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“And, Needless to Say, I Was Athletic, Too:” Southern Ontario Black Women and Sport (1920s – 1940s)

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation presents a two-part study of sporting practices of Southern Ontario Black women, between the 1920s and the 1940s, aimed at developing a socio-cultural history of sport that includes narratives from marginalized groups. Given sport's traditional position as a masculine domain, as well as Canada's status as a patriarchal White supremacy, the accounts presented in this work centre Black women's sport experiences through an intersectional perspective. It is argued that, by virtue of their simultaneously racialized and gendered identities, Black women had distinct sporting experiences from those of White women and men and Black men.

The first study used archived oral histories of a group of Black women who lived across Southern Ontario to document a range of activities which located women in sporting spaces. These women were not just athletes, but also coaches, umpires, and spectators. Also, men and boys were influential in these practices, often introducing women to sport. Still, for many, participation in youth gave way to being in the stands in adulthood. These narratives demonstrate the influence of gender norms and racial identity on women's sporting experiences.

The second study focused on Jean Lowe, a champion Toronto track and field athlete in the late 1930s and 1940s who also played softball and basketball. The main source of evidence was the record of Lowe's performance through two widely circulated newspapers: Toronto's *Globe and Mail* and *Daily Star*. The media often praised Lowe, and her narrative denotes a Black woman's ascent and integration in a White-dominated community. But, her seemingly unproblematic athletic career, as well as her qualification

as representing an image of pulchritude, stand in sharp contrast with her sustained designation as “dusky,” her frequent inclusion into discussions of the ‘Black athlete’s’ threatening rise, and her permanent departure from the city in the mid-1940s. Lowe’s story underscores the reticulation of ‘acceptance’ and Othering that historically characterized Canadian racial relations. Through both the oral histories and the media, it is found that insidious notions of race and gender remained embedded in some Black women’s sport experiences, even as sport expanded and shifted the lens through which society viewed them.

KEYWORDS

Black feminism, Black Canadians, Oral history, Black Women’s history, Sport history, Ontario history, Student athletes, Women of colour, racial relations

DEDICATION

To my parents, whose choices, efforts, and sacrifices allowed me to reach this step.

And, to the little girl who shared her lunch with me in kindergarten because I ate mine as soon as I got to school in the morning. She was robbed of the chance to grow up, and because of her, achievement means than I can express.

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Without hesitation, this has been a long (but great) journey. Many people have been instrumental in my finishing it and my thanks go to all of them. I first must thank my advisor, Dr. Kevin Wamsley, whose calm guidance were more than I could have hoped for. My best professional decision was by far to contact him a little more than four years ago to ask if he could be my advisor. Dr. Wamsley was always ready to sit down and talk about the next steps or whatever issue needed to be solved, but he was especially great at leading quietly and letting me make my own way. Thanks to him, I did not second guess myself as much as I could have. Supportive and kind, I am very grateful and proud to have him as a mentor. I am also thankful to Drs. Don Morrow, Anton Allahar, Janice Forsyth, and Marie Louise Adams for agreeing to be on my examining committee and for a record turnaround. I am honoured that they were the ones there to shake hands with at the very end of all this.

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This past four years, I had the chance to have many positive interactions with wonderful fellow Kin graduate students and North American Society for Sport History

attendees like my friend Courtney van Waas. The fruitful exchanges I had with this group were one more element that made these four years memorable. In subtle ways, they were a source of support and motivation. And for these last couple of years I spent within the Human Kinetics department at StFX University, I thank the members of faculty for their encouragement and support. I also must thank people who played a role in my MA at the University of Ottawa and who facilitated my transition to PhD, especially Dr. Eileen O'Connor, my MA advisor.

Throughout my time at Western and especially during the summer of 2016, I visited many libraries and archives across Ontario, from Chatham to Ottawa, and one in Montreal. I had access to the collections of the Chatham Kent Historical Society & Black Mecca Museum, Hamilton's Central Public Library, Western University Archives and Research Collections Centre, the Central London Public Library Archives, the Special Collections room at the St. Catharines Public Library, the Multicultural History Society of Ontario in Toronto, the Toronto Reference Library, Library and Archives Canada in Ottawa, and the McGill University Archives. This is not to mention the archives and libraries I contacted or whose databases I browsed online. Even when I left emptier handed than I would have liked, I thank the archivists and librarians at each and every stop made my research much easier.

More practically, I thank the committees responsible for awarding the North American Society for Sport History research funding, Western's School of Kinesiology internal awards, Ontario Graduate Scholarships, the Social Sciences and Humanities Council of Canada, and the Sport Information Resource Centre's doctoral awards for making the path to my degree less precarious.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The place of the body in sport is fundamental—that is an inescapable fact. Sport historian Colin Howell remarks that, “at its most basic level [...] sport is about the body: how it is used, how it is imagined, how it is watched, and how it is disciplined to meet the requirements of living or to conform to social expectations.”¹ Sport forces an enhanced experience of the body that few other socio-cultural practices provide; it is not unexpected that the prominent socio-cultural concepts of race and gender occupy such a prominent place in sport. The social history of sport has to acknowledge this to construct a credible narrative. While sport can and has been linked to larger and more abstract concepts of nationalism and capitalist hegemony,² race and gender, two concepts that largely derive their meaning from the body, are perhaps the most viscerally linked to sport.³ Sporting bodies physically confront each other in a highly visible and often symbolic public struggle in which athletes transcend their individual identities to become representatives of their race, while divided by gender. Historians observe that, as White men initially established sport as the privileged domain of White masculinity, Black males’ success in sports was used as an argument for Blacks’ inhuman abilities,⁴ while Black women’s success was interpreted as evidence of those women’s lack of femininity.⁵ But, even as sport was used to support racial prejudice and gender inequality, the extent to which minority racial groups and women have used sport as an instrument of resistance cannot be ignored. From this emerges the premise of this work, which is predicated upon the lack of histories of women of colour in sport. The dissertation aims to present an historical account of Black women’s sporting experiences in Southern

Ontario between the 1920s and the 1940s from a self-reported oral history perspective and a press media perspective.

Canadian sport history scholarship has rarely accounted for the complex ways in which gender has, historically, interacted with race to exclude women of colour or render them invisible.⁶ One can argue that the obfuscation does not start there, but with the systemic erasure of Black people from the Canadian grand historical narrative: Blacks in Canada are conveniently woven into the contemporary multicultural narrative, as recent immigrants, rather than generations old settlers.⁷ Canadian sport history scholars have so far offered little challenge to the discourse. Yet, as British scholar Sheila Scraton states, “unless sport scholars engage with the theoretical debates around difference, representation, identity, marginalization and oppression and locate sport in different women’s experiences and lives, then black women will remain at the periphery and theorizing will continue to consider gender and race as separate fields of enquiry.”⁸ Bridging the gap and centring their experience is essential for the construction of a multilayered and complex Canadian national historical narrative. Recently, Black history scholars have underscored the importance of questioning grand narratives and establishing that history is not finite but, rather, contradictory, and should be subjected to diversified interpretations.⁹

1. Research Purpose

This dissertation intends to address these issues by asking questions about the past aimed at including ignored narratives from marginalized individuals. At the core of this purpose are a number of goals: a) to extend the basis of knowledge on Black Canadian

history and, therefore, Canadian history overall, b) to widen the scope of the sport history scholarship, and, most notably, c) to expand upon women of colour's narrative in Canada beyond narratives of struggle in work, immigration, and slavery. Overlaying these goals is the general aim of sport history to expand our understandings of the cultural meanings of sport.¹⁰ The principal aim of the study, therefore, is to recover and document (as well as uncover) Black women's sport endeavours, and, through their lenses, substantiate that race and gender underpin a complex phenomenon within which both social categories are not separate but intertwined (see also section 4, Research Philosophy).

2. Research Context

Black women's sport experiences are included only minimally in most works, but those scarce descriptions suggest that Black Canadian women did, indeed, engage in sports in the early twentieth century.¹¹ Silence in the sport literature only reflects the silencing of women of colour in western socio-historical narratives and their relegation to the background.¹² While there are suggestions that some Black women were involved in organized sports at the community level, to this day, there remains an underdeveloped body of work with in-depth analysis of these practices.¹³ For instance, there is photographic evidence of a Black women's baseball team in Hamilton (the Sepia Queens) that was playing in the 1920s,¹⁴ while a basketball team of the same name appears to have been in existence by 1947 (also according to photographic evidence).¹⁵ This evidence leaves the questions of what sport represented for women, and the scope of their participation, unanswered.

The most extensive discussion on Black women's sport history in Canada is in M. Ann Hall's *The Girl and the Game*. The author mentions three champion track and field athletes who stood out before the 1980s, when Black female athletes grew in number at the elite level. The three athletes were Barbara Howard (from Vancouver), Rosella Thorne (Montreal), and Jean Lowe (Toronto).¹⁶ Barbara Howard was seemingly the first visibly Black woman to represent Canada internationally, when she participated in the 1938 Empire Games in Sydney, Australia.¹⁷ Her Olympic aspirations were dashed when the 1940 Games were cancelled and, instead, she went on to pursue a degree in physical education and teach for many years in her native British Columbia. Rosella Thorne was an acclaimed track and field and was reported to be the pride of Montreal's Black community in the late 1940s and early 1950s; she represented Canada at the 1952 Helsinki Olympics and the Vancouver Empire Games in 1954. Finally, Jean Lowe was an Ontario track champion from the late 1930s to the late 1940s. Lowe competed with Thorne in some competitions, and they both were favourites at the 1948 Canadian Olympic trials, although neither qualified. Lowe's athletic development and competitive debut occurred in Toronto, but she left Canada after the Second World War (WWII) for post-secondary studies in the United States (US); there is no evidence that she ever resided in Canada after her studies. In this dissertation, Jean Lowe's athletic career leading up to her departure is analysed through the lens of Toronto's media (see chapter four).

Barbara Howard's story provides insight into the environment in which Lowe and Thorne later developed—a teenage Lowe started making a mark on Toronto's tracks in Howard's last years. In fact, in 1940, the latter two women could have faced each other

on the 100m sprint line, had that year's Canadian Championships not been cancelled.¹⁸ In 1947, when Lowe left Canada, Thorne was rising on the Montreal scene. Note that, as Howard was from Vancouver, she was removed from the Ontario context in which Lowe lived and competed. According to a 2011 Burnaby *Newsleader* article in which Howard was interviewed, "At 17, she was in her first year of competing outside of school meets. So, it was something of a shocker when she tied the Games record, running the fastest time of any woman in the British Empire."¹⁹ As she became the first Black woman to compete for Canada at that level, it had been a quarter of a century since John "Army" Howard (no relation to Barbara) had become the first Black Canadian Olympian in 1912.²⁰ Since then, other Black men had been a part of Canadian international teams (e.g., Ray Lewis and Dr. Phil Edwards in the 1920s and 1930s). It was also a decade since the Matchless Six²¹ had made their mark and proven that women could compete in vigorous exercise without harm.²² Barbara Howard's membership on the 1938 Canadian team was out of the ordinary, if one considers the status of Black people in Canada at the time: Black people were relatively few in Canada, and racial tensions between White and Black Canadians were widespread (see section 2, in chapter two).

Nonetheless, sport helped push some boundaries: The success of Black athletes such as Dr. Phil Edwards (the British Guianese who later ran for Canada) at the first Games in 1930 had led to the radical decision to reschedule the second instalment in London (England) rather than Johannesburg (South Africa), as planned. This was to protest South Africa's policy to not permit Black athletes to compete and, as such, "The 1934 Empire Games welcomed more non-white athletes than were present at the 1930 Games, with India, Trinidad, Hong Kong and Jamaica participating for the first time."²³

Women only made their Empire Games debut at the second Games, in 1934. In 1938, Howard was one of the first women (Black or White) to compete in track and field at the Games. What is more, evidence suggests that Howard was either the first or one of two first Black women ever to compete at the Empire Games.²⁴

In her individual event, the 100-yard dash, Howard finished in sixth place. She was more successful in the 440 yards and the 660 yards relays, where she helped her team win silver and bronze medals respectively.²⁵ Howard's story remained relatively unknown until recently; she was only inducted in her hometown of Burnaby's Sports Hall of Fame in 2011, and in the British Columbia Hall in 2012.²⁶ Back in 1938 in Sydney, Howard had received plenty of attention. Most of the attention likely stemmed from the fact that she was among the first Black female athletes to be seen at the Games and, presumably, the only one that year. The unusual attention prompted renowned Toronto *Globe and Mail* sports Columnist Bobbie Rosenfeld to write that:

Barbara Howard, dusky sprinter from B. C., caused quite a stir among Sydney's populace during her appearance at the Empire games. She apparently was quite a novelty ... appearing on the front page of every newspaper. They seldom see coloured athletes down there ... the photographers and autograph seekers kept on her trail.²⁷

Howard did recall being singled out by the media and public who were not accustomed to seeing black athletes; photographers and autograph seekers dogged the young "dusky" athlete everywhere.²⁸ "Dusky" was another term used to refer to Black athletes in the press media and seemed interchangeable with the other familiar term "Negro/ess" (For more, see section 6 in chapter four). During this research, it was found that "Black" was less commonly used in the newspaper at the time. Rosenfeld's comments suggested that, while Australians seldom saw coloured athletes, Canadians

were more familiar with them. Rosenfeld may have been implying that Barbara Howard was one among many Black women in Canadian sports, or simply referring to the fact that Black athletes in general—mostly men—were not such a surprising sight for Canadian sport fans.

By securing a place for herself on an all-White Canadian team, Howard was a pioneer of sorts.²⁹ By competing on the track, she was fighting the invisible Canadian colour line; in Howard's case, sport opened up new horizons and allowed her to travel. Participation in sport at that level signified the transcendence of more than racial and sexist barriers as she also broke some social class barriers. Pioneer Black American journalist Michael D. Davis surmises that Black women in this period ran and jumped to get ahead in spaces they could not otherwise reach.³⁰ Notably, for the best amateur track and field athletes in the US, sport provided a path to post-secondary studies, as further explored below. Furthermore, Barbara Howard's presence at the Empire Games signified more than a young athlete qualifying ahead of the some of the best runners of the country. It marked the beginning of Canadian Black women's participation in a sport (track and field) which they would later dominate in numbers as elite athletes. From the 1960s onwards, Black Canadian women were disproportionately represented in track and field relative to their numbers in the larger population.³¹

As previously noted, in the 1940s and 1950s, two other Black women made their mark on the track scene. Among them were Jean Lowe, a champion from Ontario in the 1940s, and Rosella Thorne, who competed at the provincial and the international level from 1949 to 1954.³² As noted by Hall, Howard's and Lowe's successes even prompted

Montreal *Daily Star* sport columnist Myrtle Cook to question the fuss being made about Jackie Robinson's 1945 draft into the baseball's major leagues (i.e., for the Montreal Royals, a Brooklyn Dodgers' farm team). According to Cook, Black women had been present in sport all along.³³ If Black women had been present in sport for so long, their stories were certainly not recorded.

The lack of historical documentation of Black women's sport is primarily due to a few factors: i) women's sport, Black, White, Aboriginal or other, was rarely covered or given as much attention as men's sport;³⁴ ii) of all women, White women received the most coverage as they were the most involved in sport; iii) White women were most likely to have the financial means to participate in disciplines most "appropriate" for women, such as tennis, golf, or figure skating, which received more coverage;³⁵ and iv) Black women mostly participated in low cost and, incidentally, 'less feminine' sports, such as track and field or basketball, because they were not likely to have the socio-economic background that afforded them opportunities to participate in the more 'feminine sports.' As explored below, racial stereotypes may have also contributed to Black women's relegation to 'masculine sports' and the privileging of 'white feminine sports.' In the early decades of the twentieth century, track and field also had less support and organization, which made it difficult to scout athletes or to train them, lowering the chances that individuals with potential may have had to participate.³⁶

But what about non-elite level amateur sport? There are some fragmented historical records of organized women's hockey and softball teams in the since-relocated Nova Scotian Africville community, as well as reports of leisure swimming.³⁷ Africville

was an independent Black community which established itself on the shore of Bedford Basin, in Halifax, circa 1840s.³⁸ Throughout the better part of the twentieth century, the community thrived on the outskirts of Halifax as best as it could, with a strong and rich heritage, and with most of its working-class residents owning their homes.³⁹ However, the municipality of Halifax shunned and neglected the community and, in the 1960s, opted to demolish it and relocate its residents.⁴⁰ Despite a lack of resources, “Leisure time was dedicated to organized and spontaneous outdoor recreation activities for residents of all ages. Sports diversions took full advantage of the range of venues the Africville area offered with its wide-open fields and proximity to the ocean.”⁴¹

In Africville, sports were one of the few social recreational activities organized outside of church, although it remains to be seen whether the church opposed or supported it. It was also undertaken despite the precarious socio-economic conditions of the community. As of the redaction of this work, there has been no systematic analysis undertaken about the place of sport in the construction of Africvillian identities. And, one observes that there are little to no records of Black women’s sport in Ontario, at the community level, during the period under study. But, while prominent female athletes of colour may have been few in Canada, a few individuals had made their mark in their communities and beyond by the 1950s. Further research of those and other athletes’ narratives is still necessary to uncover these narratives of Canadian Black women’s sporting practices from a historical perspective.

Black women’s sporting culture in Canada may have paralleled White Canadian women’s culture just as it may had done with Black men’s sport culture. But, as of the

writing of this work, there are not enough historiographies on Black Canadian women's sport experiences to provide insight into how their racial identities may have influenced their athletic endeavors. However, the literature indicates that racial identity was a factor in Black men's experiences.⁴² And, White women's history of sport demonstrates the ways in which gender shaped women's practices in a White society. Although significantly underdeveloped, it is speculated that Aboriginal women's sport history, like their history in other areas, was impacted by colonial, patriarchal, economic, and, especially, racial, and gender forces.⁴³ The need arises to explore Black women's experiences as separate but informed by the experiences of these other groups.

2.1 Outside Canada

Discussions of sports and especially race in sport are difficult to carry out in silos and without an international perspective. This is not only because the issue of race comes from and goes beyond Canadian borders, making that perspective key to the discussion, but also because the bulk of the scholarly commentaries and studies emanate from the US and, to a certain extent, the United Kingdom.⁴⁴ Alongside this, there is no evidence to suggest that Black Canadian athletes were exempt from stereotypes and prejudices that globally affected the experiences of Black athletes, something that has been characterized in the US and British literature. Hence, one turns to the American and British literature for more in-depth historical discussions on Black women and sport.⁴⁵ This literature demonstrates that women's sport participation is not a chance occurrence that can simply be traced back to legislation or that depends on skill alone; it is a function of gender roles in a given community and how those roles are interpreted within the sporting context.⁴⁶

Given cultural and geo-political interconnections between Canada and the US and Great Britain, Black American and British scholarships provide a useful blueprint for interpreting Black Canadian women's sport histories in the black feminist perspective. In this work, Black feminism is utilized to rearticulate feminist thought, recognizing the legacy of White European colonialism in the oppression of women informs racialized women's historical exploitation in capitalist White supremacist systems.⁴⁷ Black and British scholarships indicate that having to contend with race and racism in addition to the constraints imposed on women in patriarchal societies had a particular effect on Black women's relationship to sport. Most noteworthy in the Black American female sport history literature is the fact that Black women athletes were perceived as Black first and as female second. In fact, the racialization of Black women's gender identities facilitated society's acceptance of their sporting endeavours, because Black women could be assertive, strong, and achieving athletes, and still be considered womanly.⁴⁸ This, however, did not make them feminine, as Blackness classified them as less feminine, as separate notions of Black and White femininity meant that Black women were not criticized for aggressive, powerful or "masculine" play.⁴⁹ Considered less feminine, this kind of play was considered fitting. In basketball, for instance, they could play a more "masculine" version of the sport and disregard the restrictions imposed by the middle classes, which were based on a definition of womanhood that did not include them.⁵⁰ At the same time, Black female athletes contended with being hyper-sexualized and with the trope of the "natural" Black athlete, which served to subordinate and delegitimize their athletic success. This was in contrast with expectations placed on White women athletes to maintain feminine characteristics deemed incompatible with sports.

The American literature also indicates that, through organizations such as the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), Black women had opportunities previously unavailable, with the help of some White women who were anxious to help 'reform' them.⁵¹ Although operating within a segregated organization,⁵² the support of the YWCA provided Black women with new prospects in a social environment with few opportunities. As women's sport gained acceptance in the interwar years in North America, Black American women thrived in more economically accessible disciplines such as track and field and basketball.

In her study, Jennifer Lansbury explored how sport was often an avenue for Black women to access higher education and a higher socio-economic status.⁵³ For athletes who strongly identified with their athletic identities and who sought careers connected to sport, this was 'a way out.' To the question "what makes them run?" author Michael Davis observes that most of the women who made a mark early in track and field were not from the middle class. Rather, a background of poverty was their common denominator.⁵⁴ In this context, unlike White female athletes, Black women could symbolically be recruited by the Black community to act as ambassadors of their race.⁵⁵ Sport was a rallying site which meant that individuals were often solicited through the Black press to be civil rights activist. A case in point was Althea Gibson, tennis champion and star from the mid-century. After having penetrated spaces largely closed to her peers, she was expected to be "visible and vocal" for the Black American Community during the Civil Rights movement.⁵⁶

While Black American women's history in sport has implications for Black Canadian sport history, Black women's stories are not universal. Black women's stories are varied and complex and, even in Canada, their stories reflect the range of experiences of people of Black African descent from various origins.⁵⁷ Black Canadian women were also present on the work force much earlier than White women, performing mainly domestic work, boarding services, entrepreneurial work (selling homemade products), and teaching.⁵⁸ It is, therefore, no surprise that labour histories have dominated narratives about Black Canadian women.⁵⁹ These histories indicate that, indeed, race and gender were combined to shape Black women's lives in important ways, motivating a separation of their experiences from that of White women and Black men. Silence in other areas breeds inaccuracy and misrepresentations⁶⁰ of the Black Canadian and, therefore, the Canadian historical narrative. Sport is one of the areas in which knowledge has yet to be uncovered to aid in diversifying and growing our understanding of Black women's experiences in Canada.

2.2 Contribution of this Study to the Literature

Historians have the task of asking questions to better reconstruct, construct, and/or deconstruct the past.⁶¹ Approaches might differ from one historian to another, but the foundation of the questions remains the same. Through a Black feminist perspective,⁶² this dissertation sets out to answer two of sport history's fundamental questions (i.e., "What is sport?" and "What is it for?"⁶³), with the premise that sport history's ultimate goal is to go beyond the parochial lens of sport itself and understand what sport has contributed to the Black female experience (as distinct from Black men

and White men and women's experiences).⁶⁴ As such, the objective is to expand (a) the "breadth of what sport was for,"⁶⁵ (b) the Black Canadian historical narrative, and (c) our knowledge of Canadian society through the lens of a particular marginalized group in the specific context of sport. These three points are discussed below.

In the first instance, situating Black women in sport history unveils Black women's socialization as gendered and racialized beings within a patriarchal White settler capitalist society. Here, socialization is defined as "a complex process that is 'mediated by important social relationships and constrained by access to resources and by general political, economic, social, and cultural forces.'"⁶⁶ Further, "sport is an institution in which, and through which, all of these elements are played out."⁶⁷ That is, Black women's sport history demonstrates how societal norms of blackness and womaness informed Black women's sport experiences and their social interactions (within and without their communities) in the athletic spaces. Women's sport participation is not a chance occurrence that can simply be traced back to discriminating legislation, nor is it a question of motor skill and talent; it is a function of gender roles.⁶⁸ Because sport is a part of the cultural landscape that has been adopted by many groups for different purposes and outcomes, and considering the traditional structure of sport as a masculine and White European space, Black women's presence and reality within the sporting structure reveals as much about Black women and the wider society as it does about sport itself. Choosing sport in the study of Black women is, simply put, "using the familiar [i.e., sport] to discover the complex and the untold."⁶⁹

Secondly, to expand Black Canadian women's history is also to expand Black Canadian history. It goes beyond a simple history of Black Canadians to integrate Black history into Canadian history, that is, position Blackness within Canadian historical society to challenge its longstanding erasure. The emphasis of historical studies of Black women that examine slavery, immigration, and work skews the perception of Black women. While it is important and necessary to understand and reconstruct Black women's narratives of struggle, it is also essential to diversify their narratives to paint a more complex portrait of their past experiences. Positioning Black women at the centre of inquiry allows individuals who are identified and who identify themselves as Blacks to develop a better sense of themselves,⁷⁰ and challenges any feminist paradigm founded on a baseless premise of the uniformity of all women's experiences.⁷¹ Indeed, looking at sport only through the gender lens has obscured some issues affecting many women who are not White. As Scraton writes, "many of the current issues addressed in sport, while being central to a critical feminist project and/or engaged with contemporary post-structuralist debates, in the main, remain ethnocentric."⁷²

In Canada, where White European women dominate social-historical studies on women and Black men dominate studies on Blacks, it is implied that Black women fit within those two narratives. However, a Black woman is "not a woman today and a genderless Black person tomorrow. Both components are integral to and inseparable parts of who [Black women] are."⁷³ It is important to address the "serious lack of writings on black women's experiences of sport"⁷⁴ reported in the literature, and this begins with "listening to" history from the perspective of Black women.

Positioning Black women at the centre of inquiry is also an opportunity to explore gender relations within the Black community itself, a perspective that has generally been neglected in Black studies.⁷⁵ Additionally, although most Black women shared similar racial and gender experiences, they have had varied individual experiences based on location, socio-economic status, and various other factors. This means that Black women's narratives have multiple layers, as factors such as colour, religion, sexuality, and culture all contribute to a heterogeneity within Black female history itself.⁷⁶ Through a historical study of sport from the standpoint of some Black women, one stands to gain a new perspective of Black histories. I do not suggest that this is a definitive or complete history of Black women in sport.

This leads to the third point that a historical study of Black Canadian women is a means to enhance our socio-historical understanding of how a subset group of a racial minority navigated through a White nation such as Canada. Colin Thomson articulates this best in the introduction to *Blacks in Deep Snow: Black Pioneers in Canada*:

[Only recently in Canada] has the black population exceeded two percent of the total population. At the same time, that seemingly negligible fraction has been hounded by an overwhelmingly dominant white Canadian society. Apart from its intrinsic worth, then, black Canadian history is valuable for what it reveals about that dominant society. To talk of white racism in Canada does not mean that everyone who is white believes that the white person possesses inborn superiority. It does mean that Canadian society operates as though this were the case; that the nature of our society is the same as if this belief were [*sic*] indeed shared by most Whites.⁷⁷

The study of Blacks helps develop an understanding of Canada's relationship with race and institutional and individual racism, while the study of Black women adds both gender and race to the prism.⁷⁸ In the Canadian context, it is about conceptualizing how the gendered identity of the Black female individual fits into and reorganizes the

Canadian White settler narrative.⁷⁹ Black Canadian historiography calls for a constructive critique of the status quo of Canadian history writing and its resulting narrative. And Black history, like all histories, may present ‘competing truths,’ which do not make it less legitimate. Instead, it encourages the exploration of such complexities and impedes the tendency of histories to be normalized and considered linear.

3. Research Questions

As both Black and women, Black Canadian women have occupied a specific position in the twentieth century Canadian social landscape. So far, the question of the role of sport in their socialization as a gendered and racialized group is not fully answered. Yet, the experiences of women from a minority racial group in a key socio-cultural institution such as sport can enhance the understanding of racial relations in Canada, in particular, and of the historical Canadian context, in general. Black women’s sport experiences should expand both our understanding of sport in a specific time and place, and our conception of what the Canadian experience has been in the past.

For that, this dissertation asks two questions that emerge from historians’ assertions that that the 1920s and the interwar period, overall, represented a period of growth for organized sport in Canada, and what some scholars have termed the ‘golden age’ for women’s sport.⁸⁰ (The time frame of the study is further justified below in section 4.) With that, a) what were the sport experiences of Black women between the 1920s and 1940s in Southern Ontario? Secondly, b) what was the experience of elite black female athletes in Southern Ontario between the 1920s and 1940s? Black experiences and women’s experiences, when superimposed upon each other, especially in

the athletic space, underscore the interconnectedness of social categories that determine access to resources in Western capitalist white supremacist settler societies. Findings will add to knowledge about the role of sport in society, expand the historical narrative about Black women in Canada, and offer a new perspective on Canadian history. This dissertation, thus, attempts to construct “local history while adding to and troubling mainstream local and national history.”⁸¹

4. Research Philosophy / Theoretical Approach

To study Black women from a socio-historical perspective requires a position on Blackness in Canada, as well as a position on womanhood.⁸² As outlined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in her seminal work, to ignore the intersectional experience of Black women is detrimental to any theoretical analysis of their experiences.⁸³ This implies the introduction of gender into race studies because both race and gender performances intersect: race is gendered and gender is racialized.⁸⁴ Neither Black femininity nor Black masculinity can be studied without acknowledgement of race’s intersection with gender. For example, Black women’s work in Canada was shaped by race and gender in a structure where race- and female-bound work meant being on the lowest rung of the socio-economic ladder.⁸⁵ Without that acknowledgement, theories reproduce the main relations of domination and subordination in society. Therefore, this work is positioned to present certain aspects of Black women’s experiences, with the acknowledgement that multiple subjectivities are at play in any woman’s story.

First and second wave feminism, the movements to emancipate women in a patriarchal system by addressing the unequal power relations between men and women,

have a tendency to reduce all women's struggles to gender only.⁸⁶ This ignores race, class, sexuality, and other social categories that shape individual experiences and that place some women above others in the social hierarchy.⁸⁷ Particularly, during the second wave of the feminist movement—when the struggle for equality shifted from suffrage to a direct challenge of the patriarchy in the 1970s—women of colour and lower classes were absent or invisible; as historian Vijay Agnew notes, many women of colour did not share the same cultural practices and class struggles as White middle-class women.⁸⁸ This was a symptom of how feminist discourse remains embedded within existing power relations, which makes it subject to replicating them just as much as countering them.⁸⁹ Hence, by adopting an intersectional research perspective, the focus herein is on stories of women where race and gender intersect, in order to develop an understanding of the compounded impact of those categories.

Black American history scholarship helps us understand the need for an adequate feminist theory that centres women of colour not based on a false premise of a uniform women's experience.⁹⁰ According to Crenshaw, this approach stands to benefit more people by combatting both sexism and racism, as opposed to partial results from approaches only focused on White women.⁹¹ Women's sport history scholarship benefits from the recognition of dynamics of power that characterize the hybrid subordination of women of colour.⁹² For instance, while gender relations in Black American communities were clouded by the tensions of existing in a patriarchal and sexist society, sociologist Yevonne R. Smith observes that Black communities were “more equalitarian than the dominant [White] culture” concerning women's sport participation.⁹³ Women of colour have been and remain multidimensional; they have looked at and been looked at from

multiple vantage points. Yet, their history remains largely unidimensional.⁹⁴ In employing the experiences of Black Canadian women from Southern Ontario between the 1920s and the 1940s as a focal point, this dissertation attempts to bridge gender, race, and class relations in sport, and, thereby, document an integrated and inclusive historical account of the topic under discussion.

Historian Allen Guttmann stresses that “the sheer multiplicity of behaviours” exhibited in the history of women’s sport demands that we reassert what it is to be a woman.⁹⁵ Linda Williams also concludes that, as women’s sport had greater support in the Black American community, this reveals more codependence between Black men and women than between White men and women.⁹⁶ Given these observations, Black women’s sport history stands to help us further understand Black Canadian women and Black Canadians in general. Moreover, historian Nancy Struna writes that, “if scholars wish to explain the nature and the significance of sport in a social context, they simply cannot ignore the other behaviors which occurred or intersected with sport.”⁹⁷ Therefore, sport’s conceptualization alongside other activities in which women were engaged (e.g., work, church, and community involvement), and situating sporting endeavours in the established discourses about Black femaleness (or feminine Blackness) is essential.

I am also cognisant of the fact that history is written, constructed, and manufactured, like other stories. When this goes unquestioned, naturalized, and normalized, popular grand narratives emerge that obscure certain elements that go unrecognized. Examining those narratives can be done by questioning “how historical facts are collected and what kind of politics of knowledge are being harnessed.”⁹⁸ This implies continuous reflexivity during the writing process.

5. Delimitations

5.1 Time Frame

The period of study extends from the 1920s to the end of 1940s. Multiple factors explain the location in that period. First, it was a historically significant period for sport in Canada. There is some consensus among sport historians that the 1920s-1930s period marked a time of growth for Canadian women's sport.⁹⁹ Women entered the sporting domain in greater numbers and received support from the public. The momentum was difficult to carry far into the 1940s, as seen, for instance, with the Edmonton Grads, a record-breaking basketball team which disbanded in 1940, at the onset of WWII. They had dominated their sport since 1915.

Second, the Black Canadian population in Southern Ontario during that period was more socio-culturally and economically homogenous, and the Black population in Canada was then least constituted of immigrants. This was because in 1911, the government of Canada introduced radical immigration policies which had a profound effect on people of colour's immigration to Canada, resulting in an increase in the White European population within the country. As James Walker notes, "immigration restrictions meant that by the Second World War most black Canadians had been born [in Canada]."¹⁰⁰ The loosening of the policies in 1952¹⁰¹ and the shift in 1967 to a point system¹⁰² expanded the ethnic makeup of Black Canadians as more Blacks from Central and South America, the Caribbean, and Africa began to arrive. While cognisant that the Black community was not altogether without recent immigrants prior to the waves of immigration in the 1950s and 1960s,¹⁰³ the introduction of large numbers of various

Black ethnic groups requires a separate investigation. Note also that preliminary research did not uncover cases earlier than the 1920s (late 1890s or 1910s) or any significant Ontario based histories in the period between 1950 and 1960s.

As there is no established history of Black women in sport during the first half of the twentieth century when women's sport was growing, this dissertation will attempt to fill in the literature gap. Sporting pioneers had set the grounds for athletes across the nation to be able to participate in organized sport, which underscores the importance of focusing on the study period. Earlier in the century (pre-1920s), Black Canadian women's status in the Canadian socio-economic, political, and cultural landscape would have constrained their participation in what was a privileged White middle- upper-class and masculine domain. Finally, preliminary research indicates that there are a few individuals and groups whose sporting experiences occurred between the 1920s and the 1940s that have yet to be analysed in depth. This study sets out to expand those narratives.

5.2 Location and Activities

The scarcity of sources on Black Canadians in the period under study and on the specific topic at hand is compounded by relatively low Black population numbers throughout most of Canada's history. Between 1871 and 1951, Blacks represented less than 0.5% of the population. In fact, their proportions diminished through that time, going from 0.6% in 1871 to 0.1% in 1951.¹⁰⁴ This was largely due to Canadian immigration policies, which facilitated White European immigration while impeding the entry of immigrants of colour.¹⁰⁵

Such anti-Black policies were strategic and were meant to keep the Black population at a minimum. In provinces where the Black population was higher, such as Ontario and Nova Scotia, Blacks could be vocal enough against racial prejudice to incite institutional and physical segregation. This made the population more visible, as individuals were forced to create their own community infrastructure such as newspapers, schools, and businesses.¹⁰⁶ In contrast, in provinces such as Quebec, there were so few Black residents that it was difficult for them to unite significantly as a group. Thus, in the city of Montreal, Black people were an ‘invisible’ population, confined to disenfranchised neighborhoods through which waves of new immigrants passed and left them, leaving them absent from historical records beyond slavery time in Quebec.¹⁰⁷ Such ‘invisibility’ contributed to the erasure of small Black communities embedded within high- populated regions. This makes source material scarce, as detailed below, and recommends a more regional approach to history to ensure an adequate base of knowledge. Thus, this dissertation focuses on Black women who lived in Ontario. Selecting this region stemmed from availability of resources (financial and time related) and reflects access to and accessibility of specific databases located within that region, which yielded pertinent information during the research.

Accounts centre on individuals who lived, and events that took place, in Ontario’s capital, Toronto, and in towns to the south of it (i.e., London, Niagara, Hamilton, Chatham-Kent, etc.). The rationale for selecting Ontario also stems from the rich and long history of Black people in the southern region of the province. Clusters of Black communities were found in Ontario before, during and after the period under study.¹⁰⁸ Black people have been rooted in Ontario since the 1860s, and this has allowed for the

growth of a substantial social life amongst Black communities in the province.¹⁰⁹ Note also that historically Ontario is located in the most populated region of Canada so, tracing the history of a minority within it requires dedicated research. Along with Nova Scotia, Ontario counted the highest number of Black citizens from the 1920s to 1940s, but populations within the two provinces had different socio-historical backgrounds.¹¹⁰ Hence, focusing on Ontario accounts for differing socio-political contexts between provinces overall. For instance, Ontario enacted the Racial Discrimination Act in 1944, nearly a decade before Nova Scotia adopted a similar act—the Fair Employment Practices Act—in 1953, and two decades before Quebec (see further in chapter 2, section 2).

Furthermore, children's play was not a part of the conceptualization of sport in this study, in line with Guttmann's argument that "sports of older women and adult women usually reveals more about culture than do young children's games."¹¹¹ Hence, the focus in this study is on structured sport endeavours of older girls and women. Of note is the fact that, because puberty has often—though not always—led girls to abandon sports,¹¹² it is presumed that girls' participation in sport beyond puberty has more significance; but given the time period and the paucity of knowledge on the topic, young girls' sport will not be ignored. There is also a distinction made in this work between athletics and physical education and activities. In the dissertation, sport refers to "nonutilitarian physical contests" which may include competition against oneself, nature, or another contestant.¹¹³ This theoretical distinction is essential, because sports and physical activity/exercise are not subject to the same social restrictions; while physical activity or fitness is related to health, sport and competition is a purely recreational

activity to which stronger social meanings have been attached. I think, for example, about the fact that sport was traditionally a male domain in which female participation has often drawn controversy, while girls and women were encouraged to be physically active (albeit minimally) for health purposes.¹¹⁴ This study is concerned with Black women's navigation of the sport space (as a socio-cultural institution), and not with wider question of access to physical activity and health services.

5.3 Archival Sources

The most important constraint to this research was the rarity of records pertaining to marginalized minority racial groups in general Canadian archives.¹¹⁵ It seems, as Vijay Agnew notes, that women in marginal communities did not keep extensive textual records; they did not write diaries, books, or keep community records.¹¹⁶ It is, however, understood that public archives are not limited sources for marginal groups by accident. Historian Douglas Booth describes archives as “sites of power” whose content should be conceptualized relative to its creators and the context in which records were stored.¹¹⁷ It is imperative to uncover the circumstances under which particular material was assembled and to listen to the silenced voices. Jennifer Kelly and Mikael Wossen-Taffesse stress upon the latter in this manner:

While archival research of government and newspaper documents is a staple of thorough historical practice, such sources and methods rely on what has been donated to or accessed by archives. Often these narratives (e.g., correspondence, journals, etc.) are fragments of life as conveyed and experienced by those in positions of social and political power and, thus, offer a less than complete view of the past. The artefacts that represent the everyday lives of Black women were not regarded as worthy of preserving for future generations.¹¹⁸

Preliminary research confirmed that large archival holdings contained few relevant documents. Even municipal archive collections (e.g., the Roy States Collection at McGill University, the Norval Johnson Heritage Centre Collection at the St. Catharines Public Library, and the Chatham-Kent Black Historical Society archives) contained little that was pertinent to the research questions. As Karen Flynn noted when mapping the experiences of Black nurses in Canada, “scholars interested in writing about Black women cannot simply walk into the Ontario Archives or Library and Archives Canada and request a finding aid”¹¹⁹ on a very specific topic. In Flynn’s case it was “Caribbean domestic workers recruited by the State during the 1950s.”¹²⁰ In the case of this work, it is women’s sport between the 1920s to the 1940s in Southern Ontario.

Hence, to answer the first research question, the main source utilized was archived oral histories (from the Multicultural History Society of Ontario (MHSO)). Oral histories are a source type that has also been given much attention in the Black Canadian women’s history literature.¹²¹ As historian Dorothy Williams indicates, “Oral history came into fashion in the 1960s, as the reach of history extended beyond the elite, or traditional areas of research, into the domain of the marginalized groups.”¹²² This source is especially suited to trace narratives absent from mainstream archives, such as Black Canadian histories. It is important to note that sociologist Linda Carty has observed that Black Canadians’ oral traditions—which translated in a lack of written records in favour of oral transmission of histories—has made Black women’s history less legitimate in academia.¹²³ In a field such as sport history where written documents are still the main sources, oral traditions have, indeed, been marginalized.¹²⁴ One of the contributions of

this study is the expansion of the main evidentiary base in the field of sport history (such as newspapers, minute books, and other types of written material) by using oral histories.

For groups whose history was minimally preserved in the form of written records, oral histories were the answer to capture memories and experiences that illustrate social conditions and community histories. Kelly and Wossen-Taffesse note the importance of “community based local histories,” stating that “these community narratives often provide a counter-discourse to easy assumptions that racialized women were consistently downtrodden and lacked agency. These family accounts demonstrate that even when economic opportunities were slim, and racism was evident, Black women did find spaces to excel.”¹²⁵ Once these histories are constructed, they can then be contextualized with the help of less localized narratives, to link the individual stories contained within those accounts with public issues in the socio-cultural environment.¹²⁶ Thus, information from the oral histories was supplemented with secondary and archival sources.

To retrace an elite athlete’s sporting experience in Toronto in the late 1930s and 1940s, as per the second research question, the main source of evidence was newspaper archives. Newspaper material is one of the most common sources in sport history,¹²⁷ and it is also found that the elite athlete who is the focus of the present newspapers was most visible through that medium. In fact, as Lansbury observes concerning Black American athletes,¹²⁸ it can also be argued that Black Canadian women were the most visible as athletes in recorded history. The fact that there were women sport columnists in two major Toronto newspapers (*The Globe* and the *Star*) during the period under study also permits us to view Black athletes through the lens of fellow women. The unreliable

nature of newspaper material as a sport history source¹²⁹ is acknowledged; thus, during interpretation of the accounts, I expended significant effort to contextualize press reports and cross verify the information through other sources. Notably, diverse types of archival sources supplemented newspaper accounts.

It should be noted here that preliminary research cast a wider net across Canada and that the study's scope was later reduced to Southern Ontario. There, local collections focusing on visible minorities were a starting point for the research. These included the library and collections of the MHSO, The Buxton National Historic Museum, The Ontario Black History Society Archives, and the Research Centre of the Chatham-Kent Black Historical Society. Of these locations, the MHSO was the most helpful. As noted above, browsing of some key municipal fonds of archives and collections yielded little relevant information. Browsing all issues published during the period under study by the sole Black Canadian newspaper, London's (ON) *Dawn of Tomorrow* also yielded no relevant data.

6. Methods

6.1 Accessing and Analysing Oral Histories

When listening to the MHSO interviews, I took notes of and transcribed any mention, practice of, or encounter with sports by the informants, as well as notes on the informants and on the rest of the interview. The notes were condensed topically (displayed with extracted quotes) and a verification process was undertaken through re-listening to drawn summaries.¹³⁰ The findings were then analyzed and interpreted to

make visible the combined impact of race and gender on the informant's sport related recollections.¹³¹ Two major themes emerged—"In the Game" and "At the Game"—as the recorded interview data were being screened, filtered, and compiled and, then, reanalyzed inductively. In the Game, women were athletes in school and in community women's teams, and some were also involved in sport alongside boys and men. There is also evidence of women coaching and one umpire of men's baseball. At the Game, women were avid sport spectators, cheering on men from their communities, but also participating in anti-racism work from the stands.

This information is presented and analysed alongside other secondary sources, photographic evidence, and other archived oral histories, including:

- i) a 2007 interview from the Buxton National Historic Site and Museum conducted with Buxton (Ontario) resident Dolores Shadd;
- ii) interviews from the Virtual Museum of Canada exhibit entitled Our Stories - Remembering Niagara's Proud Black History; and
- iii) interviews from a recent project by the University of Windsor (Ontario) entitled Breaking the Colour Barrier: Wilfred "Boomer" Harding & the Chatham Coloured All-Stars.

These oral histories were included because some of the interviewees were connected to some of the MHSO informants, or because preliminary research indicated that they contained pertinent and complementary recollections. For instance, some informants

interviewed in the Breaking the Colour Barrier project were relatives of two MHSO informants.

6.2 Accessing and Analysing Newspapers

A search was conducted through digital newspaper archives databases to which I had access. This included the following four: *Globe and Mail: Canada's Heritage* from 1844, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, African American Newspapers, 1827-1998, and Toronto Star Archives-ProQuest Archiver. The following terms and their variations were used: Jean Lowe; colored/dusky/negro(ess) athlete; dusky AND sport AND girl; colored/dusky/negro(ess) AND softball; colored/dusky/negro(ess) AND basketball; colored/dusky/negro(ess) AND track. These terms were aimed at finding not only information about Jean Lowe, but also any reports of other Black female athletes. A preliminary study informed the integration of the now antiquated “dusky” in the search, as well the use of American, rather than Canadian-English, spelling of “coloured.”

Of the various publications held within those databases, the *Globe* and the *Star* were the most helpful (between 1938 and 1950, there were 86 articles in the *Globe* and 28 in the *Star*). The coverage comprised of either brief reports about competition results, or detailed discussions about athletes. Some entries had no indicated authors, while others were found in the publications' sport columns. There were also a few results about Lowe in American newspapers: The Indianapolis *Recorder* and The Kansas *Plain Dealer* had one entry each, and the Chicago *Defender* yielded the most, with 13 entries about Lowe's competition results and prospects.

After reducing the content of the search results by removing redundant articles (those that only briefly reported dry and brief competition results), the articles were printed and organized chronologically and by newspaper in a folder. Next was a re-analysis intended to sort, process, and topically organize the content. Each article was colour coded according to the following subjects in its content: performance (i.e., results, awards, and accolades), athletes' femininity, Blackness (i.e., a discussion about black athletes), responsibility and authority figures (e.g., Lowe's promotion to administrative duties and discussion about administrative staff around her), injustice within women's sport, and information about Lowe's education and work. This was an inductive process based on the content of the articles themselves. Some articles were assigned more than one colour code. The colour coding was used to sort the findings and, adopting the intersectional perspective, to nuance and organize findings to make visible the combined impact of race and gender on Lowe's experience.

7. Chapter Organization

Chapter two provides a context for the histories explored in this work, focusing on the first half of the twentieth century. The chapter provides a background of racial and gender relations in Canadian society, an outline of the socio-economic conditions of Black people in Ontario, and positions Black women's history in Canada and Ontario based on their Blackness and womanness. Histories of White middle to upper class men dominate the sport history scholarship in Canada. I undertook the task to locate Black men and White women in that scholarship, with the goal of providing context and illustrating the gap in literature concerning Black women's narratives. In this respect, the

chapter creates the socio-historical framework within which to understand the narratives presented in chapters three and four.

Chapters three and four present two types of experiences of sport by women. In chapter three, the sporting practices of a group of women from Southern Ontario, are relayed through archived oral histories. Sport emerged in ten interviews from informants born between 1889 and 1923 and who were active between 1920 and 1950. For most oral history informants, school was one of the principal locations where they encountered sport, including track and field, baseball, basketball, and tennis. Informants also described playing alongside their brothers and other boys as youth and young adults. Most significantly, it is revealed that attending sport games was a regular activity for some of the informants, regardless of the extent of their own sport participation. The bleachers were an extension of the community's social arena, especially to support successful teams, whether men or women's.

In chapter four, through mainstream Toronto newspapers, the work traced the athletic journey of Jean Lowe, a track and field amateur athlete who was active between the 1930s and 1940s. As a Black woman, Lowe negotiated a White dominated space in a non-work setting as a successful and popular athlete. Lowe was a stand out athlete in Toronto, well known for her accomplishments at the time, and often was applauded by prominent ex-Olympian and sport columnist Bobbie Rosenfeld. From a champion high school athlete in the late 1930s, Lowe became a member of a champion running club in the 1940s. Sport journalists and columnists praised her talents, while her common description as 'dusky,' a racial epithet, Othered her as a Black athlete. Her racial identity

was always at the forefront, and yet she was also hailed as a model of femininity in the press, challenging contemporary gender notions that characterized Black female track and field athletes as deviant and masculine.

Chapter five concludes with a link between the accounts in chapter three and four and a discussion of how sport facilitated contact between Black and White people outside formal settings. The racial relations context of the time framed women's experiences; this is seen both within the oral histories and Jean Lowe's account. The concluding chapter discusses the ways in which sport experiences help in locating racial and gender dynamics present in the labour history of Black women in Canada operated outside of the work context.

The history of Black women in sport is fragmented, which complexifies its narration. It is also a simple history, as told in the following chapters. The narrative easily conveys the different layers that composed Black female Canadian experiences in the early to mid-twentieth century through the social lives of a few women. Weaving together chapters three and four's accounts notably presents a look at an institution's role in racialized women's socio-cultural life while centring the intersectional experience of a historically-marginalized group. This is informed by the premise that sport histories, "the breadth of what sport was for"¹³² at a given time and place, have not gone past their shelf life so long as sport remains anchored in society.

Notes

¹ Colin D. Howell, *Blood, Sweat, and Cheers: Sport and the Making of Modern Canada* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 106.

² Howell, *Blood, Sweat and Cheers*, 50, 25, 98.

³ Along with class, gender and race for a matrix of domination that is manifest in the experiences of all sportspeople, but especially in the experiences of women of colour. Jennifer E. Bruening, "Gender and Racial Analysis in Sport: Are All the Women White and All the Blacks Men?," *Quest* 57, no. 3 (2005): 330, DOI: 10.1080/00336297.2005.10491861.

⁴ As articulated by Morrow and Wamsley, "the invention of race as a biological distinction helped white men deal with their fears of physical competence." Don Morrow and Kevin B. Wamsley, *Sport in Canada: A History*, 4th ed. (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 2017), 168.

