sport can be a perceptively selfish and monotonous experience. Initially, achieving new levels of performance, results and winning become the measure of success and the definition of the athlete but eventually, athletes describe that the satisfaction from winning ebbed; winning did not provide meaning or fulfillment. One athlete describes her experience as a state of mild depression
following her successful Olympic performance, an occurrence that is noted by many media platforms for many athletes. Common to all the athlete participants in this research, athletes with recent high-performance successes tend to engage in social initiatives to derive deeper meaning from their sporting experience. Athletes work to shape their sporting experience and yearn to make their sporting journey meaningful. Through the process of engagement, athletes seek to understand themselves both as athletes and as humans, and to maximize the value of their sporting experience.

The idea of being a citizen of the Olympic Community is an ambition that is not fully understood, particularly within the current sociocultural and political structures of high-performances sport. Beyond participation in the sports sphere, athletes become representatives of meaning, values and nationhood. The values, character, and meaning ascribed to athletes is bolstered by media and deployed by organizations or entities to communicate messages and work towards social objectives. Pursuing sport in isolation provides athletes with little of the meaning and value that sport is meant to instill. It is important to educate athletes on the values of Olympism, define an Olympic athlete’s responsibility to uphold the values of Olympism in a more robust manner, and provide athletes guidance when seeking opportunities to engage in social initiatives. It would be beneficial to create a platform or avenue through which athletes can share their experiences directly with other athletes, or to seek guidance and advice.

Athletes’ rights have been established through past legislation, advocacy, activism and decisions by CAS and SDRCC; yet, athletes express that they do not know and/or experience the rights that have been established for athletes. While some athletes express knowledge of their rights, there is little clarity on the process through which these rights can be uniformly upheld. Current sport governance structures place sport-governing bodies in positions of power, exerting their power through force, coercion and ideological dominance (Birrell, 2000; Horne et al., 2013). There are numerous contracts, agreements, and obligations imposed on athletes who participate in high-performance sport. Athletes are persuaded to conform because their sporting goals are aspirational and they fear that non-compliance will result in reprisal (Kidd, 2010; Koss, 2011). Compliance is compelled through the fear of the risk of losing the chance to participate at the highest level. A shift in power structures is needed to ensure that the sporting process is inclusive and balanced rather than unilateral or heavily favoured structure that is prevalent in the current high-performance context. Additional advocacy and activism initiatives are necessary to continue efforts to define athletes’ rights, ensure rights are upheld by governing bodies, and inform athletes on what their rights are and how to uphold them.

There are few current documents in the high-performance sporting domain that outline athletes’ rights and none that outline a full spectrum of athletes’ rights from a social justice perspective. It is necessary to create a single legally binding document that defines athletes’ rights and responsibilities in an accessible manner to provide clarity, understanding and uniformity of athletes’ rights. The IOC has the Olympic Charter to govern their movement that speaks to governance and the practices of the IOC, IFs and the Olympic Games; it is time now for an Athlete Charter, to empower and protect athletes as Olympic citizens pursuing sport on a global stage. Accomplishing this on a global platform would require either an independent body or sport governing bodies to establish a list of athletes’ rights with the consultation of athletes and sport governing bodies. To give the document legitimacy, it would need to be adopted and

ratified into the governing structures, policies, and documents of all sport governing bodies within the Olympic Movement. An effective *Athlete Charter* would ensure that athletes’ rights are globally recognized and embedded within international sport law, providing a concrete avenue for athletes to protect their rights and experience in sport. An *Athlete Charter* should include the following rights:

- Human Rights recognized internationally
- Right to health, safety, well-being and medical care
- Right to the freedom of expression
- Right to education
- Right to safety, security and protection of information
- Right to equality
- Right to natural justice and due process
- Right to proportionate sanction
- Right to participate in sport free from discrimination of any kind
- Right to sport free of exploitation, harassment and abuse
- Right to transparency in governance
- Right to participate in sport governance
- Right to fair and clean sport
- Right to fair selection
- Economic rights
- Commercial Rights