⁵ Patricia Vertinsky and Gwendolyn Captain, "More Myth than History: American Culture and Representations of the Black Female's Athletic Ability," *Journal of Sport History* 25, no. 3 (1998): 541; Linda D. Williams, "Sportswomen in Black and White: Sports History from an Afro-American Perspective," in *Women, Media and Sport: Challenging Gender Values*, ed. Pamela J. Creedon (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1994), 47.

⁶ Victoria Paraschak, for instance, presents a short analysis of Aboriginal women's sport history only to conclude that they remain invisible in the record. See Victoria Paraschak, "Invisible but Not Absent: Aboriginal Women in Sport and Recreation." *Canadian Woman Studies* 15, no. 4 (1995): 71-73. M. Ann Hall also briefly discusses Aboriginal women's involvement in sports in her work. M. Ann Hall, *The Girl and the Game: A History of Women's Sport in Canada* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 6, 94, 207. More recently, Hall called for the expansion of the literature on Aboriginal women's sport history study. M. Ann Hall, "Toward a History of Aboriginal Women in Canadian Sport," in *Aboriginal Peoples and Sport in Canada: Historical Foundations and Contemporary Issues*, eds. Janice Forsyth and Audrey R. Giles (Vancouver, BC: UBC Press, 2012), 64-71.

⁷ The first record of a Black person in the Canadian colonies can be traced back to Matthieu Da Costa, a translator, in the seventeenth century. The next person of African descent in the record was a slave boy from Madagascar named Olivier Le Jeune. Robin W. Winks, *Blacks in Canada: A History*, 2nd ed., Montreal, QC and Kingston, ON: McGill-Queen's Press-MQUP, 1997), 1.

⁸ Sheila Scraton, "Reconceptualizing Race, Gender and Sport: The Contribution of Black Feminism," in *Race, Sport and British Society*, eds. Ben Carrington and Ian McDonald (New York, NY: Routledge, 2001), 171.

⁹ See Boulou Ebanda de B'Béri, Nina Reid-Maroney, and Handel Kashope-Wright, eds., *The Promised Land Project: History and Historiography of the Black Experience in Chatham-Kent's Settlement and Beyond* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2013).

¹⁰ Struna, "Beyond Mapping Experience," 128.

¹¹ Hall makes a relevant, but brief commentary on Black athletes before the 1980s, and notes that there is a gap in the literature on those athletes. William Humber includes a few female athletes from before and after the 1980s in his compilation of Black Canadian athletes. Humber does not conduct an extended historical analysis specifically focused on Black women's sport participation in Canada. Hall, *The Girl and the*

Game, 214. William Humber, *A Sporting Chance Achievements of African-Canadian Athletes* (Toronto, ON: Natural Heritage Books, 2004), 78, 79, 88, 89, 93, 94

¹² Smith, “Women of Color in Society and in Sport,” 228.

¹³ See note 11.

¹⁴ Adrienne L. Shadd, *The Journey from Tollgate to Parkway: African Canadians in Hamilton* (Toronto, ON: Natural Heritage Books, 2010), cover page.

¹⁵ “Community Memories. The Souls of Black Folk: Hamilton’s Stewart Memorial Community,” accessed March 29, 2016, *Virtual Museum of Canada*, http://www.virtualmuseum.ca/sgc-cms/histoires_de_chez_nous-community_memories/pm_v2.php?id=search_record_detail&fl=0&lg=English&ex=00000636&hs=0&sy=cat&st=&ci=8&rd=149131#.

¹⁶ Hall, *The Girl and the Game*, 113.

¹⁷ This is not a forgone conclusion, however, as there is no evidence of any other individual before her, Howard appears to have been the first woman of colour to represent Canada on the world stage.

¹⁸ Bill McNulty and Ted Radcliffe, *Canadian Athletics, 1839-1992* (Ottawa, ON: Athletics Canada, 1992).

¹⁹ Wanda Chow, “90 year-old Burnaby Woman,” *The Newsleader* (Burnaby, BC), February 8, 2011, national edition. Accessed March 14, 2018. <http://www.burnabynewsleader.com/news/90-year-old-burnaby-woman-was-once-fastest-in-british-empire-1.1901363>

²⁰ See Valerie Jerome and Stuart Parker, “The Conservative Vision of the Amateur Ideal and its Paradoxical Whitening Power: The Story of Valerie Jerome in 1950s and 1960s Canadian Track and Field”, *Sport in Society: Cultures, Commerce, Media, Politics* 13, no. 1 (2010): 13. See also McNulty and Radcliffe, *Canadian Athletics*.

²¹ This was a nickname give to the six women team that was the first Canadian female track and field athletes to compete in the Olympics, in Amsterdam, in 1928. See Ron Hotchkiss, *The Matchless Six: The Story of Canada’s First Women’s Olympic Team*. (Toronto, ON: Tundra Books, 2012.)

²² Morrow and Wamsley, *Sport in Canada*, 230-231.

²³ Daniel Gorman, “Amateurism, Imperialism, Internationalism and the First British Empire Games,” *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 27, no. 4 (2010): 628.

²⁴ A certain N. Morales competed in the diving event for Jamaica in 1934. Video of the Jamaican team at the opening ceremonies suggest that Morales was a light-skinned White presenting (probably Latina) woman. In 1938, among the nations to compete, none had female representatives of colour, which appears to have made Howard the first Black woman to compete at the Games and the first in track and field. *British Empire Games - Great Athletic Meeting at White City*, British Pathé video, 3:30, Canister: 34/64, Sort no. 34/064, issued on August 9, 1934, accessed online: <https://www.britishpathe.com/video/british-empire-games>; “1938 British Empire Games - Medals Tally by Country,” *Commonwealth Games Federation*, accessed March 14, 2018. http://www.thecgf.com/games/tally_country.asp

²⁵ Hall, *The Girl and the Game*, 85-86.

²⁶ She was inducted in the Canadian Sports Hall of Fame in 2015, two years before her passing. *Newsleader*, February 8, 2011, national edition; "Athlete," *Burnaby Sports Hall of Fame*, accessed April 29, 2018. <http://www.burnabysportshalloffame.ca/10athlete.htm>; "Barbara Howard," *BC Sports Hall of Fame*, accessed April 29, 2018. <http://www.bcsportshalloffame.com/inductees/inductees/bio?id=368&type=person>

²⁷ Ellipses in the original. Bobbie Rosenfeld, "Feminine Sport Reel," *Globe*, February 19, 1938, 18.

²⁸ *Newsleader*, February 8, 2011, national edition; *Globe*, May 18, 2010, national edition.

²⁹ Howard did not stop there: she went on to become the first person of colour to teach in the Vancouver School Board. Tabitha Marshall, "Barbara Howard," *Historica Canada*, accessed January 23, 2018. <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/barbara-howard/>

³⁰ Michael D. Davis, *Black American Women in Olympic Track and Field* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 1992), xviii.

³¹ Hall adds that "Beginning with pioneer athletes of colour [like Barbara Howard and Rosella Thorne], to the highly successful track athletes whose parents immigrated to Canada in the 1980s and finally to the many fine high performance athletes of today in a great variety of sports, their accomplishments and contributions have been outstanding and out of proportion to their numbers in the general population." Hall, *The Girl and the Game*, 214.

³² Hall, *The Girl and the Game*.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 112.

³⁶ Hall, *The Girl and the Game*, 112.

³⁷ Sheldon Gillis, "Putting It on Ice: A Social History of Hockey in the Maritimes, 1880-1914," (Master's thesis, Saint Mary's University, 1996), 78; Susan Marion-Jean Precious, "The Women of Africville: Race and Gender in Postwar Halifax," (Master's thesis, Queen's University, 1998), 44-47; Donald Clairmont and Dennis Magill, *Africville Relocation Report* (Halifax, NS: Institute of Public Affairs-Dalhousie University, 1971), 109.

³⁸ Clairmont and Magill, *Africville Relocation Report*, 43.

³⁹ Precious, "The Women of Africville," ii, 25, 28.

⁴⁰ See Clairmont and Magill, *Africville Relocation Report*.

⁴¹ Precious, "The Women of Africville," 46-47.

⁴² See chapter two, section 3. See also Cecil Harris, *Breaking the Ice: The Black Experience in Professional Hockey* (Toronto, ON: Insomniac Press, 2003); Frank Cosentino, *Afros, Aborigines and Amateur Sport in*

Pre World War One Canada (Ottawa, ON: Canadian Historical Association, 1998); Russell Field, "Sport and the Canadian Immigrant: Physical Expressions of Cultural Identity within a Dominant Culture," In *Race and Sport in Canada: Intersecting Inequalities*, eds Janelle Joseph, Simon Darnell, and Yuka Nakamura, 29-56 (Toronto, ON: Canadian Scholars' Press, 2012); Valentine and Darnell, "Football and 'Tolerance';" Humber, *A Sporting Chance*; Krebs, "Hockey and the Reproduction of Colonialism in Canada;" *Mighty Jerome*, directed by Charles Officer (Montreal, QC: National Film Board, 2010), accessed online at https://www.nfb.ca/film/mighty_jerome_edu/; Nzindukiyimana and Wamsley, "Lowering the Bar."

⁴³ See chapter two, section 4.3. See also M. Ann Hall, "Towards a History of Aboriginal Women in Canadian Sport," in *Aboriginal Peoples and Sport in Canada: Historical Foundations and contemporary Issues*, ed. Janice Forsyth and Audrey R. Giles (Vancouver, BC: UBC Press, 2013), 64-91; Victoria Paraschak, "Variations in Race Relations: Sporting Events for Native Peoples in Canada," *Sociology of Sport Journal* 14, no. 1 (1997): 71-72.

⁴⁴ Mensah, *Black Canadians*, 196.

⁴⁵ Among others, see Jennifer H. Lansbury, *A Spectacular Leap: Black Women Athletes in Twentieth-century America* (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 2014); Smith, "Women of Color in Society and in Sport"; Linda D. Williams, "Sportswomen in Black and White: Sports History from an Afro-American Perspective," in *Women, Media and Sport: Challenging Gender Values*, ed. Pamela J. Creedon (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1994).

⁴⁶ Jennifer E. Bruening, "Gender and Racial Analysis in Sport: Are All the Women White and All the Blacks Men?," *Quest* 57, 336.

⁴⁷ Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2002), 22, 32, 232.

⁴⁸ Smith, "Women of Color in Society and in Sport," 233.

⁴⁹ Lansbury, *A Spectacular Leap*, 24.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁵² Martha H. Verbrugge, "Recreation and Racial Politics in the Young Women's Christian Association of the United States, 1920s-1950s," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 27, no. 7 (2010): 1193.

⁵³ Lansbury, *A Spectacular Leap*, 9.

⁵⁴ Davis, *Black American Women in Olympic Track and Field*, xvii.

⁵⁵ Lansbury, *A Spectacular Leap*, 9.

⁵⁶ Jennifer H. Lansbury, "'The Tuskegee Flash' and 'the Slender Harlem Stroker': Black Women Athletes on the Margin," *Journal of Sport History* 28, no. 2 (2001): 244.

⁵⁷ Afua Cooper, "Constructing Black Women's Historical Knowledge," *Atlantis: Critical Studies in Gender, Culture & Social Justice* 25, no. 1 (2000): 45.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ This process is articulated by Smith, "Women of Color in Society and in Sport," 231.

⁶¹ These models are defined at length by Douglas Booth. See Douglas Booth, *The Field: Truth and Fiction in Sport History* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2005), 8.

⁶² Black feminism is here defined as an approach to feminism which prioritizes Black women's standpoint and, through that, an epistemology aimed at questioning the White feminist disregard of racial factors in women's experiences. Black feminism is grounded in the notion of the matrix of domination which reflect the complex nature of compounded oppression woven in societal institutions. The matrix facilitates the organization, development, and containment of intersection oppressions. Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 228, 256, 269, 271,

⁶³ Howell, *Blood, Sweat and Cheers*, 5.

⁶⁴ Struna, "Beyond Mapping Experience," 133.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 128.

⁶⁶ Bruening, "Gender and Racial Analysis in Sport," 335.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 336.

⁶⁹ Ebanda de B'Béri, Reid-Maroney, and Kashope-Wright, "Introduction," 5.

⁷⁰ Cooper, "Constructing," 39.

⁷¹ Yevonne R. Smith, "Women of Color in Society and Sport," *Quest* 44, no. 2 (1992): 232.

⁷² Scraton, "Reconceptualizing Race, Gender and Sport," 172.

⁷³ Cooper, "Constructing Black Women's Historical Knowledge," 40.

⁷⁴ Scraton, "Reconceptualizing Race, Gender and Sport," 172.

⁷⁵ However, sexism played a part in slowing the Black civil rights movement. Smith, "Women of Color in Society and in Sport," 233.

⁷⁶ Cooper, "Constructing Black Women's Historical Knowledge," 40.

⁷⁷ Colin A. Thomson, *Blacks in Deep Snow: Black Pioneers in Canada* (Don Mills, ON: J. M. Dent, 1979), 10.

⁷⁸ The prism is here defined as a conceptual multidimensional representation of the multitude of socio-cultural categories which shape individuals' reality. This may be outlined differently depending on one's position in the social hierarchy, hence the need for an epistemology that centers marginalized groups to make visible elements of the prism which may be ignored otherwise by dominant.

⁷⁹ For further discussion on Canada's White settler identity, and how it influences the integration of alternative narratives, see Notisha Massaquoi, "Future Imaginings of Black feminist Thought," in *Theorizing Empowerment: Canadian Perspectives on Black Feminist Thought*, eds. Njoki Nathani Wane and Notisha Massaquoi (Toronto, ON: Inanna Publications & Education Inc., 2007), 5-24.

⁸⁰ Helen Lenskyj, "Whose sport? Whose traditions? Canadian women and sport in the twentieth century," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 9, no. 1 (1992): 141; David McDonald, "The Golden Age of Women and Sport in Canada," *Canadian Woman Studies* 15, no. 4 (1995): 12-15.

⁸¹ Boulou Ebanda de B'Béri, Nina Reid-Maroney, and Handel Kashope-Wright, "Introduction," in *The Promised Land Project: History and Historiography of the Black Experience in Chatham-Kent's Settlement and Beyond*, eds. Boulou Ebanda de B'Béri, Nina Reid-Maroney, and Handel Kashope-Wright (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 5.

⁸² Peggy Bristow, ed., *We're Rooted Here and They Can't Pull Us Up: Essays in African Canadian Women's History* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 7-8.

⁸³ Mensah reiterates Crenshaw's concept in the Canadian context. Kimberle Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A Black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory, and antiracist politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum* (1989): 140; Mensah, *Black Canadians*, 159.

⁸⁴ Elizabeth V. Spelman, *Inessential Woman: Problems of Exclusion in Feminist Thought* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1988), 13, 55, 136.

⁸⁵ Dionne Brand, "'We Weren't Allowed to Go in the Factory Work until Hitler Started the War': The 1920s to the 1940s," in *We're Rooted Here and They Can't Pull Us Up: Essays in African Canadian Women's History*, coord. Peggy Bristow (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 172.

⁸⁶ Rhode notes that "To realize its full potential, feminism must sustain a vision concerned not only with relations between men and women, but also with relations among them." Deborah L. Rhode, "Feminist Critical Theories," *Stanford Law Review* 42, No. 3 (1990): 638.

⁸⁷ Vijay Agnew, "Canadian Feminism and Women of Color," *Women's Studies International Forum* 16, no. 3 (1993): 217. See also, Spelman, *Inessential Woman*, 133, who offers a philosophical analysis of feminism.

⁸⁸ Agnew, "Canadian Feminism," 223.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 220.

⁹⁰ Smith, "Women of Color in Society and in Sport," 232.

⁹¹ Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex," 166.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 140, 145.

⁹³ Smith, “Women of Color in Society and in Sport,” 233.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 246.

⁹⁵ Allen Guttman, *Women’s Sports: A History* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1991), 4.

⁹⁶ Williams, “Sportswomen in Black and White,” 54, 60.

⁹⁷ Nancy Struna, “Beyond Mapping Experience: The Need for Understanding the History of American Sporting Women,” *Journal of Sport History* 11, no. 1 (1984): 132.

⁹⁸ Ebanda de B’Béri, Reid-Maroney, and Kashope-Wright, “Introduction,” 5.

⁹⁹ Ann M. Hall, “The game of Choice: Girls’ and Women’s Soccer in Canada,” *Soccer & Society* 4, no. 2-3 (2003): 32.

¹⁰⁰ James W. St. G. Walker, *Racial Discrimination in Canada: The Black Experience*, booklet no. 41 (Ottawa, ON: Canadian Historical Association, 1985), 16.

¹⁰¹ This is when the word “race” was replaced by “ethnicity” in the Immigration Act in the section detailing the basis on which official could allow the entrance of an immigrant into the country. Lisa Marie Jakubowski, *Immigration and the Legalization of Racism* (Halifax, NS: Fernwood, 1997), 17.

¹⁰² The point system was meant to base an immigrants’ entry on objective and concrete criteria, such as education, and not on arbitrary and racist ones such as race or ethnicity. This opened the door to a more diverse immigrant population. Jakubowski, *Immigration and the Legalization of Racism*, 17.

¹⁰³ Various factors are implicated in this: geographical location, segregated and non-segregated communities, ancestry or direct origins (British, American, or Caribbean), religion, education (some were able to go study in Black Colleges in the United States, mixed race status, economic class, etc.

¹⁰⁴ Anne Milan and Kelly Tran, “Blacks in Canada: A Long History,” *Canadian Social Trends* 72, no. 2 (2004): 3.

¹⁰⁵ Walker, *Racial Discrimination in Canada*, 16.

¹⁰⁶ Dorothy W. Williams, *Blacks in Montreal, 1628-1986: An Urban Demography* (Cowansville, QC: Éditions Yvon Blais, 1989), iv.

¹⁰⁷ This minority status meant they were largely unable to gather enough people to protest systemic issues. Williams, *Blacks in Montreal*, iv.

¹⁰⁸ Milan and Tran, “Blacks in Canada,” 3.

¹⁰⁹ Multicultural History Society of Ontario. *Ontario’s African Canadians, 1865-1915* (Toronto, ON: Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 2000), 6.

¹¹⁰ See the comprehensive works of Walker and Winks, among others. Walker, *Racial Discrimination in Canada*; Winks, *Negroes in Canada*.

¹¹¹ Guttman, *Women's Sport*, 2.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 3.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹¹⁴ In the 1860s, Montreal physical educator Frederick Barnjum was one of the proponents of physical activity for women, recognizing that they did not get the same opportunity as boys to be active. He notably outlined the constraints imposed on girls' movements by socio-cultural expectations and fashion. Morrow and Wamsley, *Sport in Canada*, 191-192.

¹¹⁵ Jennifer R. Kelly and Mikael Wossen-Taffesse, "The Black Canadian: An Exposition of Race, Gender, And Citizenship," *Journal of Canadian Studies/Revue d'études canadiennes* 46, no. 1 (2012): 170.

¹¹⁶ Agnew, "Canadian Feminism," 219.

¹¹⁷ Booth, *The Field*, 87.

¹¹⁸ Kelly and Wossen-Taffesse, "The Black Canadian," 170.

¹¹⁹ Karen Flynn, "'I'm Glad That Someone Is Telling the Nursing Story'," *Journal of Black Studies* 38, no. 3 (2008): 444.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ Cooper, "Constructing Black Women's Historical Knowledge," 45.

¹²² Dorothy W. Williams, "The Jackie Robinson Myth: Social Mobility and Race in Montreal, 1920-1960" (Doctoral dissertation, Concordia University, 1999), 21.

¹²³ Linda Carty, "African Canadian Women and the State: 'Labour Only, Please'," in *We're Rooted Here and They Can't Pull Us Up: Essays in African Canadian Women's History*, ed. Peggy Bristow (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 194.

¹²⁴ Gary Osmond and Murray Phillips, "Sources," in *Routledge Companion to Sport History*, eds. S.W. Pope and John Nauright (New York, NY: Routledge, 2010), 37-38.

¹²⁵ Kelly and Wossen-Taffesse, "The Black Canadian," 170.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ Booth notes that depending on one's epistemological assumptions, the interpretation of newspapers will vary, and Jeffrey Hill cautions about solely relying on newspapers as sources and encourages historians to question the newspaper as text. I adopt a re/constructionist approach, both treating the newspaper as record contextualizing the discourse within it. Booth, *The Field*, 94; Jeffrey Hill, "Anecdotal Evidence: Sport, the Newspaper Press, and History," in *Deconstructing Sport History: A Postmodern Analysis*, ed. Murray G. Phillips (New York, NY: State University of New York Press, 2006), 125, 127.

¹²⁸ Lansbury notes that "Much more had been written about these athletes in the black, and white, press than any other black women athletes of their generation." Lansbury, *Champions Indeed*, 5.

¹²⁹ Newspaper writers can be biased, present misinformation, and omit or be unaware of some information. The newspaper is not a perfect source, if such a thing exists, and this must not be forgotten. Booth, *The Field*, 89.

¹³⁰ Carl Auerbach and Louise B. Silverstein, *Qualitative Data: An Introduction to Coding and Analysis* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2003), 20; Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman and Johnny Saldana, *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2013), 74, 204.

¹³¹ John H. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, 2nd ed. (Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications, 1994), 19, 21; Alan Bryman, Edward A. Bell, and James J. Teevan, *Social Research Methods*. 3rd Canadian ed. (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press Canada, 2012), 268-9, 279.

¹³² Struna, "Beyond Mapping Experience," 128.

CHAPTER II

OVERVIEW AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

1. Introduction

In Canada's history, sports, games, and pastimes are cultural markers that highlight how people related to one another, struggled for authority and power, included some and excluded others, celebrated lifestyle, and community values, and had fun.¹ Historically, sport serves as a useful lens to understand gender and sexuality, as well as national and racial values; as historians Don Morrow and Kevin Wamsley note, "At the individual level, people traded on the social, political, and economic rewards embedded in physical activities."² Sport is not just a small element of the national narrative; it is an important part in the production of the nation itself.³ Embedded within a Eurocentric patriarchal and colonial context, nineteenth century nation builders leveraged racial and gender hierarchies to construct a Canadian identity and, thus, participants in 'respectable' sports were more likely to reflect the dominant image of Canada; 'respectable athletes' were more likely to be "men rather than women, the English rather than the French, whites rather than Blacks and Native people, Protestants rather than Catholics, and middle- rather than working-class."⁴ The institution of sport did not take shape and grow within a vacuum, much less a socio-cultural vacuum.

As historian Colin D. Howell specifies, "the history of sport in twentieth-century Canada is a story of class and gender formation, capitalist transformation, and nation building in the broadest sense."⁵ As with most spheres of public life, White males have long dominated mainstream sport, which ensured that White and male histories came to

the fore. Racial and gendered hierarchies, as the literature demonstrates, have been reproduced for so long in Canadian society that, in many respects, they continue to mark current social relations.⁶ Integration into certain sports was possible, not because the society became tolerant toward women and racial/ethnic minorities, but because certain disciplines did not carry as much cultural importance as others.⁷ The notorious case of hockey and its long-sustained colour bar (lifted at the highest level, by the National Hockey League, in 1958), is evidence of the place that some activities came to occupy in White Canadian masculine culture.

That connection between sport and society is of paramount importance in this dissertation. While aiming to construct a history of Black women in sport, it is necessary to establish the historical context of the period under study. To appreciate the small space that Black Canadian women and men occupy in the Canadian sport history literature, this chapter positions Black Canadians within that period's wider social, cultural, political, and economic landscape. This exercise is especially necessary to contextualize chapters three and four, and for a greater understanding of the social fabric within which Black women advanced. Although the narrative is about a minority female group in a traditionally White male space, I approach it as a history of resistance, not as a victim's narrative. This aligns with historian M. Ann Hall's approach in her narrative of women's sport in Canada, and Afua Cooper's proposed model for the study of Black women's history: Recognizing racial, gender, and class oppression is important, and centring race in historical analysis is deemed necessary, however, the spotlight is put on resistance, giving agency to the individuals under study.⁸ Hence, to provide a framework for a story of Black women in sport, this chapter is an exploration of Black and White racial

relations and Black Canadian socio-economic history, with a focus on Ontario during the period under study.

2. Being Black in Canada

While it is true that Canada served as a haven for American refugee slaves for more than 75 years in the nineteenth century, the Underground Railroad helped create a myth of Canada as a land of freedom, equality, and full citizenship for Black people—a Promised Land of sorts.⁹ By the turn of the twentieth century, Canadians could not claim that the United States (US) was the only nation with a race problem. Writing from within McGill University’s Department of Economic Studies in 1930, Ida Greaves remarked that, “the path to Canadian freedom has proved a cul-de-sac” for Black people.¹⁰ Despite early evidence, such as Greaves’ report, the narrative that the struggle for Civil Rights was, and remains, an American problem persists in the Canadian national consciousness. Most notably, the case of Viola Desmond’s arrest in New Glasgow (Nova Scotia) in 1946 has only recently risen to the fore of the Canadian collective consciousness (starting with her official pardon in 2010); Canadians are more familiar with the later case of American Civil Rights’ activist Rosa Parks and her iconic stand for a bus seat in Montgomery (Alabama) in 1955.¹¹

The dominant history of Black people in Canada suffers from a lack of nuance, especially in the popular arena. Despite historical evidence that restrictions have been imposed on Black people in Canada since 1783, when their communities started to establish themselves, anti-Black racism in Canada is seen as a new phenomenon, not rooted in the past but, rather, in the increase of the Black population in the later decades

of the twentieth century.¹² In fact, Black history scholars, such as James W. St. G. Walker, argue that racial disadvantage directed at various prominent groups (Aboriginals, Jews, the Chinese, Japanese, South Asians, and of course, Black people) has manifested itself at different stages of the country's history, in different forms, and that it is a formative part of the history of Canada. Anti-Black discrimination was rooted in colour and the meanings that it came to convey, rather than a more tangible barrier such as language, dress, or an 'exotic' social structure, which could be cited for other people of colour in Canada.¹³ Blackness in Canada became associated with subordination, which led to a conception of Blackness as Other and 'inferior.'

De facto racism in Canada, especially prior to WWII, meant that an invisible but real colour bar oppressed Black Canadians in various social spheres.¹⁴ The Canadian colour bar had the distinction of being invisible because, as Walker writes, it was "upheld by attitude rather than by law, justified by convention rather than ideology."¹⁵ The attitude had roots in the legacy of slavery, a condition that Canadian British society assumed had reflected the rightful place of Black people. Thus, the convention saw Black people in servile positions.¹⁶

As Walker outlines, Canadian attitudes towards Black people in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries emanated primarily from outside influences: With less than 0.5% of Black people in the country at the time, most White Canadians had no first-hand relationships with Black people and defined their relationships through the stereotypical norms and observations originating in the US.¹⁷ A vicious circle emerged from this as few Black people could attain work outside the service and manual

labour sector, and the kind of work they performed was devalued. Limited opportunities reinforced anti-Black stereotypes, especially with regards to servitude and intellectual ability.¹⁸ Between 1845 and 1945, race ‘theories’ gave rise to more widespread segregation, while pseudo-scientific explanations for Black people’s conditions justified their subordination to ‘superior races.’¹⁹ As such, segregation was the norm in housing, recreation, lodging, restaurants, entertainment, and remained so until the mid-1940s, when different provinces began enacting anti-racism legislation.²⁰ Ontario was the first to establish such a legislation in 1944, while Quebec was the last in 1964.

The Black population’s relatively small size in a majority White European country only accentuated their visibility. In 1901, Canada’s Black population only represented 0.3 % of the Canadian population. This number decreased to 0.2 % between 1911 and 1971 (reaching its lowest level, 0.1%, in 1951).²¹ Research for this dissertation focused on Southern Ontario, one of two locations where, according to estimations, the largest groups of Black Canadians lived during the period under study—the other location being Nova Scotia. But, records of the percentages of Black people in Canada in the twentieth century were just estimations because, when they could, Black men and women who could ‘pass’ as White did so and self-reported as non-Black in the censuses.²² In his paper entitled “Negroes in Canada” published in 1961, sociologist Harold H. Potter remarks that,

The decrease of more than four thousand Negroes between 1941 and 1951 means that either more Negroes died and emigrated than arrived through birth and immigration in that period, or almost one-fifth of Canadian Negroes chose to report themselves under other labels after 1941.²³

Such phenomena, especially seen through its effect on descriptive statistics, is a reminder that Blackness and race are nothing more than socially fabricated labels, despite attempts to justify them scientifically over time.²⁴ As Potter notes, ‘Black’ referred to individuals who shared only a darker skin complexion and some ‘exotic’ markers in facial features and hair, but who often represented varied ethnic identities, including “‘old-line’ native [Black] Canadians, British West Indians, or American [immigrant] newcomers.”²⁵ The lack of categorization of Black people reflected how society viewed them. The introduction of the *Annual Report on Vital Statistics* helped illustrate this more clearly; before 1921, Black Canadians were not internally distinguishable.²⁶ Nevertheless, detailed *Annual Report* or not, race remained a key social marker which impacted one’s socio-economic opportunities.

In this dissertation, I largely focus on what historian Dorothy Williams terms ‘the Jackie Robinson Generation’ in her doctoral dissertation titled “The Jackie Robinson Myth: Social Mobility and Race in Montreal, 1920-1960.” This generation was born and grew up in the period under study and saw specific shifts within Canadian society occur within that time. Williams describes them as a generation that

grew up before human rights were protected under Canadian or provincial charter. Significantly, the generation of the Jackie Robinson period was the last Canadian born generation to come into adulthood before the winds of the civil rights movement blew across the border and fanned Canada’s civil rights movement. They were constrained by the racism of their day, forced to endure battles in the streets and within the institutions of society without the support of the law.²⁷

The author names that generation after the famous Brooklyn Dodgers baseball player who became the first Black man to play Major League Baseball in the twentieth century in 1948. His 1946 debut in Montreal with the Dodgers’ farm team, the Royals,

introduced him to the public and, especially, introduced the notion that Black men could succeed in the Major Leagues. As the “gentleman Negro athlete,” Robinson “defined an era of, and an aura of, Black success.”²⁸ However, Williams argues against the idea that Jackie Robinson’s socio-economic rise in Montreal reflected racial tolerance in the city and/or Canada; on a macro level, in their working and social lives, Black people in Canada who grew up and lived during that era were not somehow shielded from racism (hence the “Jackie Robinson Myth” appellation).²⁹ Of course, it must be conceded that individual experiences differ within each group; some may have escaped racism.³⁰ For instance, Violet Blackman, one woman interviewed in 1979 as part of the Multicultural History Society of Ontario (MHSO) oral history project referenced in this work (see chapter three), asserted that she “never had to encounter discrimination” and “never felt out of place.”³¹ Notwithstanding Blackman’s individual experience, as observed by Williams, prejudice and intolerance did steer many others’ lives.

It must be underscored that an irrational fear that Black immigrants would overwhelm Canada fueled a strong anti-Black sentiment.³² This then characterized the period between 1909 and 1930, linked to a long anti-Black, racist campaign.³³ Notably, as documented by historian Sarah-Jane Mathieu, Wilfred Laurier’s Government (1896 and 1911) qualified Black immigrants as an “invading foreign force.”³⁴ This type of discourse echoed beyond Laurier’s time and fuelled public attitudes towards future Black immigrants. Hostility also stemmed from the racialization of Canadian immigration policy, which reached its heights with the introduction of Section 38 in the *Immigration Act* of 1910. Section 38c specifically gave officials the power to turn away “immigrants belonging to any race deemed unsuited to the climate or requirements of Canada, or of

immigrants of any specified class, occupation or character.”³⁵ To understand who was ‘suitable,’ one must look at how, during the early twentieth century, Canada, like many other nations, was struggling to define itself.

After Confederation in 1867, the country’s leaders were more determined than ever to grow and develop the nation’s image, not only internally but, also, on the international stage.³⁶ Through that process, Canada’s ties to its British roots fuelled a tenacious belief among nationalists that Anglo-conformity (i.e., a White Canada) was the only solution to ensuring unity.³⁷ The growth of Canada as a nation was defined by its ambition to establish the country to mirror Great Britain. As a British settler colony, Canada retained a strong link to the Empire. Thus, White British immigrants were more valued than any other immigrant group.³⁸ However, British-only immigration was not a viable solution for populating a vast territory such as Canada. Other groups of Europeans, especially those from the north-west, were also ‘ideal’ immigrants. Immigration officials surmised that they could easily integrate into the majority Anglo-Saxon Canadian society or at the very least into the minority, but non-negligible, French-Canadian society.³⁹ With those objectives, immigrants from Central, Southern, and Eastern Europe were inadequate, and people of colour were especially unwelcome; the sentiment was that the latter could never adapt or conform themselves well enough to the Anglo-Saxon model in future generations.⁴⁰

Immigration policies had an additional impact on the socio-economic stratification of the different groups already in, or upon arrival in, Canada.⁴¹ Black people occupied the lowest rung of the ladder alongside other groups such as Aboriginals and

Chinese peoples, while White British Protestants were on top.⁴² It was difficult for Black Canadians to reach for the same opportunities as their fellow Canadians when the latter became convinced that Black people did not belong in Canada, and that the US' enactment of Jim Crow laws was ample proof of this.⁴³ Black people may have been relatively small in number, but their visibility did not fade. The result was a decline in the Black population size by the 1930s, which, as outlined below, enhanced their struggle to reach for the freedom implied by the myth of The Promised Land.⁴⁴

2.1 Women's Survival and Labour History

The historiography of Black people in Canada, and particularly Black women, has focused notably on working circumstances.⁴⁵ As the centre of basic survival for any group, labour history is pertinent. Importantly, what the historiography of Black women in areas outside of work tells us is relevant to the labour history literature. Sociologist Joseph Mensah notes that discrimination encountered outside the workplace serves to undermine Blacks in the labour market, since it constructs prejudice that eventually manifests itself in the workplace.⁴⁶ In consequence, racism in the workplace may be the most damaging form of bigotry because it strikes at the ability of its victims to sustain themselves and their families.⁴⁷ It should be noted that the vicious cycle of discrimination and socio-economic disadvantage is complex and does not provide a clear starting point for analysis. This means that the racism embedded in that cycle is just as difficult, although not impossible, to extricate.⁴⁸

In her study of Black nurses' history in Canada, Karen Flynn likewise contends that Black women's historical narratives in Canada need to be positioned in the context of

Canada as a White Supremacist settler capitalist nation.⁴⁹ This has been central in the most notable analyses of Black Canadian women's history, especially when attempting to retrace their professional experiences. Flynn also notes that historians have underscored the gendered and racialized nature of the hurdles faced by these women, which participates in exposing the myth of "the benign treatment of Black people in Canada."⁵⁰ Within that context, racial dynamics in sport can help retrace how prejudice and stereotypes were reinforced or challenged outside of sport, with the understanding that what happened outside of the workplace still had an effect in the workplace.

A most telling overview of the socio-economic condition of Black people during the period under study emerges from Ida Greaves' study in 1930, titled *The Negroes in Canada*. Greaves indicates that Black people in Canada were likely to immigrate to the US where they would be in greater number and, therefore, benefit from social and economic opportunities not available in Canada due to colour.⁵¹ In Canada, despite being a small minority unlikely to pose a real threat to the White majority, social mobility was significantly hindered. Greaves identifies a few contributing factors: a) isolation in urban centres and dispersion in rural areas, due to b) landlord and employer discrimination, and c) the fact that while Black people could vote and were legally equal, in practice and in daily life, they were dismissible.⁵² Private owners/establishments reserved the right not to serve them, for instance. Thus, Black men and women faced many undignified situations, which they either faced head on or decided to escape.

Confronted with injustice and isolation, "In the early decades of the twentieth century, an extraordinary flowering of African-Canadian organizational life developed.

[...] the descriptive titles of these early ethnocultural associations reflected the purpose of banding together.”⁵³ Since the firm establishment of a black community in Ontario, several groups grew with the intent of providing services to those in need. Some of them focused on women’s issues or were operated by women, such as the Woman’s Home Missionary Society of Chatham, which did humanitarian work. Women’s groups flourished in the twentieth century and their activities ranged from helping those in need, to providing childcare, leisure activities, and catering.⁵⁴ As will be demonstrated in later chapters, the sport institution aligned itself alongside these institutions to play a similar role in the blossoming of Black communities.

Since their arrival in the British Canadian colonies, Black women mostly laboured outside the home, while many White women outside the working classes worked in the home after marriage. Black women rarely could afford to be housewives and, so, worked alongside men.⁵⁵ At the turn of the twentieth century, Black women were expected to take care of their families, while simultaneously fulfilling the role of wage earners. According to a study by the MHSO titled *Ontario’s African Canadians, 1865-1915*, Black women in the early century tended to be more educated than men, which meant that their wages were relied upon just as much (if not more) to ensure the survival of the family. Indeed, one may observe that “[t]he role of black women as wage earners flew in the face of the cult of domesticity. To many Ontarians, women’s work was intimately bound up with survival.”⁵⁶ Thus, in the pre-1950s era, while most men worked in general manual labour or as railway porters, women were mostly working in service work.⁵⁷ Records also show that, within Black communities—especially outside urban centres—

Black women were also found in boarding services, doing entrepreneurial work, and teaching in segregated schools they helped found.⁵⁸

Because gender and race structured Black women's work, this meant being at the lowest end of the wage spectrum, while being bound to undervalued racialized-feminine work.⁵⁹ Therefore, in the pre-WWII period, Black women had few professional options and earned some of the lowest wages available, all in difficult and unstable situations. Many women worked as domestics to support families which relied on their income as much as men's.⁶⁰ In fact, since 80% of Black women working in Canadian cities could only find work in domestic service, industrialization had a lesser effect in opening a variety of new and better jobs on Black working women than it did on their White counterparts.⁶¹ Unless one was very light skinned, i.e. 'pass' for White, Black women were not hired as front-line employees in stores and offices no matter their qualifications.⁶²

Characterized as simplistic, unchallenging, and undignified, domestic work was further deprecatd by its standing and role within the gender order; this association devalued Black women forced into it. Black men did not earn much more than Black women did, but by virtue of their gender, men were spared jobs defined as domestic and unskillful and, hence, feminine.⁶³ The link between domestic work and servitude, as well as the low wages earned through it, only helped to reinforce the perceived connection between Blackness and inferiority.⁶⁴ Even more, this kind of labour did not offer opportunities for professional mobility. In 1930, sociologist Ida Greaves summarized it best in this manner: "the essential point is that [Black people] are given little chance of

competing with other workers [...] an employer simply does not employ a Negro for most kind of work, nor a white man for that work which Negroes do.”⁶⁵

In addition to not being hired for certain jobs routinely, Black people also were not welcome as patrons in many establishments; it was common to face degrading signs such as “No Jews, No Dogs, [and] No Niggers Allowed” in Ontario establishments. The *1944 Discrimination Act of Ontario* was no doubt a welcome legislative initiative. The Act addressed the blatant racism encountered by racial minorities and was the first of its kind in Canada (other provinces followed suit in the ensuing years). The Act, however, did not totally protect against discrimination—it only made it illegal to post “Whites only” signs—but it was a hard-earned victory for lobby groups such as the Canadian Jewish Congress against defenders of the freedom of expression.⁶⁶ This was one of the first victories for marginalized groups in the long struggle for human rights. The struggle raged until the 1960s in Canada.⁶⁷

Those with no access to schooling for specialized jobs had very few prospects.⁶⁸ Nursing was one of the few higher education jobs available to women at the time, but Black women who could had to go study in the US. Prior to the mid-1940s, Black women could not train⁶⁹ as nurses in Canada, let alone be hired.⁷⁰ Unlike Canadian schools, the Black American educational infrastructure was ready to welcome them. Often, those who left for their studies (to Detroit, Chicago, New York, Philadelphia, etc.),⁷¹ did not come back to Canada.⁷² In her historical study, Flynn notes how these “[r]acist practices against young Black Canadian women who wanted to train as nurses are subsumed in national

narratives in favor of scripts that project or render Canada a safe haven and democratic society.”⁷³

The onset of WWII gave Black women the opportunity to enter industrial labour. Employers recruited Black women to address a labour shortage in lower-ranked jobs vacated by White women for higher industry jobs, which, in turn, men had left to enlist in the military.⁷⁴ However, that labour market shift also compelled the government to recruit Black women in previously unattainable jobs, including teaching.⁷⁵ Nevertheless, while WWII forced employers to surmount the most blatantly racist practices in the job industry, Black employees still were relegated to the worst kind of jobs, and pay was still minimal.⁷⁶

At War’s end, the progress made was halted and even reversed; Black workers suffered more from the post-war reconversion than did White workers.⁷⁷ Black Canadian women persisted, and refused to be forced back into domestic service in masses as before, prompting the government to import Caribbean domestic workers from the 1950s until 1967.⁷⁸ This ‘domestics scheme’ was designed to address the shortage in the sector when the government failed to recruit ‘nannies’ from Europe, and it reinforced the stereotype of Black women as servants as they continued to be ushered into service work for years after.⁷⁹ The scheme emulated a similar strategy in 1910, when women from Guadeloupe (French Caribbean) came to work for middle-class families, typically in Quebec. Immigration officers chose workers carefully, and those hired performed well, but, in the face of rampant hostility towards Black immigrants, the program stopped approximately after a year, and the government sent them back.⁸⁰ In contrast, immigrant

White domestics were seen as an investment that would provide suitable wives and mothers, unlike Black domestics who were expected to have difficulty integrating and would, hence, become “economic and social liabilities.”⁸¹ Simply put, Blacks were not envisioned as a valuable part of the nation building effort.⁸²

Caribbean women from different backgrounds and levels of education took advantage of the 1950s ‘domestic scheme’ to enter Canada, especially since the immigration system made entry to the country otherwise difficult for them.⁸³ It was not until 1967, when the Canadian immigration policy changed to a point system, that barriers were lowered for immigrants of colour.⁸⁴ As a result, Black women’s social, economic, and political status in the first half of the twentieth century defined their status in Canada during the period under study and in the following decades. Therefore, not acknowledging the intersectionality at the core of Black women’s lives before, during, or since the period under study would be detrimental to any form of analysis of their socio-cultural experiences.⁸⁵

An additional recurrent theme in the Black Canadian women’s history scholarship is that of Black women’s leadership in their communities early on. This was true in and outside of Ontario. For instance, a history of Black women in Nova Scotia demonstrates how Black female Loyalists rose up in their communities as educators, while their involvement in the church, often alongside their husbands, made them valuable religious and spiritual leaders.⁸⁶ After 1812, Black women were heads of households and maintained a strong presence in the church. As Black churches served as centres for “social, educational, economic and spiritual work,”⁸⁷ this positioned Black women at the

centre of their community life. Moreover, according to the MHSO, whether at home, church, work, or in the wider community, “women provided a bulwark against the harshness of contemporary life.”⁸⁸ In Ontario, this structure was crucial to survival as, “For many African-Canadian women, community service co-existed with the need to work for wages and to take their place in the family as an economic unit.”⁸⁹ Given the church’s function as a hub for social life (and sport, by extension),⁹⁰ women ought to have been connected incidentally to sporting life. Whether they were mostly involved as participants, as facilitators to men’s sport, or both, is yet to be determined fully.

An individual example of the initiative of Black Ontarian women is that of Christina E. Jenkins Howson from London. In 1923, she co-founded a newspaper, *The Dawn of Tomorrow*, a Black Canadian owned and focused paper, with her husband (James F. Jenkins).⁹¹ Jenkins Howson also held volunteer positions in various community associations and, when her husband died in 1931, Jenkins took over as *The Dawn*’s editor until her death in 1967.⁹² The newspaper remained in print for a few years after her, although there are few post-1971 issues that remain.⁹³ The editors billed *The Dawn* as a medium “Devoted to the Interests of the Darker Races” and a recent analysis of the newspaper by Cheryl Thompson demonstrates how the paper highlighted the accomplishments of Black people in Canada, and challenged racial discrimination in all of its forms in the editorial.⁹⁴

When Jenkins Howson assumed the role of *The Dawn*’s editor, she added to her duties as a single mother of nine, and as a volunteer executive in no less than four community and women’s clubs.⁹⁵ As mentioned above, women’s associations

represented one important way women contributed time and energy for the advancement of their communities outside of wage earning. Jenkins Howson may be but one case, yet she exemplifies the social pathway of a typical Black woman between the 1920s and the 1940s (albeit in an exceptional light): no matter one's other interests, marriage and children figured prominently in one's life. Moreover, as indicated above, most women had few options outside of service work.

Black women's socio-economic history and community structure in Canada also provides a necessary context for understanding any non-utilitarian practices. This is the case when the amateur ideology structured sport participation during the period under study. For athletes who hoped to compete in most local, national, and international tournaments, amateurism was a requisite for participation and was strictly regulated by the Amateur Athletic Union of Canada (later Amateur Athletic Association of Canada (AAAC)).⁹⁶ That is, sport was not a venue for wage earning for most athletes, especially women. Writing in 2000, Afua Cooper indicates that,

Using the concepts of self-reliance and survival strategies to study Black women's lives is [...] a good way to interrogate the opposing duality of victim and resister. This model shows that Black women were victimized by class, race, and gender oppression, but they resisted as much as they could in very creative ways. There are many other themes that need to be explored.⁹⁷

Cooper underscores sport as one of the themes requiring further exploration; almost twenty years later, this is still the case. As sport historian Bruce Kidd notes, the embeddedness of sport within Canadian society means that sport performance is about embodying a specific cultural identity, and distinct disciplines encourage specific identities.⁹⁸ Mostly, Canadian sport has been imbued with a White masculine identity, as is the case with hockey, which has long marginalized people of colour.⁹⁹ The task

remains to situate Black female identity within that traditionally White male space. It is true that opportunities for leisure were limited, primarily because not all establishments allowed Black people to use their facilities/services.¹⁰⁰ But, as the sport history record suggests, Black women were involved in sport, and so, they have a history in sport.¹⁰¹

3. Black(male)ness in Canadian Sport

Canada's colonial past clouds the country's history and is responsible, as indicated above, for the marginalization of people of colour and women from the dominant discourse, as well as for defining the experiences of communities of colour. The sport arena, and its history, was not the exception; in fact, sport represented a symbolic space in which participants could reinforce and celebrate hegemonic ideas of masculinity, capitalism, nationalism, and white supremacy—all ideas that thrive on exclusion.¹⁰² In Canadian sports, race and socio-economic class were always present and normalized, while simultaneously being obscured and hidden. In many ways, this was reflective of Canadian society in general, especially because this allowed marginalized sport participants to resist to the use of modern sport as an instrument of “bourgeois hegemony.”¹⁰³ Therefore, questioning the role of race in constructing the image of Canada through sport offers a unique perspective on the historical construction of Canadian citizenship.¹⁰⁴ This is a first step before exploring Black women's sporting experiences, the second being situating women in the hegemonic masculine sporting world.

Canada was not the refuge that many had expected it to be, hence, Black people were generally portrayed as mentally, morally, and physically unfit for Canadian society,

values, and climate.¹⁰⁵ As previously outlined, these prejudices dictated immigration officials' decisions to admit Black immigrants into the country. When it came to sport, the same web of notions and beliefs about race functioned as a justification to exclude Black people from the field of play.¹⁰⁶ Since the nineteenth century, Black people were portrayed as stupid and under the rule of passionate impulses, which, in the eyes of White society, rendered them incapable of following or grasping sports rules, or, for the men, behaving like gentlemen.¹⁰⁷ Amateur sport, founded upon specific ideas that privileged middle- and upper-class White men with the resources to engage in non-utilitarian unremunerated activities, was especially exclusive. As Don Morrow and Kevin Wamsley write, "The invention of race as a biological distinction helped white men deal with their fears of physical competence,"¹⁰⁸ which helps explain the 'moving of the flag' to new heights whenever racialized people proved stereotypes wrong. The contradictions of racial definitions were a product of the global White colonial project. Within it, as articulated by sociologist Ben Carrington, "[Black] Africans became idealised/eroticised and despised/condemned at the same time."¹⁰⁹ In this context, Carrington argues, the concept of the natural/gifted Black athlete emerged once Black athletes proved that Black people were athletically competent. Thus, when it comes to the conceptualization of race, ambivalence is useful, for it allows constructions of the Other to be flexible and to adapt to the times.¹¹⁰

Interestingly, it appears that, because Black people were few in numbers and effectively rendered non-threatening within the socio-economic sphere,¹¹¹ Canadians did not always exclude Black athletes. Integration seemed to occur in specific time periods when and in disciplines where Black athletes were not perceived as a threat to White

Canada, which, in turn, allowed them to garner a certain level of support from the public. As such, by the twentieth century, Black players who entered mainstream amateur and professional sport in Canada did not significantly challenge White hegemony.¹¹² The press and the public alike even widely acclaimed some of these men. This 1942 impassioned editorial by Andy Lytle, Sport Editor of the Toronto *Star*, about the colour line in organized baseball and hockey illustrates a critical stance towards racism in sports:

[...] The rule against inclusion of the colored athlete in baseball is an unwritten one. But it is rigorous, nevertheless, as every ball follower in the country, from bat boy to league president and from the bleacher fan to stuffed shirt in a plush-lined box knows as well as a Moslem zealot knows the Koran. In numerous Canadian cities there are colored athletes who make track teams, are given regular berths in C.H.A. teams, play without too much question of race prejudice on amateur ball clubs. But a Negro with the speed of [American sprinter] Eddie Tolan, the grace of [Canadian middle-distance runner] Phil Edwards and the hitting power of [American heavyweight boxer] Joe Louis could not, because of organized baseball's unwritten rule, one that Landis tries to obscure by legal subterfuge, catch a place on Toronto's International league club.