This is a preliminary list of rights that could be included and defined in an *Athlete Charter*. It is necessary to continue advocacy and activism work to further define athletes’ rights and expand them to higher levels of social justice that will better empower and protect athletes. An *Athletes Charter* would empower athletes to hold governing bodies accountable for their policies and upholding human rights, as well as ensuring the protection of these rights through legal processes. To effectively implement an *Athlete Charter*, it is essential to address governance
structures and education. It is necessary to create and implement policies that ensure the effectiveness of governing structures both globally and domestically. Including athletes in governance structures that provide transparency, accountability, fiduciary responsibility, and clear definitions/outlines will work to ensure that athletes’ rights are protected and that athletes’ voices communicating their needs are heard.

All members of the high-performance sportscape (athletes, officials from sport governing bodies, media, sport officials, and others in the sport entourage) need to be educated and informed so that athletes’ rights can be recognized and respected. While sport governing bodies, such as the IOC or NOCs should have the responsibility to educate all relevant entities, it may not be in their best interest to do so. Two potential avenues to ensure the education of all athletes is either to establish or appoint an autonomous agency that represents athletes’ best interests or to designate relevant government ministries (ie. Sport Canada) the authority to monitor, evaluate, and hold governing bodies accountable. There are multiple avenues through which it is possible to educate athletes. Educational platforms that currently exist include online modules like those mandated by Sport Canada and CCES to inform athletes about doping and the anti-doping procedures. Alternatively, the NOCs could host an athletes’ rights forum, alongside other Olympic preparation events, to ensure the education of athletes. There is no one avenue that is best to ensure all athletes are informed, rather the use of mixed and multiple platforms would ensure more athletes are educated and informed on their rights and how to protect themselves.

Athletes’ responsibilities are the duties that athletes must perform to maintain their status. Beyond athletes’ legal, performance, ethical and moral responsibilities, within the Olympic Movement, athletes have the responsibility to uphold the values of Olympism. The Olympic Charter stipulates that a task of the NOC is to select athletes for the Olympic Games; thus
Such selection shall be based not only on sport performance of an athlete but also on his or her ability to serve as an example for the sporting youth of his or her country. (Olympic Charter, 2015, p. 66)

Being a good example draws upon the values of Olympism: friendship, respect, and excellence; yet the interpretations of high-performance athletes are as variable as the definition of Olympism is vague. Within the Olympic Movement, athletes are neither well educated about the values of Olympism, nor is there a mechanism to monitor the adherence of athletes to the values that the Olympic Movement espouses (Kidd, 2016). While some athlete participants hold the view that athletes have a social responsibility and duty beyond sport, other participants in this study feel that engaging in social initiatives is not their responsibility by nature of the status as athlete or Olympian. As with athletes’ rights, it would be beneficial for all athletes to have a single document outlining their responsibilities.

Regardless of whether or not athletes feel it is their responsibility to become involved in matters of social and community justice that affect them or communities about which they care, Canadian athletes are, indeed, engaging in social initiatives within sport and within broader sociocultural and political contexts. The forms of engagement identified and defined in this research include corporate, non-profit and social enterprises, activism and advocacy. Athletes’ engagement in corporate initiatives involves a partnership or relationship established between an athlete and a private, for-profit entity to work towards social objectives. Athletes’ engagement with a non-profit organization or a social enterprise involves a partnership or relationship between athletes and non-profit or social entities that work to advance a cause or contribute to social change. Athlete advocacy involves an athlete publicly supporting a cause and the recommendation of policy or action (Heil, 2016). Athlete activism involves an athlete working to impact a cause, policy, program, culture, or work to create political or social reform. There is a rich history of athletes engaging in social initiatives in all areas, for example, Anne Peel’s advocacy efforts for equal funding, Mark Tewksbury’s public criticism of the IOC calling for reform and the COCs One Team program focusing on inclusivity in sport. Athletes in this study articulated that they felt compelled to engage in initiatives within sport because they are directly
affected by the structures and rules in place, and because they desire a more positive sporting experience for themselves, those around them, and future generations of athletes. Outside of sport, athletes have the right to be engaged as passport holding and registered voting citizens; they work on a variety of initiatives, most often those with a personal connection or passion. The four categories of engagement identified earlier are not necessarily differentiated or isolated. Athletes engage in more than one form of social initiative: often there is overlap between the various forms of engagement.