Surely, if a man is good enough to be given citizenship, if he is considered sound enough politically to fight for his country, he is good enough to play for it. In that respect, because we come up against the great American prejudice—one that isn't admitted—Canada occupies a slightly less hypocritical position than her great neighbor country, the alleged 'arsenal of democracy.'

There is nothing in the rules or constitution of the National Hockey league against Negroes playing for it—but let any of them try to crash one of those gilded gates and if he gets a contract I'll eat your oldest hat in front of The *Star* building at high noon and take a jigger of nitrate of silver as a chaser.

If the white race is, as alleged, superior to the African, I'll be hanged if we can prove it by examination of sporting and athletic records. [...] ¹¹³

Lytle's plea was made in response to a claim that "there is no colour bar in baseball," and his position clearly suggested that Canadian society was not fair to athletes who competed for Canada. As he noted, hockey was also one of the sports without an explicit anti-Black rule, but which would only see a Black athlete at its highest level more than a decade after his comment.¹¹⁴ In Lytle's eyes—and he could not have been the only

one with this perspective—the absence of official discriminatory policies did not mean that discrimination was absent.

The treatment of Black people did not prevent Black athletes from excelling. Amid tense racial relations, John ‘Army’ Howard became a part of the 1912 Canadian Olympic track and field team. By the 1920s, Black male athletes were a regular sight on Canadian Olympic teams. It is also telling, and perhaps even symbolic, that the first recipient of the Lou Marsh Trophy for the outstanding Canadian athlete was Dr. Phil Edwards, a Black Canadian athlete (from British Guiana). Dr. Edwards (a Doctor of Medicine with a degree from McGill University) won five Olympic bronze medals in middle distance running events at the 1928, 1932, and 1936 Games.¹¹⁵ What is more, in 1931, when Canadian champion Larry Gains defeated White South-African Dan McCorkindale to win the British Empire Heavyweight boxing title, he was the first Black man able to challenge for the title, and the Canadian press supported him throughout his quest. Newspaper accounts suggest that the public and the press were supportive of his challenging for the world title also, but the politics being what they were at the time, Gains did not see the colour bar lifted in time to fight for it.¹¹⁶ But, within the conditions described above, tolerance for Black male athletes, either amateur or professional, was partial and conditional.¹¹⁷ Thus, Black men’s sport history in Canada is one that requires nuance in its interpretation.

Some athletes successfully integrated within their team or were embraced by the Canadian public; but they simultaneously ‘failed,’ because their integration did not translate in the significant advancement of Black people, nor did it mean the end of racial

discrimination for themselves.¹¹⁸ This reflects the gradations of racial dynamics superimposed upon Black athletes in the twentieth century; accolades and public acclaim did not mean total absence of racist indignities visited upon Black people by White Canada during that time.¹¹⁹ John Valentine and Simon Darnell, in their study of Black football players in twentieth-century Canada, note that when Black players started using their platforms to contest racism and covert anti-Black treatment, the widespread denial of the players' remarks that followed their remarks blatantly ignored the legacy of colonial ideas of race.¹²⁰ Integration in mainstream sport did not mean racial equality for all, in or out of sport. As previously mentioned, a refusal to recognize anti-Black racism and Blackness has long been a pervasive Canadian trait.

Several accounts serve to highlight the treatment that Black athletes faced in a majority White European society. Of note are the published autobiographic accounts by Black Canadian athletes. These stories narrate the ways in which they navigated race and class, on and off the sporting field, and provide a rich record of the experiences of racialized individuals in Canada. Examples include *A Fly in A Pail of Milk: The Herb Carnegie Story*, by the man hailed as one of the greatest hockey players never to make it to the big league; *Shadow Running : Ray Lewis, Canadian Railway Porter and Olympic Athlete*, by a Hamilton (ON) railway porter who won bronze in track and field at the 1932 Games and silver at the 1934 Empire Games; *The Impossible Dream*, by Larry Gains, Canadian and British Empire heavyweight boxing champion from the late 1920s to the mid-1930s, who could not challenge for the world title because of the colour bar; and *The Autobiography of Willie O'Ree: Hockey's Black Pioneer*, by the first Black man to play in the National Hockey League.¹²¹ These autobiographies provide a rich source for

historians interested in exploring the experiences of racialized peoples in Canada in more depth. In them, the athletes explore the ways in which their success in sport enabled a progression in society of sorts, by opening up opportunities otherwise unavailable and how, despite everything, the societal structures made few exceptions for them.

Here and there, elite Black men's experiences in sport appear in more broadly focused Canadian sport history works;¹²² the stories of individuals and groups at lower levels is a less developed area. The experiences of Black athletes outside individual disciplines who did not reach high-level tournaments prior to the 1950s and how race may have shaped their experiences can only be surmised. One must look at the intersection of the experiences of elite athletes (such as the ones above), the few narratives of sport at local/barnstorming levels (as described below), and the current understanding of Black history in Canada. Thus, in the first half of the twentieth century, there were several all-Black barnstorming men's baseball teams who enjoyed success within their communities across Ontario, the Maritimes, and the Prairies.¹²³ Their stories have yet to be examined and/or extensively positioned within the local and national socio-historical context. One approach to bridging that gap may lie in a bottom-up approach to building historical narratives, as demonstrated by the Chatham Coloured All-Stars example below.

Recently, a team at the University of Windsor conducted a public history project about the Chatham Coloured All-Stars, a 1930s baseball team that was the pride of the Chatham-Kent (Ontario) community, both Black and White. The All-Stars was the first all-Black team to win the Ontario Baseball Association championship in 1934. One

standout player from the team was Wilfred “Boomer” Harding who played soccer, hockey, and basketball, and pole-vaulted, in addition to playing baseball.¹²⁴ In fact, Harding’s extensive collections of scrapbooks were the foundation for the All-Stars project, titled *Wilfred “Boomer” Harding & the Chatham Coloured All-Stars (1932-1939)*. The project highlights the neglected All-Stars’ story for a larger audience, and includes a website with oral interviews, pictures, and newspaper scans.¹²⁵

There are a few monographs, chapters, and journal articles that document Black male Ontarians’ sport history before and during the 1920s to 1940s study period.¹²⁶ A standout work is William Humber’s *A Sporting Chance: Achievements of African-Canadian Athletes*. Humber presents the sporting achievements and personal triumphs of various Black men and a few women.¹²⁷ The work is not exhaustive nor documented, but it is one of the few dedicated attempts at presenting Black athletes various disciplines in the Canadian sporting arena, from coast to coast, between the nineteenth century and the early twenty-first century. The author details how race defined Blacks’ athletic endeavors and contextualizes athletes’ successes, albeit in a superficial manner. There is no attempt at documenting athletes’ accounts with sources and there is no thesis to guide the brief narratives about each athlete.

In-depth scholarly work about most of the above-mentioned individuals/teams and others is also incomplete: Despite the significant documentation of Black men’s sport experiences in Canada (e.g., the autobiographies), few peer-reviewed forums analyze the Black Canadian sport experience immediately before, during, and after the two World Wars.¹²⁸ However, scholarly attention has been turned on pre-WWII boxers, especially

Nova Scotian such as George Godfrey, George Dixon, and Sam Langford, whose careers led them outside Canada and some of whom faced boxing's colour line (1915 to 1937).¹²⁹

Within that, Black men have been the focus of the historiography of Black people's sport participation in Ontario and elsewhere in Canada. There has been little effort to underscore that Black experiences in sport are not just male and Black sport historiography has ignored the intersectional Black women's experiences, much in the way White women's sport histories have done. The focus on Black men's narratives often conflates stories of race and racism in sport with Black men only, marginalizing Black women and other people of colour.¹³⁰ But, separate positions in the social patriarchal hierarchy distinguish the male and female experience in sport. And, because of that, when recognizing that sport is a racialized arena, it cannot be assumed that it affects racialized men and women in the same way. Approaches that do not attempt to centre Black women's experiences within those changes brought about through resistance to White supremacy are less effective in addressing Black women's already fragile and subordinated position within gender and racial discourses.

Centring Black women's narratives is necessary because, when Black males were emancipated through sport by being able to challenge Black masculine stereotypes, Black women's emancipation did not necessarily follow. In fact, in his sociological examination of Black men's participation in cricket, Ben Carrington concluded that to see sport *only* as a form of resistance to White male power is simplistic.¹³¹ It denies that men in sport have the power to reproduce masculinities that silence women's voices, given sport's tradition of privileging masculinity. When men's narratives continue to obscure Black

women's experiences, it indirectly reinforces Black women's subjugation by pushing their stories further into the background. As observed by sociologist bell hooks, historically in a patriarchal White supremacy sexism played an important role in Black women's subordination.¹³² Sociologists Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo and Michael Messner also observe that,

in foregrounding the oppression of men by men, [...] studies risk portraying aggressive, even misogynist, gender displays primarily as liberatory forms of resistance against class and racial oppression. [...] gender is commonly viewed as an epiphenomenon, an effect of the dominant class and/or race relations. What is obscured, or even drops out of sight, is the feminist observation that masculinity itself is a form of domination over women.¹³³

Racism (towards a racialized group) and sexism (within racialized communities) are not mutually exclusive; they can exist together because there are multiple layers within a system of power.¹³⁴ Therefore, the scholarship examining Black masculinities needs a counter-balance to ascertain the effect of Black men's emancipation from Black masculine stereotypes on Black women. According to bell hooks, the feminist standpoint is very effective, since it includes all groups, in spite of gender, race, and sexuality.¹³⁵ In other words, even more than studies of sport from the masculine perspective, black feminism and its theoretical frameworks, such as Feminist Critical Race Theory, can offer a "radical critique of masculinity" beneficial to all gender groups.¹³⁶

Black men's success in sport may also be interpreted as a form of agency that reproduces, instead of always resisting, White masculine hegemony.¹³⁷ Thus, one has to be careful when hailing sport as a space for Black men's resistance to normative White masculinity.¹³⁸ Given the place of sport within Western White societies in the twentieth century, Black athletes, especially successful ones, were models of integration, but only

superficially. For instance, Boxer Jack Johnson's victory over White Tommy Burns to become the first Black world heavyweight champion did not usher in an era of acceptance for Black athletes. However, it is also true that subjugated peoples have been able to use sport to resist oppression. Some Indigenous groups' use of sport to resist a hostile settler state is an outstanding example of this in Canada.¹³⁹ Where the organizers of sport set out to utilize it as an assimilation and imperialist tool, they did not always succeed. Therefore, Black athletes' success in sports, beyond being evidence of integration, also signifies confrontation with ideas of White supremacy.¹⁴⁰ On that point, it is useful for critical studies in gender to address Black masculinities in sport, because the narrative of the Black male's resistance to White male oppression through sport suggests that the challenge of racist ideologies lends itself to the sporting arena. When questioning patriarchal systems, one also needs to question Black masculinity to underscore that "just as all women are not equal, all men are not necessarily equal and perhaps some men are even less equal than some women."¹⁴¹

4. Women in Canadian Sport History

4.1 Organization

Sport within the period of the 1920s to the 1940s was framed within a specific gendered and class-based structure. This structure dictated all athletes' practice within it and as the goal of this dissertation is to locate Black femininity within and beyond that structure, it calls attention to key understandings about (White) women's sport in Canada during the period under study. There is a consensus among sport historians that the 1920s was a decade of advancement for White middle-class women and women's sport in

Canada.¹⁴² By the end of the First World War, communities organized competitions for women, and different disciplines evolved at different speeds. Historian Bruce Kidd notes that basketball grew rapidly, that softball was popular in the summer, and that for some women, hockey was also popular.¹⁴³ In individual sports, tennis and golf were most popular/accessible for women of the middle- upper-class, while women of all classes could be found in swimming, speed skating, and track and field events; for the latter activities, venues could be found through city provision.¹⁴⁴ Of note is the fact that athletes were often versatile, excelling in more than one sport.¹⁴⁵ In the 1930s, while participation declined in some sports (e.g., softball in Northern Ontario and in the Maritimes) along with coverage, women continued to compete.¹⁴⁶

Like most institutions, sport was bound by heteronormative standards.¹⁴⁷ As such, sexist ideologies dictated that women had to be feminine in all social spheres applied to sport and, early on, male approval and support was crucial to the success of women's sports and competition.¹⁴⁸ The 'femininity factor' had implications within the amateur sport system. While amateur athletes needed a certificate to confirm their status, women were also required to have a medical certificate of good health.¹⁴⁹ Prior to the 1960s, this linked to the international debate over the extent to which women could participate in sport safely—i.e. without damaging their reproductive organs. The certificate reassured the public that competing women, especially track and field athletes, would not upset the gender order and would settle down with a husband and family after their athletic careers.¹⁵⁰ This was especially so after WWII, when a new push towards traditional family structures once again came to dictate what sports were appropriate for women. Graceful, artistic sports such as synchronized swimming and figure skating were

constructed as feminine, and the femininity and heterosexuality of those not in feminine sports (e.g. track and field and basketball) were questioned.¹⁵¹

The image of the beautiful girl-next-door and of the glamorous lady was the dominant feminine image for Canadians, and sport was a key stage for that image's dissemination.¹⁵² As a figure skater who donned ultra-feminine costumes and whom the media catered to, Barbara Ann Scott is one athlete who fit perfectly within that narrative.¹⁵³ Scott was a successful White figure skater with Canadian and world victories, as well as an Olympic gold medal. She was dubbed Canada's sweetheart and was praised for her idealized feminine 'pixie' figure and image. Sports such as golf, figure skating, fencing, swimming, diving, skiing, gymnastics, badminton, and tennis, all of which had no funding from a national body and required individual resources, also happened to be constructed as the most "feminine" sports. These sports did not lead athletes to develop bulging muscles and were perceived to be less strenuous for the 'fragile' female body. Consequently, middle- upper- class women were more likely to be found in those disciplines.

Overall, support and tolerance for women's sport was always shifting depending on a variety of factors. For instance, in the 1930s and 1940s, track and field and swimming received some attention when athletes began attending large-scale international competitions but, ultimately, there was little attention on those athletes outside of competitions.¹⁵⁴ Thus, in the period under study, sport media helped construct, maintain, aggrandize, and sexualize 'pixie girl' Barbara Ann Scott's image. How Black women athletes fit in that understanding of feminine athletes in the Canadian context is

unclear. Access to feminized sport, as well as Black women's racialized femininity, as discussed in the previous chapter, can be expected to have been factors in their location within that discourse.

It is also important to note that, in the amateur system prevalent during the period under study, athletes needed sponsors.¹⁵⁵ Since amateurs could not be remunerated for competing, as per the amateur code,¹⁵⁶ they had to pay for expenses themselves or, as part of a sporting club, be sponsored. In this way, athletes from lower socio-economic backgrounds had a chance to participate 'on an equal footing' as those with more resources. Of course, working-class individuals who also had to labour and provide for themselves had limited time and energy to dedicate to their sport in comparison to middle- and upper-class athletes. At the turn of the twentieth century when the women's sport system was underdeveloped, men overwhelmingly played the sponsoring role for women athletes. In 1921, when the foundation of the Toronto Ladies' Club allowed women to control their own participation, its leader came from an affluent background and was educated in private schools, because White women who had attended exclusive schools and universities enjoyed more sport freedom.¹⁵⁷ The Ladies' Club was the inception of a movement that would see the creation of the Women's Amateur Athletic Federation (WAAF) in 1925, an organization which defied the AAAC's monopoly to established control over women's sports.¹⁵⁸

As the founding of the WAAF brought control, there were also more opportunities for women beyond the tracks, fields, and courts; women became involved in administering, managing and, in some cases, writing about sport. Indeed, between the

late 1920s and 1940s, several newspapers throughout the country featured women sport columnists, including, but, not limited to, Alexandrine Gibb (for the *Toronto World*, *Toronto Evening Telegram*, *Toronto Daily Star* between 1928 and 1945), Myrtle Cook (*Montreal Star*, 1929 to 1970s), and Fanny “Bobbie” Rosenfeld (*Toronto Star Weekly*, *Montreal Daily Herald*, *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 1937-1958).¹⁵⁹ These women had been accomplished athletes and remained great advocates for women’s sport—Cook and Rosenfeld were decorated members of the famous Matchless Six, the group that represented Canada at the 1928 Olympic Games in track and field, and Gibb had been Manager of the Canadian Women’s National Team in 1928.

Female columnists were a welcome addition to the media because male journalists usually patronized women athletes; but, according to historian M. Ann Hall, they otherwise treated them with respect.¹⁶⁰ On a regular basis, female columnists promoted, reported, and commented critically on women’s sports. The onset of WWII affected sport organizations as well as the newspaper columns but, because a measure of sport competition continued during the war as part of the war effort (producing healthy citizens and amassing funds to send overseas), some competition continued nonetheless.¹⁶¹ We discover, for example, that newly employed women in the manufacturing and other wartime industries had the benefit of recreational programs organized through work.¹⁶² It is not yet clear whether Black women participated in those programs.

4.2 Experiences

A review of women's Canadian sport history ought to highlight one of the most comprehensive studies on the topic to date: M. Ann Hall's *The Girl and the Game: A History of Women's Sport in Canada*. Hall's work is especially relevant as the most comprehensive documentation of the history of women's struggle to carve themselves a space in the Canadian male centric sporting space. Hall characterizes the history of women's sport as both a struggle for legitimacy and as a "history of cultural resistance."¹⁶³ She sets out to "trace how male hegemony in Canadian sport was (and is still) resisted by women and how their efforts have been supported and opposed by both men and other women."¹⁶⁴ The author mainly focuses on sport as an institutionalized activity and on how, because of masculine hegemony, women's sports were not considered to be 'real sport' and women athletes were viewed as lesser women.¹⁶⁵ This conflict is a starting point for positioning women's sport history in a feminist paradigm that sees women not as victims of oppression, but as agents in their own right whose actions shaped their own records. The struggles for White women and Black men to enter sport are parallel, because sport was not constructed for them. Their struggles help us develop an understanding of racialized women's particular struggle.

Although women's history to date has focused on the distinction between men and women's sport experiences, the variety within women's experiences is often disregarded.¹⁶⁶ A limit of most women's sport histories, including Hall's otherwise comprehensive work, is its focus on English-speaking White women. Historian Patricia Vertinsky argues that once women gained a foothold in sport during the 1970s, White

women's history was presented as universal to all women.¹⁶⁷ Helen Lenskyj also upholds that the lack of diversity in universities, where the scholarship originates, has undermined certain stories, particularly those of women of colour, in favour of men's history and White women's stories.¹⁶⁸ While evidence suggests that a number of individual Black athletes reached high levels of competition in various disciplines (i.e., track and field, swimming, and basketball) prior to the Second World War,¹⁶⁹ their stories have not yet been charted in the scholarship. Thus, the research questions that guide this dissertation expand the narratives of sport in the Canadian historical context beyond exclusively White women's or men's stories. In this regard, Hall does note that further investigation needs to trace the experiences of women from diverse backgrounds and ethnicities in Canada. She also recognizes that the scholarship often erases women from diverse backgrounds and identities, to the benefit of White women's stories, and acknowledges the influence of participants' identities on participation in sport.¹⁷⁰

The nature of women's sport record-keeping may also be in large part responsible for the dominance of White women's experiences in the literature. For instance, between 1928 and 1970, the women sport columnists who covered women's sport were White.¹⁷¹ These columnists published in the mainstream press media, and the sole Black-published newspaper in Canada between the 1920s and 1940s, London's *Dawn of Tomorrow*, did not appear to have women sport reporters, nor a dedicated sport-focused space.¹⁷² Given that reality, Hall's assertion that there were few Black women in Canadian sports until the 1980s when Caribbean immigrants started to dominate track and field is worth investigating. In addition, confining the discussion to organized (amateur) elite sports should not lead to a conclusion that Black women rarely participated in sports. Black

women athletes may have been rare on the public scene (there is no denying that Black Canadians were smaller in numbers throughout the twentieth century), especially right after WWII, but this does not mean that they did not engage in sport. Notably, chapters three and four delve into the selected experiences of some women within their own communities and in elite sport.

4.3 On the Field with Aboriginal Women

Aboriginal women's histories in sport provides a good frame of reference when attempting to write Black women's history in sport. Aboriginal and Black women share comparable, but distinct, positions within Canada's socio-cultural and political context. Aboriginal women's experiences are outside the scope of this dissertation, but understanding a measure of their experiences helps contextualize Black women's sport history scholarship, as Aboriginal women were also racialized women. Indeed, they share with Black women the fact that their early twentieth century sporting experiences have not been extensively documented; yet, at as the few accounts that exist suggest, this does not mean that both groups did not participate.¹⁷³

An essential distinction to make about Aboriginal women's sport histories is that the moments that frame the history of White women in Canadian sport do not align with Aboriginal women's histories. Hall has acknowledged historian Janice Forsyth's contention¹⁷⁴ that Aboriginal women's history needs to be framed differently, by noting that,

Much more important to the lives and experiences of Aboriginal women, especially over the past two hundred years, are their first encounters with Europeans, their role in the fur-trade society, the Indian Act of 1876 and its

various revisions, the establishment of reserves and forced residential schooling, and more recently, the confluence of sport and Aboriginal policies—very different benchmarks indeed.¹⁷⁵

In traditional Aboriginal societies, sports and games, as a means for teaching survival skills and transmitting cultural values, were open to women.¹⁷⁶ Where some Aboriginal peoples did not allow women to participate in certain activities, especially alongside men, it was still possible for women to participate out of sight of men. This was the case, for lacrosse, where some tribes even arranged games with mixed teams by allowing some modifications.¹⁷⁷ Ultimately, the colonial enterprise disturbed most of the structure of Aboriginal lives, and sport and games were not an exception; Aboriginal women's sport was relegated to the background.¹⁷⁸ By the end of the nineteenth century, it is fair to conclude that assimilation of certain Aboriginal groups into European society had eroded many Aboriginal women's access to sporting activities, mimicking the restrictions imposed on non-Aboriginal women.¹⁷⁹

At the turn of the century, while White women could challenge gender norms and create a space for themselves in the male dominated sport arena, it is unclear whether Aboriginal women were able to do, or at least attempt, the same. Once Indian residential schools were established, the administration's approach was to funnel the children into stereotypically gender-specific activities, which, once again, edged out girls from sport-oriented recreation activities.¹⁸⁰ Often, in residential schools' sport, where Aboriginal children were exposed to European sport in the wake of the banning of traditional Aboriginal sports and games, did not welcome girls.¹⁸¹ Later, the rationale for educating Aboriginal girls who went to residential schools was to inculcate 'proper' domestic skills deemed essential to manage the home;¹⁸² sport was not a priority in this design.

When some Aboriginal women were separated from their communities, they were denied the opportunity either to be active in traditional settings (dances, shinny, various survival-based activities), or to be included in contemporary forms of sport in residential schools (hockey, soccer, baseball).¹⁸³ There were exceptions, as J.R. Miller notes, where some Aboriginal girls at certain schools were involved in physical activity, but the typical situation saw girls given relatively few opportunities compared to boys.¹⁸⁴ In the 1950s, a survey about students' academic and social experiences revealed that, when asked about what one liked to do with their free time, "female students most often wrote, 'Reading, Knitting, Writing Letters,' while boys usually put down, 'Sports.'"¹⁸⁵ Although many of the sports in question were intended to transmit Eurocentric norms, they also offered a site of cultural resistance and survival to some Aboriginal peoples;¹⁸⁶ for this reason, it matters that some women were excised from organized and formal sport for the better part of the twentieth century.

5. Summary

Sociologists and historians have extensively studied why Blackness in Canada retains an outsider status in the twenty-first century, after centuries of Black presence.¹⁸⁷ Black citizens are not fully a part of Canadian identity; dominant narratives define them as incoming and from elsewhere. They are attached to foreign nationalities, origins, and ethnicities, all of which serves to define them outside of the normative visions of Canada.¹⁸⁸ The contemporary usage of the terms "Black Canadian," "African-Canadian," and other hyphenations to refer to Black people, even by Black people themselves, is a testament to this reality, although historian Afua Cooper argues that it is characteristic of

a people who are still “consciously negotiating the multiple identities which arise out of [their] modern and post-modern condition.”¹⁸⁹

A review of Black history in Canada also indicates that, due to their circumstances, the Black subject is essentialized, simplified, and made one-dimensional in Canadian history. Politician and activist Rosemary Brown’s argument (1973) that, “where judicious prodding might unearth the names of one or two of the [Black] males who made contributions in the past [while] the digging has to be deep indeed to find the women”¹⁹⁰ still applies to the history of Black women in Canadian sport. Therein lies the significance of revisiting Canada’s grand historical narrative to make relevant the experiences of Black people and situate race within its social past.

The task at hand is also meant to expand Canada’s racial history and to complexify Canadian history by integrating and widely acknowledging the above narrative of anti-Blackness in Canada. It is an effort to mobilize knowledge that helps bring Black history at the centre of Canadian history, rather than positioning Black history as an afterthought or a footnote. This dissertation begins that process, using the experiences in sport of Black women from Southern Ontario. In the following two chapters, two separate approaches are taken to construct that narrative of sport in Canada: First, using oral histories completed in the late 1970s, 1980s, and early 1990s with women who lived in Southern Ontario between the 1920s and the 1940s, I explore what women recalled about sport when telling their life stories. These reports on the experiences of ‘regular’ women situate sport within the everyday and help illustrate sport within the Black community of the time. Second, using two mainstream Toronto

newspapers, the *Globe and Mail* and the *Star*, I trace Jean Lowe's track and field career from the late 1930s to the late 1940s in Ontario. Hers is a narrative of an elite athlete as seen through the mainstream media's eye.

Notes

¹ See Morrow, Don, and Kevin B. Wamsley. *Sport in Canada: A History*, 3rd ed. (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 2013).

² Morrow and Wamsley, *Sport in Canada*, 149.

³ Janelle Joseph, Simon Darnell, and Yuka Nakamura, eds., *Race and Sport in Canada: Intersecting Inequalities* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 2012), xi-xii.

⁴ Colin D. Howell, *Blood, Sweat and Cheers: Sport and the Making of Modern Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 28.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁶ Joseph, Darnell, and Nakamura, *Race and Sport in Canada*, 63.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Ann M. Hall, *The Girl and The Game: A History of Women's Sport in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), xv; Afua Cooper, "Constructing Black Women's Historical Knowledge," *Atlantis: Critical Studies in Gender, Culture & Social Justice* 25, no. 1 (2000): 45.

⁹ James W. St. G. Walker, *Racial Discrimination in Canada: The Black Experience*, booklet no. 41. (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association, 1985), 6.

¹⁰ Ida C. Greaves, *The Negro in Canada*, McGill University Economic Studies; No. 16. (Orillia, ON: Packet-Times Press for the McGill University Department of Economics and Political Science, 1930), 60.

¹¹ Many narratives that compose a long history of racism dating back to French colonial rule in what is currently Canada are left background of the nation's grand narratives. For a recent account of Black perseverance, see Graham Reynolds and Wanda Robson, *Viola Desmond's Canada: A History of Blacks and Racial Segregation in the Promised Land* (Halifax, NS Fernwood Publishing, 2016).

¹² Sharon Morgan Beckford, "A Geography of the Mind," *Journal of Black Studies* 38, no. 3 (2008): 462; James St. G. Walker, *Racial Discrimination in Canada: The Black Experience*, booklet no. 41 (Ottawa, ON: Canadian Historical Association, 1985) 7.

¹³ Here, the term non-White used is meant to highlight groups not considered White in the Canadian Eurocentric lens. Walker, *Racial Discrimination in Canada*, 7.

¹⁴ Systemic racism here refers to an institutionally sanctioned form of disadvantage faced by people of colour within a White supremacist settler colony. Unlike individual racism (i.e., interpersonal racial prejudice), systemic racism is here designating the embeddedness of racist ideologies within social institutions, conferring them with the power to maintain the racial hierarchy. This enforces discrimination in immigration policies, housing, property, education, employment, services, and the justice system. See Clayton James Mosher, *Discrimination and Denial: Systemic Racism in Ontario's Legal And Criminal Justice Systems, 1892-1961* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 118; Barrington Walker, "Finding Jim Crow in Canada, 1789–1967," in *A history of Human Rights in Canada: Essential Issues*, ed. Janet Miron (Toronto, ON: Canadian Scholars' Press, 2009), 81-98.

¹⁵ Walker, *Racial Discrimination in Canada*, 8.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., 7-8.

²¹ Even after 1921, when an Annual Report on Vital Statistics debuted in most Canadian provinces, local and official counts remained different. In Quebec it started in 1926, and Newfoundland in 1949, after joining Confederation. Anne Milan, and Kelly Tran, "Blacks in Canada: A Long History," *Canadian Social Trends* 72, no. 2 (2004): 3; Greaves, "The Negroes in Canada," 48; Harold, H. Potter, "Negroes in Canada," *Race* 3, no. 1 (1961): 40.

²² Potter, "Negroes in Canada," 40.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Several authors have written about and extensively discussed the constructive nature of race. The following examples are not an exhaustive list, but they position this discussion within this study's topic: Anton L. Allahar, "When Black First Became Worth Less," *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* XXXIV, 1-2 (1993): 39-55; Patricia Vertinsky and Gwendolyn Captain, "More Myth than History: American Culture and Representations of the Black Female's Athletic Ability," *Journal of Sport History* 25, no. 3 (1998): 537-541.

²⁵ Potter, "Negroes in Canada," 40.

²⁶ Greaves, "The Negroes in Canada," 48.

²⁷ Dorothy W. Williams, "The Jackie Robinson Myth: Social Mobility and Race in Montreal, 1920-1960," (Doctoral dissertation, Concordia University, 1999), 11.

²⁸ Williams, "The Jackie Robinson Myth," 9.

²⁹ Ibid., 6-8.

³⁰ Although, according to Mosher, “The combination of [the] individual-level and systemic racism rendered it virtually impossible for the majority of Canadian Blacks to escape the disadvantaged social and economic positions to which they had been assigned since their arrival in the country. Mosher, *Discrimination and Denial*, 118.

³¹ Violet Blackman, interview by Huguette Casimir, January 15, 1979, in Toronto, Ontario, Cassette tape, Multicultural History Society of Ontario, Toronto, ON.

³² Winks, *Blacks in Canada*, 287.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Sarah-Jane Mathieu, *North of the Color Line: Migration and Black Resistance in Canada, 1870-1955* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 6.

³⁵ Library and Archives Canada, ‘Radical Policies’, *Moving Here, Staying Here. The Canadian Immigrant Experience*, last revised October 20, 2006, <https://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/immigrants/021017-2511.01-e.html>

³⁶ Howard Palmer, “Mosaic Versus Melting Pot?: Immigration and Ethnicity in Canada and the United States,” *International Journal* 31, no. 3 (1976): 497.

³⁷ Lisa Marie Jakubowski, *Immigration and the Legalization of Racism* (Halifax, NS: Fernwood, 1997), 12; Palmer, “Mosaic Versus Melting Pot?,” 497.

³⁸ Jakubowski, *Immigration*, 12, 13, 14; Palmer, “Mosaic Versus Melting Pot?,” 494.

³⁹ Howard, “Mosaic Versus Melting Pot?,” 490.

⁴⁰ Palmer, “Mosaic Versus Melting Pot?” 494.

⁴¹ Agnes Calliste, “Race, Gender and Canadian Immigration Policy: Blacks from the Caribbean, 1900-1932,” *Journal of Canadian Studies/Revue d’études Canadiennes* 28, no. 4 (1993): 132; Palmer, “Mosaic Versus Melting Pot?” 495.

⁴² Palmer, “Mosaic Versus Melting Pot?” 495.

⁴³ Winks, *Blacks in Canada*, 288.

⁴⁴ Walker notably argues against the false idea of Canada’s promised land of freedom, equality, and full citizenship for Black people created by the Underground Railroad. Walker, Walker, *Discrimination in Canada*, 6.

⁴⁵ Cooper, “Constructing Black Women's Historical Knowledge,” 45.

⁴⁶ Joseph Mensah, *Black Canadians: History, Experiences, Social Conditions*, 2nd ed. (Halifax, NS: Fernwood Publications, 2010), 139.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 23.

⁴⁹ Karen Flynn, “I’m Glad That Someone Is Telling the Nursing Story,” *Journal of Black Studies* 38, no. 3 (2008): 444.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 458.

⁵¹ Greaves, *The Negroes in Canada*, 51.

⁵² Ibid., 50-74.

⁵³ Multicultural History Society of Ontario, *Ontario’s African Canadians, 1865-1915* (Toronto, ON: Multicultural History Society of Ontario), 9.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Linda Carty, “African Canadian Women and the State: ‘Labour Only, Please,’” in *We’re Rooted Here and They Can’t Pull Us Up: Essays in African Canadian Women’s History*, ed. Peggy Bristow (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 200.

⁵⁶ Multicultural History Society of Ontario, *Ontario’s African Canadians*, 11.

⁵⁷ Dionne Brand, “‘We Weren’t Allowed to Go in the Factory Work until Hitler Started the War’: The 1920s to the 1940s,” in *We’re Rooted Here and They Can’t Pull Us Up: Essays in African Canadian Women’s History*, coordinated by Peggy Bristow (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 174, 175.

⁵⁸ Cooper, “Constructing Black Women’s Historical Knowledge,” 44-5.

⁵⁹ Brand, “‘We Weren’t Allowed to Go in the Factory Work until Hitler Started the War,’” 172.

⁶⁰ Carty, “African Canadian Women and the State,” 207-8.

⁶¹ Brand, “‘We Weren’t Allowed to Go in the Factory Work until Hitler Started the War,’” 175.

⁶² Ibid., 50.

⁶³ Carty, “African Canadian Women and the State,” 207-8.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 207.

⁶⁵ Greaves, *The Negroes in Canada*, 57.

⁶⁶ Cheryl Thompson, “Cultivating Narratives of Race, Faith, and Community: The Dawn of Tomorrow, 1923–1971,” *Canadian Journal of History* 50, no. 1 (2015): 63; James W. St G. Walker, “Race”, *Rights and The Law in The Supreme Court of Canada: Historical Case Studies* (Toronto, ON: Osgoode Society for Canadian Legal History & Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1997), 197.

⁶⁷ Walker, *Discrimination in Canada*, 18.

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- ⁶⁸ Brand, “‘We Weren’t Allowed to Go in the Factory Work until Hitler Started the War,’” 177, 178.
- ⁶⁹ Flynn, “‘I’m Glad That Someone Is Telling the Nursing Story,’” 444.
- ⁷⁰ Carty, “African Canadian Women and the State,” 206.
- ⁷¹ Flynn, “‘I’m Glad That Someone Is Telling the Nursing Story,’” 446.
- ⁷² This is noted by Greaves, *The Negroes in Canada*, 50-74.
- ⁷³ Flynn, “‘I’m Glad That Someone Is Telling the Nursing Story,’” 446.
- ⁷⁴ Brand, “‘We Weren’t Allowed to Go in the Factory Work until Hitler Started the War,’” 178, 179, 181.
- ⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 183.
- ⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 188.
- ⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 189.
- ⁷⁸ Mensah, *Black Canadians*, 164.
- ⁷⁹ Brand, “‘We Weren’t Allowed to Go in the Factory Work until Hitler Started the War,’” 190.
- ⁸⁰ Mensah, *Black Canadians*, 164.
- ⁸¹ Calliste, “Race, Gender and Canadian Immigration Policy,” 133.
- ⁸² *Ibid.*
- ⁸³ Mensah, *Black Canadians*, 164.
- ⁸⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 159.
- ⁸⁶ Sylvia Hamilton, “Naming Names, Naming Ourselves: A Survey of Early Black Women in Nova Scotia,” in *We’re Rooted Here and They Can’t Pull Us Up: Essays in African Canadian Women’s History*, coordinated by Peggy Bristow (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 25.
- ⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 34-35.
- ⁸⁸ Multicultural History Society of Ontario, *Ontario’s African Canadians*, 12.
- ⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 11.
- ⁹⁰ The church organized all kinds of activities, from bazaars (markets where members of the community could sell and buy goods) and picnics to sleigh rides and running races. Mary (Bee) Allen, interview by Ray Thompson, July 23 and 30, 1982, in Toronto, Ontario, Cassette tape, Multicultural History Society of Ontario, Toronto, ON; Isobel Louise Bailey, interview by Donna Bailey (Ontario History Society), August 6, 1982, in Toronto, Ontario, Cassette tape, Multicultural History Society of Ontario, Toronto, ON; Violet

Eudora Bell, interview by Lorraine D. Hubbard, September 3, 1980, in Toronto, Ontario, Cassette tape, Multicultural History Society of Ontario, Toronto, ON; Blake Harding and Pat Harding, "Breaking the Colour Barrier: An Oral History of the Chatham Coloured All-Stars," interview by Miriam Wright, May 25, 2016, in Chatham, Ontario, transcript, University of Windsor and the Chatham Sports Hall of Fame, Ontario, available online at <http://cdigs.uwindsor.ca/BreakingColourBarrier/items/show/716>

⁹¹ Multicultural History Society of Ontario, *Ontario's African Canadians*, 11.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Thompson, "Cultivating Narratives of Race," 64.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 60.

⁹⁶ Bruce Kidd, *The Struggle for Canadian Sport* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 65.

⁹⁷ Cooper, "Constructing Black Women's Historical Knowledge," 45.

⁹⁸ Kidd, *The Struggle for Canadian Sport*, 5.

⁹⁹ See, Andreas Krebs, "Hockey and the Reproduction of Colonialism in Canada," In *Race and Sport in Canada: Intersecting Inequalities*, ed. Janelle Joseph, Simon Darnell, and Yuka Nakamura, 81-106 (Toronto, ON: Canadian Scholars' Press, 2012).

¹⁰⁰ Among others, see John Cooper with Ray Lewis, *Shadow Running: Ray Lewis, Canadian Railway Porter and Olympic Athlete* (Toronto, ON: Umbrella Press, 1999); Mensah, *Black Canadians*, 185-207; Ornella Nzindukiyimana, "Vers une histoire sociale des Noirs en natation au Canada (1900-1970)" (Master's thesis, University of Ottawa, 2014).

¹⁰¹ This statement expands upon Cooper's, who enounced that "Black women in this country [Canada] have made history and therefore do have a history." Cooper, "Constructing Black Women's Historical Knowledge," 39.

¹⁰² Morrow and Wamsley, *Sport in Canada*, 179, 186.

¹⁰³ Howell, *Blood, Sweat and Cheers*, 50.

¹⁰⁴ Janelle Joseph, Simon Darnell, and Yuka Nakamura, *Race and Sport in Canada: Intersecting Inequalities* (Toronto, ON: Canadian Scholars' Press, 2012), 3.

¹⁰⁵ Calliste, "Race, Gender and Canadian Immigration Policy," 133.

¹⁰⁶ For instance, in addition to notions of fundamental racial inferiority based on skin pigmentation alone, Black women were seen as immoral and as having loose morals, while Black men had a threatening sexuality. Howell, *Blood, Sweat and Cheers*, 110.

¹⁰⁷ In the 1830s, some horseracing and pedestrian clubs in Upper and Lower Canada stipulated that Black men were not welcome. A Black rower from the 1860s came up against the anti-Black amateur rules of a Toronto horseracing club when he entered a regatta organized by the club. Other competitors refused to

race against him. However, this did not stop him from participating in other regattas, because the sport itself had no set amateur rules. Howell, *Blood, Sweat and Cheers*, 110; Morrow and Wamsley, *Sport in Canada*, 63.

¹⁰⁸ Morrow and Wamsley, *Sport in Canada*, 186.

¹⁰⁹ Ben Carrington, "'Race', Representation and the Sporting Body," Paper submitted to the CUCR's Occasional Paper Series (2002), 9.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Black men and women were positioned so as not to challenge the White supremacy patriarchal status quo by systemic racism in key areas of social life (e.g., employment, housing, and immigration), as previously discussed. bell hooks indicates that Black women were rendered less threatening by their relegation to work no one else was willing to do, therefore, they could not jeopardize anyone's place in the "real" workforce. bell hooks, *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1981), 91; Mosher, *Discrimination and Denial*, 118; Walker, "Finding Jim Crow in Canada", 81-98.

¹¹² John Valentine and Simon C. Darnell, "Football and 'Tolerance,' Black Football Players in 20th Century Canada," in *Race and Sport in Canada: Intersecting Inequalities*, eds Janelle Joseph, Simon Darnell, and Yuka Nakamura (Toronto, ON: Canadian Scholars' Press, 2012), 59.

¹¹³ Andy Lytle, "Speaking on Sports," *The Star* (Toronto, ON), July 21, 1942, 12.

¹¹⁴ It took even longer (1994) for a Black coach to be in charge of a professional hockey team. See John Paris Jr. and Robert Ashe, *They Called Me Chocolate Rocket: The Life and times of John Paris, Jr., Hockey's First Black Professional Coach* (Halifax, Nova Scotia: Formac Publishing Company Limited, 2014).

¹¹⁵ The Lou Marsh Award was instituted in 1936 and is awarded by a panel of sports journalists to the top Canadian athlete (male or female, amateur or professional) of the year; it was named after the illustrious Toronto Star sport journalist. Don Morrow, "Lou Marsh: The Pick and Shovel of Canadian Sporting Journalism," *Canadian Journal of History of Sport* 14, no. 1 (1983): 21.

¹¹⁶ Ornella Nzindukiyimana and Kevin B. Wamsley, "Lowering the Bar: Larry Gains's Heavyweight Battle for a Title Shot, 1927–1932," *Sport History Review* 47, no. 2 (2016): 130-33.

¹¹⁷ See, for example, Ornella Nzindukiyimana, "John 'Army' Howard, Canada's First Black Olympian: A Nation-Building Paradox," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 34, no. 11 (2017): 1140-1160; Valentine and Darnell, "Football and 'Tolerance'," 59.

¹¹⁸ Valentine and Darnell, 59.

¹¹⁹ The work of Steven Jackson on Ben Johnson and the politics of national identity and race in Canada is illustrative of this. See Steven J. Jackson, "A Twist of Race: Ben Johnson and the Canadian Crisis of Racial and National Identity," *Sociology of Sport Journal* 15, no. 1 (1998): 21-40; Steven J. Jackson, David L. Andrews, and Cheryl Cole, "Race, Nation and Authenticity of Identity: Interrogating the 'Everywhere' Man (Michael Jordan) and the 'Nowhere' Man (Ben Johnson)," *Immigrants & Minorities* 17, no. 1 (1998): 82-102.

¹²⁰ Valentine and Darnell, “Football and ‘Tolerance’,” 59.

¹²¹ See Herb Carnegie, *A Fly in A Pail of Milk: The Herb Carnegie Story* (Oakville, ON: Mosaic Press, 1997); John Cooper with Ray Lewis, *Shadow Running: Ray Lewis, Canadian Railway Porter and Olympic Athlete* (Toronto, ON: Umbrella Press, 1999); Larry Gains, *The Impossible Dream* (Thetford, UK: Leisure Publications, 1976); Willie O’Ree and Michael McKinley, *The Autobiography of Willie O’Ree: Hockey’s Black Pioneer* (Toronto, ON: Somerville House Publications, 2000).

¹²² For instance, mentions can be found in Howell, *Blood, Sweat and Cheers*, 28, 110; Morrow and Wamsley, *Sport in Canada*, 110, 186.

¹²³ See Colin D. Howell, *Northern Sandlots: A Social History of Maritime Baseball* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1995), Chapter 9. Daniel Kelly, *The Chatham Coloured All-Stars 1933-34* (Harding Publications: University of Windsor, 1977); Lauren Miceli, “The 1934 Chatham Colored All-Stars: Barnstorming to Championships,” *The Great Lakes Journal of Undergraduate History* 4, no. 1 (2016). Other works with a broader focus have made note of the barnstorming in and outside of Ontario: William Humber, *A Sporting Chance Achievements of African-Canadian Athletes* (Toronto, ON: Natural Heritage Books, 2004), 7, 8, 9; Morrow and Wamsley, *Sport in Canada*, 110.

¹²⁴ Breaking the Colour Barrier: Wilfred “Boomer” Harding & the Chatham Coloured All-Stars (1932-1939), *Centre for Digital Scholarship*, accessed January 12, 2018.
<http://cdigs.uwindsor.ca/BreakingColourBarrier/>

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ This is not a comprehensive list: Cecil Harris, *Breaking the Ice: The Black Experience in Professional Hockey* (Toronto, ON: Insomniac Press, 2003); Frank Cosentino, *Afros, Aborigines and Amateur Sport in Pre World War One Canada* (Ottawa, ON: Canadian Historical Association, 1998); Russell Field, “Sport and the Canadian Immigrant: Physical Expressions of Cultural Identity within a Dominant Culture,” In *Race and Sport in Canada: Intersecting Inequalities*, eds Janelle Joseph, Simon Darnell, and Yuka Nakamura, 29-56 (Toronto, ON: Canadian Scholars’ Press, 2012); Valentine and Darnell, “Football and ‘Tolerance’;” Humber, *A Sporting Chance*; Krebs, “Hockey and the Reproduction of Colonialism in Canada;” *Mighty Jerome*, directed by Charles Officer (Montreal, QC: National Film Board, 2010), accessed online at https://www.nfb.ca/film/mighty_jerome_edu/; Nzindukiyimana and Wamsley, “Lowering the Bar.”

¹²⁷ Humber, *A Sporting Chance*.

¹²⁸ Nova Scotian boxer Sam Langford, Vancouver sprinter Harry Jerome’s biography, and Fosty and Fosty, and Harris’s work on Black Canadian hockey players are three examples of the type of documents available about Black Canadian sportsmen. They are also an example of the fact that many Black Canadians sport and sportsmen historiographies are not academic works. See Fil Fraser, *Running Uphill: The Short Fast Life of Harry Jerome* (Edmonton, AB: Dragon Hill Publishing/Lone Pine Publishing, 2006); George Robert Fosty and Darril Fosty, *Black Ice: The Lost History of the Colored Hockey League of the Maritimes, 1895-1925* (Halifax, NS: Nimbus Pub, 2008); Harris, *Breaking the Ice*; Clay Moyle, *Sam Langford: Boxing’s Greatest Uncrowned Champion* (Seattle, WA: Bennett & Hastings Publishing, 2013).

¹²⁹ See Brian Lennox, “Nova Scotia’s Forgotten Boxing Heroes: Roy Mitchell and Terrence ‘Tiger’ Warrington,” *Nova Scotia Historical Review* 12, no. 2 (1992): 32-46; Brian Douglas Lennox, “Nova Scotian Black Boxers a History of Champions,” (master’s thesis, Dalhousie University, 1991); Moyle, *Sam Langford*; Jason A. Winders, “‘Fought the Good Fight, Finished My Course’: George Dixon Amid the

Rising Tide of Jim Crow America,” (doctoral dissertation, Western University, 2016); Alexander Young, “The Boston Tar Baby,” *Nova Scotia Historical Quarterly* 4, no. 3 (1974): 277-298.

¹³⁰ Vertinsky and Captain, “More Myth than History,” 538-539.

¹³¹ Ben Carrington, “Sport, Masculinity, and Black Cultural Resistance,” *Journal of Sport & Social Issues* 22, no. 3 (1998): 178.

¹³² hooks prefers to spell her name (a pen name derived from her grandmother’s name) without capital letters. bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2015), 157, 158; hooks, bell, *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1990), 62, 63.

¹³³ Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo and Michael A. Messner, “Gender Displays and Men’s Power: The ‘New Man’ and the Mexican Immigration Man,” in *American Families: A Multicultural Reade*, eds. Stephanie Coontz, Maya Parson, and Gabrielle Raley (New York, NY: Routledge, 1999): 208.

¹³⁴ hooks, *Yearning*, 62, 63.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Scraton, “Reconceptualizing Race, Gender and Sport,” 175.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 174.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 174.

¹³⁹ See Janice Forsyth and Kevin B. Wamsley, “‘Native to Native ... We’ll Recapture Our Spirits’: The World Indigenous Nations Games and North American Indigenous Games as Cultural Resistance,” *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 23, no. 2 (2006): 294-314.

¹⁴⁰ C. L. R. James’ seminal work, *Beyond a Boundary*, is one of the first to articulate this idea through the lens of cricket in the British Caribbean. See C. L. R. James, *Beyond a Boundary* (London, UK: Hutchinson, 1966).

¹⁴¹ Jacinth Herbert, “Otherness and the Black Woman,” *Canadian Journal of Women & Law* 3 (1989): 273.

¹⁴² Among others, see Kidd, *The Struggle for Canadian Sport*, 95; Hall, *The Girl and the Game*; Helen Lenskyj, “Whose Sport? Whose Traditions? Canadian Women and Sport in The Twentieth Century,” *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 9, no. 1 (1992): 141.

¹⁴³ Kidd, *The Struggle for Canadian Sport*, 101. Carly Adams’ body of work about women’s hockey and softball in Ontario especially reflects the popularity of both sports in Ontario: e.g., Carly Adams, “Softball and the Female Community: Pauline Perron, Pro Ball Player, Outsider, 1926-1951,” *Journal of Sport History* 33, no. 3 (2006): 323-343; “‘Queens of the Ice Lanes’: The Preston Rivulettes and Women’s Hockey in Canada, 1931-1940,” *Sport History Review* 39, no. 1 (2008): 1-29; “‘Supervised Places to Play: Social Reform, Citizenship, and Femininity at Municipal Playgrounds in London, Ontario, 1900-1942,” *Ontario History* CIII, 1 (2011): 61-80; “‘I Just Felt Like I Belonged to Them’: Women’s Industrial Softball, London, Ontario, 1923-1935,” *Journal of Sport History* 38, no. 1 (2011): 75-94.

¹⁴⁴ Kidd, 106.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 107.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 143.

¹⁴⁷ Kidd, *The Struggle for Canadian Sport*, 107, 134. A caveat was that working-class women less restricted than middle-class women who had to protect respectability. Respectability was a prominent quality associated with upper-class women in the sporting context since the nineteenth century, when women spectators were used to project respectability at sporting events, as per Howell, *Blood, Sweat and Cheers*, 28.