Athletes involved in social initiatives follow many paths. No single ‘how-to’ guide for effective athlete engagement in social initiatives has been developed. This research seeks to offer general guidance to athletes and organizations. An effective process of engagement will require personal self-reflection and honesty on the part of the athlete to determine whether he/she/they want to engage; and if they do, how they might do so in an effective manner. There are numerous streams, whether collaborating with a corporation or non-profit entity, establishing initiatives and programs within pre-existing structures or independently creating opportunities to impact a cause. Occasionally this process requires athletes to work against organizational or institutional power imbalances to ensure or enhance social justice and enriched opportunity. It is beneficial for athletes to reflect, identify, and document the skills and expertise they have acquired, either through sport, life or academic formation in order to determine how these skills might best add value to a social cause.

Athletes can also identify the work they would like to do, or issues they want to support to influence change. Thus, athletes can choose to face inward toward improving current sport regulations, structures, programs or fundraising programs, and/or outward to a broader circle of impact. Athletes may have an externally facing role, using their platform from sport as a tool to communicate messaging, garner support or leverage that power to facilitate change. When working with an organization, a few of the athlete and organizational participants described the necessity to collaborate and communicate to identify the organizational objectives and maximize the overlap between the needs of the organization or corporation and the skills or wants of an athlete. It was also described by members of organizations that it is critical for athletes to be
mindful through the process, ensuring that they have the education and knowledge on which to base their efforts, ensuring they do not do harm, particularly in causes that are sensitive. Lastly, all of these efforts must be rooted in an authentic and sincere connection to, or passion for, a cause. The ‘authentic’ connection, described previously as the alignment between ones’ core values, motives, desires and beliefs with actions and behavior (Newman & Smith, 2016; Gino et al., 2013; Varga & Guignon, 2017), is the power and fuel that enables an athlete to endure the ebbs and flows in the movement, and the challenges they may face. Authentic connection and credibility lead to sustained efforts over time. When engaging in the pursuit of social change, athletes believe that it is important to connect action with a purpose and a reason.

Finally, the Olympic Movement is an aspirational movement (Kidd, 1996) that is currently falling short of the values that Olympism espouses. The current context of high-performance sport prioritizes victory over virtue at the expense of athletes. This research has provided a base from which to navigate the territory of athlete citizenship; however, there is significant work that needs to be done to enable athletes the opportunity to fully recognize their rights and responsibilities. As such, I call upon the global sporting community, led by athletes, to establish a document with a comprehensive list of athletes’ rights and responsibilities to be ratified into sport governing policy. I call upon academics to conduct research focusing on interpretations of Olympism, the roles and responsibilities that flow from these frames of understanding, and to conduct ongoing evaluations of athletes’ rights. I call upon sport governing bodies domestically and abroad to fulfill their responsibility to athletes to uphold, protect and expand athletes’ rights. I call upon the COC and Sport Canada to establish a tool to better educate Canadian athletes on the values of Olympism, their rights and responsibilities and establish leading practices in governance and the protection of athletes’ rights. Finally, I call upon the Canadian sport system to emphasize the pursuit of excellence rather than victory, to emphasize the virtues of sport and the value of creating meaning through their sporting experience at all levels of sport.
References

Primary Documents


References


*Selected Writings by Hans Lenk.* Messing, M., & Müller, N. (Eds.). Kassel, Germany: Agon Sportverlag.


*Yale School of Management*. 0. 609-618.