¹⁴⁸ Kidd, *The Struggle for Canadian Sport*, 107, 134. A caveat was that working-class women less restricted than middle-class women who had to protect respectability. Respectability was a prominent quality associated with upper-class women in the sporting context since the nineteenth century, when women spectators were used to project respectability at sporting events, as per Howell, *Blood, Sweat and Cheers*, 28.

¹⁴⁹ Kidd, *The Struggle for Canadian Sport*, 119.

¹⁵⁰ After the 1960s, the International Amateur Athletic Association introduced sex testing policies. Hall, *The Girl and the Game*, 242.

¹⁵¹ Hall, *The Girl and the Game*, 93-94, 104-133.

¹⁵² Morrow and Wamsley, *Sport in Canada*, 141-147; Hall, *The Girl and the Game*, 147.

¹⁵³ Morrow and Wamsley, *Sport in Canada*, 141-147; Hall, *The Girl and the Game*, 147.

¹⁵⁴ Hall, *The Girl and the Game*, 43, 72.

¹⁵⁵ Kidd, *The Struggle for Canadian Sport*, 109.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 65.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 109.

¹⁵⁸ The WAAF used the AAAC template for its constitution. Adams, "Softball and the Female Community," 325.

¹⁵⁹ Others were Phyllis Griffiths, Vaughn Mason (The Halifax *Mail* 1930), Patricia Page Hollingsworth (Edmonton *Journal*), "Susie Q." (Edmonton *Bulletin* 1938), Lillian "Jimmy" Coe (Winnipeg *Free Press*, before and after WWII), Shirley Boulton (Winnipeg *Tribune*: also, wartime), Ann Stott (Vancouver *Sun*, 1939-1941), and Ruth Wilson (Vancouver *Sun*, 1943-45). Hall, *The Girl and the Game*, 12.

¹⁶⁰ Hall, *The Girl and the Game*, 13,

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 100, 102.

¹⁶² Working class women were less restricted than middle class who had to protect respectability. Kidd, *The Struggle for Canadian Sport*, 107; Joan Sangster, "The Softball Solution: Female Workers, Male Managers and the Operation of Paternalism at Westclox, 1923-60," *Labour/Le Travail*, 32 (1993): 189.

¹⁶³ Hall, *The Girl and the Game*, xv.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹⁶⁶ Adams, "Softball and the Female Community," 325.

¹⁶⁷ Patricia Vertinsky, "Gender Relations, Women's History and Sport History: A Decade of Changing Enquiry, 1983-1993," *Journal of Sport History* 21, no. 1 (1994): 1.

¹⁶⁸ Lenskyj, "Whose Sport? Whose Traditions?," 142.

¹⁶⁹ Hall, *The Girl and the Game*, 85-87, 113.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹⁷² This is based on a systematic browsing of the surviving editions published within that period. See also Thompson's review of the publication: Thompson, "Cultivating Narratives of Race."

¹⁷³ M. Ann Hall, "Towards a History of Aboriginal Women in Canadian Sport," in *Aboriginal Peoples and Sport in Canada: Historical Foundations and contemporary Issues*, ed. Janice Forsyth and Audrey R. Giles (Vancouver, BC: UBC Press, 2013), 81. See also Janice Forsyth, "After the Fur Trade: First Nations Women in Canadian History, 1850-1950," *Atlantis* 29, no. 2 (2005).

¹⁷⁴ Janice Forsyth, "After the Fur Trade: First Nations Women in Canadian History, 1850 – 1950," *Atlantis* 29, no. 2 (2005): 78.

¹⁷⁵ Hall, "Towards a History of Aboriginal Women in Canadian Sport," 65.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 67.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 67

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 68.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 70-72.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 72.

¹⁸¹ J.R. Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools*, 2nd ed. (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1996): 218.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 218-219.

¹⁸³ Hall, "Towards a History of Aboriginal Women in Canadian Sport," 73.

¹⁸⁴ Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision*, 225.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 226.

¹⁸⁶ Forsyth and Wamsley, “‘Native to Native... We’ll Recapture Our Spirits’,” 310.

¹⁸⁷ Among many others see Himani Bannerji, “Geography Lessons: On Being an Insider/Outsider to The Canadian Nation,” In *Dangerous Territories: Struggles for Difference and Equality in Education*, eds Leslie G. Roman & Linda Eyre, 23-41 (New York, NY: Routledge, Inc., 1997); Constance Backhouse, *Colour-Coded: A Legal History of Racism In Canada, 1900-1950* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press: 1999); Peggy Bristow (coordinator), *We’re Rooted Here and They Can’t Pull Us Up: Essays in African Canadian Women’s History* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1994); Cooper, “Constructing Black Women’s Historical Knowledge,”; Notisha Massaquoi and Njoki Nathani Wane, eds., *Theorizing Empowerment: Canadian Perspective on Black Feminist Thought* (Toronto, ON: Inanna Publications and Education Inc., 2007); Thompson, “Cultivating Narratives of Race,” 63; Palmer, “Mosaic Versus Melting Pot?”; Mathieu, *North of the Color Line*; Rinaldo Walcott, *Black Like Who?: Writing Black Canada*, 2nd ed. (Toronto, ON: Insomniac Press, 2003); Walker, “Race”, *Rights and The Law*.

¹⁸⁸ Janelle Joseph, “An Intersectional Analysis of Black Sporting Masculinities,” in *Race and Sport in Canada: Intersecting Inequalities*, eds Janelle Joseph, Simon Darnell, and Yuka Nakamura (Toronto, ON: Canadian Scholars’ Press, 2012), 242-243.

¹⁸⁹ Cooper, “Constructing Black Women’s Historical Knowledge,” 44.

¹⁹⁰ Lawrence Hill, *Women of Vision: The Story of the Canadian Negro Women’s Association, 1951-1976* (Toronto, ON: Umbrella Press, 1996), 12.

CHAPTER III

“WE USED TO PLAY BALL”: SELECTED RECOLLECTIONS OF BLACK WOMEN’S SPORT EXPERIENCES IN SOUTHERN ONTARIO (1920s TO 1940s)

1. Introduction

For Black women, racial and gender constructs are not separate. They are connected and interwoven. To appreciate Black women’s involvement in sport requires an understanding of the combination of socio-cultural forces that influenced their lives in the past. Finding and listening to all ‘Black voices,’ not just Black men’s voices, is crucial for this task. This centring of Black women’s voices within the narrative is advocated by Black feminist theorists.¹ Hence, this chapter presents the sporting experiences of selected Black women from Southern Ontario, as recalled in archived oral histories. As previously outlined, the historiography of Black Canadian women has focused on survival through immigration and labour history (as in the histories of teaching and nursing). The substantive evidence from the oral histories of a group of Black Ontarian women demonstrates that sporting spaces were well located to contribute to socio-cultural expression, resistance, and survival within some Black communities.

As of yet, noted sociologist Sheila Scraton, “we have no knowledge as to whether [Black women’s] invisibility reflects a total absence from sport or whether the existing histories that have concentrated on competitive, male sport simply ignore women’s existence in other important contexts of physical activity.”² Black Canadian women’s sport history enables us to situate sport more accurately within the historical context and better understand its role in the construction of not just the Black feminine identity, but,

incidentally, White and male identities as well.³ There is no telling marginalized stories without expanding the dominant ones. To bridge that gap, one needs to appreciate how Black women's gendered and racialized identities are situated within, and reorganize, the concept of Canadian identity, as called upon by Black Canadian feminists such as Notisha Massaquoi.⁴ The present chapter begins to mend the literature gap by exploring selected Southwestern Ontario Black women's recollections of sport in their life stories. This exploration presents a base knowledge that is a necessary point of departure for building a narrative that may be incorporated into the larger Canadian socio-historical fabric.

By instrumentalizing Black women's sport experiences,⁵ this chapter presents an analysis of how the racial and gender dynamics present in the labour history of Black women in Canada operated beyond work spaces, while recognizing that non-work-related practices nevertheless affected labour and access to resources. Oral narratives collected to preserve the life memories of dozens of Black women in Southern Ontario provide access to the recollection of sport and locate sporting experiences in their individual histories. These oral histories were collected from the Multicultural History Society of Ontario (MHSO). The narrative constructed from the archives illustrates myriad ways in which several women were involved in sport between the 1920s and the 1940s as participants and as spectators. The chapter contains two main sections, that is, women as athletes in various sports and levels, and as administrators ("In the Game") and women as spectators ("In the Stands"). But first is an outline of the study's historiography.

2. Epistemology: Accessing Memories

Oral histories are found to be both “a method of historical analysis and an object of study.”⁶ In the first instance, oral histories have facilitated the study of marginalized individuals’ experiences at the micro level in what has been termed “history from the bottom.”⁷ In sport history, oral histories have widely been used to study Negro baseball in the United States (US).⁸ In the Black Canadian women’s literature, they have mainly served in the study of work and immigration.⁹ In the second instance, scholars have set out to deconstruct the process of storytelling and the act of remembering. In this perspective, oral histories are conceptualized as “much more closely linked to the real and immediate social situation of the interview than to things one would correlate with historic facts of lives lived.”¹⁰ This has made it possible to envision oral histories as a method while also recognizing their limits with regards to empirical research. While acknowledging this latter discussion within the scholarship, the focus herein is on the content of the recollections (the ‘facts’), rather than questions of how or why individuals remember their experiences as they do. This is in keeping with the study’s research question: *what* were Black women’s sporting practices in Southern Ontario between the 1920s and the 1940s?

This work is grounded in Douglas Booth’s presentation of the historical knowledge structure. In his important work about sport historiography, Booth outlined three models of historical study approaches: reconstructivism, constructivism, and deconstructivism.¹¹ Booth also describes explanatory paradigms founded upon those models and that follow the philosophical assumptions that underpin their arguments. This

research inscribes itself in the reconstructionist/constructivist paradigm because a) the use of social memories carries the assumption that that the past cannot be accessed in fullness, b) the histories uncovered will be positioned within the broader socio-economic, political, and cultural context, and c) it is recognized that the historian's gaze is inherently bent by her/his theoretical approach.¹²

Pre-study assessment on archival sources access revealed that availability of primary historical sources about Black women's experiences was rendered difficult by the ways in which other groups overshadowed women of colour's sporting activities in the Canadian historical record. In fact, a lack of written documentation has led several Black social history scholars to turn to oral histories.¹³ Consequently, the current study did not depart from the epistemological location of the existing literature. The use of oral histories is equally legitimized by the historical necessity for Black Canadians to preserve memories in the form of oral histories for social and cultural resistance and survival. Writing at the turn of the 21st century, Canadian historian James Morrison remarked that "living history composed of oral history and oral tradition has allowed for a rewriting of the past in the past quarter century and has also allowed the marginalized and peripheralized to maintain their cultural voices."¹⁴ Oral histories present Black women's lives "as they were," providing a nuanced view of their experiences of discrimination and denial of opportunity, as well as stories of fulfilment and realization. In this perspective, examining oral histories has the potential to bring attention to previously unexplored aspects of their socio-cultural existence outside of the shadow of more prominent groups. Through Black women's voices, I demonstrate the role of sport and sporting spaces in Black communities in pre-1950 Ontario.

3. Archival Sources

For this investigation, the main source was the archived oral histories of Black women born between 1889 and the 1923 who lived in Southern Ontario. These oral histories were a part of the MHSO collection in Toronto. In 21 discussions targeted on life stories collected to preserve community memories for younger generations, I found (through listening) that some informants and their interviewers and interviewees raised the topic of sport. Consequently, those memories of sport were embedded within the wider narrative of informants' lives, allowing one to contextualize those experiences alongside other social experiences with family, work, and communities. Recollections of sport appear as constitutive of the informants' life stories because they emerged organically and unplanned; they were not the sole focus of the interviews. As specified by historian April Gallwey, archived oral histories offer a rich source for social historians interested in examining "historical shifts at the socio-cultural level."¹⁵ By exploring these sources of mostly untapped qualitative data, the occasion arises to link public history with academic historiography.

The MHSO records are a part of a series of interviews with members of various ethnic and racial groups living in Ontario collected for an oral history project between the late 1970s and early 1990s. The MHSO collection was compiled in an effort to preserve memories of groups with few records. The collection counts over 8,000 hours of recorded testimonies from 6,075 interviews with members of over 80 groups.¹⁶ These were recorded on cassette tapes and the majority are preserved this way, with only a few of them having a digital copy and/or a transcript. The interviewees were adults of various

ethnocultural groups in the province, including Black and White Canadians, First Nations, and various individuals with Caribbean, American, Arab, and Asian origins, as well as Jewish and Mennonites.¹⁷ It is not indicated why specific informants were chosen, although they appear to have been prominent members in their communities.

93 interviews were conducted with African-Canadians, and for the dissertation, the focus was on women informants (as indicated by their first names): 30 individuals, for a total of 52 cassette tapes. The number of tapes per informant ranged from 1 to 4 tapes, but with some tapes being inaccessible and some being damaged, only interviews from 21 individuals could be retrieved for a total of 41 tapes. The interviews were unstructured and were conducted in person, in the informants' homes, and sometimes in the presence of spouses, friends, or other family members. Interviews were conducted by Ontario Black History Society representatives and by informants' friends or family members, with a select number of informants also serving as interviewers to informants with whom, based on the familiarity in the interview, suggested acquaintance. The level of interviewers' expertise as researchers was not described.

Informants generally discussed their birth place, parents, childhoods, young adulthood, involvement in the community, working lives, families, and various activities in which they took part. Out of 21, 10 informants discussed sports during their interviews, and their experiences are discussed in this chapter. They are presented in Table 3.1, along with information on their age at the time of interview.

Table 3.1. Profiles of Ten Archived Oral History Informants who Discussed Sport in their Interviews with the Multicultural History Society of Ontario

Informant	Birth year	Year of interview	Estimated* age at interview
Mary Allen (née Bee)	unknown	1982	unknown
Isobel Louise Bailey	unknown	1982	unknown
Violet Eudora Bell (née Brian)	1889	1980	91
Beulah Cuzzens / Couzzens (née Harding)	1907	1980	73
Wanda Harding-Milburn	1924	1980	56
Norma Nicholson	1923	1983	60
Vivian Robbins-Chavis	1923	1980	57
Hilda Viola Watkins	1907	1980	73
Nellie Rosina Wells	1909	1980	71
Geraldine Williams	1914	1981	67

*Estimated because exact date of birth, relative to date of interview, was not available for some individuals.

Beulah Cuzzens and Wanda Harding-Milburn were sisters from a mixed-race family from Chatham-Kent (Ontario), which was heavily involved in sport throughout the period under study; three of their four brothers were members of the Chatham Coloured All-Stars baseball team, the first all-Black team to win the Ontario Baseball Amateur Association championship, in 1934.

Although some MHSO informants immigrated to Canada as young adults, most were born in Canada and all resided in Southwestern Ontario towns/cities between the 1920s and the 1940s. And, born between 1889 and the 1923, the 10 informants in

Table 3.1 were also active adults and young adults during the period under study. At the times of their interviews, they lived and were interviewed in Toronto, Windsor, Chatham, and North Buxton. These interviews took place more than 25 years ago and most of the informants have since died. This makes their recollections an especially valuable record of their experiences. This is a crucial point, because oral histories present a distinct perspective from the traditional written or photographic sources that are the foundation of most sport histories; they offer memories made in the past but understood in the present. Decades ago, the informants' memories were relatively 'fresher' (closer in time to the time those experiences took place than they would be today). This reduces the effect of the time factor in their interpretation/recollection of their experiences.¹⁸ It should be noted that, since the research question that guides this dissertation asks, "what was" rather than "why it was," the informant's skewed interpretation of events, cited as an important blindside of oral histories,¹⁹ is not a primary concern. Rather, including the voices of informants who could not be accessible today adds a richness to the work. The archived nature of the oral history also slightly diminishes the impact of age: Had the interviews been conducted today, informants would be even more advanced in age than they were at the time of interview.

When listening to the MHSO interviews, I took notes of and transcribed any mention, practice of, or encounter with sports by the informants, as well as notes on the informants and on the rest of the interview. The notes were condensed topically (displayed with extracted quotes) and a verification process was undertaken through re-listening to drawn summaries.²⁰ The findings were then analyzed and interpreted to make visible the combined impact of race and gender on the informant's sport related

recollections.²¹ Two major themes emerged—“In the Game” and “At the Game”—as the recorded interview data were being screened, filtered, and compiled and, then, reanalyzed inductively.²² In the Game, women were athletes in school and in community women’s teams, and some were also involved in sport alongside boys and men. There is also evidence of women coaching and one umpire of men’s baseball. At the Game, women were avid sport spectators, cheering on men from their communities, but also sometimes participating in anti-racism work from the stands.

This information is presented and analysed alongside other secondary sources, photographic evidence, and other archived oral histories,²³ including:

- i) a 2007 interview from the Buxton National Historic Site and Museum conducted with Buxton (Ontario) resident Dolores Shadd;
- ii) interviews from the Virtual Museum of Canada exhibit entitled *Our Stories - Remembering Niagara’s Proud Black History*; and
- iii) interviews from a recent project by the University of Windsor (Ontario) entitled *Breaking the Colour Barrier: Wilfred “Boomer” Harding & the Chatham Coloured All-Stars*.

These oral histories were included because some of the interviewees were connected to some of the MHSO informants, or because preliminary research indicated that they contained pertinent and complementary recollections. For instance, some informants interviewed in the *Breaking the Colour Barrier* project were relatives of MHSO informants Beulah (Harding) Cuzzens and Wanda Harding-Milburn. As noted previously, from these histories, there emerged two themes: “In the Game” and “At the Game.”

4. In the Game

4.1 Athletes

For most informants, school was one of the principal locations where they encountered sport. For instance, Hilda Viola Watkins (b. 1907) attended a mostly black school in Buxton, and her interviewer (who happened to be Vivian Chavis, one of the other interviewees) described her as a sport/athletic enthusiast. Watkins recalls going to school to “play ball” during lunch time while her brother went to eat at their grandparents’ home. Watkins described eating “in a hurry and get[ting] out on the schoolyard [to] play ball.”²⁴ Although she did not elaborate on the level of organization of those games, the kind of ball (hard or soft), or on whether (and how long) she pursued it beyond school, her interest in sport continued in her later years: She told her interviewer that she had joined the local YMCA at 73 years old for fitness swimming classes. Still concerning activities at school, Isobel Bailey explained that she had “belonged to a softball girls’ team,” but that it was as far as she could remember or tell.²⁵ Bailey, like many, did not elaborate on her practice or on whether her membership was out of the ordinary. She instead highlighted her brother’s more extensive sporting practice in hockey and baseball, a reflection of other informants’ approaches—turning the discussion to men’s sport—later discussed at the chapter’s close.

A more elaborate description of sporting practice at school came from Geraldine Williams (b. 1914), who noted that her elementary school offered a range of recreational activities. Note that Williams was elementary school-aged in the early 1920s. As she related, “We used to play basketball and volleyball. They had tennis and not too many

[schools] do now. I used to play basketball myself, but I was a poor sport— [Tape cuts].”²⁶ Key to this is her suggestion students could explore different disciplines, although more information is needed to understand how ordinary Williams’ experience was. For instance, although Williams’ note about tennis suggests that a sport like tennis was a regular activity in schools (or at least in the locality outside Toronto in which she grew up), there may have been a class factor to explain the range of activities.

In that same vein, Violet E. Bell (b. 1889), a “champion runner of the city” (Toronto) at 10 and 11 for two different schools, tells us about organized school sport.²⁷ Bell’s sporting success was even more remarkable, for an accident suffered at 6 years old had prevented her from walking for two years. As she proudly declared, “this knee [pats it audibly] was cured enough for me to run. And not only that but be a champion runner.”²⁸ Her personal life story framed her sporting experience and framed it in bright lights. Nonetheless, we learn from Bell that different schools had various levels of sport training; she still won with little training at her first school, but at her second school, “they really trained us.”²⁹ Training was useful because a yearly competition between school champions decided city champions.

Bell also confirmed Williams’ note about the wide range of activities to which young women had access. Beyond running, Bell also “played tennis, used to swim...” and, in fact, “Anything out of doors, I love it. But I never played golf. I used to paddle a canoe and row a boat and all that kind of stuff.”³⁰ What remains unclear is the extent to which such activities were pursued in an organized structure for these women. And although Bell did not talk about participating in tournaments other than the ones

described above, running remained an interest of hers well after marriage; she “used to run all the time.”³¹

Team sports, baseball and basketball, were especially prevalent in the recollections. Beulah Cuzzens’ interviewer noted that Cuzzens had previously “told [her] [she] played a little ball too in the bloomer days,” although the septuagenarian confessed she did not remember her playing days.³² As detailed below, Beulah Cuzzens was not cited as part of the Buxton bloomers girls’ team. What she remembered, instead, was how much she never liked basketball in high school. In fact, she said,

I learned to hate basketball because of how teacher had us all buy our little bloomers and mini blouses, and then when it came to play basketball she’d give us dumbbells to swing. We never got to play basketball. I never liked basketball. I had to teach it once in Windsor when I was supplying, and I was lost. I couldn’t do it, and I didn’t want to do it. I don’t like basketball. I don’t know who the teacher was, I don’t remember her, but I remember she certainly gave me a dislike for basketball.³³

Cuzzens graduated from Normal School in London (Ontario) in the 1920s and taught for decades in rural segregated schools in Ontario (in Shrewsbury and Harrow). She was one of the last to teach in School Section #11, the last segregated school in the province.³⁴ Her supplying work in Windsor is estimated to have been after the consolidation of segregated Ontario schools in 1965. In the one-room school house, it is doubtful that pupils participated in organized sport at school until before were able to attend (integrated) high schools. Space, resources, and small groups (one-room implied several age groups in one classroom) would have represented substantial barriers.

Cuzzens adds that she “was never a good athlete [and that she] always got tired.”³⁵ But, she had female acquaintances who played and who were part of teams and

so, was more of a spectator. As explored further below, Cuzzens was an avid sport fan, and those she supported included her youngest sister, Wanda Harding-Milburn, and her brothers. Their nephew recounts that, although the Harding family were all fans of sport, the oldest sisters (thus, excluding Harding-Milburn) were “more or less braniac, they were academic” who nonetheless “supported all the others in their athletic venues.”³⁶

Harding-Milburn was the youngest of a family of seven and credits her brothers with sparking her sporting interests. Her brothers were a part of an all-Black baseball team (the Chatham Coloured All-Stars) and, in fact, their influence went beyond their family to other women. This is established by Cleata Morris, a resident of neighboring North Buxton.³⁷ Although Harding-Milburn’s parents did not have much wealth, she described a happy and caring family where,

The boys always had other young men around when they were in their ball playing years, and I didn’t really have the influence of my sisters because they were grown and gone when I came along. They were both 19 and 17 years older than me so they were on their own practically when I came along. I was influenced by brothers mostly.³⁸

The Harding brothers were athletic, but “needless to say,” Harding-Milburn “was athletic, too.”³⁹ She notes that, “[she] certainly enjoyed sports all the time [she] was growing up and even when [she] got in high school, [she] participated in track and field.”⁴⁰ In answer to whether sport was important to the Harding family, her niece, Andrea Levisy confirmed that, “they were to the whole family, including [my father’s] sister, Wanda. [...] everybody was athletically involved when [my father] was growing up.”⁴¹ Similar to Watkins and Bell above, sport remained a lifelong activity for Harding-Milburn. After having her children, she is reported to have played five pin bowling, and then, later in life, golf.⁴² She played sport both in the community and at school.⁴³

In addition to track and field, in which Harding-Milburn was “excellent,” according to her nephew,⁴⁴ she also played basketball at school, then “on the girls’ baseball team that played during the [Second World] war.”⁴⁵ It is, indeed, suggested below that, with the success of the Chatham All-Stars in the early 1930s, women’s softball and/or baseball teams were formed and endured throughout the 1930s and 1940s. As with many men’s teams during that period, the All-Stars disbanded when the Second World War military draft depleted their numbers,⁴⁶ which may have opened the field up for women’s teams. It is unclear whether these women’s teams produced any income, however modest, for their members like some men’s barnstorming teams.⁴⁷

Harding-Milburn also discussed various aspects of growing up Black in Southwestern Ontario. This included being a part of a mixed-race family (her mother was a White Irish woman who was disowned for marrying a Black man), growing up poor but having older siblings who supported the family when she was younger, having a brother who could ‘pass’ as White and got jobs that his siblings or his father could not get, and fighting and living with racial discrimination in Chatham. In answer to whether she encountered barriers to playing sport in the wider community, her daughter was sure she did, as “there were those who didn’t want to associate with [her]. Especially with their family being of mixed race, it made life even a little more challenging for them.”⁴⁸ But in recounting her own story, Harding-Milburn underscored that playing sport was a sort of leveller for her and other poor students in her school:

We were more readily accepted at high school than my [older] sisters were. When they went to high school it was almost a no-no, but they still were allowed to go. And when I went to high school in the ‘30s, there definitely was a lot of prejudice. We were accepted in some lights, but yet there was a class distinction. If not just in colour, there was financially. There were the rich and there were us poor and

we didn't have anything in common. But, being in sports, lots of times I found that I had a little bit of companionship with some of the kids. And I was on the basketball team. And then I went to school with my coloured friends and we played basketball together and then we just came home and forgot about it.⁴⁹

The description suggests that sport played a significant role in attenuating racial and economic class barriers between students. It allowed Black and White students to relate and socialize with each other in a way that was not possible otherwise in the sociocultural environment in which they lived. Historian Karen Carole Flynn described a similar companionship phenomenon in her history of Black Canadian and Caribbean female nurses in the 1940s and 1950s. Flynn referred to women who, like Harding-Milburn and her friends, sought out sports such as track and field, baseball, softball, and hockey because they functioned as tools of resistance to racial prejudice and survival in a discriminating environment. Two of Flynn's informants explained that, in high school, they participated in sport because it alleviated tensions between themselves and White students, "undercut[ting] racial and gender differences."⁵⁰ Even more, one informant stressed that, "because of our participation in sports, our teachers became more accepting of us."⁵¹ If the struggle to combat racism is fundamentally a fight against stereotypes at the individual level,⁵² then these women engaged in important social justice work through sport.

But where sport may have allowed Black student-athletes to navigate an otherwise hostile space more easily, the unity formed on mixed raced sport teams was ephemeral. One cannot underestimate the practicality of sport's ability to foster immediate connections. But, if sport could bridge a gap between students, it was only superficial. Black students' experiences were shaped by racism and sport could not offer

substantial help. Notably, after describing the context in which she played basketball at school, Harding-Milburn added that,

There were things that we could do and things that we couldn't do, and we always knew where we were. We couldn't work. A lot of kids worked when they went to high school and worked in the stores in town, in the dime stores. We couldn't do that. I went to school and had a good friend and then went and worked in her mother's kitchen on the weekends because that's all I could do. But, we knew that it was so— [...] That was the way it was.⁵³

Sport was limited in its capacity as an equalizer for Wanda Harding-Milburn and her peers. Perhaps, the scale of sport participation at that level was not enough to produce lasting effects (beyond the scope of the sporting field). Nevertheless, it demonstrates a place for sport within the socio-political and cultural lives of these women. That sport was a middle ground of sorts for some is a crucial element, even more so because it occurred at a key moment in the growth of women's sport history—the interwar period (see chapter 2). The sporting space reflected the various socio-economic opportunities that Black women saw opening during that period. Importantly, through sport, Black women penetrated a sphere of public life on a more similar footing to White women. This rare opportunity then, provided contact between these two groups and, as previously remarked, had the potential to impact prejudice slowly, however limited or temporary the effects.

It is important to note that this study did not produce compelling evidence that these Black women actively sought to produce societal change through their own sport participation. This, in fact, was not the purpose of the study. Yet, although the examination of sport's role in the Black community at large is beyond the scope of this dissertation, it is necessary to note that the source material in this and the next chapter

does not seem to indicate that Black women athletes *deliberately* employed sport in their activism. Rather, the dominant motive for sport participation was recreation as it was for most women at the time. Harding-Milburn's experience is a case in point:

Companionship was one reason—it influenced her participation in basketball at school—and competition was another: “I played golf years ago and then the last ten years I didn't play too much. But I played a lot this year and I thoroughly enjoyed it. I wish I was a better golfer, but nevertheless, I still enjoy the competition.”⁵⁴ However, the idea of sport as a tool for fighting prejudice against the Black community transpires in the narrative of women as sport fans explored below. This is relevant to the question of Black women's sporting experiences, as some who do not recall playing or being in sport nonetheless recall watching/supporting mostly men's sport. Thus, for some informants, men's sport was a manifest tool for fighting prejudice on a large scale, while they did not explicitly frame their own as such. Black women's sport as activism appears mostly as a latent notion, or as a small-scale endeavour.

4.1.1 *With the Boys*

Twentieth century stereotypes concerning athletic girls/women were not enough of a deterrent from participation. Boys did not automatically exclude girls from playing and, in fact, had a considerable influence on girls'/women's involvement in sport. For instance, Wanda Harding-Milburn indicated that her brothers introduced her to sports. Others, such as Pauline Williams and Cleata Morris, two Buxton residents, discussed the influence of other members of the Chatham All-Stars on women's sport in the region. Williams' mother, Alma Robbins had two brothers, Hyle and Stanton Robbins, who played for the All-Stars; Morris was the Robbins' cousin. Alma Robbins was one of

seven siblings and one of three sisters born between 1909 and 1913. As a young woman (1924 and 1930), according to her daughter, it was normal that,

[Alma] would play sometimes out there with them. The girls always played ball with the boys... Even my mother, she would be out there too, and she was a left hander, so she would be up there fighting too. The whole family, really. Even the other brothers. They would have a ball team of their own 'cause there was seven of them. So, I can't just say one, they would all be out there.⁵⁵

In the Robbins household sport was, indeed, a family affair:

There was a catcher that always liked to, you know, catch with [Stanton], but when he'd see that Stanton was coming to the mound, he got an extra pad and put it in his glove, 'cause he said Stanton would burn his hands up if he didn't put that pad in. [Laughs]... And he [Stanton] would do that to his sister [Alma] and them. He'd throw a ball and hit her hat off her head and she'd still be spinnin'. [Laughs] Him and her were always fighting. They were always working out there and she liked to play ball with them. She said he could get that ball and he would land it on anybody that got near him.⁵⁶

Morris adds that, “[the Robbins sisters] heard of these games that [the boys] were playing and said, ‘Oh, well, we can do it too.’”⁵⁷ And Williams reiterates that “the whole family would be out there playing. It wasn't just the boys. The girls would be out there too, just fighting along with all the men. Didn't matter.”⁵⁸ For those young women, sport was not out of bounds, but in stating that “they could do it too,” Morris underscored sport as a male domain and their presence as a break from gender norms they were expected to follow.

Both boys and the girls played ‘ball’ in youth, and, effectively boys had a direct impact on the sporting activities of their female peers. But, importantly, it continued into young adulthood in two fashions: inspiration to form teams and invitation to play on men's teams. With regards to the former, Cleata Morris remarked that men's sport inspired women in their community to form their own teams. The notion that if boys

could do it, girls could too, remained. Thus, when the Chatham All-Stars men’s team formed in 1932, a women’s baseball team also formed at around the same time in neighbouring Buxton. Alma Robbins and her sisters played on it and Morris remembers that, “they wore—I called them bloomers. [...] And they had a good ball team. I mean, I heard about them.”⁵⁹ In *Legacy to Buxton*, author Arlie Robbins featured a photograph of what likely was the ball team in question, seen in Figure 3.1.⁶⁰



Fig. 3.1. Girls’ Ball Team [ca 1932]. *Source*: Arlie C. Robbins. *Legacy to Buxton*. Chatham, ON: Ideal Printing, 1983. 155A.

According to Arlie Robbins, the Buxton girls first began playing on a softball team in the mid-1920s, and although “the folks looked askance at these ‘tomboys’ wearing bloomers,” in a world of jazz, bootleggers, flappers, the Charleston and other new dances, there was only a mild ripple.⁶¹ The ‘golden age’ of women’s sport was beginning, and it seems the movement reached even rural Southern Ontario. The team counted girls as young as 14 years old. They played “rough and ready” baseball too, and as they contended for championships, any reticence diminished. Robbins notes that the team played for approximately three years and, in that time, it was a “tough little team to

beat.”⁶² In keeping with the times, it was under the leadership of a man, Mr. Newby. The conditions in which they played were not ideal, but it seems the team was not discouraged:

Finances were always short, so they often had to make do with bats from the pick handles and Mr. Newby would patiently sew their battered balls until sometimes it was hard to tell where the original ball had been. But nevertheless, they kept going. They played in Newby’s pasture, just about where the museum stands now. Like all pastures, it had the usual problem but these were minor details in those days. There was always lots of grass where a quick swipe of the foot got most of “it” off.⁶³

According to Robbins, the Buxton girls’ bloomers team was so talented that they were once challenged by the boys’ team and proceeded to beat them, to the boys’ “disgust and embarrassment.”⁶⁴ They also travelled for competition, although it is not clear within which structure they played for the Championship discussed in *Legacy for Buxton*. The stated finances issues perhaps answer the question of income for women’s teams; if the team generated any revenue, it was not filling anyone’s pockets.

The “formidable bunch” who played in bloomers made by their mothers left a lasting impression in the community. Their perseverance was rewarding at least in one capacity for, decades later, the elderly still told their tales to the younger generations:

One time they were playing a team for Merlin coached by old Doc Bell. Muriel Newby was playing second base for Buxton and as Merlin’s base runner slid into second she somehow up-ended Muriel who promptly sat on the girl’s head. And there she sat until the girl was called out. As Bell came running to the rescue, Muriel got painfully to her feet all the while complaining of her ‘sore’ ankle. But sore head and sore ankle both survived to play another day.⁶⁵

Merlin is another small farming town near Chatham and Buxton. Merlin was also the location of the last segregated Black school to be closed in Ontario in 1965.⁶⁶ Merlin is

still a very small community today, but it is possible that its team was also an all-Black team, if Merlin counted enough Black families to open a school pre-1965.

Cleata Morris was born in the early 1920s and so, “our ball team formed after that group [in the 1940s]. And we played ball—actually, ‘bout now, we be getting ready to go down to the Catholics St. Patrick’s and play with the girls there. [Pauline Williams laughs] Then we played with the Blenheim...”⁶⁷ The All-Stars continued to be influential, even though they disbanded in 1939 (they reformed in 1946 under a new name). Morris further holds that,

in later years [the All-Stars] were an incentive. [...] Because me—well, I was a catcher on a girls’ team here. We had girls’ teams in Buxton, ball games. [...] And we looked forward to it. More so than when we had to go to Sunday school at church. [laughs] That was number one. Which they don’t do today. During the week, it was fun, looked forward to it. Even today now, the park—this next generation, below me, they have the Buxton Nationals.⁶⁸

Hence, women formed teams, and some were even inspired by their male counterparts to be involved in local competition in the 1920s, ‘30s, and ‘40s. This was part of a cycle. As author Arlie Robbins observed about men’s teams, “one generation followed the other and the teams of the teens and 20s were the followers of the earlier teams and the forerunner of the teams of the 30s.”⁶⁹ It is not clear whether the women’s team was also an all-Black team, although Figure 3.1 and knowledge on racial relations in the Buxton area during that period suggest that this was the case. Further information is needed on the team’s managerial and organizational structure, and on whether these women’s possibly all-Black teams ever reflected the entrepreneurship in all-Black men’s teams.⁷⁰

Where young girls and boys played together in their youth, men and women could be found playing together in adulthood. While the MHSO sources used herein do not discuss this, complementary sources suggested that some men's teams invited women to play with them. In an oral history collection titled *Our Stories: Remembering Niagara's Proud Black History*,⁷¹ Harry Harper remembered that, at least once, when his team was short a player, they invited one of his teammate's sister to join the team:

there was a few times we only went up with eight [players] [sic]. Then the other one would show up later. And then one time, George Bell's sister, June—she played baseball [as well as] my second oldest daughter. [...] June happened to be with us this time. So, there's only eight there, so [the opposing team] was gonna put one of their men, make up the ninth. 'Course, you know me, I said, 'Well, wait a minute!' I said, 'How's it gonna be the Coloured All-Stars if he's playin'?' He killed himself laughin'. So then, we said, 'Isn't somebody got an extra sweater?' 'Yeah.' 'June,' I called her, 'You're on second base.' 'What?'

As he indicated, Harper's team was an all-Black baseball team and the described remarks suggest that it was important for them to keep it that way. They were based in the Niagara (Ontario) region, in the 1940s. Including June Bell, a woman, on the Stars did not go smoothly with the opposing team. However, play went on with June Bell at second base:

So, this here pitcher guy was doin' the pitchin'. 'Oh,' he says, 'I'll fix her.' He said, 'Wait till she gets up to bat.' Well, she got up to bat, and he threw a fast one, she swung, and missed. 'See there! She can't even see 'em!' He threw another one. She hit it and got two base hits out of it. He was so mad, he says, 'Wait till I get up to bat! I'll fix you!' He said, 'I'll burn one down there to second base.' He burned one down to second base. Well, I'm [pitcher] left handed [...] she picked up the ball in her right hand and she was about five feet from the second base, she threw it to the short stop and he caught it, spun around, and threw it to first base. We got three out! [Laughs]⁷²

There is only one such illustrative case of a woman playing on a men's team which was revealed in this study. Although the opposing team was disgruntled by the woman's inclusion, Harper's casual retelling suggested that this was not an unusual

circumstance. After all, women and baseball were not an absolute antithesis: women played and attended games in numbers. Harper's story signals that not all experiences in sport were confined to joining in youth games or to women's teams. This does not only expand the narrative, it offers a much-needed glimpse into gender relations within the Black community, as shaped by sport.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, not all gatekeepers in women's sport were men. Some women played a role in administrating women's sport, notably as coaches. Some coaches were primarily educators. Hilda Watkins remembered a teacher, a certain Eunice Hyatt Kersey, who "used to have a group of girls, training the Girl Guides. [...] she was athletically inclined, and she would coach girls in basketball."⁷³ When considering that segregated Black schools tended to be underfunded, and that integrated schools counted few Black teachers, it is fair to estimate that there were not that many Black female coaches, especially as time went by. Some coaching would have been done within schools themselves, but there were also teams formed externally who would have been in need of coaching. Like the Buxton ball team above, these teams played in public spaces, and through community centres or churches.

A unique example of women coaching is Dolores Shadd, a farmer and educator from Buxton. She coached women in baseball, basketball, soccer, and volleyball—in short, "whatever had to get coached."⁷⁴ As Shadd recounts, when her husband started coaching a baseball team in Buxton, her uncle asked that she "do the girls."⁷⁵ She admits that she had to motivate her team to play harder:

Standing between home base and first [...] girls would hit the ball and they would never run, just sort of [flaps hands in front of chest]. So, I got a three-foot ruler and just stood there and [the girls] said 'Is she gonna hit us?' 'We don't know!'

‘Or else, I’m gonna go by her so fast she’ll never catch me.’ I never had trouble with the team getting to first base. I never touched anybody. [Laughs]⁷⁶

Although initiated by men, women did not relinquish all monopoly of authority to them. Shadd had also coached basketball in Detroit whilst pursuing her studies at Wayne State University.⁷⁷ It is estimated that the above episode occurred around the late 1940s, or in the 1950s, after she had left Detroit. She remembered coaching five teams: The Red Dragons (a Chinese American team), the Mexican Spitfire (a Mexican team), the Jiving Jills, the Hot Shots, and “another team.”⁷⁸ The first two teams were from Detroit in the early 1940s; it is unclear where the other three were from or if they counted the above-mentioned Buxton team.

One of Shadd’s players, Dorothy Moy Matsumoto, explained that the Red Dragons played out of the Neighborhood House, a community centre that catered to the “underprivileged” in Detroit’s Chinatown.⁷⁹ Matsumoto remembers that the Neighborhood house was frequented by a variety of kids, including Hispanic, Belgian, Maltese, and Irish. Coaches who worked for the Houses could be White, and in Shadd’s case, Black, but Matsumoto’s team was an all-girls’ Chinese team. Figure 3.2 is a photograph of the Red Dragons in 1945, with Coach Shadd in the back right. The Red Dragons “would challenge the Chinese from Cincinnati or Toronto or Chicago, so [they] would travel to all the different cities...”⁸⁰ It is suggested that Shadd and the Dragons represented a solidarity against racial prejudice through community creation. Whether done directly or indirectly through sport, it was a way to combat through sport: “Dolores and the Red Dragons withstood the colour bar, their friendship given strength by overcoming injustice.”⁸¹



Fig. 3. 2. The Red Dragons Basketball Team, Detroit, Michigan. [ca 1945] *Source: Older, Stronger, Wiser*, directed by Claire Prieto (1989; Montreal, QC: Studio D; National Film Board of Canada), Online.

Shadd's was also an umpire for a Buxton men's team. Initially, she remembered, she was meant to transport one of the "local boys'" baseball teams when those in charge of the teams were unable to keep up with the schedule come fall. From this developed an opportunity to umpire:

I remember we went off to Charing Cross and I could hear this man fussing something about us, but I couldn't hear it. It didn't sound nice anyhow. We got the team lined up and I said 'OK, batter up.' And wow, he hit the ceiling. Buxton was supposed to send an umpire; they had their rules. And they didn't send an umpire. So, one guy said, 'Miss Shadd now—' [the first man interrupted] 'No! I don't want no woman umpire.' The [one guy] said 'she teaches in [...] high school, I think you better stay out of her way.' And I said, 'Please let me in so that I can pull him out and kick him out of the park!' Because he was swearing, and I didn't—you know—I didn't allow that in the park. So anyhow, he got back. So, after that game, when the boys went anyplace, they had a female umpire; [smiling] and that was fun.⁸²

Shadd had the support to step into that role and demonstrated a relative flexibility within the local sport system. Her presence was not considered alarming, despite initial

resistance to her as a woman in that environment. There emerges yet another angle through which to conceptualize the relationships between men and women in the Black community. As discussed in the conclusion chapter, this is indicative that the sporting space was a common space for men and women in some communities, which challenges the gender segregation traditionally associated with sport.

5. At the Game

Attending sport games was a regular activity for some of the informants, regardless of the extent of their own sport participation. From MHSO informants to their relatives through to the supplementary oral histories, it was found that a large part of the sporting experiences of Black women was in the stands, spectating and cheering. For some informants, attending games constituted the largest proportion of their remembered sport experiences. This aspect expands upon our understanding of the place that sport occupied in these Black women's lives, perhaps more so than their participation.

Informants mostly expressed the difficulties that men in their communities had in succeeding in sport because of race. This could be a reflection of a wider socio-cultural barrier that would have existed for women of colour in sport as well. The predominance of men's sport in Canadian society, especially in the period under study, perhaps contributed to the subsequent predominance of sport spectating memories present within life stories interviews. Ultimately, memories are not made in a vacuum, and people remember differently according to how they interpreted the past.⁸³ In that frame, Black women's memories of their own sport participation may have taken a back seat in response to a cultural norm that elevated Black men's sporting stories. Black men's entry

into mainstream (White) sport has, certainly, been most linked to major shifts in racial history, while Black women's stories linger in the background. And, the preponderance of men's sport in the memories explored in this work strongly suggests that men's sport was given precedence, and that women were predominantly on the sidelines.

5.1 Cheering on the Boys

With brothers, husbands, boyfriends, sons, cousins, and nephews playing baseball, there was plenty of incentive for women to attend sport games. For instance, Blake Harding noted that his mother, who was not athletically inclined herself, "went to a lot of [her husband Wilfred 'Boomer's'] things" and was an enthusiastic cheerleader, although, in the end, he thinks "she just wore out of it all."⁸⁴ Fran Dungey, Wanda Harding-Milburn's daughter, noted that her mother "was a great follower of sports. And, certainly, baseball was one of her things she really enjoyed following even all of her adult life."⁸⁵ Dungey adds that spectating must have taken more importance "in the earlier years when her brothers were in various activities. She was a great fan,"⁸⁶ suggesting that her mother followed sports all her life, but especially when her brothers and husband played.⁸⁷ Harding-Milburn herself described attending baseball matches later in life (outside the period under study), notably to see Fergie Jenkins Jr. play in Toronto.⁸⁸ She was acquainted with his mother, Delores Jenkins, and with Jenkins himself.⁸⁹ Some women's ball teams had enthusiastic supporters, but widespread popularity and acclaim seemed reserved for the boys. In fact, Cuzzens was the one MHSO informant who recalled going to watch women's ball.

The Hardings were an example of a family highly involved with sport as spectators and participants; three of the seven Harding siblings (Len, Wilfred ‘Boomer,’ and Andrew) were a part of the Chatham All-Stars. The brothers’ baseball playing (including Carl, the oldest and last brother, who played in St. Thomas, ON)⁹⁰ meant that the sisters (including Beulah Cuzzens, older sister, and Wanda Harding-Milburn, youngest) were avid sport fans. Support for sport extended beyond their brothers’ games: Cuzzens watched any games as much as she could, and Harding-Milburn was even inspired to play. When describing her experience attending games, Cuzzens noted that,

...I think this is one of the things [that were important] within Chatham when I was young, because every night of the week we were on Sterling Park to see a ball game. Baseball was really our breakfast, dinner, and supper at our house. We ate, drank, slept, played baseball—my brothers [did]. Len was manager of the teams at various times, so these boys would always gather at our house and their sweaty suits and things were always in the corner of our kitchen. My mother finally became a baseball addict and towards the end my dad became one too. And we had many a big battle over there on Sterling Park. I could remember I would just go home and eat my dinner and then go over on to Kelsa Park and watch [others] play softball. [My brother Wilfred] Boomer played softball, but I don’t remember too many of the Stars who did. I think there were others who did, but I remember he played a little and umpired a little baseball.⁹¹

Cuzzens also observed that the family considered her brothers’ involvement in amateur sport to be crucial to the boys’ education:

they belonged to what was called the Ontario Baseball Association [OBA]. I’m not too well-acquainted with it, but I know every year my mother used to have to sign papers and certain rules had to be kept by these boys, and there were certain gentlemen who came up here to take care of this. And we always felt that belonging to the OBA or the OHA [Ontario Hockey Association], whatever the case may be, that this was a very good influence on my brothers because in those days you had to keep a few rules and after all this is what training is.⁹²

However, the informant did not address the place of sport in girls’/women’s lives. Girls’ education was not aligned with organized sport, leaving them mostly on the outside looking in. But, what transpires in her recollection is that sport was embedded within

social life and created connections not just for the family, but also the wider community. Consequently, being able to attend a baseball game at a moment's notice was highly valued. That they could access sport from the area of town where her family lived was especially significant. Cuzzens recalled that, "there was a Mr. Sterling who built a park. I always had a great admiration for this man. Suddenly, I wish I could have told him. He built Sterling Park in the ghetto. They had nice parks in the other part of town, but he put his up there."⁹³ The Harding family lived in one of the poorest areas of town, and as Harding-Milburn qualified it, "Not down by the railroad track, but around three of them."⁹⁴ The implication was that, outside of private provision, her community did not have ready access to such prized recreational/sport spaces. This park and the sport events it hosted there were important for a community with few other spaces in which to gather together.

Interest in baseball was not limited to the local community level but was extended to elite sports. Thus, beyond the All-Stars, there were other teams of interest, such as the Detroit Stars of the Negro Leagues who were known to play at the Buxton Homecoming, according to Vivian Robbins-Chavis.⁹⁵ A most prominent experience of this is Beulah Cuzzens' recollections of watching Jackie Robinson play baseball. Vivian Robbins, who was Beulah Cuzzens interviewer reminded Cuzzens that they once attended a Jackie Robinson baseball game together at the Maple Leaf Stadium.⁹⁶ Robinson, prior to his entry in the Major Leagues with the Brooklyn Dodgers, played on the Dodgers' farm team in the International League, the Montreal Royals. Hence, occasionally, he played against the International League's Toronto Maple Leafs. Robinson's arrival and popularity in Montreal has produced a narrative of racial tolerance in Montreal and

Canada, but some scholars have demonstrated the mythical nature of this narrative.⁹⁷

Cuzzens' reiterates that position in her recollection:

when Jackie Robinson joined the International League, and would come to Toronto, I would always go and see him play. That was an experience because, mostly, I'd go alone, and I would sit and listen to them—I think they called him every name you could think of that any black had been called like 'nigger,' 'black boy,' 'eight ball,' 'coon.' And you would sit there and burn up, and then finally I decided that if I probably went and sat by three big black men, maybe that wouldn't happen. And that's what I'd always do. I'd always, after that, find a place where Black men were sitting and of course then that stopped the name calling. [...] Jackie took a beating. Jackie took a real beating at the beginning.⁹⁸

Cuzzens' words present Robinson's journey from an unusual perspective: from a Black Canadian and female perspective. In fact, there is little exploration of the role of women as sport spectators in a historical context, and the narrative that emerges from Cuzzens' interview is especially illuminating. Of specific interest is her suggestion that people hurled abuse at Robinson more readily in her presence as a woman, and that it ceased when men were present. We should, therefore, consider that Black men experienced Robinson's tenure in Canada much differently than women, and that the latter's voice on this has been silent in the historical record.

5.2 'Fighting' in the Stands

Sport was a notable part of the community and, in many ways, more than simple entertainment. While none of the MHSO informants discussed barriers in their own sporting endeavours, none indicated an ambition to go further than what was made available in their sport (e.g., through elite competitive sport). Instead, they expressed that desire for their male relatives. In discussions of the Chatham Coloured All-Stars, for instance, they noted how colour prevented the men from achieving a higher level of

practice. Informants who recalled going to watch sport were primarily those whose male relatives were active in sport, or who were a part of the Chatham Coloured All-Stars. The team that played an important role in women's sport was also equally significant in the community's history.

The All-Stars formed in 1932 and joined the Ontario Baseball Amateur Association (OBAA) in 1934, only to disband in 1939 when most of their members enlisted in the military. In 1946, some of the members reformed the team under a new name: The Taylor A.C. baseball team. In a local newspaper, in 1946, the team was described as "one of the finest ball teams in the district, and also one of the best drawing cards to ever play in Western Counties or O.B.A.A. ranks."⁹⁹ During its tenure, it built a reputation as one of the best teams in the province, especially after winning the Ontario baseball intermediate "B-1" championship their first year in the OBAA. It was the first all-Black team to do so. Winning the championship enhanced the impact of the team on the Chatham community, particularly on its Black members. Blake Harding, son of Wilfred 'Boomer' Harding, one of the most prominent members of the team, recalls that,

the community [came] together behind [the team], and not just the black community. It was a real turning of time, because before that there was very little acceptance, you know, Blacks at the time. They went to church, or they did menial jobs. Now they were celebrities that had brought respect, through sport, to Chatham. And so, when they played ball on Sundays and Saturdays, the ball park was filled with everybody. And a lot of people were out to cheer the boys on. A lot of them were relatives, but it was something that gave them hope. The White people were out to cheer them on because it brought an OBAA recognition to Chatham that they didn't have.¹⁰⁰

But, baseball fans outside Chatham and the area did not embrace the team as readily; it faced prejudice from some opponents who did not want to play against it

because the players were Black. He recounted an event when the Toledo Mud Hens (a Minor League team affiliated with the Major League's Detroit Tigers) refused to play the All-Stars. This was in following the Major League Baseball's rule not to play teams from the Negro Leagues, and therefore, any Black players.¹⁰¹ Talking about their barnstorming days in the London *Free Press*, Boomer Harding described a game against a White team from Detroit which included some Tigers members, and which refused to face the All-Stars. However, the All-Stars had a Walpole Island First Nations player on the team, Wellington 'Willie' Shaugnosh, and "At that, the Detroit manager said we'd better all be Indians in a hurry or his guys wouldn't take the field. So, for a day we were Indian."¹⁰²

Unlike White women on the sidelines, Black women were not just cheering; they contributed to extending the struggle they shared with the playing men on the field to the stands. Beulah Cuzzens' interview is especially illustrative on that subject:

The Stars were treated just like Jackie Robinson. I went into Bleinheim [Ontario] one day to watch the Stars play ball. I taugth down in Shrewsbury, so I got there a little early and the kids along the road said, 'Well, I see the darkies are arrivin'.' That was me. [Laughing] And a little later, our team came along, and we were called all the names that they called people in those days.¹⁰³

The casual way in which Cuzzens describes the verbal abuse that one could encounter at sporting events also illustrates the ubiquity of such prejudiced treatments. The reality of racism and its ability to prevent men from reaching higher levels on or off the baseball diamond was omnipresent. As noted previously, Cuzzens' observation supports historian Dorothy Williams' thesis that Robinson's successful trial-integration into the Major League via the Montreal Royals did not reflect the end of anti-Black systemic and individual racial intolerance in the region.¹⁰⁴ Certainly, the Robinson myth contributes to the perception that not only was he significantly well treated by the Canadian public

throughout his tenure, but that it also reflected upward mobility for Black people in Montreal, if not Canada. As racism shaped one's working life, its derivatives insidiously seeped into everyday life as well. However, in her interview, Cuzzens laughed about derogatively being called "darkie," and remarked that, "*we* played ball just the same. [Author emphasis]"¹⁰⁵

Abuse was not taken lying down; people fought back against the indignities visited upon them as much as possible. And, racial abuse may have been common, on the field and in the stands, but members of the community did not make light of such occurrences. The following incident described yet again by Cuzzens demonstrates as much:

I can remember being [at] Sterling Park one time when I think Abby Scott was up to bat and some little white boy sitting in the stands calling, 'C'mon black boy!' And I remember Duddy Milburn getting up and walking over—Duddy was lame and he had a certain walk—walked deliberately over to this boy, slapped him in the mouth, walked deliberately back, and sat back down. That was before I'd seen Jackie Robinson play and I'd often wish that Duddy had been up in Toronto to do a few of those things. [Laughs]¹⁰⁶

Cuzzens further underscores how much racial tensions dictated Black people's combative outlook and behaviour. She remembered that, "We had to fight our way through. We went to the integrated schools, but if you could fight, you got along a bit better. Not fighting all the time, but just fighting to make them know that you were a person. I didn't do much fighting. I was a youngin'. My sister was the fighter. [Laughs]"¹⁰⁷ She further connected the "fight" to sport, admitting that she "liked to watch," was "a spectator," but that she also loved to "root and fight. [Laughing]"¹⁰⁸ The recurrence of the word "fight" in relation to sport in Cuzzens' recollections is significant; it suggests that fighting

intolerance could be performed in the stands. In essence, sport was a “fighting” arena. In support of Cuzzens’ statements, Blake Harding (her nephew) indicated that women engaged in actual fights at games, when they were out supporting the Stars:

to hear my mother and them talk, a lot of times the women were in more fights than the men on the field. And, because it was brothers, husbands, boyfriends that were on the fields, and they were sitting there listening to the chirping going on in the stands. And if you said something about one of them, the fight would start and the play on the field would stop. And you’d have to go separate them. At home, totally different. It was like a big love-in and people would be excited about going.¹⁰⁹

Although Harding is not precise about the nature of the “chirping” that triggered altercations, his words suggest that women were just as likely as Duddy Milburn above to ‘slap someone in the mouth’ in defense of the men on the field.

In a community marginalized not by laws but by social norms, socio-cultural institutions were highly meaningful. As described in chapter two, these institutions ensured the survival of their community despite everything. For instance, informants echoed the sentiment that “the BME church was the centre of social life”¹¹⁰ throughout their interviews. Sport was, in fact, one of the few social spaces outside the church in which Black communities could gather and continue this community building and sustenance work. The next generation became aware of this as well. Blake Harding notes that,

at that time, the major gathering halls were the [African Methodist Episcopal] AME Church, the [British Methodist Episcopal] BME Church, and the Baptist Church on King Street, or the Queen St. Baptist out in Dresden, and one in North Buxton. So, the conversation would be: ‘these [All Stars] are local heroes.’ And you know, there was a buzz in the community, there was a buzz in the press, the media...¹¹¹

Sport and, especially, all-Black sport teams like the All-Stars, were an important emblem which translated in deep passion for sport teams in the community. One informant, Vivian Robbins-Chavis, suggested that a big part of the power of the Church was in being an institution controlled by the community. This was a source of pride. Robbins-Chavis affirmed that, “We were very happy. We controlled our churches, we control our institutions. These were a positive environment [which provided] education to be envied even by Whites.”¹¹² As a former teacher, Vivian-Robbins also expressed pride in Buxton’s educational institutions, which “did very well in singing and sports.”¹¹³ Institutions provided more solid ground for the community. Sport was such an institution upon which the community had a measure of control, and it was a source of pride and positivity. In those circumstances, Black success on the diamond had great significance; this explains how communities could adopt sporting spaces as fighting spaces. Members of the community, both women and men, rallied to defend it.

Before the Civil Rights Movement, there was sport, in general, and baseball, in particular. Beulah Cuzzens, her family, and her community, and their sporting practice especially illustrate this. The success of the Chatham team, an all-Black team, was more than casual entertainment and pastime; was certainly not an economic venue. This is not to say that other sports were absent in the community, but that the community did not rally around it in the way they did with baseball. As Cuzzens noted, “I never really been a race person until the ‘60s when everybody became conscious. I always thought we did the things black people did: we had a black baseball team. We [as a community] never played basketball, though.”¹¹⁴ Unlike the church or school, sport allowed people to confront the wider White society from a marginal position. Sustained support for

organized sport was necessary for the space to maintain its status as a social institution, both in the sense of community survival and meeting space, which explains the “active” participation from the stands and the value of attendance.

6. Interpretative Comments

Fran Dungey noted that, later, her mother also encouraged her [Dungey’s] two brothers in their sports. Indeed, Wanda Harding-Milburn described her children’s sporting practice in a discussion about breaking away from traditional women’s roles in the 1940s, working after marriage, grabbing opportunities, and being ambitious to get out of poverty. As she observed, her “kids had a full life as far as recreation was concerned.”¹¹⁵ Going to school, participating in sports on peewee ball teams and hockey teams was a part of this, but she also makes note of the fact that they were also taught to work. Work was work, and sport was only ever sport. For a woman concerned with getting out and staying out of poverty as a mother, sport was dismissed as a venue for economic growth, even for her male children, although she valued sport and included it in their social life. This echoes hers and other women’s experiences of sport in as an important social space for these men and women in Southern Ontario, but one that was not linked to economy.

As in all things, sport was not for everybody. For some of the women, lack of interest, rather than a lack of opportunity or access, explained lack of participation. Thus, for some informants, participation was limited to occasional physical activities: Norma Nicholson only mentioned how ice skating was one social activities, along with dances, in which she participated in in her youth;¹¹⁶ as for Nellie Rosina Wells it was a bowling

league for women connected to the bible study class.¹¹⁷ Bowling, in fact, was an activity that at least two women (Wanda Harding Milburn and her sister-in-law, Joy (Handsor) Harding) are reported to have engaged in recreationally with their husbands.¹¹⁸ Blake Harding, the son of the most athletically involved of the Harding brothers, noted that his mother (Joy Harding) did not take much to sport in her life. Harding notes that she only bowled and participated in and won darts tournaments with her husband.¹¹⁹

Environment and background, as well as interest, also played a part in sport participation. It is suggested, for instance, that Joy Harding's environment did not allow her to develop any interest in sport in the same way her sister-in-law, Wanda Harding-Milburn, did. Of note is the fact that Joy Harding grew up in the country, while Harding-Milburn grew up in town (Chatham). According to her son, growing up in a township, Joy Harding was told what to do with her life, and sport was not it. She was simply meant to:

contribute to the farm. So, she didn't have a lot of athletic drive or passion for it. But she did it, and it was a social thing with the darts, and she bowled. Dad bowled too, when they were younger and first got married and things like that. But the drive to compete wasn't there. She was a scrapper though—she might have been five foot nothing, but she was vicious when she got into it, and so she was a good cheerleader.¹²⁰

Thus, community support and circumstances could be factors for some women, the effect of which should be explored in further examined in the future. This would help understand experiences of sport on the socio-economic spectrum and in different regions.

Furthermore, the path taken by the informants who reached adulthood during the period under study, and specifically the interwar period of the 1920s and 1930s, deviated from the one their mothers may have taken a generation before. Particularly, Wanda

Harding-Milburn was of a generation of women who did not stay at home but who went out to try to get their families out of poverty. She held a job outside the home after marriage unlike her mother before her, who had exclusively been a housewife. In response to whether her mother worked, she responded: “Oh no, it was unheard of for women to work. She—in fact, in the ‘40s, when my sister-in-law and I started to work, that was a no-no. We were supposed to stay home and take care of our families, whether we paid the bills or not. No, she would never think about working. She was a lady all the way.”¹²¹ With these words, Harding-Milburn strongly suggested that working outside the home was unladylike and that her contemporaries and herself went against the grain. As she noted, “I think we were just at the age where we were all ambitious and tired of being poor. And there was money to be made, there were jobs to be had, and there were opportunities at that time so, you tried to grab whichever one you were suited for.”¹²²

This echoes the literature about Black women who had to work outside the home to help support their families traditionally and, more importantly for the period under study, the shift in opportunities during and after WWII. The rise in sport participation among women in the interwar period echoed this shift, and some of the shift’s elements transpire in the life stories curated herein. Indeed, while some informants were homemakers, others had ambitions beyond domestic occupations; some went to Normal School and worked as teachers in predominantly Black schools, and at least one worked in an office. If, as the literature suggests, many black women worked as domestics, some informants included in this study did not represent those norms. It is equally important to note that Harding-Milburn’s mother, Sarah (Holmes) Harding, was a White Irish-Canadian woman who had married a Black man. Socio-cultural norms meant that the

Harding siblings were and perceived themselves as Black. With the caveat that Harding-Milburn's mother was of a different generation and all that this implies, this is relevant to the thesis, because expectations for Black and White women at the time were different.

But, the typical life path (school, work, marriage, and kids, in that order) did not leave much time or space for sporting ambition, even if opportunities were open. One informant remarked that, "Once you were married, you were a Mrs.," and so, there were things that you could and couldn't do as a married woman, and later, due to age.¹²³ The incompatibility of a married status with organized sport reflects expectations of women athletes throughout the period under study. North American gender norms required women athletes to be feminine and, therefore, marriable, even as married athletes were expected to quit competition in anticipation of child bearing and homemaking.¹²⁴ It has been observed that, for Black American athletes, marriage signified a 'positive' change which affirmed their femininity and heterosexuality.¹²⁵ For all women, settling down and building a nuclear family reflected an image of success that reassured the heteronormative society that female athletes were not neglecting their duties as women.¹²⁶ This did not account for the many women who continued to labour outside the home after marriage. Hence, no informant reported participating in organized competitive sport after marriage; all reported working outside the home to support their families. For some, sport after marriage seems to have been limited to coaching/teaching opportunities and for most, any contribution to sport was contained in their capacity as sport fans.

On that account, the narrative that emerges from the oral histories suggests that socio-cultural identity as Black women did shape their sport experiences. In fact, as most

followed the normalized life path prior to 1950s, few in the Black community could reach elite sporting levels, especially being raised in racial minority population in a White settler colonial patriarchy. The focus of chapter four is a case in point: it appears, based on the current data, that only one Black woman from Ontario reached relative national and international recognition as an athlete between the 1920s and the 1950s. But, oral histories indicate that sport was an important part of Black women's lives. Regardless of the level of sporting participation, sport experiences were expanded through the support they showed for their male relatives and community sporting endeavors. It is understood that limiting the conceptualization of Black women's experiences in sport to individual practice and participation presents only a partial narrative.

Nevertheless, little in the informants' recollections frames extended participation in organized sport as unattainable. It simply appears that norms and expectations did not encourage it, which does not permit us to ascertain what opportunities there were for women to pursue sport careers in numbers. Also, the sources are not conclusive as to whether the women's baseball teams allowed their members to generate revenue. Thus, women demonstrated few sport ambitions for themselves, despite a relatively widespread practice of baseball and softball in their communities.¹²⁷ Even the most actively involved in sport seemed to hang up their equipment and take to the stands instead.

To be sure, as the extant women's sport history literature has demonstrated, opportunities were even more limited than for their male counterparts. Amateur sport was especially out of reach for people from the 'wrong side of the tracks,' as some informants were. And, as indicated, one's life path was generally structured by strict socio-cultural

guidelines that did not leave much space for sport for young working women, wives, and then mothers. Violet Bell and Wanda Harding-Milburn's accounts of organized sports lives that dwindled after school, and disappeared after marriage, seemed typical among the informants.

Lack of financial and social capital resources and paucity of accessible sporting infrastructure was also compounded by a lack of opportunity for women of colour in smaller Southern Ontario municipalities. These women may have formed their own teams and barnstormed throughout their region, and some may have been invited to substitute on men's teams, or their brothers' games, gladly. But, when it came to taking the next step, there is no indication that support existed. Long term involvement in sport for these women was limited to roles as administrators, such as coaches, often an extension of teaching duties. In that light, Jean Lowe's track and field career long after high school stands out (see chapter four).

While she did not take to sport, Beulah Cuzzens' recollections indicate that, as early as the 1920s, women were exposed to sporting activities at school. Informants suggest that, for many Black women, school supplied the most exposure to sport. Education was especially valued for families like the Hardings where "the girls were all encouraged for education and to get through at least high school."¹²⁸ This ensured that her siblings, sisters as well as brothers, had access to an education, and by extension, some opportunities for organized sport. Informants in this study were all educated at least until high school; thus, it is less clear how or whether women could access sport outside of the school system. Chapter four elaborates on the case of an individual who remained

involved in organized sport after school, and her case reinforces the idea that school sport was a determinant early in her career.

Considering the traditional construction of sport as a masculine and as a White European dominated arena, Black women's presence and reality within the sporting structure was and remains a complex matter. Their presence as well as their absence can help us understand the various mechanisms that came to bear on Black women's socialization in Southwestern Ontario. Historians have highlighted the value in gathering individual stories to help in the understanding of certain histories and in the acknowledgment of the permutations of experiences due to sociological, economic, and cultural locations. Using oral histories focused on life stories makes it possible to localize sport experiences of women whose lives followed similar patterns during a specific period in a given location. By examining selected Black women's sport experiences, we slowly begin to understand the racial and gender dynamics present in the work history of Black women in Southwestern Ontario outside of the work context. Family, community, and church were three important social spaces, but for the women whose narratives are included herein, sport additionally provided an alternative space for forging distinct social connections. And sport facilitated contact between some Black and White people outside the formal settings of school or work. In a de facto segregated society, positive contact between races had the potential to help improve conditions for Black people.

7. Limitations and Conclusion

The MHSO oral history informants who included sport in their discussion did not explicitly express the difficulty of pursuing sport participation as Black women in the

period under study. A couple of factors may be cited for this: a) the brevity of the discussion on sport in their interview, especially considering that sport was not the focus of the exchange but only one aspect which was casually brought up, and b) the MHSO project's premise made interviewers focus on the effect of race and did not always reflect the intersectional experiences of the informants in depth. The latter is especially key, as the interviewers focused on contrasting the informants' life experiences with mainstream White Canadian society, and less effort was spent contrasting their experience to Black men's experiences in the community. The "construction and the transmission of historical memory" is so interlaced with context, that this allows the historian to better position the informants' act of remembering.¹²⁹ This also impacted the ability of the oral histories to contribute extensively to understanding the gender dynamic within the Black community itself.

Also, interviewers did not always request that informants expand on or provide an exhaustive description of their experiences in sport when it came up. This is especially evidenced in the interviews conducted with some of the women's relatives—notably the Hardings—in the *Breaking the Colour Barrier* project; clearly, there was more to be said. It is difficult to ascertain how much informants omitted. Simply put, sport was minimized in some women's memories and in the interview process, only partially conveying the extent to which women were involved in sport as participants. It reflects the social and political act of remembering, and recalling, and the reshaping and transformation of recollections that occur in oral histories.¹³⁰ Events thus remembered (in the context of life histories) not only convey how they unfolded, but how they "unfold and interrelate" over the course of a life.¹³¹ However, the unstructured nature of interviews meant that sporting

memories were independently raised by informants. This underscores the significance of those events in the context of their lives in a manner that may not have been so apparent in interviews focused only on sport.

The group of women featured also came from or reached a similar socio-economic level. The informants included educated women who came from pro-education families that were able to support them in getting an education.¹³² Class may, indeed, explain the dissonance between the working histories of some informants (e.g., teachers and office workers) and that of the dominant discourse about Black women as labourers in Canada between the 1920s and 1940s. A trend in the scholarship is to portray Black women and their experiences as uniform, and not recognize the presence of various categories, and, indeed, economic class categories, within Black communities, mirroring the stratification in White communities.¹³³ But, while the interwar period brought changes and improvements, it cannot be expected that the shift was widespread as to affect all individuals.

Some of the informants were lucky to have school paid for them. In Beulah Cuzzens' case, for instance, her oldest brother quit school to work and pay Cuzzens' way to Normal School in London.¹³⁴ Others quit school for good to work, as related by Wanda Harding-Milburn;¹³⁵ Cleata Morris, in contrast, was one who went to work after school to gather tuition money for Normal School.¹³⁶ Most of these women played sport in youth and later in their early adulthood, and interest in sport was maintained in adulthood mainly through fanship. Beyond simple interest, we may safely assume that continuous sporting experiences, especially as participants, were correlated with socio-economic

status and educational background. In that vein, it is possible that women with fewer opportunities, i.e. those who quit school too early, who had to work in menial jobs, and whose families were immovably located low on the socio-economic ladder, possibly had fewer opportunities and motivation to participate in sport.

Of note is the prominence of baseball in life history narratives. Baseball was more accessible, owing to a combination of the availability of spaces, minimal and cheaper equipment, and its meaningful role as gathering space for the Black community. Furthermore, Cleata Morris suggested that sports such as hockey were inaccessible because of the lack of equipment, just as Beulah Cuzzens implied that access to proper space in small towns' poor neighborhoods limited the development of sports such as basketball. Some informants' experiences demonstrate that some women, just as well as men, were involved in multiple sports, although women's life paths limited participation soon after school. It is also within baseball that black men and women, as youth and as adults, were mutually engaged in the sporting space. In these instances, some women played an active role as players and administrators much different than the relatively passive, but no less crucial, role they fulfilled as spectators. The integration of women on men's teams especially suggested in the source material is a key indicator of the sporting space's role in the relation between genders, showcasing a certain challenge of hierarchies and wider gender segregation norms through the sporting space.

In summary, these women grew up and lived under the weight of racial prejudice, and it was a part of what shaped their experiences in sport. Gender also shaped their sport experiences, as they seemed to have followed a similar pattern: competitive sport was

primarily present during the teenage years, and it fell by the wayside in adulthood, especially after marriage. As indicated, some did continue to practice physical recreational activities but, in a general sense, participation gave way to being in the stands. Interestingly, the gendered nature of sport did not have as obvious an impact on their sport as did the broader gender norms in society, which were incompatible with sport. In other words, it is not that women could not play, but sport was not a priority because as women, their responsibilities rested elsewhere. Of course, these responsibilities created an environment with fewer opportunities, overall. Most importantly, some Black women did participate in sport and they were enthusiastic sport fans. These experiences present a compelling and unique history of this group of Black women's sport in Southwestern Ontario.

Notes

¹ Most notably, sociologist Patricia Hill Collins stresses that “the overarching theme of finding a voice to express a collective, self-defined Black women’s standpoint remains a core theme in Black feminist thought.” Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2002), 99.

² Sheila Scraton, “Reconceptualizing Race, Gender and Sport,” in *‘Race’, Sport and British Society*, ed. Ben Carrington and Ian McDonald (London, UK: Routledge, 2001), 177.

³ *Ibid.*, 177.

⁴ Notisha Massaquoi, “An Unsettled Feminist Discourse,” in *Theorizing Empowerment: Canadian Perspective on Black Feminist Thought*, eds. Njoki Nathani Wane and Notisha Massaquoi (Toronto, ON: Inanna Publications and Education Inc, 2007), 81.

⁵ Instrumentalization refers to the usage of women’s voices in the form of oral histories for the purpose of studying and constructing women’s sport history. This aligns with a trend which has seen oral histories being employed successfully to explore race in sport (notably, through studies of the Negro Leagues). Susan K. Cahn “Sports Talk: Oral History and Its Uses, Problems, and Possibilities for Sport History,” *The Journal of American History* 81, no. 2 (1994): 598.

⁶ Katrina Srigley, "Stories of Strife? Remembering the Great Depression," *Oral History Forum d'histoire orale* 29 (2009): 5. And, as author James Morrison notes, "Oral history is the personal as well as the political." James H. Morrison, "Oral History as Identity: The African-Canadian Experience," *Oral History Forum d'histoire orale* 21 (2002): 58. See also Michael V. Angrosino, *Exploring Oral History: A Window on The Past* (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 2008); Cahn "Sports Talk;" Brigitte Halbmayr, "The Ethics of Oral History: Expectations, Responsibilities and Disassociations," in *Oral History: The Challenges of Dialogue*, eds. Marta Kurkowska-Budzan and Krzysztof Zamorski (Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins Publications, 2009); Ruth Roach Pierson, "Experience, Difference, Dominance and Voice in the Writing of Canadian Women's History," in *Writing Women's History: International Perspectives*, eds. Karen M. Offen, Ruth Roach Pierson, Jane Rendall, and the International Federation for Research in Women's History (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1991).

⁷ Cahn, "Sports Talk," 597.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 598.

⁹ For example: Dionne Brand, *No Burden to Carry: Narratives of Black Working Women in Ontario, 1920s-1950s* (Toronto, ON: Women's Press, 1991); Peggy Bristow, *We're Rooted Here and They Can't Pull Us Up: Essays in African Canadian women's history* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1994); Karen Carole Flynn, *Moving Beyond Borders: A History of Black Canadian and Caribbean Women in the Diaspora* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2011); Makeda Silvera, *Silenced: Talks with Working Class Caribbean Women About their Lives and Struggles as Domestic Workers in Canada* (Toronto, ON: Sister Vision Press, 1989); Lars-Christer Hydén and Linda Örvulv, "Narrative and Identity in Alzheimer's Disease: A Case Study," *Journal of Aging Studies* 23, no. 4 (2009): 205-214.

¹⁰ Halbmayr, "The Ethics of Oral History," 196.

¹¹ Douglas Booth, *The Field: Truth and Fiction in Sport History* (New York, NY: Taylor & Francis, 2005), 7-13.

¹² According to Booth, the reconstructionist/constructionist explanatory paradigm prioritizes contextualization of sport within the environment in which it is played. This stresses the importance and influence of socio-economic and political contexts and the necessity to incorporate them into the interpretation of activities. Booth, *The Field*, 14, 18.

¹³ See note 10.

¹⁴ Morrison, "Oral History as Identity," 49.

¹⁵ April Gallwey, "The Rewards of Using Archived Oral Histories in Research: The Case of the Millennium Memory Bank," *Oral History* 41, no. 1 (2013): 37.

¹⁶ Harney notes that "The MHSO was inspired by the new social history of the 1960s that demanded a fuller examination of all classes in society through the use of non-traditional sources [...] to conjure up a lived history of all peoples, even those who, because of the work demands of everyday life or lack of language skills, did not leave easily-accessible records." Nicholas DeMaria Harney, "Neoliberal Restructuring and Multicultural Legacies: The Experiences of a Mid-Level Actor in Recognizing Difference," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 34, no. 11 (2011): 1921.

¹⁷ As per author Nicholas Harney, the MHSO, a non-profit organization founded in 1976, received a three-year \$3M grant from the province of Ontario to "collect material relating to Ontario's ethnocultural

diversity and assist the Archives in preserving the material. At the end of the five-year grant, the need to continue this activity became clear and the institution received an annual operational budget from the province.” See “Oral Testimony,” *Multicultural History Society of Ontario*, accessed July 10, 2018, <http://mhso.ca/wp/oral-testimony-collection/>; Harney, “Neoliberal Restructuring and Multicultural Legacies,” 1921.

¹⁸ This is not to say that the informants’ recollections were more “complete” in the 1980s and 1990s. After all, this was still decades after events took place. However, the effect of time on their perspective is estimated to have been reduced in this way than if the interviews took place today.

¹⁹ The instability of memory and the construction of memories according to the current socio-cultural context of an informant have been cited as important oral history drawbacks. Yet, historians acknowledge that all sources, even primary and written sources often relied upon in historiographies all present weaknesses and biases. Simply put, all sources are limited in their representation of the past, and it is up to the historian, using a systemic approach and by using more than one type of source, to analyze and interpret the evidence. See note 7.

²⁰ Carl Auerbach and Louise B. Silverstein, *Qualitative Data: An Introduction to Coding and Analysis* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2003), 20; Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman and Johnny Saldana, *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2013), 74, 204.

²¹ John H. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, 2nd ed. (Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications, 1994), 19, 21; Alan Bryman, Edward A. Bell, and James J. Teevan, *Social Research Methods*. 3rd Canadian ed. (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press Canada, 2012), 268-9, 279.

²² John H. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, 2nd ed. (Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications, 1994), 19, 21; Alan Bryman, Edward A. Bell, and James J. Teevan, *Social Research Methods*. 3rd Canadian ed. (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press Canada, 2012), 268-9, 279.

²³ As outlined by Bryman, Bell, and Teevan, *Social Research Methods*, 167.

²⁴ Hilda Viola Watkins, interview by Donna Bailey (Ontario History Society), October 19, 1980 / January 12, 1981, in Windsor, Ontario, Cassette tape, Multicultural History Society of Ontario, Toronto, ON.

²⁵ Isobel Louise Bailey, interview by Donna Bailey (Ontario History Society), August 6, 1982, in Toronto, Ontario, Cassette tape, Multicultural History Society of Ontario, Toronto, ON.

²⁶ Geraldine Williams, interview by Donna Bailey (Ontario History Society), December 15, 1981, in Toronto, Ontario, Cassette tape, Multicultural History Society of Ontario, Toronto, ON.

²⁷ Violet Eudora Bell, interview by Lorraine D. Hubbard, September 3, 1980, in Toronto, Ontario, Cassette tape, Multicultural History Society of Ontario, Toronto, ON.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid. Encouraged by her daughter (who was present during the interview), she shared a story about how, while eight months pregnant with one of her children, she took part in a running race at a church picnic.

³² Whether it was not important enough to remember or whether she simply did not have much to remember is not clear. Beulah Cuzzens, interview by Vivian Chavis, September 23, 1980, in Windsor, Ontario, Cassette tape, Multicultural History Society of Ontario, Toronto, ON.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Cuzzens taught at School Section (SS) #11 in Colchester South township, in Essex County for more than 20 years. The school was just outside of Harrow. SS #11 was a Black school, but throughout the years, it did could a few White pupils. She retired in 1975, ten years after SS #11 was closed and its students sent to an integrated elementary school. Peggy Brooks-Bertram and Barbara Seals Nevergold, *Uncrowned Queens: African American Women Community Builders of Western New York, Vol. 3* (Buffalo, NY: Petit Printing, 2009), 94; Kevin Philipupillai, "Ontario's Last Segregated School," *Professionally Speaking*, March 2014, 34-37; Sylvia Hamilton, "Stories from *The Little Black School House*," in *Cultivating Canada: Reconciliation through the Lens of Cultural Diversity*, eds. Ashok Mathur, Jonathan Dewar, and Mike DeGagné (Ottawa, ON: Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2011), 107.

³⁵ Cuzzens, interview by Vivian Chavis.

³⁶ Blake Harding and Pat Harding, "Breaking the Colour Barrier: An Oral History of the Chatham Coloured All-Stars," interview by Miriam Wright, May 25, 2016, in Chatham, Ontario, transcript, University of Windsor and the Chatham Sports Hall of Fame, Ontario, available online at <http://cdigs.uwindsor.ca/BreakingColourBarrier/items/show/716>

³⁷ Pauline Williams and Cleata Morris, "Breaking the Colour Barrier: An Oral History of the Chatham Coloured All-Stars," interview by Josh Deehan, July 10, 2016, in Chatham, Ontario, transcript, University of Windsor and the Chatham Sports Hall of Fame, Ontario, available online at <http://cdigs.uwindsor.ca/BreakingColourBarrier/items/show/729>

³⁸ Wanda Milburn, interview by Wilson Brooks, September 28, 1980, in Chatham, Ontario, Cassette tape, Multicultural History Society of Ontario, Toronto, ON.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ She attended Chatham Collegiate. Milburn, interview by Wilson Brooks.

⁴¹ Andrea Levisy, "Breaking the Colour Barrier: An Oral History of the Chatham Coloured All-Stars," interview by Josh Deehan, August 22, 2016, by phone from Windsor, Ontario to Amherst, New York, transcript, University of Windsor and the Chatham Sports Hall of Fame, Ontario, available online at <http://cdigs.uwindsor.ca/BreakingColourBarrier/items/show/718>

⁴² Fran Dungey, "Breaking the Colour Barrier: An Oral History of the Chatham Coloured All-Stars," interview by Genevieve Chevalier, August 27, 2016 by phone from Windsor, Ontario, to Toronto, Ontario, transcript, University of Windsor and the Chatham Sports Hall of Fame, Ontario, available online at <http://cdigs.uwindsor.ca/BreakingColourBarrier/items/show/723>

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Harding and Harding, "Breaking the Colour Barrier."

⁴⁵ Tracey Harding, "Breaking the Colour Barrier: An Oral History of the Chatham Coloured All-Stars," interview by Salma Abumeeiz, August 15, 2016, by phone from Windsor, Ontario, to Toronto, Ontario, transcript, University of Windsor and the Chatham Sports Hall of Fame, Ontario, available online at <http://cdigs.uwindsor.ca/BreakingColourBarrier/items/show/730>

⁴⁶ "Chatham Colored Stars Return Under New Name," *Daily News* (Chatham, ON), June 12, 1946. Retrieved from <http://cdigs.uwindsor.ca/BreakingColourBarrier/exhibits/show/1935-46/item/947>

⁴⁷ Colin D. Howell, *Northern Sandlots: A Social History of Maritime Baseball* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 28.

⁴⁸ Dungey, "Breaking the Colour Barrier."

⁴⁹ Milburn, interview by Wilson Brooks.

⁵⁰ Flynn, *Moving Beyond Borders*, 53.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Neil Bissoondath, *Selling Illusions: The Cult of Multiculturalism in Canada* (Toronto, ON: Penguin Books, 1994), 212.

⁵³ Milburn, interview by Wilson Brooks.

⁵⁴ Ibid. Her daughter also suggested that Harding-Milburn enjoyed the camaraderie of playing sport. See Dungey, "Breaking the Colour Barrier."

⁵⁵ Williams and Morris, "Breaking the Colour Barrier."

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Laughing, Williams added that "well, [bloomers were] what they had on. They looked like bloomers." Williams and Morris, "Breaking the Colour Barrier."

⁶⁰ In the front row, left to right, were Freda Toyer, Alma Robbins, Marie Harding, Bertha Rhue, Muriel Newby, and unknown men. In the front row were, Hazel Shadd, Winnie Moore, and Vera and Lola Robbins. Other members of the team as recounted by Robbins were Irene and Florine Harding, Erma Prince, Grace Travis, Alice Rhue, Inez Robbins, Marion Moore, and Ad Shreve. Beulah Cuzzens also suggests that an Evelyn Williams Wright also played on the team. Cuzzens herself does not remember playing on it, although her interview recalled that Cuzzens had told her so before. Cuzzens, interview by Vivian Chavis; Arlie C. Robbins, *Legacy to Buxton* (Chatham, ON: Ideal Printing, 1983), 271.

⁶¹ Robbins, *Legacy to Buxton*, 138.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ The biggest occasion presented itself for a competition in St. Thomas (Ontario) and it marked the players' memories. Robbins, *Legacy to Buxton*, 139.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ "End of Segregation in Canada," *Historica Canada*, accessed January 9, 2018. <http://www.blackhistorycanada.ca/events.php?themeid=7&id=9>

⁶⁷ Williams and Morris, "Breaking the Colour Barrier."

⁶⁸ Indeed, a team by the name "Buxton Nationals" remains a community baseball team in Buxton as of the writing of this dissertation. They are a co-ed and mixed-race team that occasionally plays exhibition games at community events, the latest having been the 2016 Buxton Homecoming. Trevor Terfloth, "Buxton Homecoming marks 93rd year," *Daily News*, September 5th 2016; Williams and Morris, "Breaking the Colour Barrier."

⁶⁹ Arlie C. Robbins. *Legacy to Buxton* (Chatham, ON: Ideal Printing, 1983), 155A, 138.

⁷⁰ Further information is needed on the team's management and organization structure, and on whether these women's possibly all-Black teams reflected the entrepreneurship in all-Black men's teams. Richard Bak, *Turkey Stearnes and the Detroit Stars: The Negro Leagues in Detroit, 1919-1933* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1994), 17.

⁷¹ The *Our Stories* project is an exhibit in the Canadian Virtual Museum and features a collection of memories from long-time residents of Southern Ontario. Norval Johnson Heritage Centre, "Our Stories - Remembering Niagara's Proud Black History," *Community Memories*, accessed January 9, 2018, http://www.virtualmuseum.ca/sgc-cms/histoires_de_chez_nous-community_memories/pm_v2.php?id=exhibit_home&fl=0&lg=English&ex=00000659&pg=1

⁷² Harry Harper, "Our Stories - Remembering Niagara's Proud Black History," interview by Lyn Royce and Natalie Przybyl, August 22, 2008, in St. Catharines, Ontario, MP3 recording, Norval Johnson Heritage Centre, Niagara Falls, Ontario, available online at http://www.virtualmuseum.ca/sgc-cms/histoires_de_chez_nous-community_memories/pm_v2.php?id=story_line&lg=English&fl=0&ex=00000659&sl=6582&pos=1

⁷³ Watkins, interview by Donna Bailey.

⁷⁴ Shadd's maiden name was Hurst. She grew up in Detroit with parents from in Dresden and Harrow (both small farming communities in Southern Ontario). Dolores Shadd, "Interview with Dolores Shadd, National Farmers Union," *In Union is Strength: Voices of the National Farmers Union of Canada*, produced by Kossick, Don, Steve Wolfson, and Penny Ward (Regina, SK: Wolf Sun Productions, 2011), accessed online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wd0CQn0rg7s>

⁷⁵ Dolores Shadd, interview by Scott McGuigan, June 19, 2007, in Merlin, Ontario, video, Buxton National Historical Site and Museum, North Buxton, Ontario.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ *Older, Stronger, Wiser*, directed by Claire Prieto (1989; Montreal, QC: Studio D; National Film Board of Canada), Online; Sook Wilkinson and Victor Jew, eds., *Asian Americans in Michigan: Voices from the Midwest* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2015), 56.

⁷⁸ *Older, Stronger, Wiser*, directed by Claire Prieto (1989; Montreal, QC: Studio D; National Film Board of Canada), Online.

⁷⁹ "Detroit's Lost Chinatown," *News and Free Press* (Detroit, MI), November 2, 1997, 60.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ *Older, Stronger, Wiser*, directed by Claire Prieto (1989; Montreal, QC: Studio D; National Film Board of Canada), Online.

⁸² Shadd, interview by Scott McGuigan.

⁸³ Furthermore, contemporary statements are subject to bias informants' recollections. See note 7.

⁸⁴ Blake Harding and Pat Harding, "Breaking the Colour Barrier."

⁸⁵ Dungey, "Breaking the Colour Barrier."

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Dungey further notes that, "I would say that [sport] was almost like a focal point for conversation and entertainment, and, you know, going to the baseball games in the summertime when my dad played. That was part of the activity for the summer. It was an important part of being active." Dungey, "Breaking the Colour Barrier."

⁸⁸ Jenkins is a Chatham native who played in the Major League Baseball from 1965 to 1983. He was also the first Canadian inducted in the baseball Hall of Fame in 1991.

⁸⁹ Milburn, interview by Wilson Brooks.

⁹⁰ Jennifer Miss, "Breaking the Colour Barrier: An Oral History of the Chatham Coloured All-Stars," interview by Alastair Staffen, October 5, 2016, by phone, from Windsor, Ontario, to Paris, Ontario, transcript, University of Windsor and the Chatham Sports Hall of Fame, Ontario, available online at <http://cdigs.uwindsor.ca/BreakingColourBarrier/items/show/731>

⁹¹ Cuzzens, interview by Vivian Chavis.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Milburn, interview by Wilson Brooks.

⁹⁵ Vivian Robbins-Chavis, interview by Wilson Brooks, August 30, 1980, in North Buxton, Ontario, Cassette tape, Multicultural History Society of Ontario, Toronto, ON.

⁹⁶ Cuzzens, interview by Vivian Chavis.

⁹⁷ See, among others, Dorothy Williams, "The Jackie Robinson Myth: Social Mobility and Race in Montreal, 1920-1960" (Doctoral dissertation, Concordia University), 11.

⁹⁸ Cuzzens, interview by Vivian Chavis.

⁹⁹ *Daily News*, June 12, 1946.

¹⁰⁰ Harding and Harding, "Breaking the Colour Barrier."

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ernie Miller, "Boomer Harding: One Great Guy," *Free Press* (London, ON), September 7, 1978, B18.

¹⁰³ Cuzzens, interview by Vivian Chavis.

¹⁰⁴ Williams, "The Jackie Robinson Myth," 11.

¹⁰⁵ Cuzzens, interview by Vivian Chavis.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Harding and Harding, "Breaking the Colour Barrier."

¹¹⁰ Mary (Bee) Allen, interview by Ray Thompson, July 23 and 30, 1982, in Toronto, Ontario, Cassette tape, Multicultural History Society of Ontario, Toronto, ON.

¹¹¹ Harding and Harding, "Breaking the Colour Barrier."

¹¹² Robbins-Chavis, interview by Wilson Brooks.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Cuzzens, interview by Vivian Chavis.

¹¹⁵ Milburn, interview by Wilson Brooks.

¹¹⁶ Norma Nicholson, interview by Ray Thompson, January 29, 1983, in St. Catharines, Ontario, Cassette tape, Multicultural History Society of Ontario, Toronto, ON.

¹¹⁷ Nellie Rosina Wells, interview by Lorraine D. Hubbard, September 10 and October 28, 1980, in Toronto, Ontario, Cassette tape, Multicultural History Society of Ontario, Toronto, ON.

¹¹⁸ Dungey, “Breaking the Colour Barrier;” Harding and Harding, “Breaking the Colour Barrier.”

¹¹⁹ Harding and Harding, “Breaking the Colour Barrier.”

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Milburn, interview by Wilson Brooks.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Allen, interview by Ray Thompson.

¹²⁴ Susan K. Cahn, *Coming on Strong: Gender and Sexuality in Women’s Sport*, 2nd ed. (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2015), 110, 181, 232, 370; Ann M. Hall, *The Girl and the Game: A History of Women’s Sport in Canada*, 2nd ed. (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2016), 138.

¹²⁵ Note that, although, men rarely earned a full living exclusively through sport either, unlike women, they were not normally sidelined by marriage and family. It required giving up sport, lest they be seen as improper, especially after child bearing. Cindy Himes Gissendanner, “African American Women Olympians: The Impact of Race, Gender, and Class Ideologies, 1932-1968,” *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport* 67, no. 2 (1996): 176; Jennifer H. Lansbury, “‘The Tuskegee Flash’ and ‘the Slender Harlem Stroker’: Black Women Athletes on the Margin,” *Journal of Sport History* 28, no. 2 (2001): 240.

¹²⁶ Hall, *The Girl and the Game*, 140-141.

¹²⁷ Future studies should investigate whether there were any Black women on Ontario industrial teams and leagues.

¹²⁸ Harding and Harding, “Breaking the Colour Barrier.”

¹²⁹ Cahn, “Sports Talk,” 603.

¹³⁰ Bryman, Bell, and Teevan, *Social Research Methods*, 167.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Only some of the women’s working information was identified: Cuzzens went to normal school and taught in schools for decades. Robbins-Chavis also worked as a teacher. Norma Nicholson worked in a cleaning and pressing plant (dry cleaning) and also in a furniture store. Harding-Milburn worked in an Eaton Department store’s stocking room, as a receptionist for a doctor, for the Victorian Order of Nurses, and as a ward secretary at a hospital. Cuzzens, interview by Vivian Chavis; Dungey, “Breaking the Colour Barrier;” Nicholson, interview by Ray Thompson; Robbins-Chavis, interview by Wilson Brooks.

¹³³ Historian Afua Cooper has notably, called for a diversification of understandings of Black femininities based on factors such as religion, culture, language, class, and sexuality. Additionally, as expressed by Jessica Edwards, the accounts of Black women in sport, often obscured in sport grand narratives, remind us that we must not assume gender universalism (i.e. the perception of an equivalency between all women’s experiences). Afua Cooper, “Constructing Black Women’s Historical Knowledge,” *Atlantis: Critical*

Studies in Gender, Culture & Social Justice 25, no. 1 (2000): 40; Jessica Edwards, "The Black Female Athlete and the Politics of (In)Visibility," *New Political Economy* 4, no. 2 (1999): 279.

¹³⁴ Milburn, interview by Wilson Brooks.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Williams and Morris, "Breaking the Colour Barrier."

CHAPTER IV

TRACKING JEAN LOWE, FROM TORONTO TO TUSKEGEE: BEING A BLACK CANADIAN WOMAN IN ELITE SPORT (1930s TO 1940s)

1. Introduction

Born in Toronto, in 1922, Alice Maud Eugenia ‘Jean’ Lowe¹ was a stand-out athlete by the time she graduated from high school in the late 1930s.² At school, she had participated in many of the sports available in the girls’ program, was a student-administrator for many of them, and achieved top athletic honours.³ From what the evidence suggests, Lowe became one of Canada’s best track and field athletes of the mid-twentieth century, and according to performance records, the most successful black female athlete in Ontario at the time.⁴ In 1985, she was inducted in the Tuskegee University Athletic Hall of Fame (Alabama), where she obtained a Physical Education degree in 1950 while a member of Tuskegee’s famous track and field team.⁵ Nevertheless, her path in Toronto, as revealed through the two most prominent Toronto newspapers, confirms that the athleticism for which she was so well regarded was not enough to efface the truth of her racial identity in a racially-conscious society.

Since adolescence, Lowe was a member of several sport clubs, notably as a track athlete; between job shifts and track meets, she also made appearances on the softball diamond and in the basketball “cage.”⁶ One could not fail to notice the versatile and talented young athlete in the local press, as she broke records and led her teams to victories. In doing so, she drew the keen eye of key women’s sport commentators in the *Toronto Globe and Mail* and *Toronto Daily Star*: Fanny “Bobbie” Rosenfeld and Alexandrine Gibb, respectively. Rosenfeld, an ex-Olympic medallist turned sport

journalist, was Jean Lowe's champion early on in the "Sports Reel," her long running *Globe* column. In 1946, after Lowe left to pursue an education in the United States, Rosenfeld wrote that, "Jean was a valued member of our athletic colony...an all-rounder of sorts, she specialized in track and field..."⁷

As a rising athlete at the onset of, and during, the Second World War (WWII), there were three factors, which, in part, inhibited Lowe's rise to prominence. First, as a champion track and field athlete, Lowe had no national stage upon which to grow and develop during most of her time in Toronto (between 1940 and 1947, the Canadian athletics championships were held once, in 1941).⁸ Instead, throughout the early 1940s, she relied on annual American Amateur Union (AAU) meets, which, fortunately, took place in the American Northeast during the period. Second, because of WWII, Lowe had no major international competition opportunities, as the Olympic and Empire Games were canceled. The 1938 Empire Games were the last major competition to take place before the War, when Lowe was still a junior athlete and her attempt to qualify for the 1948 Olympics was unsuccessful. Third, she peaked alongside American sprinters Alice Coachman and Stella Walsh, arguably two of the best in the world in her specialities (the 100m and the 200m sprints) at the time.⁹ The latter two champions and the former circumstances ostensibly overshadowed Lowe at nearly every turn. It can, nonetheless, be argued that those circumstances are what make Lowe's narrative compelling, as they serve to construct a novel and unique history of a Black Canadian woman.

Ultimately, there were opportunities through sport, which Lowe used to forge a place for herself in the world and build a career. Lowe was often third behind future Olympian Walsh and future Olympic medallist Coachman; however, during the AAU

meets at which the trio faced each other, Lowe left her own mark as the captain and anchor of a multi-champion 4×100 m relay team. Additionally, while Walsh and Coachman left Lowe in the behind on their way to Olympic glory, during one of those meets, Lowe made the connection that would lead her to the Tuskegee Institute and a career in teaching.¹⁰ It must also not be forgotten that, in the 1930s and 1940s, journalists and administrators like Bobbie Rosenfeld, Myrtle Cook (Montreal *Daily Star*), and Alexandrine Gibb ushered in an era of mainstream support for and promotion of women's sport.¹¹ Of this, Lowe was a principal beneficiary. Hence, primarily through the lens of the press, her journey as presented in this chapter, positions sport as a medium for professional achievement for a young black woman in the inter-War, War, and post-War periods.

As previously established in this previous chapters, the Canada of the 1930s and 1940s was far from a raceless utopia. However, in the British colonial context, the young nation was left with a sense that it had transcended such distractions and, as such, overt manifestations of Black-White racial tensions were subdued and difficult to extricate.¹² Indeed, little in the media overtly suggested that race created obstacles for the talented sprinter. There is no ignoring the influence of the socio-historical context in which she lived, where a racialized individual was Other. As a case in point, the press reports often used the qualifier “dusky” for Lowe. Thus, as documented through the *Globe* and the *Star* (two of Toronto's widest circulation newspapers),¹³ Jean Lowe's sport career in Canada is a compelling historical narrative that helps locate at least one Black woman's racialized and gendered identities in Canadian elite sport.

2. Historiography

Jean Lowe's career, as seen through the lens of the Toronto (White) press media, provides an answer to the question of the experience black Canadian women in Southern Ontario elite sport between the 1920s and 1940s. What emerges from the ensuing narrative is that, in contrast to the dominant narrative in the literature, Lowe's public identity primarily rested upon her femininity, as was the case for white athletes in that era. While designated as a "dusky," "coloured," or "negro" athlete in the press (both common descriptors of Blacks at the time), there also was no explicit indication that racial discrimination shaped Lowe's social interactions, making race secondary. In the press, the emphasis on femininity upstaged race in the construction of the athlete's public persona, as it were. Only through a contextual analysis does one begin to locate race in that setting.

The current assessment is even more significant since historian Jennifer H. Lansbury, in her comprehensive historical study on Black women athletes in American society, finds that Black women athletes were women and Black first, and athletes second, both in the Black and White presses.¹⁴ This was a way to diminish their athletic accomplishments and endeavours. It underscored the normalization of sport as masculine and White domain within which people of colour were Othered. Lansbury's assessment demonstrates that athletes' experiences were rooted in their Black feminine identity, not their femininity or their blackness alone. Lansbury also notes that sport played a crucial role in the lives of Black women, by allowing them to transcend their socio-economic background through travel and education, opportunities otherwise unattainable by those individuals.¹⁵ On the surface, Lowe's narrative was structured more by gender and less

by race. Nevertheless, race was a significant factor for her too; a Black woman could not escape her Blackness. Therefore, in the Canadian feminine and Black sport historical context, the present analysis teases out unique and subtle racial undertones in reports about the Ontario track champion.

It should be noted that Lansbury examined the reports of Black, male American sportswriters. In contrast, this part of the dissertation investigates White Canadian press reports and, within them, women's sport columns. Two factors made it a challenging task to examine the Black press and to establish a true parallel with Lansbury's work: i) The Canadian Black press was largely not as developed as it was in the US. Between the 1920s and the 1940s, it consisted of one publication—London (Ontario) based *Dawn of Tomorrow*—which did not discuss sport at length, or Lowe at all.¹⁶ ii) The Black American newspaper sources¹⁷ to which I had access did not discuss Jean Lowe enough to provide an avenue for analysis.

3. Method

A search was conducted through digital newspaper archives databases to which I had access. This included the following four: Globe and Mail: Canada's Heritage from 1844, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, African American Newspapers, 1827-1998, and Toronto Star Archives-ProQuest Archiver. The following terms and their variations were used: Jean Lowe; colored/dusky/negro(ess) athlete; dusky AND sport AND girl; colored/dusky/negro(ess) AND softball; colored/dusky/negro(ess) AND basketball; colored/dusky/negro(ess) AND track. These terms were aimed at finding not only information about Jean Lowe, but also any reports of other Black female athletes. A preliminary study informed the integration of the now antiquated "dusky" in the search

(contemporary press reports was found using it in reference to Black athletes), as well the use of American, rather than Canadian-English, spelling of “coloured.”

Of the various publications held within those databases, the *Globe* and the *Star* were the most helpful (between 1938 and 1950, there were 86 articles in the *Globe* and 28 in the *Star*). The coverage was comprised of either brief reports about competition results, or detailed discussions about athletes. Some entries had no indicated authors, while most of the reports on the athlete were printed in sport columns. There were also a few results about Lowe in American newspapers databases: the Indianapolis *Recorder* and the Kansas *Plain Dealer* had one entry each, and the Chicago *Defender* yielded the most, with 13 entries about Lowe’s competition results and prospects.

After reducing the content of the search results by removing redundant articles (those that only briefly reported dry and brief competition results), the articles were printed and organized chronologically and by newspaper in a folder. Next was a re-analysis intended to sort, process, and topically organize the content. Each article was colour coded according to the following subjects in its content: performance (i.e., results, awards, and accolades), athletes’ femininity, Blackness (i.e., a discussion about black athletes), responsibility and authority figures (e.g., Lowe’s promotion to administrative duties and discussion about administrative staff around her), injustice within women’s sport, and information about Lowe’s education and work. This was an inductive process based on the content of the articles themselves. Some articles were assigned more than one colour code. The colour coding was used to sort the findings and, adopting the intersectional perspective, to nuance and organize findings to make visible the combined impact of race and gender on Lowe’s experience.

Hence, the narrative of the athlete's career to be divided in two parts: i) the Toronto years, from high school sport and club sport, including the account of Lowe's crowning as Ontario's best female athlete in 1942 (section 4), and ii) the Tuskegee years, which detail her tenure at the Tuskegee Institute (now University) from 1947 to 1950 (section 5). Two themes emerged—'duskiness' and pulchritude—from the reports about racialization and femininity made in relation to Lowe. The two terms were used thus specifically in the yielded data. As they are intertwined, the themes are discussed in conjunction with each other in section 6.

Through this systematic account of Lowe's experience, this chapter aims to present a historical perspective on a Black elite athlete's sport narrative in Canada, from the 1930s to the 1940s. While the previous chapter expanded upon chapter two by attempting to make visible the place of sport within Black women's lives in Southern Ontario, the present chapter expands upon this by presenting an account of a Southern Ontario Black female athlete's experiences through the lens of the media. In the previous chapter, sport emerged as an instrument in the socio-cultural resistance and survival for Black women in Ontario; this chapter explores the idea of sport as a socio-economic instrument, through the lens of an elite athlete's career journey in and outside of sport. I trace Jean Lowe's story between the 1930s and 1940s using newspaper reports (primarily the *Globe* and *Star*) and supported by various sources, including yearbooks, vital records, census information, immigration documents, and various secondary sources.

4. Toronto Years

4.1 High School, Track Star

According to her 1985 Tuskegee Athletic Hall of Fame profile, Lowe began running for a Toronto sport club at age 13, in 1934.¹⁸ It is also around that time that she entered Toronto's Eastern High School of Commerce, a well attended school open since 1925 which offered a long list of sporting activities, including basketball, volleyball, tennis, badminton, track and field, swimming, life-saving, baseball, and dance.¹⁹ Throughout her school years, Lowe was a track and field champion, and played on the volleyball, basketball, softball, badminton, tennis, as well as being on the dance team.²⁰ Eastern Commerce took its sport seriously, although girls' sport was mostly interform (intramural) in the 1930s.²¹

The introduction to the girls' sport section in the Eastern Commerce 1933-34 Yearbook hinted at the school's growing athletic reputation:

[The past year] has been, beyond all dispute, the most outstanding year in girls' sports at Eastern Commerce. As each term passes, it leaves a history, a history that is of remarkable importance in athletic activities, but we, in spite of our youth, have already acquired a reputation, and Commerce is only starting on the road to athletic fame. Such progress has only been made possible by the excellence shown by our girls. They take it as a personal duty and great are the results.²²

By 1937, sport was considered a must for girls at Eastern Commerce, and the wide variety of sports available was aimed at ensuring that each girl could find at least one sport to enjoy in every season.²³ The link drawn between sport and character in the school's Girls' Athletic Society's statements was in step with women's sport advocates' discourse earlier in the decade, and its defense for girls' sport mirrored the arguments espoused by women sport columnists in defense of school competition.²⁴ Indeed, in a

Toronto *Daily Star* entry in 1931, Bobbie Rosenfeld argued that “Athletic competition teaches you the true meaning of the word ‘sportsmanship’ and is a prime factor in giving healthy bodies and clean minds. It makes you feel that you are a strong and living creature.”²⁵ The Athletic Society further argued that “A girl’s character is plainly shown by the way she ‘plays the game.’ Qualities such as co-operation, sportsmanship, honesty, and ability to assume responsibility, are all developed and obtained through athletics.”²⁶ Character development was emphasized in these statements and it was clear what sportsmanship was understood to be by sport administrators (see section 7 for a discussion on the implication of this connection between character and sport). The physical component was also a part of the Athletic Society’s rationale for girls’ sport. As explained, “participation in some athletic activity is good for every girl who is physically fit.”²⁷

The Society’s executive was “responsible for the well-organized programme of after school activities.”²⁸ In addition to a student-athlete, Lowe was also one of the Society’s executive members, working for the track, basketball, volleyball, softball, and tennis teams throughout her years at Eastern Commerce. In her later years at the school, she also served as the president of the Girl’s Athletic Society.²⁹ The young athlete’s deep involvement in her school’s administration is especially notable, as evident in its school yearbooks, Eastern Commerce had an overwhelmingly White population—from the faculty to the student body—during Lowe’s tenure. Certainly, Lowe stood out among her peers, as no other student of colour was identifiable in the many school forms, societies, and sport teams recorded within five yearbooks from 1933 to 1937.³⁰ See, for instance, Figure 4.1 where she was photographed (fifth from left in the third row) with other

members of the 1936-37 Girl's Athletic Society's executive members.³¹ As can be observed in the photograph, Lowe's dark skin complexion dismisses the idea that she was able 'pass' as anything other than Black.



Fig. 4.1. Girls Athletic Executive. Source: Eastern High School of Commerce, *Eastern Echo* 1936-37, Volume IX (Toronto: Eastern High School of Commerce, ND), 79.

If Lowe was the only or one of very few Black students, it raises the question of whether Eastern Commerce's athletic reputation explains how a talented Black athlete like her came to attend the school. It was not uncommon, however, to have high schools with few to no Black students. During this time, segregation was not law in Ontario but, as historian James W. St. G. Walker writes, Canadian racial discrimination was not governed by law, but by a traditional understanding of the racial order.³² Racial lines were divided along socio-economic lines and, naturally, led to geographic segregation,

which in turn led to segregated elementary schools. By default, where the size of the population could sustain it, Blacks and Whites attended separate schools.³³ Because not everyone could afford to attend high schools, and because Black families were disproportionately located at the lowest rung of the socio-economic ladder, segregated high schools were less common. They could not make up a large enough student body and Black students who could attend majority White high schools.

In a context of de facto segregation in schools and in an overwhelmingly White school, the choice of words by Eastern Commerce's principal in his 1937 yearbook statement—when Lowe was a sophomore—are worthy of attention. Addressing his students, the principal encouraged students to “go forward with confidence that the men and women of your generation will maintain the traditions of the race to which you belong, and will make Canada a good country in which to live.”³⁴ Admittedly, it may be argued that the ‘race to which you belong’ was not a euphemism for the “White race” *per se* but, rather, a reference to a Canadian or wider British race. This inclusive interpretation is a possibility if one considers the idea that Black Canadians had equal access to the full privileges of citizenship to be true. It is more probable that, in the socio-cultural conditions of the time where the ideal of a “White Canada” shaped important policy (e.g., through an anti-Black/Asian Immigration Act), ‘Canadians’ were synonymous with Whiteness and were distinguished by colour.³⁵ Ultimately, the principal addressed a majority White student body in a remark that addressed racial consciousness in their society, and stressed that it was incumbent upon them to maintain their race’s ‘traditions,’ of which the racial order was one.

This notwithstanding, Lowe's involvement in her school's sport administration was matched by her athletic achievements. During her tenure, high school track and field athletes took part in an annual track and field competition (known as Field Day) held in the spring. At this occasion, individual champions in the Junior, Intermediate, and Senior categories were crowned. (This appears to have been an interform event, although it was competitive enough to be featured in the sport pages of the Toronto press.) Lowe was the 1936 junior track and field champion and Figure 4.2 shows her alongside that year's Senior and Intermediate champions.³⁶ According to the *Star*, she later became the school's senior track and field champion in 1938, when she also earned the Senior Honour Letter.³⁷ The next year, at the close of her high school career, the *Globe* reported that Lowe "was returned as senior champion" at the Eastern Commerce championships and had "shattered" school records in the senior girls' category, in both the hop, step, and jump event and the 75 yard dash.³⁸

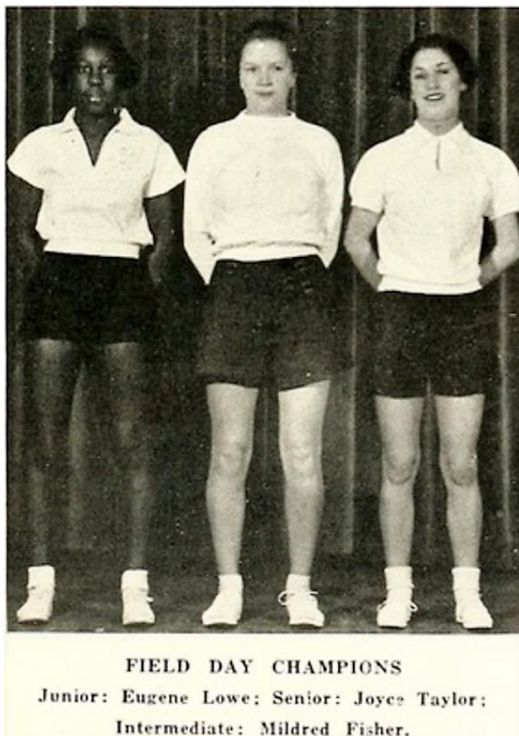


Fig. 4.2. Field Day Champions. *Source:* Eastern High School of Commerce, *Eastern Echo 1936-37, Volume IX* (Toronto: Eastern High School of Commerce, ND), 83.

Thus, before she had even graduated from high school, Lowe was a rising junior athlete as she entered Toronto's track and field scene. With clear and recognisable talent, it is no surprise that she became a member of one of the city's sport clubs as a young teenager.³⁹ Two years later, in 1937, she was a field athlete for the Leslie Grove club at the annual indoor athletic meet in Toronto; she came in first in the running high jump and third in the standing broad jump, and the meet in question counted a record of 700 participants, according to the *Globe*.⁴⁰ The following year, at the Ontario Women's track and field Championships, Lowe was a junior with the Toronto Ladies' Athletic Club when she once again won the running high jump event.⁴¹ Although she competed with the Toronto Hexathlon Ladies' Club in April 1939,⁴² she also travelled as part of the Toronto Ladies' track team that same year—with seven other girls—to Cleveland (Ohio) for a competition against Cleveland and Philadelphia (Pennsylvania) teams.⁴³ The *Star* reported that Lowe was a shining “track star” at the onset of the 1940s.⁴⁴ Indeed, the above examples were only the first of the more than a hundred times that Lowe appeared in the Toronto press between 1937 and 1950. As outlined below, during those years, she was one of the most successful and recognizable athletes in the city, stepping on several podia and as a member of some of competitive Toronto clubs.

4.2 Club Sports (1938-1946)

4.2.1 Basketball and Softball

Lowe did not just confine oneself to a single sport. While her focus seemed to remain on track and field, Lowe dabbled in softball and basketball throughout the 1930s and 1940s. Early on, she played for the Toronto Ladies' Club “B” Basketball team in the Queen City Women's Basketball association. Thus, in 1940, Lowe participated in

competition under a “new ‘pay-to-play’ plan, whereby players as well as spectators [were] charged 10 cents admission.”⁴⁵ This is the only time Lowe was reported to have participated either in the Queen City League, in the “pay-to-play” structure, or with the Toronto Ladies’ basketball teams. However, once again, Lowe’s athletic journey may be linked to prominent advocates of women’s sport in the city, this time through Alexandrine Gibb and the Toronto Ladies Club.

In her work, historian Ann M. Hall documents Gibb’s co-founding of the Toronto Ladies Club in the early 1920s. The Club was based upon the philosophy that women should run girls’ and women’s sport. By the time Lowe joined, the Toronto Ladies Club was a long way from 1929 when the Toronto Ladies were the envy of other sport clubs and financed non-paying activities such as basketball, track and field, and hockey, with their softball gate receipts.⁴⁶ The Club was not commercially sponsored, which helps to explain its members’ participation in a pay-to-play tournament.⁴⁷ This made the Toronto Ladies’ promotion especially important. As a columnist, Gibb reported about the activities of girls in the city including her own Toronto Ladies, but also about various sporting events, league openings, and public service announcements, and she reported on former athletes. Yet, Lowe appears in the *Star* much less often than she did the *Globe* and in Bobbie Rosenfeld’s column.⁴⁸ This may be in part because Lowe eventually left the Toronto Ladies for other clubs.

Lowe also played more extensively for the Hope United team (associated with Hope United Church), registered in the Toronto Women’s Basketball League.⁴⁹ She was a common sight at the top of Hope’s scoring, including in February 1944, when Hope won the senior title.⁵⁰ Gibb’s description of Jean Lowe as “Jean Lowe of track fame”⁵¹

and “the girl runner of Toronto [Ladies] B”⁵² suggests that basketball was secondary for Lowe. Basketball was a handy winter sport for softball players,⁵³ and this likely applied to ‘girl runners’ too.

Additionally, she was also a remarkable softball player. That is, in softball games reports, players were only mentioned when their performance truly warranted a remark. Yet, win or lose, Lowe’s homers and singles often helped place her name in the sport pages. She played for the Malvern Sportswear team in the Beaches Ladies’ Softball League in 1940 and, although she still played for them in 1943,⁵⁴ she also joined the Sleepmasters in 1941 as a “valuable new addition.”⁵⁵ By then, Gibb introduced her as the “noted speedster.”⁵⁶ These specific references made her not only easy to track through the media archives, but more significantly, they highlighted her notoriety in the Toronto athletic arena.

4.2.2 Laurel Ladies’ Athletic Club

Before settling down with the Laurel Ladies’ Athletic Club, Lowe was a member of a few running clubs: She ran for the Hexathlon and the Toronto Ladies in the late 1930s, and for the Toronto Lakesides in 1940. As Hall notes, clubs such as the Lakesides, like the Ladies, were reliant on high school graduates,⁵⁷ and it appears that Lowe ‘test drove’ a number of them before finally settling for the Toronto Laurel Ladies’ Athletic Club by 1941. With the Laurels, she broke record after record, starting with 220 yards record at the 1941 Ontario indoor championship.⁵⁸ ‘Dusky Jean Lowe,’ as was common for Rosenfeld, Gibb, and other *Globe* and *Star* sports writers to refer to her,⁵⁹ was an entertaining runner to follow, according to and thanks to Rosenfeld’s enthusiastic writing

about her exploits. Examples include an upset win in which Lowe “came fast in the last ten yards, to edge [the standing 100 yards champion] in the 100...” at a Toronto meet.⁶⁰

With the Laurels, she had one of the most successful years in her athletic career, in 1942. The young athlete first set an indoor record in the 100 yards women’s sprint in February by registering 13.4 seconds, the same time as “the winners in the men’s open and junior century sprints.”⁶¹ A month later, she broke her own record and registered 13 seconds flat.⁶² The 100 yards and 100 metres dash were some of her specialties, and she became a regular on the events’ podia.⁶³ Her part in the relay team was also worthy of attention and became even more so in the years that followed.⁶⁴ Her renown was such that, prior to the 1942 Ontario track and field championships, Lowe was qualified by Alexandrine Gibb as a “leading light” alongside three others athletes.⁶⁵ A few days later, at the championships, Lowe won five events. As Gibb reported, “It was a five-star final day for dusky Jean Lowe of the Laurel club, Saturday afternoon [...] winning the senior 60 and 100 metres, and going on from there to annex the running high jump, the running broad jump and finishing the day by running anchor on the championship relay team.”⁶⁶

Lowe contributed in great part to the Laurel team’s victories over the years.⁶⁷ With the club, she participated in local, provincial, and US meets. Norm Campbell (husband to accomplished 1936 Olympic hurdler Roxy Atkins Campbell) initially coached the Laurels. When Campbell left his coaching post to join the military full time in 1942 as a pilot officer,⁶⁸ Abbie Cooper replaced him. Then, Roxy Campbell terminated her tenure in the Women’s Amateur Athletic Federation (WAAF) of Canada’s Ontario branch administration to become the Laurels’ assistant coach and chaperone.⁶⁹ Lowe could also be found in leadership roles in the Laurel Ladies club. When the Laurels’ relay

team headed to the 1943 AAU championships in Lakewood (Ohio), Lowe captained the four members' team;⁷⁰ she remained captain until 1945, when she left Toronto. As with her high school's Girls' Athletic Society involvement, she climbed her way up in the Laurels' administration: she was elected to club president in 1942, promoted from her position as treasurer.⁷¹

'Dusky Jean Lowe' was a recurrent athlete in the Toronto sport pages in the first half of the 1940s. But, without major national and international tournaments at the onset of and throughout WWII, Lowe could not face the world's best. The last major international tournament for track and field before the War was the 1938 Sydney (Australia) Empire Games. As indicated in chapter two, Barbara Howard from British Columbia was a medal hopeful on the women's team, was the first Black woman to compete internationally for Canada and, in all likelihood, the first Black woman to compete at the Empire Games since their inception in 1930.⁷² There was no national meet in 1937. Instead, the nationals resumed in 1938 (Halifax) and 1939 (Hamilton, Ontario), and were again not held in 1940. After the 1941 instalment, Canadian athletes did not convene again until 1947 (in Edmonton, Alberta).⁷³ Lowe was unable to attend the 1938 nationals, but she attended the 1941 event.

One of the few opportunities for international contact was through some inter-city tournaments between Toronto and Cleveland clubs. During the early 1940s, the Polish Olympic Club, a Cleveland sports club to which famous Stella Walsh belonged, travelled to Toronto on a few occasions to participate in basketball or softball matches and track and field meets against Toronto clubs.⁷⁴ These special meets were an opportunity to highlight the best athletes in both cities. As such, in September 1942, when Walsh

requested a meet, she was turned down because “the cream of Laurel’s crop” (i.e. Lowe and one of her teammates) would not be available; Lowe had to work that night and her teammate was participating in softball playoffs.⁷⁵ In 1943, they met again, and Lowe and Walsh ran in a special 60 yards sprint and in the relay, with Lowe coming in second behind Walsh.⁷⁶ The Laurels also traveled to Cleveland on at least one occasion as part of these exchanges.⁷⁷

Most important was the fact that, during the Canadian Championship hiatus, AAU national meets continued to take place in the US. The first of these in which Lowe participated was in Ocean City (New Jersey), in 1942, where she came in third in the 100m sprint.⁷⁸ A year later, she led the Laurels’ six-member team to the tournament at Lakewood (in the Cleveland area).⁷⁹ The sole Canadian victory was Lowe’s relay team, which broke the Tuskegee Institute Tigerettes’ five-year streak. The Laurels then went on to defend their title successfully, four years in a row.

Upon returning from the 1943 meet, Bobbie Rosenfeld reported that Roxy Campbell, the Laurels’ chaperone and assistant coach, had singled out sprinter Alice Coachman of the Tuskegee Institute as heir to Stella Walsh’s women sprint throne.⁸⁰ But, while Lowe came in fourth place in the 100 metres event, Rosenfeld reckoned that Lowe’s time of 11.9 beat the standing Canadian record set by Myrtle Cook at the 1928 Olympic trials.⁸¹ In fact, the team’s relay victory was such that “[p]lans [were] afoot for civic recognition of Laurel’s winning effort at Cleveland,”⁸² although there is no confirmation in the Toronto Press that these plans came to fruition. Nevertheless, this signified a new stage in Lowe’s career, as the Laurels rose to prominence thanks to their AAU victories.

The following year, the Laurels were hard at work preparing to defend their relay title at the 1944 US meet.⁸³ Four days prior to the meet, the *Globe* printed a photograph (see Figure 4.3) of the five-member team in club uniform, including their chaperone/assistant-coach/manager, Roxy Campbell (fourth from the left in the photograph). The photograph's accompanying title, "Treat for Harrisburg," along with their teams' formal attire of skirts and blazers, presented a specific feminine image. Part of the caption read: "Toronto Laurel Ladies' Track Club is sending this nattily outfitted delegation to the US women' track and field championships at Harrisburg, Pa., Saturday."⁸⁴ The "natty" team went on to defend its relay title successfully that year. Subsequently, in her extensive description of American women's track and field history, track historian Louise Mead Tricard notes that the 1944 winning Laurels became the first women's relay team to appear on the cover of "The Amateur Athlete," the AAU's magazine.⁸⁵ According to Tricard's description of the cover, Lowe was featured alongside her three teammates and their coach, Albert "Abbie" Foster.

In terms of individual results at the 1944 meet, Lowe once again came in third in the 100m sprint—the only one of the Laurels to reach the podium individually—behind Walsh and Coachman. Despite a report that Coach Foster lacked confidence in the Laurels' individual performances, the club came in third place with respect to scores.⁸⁶ But, Lowe showed a lack of improvement from the previous year, perhaps because, in Ontario, she was accustomed to 100 yards races and was not trained for the 100 metres race.⁸⁷ This placed her at a disadvantage, come championship time. On the other hand, the Canadians were used to a 440 yds (402.336m) relay race in Ontario meets, which may have given them the advantage in that event.



Fig. 4.3. Treat for Harrisburg. *Source: Globe*, July 4, 1944, 15.

Following the 1944 meet, while the defending champions were being treated to “a little neck craning in New York, Baltimore and Washington” before their return home, a wistful Rosenfeld showered the team with praise for its efforts and for putting Canada back on the track and field map:

It gives this space a nostalgic thrill, hailing the sprinting Laurels. It recalls to mind (admittedly a few years back) when another band of Maple Leaf wearers used to make its international opponents sit up and holler ‘Uncle!’ Came the annual New York Millrose and Philadelphia Meadowbrook games, the familiar cry of ‘Watch the Canadians!’ was music to our ears. And now, after a depressing lull, the Abbie Foster coached Laurels are putting us back on the international standard again. Laurels also merit a clash of cymbals, even if pianissimo, for their persistence in keeping girls’ track and field alive in Ontario, awaiting the not-so-distant day of revival.⁸⁸

This ode to the good old days reminded readers of the uncertainty of the standing of track and field in Canada at the time. There was no indication that this applied to both women

and men; however, the lack of Canadian national championships certainly affected all athletes. That the Laurels distinguished themselves so well was, therefore, a testament to persistence on the part of the club's members. Certainly, they were the standout Canadian team at the AAU meets each year, although one cannot assert that they were representative of all of Canada's talents. Because the AAU meets were held in the American Northeast during WWII, it appears that only clubs from Central Canada (mostly Ontario, at that) could attend.

The following summer, as the team was preparing to head to Harrisburg to defend its title for a third time, a photograph of the champions with their coach was once again featured in the *Globe*.⁸⁹ The 1945 results were the same as they were in 1944: The relay team won for a third year in a row, and Lowe came in third in the 100m sprint, as always behind "Tuskegee's wing-footed negress" Coachman and "the Great Stella."⁹⁰

The 1945 meet was the last tournament in which Lowe participated as part of a Canadian team. In January, Rosenfeld reported that Lowe had moved to New York City for school and that she had her eyes on the Tuskegee Institute.⁹¹ She continued to be a registered member of the Toronto Laurel Ladies Club, which changed its name to the Toronto Malvernettes in 1946, and she stayed in contact with Coach Foster.⁹² After a short time at Clark College (now Clark Atlanta University, Georgia),⁹³ she finally enrolled at Tuskegee in the fall of 1947 and, thus, missed the 1946 AAU meet where the Malvernettes defended the relay title for a fourth time.⁹⁴ Once at Tuskegee, she competed until graduation in 1950 as a member of the Tuskegee Tigerettes track team in one of the best American women's track and field programs.⁹⁵

As the first post-War Olympic Games were set to be held in London (England), in 1948, Montreal hosted the Canadian trials. Although Lowe had not competed in Canada for two years, she went to the trials. This was the first opportunity for Lowe to represent Canada at a major international event and reports indicated that she, indeed, trained with an eye towards winning a place on the national team.⁹⁶ She spent the summer in Toronto training with the Malvernettes and travelled with her former relay teammates to the trials with the help of fundraising by fans from the Sunnyside district. The “coloured star” did not qualify in either the 100 metres or the 200 metres events, despite being among the city’s best hopes.⁹⁷ The circumstances surrounding the Olympic trials remain unclear, as demonstrated in the “Whatever Happened at the Montreal Trials” subsection below. The trials became her last recorded Canadian competition; two years after her graduation from Tuskegee, she applied for American citizenship. She did not to return to Canada for competition; nor does it appear that she resided in the country again after that.

4.2.3 “*Lightning Lowe,*”⁹⁸ *Ontario Best Woman Athlete of 1942*

With regards to athletic performance, 1942 was Jean Lowe’s best year; by year’s end, she was an undisputed contender for the Norman Craig Memorial Trophy, awarded to the province’s most outstanding woman athlete of the year since 1932. The awarding of the trophy was based upon a calendar year’s performance in all sports. As of 1937, the Ontario branch of the WAAF decided the winner.⁹⁹ Laurels had won the award three times in the 10 years the trophy had existed, and, by the fall of 1942, Lowe stood to make it four.¹⁰⁰ Below is Bobbie Rosenfeld’s description of Lowe’s accomplishments in anticipation of the WAAF vote. The profile presents a case in which one can best observe

Lowe as just another female athlete through the press' lens, with race seemingly removed from the equation:

She defeated every single Canadian and Ontario senior sprint and jump champion in being the first girl to win the maximum possible of five Ontario Championships (60 metres, 100 metres, running high jump, running broad jump and member of the winning relay). In the sprints, Jean came within one-tenth seconds of two long standing Ontario records, bucking a head wind.¹⁰¹

The first time Lowe had been that close to nomination was in 1939, when there had been no clear standout nominee. Jean Lowe was still new on the scene, and she was mentioned for having come in second in the 100m sprint behind one of the Trophy contenders; according to Rosenfeld, the latter could not be said to have “set the world on fire” that year.¹⁰² The implied mediocrity of the 1939 roster was a contrast to Lowe’s year in 1942. Rosenfeld did not doubt that Lowe’s “super performance” at the July Ontario Championships was a remarkable achievement which put her on top of the list of nominees.¹⁰³ With only a little more than half the year gone, Rosenfeld reckoned that the athlete’s five top-of-the-podium finishes “just about [gave] her a stronghold on the Norman Craig Trophy, significant of Ontario’s outstanding gal athlete... The dusky Laurel star was simply effortless all afternoon.”¹⁰⁴ When candidates for the award were set to be named by the Laurels a few weeks later, Rosenfeld suggested that the club would have to “do it with mirrors if they hope to keep Dusky Jean Lowe from taking it all.”¹⁰⁵ Short of a last minute surprise at the softball world tournament, it seemed a “tailor made cinch” for the “the laurel trackette.”¹⁰⁶ Unlike in her first assessment above, one notices that Rosenfeld repeatedly used “dusky” to describe Lowe, even crystallizing the descriptor with a capital “D.”

To be considered by the Athletic Federation for the Trophy, an athlete had to be nominated as first choice by her own club, and, then, receive votes from other clubs in the province. With an impressive individual performance, she was on the shortlist of the year's five nominees and three clubs (The Laurels, the Colborne, and the Lakeside) nominated her.¹⁰⁷ She was awarded the trophy later that month, and Figure 4.4 shows the “torrid trackster of Toronto Laurels,” this time nicknamed “genial Jean,” posing with her trophy in the *Globe*.



Fig. 4.4. Winner of Craig Memorial Trophy, 1942. Source: *Globe*, October 26, 1942, 20.

As testament to her distinguished accomplishments that year, Lowe's name was also put forth for the 1942 WAAF Rose Bowl, an award “emblematic of Canada's premier girl athlete.”¹⁰⁸ The Rose Bowl was a nationwide affair and, as such, Lowe's nomination did not go unopposed. Rosenfeld wrote to address criticisms:

This gives us a chuckle... Myrt Cook's 'Women's Spotlight' in the Montreal Star wonders how Ontario can name anyone for the Federation Rose Bowl (Jean

Lowe is our choice) when they withdrew as a branch from the WAAF of C[anada] early this year... We'll answer that with a counter question... Why has Montreal a memory as short as a politician's?... Wasn't it just a few weeks ago that the Quebecers, through the medium of Myrt's column, were urging Ontario to stage the Canadian track and field championships? Tut, tut, Myrt, we weren't affiliated then, either, you know.¹⁰⁹

From this, we may discern two things: first, the Rose Bowl was coveted enough to trigger some public squabbles between Rosenfeld and her former Olympic teammate and now colleague at the *Montreal Star*; second, there was an unsuccessful effort to restore the Canadian championships between 1941 and 1947. The Rose Bowl did not go to Jean Lowe, but endorsement for Lowe in Rosenfeld's column did not waver. She put Lowe's name forward again when the *Canadian Press* requested nominations for its "outstanding performance in the Canadian sports field" poll in December 1942.¹¹⁰

Notwithstanding this, after earning the respect of her peers beyond her own running club, Lowe's star continued to rise in the following years. On the surface, her path from there was seemingly free of prejudice. That is, until her departure four years later, Lowe was in many ways one of the popular faces of Toronto women's sport, a not so small feat for the daughter of West Indian immigrants.¹¹¹ Of note is the fact that, at the meeting to vote for the Ontario award, Lowe also stood to be nominated for the Lou Marsh Memorial Trophy. The trophy was named after Toronto *Star* sport journalist and referee, Lou Marsh, and has been awarded to the year's outstanding Canadian athlete, man or woman, since 1936.¹¹² Black champion Phil Edwards was awarded the inaugural trophy, following his performance on the track at the 1936 Berlin Olympics. In 1942, however, Lowe was not so lucky: Instead, the WAAF nominated Joan Langdon, a British Columbia swimmer. Nevertheless, we must be careful to not view these nominations—symbolic public endorsements as they may be perceived—as somehow reflective of

racelessness in Toronto and Canada. This would be a simplistic assessment and does not do justice to the complexity of the structure, which Lowe navigated with apparent ease. As explored below, there rested several unspoken issues under the surface of that idyll. These issues present the position of the darling of the Laurels track and field as Other, as discussed below.

5. Tuskegee Years

Before any critical analysis of the account of Lowe's years in Toronto, it is useful to outline her experience after she left in 1945, particularly since archival documents suggest that her decision to stay in the US was made even before she enrolled at the Tuskegee Institute two years later.¹¹³ There, she pursued a degree in Physical Education, graduated (officially as Alice Mary Eugenia Lowe) with the class of 1950,¹¹⁴ after which she had a long teaching career in Alabama. Ultimately, she followed in the footsteps of other Black Canadians who sought better futures outside of Canada, and who took their talent with them. The premise with Lowe is that sport opened a door to this well-travelled road as it had and continues to do for many young Canadian athletes.

When Lowe was applying for US naturalization in 1952, Cleve L. Abbott, the Tuskegee Institute's Physical Education Director, acting as her witness, declared that he had met Lowe at the Ocean City AAU meet ten years prior.¹¹⁵ In hindsight, the meeting proved to be a turning point for Lowe. Abbott was a key figure in the formation of the women's track and field program at Tuskegee. As a retired First World War Major, he had pioneered the Tuskegee Relays in 1936, which became an important competition for high school Black girls in Dixie states.¹¹⁶ Over the years, athletes from the Relays were recruited and offered work/study scholarships to the Institute, and helped the school

dominate AAU competitions for two decades thereafter. Some of the Tuskegee program's recruits, Alice Coachman among them, also went on to impress at the Olympics.¹¹⁷

Coachman was a year younger than Lowe, but she had graduated from Tuskegee by the time Lowe made her way to Alabama. This suggests that Lowe's education stalled during WWII in Toronto, as she continued to compete and work but was somehow unable to attend school. Her sudden departure from Toronto at the War's close seems to indicate that the best opportunity open to her was outside of the country.

After Ocean City, as Lowe's Laurels continued to encounter and compete against the Tuskegee Tigerettes at AAU meets, Abbott, "[a]lways looking for good runners,"¹¹⁸ may have had a hand in Lowe's final decision to enroll in school at the end of WWII. Once at Tuskegee, Lowe reportedly worked as Abbott's office girl, as he again disclosed on her naturalization petition. All this suggests a good rapport between the two, one that guided the young student-athlete throughout her Tuskegee tenure and beyond.¹¹⁹

A year before enrolling at Tuskegee, Lowe entered Clark College (Atlanta, Georgia) where, as reported by Bobbie Rosenfeld, she hoped to complete a degree in "P.T. [assumed to be Physical Training] and psychology."¹²⁰ Although the columnist added that she would be back on the track, she did not reappear on a roster until 1947 as part of the Tuskegee Tigerettes team. Even without Alice Coachman, Tuskegee remained one of the best women's track and field programs in the country, many of whose members were selected for the 1948 American Olympic team. According to the school's Athletic Hall of Fame, "At Tuskegee, [Lowe] ran on championship indoor and outdoor track teams in 100 meters, 200 meters, running broad jump, high jump and relays, and won medals in each activity at every meet."¹²¹ Thus, she became a valued member of the

team, especially in the 200 metres event; leading into the 1948 trial, she was the AAU indoor bronze medallist.¹²² She became such a common sight on the track that Fay Young, Chicago *Defender* sportswriter, had to indicate to fans that Lowe was ineligible to run for the US in 1948.¹²³

After graduating from Tuskegee, Lowe worked for a year at the Palmer Memorial Institute, a Black preparatory school in Sedalia (North Carolina).¹²⁴ There she taught physical education and civics, and was in charge of the Dance Class.¹²⁵ It appears she left the school after only one year, and went on to reside in Mobile (Alabama) where she got married in 1967 (thence known as Eugenia Butler),¹²⁶ and where she worked as a high school physical education teacher for decades. In 1973, she also earned a Master of Physical Education degree from the University of South Alabama (Mobile).¹²⁷

For 29 years, Lowe worked in at least two high schools in Mobile: Central, a majority Black school, and John Shaw, an integrated school. She spent nearly 20 years at Central High School, demonstrating that her signature knack for sport administration did not waiver as she is credited with assisting the school “in setting up the first Black Physical Education program.”¹²⁸ As a teacher, she also coached track and field and basketball teams at both schools.¹²⁹ Figure 4.5 shows Lowe (now Alice Eugenia Butler, stand on the far right) with the 1978 Shaw High School girls’ track team. She also participated in track clinics in Mobile as a coach and, as of 1978, she was the secretary of Mobile’s Track and Field Association, which sponsored and promoted the sport.¹³⁰ It appears she retired from the school system in 1980.¹³¹



Fig. 4.5. Shaw High School Track Team. *Source*: The Shawana, Vol. 14 (Mobile, AL: Shaw High School, 1978), 105.

5.1 Whatever Happened at the Montreal Trials?

What transpired at the Montreal Olympic trials in 1948 remains muddled; I endeavour herein to untangle the episode's various threads. The trials' series of incidents is an apt example of the sometimes-uncertain grounds upon which Black athletes stood. In this case, through their reactions, certain White individuals close to Lowe, namely Rosenfeld and Coach Cooper, strongly suggested that the Canadian women's sport federation was not above racial prejudice.

Rosenfeld first reported that Lowe came in last in her event at the trials, despite being one of Toronto's best bets.¹³² But, in Lowe's Tuskegee Hall of Fame profile, it is indicated that, rather, Lowe "won a position on the Canadian Olympic Team in 200 meter [*sic*] and relay, however, she was unable to participate because of an injury received in Grand Rapids, Michigan while competing for Tuskegee."¹³³ The Grand Rapids Championships occurred two days after the trials. According to the American press,

Lowe placed off the podium in both the long jump (5th) and the 200 metres (6th), but there was no report of an injury or of dashed Olympic dreams.¹³⁴ The Toronto press did not report on this event or on any injury. Whatever the version of accounts, Lowe was not a part of the 1948 Canadian Olympic team. But whether she initially qualified or not may have been irrelevant, because of the controversy and tumult that followed the WAAF's choice of who to include on the national team. The press accounts not only suggest that bias and discrimination may have robbed many athletes of deserved spots on the Olympic roster, but that for Jean Lowe and Rosella Thorne, there were racist motives.

The first complaint was raised upon the Toronto athletes' return from the trials. Both Coach Foster of the Malvernettes and Dallas Kirkey, the president of the Toronto Ted Day Athletic Club, alleged that there had been some questionable decisions by the WAAF selections. According to Rosenfeld,

The Olympic records for the running high dudgeon and for throwing insults for distance, from all accounts, were undoubtedly set at Canada's Olympic trials. In fact, the Montreal production insulted the Ontario contingent to the point of violence and a threat to withdraw its members from the Olympic team. What a way to start the Olympics! ...

Since this is an immaculate family journal, I hesitate to print the verbal salvos fired in the general direction of the Canadian Olympic Committee. Translated into quieter tones, the returning Toronto officials and coaches insist that the trials were loaded with favoritism.¹³⁵

Kirkey went on to suggest that this was premeditated because Vancouver athletes reportedly traveled to the trials ready with their passports, and that some were selected ahead of non-British Columbians, despite not winning their event. He was quoted using the term "sharp practices" to designate the "travesty on sport" to which he had been witness.¹³⁶ Note, however, that the trials were completed close to the date set for Team Canada to sail for England from Montreal. It is not inconceivable that, hopeful of being

selected for the team, athletes would bring their passports to Montreal to avoid travelling all the way back to British Columbia to get them and return to Quebec to board the ship.

But, whether or not Ontarians were short-changed, Rosenfeld seemed convinced that Vancouver athletes received better treatment even before the Toronto officials ‘confirmed’ her suspicions.¹³⁷ It was a fact that, of the seven track and field female athletes initially selected (prior to Nancy Mackay of the Malvernettes’ inclusion at the last minute, after complaints), five were from British Columbia.¹³⁸ Furthermore, once at the Games in London, the ‘Vancouver pull’ remained: Rosenfeld reported that Nancy Mackay of the Malvernettes was originally excluded from the relay team, despite having one of the four best times. Mackay was eventually instated, and the team went on to win the Olympic bronze medal.¹³⁹

More ‘damning’ yet was the case of Rosella Thorne, then a rising track champion, who had been robbed of a place on the team despite winning her event. As described below, reports in the press heavily implied that racism was a factor, although Rosenfeld first reported on an undescribed sort of discrimination. As she wrote at the bottom of the already heated entry, “Abbie Foster, coach of Toronto Malvernettes, is back home with a story, which, if true, is tragic. He charges discrimination against Rosella Thorne, colored star of Montreal.”¹⁴⁰ The coach was quoted as saying that,

In [his] opinion, Miss Thorne was the victim of discrimination. She won the 80-metre hurdles in 12.6 seconds, three tenth away from the standard, but was left off the team in favor of Elaine Silburn of British Columbia, who didn’t win an event and was inches off the standard in both the high jump and the broad jump.¹⁴¹

In the same day’s edition of the *Winnipeg Free Press*, Foster was further quoted as saying that he thought “Thorne, Montreal Negress was left off the team ‘because she is

coloured.”¹⁴² Still according to the *Free Press*, the coach added that Thorne was “‘left off deliberately’ while girls ‘who didn’t make the standard and weren’t as close as she was were included,” before regretfully adding that “[Thorne] is a comer [and that she] would improve every time out and be a credit to Canada.”¹⁴³ This suggested that the choice to send the British Columbian athlete in her place was not only unfair, but also short-sighted.

Rosenfeld additionally wondered whether “any whisper of discrimination reached the ears of Jean Lowe, Toronto’s colored trackster,” who had come in “dead last in her heat, which is unusual for a gal who repeatedly has shown the way in the 200 metres.”¹⁴⁴ Rosenfeld did not explicitly call this a display of racism but the reference to Lowe and Thorne is compelling. Note also that Nancy Mackay was reportedly dealt the same blow as Thorne, but that the selection committee finally included her on the team after Ontario representatives’ protests. If Quebec officials saw an injustice they did not act; and if they logged a complaint, it was unsuccessful.¹⁴⁵irate, the Toronto columnist continued to express frustration with the WAAF the following day in her signature style:

Not that it’s any import now that the Canadian team has sailed, but for the sake of the records the United States women’s Olympic track team has five colored members.... this is noted in lieu of the brown-in-the-mouth taste left over the treatment given Rosella Thorne, Montreal’s colored 80-metre hurdling star, who was left behind to ponder man’s inhumanity to man.¹⁴⁶

In closing, Rosenfeld noted that “certain quarters” pointedly believed that the colour line had been drawn in front of the Montreal athlete.¹⁴⁷ It does not appear that Lowe was the subject or target, but the uncertain circumstances surrounding her non-qualification remain.

Besides the journalist's loaded comments, there is no indication that Lowe, or Thorne, gave their thoughts on the situation. In an interview with historian Ann M. Hall, Thorne only brought up an incident on board the ship on the way to the 1950 New Zealand Empire Games, as the sole example of the racial discrimination she faced in her athletic career.¹⁴⁸ In fact, Thorne noted, she had never even heard of Jean Lowe (nor of Barbara Howard who was a few years her senior), and was quite amused upon learning from Hall that Black athletes, including herself, were referred to as 'dusky' in the press.¹⁴⁹ But, considering Rosenfeld's statement symbolically linking Lowe to the Thorne case, the columnist's position was clear: race had been an issue and maybe Lowe's poor results in the 200 metres was not just bad luck. Certainly, one must account for the inconsistency between Rosenfeld's report that she was dead last in her events and the assertion made in some contemporary US newspapers and in Lowe's 1980s Tuskegee Hall of Fame profile that she had, in fact, qualified for the Olympics and taken out by a later injury. It is difficult to ascertain who made the error.

The Canadian Olympic headquarters and Ann Clark, the Vancouver-based representative of the WAAF on the Canadian Olympic Association, reportedly dismissed all discriminatory allegations. The representative "ridiculed any suggestion that the color bar had been drawn in the selection."¹⁵⁰ In fact, according to the *Free Press*, Clark denied knowing that Thorne was not White before the decision was made. In the "Sports Reel," Clark explained that Thorne was ousted only because her "time of 12.6 seconds wasn't nearly good enough,"¹⁵¹ which meant that her time was not expected to rival the best in Europe.¹⁵² In the *Free Press*, Clark was quoted as saying that "it was felt that unless the Canadian Olympic standard of 12.3 seconds was met or approached to one-tenth of a

second, no hurdle selections would be made, with the selection committee limited to eight [women athletes] for all track and field events.”¹⁵³

How did that explanation stack up? In their extensive compilation of Canadian athletic records, Bill McNulty and Ted Radcliffe indicate that Thorne had 1948’s best Canadian time in the sprint hurdle and the 6th best distance in broad jumping. For her part, Elaine Silburn, the British Columbian who went in Thorne’s stead, held the year’s Canadian best broad jump (achieved ahead of the trials), but had no hurdling time.¹⁵⁴ At the Olympics, a few weeks later, the top five hurdlers finished under 12 seconds, effectively much faster than Thorne’s best that year. However, not only did Silburn fail to qualify for the long jump finals at the Games, but her distance was between 35.5 and 47.5 centimetres shorter than that of the Olympic medallists.¹⁵⁵ It is safe to say that neither athlete was competitive enough in their respective disciplines at the world level. Retrospectively, the decision to send Silburn over Thorne appears questionable, and vindicates Coach Foster’s position and Rosenfeld’s scepticism.

In a display of perspicacity, Rosenfeld had cautioned against a colour bar in sport a few months before the Olympic trials’ incidents. She reported that her colleague at the Montreal *Star* believed Rosella Thorne’s place on the Olympic team to be guaranteed, short of an earthquake, and emphasized Thorne’s versatility as a sprinter, high jumper, and long jumper. The key part of this entry was that it was prefaced with the following commentary on Herb Carnegie, the eminent hockey player who tenured in Quebec provincial and senior hockey leagues at the time:

Can anybody in the house tell me whether Herbie Carnegie, classy Negro hockey player, has ever been offered a pro contract? ... Herb, a prolific scorer, has for

years been one of the top players down Quebec way ... wound up with 90 points this season, good for second place in the provincial (Quebec) league.¹⁵⁶

The profile on Thorne swiftly followed the above imploration without transition. By discussing Carnegie, arguably the best hockey player to never make it to the National Hockey League, alongside Thorne, a rising young Black athletic talent, the “Sports Reel” presented a subtle analogy of how the colour line in sport was alive and well, notably in Quebec. The events at the trials a few months later cannot have been a surprise to those ‘certain quarters’ who had been somewhat cognizant of the colour factor.

It should be underscored that this appears to be the only time, over the course of more than a decade of reporting on Lowe’s progress, that anyone in the two large Toronto newspapers explicitly discussed the systemic issues that athletes of colour faced.¹⁵⁷ Given these developments, what should be made of the anxious reports about the rise of athletes of colour in track and field? One must ask, because the juxtaposition undercuts the expression of contempt for racial discrimination. It is obvious that athletes’ blackness continuously set them apart to the point of framing their successes as separate from that of ‘mainstream’ White athletes. This was reiterated in several ways, and, indeed, in what appears to be the last mention of Jean Lowe in the *Globe*, in May 1950 (and, also, see the next section). Writing about the potential of Black baseball players in the Toronto Maple Leafs (a minor league team), Jim Vipond, a *Globe* sports editor remarked that,

A Negro ball player would be a great attraction in this town. Many a sport fan will recall the tremendous crowd appeal of Dr. Phil Edwards, the middle-distance runner; Sammy Richardson, the broad jumper; Jean Lowe, the sprinter, or Arthur King, the boxer. [...] Boy, what gates another Monte Irvin would draw at Maple Leaf Stadium!¹⁵⁸

While praising previous Black champions, Vipond presented Black athletes as having *specific* talents, which needed to be capitalized upon. Due to the understanding of ‘Negro

players,' they would be attractive because they were Black and less because they were good athletes who happened to be Black. It is worth noting, for instance, that Vipond listed Lowe alongside male athletes when the subject of the entry was a male baseball player. It was not a direct call for society to deny or summarily dismiss their performances; however, the racialization of these athletes was a reproduction the notion of the 'natural Black athlete,' a pillar of the racial ideology in sport. This parallels sociologist Ben Carrington's statement regarding Black sportsmen who have to balance a hypermasculine image with social powerlessness.¹⁵⁹ Under the White gaze, Jean Lowe and her contemporaries were hyper-athletic bodies, and were divested of agency. As such, many of those invested in defending the abilities of Black athletes in the athletic arena did not seem as invested in truly empowering them as members of a marginalized group.¹⁶⁰ The anxious way even that 'advocates' of Black athletes sometimes described Black success betrayed in their comments.

In their praises, Vipond and Rosenfeld had left out how some athletes, like several other Black people, were not inclined to stay in Canada because of a lack of socio-economic opportunities. Not every athlete successfully pursued a degree in Medicine at McGill University like Dr. Edwards. Sammy Richardson, Ontario track star mentioned above by Vipond, was a case in point.¹⁶¹ On the eve of the 1938 Empire Games, Alexandrine Gibb wrote that Richardson, a 1936 Olympian, did not intend to represent Canada in Sydney (Australia). In fact, Gibb wrote, Richardson told "Toronto sport people" that,

A man came over from Detroit and offered me an education in a Detroit university and I'm going to accept it. [...] I would like to get a job here, but I can't. The Detroit people will give me a job after school hours and give my father a job, too. [...] The British Empire games trial are in September? They are passe

[sic] with me. I'm out for an education and a job. I don't want to go to Australia at all.¹⁶²

Even at the best of times, doors were not opened for Black workers in Canada, whether they be successful elite athletes or not. Richardson's meeting with the 'man from Detroit' may be similar to Lowe's fortuitous meeting with Tuskegee's Cleve Abbott. Perhaps Lowe would have left earlier if not for the Great Depression and the War because, if one was Black and wanted an education and/or a job, choices were slim in Canada. Instead, upon graduation in the late 1930s, she worked and played sport in Toronto then left only a couple of months after the official close of WWII. Clearly, Lowe also saw a better opportunity open up at Tuskegee and took it.

6. Of Dusky Athletes and Coloured Pulchritude

It appears that Jean Lowe was the only Black athlete (at least, prominent enough to be profiled) in her running club, and one of the few (if not the only) Black athlete(s) in the city. Few other 'dusky,' 'coloured,' and/or 'negro/ess' women athletes were mentioned at all in the papers at the time.¹⁶³ The rare mentions included Barbara Howard, the British Columbia champion sprinter, one Helen Smith, a "coloured 'under 14 junior'" who made an impressive debut at the 1942 Ontario championships,¹⁶⁴ and Rosella Thorne, the champion hurdler and broad jumper from Montreal (both Thorne and Howard are briefly discussed in chapter one).

6.1 Unpacking 'Dusky'

It must be acknowledged that, in some quick write-ups, familiar Black athletes like Lowe blended in with the White crowd when referred only by name. However, not being referred by race was the exception. By default, media entries describe her by skin

colour, something never done for her White peers, as is the privilege of Whiteness.¹⁶⁵ The recurrent use of ‘dusky’ established for her contemporaries, as well as current readers, that no matter how valued a Black athlete may have been as a member of a squad, she remained Other. After all, skin colour, dusky or otherwise, had no concrete bearing on performance report.

A discussion around the emblematic social-cultural stigmatization of dark skin, which complexified the racial order, is useful to contextualize the constant reminder of athletes’ skin colour. The embeddedness of colourism in colonial societies goes beyond sport, as the tenure of the popular Miss Nova Scotia event and subsequent reports in mainstream press help illustrate. Notably, at the occasion of the 1940 pageant, “thousands of admirers of coloured pulchritude” were gathered to witness “Dusky ‘oomph’ queens from Negro communities” vie for the honour of being crowned the “fairest among the darkest.”¹⁶⁶

Miss Nova Scotia was a beauty contest meant to crown fair skinned beauties and the event cemented the low status of dark skin, even among Blacks. By those standards, one may take note of the fact that Lowe’s complexion pre-emptively disqualified her from the pageant. This was reflective of the cultural adoption of the premise of a Jim Crow era vaudeville saying recycled by American Blues singer Big Bill Broonzy as follows: “If you’s white, you’re alright; If you’s brown, stick around; But if you’s black—oh, brother, git back, git back, git back!”¹⁶⁷ Previous historical analyses and reports indicate that fairer skinned Black women in Canada, and elsewhere, were considered more beautiful and more valuable than darker skinned ones. This was especially true within Black communities themselves; sociologist Russell Ames explains

that this was an expression of an “old phenomenon” wherein hate is transferred “from the oppressor to the most vulnerable object at hand, since striking back at the oppressor is dangerous.”¹⁶⁸ Therein lay the rationale of the Miss Nova Scotia’s call for the ‘fairest among the darkest.’¹⁶⁹

In that framework, the constant use of ‘dusky’ as a descriptor emphasized that the black female athlete’s identity was not only gendered, but also racialized. In that context, Jean Lowe would not have been considered the epitome of feminine beauty, Black or White. This added a dimension to the contemporary struggle of women athletes, especially track and field athletes, against the idea that playing sports made them less feminine. Indeed, during the 1930s and 1940s, track and field athletes were criticized for participating in a sport that gave them a mannish, (heterosexually) unattractive figure.¹⁷⁰ This meant that Black American women’s overwhelming success in the sport reinforced the idea that they lacked femininity. As is typical of such bigoted notions, this also made their participation more acceptable than that of White women, since it confirmed the stereotype. Of course, Black athletes were simply gravitating towards what was often the more affordable and accessible sport, and, in some cases, what could be a ticket to socio-economic development.¹⁷¹

Such prejudice made it difficult to compete on the femininity scale with athletes in more ‘traditionally’ feminine, but relatively less accessible sports, such as figure skating, gymnastics, swimming, or tennis. These sports produced athletes like figure skater Barbara Ann Scott, whom Rosenfeld once described as “Ottawa’s 15 year-old bundle of feminine pulchritude,” “capable cutie,” and “peach-and-cream chick,” all in the span of a single column entry—Scott won the pulchritude battle with minimal contest.¹⁷²

In the same column of the same issue, Lowe was summarily described by skin colour alone. However, there was a silver lining, since Rosenfeld spent more time outlining her athletic achievements than she did with Scott.¹⁷³ Although outside of the scope of the present study, one wonders what a systematic examination of both athletes' ratio of looks to performance reports would find.

Strikingly, even in a White supremacist colonial patriarchy, the lines of the triple jeopardy of Blackness (race), darker skin, and track and field's masculinizing quality were not as deeply etched as one may be led to believe—far from it. Lowe did not lose her appeal and femininity in the eyes of everyone of her contemporaries in Canada. Complicating the dominant narrative in the literature, the notion of track athletes and Black women as unattractive was challenged publicly during Lowe's time in Toronto, with newspaper columns twice citing her as a case in point.

The first instance occurred the Summer after she was crowned Ontario's outstanding athlete of the year in an entry by Jim Coleman, a long time White columnist in the *Globe*. At the occasion, Coleman took it upon himself to defend track and field athletes' femininity which, as described previously, was often questioned. On the eve of the Lakewood AAU championships, Coleman wrote the following in the "About People and Things" section of his "By Jim Coleman" column:

Those critics who decry the lack of pulchritude in women athletes should take a look at the Laurels team from Toronto which will compete in the American women's Track and Field Championships at Cleveland next Sunday... **MRS ROXY CAMPBELL** will chaperon the six-girl team, which consists of: **JEAN LOWE**, Captain; **HELEN MORRISON**, Canadian sprint record-holder; **MARY CUMMINS**, Ontario 200-metre Champion; **MARY McKELLAR**, the Port Colborne girl who holds the Provincial hurdlers championship, and **DORIS WRIGHT** and **VIOLA MYERS**, who hold junior sprint records... **AB FOSTER**, who claims that once he shook hands with Miss Toronto, will coach the team...¹⁷⁴

In Figure 4.6, one can see most of the Laurels to which Coleman referred. The photograph was taken on the eve of the Lakewood championships and published two days after Coleman's statement. Included in the photograph (left to right) were Mary Cummins, Helen Morrison, Roxy Campbell (assistant coach and chaperone), and Mary McKellar in the front row, with Viola Myers, Doris Wright, and Jean Lowe in the back.



Fig. 4.6. Laurels Go Seeking Laurels. *Source: Globe*, August 13, 1943, 14.

It is worth noting that the columnist focused on the Laurels and, then, included Lowe by name, when the team was, by no means, the only women's sports club in the city. The success of the team at meets must have been a factor that elevated the Laurels' visibility and Lowe's image, by the same token. What and how Coleman presented the 'evidence' to his argument is equally worthy of note, as he did not provide examples of

physical feminine attributes to make the case for athletes' pulchritude. Instead, one has to read between the lines. Most importantly, some implicit elements of his argument had little to do with looks: Firstly, he emphasized that a well-known and well-respected figure in women's sport would chaperone the team. As indicated previously, the Laurels' ex-coach's wife, an ex-Olympian, had stayed behind when her husband was called for military duty, and had quit her WAAF administration duties to assist the young Laurels.

Secondly, Coleman listed the six members of the team and chose to highlight their athletic achievements, rather than their feminine physical attributes; this was a bold choice, when attempting to disprove that the athlete lacked pulchritude. In addition, as he started with team captain Lowe, he did not use the 'dusky' epithet, which, in the absence of a photograph, effectively hid her racial identity. In closing, and to punctuate his statement, Coleman introduced the White male coach by associating him, however thinly, with Miss Toronto.¹⁷⁵ With a few words, the columnist presented an image of Foster as a man who appreciated traditional feminine beauty, effortlessly signifying that the coach was unlikely to be at the helm of a team of masculine girls.

By framing his arguments in this way, Coleman did not need a photograph to illustrate that the Laurels were a glowing image of femininity, despite their obvious athleticism. Note also that the columnist was himself a White man, making his endorsement even more 'legitimate' in society's eyes, and Lowe's inclusion all the more significant. This, in addition to his notoriety and the accompanying wide readership across Canada, could only add gravitas to his endorsement. As historian Duncan Koerber argues, Coleman and his colleagues were key in the construction of the sport business identity, "informed by the greater discourses of journalism and society."¹⁷⁶ Therefore,

famous columnists became incontrovertible figures whose discourse was carefully crafted to resonate with their audience (or, alternatively, their audience came to trust their words uncritically). Hence, the above ‘treatise’ on feminine pulchritude may be understood not as the random ramblings of a single individual, but as a rhetoric, which made sense to a good number of readers.

A few years later, the *Star* again chose Jean Lowe and the Laurels (now Malvernettes) to continue debunking the persistent myth that women athletes were unfeminine. The unidentified writer was more direct in their defence, using photographs and not relying on allegory. Two photographs (see Figure 4.7) were positioned side-by-side under the title “Who Said Track Girls Have Masculine Look?”: the first was of a running Jean Lowe in sports gear (short sleeves shirt and shorts), and the second was of her Malvernettes teammates in Club uniform—vests and long skirts.

The photographs were captioned in this manner:

Darlings of the track and field meets are Ab Foster’s Malvernettes. Foster is a stickler for sartorial perfection were girl athletes are concerned. ‘Too many people,’ says Foster, ‘scream that girls engaging in sport lose their femininity.’ From the above it is obvious that the Malvernettes believe in looking spic and sparkling, in action or on the sidelines. That’s Jean Lowe at left warming up for the Montreal [Olympic] Trials where she will tackle the sprints. From left to right in the other shot are Shirley Eckel, Nancy Mackay, Mary Paterson, June Grosse, Mildred Grosse (both nieces of Rosa Grosse), Virna Myers and Viola Myers.¹⁷⁷

Of note is that, once again, Coach Foster’s approval was employed to advance the argument. The writer’s reiteration of Jim Coleman’s entry five years prior was crucial and seamlessly accomplished two things: a) it presented Foster as a fan of the feminine figure, which connected the athletes to a heteronormative ideal, and b) it reassured readers that the athletes were not only under the leadership of a masculine figure, but one

who ensured that they maintained their femininity through it all. As Bruce Kidd states, at that juncture in the history of women's sport in Canada, male approval and support was vital to the success of women's sports and amateur competition.¹⁷⁸

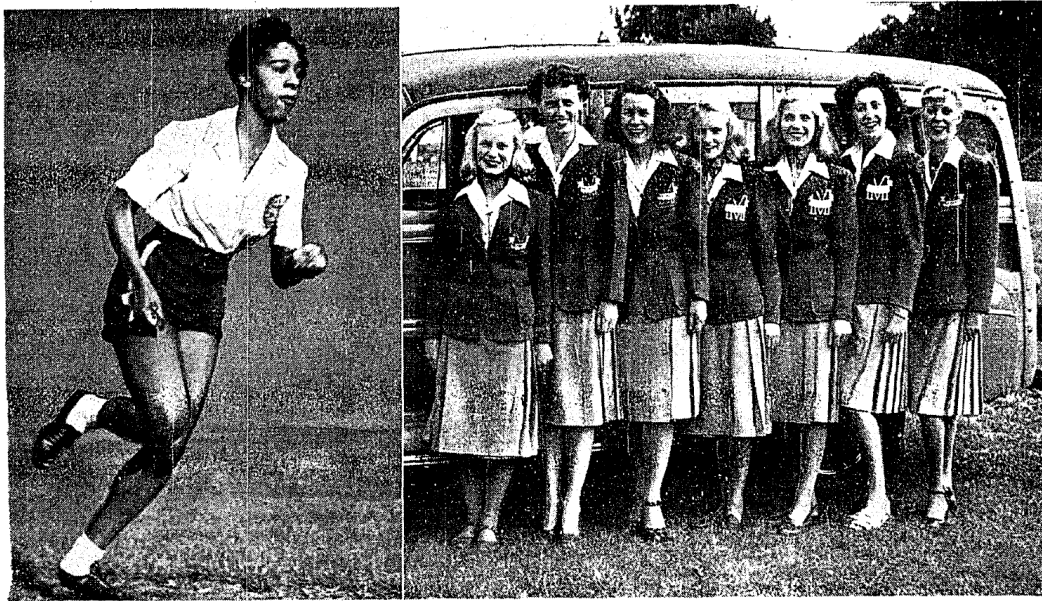


Fig. 4.7. Who said track girls have masculine look? *Source: Globe*, July 8, 1948, 18.

The foregoing glowing endorsements complicate the discourse. It may be implied that, while Lowe's dark complexion stood out amid the accolades and praises, it was a simple phenotypic marker to the sport writers. Rosenfeld's frequent colloquial use of "dusky" to qualify the athlete in her reports could suggest that she viewed it as an inoffensive term and not as a racial epithet meant to diminish and minimize Lowe's achievements. The term, after all, appeared intermittently throughout the years. Familiarity may also explain how Lowe was only ever described as "dusky" or "coloured," rather than by other more explicit epithets for Black women. For instance, Rosenfeld casually introduced other athletes as 'negresses' instead: she described Alice Coachman as a "wing-footed negress,"¹⁷⁹ and American Alfrances Hyman as a "formful

Negress.”¹⁸⁰ Without anachronistically judging “negress” as an offensive term (it was simply the feminine version of the more commonly used “negro”), it is to be noted that Rosenfeld did not use it for Lowe.

Moreover, pulchritude notwithstanding, a key point remains that Lowe’s White teammates were not physically described at every turn, and certainly not by skin colour—there was no need for it.¹⁸¹ That is an important point. In a racially-conscious society, announcing one’s racial identity could only frame readers’ perceptions of one’s performance. Arguably, Lowe’s inclusion in not just one, but two studies on a track athletes’ femininities, designated her as one whom society was most likely to perceive as less feminine¹⁸² and, hence, the need to focus on her as an example. As seen in the next subsection, racial stereotypes coloured even Rosenfeld’s enthusiastic support for Lowe. Ultimately, Lowe was a ‘Black athlete,’ with all the sociocultural meanings attached.

6.2 A Credit to her Race

Despite Lowe’s prominent status in the Toronto sporting arena, few, if any, issues were raised in the press about who she was and the implications of this outside the running track. The style of journalism at the time also meant that athletes were rarely given a voice in the sports pages (through interviews for instance). It is, therefore, difficult to determine with accuracy how her experience was different from that of her White teammates off, or even on, the tracks. However, the subject of Blackness and what it meant to be a Black athlete (not just in reference to Lowe) was addressed on a couple of occasions when Lowe was active:

(i) When Frank Dixon of New York University set a precedent by winning a long-distance event at the AAU indoor games in March 1943, Rosenfeld spent three quarters of her column on what she qualified as an undisputable “supremacy of the colored lads in the sprints and field events.”¹⁸³ The columnist listed the outstanding Black stars of the 1936 Olympic Games as evidence, notably citing the “colored lads that had carried the US a long way in track,” including Jesse Owens, Ralph Metcalfe, Matthew Robinson, John Woodruff, Cornelius Johnson, and Archie Williams.¹⁸⁴ She also named Phil Edwards, the native from British Guyana who competed for Canada in 1936 and won bronze in the 800 metres event. American Betty Woods, “a colored gal who also tops on the distaff side [female sport side],” was also mentioned “as an afterthought” for her challenge of World Champion Stella Walsh. In closing, Rosenfeld made note of “Dusky Jean Lowe of Laurels,” who then held five Ontario titles.¹⁸⁵

The fact that Lowe made the cut on that list was not a testament to her international prowess, but an indication of the standard by which sport observers measured her performance. She was not just a successful woman athlete, or a vanguard for the success of the sport among women in Canada. Rather, the statement framed Jean Lowe’s success within the racial relations context of the time; she was a ‘Black athlete’ and, therefore, a ‘credit to her race.’ The above only served to highlight the notion that Black athletes were replacing White athletes in track and field. This is a reminder of the Black athlete’s rise in sport, which betrayed the anxiety that the White world had witnessed decades earlier, when Tommy Burns lost his world heavyweight boxing title to Jack Johnson.¹⁸⁶

(ii) In 1947, Rosenfeld wrote again about the oncoming American Olympic female track and field team, which was predicted to be all-Black.¹⁸⁷ It is true that the all-Black Tuskegee Institute had dominated the AAU nationals for a decade by then.¹⁸⁸ Consequently, one may argue that Rosenfeld only meant to make a simple observation, and to applaud Black women's success. However, the emphasis on the supposed losing out of White athletes was conspicuous. In an interview with Abbie Foster (then Lowe's ex-coach) after that year's AAU meet, in which the Malvernettes had failed to defend their relay title, Foster was quoted as saying that,

The colored gals from Albany State College and Tuskegee Institute were in complete command of the national track and field championships. Stella Walsh of Cleveland salvaged the 200 metres, while Lil Cooperwaithe of Chicago took the 80-metre senior hurdles from the dusky damsels. Even the great Walsh had to have her running shoes on to turn back the bid of colored Audrey Patterson of Wiley College.¹⁸⁹

The choice of words in the column entry made a case for a White-versus-Black struggle, one that the White contingent was quickly losing. Tuskegee had been dominant long before then, yet White athletes' demise in the sport was framed as breaking news. As it was, athletes of colour were singled out and given all sorts of descriptive racial descriptors; though celebrated, they remained Other. In that framework, Lowe was compartmentalized in the Black category, and her success was attributed to work ethic only up to a point. As a racialized athlete, her performance was liable to be seen through a common pseudo-scientific lens through which society viewed Black athleticism as 'natural' yet superhuman.¹⁹⁰

The above discourse had the potential to engender discrimination given that racial prejudice and presumptions underpinned the colour bar in many sports in the twentieth century. Still, through Bobbie Rosenfeld, the columnist who wrote the most about Lowe,

it also appears that prejudice or misinterpretation of Black athletic success did not signify support for discrimination. Perhaps the combination of the 'win at all costs' sport ethic principle, as well as the specific context of Canada, allowed for a somewhat contradictory but tolerant approach to prejudice.¹⁹¹ That is, while sometimes presenting racialized perspectives on Black athletes, Rosenfeld was also not radically opposed to Black athletes, nor was she an advocate of their discrimination. The multilayered socio-cultural and political fabric of Canadian society certainly muddied the waters. With her European-Jewish heritage,¹⁹² Rosenfeld was perhaps more capable of empathizing with the plight of other racial minorities than other commentators. She had faced anti-Semitism in Canada and was particularly conscious of the rampant racism in society, which she often referenced in her column. Certainly, Alexandrine Gibb did not bring the same nuance to her column. In this, Jean Lowe's narrative allows us to explore the many intricacies of racial ideologies and their effects: racial epithets and prejudice did not equal total and complete absence of opportunities.

Accordingly, Rosenfeld spoke plainly, when she believed that there was some racial injustice within the Canadian women's sport federation. As is the prerogative of sports columns, concern was often expressed for any alleged or substantiated mismanagement within the sporting system, including racial discrimination, real or perceived. In this, a fierce defence for Black athletes overlaid her prejudiced reports. This was most apparent in the aftermath of the 1948 Olympic trials in Montreal, when Rosenfeld strongly suggested that Jean Lowe and Rosella Thorne had been victims of racism.

7. Interpretative Comments

Apart from a single mention of another young athlete, Jean Lowe was the only female athlete designated as Black who regularly appeared in the *Globe* and the *Star* press between the 1920 and 1950. A 1947 *Globe* article about the case of a woman who had been rejected from a nurses' school in Owen Sound (Ontario) is the one other time in which a Black Canadian woman was featured at length in the press. Owen Sound's Mayor reportedly made the case that the 21-year-old woman had several attributes that recommended her as a student: "The girl, [the Mayor] said, was born and raised here, had a good record in her studies and was generally active in sport."¹⁹³ The Mayor was apparently her most prominent defender. In fact, the *Globe* reported further that he was to personally appeal to the Health Minister to "prevent a recurrence of this type of racial discrimination."¹⁹⁴ Still, no amount of good character was enough to sway the school's anti-Black stance, although, the incident was enough to require a 'justification' for such treatment of the "girl":

Ald. Latham said the majority of the [hospital] board felt that by admitting the girl the efficiency of the hospital would suffer by distracting both the patients and the nursing staff and the girl herself would perhaps be discriminated against. 'The argument was also advanced that if the application was accepted colored girls would be coming from all over the province, clamoring for admittance,' added the alderman, 'However, I pointed out that this could be prevented by restricting such applicants to bona-fide residents of Owen Sound.'¹⁹⁵

In the first instance, the report confirmed the previously documented institutional racism that saw Black women conventionally refused entry to nursing schools across the province during that time.¹⁹⁶ Not being able to access higher education in Canada was the lot of many Black Canadians, and as previously outlined in chapter two, women were often compelled to enroll in US schools where Black-operated institutions developed in the 'separate but equal' system. In the second instance, and most pertinent for this study,

the commentary on the incident reiterated the foregoing discussion of the racial anxiety trope: a few Blacks were tolerable and even acceptable, but too many was a menace. It was a measure of the limits of acceptance, which hinged on a non-threatening condition on the part of Black people. Vast numbers of Blacks in any space were cause for alarm and that principle—if one may call it that—was at the core of race relations in Canada; whether *de jure* or *de facto*, the principle structured most access policies, from border crossings to public pool access, for most of the twentieth century.¹⁹⁷ Jean Lowe is positioned within this context: tolerated, but firmly Other.

Importantly, the aspiring nurse's case—the only mention of a Black woman outside the sport section of the two main Torontonians papers consulted for this study—brings us back to sport. That the unlucky applicant's sport background was considered worthy of mention adds to the argument that sport stood to open doors as a mark of some good virtue, a possibility showcased in chapter three. This was important in a context where Black women were pushed in jobs “tailored” to them by a legacy of servitude and a prejudice of moral corruption.¹⁹⁸ In Lowe's case, it was a part of what allowed her to navigate White majority spaces with apparent ease, and to even be voted into several leadership positions—student council and athletic executive at school, club treasurer, president, and team captain—as well as being selected as best provincial athlete. What is more, the press presented her as a beacon of femininity, a compliment, indeed, for a track athlete in the early twentieth century.

Sport, however, was only a temporary buffer against certain consequences of racism; it could not grant a meaningfully permanent reprieve from a deeply entrenched ideology in the blink of an eye. Insidious notions of race remained embedded in Black

women's experiences in sport—as demonstrated in the racialization of Lowe's performance or in the categorical refusal to accept black girls in schools—even as sport expanded and shifted the lens through which society viewed them. Through that framework, we can observe race in Canada as an elusive notion that left racialized individuals to stand on uncertain ground. For those also facing the limits of their gender in a patriarchy, the effects could only be compounded.

And, what to make of the 1948 Olympic trials tumult? One may argue that, if advocates (primarily Rosenfeld and Coach Foster) publicly reacted as strongly as they did to a semblance of racial bias, then such discrimination could easily be nipped in the bud. Whatever the true motivation behind the actions of the WAAF (sending competitive athletes regardless of trials results), it is important to note that the Federation was forced to issue some sort of justification/defense, in view of the accusations leveled against it. Potentially, the visibility of elite athletes conferred them with a measure of protection against blatant discrimination, at least in the sport system. Nevertheless, it must be stressed that such protection, if indeed it can be entertained as such, could not extend to them outside of sport. One could not rely on sport alone. One could still be driven out. This may explain Lowe's departure from Toronto in 1945 for school in the US, never to return.

There is equally something to be said on navigating amateur sport as a racialized woman. While in the amateur system, an athlete's life was fraught with financial obstacles. The system's bureaucracy also made things difficult. In 1938, for instance, Rosenfeld expressed distress for how Lowe and her team were deprived of the

opportunity to travel to the Canadian track and field championship in Halifax because of apparent mismanagement of funds:

The horse is stolen now, but we said before, and we say again, that certain clubs dipped their fingers too deep into the Commission grant. [...] Jean Lowe of Toronto was the winner of the junior high jump title and deserved as much consideration as most any other athlete being sent to Halifax. We know that both Jean and Coach Cooper were keenly disappointed at the turn of events.¹⁹⁹

Lack of funds and schedule conflicts (i.e. being unable to play because it conflicted with work), were the lot of all amateur athletes. At the macro level, there is no direct evidence that she was more inconvenienced due to her racial identity than her peers were. However, it remains that the community was not colour blind, as evidenced by the sustained qualification of Lowe by her race throughout the years. Therein lies a link between Rosella Thorne's trial incident and Lowe. The fact remains that the decision by the WAAF to select Lowe was not straightforward, as Thorne was not the only athlete caught in those murky waters.²⁰⁰ It is noteworthy that, in her discourse, Rosenfeld pointedly signalled that, if indeed Thorne was a victim of racial prejudice in Montreal, then Lowe's loss also became suspicious.

Ultimately, the 'unproblematic' athletic career of a female athlete of colour in the 1930s and 1940s Toronto, as well as her qualification as an image of feminine pulchritude, stand in sharp contrast with the continuous need to designate her as "dusky," her frequent inclusion into discussions of the threat of the 'Black athlete's' rise, and her departure from the city. Jean Lowe's account underscores the reticulation of 'acceptance' and Othering that has historically characterized Canadian racial relations. Lowe's choice of school for her post-secondary studies at the end of her Toronto Laurel Ladies' club

career is especially noteworthy. There is no indication that she tried to enter Canadian schools, although her degree of choice was available at Canadian institutions.

As previously outlined (in chapter two), Canada was familiar with racial segregation in its institutions, despite lacking a blanket anti-Black law similar to the American Jim Crow laws. It has especially been documented that young Black women hopeful of attending specialized schools (e.g., nursing or beauty schools) in that time were turned away routinely in Canada.²⁰¹ The discrimination of women of colour within Canadian higher education institutions was, potentially, a significant deterrent for Lowe, not to mention the incentive of a work/study position in the Tuskegee athletic director's office. The latter would have had an undeniable appeal even if the former proved to be a non-issue. As Sammy Richardson testified when he left to study in Detroit, an amateur athlete competing without the necessary socio-economic resources stood on thin ice.

Hence, Jean Lowe's storied athletic career allows us to nuance a racialized woman's tortuous journey on an ambushed pathway to success in a White supremacist settler patriarchy. In fact, in the context of this analysis, Lowe's early intention to stay in the US upon her departure in 1945 supersedes the choice to pursue an education outside of Canada.²⁰² As implied by several athletes' careers, no amount of public acclaim could diminish the reality of being a person of colour. It underscores that, regardless of an individual's value and contribution, they were, at most, insider-outsiders.

Notes

¹ Immigration documents list her name as Alice Mary Eugenia Lowe and Alice Maud Lowe. In the newspapers consulted, she was only referred to as Jean Lowe. She may be found under the name Jean or Eugenia Lowe Butler after 1967 (it appears, she married in 1960). In her teaching years in Mobile, Alabama, she was strictly Jean/Eugenia Butler. Mobile County, Alabama, *United States Records, Coloured Marriage License Index 1865-1967*, Groom's name: Oswald Butler; Bride's name: Alice Mary Eugenia Lowe; Ancestry.com, Lehi (Utah). Accessed online: www.ancestry.com; Mobile County, Alabama, *Naturalization Petitions, compiled 1906 – 1969*, Petition record of Alice Maud Lowe aka Alice Mary Eugenia Lowe, No. 2230, Interrogatories in Depositions of Witnesses; Records of District Courts of the United States, Record Group No. 21, NAI: 1258956; Mobile Petitions and Declarations, 1951 Oct-1957 May (Box 5 Volume 19-20); National Archives and Records Administration, Washington DC. Accessed online: www.ancestry.com; Mobile County, Alabama, *Naturalization Petitions, compiled 1906 – 1969*, Petition record of Alice Maud Lowe aka Alice Mary Eugenia Lowe, No. 2230, Interrogatories in Depositions of Witnesses; Records of District Courts of the United States, Record Group No. 21, NAI: 1274123; Mobile Petitions and Declarations, 1951 Oct-1957 May (Box 5 Volume 19-20); National Archives and Records Administration, Washington DC. Accessed online: www.ancestry.com

² "A. Eugenia Lowe Butler: Class of 1950," Tuskegee University Athletic Hall of Fame, 1985.

³ Ibid.

⁴ See Bill McNulty, and Ted Radcliffe, comp. *Canadian Athletics 1839-1992* (Published by authors, 1992).

⁵ When Lowe attended, the institution was named the Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute. It became Tuskegee University in 1985. "History of Tuskegee University," *Tuskegee University*, Accessed December 20, 2017, <https://www.tuskegee.edu/about-us/history-and-mission>

⁶ The press often referred to basketball players in that era as "cagers" and their playing surface as "cages." See section 2.2.1.

⁷ Ellipses in original. Bobbie Rosenfeld, "Sport Reel," *Globe and Mail* (Toronto, Ontario), January 11, 1946, 14.

⁸ See McNulty and Radcliffe, *Canadian Athletics 1839-1992*.

⁹ Walsh, also known as Stanisława Walasiewiczówna, was of Polish origin, and had competed in the 1932 and 1936 Olympics. Upon her death, it was revealed that she was, in fact, intersex. The Olympic committee ascertained that, as she lived her life as a woman and there was no case for voiding her medals. However, her name has become associated with the debate on athletes' sex/gender verification. For her part, Coachman was an athlete of renown during her tenure at the Tuskegee Institute. She went on to become the first Black American female athlete to win an Olympic medal at the 1948 Olympics. For more on Walsh and Coachman, see Sheldon Anderson, *The Forgotten Legacy of Stella Walsh: The Greatest Female Athlete of Her Time* (New York, NY: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017); Eduardo Hay, "The Stella Walsh Case," *Olympic Review* 162 (1981): 221-222; Jennifer H. Lansbury, "'The Tuskegee Flash' and 'the Slender Harlem Stroker': Black Women Athletes on the Margin," *Journal of Sport History* 28, no. 2 (2001): 233-252; Jennifer H. Lansbury, "'The Tuskegee Flash': Alice Coachman and the Challenges of the 1940s U.S. Women's Track and Field," in *A Spectacular Leap: Black Women Athletes in Twentieth-Century America* (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 2014), 43-74.

¹⁰ "Seniors," *Tuskeana* (Tuskegee Institute, AL, 1950), 39.

¹¹ See Ann M. Hall, “Alexandrine Gibb: In ‘No Man’s Land of Sport’,” *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 18, no. 1 (2001): 149-172 ; Ann M. Hall, *The Girl and the Game: A History of Women’s Sport in Canada*, 2nd ed. (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2016), xxiv; Joseph Levy, Danny Rosenberg, and Avi Hyman, “Fanny ‘Bobbie’ Rosenfeld: Canada’s woman athlete of the half century,” *Journal of Sport History* 26, no. 2 (1999): 392.

¹² Systemic racism in Canada throughout the twentieth century was difficult to extricate, because while it technically was absent from law, little else could explain the consistent *de facto* racial segregation in housing, schooling, and labour, as well as the sustained collective positioning of Black people at the lowest rung of the socio-economic ladder. And how else might a racially tolerant young nation in great need of immigrants account for the relatively stunted size of the Black (and Asian, for that matter) Canadian population throughout the first half of the twentieth century, if not by a White Canada immigration policy? See Barrington Walker, “Finding Jim Crow in Canada, 1789–1967,” in *A history of Human Rights in Canada: Essential Issues*, ed. Janet Miron (Toronto, ON: Canadian Scholars’ Press, 2009), 88-89.

¹³ Duncan Koerber, “Constructing the Sports Community: Canadian Sports Columnists, Identity, and the Business of Sport in the 1940s,” *Sport History Review* 40, no. 2 (2009): 127.

¹⁴ Jennifer H. Lansbury, *Champions Indeed: The Emergence of African American Women Athletes in American Society, 1930–1960* (Doctoral Thesis, George Mason University, 2008), 3.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 52, 59-60.

¹⁶ This is based on my browsing of issues published between 1923 and 1947. The *Dawn* was published between 1923 and 1973 and despite being the lone Black Canadian newspaper in Canada during the period under study, several of its news items and editorials were American in origin. After careful browsing of each available edition of the newspaper between 1923 and 1947, i.e. from the paper’s inception to the year Jean Lowe left Toronto to study in the US, there was no mention of Jean Lowe or any other Black Canadian female athlete. The *Dawn* scarcely featured sport news, and it did not report on Jean Lowe’s athletic successes, although she appears to be the only Ontarian Black woman athlete who reached national and international recognition during that time. In fact, even stories about men’s sport was unusual, and when sport was discussed, the focus was on major international sport, such as heavyweight champion Joe Louis’ fights. For a thorough analysis of *The Dawn*, see Cheryl Thompson, “Cultivating Narratives of Race, Faith, and Community: The Dawn of Tomorrow, 1923-1971,” *Canadian Journal of History* 50, no. 1 (2015): 30-67.

¹⁷ These comprised of 282 titles comprised within the Archives of Americana’s African American Newspaper series accessible through the Western University library.

¹⁸ “A. Eugenia Lowe Butler: Class of 1950,” Tuskegee University Athletic Hall of Fame, 1985.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*; “Basketball, Archery, Dancing—Just Part of The Show!” *Globe*, April 7, 1936, 9; Eastern High School of Commerce, *Eastern Echo 1936-37, Volume IX* (Toronto: Eastern High School of Commerce, 1937), 79-84.

²⁰ “A. Eugenia Lowe Butler: Class of 1950,” Tuskegee University Athletic Hall of Fame, 1985; Eastern High School of Commerce, *Eastern Echo 1936-37*, 79, 81.

²¹ Eastern High School of Commerce, *1925-1985 Anniversary Echo* (Toronto: Eastern High School of Commerce, 1985), 6.

²² Eastern High School of Commerce, *Eastern Echo 1933-34, Volume IV* (Toronto: Eastern High School of Commerce, 1934), 47.

²³ Eastern High School of Commerce, *Eastern Echo 1936-37*, 78.

²⁴ Hall, *The Girl and the Game*, 123-4.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 77.

²⁶ Eastern High School of Commerce, *Eastern Echo 1936-37*, 78.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ "A. Eugenia Lowe Butler: Class of 1950," Tuskegee University Athletic Hall of Fame, 1985.

³⁰ It does not seem that her siblings (of which there were at least two sisters, one of them close to Jean in age: Vivian Eileen Bradshaw (born 1920) and Dorothy Lowe) attended the high school with her. *Eastern Echo 1933-34*; Eastern High School of Commerce, *Eastern Echo 1934-35, Volume VII* (Toronto: Eastern High School of Commerce, 1935); Eastern High School of Commerce, *Eastern Echo 1936-37*; Eastern High School of Commerce, *1925-1985 Anniversary Echo*.

³¹ In her senior year, she was also a part of the student council. Eastern High School of Commerce, *1925-1985 Anniversary Echo*, 7.

³² James W. St. G. Walker, 'Racial Discrimination in Canada: The Black Experience' (Ottawa, ON: Canadian Historical Association: 1985), 14-15, 18.

³³ Funke O. Aladejebi, "'Girl You Better Apply to Teachers' College': The History of Black Women Educators in Ontario, 1940s-1980s," (Doctoral thesis, York University, 2016), 36-38.

³⁴ Eastern High School of Commerce, *Eastern Echo 1936-37*, 7.

³⁵ Canadian Eurocentrism ensured that White people were more intrinsically connected to the nation's image of itself than Blacks, Asians, or Indigenous peoples. Howard Palmer, "Mosaic Versus Melting Pot? : Immigration and Ethnicity in Canada and the United States," *International Journal* 31, no. 3 (1976): 494.

³⁶ There is no specific mention of the events in which Lowe participated. Eastern High School of Commerce, *Eastern Echo 1936-37*, 81.

³⁷ At Eastern Commerce, student athletes accumulated points "on the basis of enthusiastic participation in athletics activities, outstanding qualities of leadership and an unfailing attitude of good sportsmanship." This rewarded leadership, participation, and achievement in one's respective sport. Being on winning teams like the popular and successful basketball team helped with points, but as described by the Society, participation and leadership were also important elements. The Girls' Athletic Society presented those who successfully accumulated the required amount of points with a crest, also known as an Honour Letter. "Eastern Commerce Holds Commencement Exercises," *Daily Star* (Toronto, Ontario), October 29, 1938, 28; Eastern High School of Commerce, *Eastern Echo 1936-37*, 79.

³⁸ "Track Titlist Crowned at Eastern Commerce," *Globe*, June 1, 1939, 19.

³⁹ This is based upon information in Lowe's Tuskegee Athletic Hall of Fame. It is not made clear what club she was a member of at this time.

⁴⁰ "Adam Beck Playground Scores Third Victory in Girls' Track Meet," *Globe*, March 12, 1937.

⁴¹ That year, as Bobbie Rosenfeld noted, the juniors outshone their senior counterparts, breaking more records than them. "Junior Girls Shine as Seven Records Fall at Ontario Title Meet," *Globe*, July 11, 1938, 15.

⁴² At the Hexathlon's club meet at the West End "Y," she came in second in the hop, step, and jump behind one of the city's best all-around athletes. "Jean Graham Tops Laurels Win Meet," *Star*, April 10, 1939, 11.

⁴³ Bobbie Rosenfeld, "Feminine Sports Reel," *Globe*, June 17, 1939, 16.

⁴⁴ "Track Stars Shine at East Commerce," *Star*, June 1, 1939, 16.

⁴⁵ There is not indication of the racial identities of her teammates. "Queen City League Opens Cage Season," *Star*, January 13, 1940, 13.

⁴⁶ Hall, *The Girl and the Game*, 146.

⁴⁷ Hall, "Alexandrine Gibb," 151.

⁴⁸ Only 33% of the reports mentioning Lowe within the two newspapers were made in the *Star* (86 to 26). Hall, "Alexandrine Gibb," 158.

⁴⁹ In a match in December 1942, Lowe was the high scorer when her team won. A year later, she was still among the team's high scorers. In February against RCAF women, and in December against the Nighters, played at Lowe's old high school. Bobbie Rosenfeld, "Sports Reel," *Globe*, December 2, 1942, 18; Bobbie Rosenfeld, "Sports Reel," *Globe*, December 4, 1943, 17; Bobbie Rosenfeld, "Sports Reel," *Globe*, February 3, 1943, 14; Bobbie Rosenfeld, "Sports Reel," *Globe*, March 8, 1944, 14; "Charlotte Bechtel Sets Scoring Mark," *Star*, January 26, 1944, 11; "Toronto Teams Reach Finals," *Globe*, March 17, 1945, 17.

⁵⁰ In the fall, the team changed its name to the Toronto Malverns, perhaps in association with the neighborhood in which Hope Church was located. This suggests that Lowe's track and field club, the Laurels Ladies, was located in the same area of town, since the club was renamed The Malvernettes, in the mid-1940s. Bobbie Rosenfeld, "Sports Reel," *Globe*, February 19, 1944, 15; Bobbie Rosenfeld, "Sports Reel," *Globe*, December 2, 1944, 14; Rosenfeld, "Sports Reel," *Globe*, January 29, 1945, 14.

⁵¹ Alexandrine Gibb, "No Man's Land of Sport," *Star*, February 10, 1940, 14.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Star*, February 10, 1940, 14.

⁵⁴ The Malverns softball team may also have been associated with the church. The 1943 game was an exhibition games between two teams from different leagues: The Beaches vs the Olympic Ladies' League. "Runs are Plentiful in Beach Contests," *Star*, June 17, 1940, 12; "Charlies Nose Out Parkettes Outfit," *Star*, July 15, 1940, 10; "Sportswear Girls Defeat Croftons," *Globe*, August 2, 1943, 16.

⁵⁵ The Sleepmasters were also a part of the Beaches Ladies' League. "Sleepmasters Win from Donuts, 11-9," *Globe*, July 4, 1941, 15.

⁵⁶ "No Man's Land of Sport," *Star*, July 4, 1941, 16.

⁵⁷ Hall, *The Girl and the Game*, 123.

⁵⁸ Bobbie Rosenfeld, "Feminine Sports Reel," *Globe*, April 21, 1941, 19; "No Man's Land of Sport," *Star*, April 21, 1941, 15.

⁵⁹ See Bobbie Rosenfeld, "Feminine Sports Reel," *Globe*, April 21, 1941, 19; "No Man's Land of Sport," *Star*, April 21, 1941, 15; "Betty Woods, Joan Davis Star at Track Meet," *Star*, February 23, 1942, 15; "Polish Girl Cages Win," *Globe*, February 2, 1942, 16; Bobbie Rosenfeld, "Feminine Sports Reel," *Globe*, March 23, 1942, 16; Bobbie Rosenfeld, "Feminine Sports Reel," *Globe*, July 27, 1942, 16; Bobbie Rosenfeld, "Feminine Sports Reel," *Globe*, September 16, 1942, 18; Alexandrine Gibb, "Jean Lowe Makes Clean Sweep of Ontario Meet," *Star*, July 27, 1942, 13; Bobbie Rosenfeld, "Sports Reel," *Globe*, October 13, 1942, 16; Bobbie Rosenfeld, "Craig Memorial Trophy Awarded to Jean Lowe," *Globe*, October 26, 1942, 20; Bobbie Rosenfeld, "Sports Reel," *Globe*, December 9, 1942, 17; Bobbie Rosenfeld, "Sports Reel," *Globe*, March 4, 1943, 17; "Dorothy Hoy Takes Sprint," *Globe*, July 4, 1944, 14; Bobbie Rosenfeld, "Sports Reel," *Globe*, January 11, 1946, 14; Bobbie Rosenfeld, "Sports Reel," *Globe*, July 30, 1946, 30; Bobbie Rosenfeld, "Sports Reel," *Globe*, October 16, 1946, 15; Bobbie Rosenfeld, "Sports Reel," *Globe*, July 6, 1948, 17; Bobbie Rosenfeld, "Sports Reel," *Globe*, July 14, 1948, 15; Bobbie Rosenfeld, "Sports Reel," *Globe*, July 16, 1948, 17.

⁶⁰ The same meet was described thus in the "No Man's Land of Sport" *Star* column: "Helen Morrison of Lakesides was another title holder title-holder to go down when Jean Lowe of Laurels nosed her out in the 100-metre sprint." It was not attributed to Alexandrine Gibb, so there is no telling whether she was authored the piece. Bobbie Rosenfeld, "Feminine Sports Reel," *Globe*, June 23, 1941, 18; "Bill Kerr Shoots 66 for New Uplands Record," *Globe*, June 23, 1941, 16; "No Man's Land of Sport," *Star*, June 23, 1941, 16.

⁶¹ *Star*, February 23, 1942, 15.

⁶² At this meet, she also broke the standing broad jump Ontario record. Bobbie Rosenfeld, "Feminine Sports Reel," *Globe*, March 23, 1942, 16; "Cleveland Track Team Ties Buffalo in Great Lakes Meet," *Globe*, March 23, 1942, 16.

⁶³ See, for instance, "Police Track and Field Team Defeats Air Force," *Globe*, June 20, 1942, 17; Bobbie Rosenfeld, "Feminine Sports Reel," *Globe*, June 20, 1942, 17; "Watson Dominates Police Meet," *Globe*, July 19, 1943, 15; *Globe*, July 4, 1944, 14.

⁶⁴ The team was not always successful. In a May 1942 meet, it was discovered that Lowe, a senior, had ran on a junior team—the Lakesides Club also had a senior on their junior team. A few days later, the team was disqualified when Lowe stepped on a lane line. But leading into the 1943 and 1944 seasons, the laurels 4x100 relay team were celebrated champions. Bobbie Rosenfeld, "Feminine Sports Reel," *Globe*, May 9, 1942, 17; Bobbie Rosenfeld, "Feminine Sports Reel," *Globe*, May 13, 1942, 14; *Star*, July 27, 1942, 13.

⁶⁵ Alexandrine Gibb, "No Man's Land of Sport," *Star*, July 23, 1942, 16.

⁶⁶ It was later suggested that Lowe had won the maximum number of events possible for a Senior; she had won five out of five event she had entered. *Star*, July 27, 1942, 13; Norma Lipsett, "No Man's Land of Sport," *Star*, September 26, 1942, 16.

⁶⁷ In many meets, Lowe was reported to be the leading points winner for the Laurels, and the Laurels often won. See "No Man's Land of Sport," *Star*, January 29, 1941, 14; "Joan Davis Features Meet," *Globe*, August 4, 1941, 14; *Star*, February 23, 1942, 15; Bobbie Rosenfeld, "Feminine Sports Reel," *Globe*, March 23, 1942, 16; "Cleveland Track Team Ties Buffalo in Great Lakes Meet," *Globe*, March 23, 1942, 16; *Star*, July 27, 1942, 13.

⁶⁸ Bobbie Rosenfeld, "Sports Reel," *Globe*, October 29, 1942, 19.

⁶⁹ Jim Coleman, "By Jim Coleman," *Globe*, August 11, 1943, 14; Bobbie Rosenfeld, "Sports Reel," *Globe*, August 16, 1943, 18; "Laurels to Defend Crown Next Month," *Star*, June 13, 1944, 8.

⁷⁰ "Toronto Tracksters Head for Lakewood," *Star*, August 11, 1943, 12.

⁷¹ *Globe*, September 16, 1942, 18; *Star*, September 26, 1942, 16.

⁷² The Games were quadrennial, and the 1938 games were the second installment of the Games. See chapter one for more.

⁷³ McNulty and Radcliffe, *Canadian Athletics 1839-1992*, 218-232.

⁷⁴ See *Globe*, February 2, 1942, 16.

⁷⁵ No mention was further made of Lowe's job and Rosenfeld did not indicate what the job in question was. Bobbie Rosenfeld, "Feminine Sports Reel," *Globe*, September 7, 1942, 20.

⁷⁶ Bobbie Rosenfeld, "Sports Reel," *Globe*, September 7, 1944, 15; Bobbie Rosenfeld, "Sports Reel," *Globe*, September 6, 1943, 18; Bobbie Rosenfeld, "Sports Reel," *Globe*, September 7, 1943, 15. In late summer of 1944, a Mr. Walter Diamond invited Walsh to a Labour Day even, and the Laurels crowd, specifically Lowe, were expected to make an appearance. Bobbie Rosenfeld, "Sports Reel," *Globe*, September 1, 1944, 17.

⁷⁷ *Globe*, June 17, 1939, 16.

⁷⁸ First place was Alice Coachman; second place was another Tuskegee Institute competitor. The Laurel Ladies' relay team came in second behind Tuskegee. In team scores, the Laurels were fifth. Bobbie Rosenfeld, "Feminine Sports Reel," *Globe*, July 4, 1942, 15; Louise Mead Tricard, *American Women's Track and Field: A History, 1895 Through 1980, Vol. 1* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1996), 262, 263, 264.

⁷⁹ *Globe*, August 11, 1943, 14; *Star*, August 11, 1943, 12; Bobbie Rosenfeld, "Sports Reel," August 18, 1943, 14.

⁸⁰ Nevertheless, Rosenfeld contended that "that Walsh woman" showed no signs of slowing down. At 32, she continued to impress fans of the sport. *Globe*, August 16, 1943, 18.

⁸¹ *Globe*, August 18, 1943, 14. According to McNulty and Radcliffe's compilation, Lowe held the best 1943 times in the 100 yards (11.8) and the 220 yards (26.9), but there was no record the 100 metres times for that year. However, if Lowe did, indeed, run 11.9 seconds, then she was the first since Hilda Strike in 1932 (Los Angeles) than a Canadian woman had registered that time. In 1928, the first year that the 100

metres event was recorded for women, Cook registered 12.0 seconds, in Halifax. McNulty and Radcliffe, *Canadian Athletics 1839-1992*, 207, 212, 225.

⁸² Once again, the team came in fifth place overall, according to Tricard. *Globe*, August 18, 1943, 14. Tricard, *American Women's Track and Field*, 268.

⁸³ Note that the Canadian press interchanged the 440-yards event with the 400m event. Americans were always metres. The "Harrisburg Fliers" mention featured a photograph of four relay member in action. "Treat for Harrisburg," *Globe*, July 4, 1944, 15; *Star*, June 13, 1944, 8; "Harrisburg Fliers," *Globe*, June 27, 1944, 17.

⁸⁴ *Globe*, July 4, 1944, 15.

⁸⁵ Tricard, *American Women's Track and Field*, 272.

⁸⁶ According to Rosenfeld, Coach Foster was not "brimming with confidence" for his athletes in the individual events. He was quoted as saying that he instructed his 200m athlete to just stick to Walsh and hope for no more than second place. Bobbie Rosenfeld, "Sports Reel," *Globe*, July 5, 1944, 15; Bobbie Rosenfeld, "Sports Reel," *Globe*, July 10, 1944, 12.

⁸⁷ See *Globe*, July 4, 1944, 14, in which Lowe came in second in the 100 yards race. In 1944, Lowe had the second best Canadian time of the year in the 100 yards (three athletes had 11.9 and two athletes, Lowe included and listed second, had a 12.1 time), and the second one in the 100 metres. McNulty and Radcliffe, comp. *Canadian Athletics 1839-1992*, 226; "Dot Hoy Outsprints Laurel's Jean Lowe," *Star*, July 4, 1944, 12.

⁸⁸ *Globe*, July 10, 1944, 12.

⁸⁹ "Laurels Brush Up," *Globe*, June 20, 1945, 17.

⁹⁰ Coachman upset new world record holder Walsh. Bobbie Rosenfeld, "Sports Reel," *Globe*, July 2, 1945, 13; "Laurels Take Relay Third Year in Row," *Star*, July 3, 1945, 12.

⁹¹ Immigration document indicate that she left to attend Traphages School of Fashion in New York, although soon after, Rosenfeld announced that she was attending Clark College in Atlanta. *Globe*, January 11, 1946, 14;

The National Archives at Washington, D.C., Washington, D.C., *Manifests of Alien Arrivals at Buffalo, Lewiston, Niagara Falls, and Rochester, New York, 1902-1954*; Record Group Title: *Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1787 - 2004*; Record Group Number: 85; Series Number: M1480; Roll Number: 066, U.S., Border Crossings from Canada to U.S., 1825-1960 [database on-line], Lehi (UT). Accessed online: www.ancestry.com;

The National Archives and Records Administration; Washington D.C., ARC Title: *Petitions for Naturalization, compiled 1912 - 1960*; NAI: 1274123; Record Group Title: *Records of District Courts of the United States*; Record Group Number: 21, Alabama, Naturalization Records, 1888-1991 [database on-line], Provo (Utah). Accessed online: www.ancestry.com

⁹² She was not named as part of the relay team which was set to defend their relay title in Buffalo (NY). Yet, it was reported that she was to meet up with Coach Foster in Buffalo to measure her fitness for some championship events. Bobbie Rosenfeld, "Sports Reel," *Globe*, July 30, 1946, 13.

⁹³ *Globe*, October 16, 1946, 15.

⁹⁴ “Malvernettes Girls Keep Relay Title,” *Globe*, August 5, 1946, 15.

⁹⁵ She had placed 3rd in the 200m event at the indoor championships in April, and Tuskegee was at the top of the team scores. Tricard, *American Women’s Track and Field*, 300.

⁹⁶ Bobbie Rosenfeld, “Sports Reel,” *Globe*, May 27, 1948, 19.

⁹⁷ Bobbie Rosenfeld, “Sports Reel,” *Globe*, June 29, 1948, 19; *Globe*, July 6, 1948, 17; Bobbie Rosenfeld, “Sports Reel,” *Globe*, July 9, 1948, 17.

⁹⁸ Bobbie Rosenfeld, “Sports Reel,” *Globe*, October 21, 1942, 18.

⁹⁹ Bobbie Rosenfeld, “Top Girl Athlete Sought by Branch,” *Globe*, October 20, 1937, 19.

¹⁰⁰ *Globe*, October 29, 1942, 19.

¹⁰¹ A few days later, Rosenfeld corrected her description, which had erroneously qualified Lowe as the Canadian and Ontario 200 metre champion. Bobbie Rosenfeld, “Sports Reel,” *Globe*, October 15, 1942, 18; *Globe*, October 21, 1942, 18.

¹⁰² Bobbie Rosenfeld, “Feminine Sports Reel,” *Globe*, October 1, 1940, 12.

¹⁰³ *Globe*, July 27, 1942, 16.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *Globe*, September 16, 1942, 18.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ *Globe*, October 13, 1942, 16; Bobbie Rosenfeld, “Sports Reel,” *Globe*, October 14, 1942, 18.

¹⁰⁸ *Globe*, October 26, 1942, 20; “Sports Reel,” *Globe*, January 28, 1943, 14.

¹⁰⁹ Ellipses in original. Bobbie Rosenfeld, “Sports Reel,” *Globe*, October 28, 1942, 19.

¹¹⁰ *Globe*, December 9, 1942, 17.

¹¹¹ According to the 1921 census, her father, Lemuel Lowe and his wife Regina Lowe (Jean’s sister Vivian’s mother and, presumably, Jean’s mother), were both born in the West Indies and had arrived in Canada in 1911. 1921 Census of Canada, Ontario, Toronto City, Ward 8, Population Schedule, York East, p. 2 [Reference Number: *RG 31*; Folder Number: 99], dwelling 13, Lemuel, Regina, and Vivian Lowe; digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed March 12, 2018, www.ancestry.ca

¹¹² Marsh wrote the long running *Star* column “With Pick and Shovel.” As of the writing of this work, the trophy continues to be awarded to top athletes in Canada on a yearly basis by a journalistic panel.

¹¹³ Upon crossing in 1945, Lowe declared her intention to reside in the US permanently. Three years after crossing, Lowe declared her intention to become a citizen in 1949 and petitioned for naturalization in 1952, two years after graduating from Tuskegee. Her witnesses were the Tuskegee Athletic Director and the Dean of women. Mobile County, Alabama, *Naturalization Petitions*, Petition record Lowe, No. 2230;

Mobile County, Alabama, *Naturalization Petitions*, Declaration of Intention Lowe, Application No. A6 096-303, Declaration No. 711, certificate of arrival No. 0600-K-3196, records of District Courts of the United States, record Group No. 21, NAI: 1274123, Mobile Petitions and Declarations, 1951 Oct-1957 May (Box 5 Volume 19-20); National Archives and Records Administration, Washington DC. Accessed online: www.ancestry.com

Washington, DC, *Manifests of Alien Arrivals at Buffalo, Lewiston, Niagara Falls, and Rochester, New York, 1902-1954*, record of Jean Alice Mary (aka Alice Maud) Lowe crossing on July 31st 1945, Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1787 – 2004; Record Group No. 85; Series No. *M1480*; Roll No. *066*; The National Archives; Washington, DC. Accessed online: www.ancestry.com

¹¹⁴ *Tuskeana* (Tuskegee Institute, AL: 1950), 39.

¹¹⁵ Mobile County, Alabama, *Naturalization Petitions*, Petition record Lowe, No. 2230.

¹¹⁶ This included Alabama and Georgia.

¹¹⁷ Abbott also personally recruited Coachman to the Tigerettes. Michael D. Davis, *Black American Women in Olympic Track and Field* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 1992), 39-40; Lansbury, “Champions Indeed,” 64, 65.

¹¹⁸ Davis, *Black American Black Women in Olympic Track and Field*, 53.

¹¹⁹ Note that Lowe file the petition in 1952. This and Abbott’s note on Lowe’s whereabouts after graduation suggests that they stayed in touch. Mobile County, Alabama, *Naturalization Petitions*, Petition record Lowe, No. 2230.

¹²⁰ If indeed she was enrolled, Lowe only attended for a year, 1946-1947. In 1988, the College merged with Atlanta University to become Clark Atlanta University. *Globe*, October 16, 1946, 15.

¹²¹ “A. Eugenia Lowe Butler: Class of 1950,” Tuskegee University Athletic Hall of Fame, 1985.

¹²² The *Defender* was a Black newspaper. “These Girls Hope to Compete in Olympics,” *Defender* (Chicago, Illinois), July 10, 1948, 10, col. 2; Tricard, *American Women’s Track and Field*, 300.

¹²³ Fay Young, “Negro Women Will Dominate 1948 U.S. Olympic Track Team,” *Defender*, May 22, 1948, 13, col. 2.

¹²⁴ The School was founded in 1902 and closed in 1971. John Locke Foundation, “Palmer Memorial Institute,” North Carolina History Project, last modified 2016. <http://northcarolinahistory.org/encyclopedia/palmer-memorial-institute/>; *The Palmerite*, Stanley Scott (ed.), Helen Platter, Leon Cooper (assoc. ed.) (Sedalia, NC: Palmerite, 1951), 7, 8, 55; Mobile County, Alabama, *Naturalization Petitions*, Petition record Lowe, No. 2230.

¹²⁵ The Tuskegee Athletic Hall of Fame notes that she also taught Math and English, but this is not indicated in the school’s year book.

¹²⁶ Her husband was Oswald Butler. Following this, it appears that Lowe went by Eugenia Lowe-Butler, and later, as Eugenia Butler. Mobile County, Alabama, *United States Records, Coloured Marriage License Index 1865-1967*.

¹²⁷ “Degrees,” *Press Register* (Mobile, Alabama), June 4, 1973, 29.

¹²⁸ “A. Eugenia Lowe Butler: Class of 1950,” Tuskegee University Athletic Hall of Fame, 1985.

¹²⁹ It appears she also “coached and sponsored majorette and cheer-leading squads,” according to the Tuskegee Hall of Fame. “School Girls Provided Track Thrills,” *Press Register*, May 21, 1978, 41; “A. Eugenia Lowe Butler: Class of 1950,” Tuskegee University Athletic Hall of Fame, 1985.

¹³⁰ The Association was formed in 1958 to promote track and field because the sport was “dead at the time.” Lowe was elected to the board in 1977. “Track Clinic Set at Pillans School,” *Press Register*, March 7, 1978; “Track Clinic Slated,” *Press Register*, March 6, 1978; “MCTFA Programs for Thinclads,” *Press Register*, October 8, 1978, Section G; “Brown to Head Track Group,” *Press Register*, September 16, 1977.

¹³¹ “Many Leaving School Jobs in Mobile,” *Press Register*, June 4, 1980.

¹³² Bobbie Rosenfeld, “Sports Reel,” *Globe*, Jun 29, 1948, 19.

¹³³ “A. Eugenia Lowe Butler: Class of 1950,” Tuskegee University Athletic Hall of Fame, 1985.

¹³⁴ Her best time in the 200 metres that year was obtained in a June Hamilton (ON) meet and was only the 9th best Canadian time. Note that the Kansas City *Plain Dealer* reported Lowe coming in third place in the long jump, while the online record places her in fifth place. McNulty and Radcliffe, *Canadian Athletics 1839-1992*, 230; “Misses Young and Robinson Eye Olympics,” *Defender*, July 17, p. 11; “Tuskegee Team Cops Women’s AAU Title,” *Plain Dealer* (Kansas City, Kansas), July 16, 1948, 4; “USA National Championship, Grand Rapids 1948: Women, Track Statistics,” *Track and Field Statistics*, accessed March 13, 2018.

<http://trackfield.brinkster.net/USATournaments.asp?TourCode=N&Year=1948&Gender=W&TF=T&By=Y&Count=&P=F>

¹³⁵ *Globe*, July 14, 1948, 15.

¹³⁶ Bobbie Rosenfeld, “Sports Reel,” *Globe*, July 28, 1948, 15.

¹³⁷ On July 13, Rosenfeld had written, “Well, what did I tell you about the best bets for Canada’s Olympic women’s track and field team! H’mmm, what did I tell you? My memory seems to have gone blank. Apparently the Olympic track and field selection committee is having trouble with its mind, too. After much debate it finally added the names of Nancy Mackay, Toronto to Malvernnettes, and Elaine Silburn, Vancouver, to the track team... And whatever happend [*sic*] to Ontario’s supremacy in girls’ track and field?... Five Vancouver tracksters on the Olympic team against Toronto’s Viola Myers and Nancy Mackay... Oi, oi, oi!” [Ellipses in original]. Bobbie Rosenfeld, “Sports Reel,” *Globe*, July 13, 1948, 15. See also *Globe*, July 28, 1948, 15.

¹³⁸ The initial track and field women’s Olympic team was comprised of four athletes from Vancouver, one from New Westminster (British Columbia), one from Toronto (Myers from the Malvernnettes), and one from Kelvington (Saskatchewan). Pat Curran, “Olympic Track and Field Athletes Are Chosen After Dominion Trials,” *Gazette* (Montreal, Quebec), July 12, 1948, 18.

¹³⁹ The other members on that team were Viola Myers (of the Malvernnettes), Diane Foster (Vancouver), and Pat Jones (New Westminster, British Columbia). A few years earlier, Jean Lowe had good chances of being a part of this medaling team alongside her old teammates Mackay and Myers. McNulty and Radcliffe, comp. *Canadian Athletics 1839-1992*, 230; “Canada Athletics at the 1948 London Summer Games,” *Sport Reference/Olympic Sport*, accessed March 14, 2018. <https://www.sports-reference.com/olympics/countries/CAN/summer/1948/ATH/>

¹⁴⁰ *Globe*, July 14, 1948, 15.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² “Another Olympic Team ‘Rhubarb’,” *Free Press* (Winnipeg, Manitoba), July 14, 1948, 16.

¹⁴³ *Free Press*, July 14, 1948, 16.

¹⁴⁴ *Globe*, July 14, 1948, 15.

¹⁴⁵ Thorne did not make the team that year, although she made the 1952 Olympics.

¹⁴⁶ Ellipses in original. *Globe*, July 16, 1948, 17.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁴⁸ Hall, *The Girl and the Game*, 170.

¹⁴⁹ Rosella (Thorne) Johnson, interview by Ann M. Hall, August 1, 2000, transcript courtesy of Ann Hall.

¹⁵⁰ *Free Press*, July 14, 1948, 16.

¹⁵¹ *Globe*, July 16, 1948, 15.

¹⁵² “Another Olympic Team ‘Rhubarb’,” *Free Press*, July 14, 1948, 16.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ Note, however, that Silburn had the first- and second-best Canadian results in the broad jump that year, although both records were posted ahead of the trials in Montreal. McNulty and Radcliffe, *Canadian Athletics 1839-1992*, 230.

¹⁵⁵ The top five finalists in the hurdles were all under the 12 seconds mark. Silburn finished 16th in the qualifying rounds, after jumping 5.220m. The top 3 in the final round in that event jumped between 5.695m and 5.575m. “Athletics at the 1948 London Summer Games: Women’s 80 metres Hurdles Final,” *Sport Reference/Olympic Sport*, accessed March 14, 2018. <https://www.sports-reference.com/olympics/summer/1948/ATH/womens-80-metres-hurdles-final.html>; “Athletics at the 1948 London Summer Games: Women’s Long Jump Final Round,” *Sport Reference/Olympic Sport*, accessed March 14, 2018. <https://www.sports-reference.com/olympics/summer/1948/ATH/womens-long-jump-final-round.html>; “Elaine Silburn,” *Sport Reference/Olympic Sport*, accessed March 14, 2018. <https://www.sports-reference.com/olympics/athletes/si/elaine-silburn-1.html>; “Olga Gyarmati,” *Sport Reference/Olympic Sport*, accessed March 14, 2018. <https://www.sports-reference.com/olympics/athletes/gy/olga-gyarmati-1.html>

¹⁵⁶ Ellipses in original. Bobbie Rosenfeld, “Feminine Sports Reel,” *Globe*, March 26, 1948, 19.

¹⁵⁷ This is based on the study and on a search through the *Globe*’s electronic database. With keywords ‘dusky’/ ‘coloured’/‘negro’/‘negress’ & ‘athlete’/‘player’/‘trackster,’ I accessed reports and discussions of athletes other than Lowe.

¹⁵⁸ Jim Vipond, “Leafs Make Deal but Still on Trial,” *Globe*, May 20, 1950, 16.

¹⁵⁹ Ben Carrington, *Sporting Negritude: Commodity Blackness and the Liberation of Failure* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2010), 103.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Alexandrine Gibb, "Richardson Heads for Detroit," *Daily Star*, August 23, 1937, 8.

¹⁶² The *Daily Star*, August 23, 1937, 8.

¹⁶³ Few still were non-athletes. Only a young aspiring nurse was mentioned during the period under study. "Negro Girl Can't Train as Nurse; Mayor is Irked," *Globe*, September 29, 1947, 15.

¹⁶⁴ This was Smith' one and only mention. *Star*, July 27, 1942, 13.

¹⁶⁵ This is a part of the larger concept of colourism among people of colour, theorized to emerge in part from the standardization of Whiteness and the internalization of inferiority (or as Frantz Fanon termed it, the epidermalization of inferiority). This discussion is largely outside the scope of this work, but its acknowledgement is necessary. For more, see Deborah Gabriel, *Layers of Blackness: Colourism in the African Diaspora* (Published by author, 2007); Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York, NY: Grove press, 2008); Juanita Johnson-Bailey, "The Ties That Bind and the Shackles That Separate: Race, Gender, Class, and Color in a Research Process," *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 12, no. 6 (1999): 659-670.

¹⁶⁶ "Negro 'Oomph' Lass 'fairest' in Halifax," *Globe*, September 2, 1942, 16.

¹⁶⁷ This song is titled "Big, Brown, and White Blues." According to author Sterling Brown, the last verse—about being black—was taken from an old vaudeville chorus. Other versions of the saying, also sometimes referred to as a poem, are phrased slightly differently and add another verse:

"If you're White, you're alright.

If you're brown, stick around.

If you're mellow, you're yellow.

If you're Black, stay back."

Russell Ames, "Protest and Irony in Negro Folksong," *Science & Society* (1950): 204; Sterling Brown, "Negro Folk Expression: Spirituals, Seculars, Ballads and Work Songs," *Phylon* 14, no. 1 (1953): 60; Marvin Lynn, Charletta Johnson, and Kamal Hassan, "Raising the critical consciousness of African American students in Baldwin Hills: A portrait of an exemplary African American male teacher," *Journal of Negro Education* (1999): 50. See also: Elizabeth Martínez, "Beyond Black/White: The Racisms of Our Time," *Social Justice* 20, no. 1/2, 51-52 (1993): 22-34.

¹⁶⁸ Ames adds that "Lighter-colored people, at times, transfer and hide resentments against the usually even lighter group called 'whites' by attacks on darker individuals." Ames, "Protest and irony in Negro folksong," 203-204. See also note 130.

¹⁶⁹ For more, see *The Greatest Freedom Show on Earth*, Directed by R.J. Huggins (2015; Ottawa, ON: Orphan Boy Productions & TVOntario), Online.

¹⁷⁰ See Roxy Atkins, "Elmer, You're Goofy: An 'Amazon Athlete' Leaps to the Defense of her Sex," *Maclean's Magazine*, September 15, 1938, 18, 37, 38; Elmer Ferguson, "I Don't Like Amazon Athletes," *Maclean's Magazine*, August 1, 1938, 9, 32, 33.

¹⁷¹ In their work, Yevonne R. Smith and Jennifer E. Bruening note that economic and socialization factors shaped the choice of track and field over any other sport. Jennifer H. Lansbury adds that track and field was

one of the few sports through which Black women could compete and train nationally. Additionally, though it, many women were able to access higher education. Jennifer E. Bruening, "Gender and racial analysis in sport: Are all the women White and all the Blacks men?" *Quest* 57, no. 3 (2005): 335; Yevonne R. Smith, "Women of Color in Society and Sport," *Quest* 44, no. 2 (1992): 235-237; Jennifer H. Lansbury, "Champions Indeed: The Emergence of African American Women Athletes in American Society, 1930-1960" (Doctoral dissertation, George Mason University, 2008), 7, 49, 97. See also Lansbury, Jennifer H. *A Spectacular Leap: Black Women Athletes in Twentieth-century America*. Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 2014; Joseph Mensah, *Black Canadians: History, Experiences, Social Conditions*, 2nd ed. (Halifax, NS: Fernwood Publications, 2010), 198.

¹⁷² Note that Rosenfeld often used a tongue-in-cheek style. She may well have been making fun of all the fuss about the skater. *Globe*, October 16, 1946, 15.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ellipses, capitalization, and bolding in original. *Globe*, August 11, 1943, 14.

¹⁷⁵ The Miss Toronto contest was slightly looked down upon by respectable families, because the girls were often working class and were accused of 'exposing.' This was in contrast to the Miss Beautiful Toronto contestants who were more middle-class and who were required to cover up more ("skirts, sweaters, stockings, and medium sized heels"). Mary Louise Adams, "Almost Anything Can Happen: A Search for Sexual Discourse in the Urban Spaces of 1940s Toronto," *The Canadian Journal of Sociology / Cahiers Canadiens de sociologie* 19, no. 2 (1994): 221.

¹⁷⁶ Coleman had had a long career in journalism before starting at the *Globe*: "Before he arrived at the *Globe and Mail* in 1941, Coleman (1911-2001) worked at the *Vancouver Province*, the *Edmonton Journal*, and the *Winnipeg Tribune*, eventually receiving an appointment to the Order of Canada in 1974 as well as a number of sports and media halls of fame. He took a particular interest in horseracing from an early age, eventually publishing a memoir, *A Hoofprint on My Heart*, about his association with the sport. He also served as publicity director of the Ontario Jockey Club." Koerber, "Constructing the Sports Community," 127, 136.

¹⁷⁷ "Who Said Track Girls Have Masculine Look?," *Star*, July 8, 1948, 18.

¹⁷⁸ Bruce Kidd, *The Struggle for Canadian Sport* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 134. For more on men's influence on the development of women's sport. See also Hall, *The Girl and the Game*.

¹⁷⁹ *Globe*, July 2, 1945, 13.

¹⁸⁰ Other athletes of colour are also designated as such. Examples include Betty Lane and Alice Coachman. August 18, 1943, 14. Bobbie Rosenfeld, "Sports Reel," *Globe*, July 1, 1954, 20.

¹⁸¹ White people are not qualified by race; White is the standard. As Richard Dyer noted, one of the privileges of Whiteness is not to be named, which confers the identity more power. Carl James also indicated that in Canada, Whites are the official "[nondescript] Canadians," only described by ethnicity when necessary, while Blacks are the only group described by colour. Richard Dyer, "The Matter of Whiteness," in *White Privilege: Essential Readings on the Other Side of Racism 2nd ed.*, ed. Paula S. Rothenberg (New York, NY: Worth Publications, 2005), 10; Carl James, "The Paradox of Power and Privilege: Race, Gender and Occupational Position," *Canadian Woman Studies* 14, no. 2 (1994): 48, 51.

¹⁸² As were her White teammates, by virtue of their track and field participation.

¹⁸³ *Globe*, March 4, 1943, 17.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁶ For more on the “Black Athlete” concept, see Ben Carrington, “Introduction: Sport, the Black Athlete and the Remaking of Race,” In *Race, Sport and Politics: The Sporting Black Diaspora* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, Ben Carrington, *Sporting Negritude: Commodity Blackness and the Liberation of Failure* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2010).

¹⁸⁷ Bobbie Rosenfeld, “Sports Reel,” *Globe*, July 3, 1947, 15.

¹⁸⁸ Tricard, *American Women’s Track and Field*, 285.

¹⁸⁹ *Globe*, October 16, 1946, 15. However, according to Tricard, there was no “Lil Cooperwaithe” from Chicago. This may have referred to Nancy Cowperthwaite, from the German-American Athletic Club in Manhattan (New York), who edged out Theresa Manuel (2nd place) and Lillie Purefoy (3rd place) of Tuskegee in the 80 metres hurdles race. Tricard, *American Women’s Track and Field*, 286.

¹⁹⁰ Wiggins, David K. “‘Great Speed but Little Stamina:’ The Historical Debate Over Black Athletic Superiority,” *Journal of Sport History* 16, no. 2 (Summer 1989) demonstrates how theories of Black ‘natural athleticism regularly resurfaced throughout the twentieth century, particularly following perceives resurgences of Black excellence in a specific discipline. Jesse Owens’ achievements at the 1936 Olympiads, for instance, had raised a ‘scientific’ debate as to the physical characteristics of his race which made him so able (160).

¹⁹¹ Since the early twentieth century, Canada was in want of international ambassadors if it hoped to attract immigrants, and sporting success could provide an enviable advantage. The first Aboriginal and Black Olympians to be included on the Canadian team roster did not usher in a new era of racial tolerance, nor did many after them. See Bruce Kidd, “In Defence of Tom Longboat,” *Sport in Society* 16, no. 4 (2013): 515-532; Ornella Nzindukiyimana, “John ‘Army’ Howard, Canada’s First Black Olympian: A Nation-Building Paradox,” *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 34, no. 11 (2017): 1140-1160.

¹⁹² Levy, Rosenberg, and Hyman, “Fanny ‘Bobbie’ Rosenfeld,” 392-395.

¹⁹³ *Globe*, September 29, 1947, 15.

¹⁹⁴ *Globe*, September 29, 1947, 15.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁶ See Flynn, Karen. “‘I’m Glad That Someone Is Telling the Nursing Story’.” *Journal of Black Studies* 38, no. 3 (2008): 443-460.

¹⁹⁷ Among others, see Constance Backhouse, *Colour-Coded: A Legal History of Racism in Canada, 1900-1950* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press: 1999); John Cooper with Ray Lewis, *Shadow Running: Ray Lewis, Canadian Railway Porter and Olympic Athlete* (Toronto, ON: Umbrella Press, 1999); Mensah, *Black Canadians*; Ornella Nzindukiyimana, “Vers une histoire sociale des Noirs en natation au Canada (1900-1970)” (Master’s thesis, University of Ottawa, 2014); James W. St G. Walker, “Race”, *Rights and The Law in The Supreme Court of Canada: Historical Case Studies* (Toronto, ON: Osgoode Society for

Canadian Legal History & Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1997); Robin W. Winks, *Blacks in Canada: A History*, 2nd ed. (Montreal, QC and Kingston, ON: McGill-Queen's Press, 1997).

¹⁹⁸ Until WWII, up to 80% of Black women occupied specific positions in the Canadian labour market as “domestics, mother’s helpers, housekeepers, general helpers, and laundresses.” Patience Elabor-Idemudia, “Gender and the New African Diaspora: African Migrant Women in the Canadian Labour Force,” in *The African Diaspora: African Origins and New World Identities*, ed. Isidore Okpewho, Carole Boyce Davies, and Ali A. Mazrui (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1999), 237. For more, see also Funke O. Aladejebi, “‘Girl You Better Apply to Teachers’ College’: The History of Black Women Educators in Ontario, 1940s-1980s,” (doctoral thesis, York University, 2016); Dionne Brand, *No Burden to Carry: Narratives of Black Working Women in Ontario, 1920s-1950s* (Toronto, ON: Women’s Press, 1991).

¹⁹⁹ Bobbie Rosenfeld, “Feminine Sports Reel,” *Globe*, August 2, 1938, 15.

²⁰⁰ See notes 162 and 163.

²⁰¹ It must be reiterated that race still shaped the socio-cultural, economic, and political reality of Black people in Canada, even in the absence of a system of laws as those found in the US. Notably, Barrington Walker notes that, “social customs and court rulings that allowed individuals the freedom to act in a racially biased manner led many Black Canadians to identify Jim Crow as a continental rather than exclusively US phenomenon.” And, an entry in *The Negro History Bulletin*, in 1948, made note of the fact that “in their dispersed condition the Canadian Negroes are not in a position to do for themselves through churches and schools what the Government fails to provide for them.” Walker, “Finding Jim Crow in Canada,” 81; “The Negro in Canada,” *Negro History Bulletin* 12, no. 1 (1948): 22.

²⁰² Indeed, despite Richardson’s reported departure, the young athlete later lived and worked in Canada. Not all who studied in the US stayed in the US.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION: THE ROAD FROM HERE

1. Summary

Modern sport has long played an integral part in people's lives, interconnected with their social, cultural, political, and economic realities. Crucially, while sport histories may reflect the effects and limits of one's social identity, they also allow us to put the spotlight on a wider range of experiences that illustrate and reflect a more complex, nuanced, and diverse past. In this work, it is especially evident that selected Black women's sport histories expand the history of racialized and gendered people in Canada beyond a narrative of struggle. Amidst inevitable tensions between Blacks and Whites in a Canadian society under patriarchal dominance, emerge a) self-defined narratives of community life, as well b) as one individual's novel account, of being black in Canada through the eyes of the media. This little-studied history of Black women's sport in Ontario reflects a specific standpoint on self, community, and society heretofore unrepresented in the literature. In other words, the stories in this work are narratives of resistance to what could sometimes be hostile circumstances and of people who found spaces in traditionally masculine and White domains to transcend boundaries on being Black and female, however temporary.

Forming the basis of this dissertation is the idea that Black Canadian women's experiences in sport have differed from those of White women, by nature of the unequal access to resources between the two groups of women in a White supremacist settler capitalist nation.¹ Documenting even a fragment of women of colour's sport history in

Canada is to expand the idea of Canada and its history: Black women histories are woven into the fabric of Canada, despite the dominance of White European national historical narrative. Accepting philosopher Henri Bergson's observation that "the eye sees only what the mind is prepared to comprehend"² urges us to 'discover' narratives that focalize the discourse outside of the dominant Eurocentric and male narratives. The nuanced location of events in time, that is, in a specific social, economic, and political context, facilitates an understanding of the past, which may then guide a society in its future.³ In the pursuit of social justice, through historiography, this is a substantial part of the knowledge mobilization. The accounts in this work are aimed at achieving this greater purpose.

Other women of colour, as well Indigenous, French-Canadian, queer, disabled women, and various intersectional identities deriving from region, socio-economic status, religion, and ethnicity, are all a part of myriad socio-cultural experiences which deserve attention, but whose subjectivities are outside the scope of the present work.⁴ The focus in this dissertation has been on understandings of sport by select Black Canadian women in Southern Ontario, between the 1920s and the 1940s. The findings present a previously unstudied perspective on the role of sport in Canada, one that distinguishes the Black Canadian female experience from that of Canadian White men and women, Black men, American Black women, and Indigenous women. An important point to make is how these accounts demonstrate that, notwithstanding the universality of sport, the historical lens is beneficial to emphasize the lack of uniformity in experiences of sport, even within the same community.

The women whose experiences are presented in this work lived at the intersection of race and gender disenfranchisement and their stories reflect the multiplicity of Black histories and women's histories. The findings encourage further exploration that take the literature farther from unilateral generalizations of the sport experiences of groups belonging to diverse categories of oppression.⁵ Black women's stories do not fit into collective stories of Black men or White women, because they are not men or White. Black women's stories are the stories of women who were black and who endured both "crosscutting forces" that established gender and racial norms and shaped their conditions and opportunities in society.⁶ This notion informed the research approach adopted for this dissertation as data analysis was done through a Black feminist lens, by centring the intersectional Black experience. This meant "embracing a paradigm of intersecting oppressions [...] as well as Black women's individual and collective agency within them."⁷ Thus, findings reflected the intertwined nature of the system of dominance at play as conceptualized in the literature. The complexity of Black women's intersectional identities transpires in the variety of narratives present in chapters three and four. Because Black women's lives are both inextricably gendered and racialized, it emphasizes a stance different from that of women and men subjugated by membership in only one subordinate social category, making it difficult to distinguish between race, gender, or class as the principal oppositional force.⁸

This dissertation was designed to present two perspectives on the Black woman's experience in Ontario. Ontario was distinguished by a relatively large population of Blacks in its Southern region. Provincial differences with regards to Civil Rights legislation, population sizes, and racial relational dynamics prohibited the conflation of

histories from various provinces. The two perspectives presented emerged, first, from a study of oral history archives and, second, from a contextual analysis of the press media.

The oral histories of women who were active between the 1920s and the 1940s originally conducted as part of a public history project on life histories were a prime first-hand perspective on community- and school-based sport. These interviews provided a profound information source, given that sport was brought up organically by informants in a way that allowed for the contextualization of their sporting activities within their lives. The accounts are a record of Black Canadian experiences that has greater value in the context of a group with little presence in the historical record. These archives were an untapped research resource, one which represents an opportunity to access Black women's own voices, especially on a topic that has received minimal scholarly and public history attention. Particularly, since the histories were collected between the late 1970s and 1990s, they also provide access to individuals' voices of women who have since died.

It is important to stress that access to historical material about Black women is made difficult by the lack of specific sources in major Canadian archives; even when present, records are buried under broad subject headings that require unusually painstaking investigations.⁹ To confront this scarcity of sources, it was resolved to follow in the footsteps of historians of women by giving women's own words "epistemic privilege."¹⁰ It is especially relevant to the topic at hand because, as historian Ruth Roach Pierson outlines, "Oral history recommended itself as *the* method for rescuing the lives of Black women from [the racial and gender] double [jeopardy] obscurity."¹¹ This approach is done with the understanding that women do not voice their experience outside the

influence of the confines of their socio-political location or outside of dominant grand narrative. The key role of “experience” in women’s socio-cultural studies, added to the fact that “Black women’s subjectivities” in Canada are mainly accessible through what only amounts to fragments of sources,¹² provided a strong rationale for using the Multicultural Historical Society of Ontario’s archived interviews.

The focus on the press-media account of Jean Lowe, an elite amateur athlete in Toronto in the late 1930s and early 1940s offers a second perspective on sport for Black women. The choice of the Toronto *Globe and Mail* and the Toronto *Daily Star* as main sources for Lowe’s account was made on four grounds: a) Lowe was the only Black female athlete featured at length in the newspapers at the time; b) they were two prominent newspapers in Toronto and so had a wide-reaching audience; c) both the *Globe* and the *Star* featured women sport columnists of renown who primarily focused on women’s sport; and d) using at least two sources augments the accuracy of the reports. It is worth underscoring the presence within the two publications of female sport columnists who had been athletes themselves, one of whom was Jewish. Bobbie Rosenfeld’s racial identity is important to note, as her writing suggested that this made her sensitive to prejudice in ways that Alexandrine Gibb (the *Star*’s journalist and columnist), as a White woman, may not have perceived. This is particularly evidenced in the *Star*’s lack of discussion about the 1948 Olympic trials ‘controversy,’ while Rosenfeld wrote about it at length.

Hence, chapters three and four present various understandings of sport and roles of sport, which answers the question of “what is sport?” and “what is it for?” for the Black women featured in this work. But, in many ways, Lowe’s urban context acutely

contrasted with that of the women in chapter three. Lowe's press coverage demonstrated a sustained involvement in competitive sport, while the oral histories uncovered more inconsistent sporting practices, although the latter may have depended on their interviewers. Oral histories also uncovered a perspective on men's and women's relations in the Black community, as they not only passively cheered on the boys, but also played with the boys. The mixed-gender sport as observed in chapter three is not reflected in the gender segregated context of chapter four. It is also understood that the cases profiled in this dissertation may reflect women from a higher socio-economic status (ones that had access to post-secondary education and financial support and stability), suggesting that one can expect more varied stories from even more varied voices, backgrounds, and circumstances. The Black women's stories that emerge, therefore, demonstrate the distinctive combined effects of the two social categories, interspersed with the class factor; it is not an experience based either on race, gender, or even class, but an experience reflective of the sum of all categories.¹³

One major similarity in both narratives was sport's ability to integrate Black women into the mainstream White society, allowing them briefly to obscure the racial order. The otherwise unavailable opportunity to interact and socialize with White students through sport, as Wanda Harding-Milburn explained in her oral history (chapter three), was a notable outcome of participating in school sport. As previously outlined by Karen Flynn, this was a sought-after advantage for young Black athletes navigating primarily White institutions.¹⁴ Even more, Lowe leveraged an exemplary high school athletic record to have an equally successful amateur run, one that informed her education and career. In her case, access to White spaces in de facto segregated communities led to

a ‘way out.’ Once at Tuskegee, Lowe joined a sport structure within which all-Black teams were the norm, a significant change from Toronto. As outlined below, her eventual emigration supports the idea that the presence of minority athletes in the Canadian White-dominated sportscape did not foster, nor reflect, any substantial shift outside of it.

2. Conclusion

2.1 Making It and Making It Out

Historically, venues for socio-economic advancement have been restricted for minority subordinate groups. Even the means of challenging the class hierarchy through sport were often segregated, as evident in the long-standing colour bars and salary discriminations in a range of sports throughout the twentieth century, including boxing, hockey, baseball, and football.¹⁵ Furthermore, resistance to Black women’s access to the education space was a symptom of racism-fueled economic anxiety and the common perception of Blacks as morally corrupt. The latter categorically characterized them as outsiders in that space and effectively limited their professional ascent, which then could alleviate some of the anxiety. This adequately illustrates the constraints of the Black Canadian freedom cul-de-sac referenced by Ida Greaves in her 1930 study.¹⁶ These circumstances also remind us of the role of race and class in determining women’s access to sport and, most importantly, they aid in the understanding of the tolerance of Black women’s participation: Female amateur sport participation, especially that of a few members of an already small racial minority, was unlikely to threaten societal hierarchies. With no apparent venue for sustainable revenue generation through sport, and with limited prospects on the traditional job market, Black women were left with few options.

This provides context for Jean Lowe's emigration and frames the underlying theme of class and access in the oral histories.

As demonstrated throughout this work, sport was one of the few spaces in which exclusion was not actively enforced, especially when considering that White and Black women typically lived in different neighborhoods, attended separate schools and churches, frequented different hair dressers, and sat separately in restaurants and cinemas.¹⁷ This positions sport as a key space for Black and White relations. What is more, Lowe's election to the Laurel Ladies Athletic Club board as treasurer, team captain, and club president are all indications that integration in that space was not superficial. Lowe leadership capacities were appreciated and rewarded in the club. Here, the significance of the notion of sport as a character building activity for racial tolerance in the structure of women's amateur sport becomes apparent. As noted above, character/morality could impact a Black person's socio-economic prospects.

Because both de facto and de jure racial segregation was predicated upon the notion that White people were characteristically different from people of colour, the institutionally enshrined link between sport and good character is necessary for interpreting the particularity of sport. As evidenced in a high school yearbook, young athletes were exposed to this character discourse (chapter four). If athletes could be expected to develop and demonstrate qualities synonymous with good character,¹⁸ then Black athletes could somewhat divest themselves of negative stereotypes and, perhaps, improve their economic chances. As indicated by Wanda Harding-Milburn (chapter three), some young women were aware of this potential. It appears that sporting activity was worth highlighting as a valuable attribute alongside more quantitative records, as

exemplified in the 1947 case of a young woman whose application to nursing school in Owen Sound was thwarted by racism.¹⁹ Consequently, parallels may be drawn between Canadian Black women's athletic experiences and that of American Black women regarding the willingness of the majority White society to hold a door open when it came to athletics.

As in Canada, contact between Black and White Americans outside of the labour or academic context was possible through athletics, even if this occurred from opposite, segregated, teams. Yet, prejudice remained and could even exacerbate the discourse of Black women as Other, by virtue of their entry and considerable success in 'masculine sports.' But the literature on Black women athletes in the US does not offer a narrative wherein people gained in-depth access to the sport 'Whitestream'²⁰ in the manner of Jean Lowe, because they remained on segregated teams. Instead, that literature has highlighted the equally notable ability for Black athletes to reach beyond what their racial and, hence, their socio-economic status, could allow.

Jean Lowe's narrative marked another key departure from the currently dominant American narrative on Black female athletes, with frequent features in wide-circulation White newspapers and, within that, her inclusion in endorsements for female track and field athletes' pulchritude. This deviates from Jennifer H. Lansbury's analysis of Black American women athletes in the same period, wherein only the Black press attempted to combat the triple jeopardy of Blackness, womanhood, and track and field stigma on behalf of the athletes.²¹ As Lansbury notes, the White American press generally ignored the accomplishments of Alice Coachman and her contemporaries and, as a result, Black

sportswriters took it upon themselves to champion them. These writers particularly devoted columns to defending their femininity.

It is necessary to comment on the contrast between the racialized individual's ease of access to the sporting domain and resistance to access in other public spheres, such as educational institutions. As previously discussed, especially in connection to chapter three's accounts, sport represented one of the few areas within which racial and class lines could be blurred for individuals, however ephemeral, in a de facto segregated society. Another side to this coin was that racist notions of Black femininity facilitated Black women's successful access in sport and, simultaneously, distorted the interpretation of that success. Indeed, a post-colonial construction of a self-contradicting image of Black women's bodies as mannish, hyper-sexual, untamed, and lacking (White) heterosexual appeal, meant less opposition to their participation in traditionally masculine disciplines, but fostered dismissal of their prowess.²² Since track and field was socially constructed as incompatible with a hegemonic (Eurocentric) idea of femininity early in the twentieth century, the sport's female champions walked a fine line between propriety and the amazon stereotype.²³ Jennifer Lansbury makes note of the fact that, because of the stereotypes, there was conscious effort to teach Black athletes 'good manners' in order to disperse the myth that Black women lacked any decorum or were masculine women.²⁴ Their socio-economic success outside of sport depended on it.

In Black sportswriters' efforts to argue for the legitimacy of Black women as track and field athletes, they focussed on athletes' femininities to the point of doing more harm than good. These writers equated women's athletic abilities with sensuality and explained their performance with mystifying reports about 'feminine secrets.'²⁵ Attempts

to defend the athletes rested on the notion that they retained their heterosexual appeal, thereby depicting them in a sexualized light. The ensuing image only reinforced the notion of Black women's loose morals, which could only undermine the women as athletes and as women. This distorted the counter-image which the Black press was attempting to build in reaction to White dailies' indifference and scorn, and reinvigorated long-standing prejudice and stereotypes.²⁶ It is, of course, conceivable that the task of fighting against the substantial masculinization of the Black female athlete in American society may have corrupted their efforts.

Through the reification of normative gender dichotomy, therefore, the Black press' discourse diverged from Jim Coleman and the Toronto *Star's* plights on behalf of Jean Lowe (and her peers). In the Black Americans' defense for the female athlete, they "created a different, though still gendered, sensual image of these athletes" for their community.²⁷ On the other hand, Canadian writers focussed on athleticism, even when their pleas were pulchritude-related. In those moments, Lowe's representation may tentatively qualify as colour-blind, as it merely depicted her alongside white peers without distinction. Moreover, not only was Lowe praised for her performance in widely-read White newspapers, her advocates positively presented her as a feminine woman. This was a balance that American Black sportswriters struggled to reach for their own athletes.

Nonetheless, despite the triumphant inclusion of Lowe in Toronto, a question remains with regards to her apparent unobstructed breakthrough in the Canadian 'Whitestream.' That is, what to make of the fact that, right at the end of the Second World War (WWII), the young athlete left Toronto to establish herself permanently in

Jim Crow America? While she remained in touch with her running club's coach and made the trip back in 1948 for the Olympic trial, she requested an American citizenship in the early 1950s, and established and built a career in Mobile, where she later pursued a graduate degree at the University of South Alabama. In Toronto, she was competing in a very different context than the one she joined later in her career. But, more than that, the Tuskegee experience represented more than just joining an All-Black team: it was a vastly appealing socio-cultural setting, which did not compare to the Canadian failed promise. As outlined below, the contrast was in the access to educational institutions, the culture of those institutions, and access to a larger Black community.²⁸

As a student athlete, Lowe balanced studies, work, athletics, and other extracurricular activities.²⁹ Being a Black athlete and a member of one of the most successful teams in the country may not have been perfect in the socio-cultural context of the US, but it conferred many significant social advantages. The most notable of these is that Cleveland Abbott not only constructed a triumphant and record-breaking program, but that he especially nurtured it through a supportive team environment. As Lansbury writes, "The mentoring and sense of family that the teammates fostered for one another was central to Abbott's success in sustaining the Tigerettes' powerhouse stature in the world."³⁰

The Institute's mission aided Abbott in receiving such laud. In addition to education, the Institute's community conferred its members with "cultural enrichment and personal fulfilment" opportunities.³¹ Propelled by a purpose to elevate the condition of Black Americans, the culture of the school was precisely designed to introduce young Black people to a middle-class lifestyle.³² Lastly, the sense of community at the Institute

helped in the development of a strong alumni network across the nation, which, in fact, was nicknamed the Tuskegee Machine.³³ It readily becomes clear that tenure at Tuskegee was as beneficial to those who, like Lowe, came from communities with much less systemic support and welcoming societal infrastructure, as it was to those who, like Alice Coachman, came from the American South's underclass.³⁴

In this context, the distinction between life in Toronto and life in Tuskegee emerges as a highly significant factor to consider when attempting to comprehend Lowe's move to, and subsequent settlement in, Alabama. In the press, Bobbie Rosenfeld and her Montreal colleague Myrtle Cook briefly hinted at instances of racism in Canadian sport, whether they centred on Lowe or not. Certainly, Lowe stood out as one of the few, if not the only, track and field elite athlete of colour in the province from the late 1930s to the 1940s. On the one hand, appreciation of Canadian racial relations of the day allows us to acknowledge the particularity and the level of Lowe's integration within her club and the Ontario sporting community. Alternatively, that same context also underscores the need for a young talented black athlete to emigrate and seek a post-secondary education in Jim Crow Southern US; at Tuskegee, and as a member of the Tigerettes, Lowe was not Other, something she had been throughout her track and field career in Toronto since high school and, generally, as a Black person in Ontario.

If one agrees with the assertion that Northern/Canadian racial equality is a myth, then, one must submit that Lowe was not somehow fleeing to a 'worse fate.' It should equally be underscored, writes historian Barrington Walker, that there is evidence of earlier (antebellum) efforts to maintain a 'natural' racial hierarchy in the North, which challenges the notion of Jim Crowism as a quintessentially post-bellum Southern US

invention.³⁵ A deeply etched racial altruism fiction in the collective Northern imaginary has obscured contradicting accounts, which renders a simplistic understanding of North American racial relations. This obfuscation has especially been present in Canada, owing to an earlier abolition of slavery and to the subsequent lack of segregationist legislation. The latter was particularly key in forging a non-racist image. However, Walker critically observes,

Jim Crow in Canada must be considered within the broader context of a British Empire that was generally committed to a brand of White supremacy in support of evolutionary and historicist racial ideas (though not racial equality) and a Canadian state which, in stark contrast to the United States, granted Black citizens the franchise and ‘full legal protections.’ These legal protections did not reflect the reality of the lowly social and economic status of Black Canadians.³⁶

Concurrently, the importance of being amongst members of your own community, especially in greater numbers, has been demonstrated to mitigate some of the issues of living under overt racism, which may explain one’s choice of Alabama over Toronto. For instance, in an anthropological study of Black women in Harlem, in 2005, Leith Mullings found that respondents placed a high importance on “perceived cultural, historical, and social advantage of living in a Black community.”³⁷ On that account, those women sought a measure of protection from racism, following a strength-in-numbers principle. What Mullings observed about women making the choice to stay in Harlem, despite unfavourable socio-economic implications, could be reflected in Jean Lowe’s emigration from Toronto. The implications here are that ‘clement conditions of systemic discrimination’ found in Toronto could be more difficult to face without strong community support than overt conditions south of the Mason-Dixie line. While Lowe’s move to the South represented an objective educational and professional opportunity, its qualitative benefits cannot be underestimated, especially in the face of an elusive

egalitarian society north of the border.³⁸ Therefore, despite a successful and acclaimed athletic career, Lowe crossed the border in 1946 not only to pursue an education, but also in search of true community kinship.³⁹ This she could readily find in the Tuskegee ethos described above.

Ida Greaves, in her 1930 writing about ‘Negroes’ in Canada, notes that Black people were likely to establish themselves in the United States (US) in search of better conditions (see chapter two).⁴⁰ With little socio-historical analysis of Black Canadian emigration in the first half of the twentieth century,⁴¹ anecdotal evidence about athletes in that period is compelling. Soon after Lowe, Montreal’s Rosella Thorne also transitioned to the US in the early 1950s. However, later in the decade, when Canadian track and fielder Valerie Jerome was offered a scholarship to Tennessee State University by rising sprint champion Wilma Rudolph’s coach, she declined. Jerome was very cognizant of the fact that she had little to no hope for another offer, unlike her brother, yet she congratulates herself on the decision. She explains her concerns at the time: “If Vancouver was bad, I could not imagine surviving in the violent segregated environment of the American South, a place I still have never visited to this day.”⁴²

A similar thought may have occurred to Lowe, but to different effect. Jerome and her family had experienced overt racism in Canada, while it is unclear whether Lowe or Thorne did to that extent; that personal history seems to have had significant bearing on Jerome’s decision. Certainly, Jerome is slightly melancholic about how, at the 1960 Olympics, Rudolph had significantly improved with the Tennessee Tigerbelles program, leaving her far behind. But, since 1946, when Lowe had left, Canadian provinces had made important strides in anti-discrimination legislation.⁴³ Additionally, her decision was

made in the aftermath of the inception of the Civil Rights Movement in the mid-1950s, which included the violent Emmett Till case. The tide had turned since Lowe's day.⁴⁴

Importantly, it is estimated that not all who crossed the border were athletes; one of Lowe's sisters eventually settled in Massachusetts.⁴⁵ All crossers did not settle permanently in the US, either, as was the case with coach Dolores Shadd (chapter three), for instance.⁴⁶ But, ultimately, between 1920s and the 1940s, individuals had limited opportunities in an underdeveloped Canadian track and field women's program and, as Black persons, they faced additional basic hurdles of access to other institutions (see chapter 2). Given the points above, going south of the border when given the opportunity was a sensible decision.

2.2 More Than an Athlete

The main distinction between Lowe's single account and the oral histories is in the diversity of experiences. Of particular interest is the integration of women into men's baseball teams as players, which reflects the prominent cases of the three women who played for the Negro Leagues in the US in the 1950s.⁴⁷ It appears that, given the position of sport as a space for challenging of racial discrimination, Black men and women were differently linked through sport (notably baseball) than were White men and women. Mixed-gender sport participation, in fact, suggests that the relation between men and women athletes in the Black community espoused more fluid gender segregation norms in sport. Even more, oral histories demonstrated that women were represented in various capacities in sporting spaces, as athletes, spectators, coaches, and umpires. As black histories have previously been limited to athletic achievement, this presents sport within

the Black community in a new light. It is true that Black women in Canada have been relatively more visible as athletes, especially in the recent past. However, with an understanding of women's positions within their communities in the pre-1950s era, it is important to incorporate the diversity of roles they played. Notably, while women as athletes are the focus of myriad North American sport histories, chapter three suggests that there is an important dimension yet to be explored of women as sport spectators.

Most significant is the function of women's spectating in Black communities of Southern Ontario. More than casual pastimes at local sandlots, being in the stands offered an opportunity to engage and challenge any arising tensions caused by the crowds' reactions to Black players. The struggle against intolerance did not stop with the men on the field, but extended to the stands, making women more than just members of the cheering crowd. Moreover, women's enthusiastic support for the men in their communities: (i) represents an important perspective on gender relations within the community, (ii) adds another dimension to their nurturing of the community, and (iii) offers a glimpse into their yet to be investigated role in the success and uplifting of Black male athletes. While standing in the background, they may have had one of the best seats in the house. The trouble remains in uncovering that perspective. For instance, to this author's knowledge, no analysis to date has explored Black Canadian female spectators' experience of Jackie Robinson's time in Montreal with the International League (1946-1947). As suggested by Beulah Cuzzens' account (chapter three), White spectators behaved differently around male spectators than they did around women.

Of course, not all members of the community were athletes or involved in sport, especially given that not MHSO informants raised the topic of sport. But, in small

communities it is suggested that through relatives and friends who were active sport participants, sport was an important element of social life. Organized sport required the participation of several members of the community to enable the success of the teams' endeavours. Note, for instance, the Buxton women's team described in chapter three, wherein mothers helped by making the athletes' bloomers. The Buxton team thrived despite some objection to women in sport in the 1920s. Some of the women of the athletic Harding family are also cases in point, as they remained avid supporters of their family members and friends despite not being athletes themselves. Support from the sidelines was not simply about being a fan; community gathering was also an essential element. Sport was a regular item on social agenda for many, whether it opened the door to the wider White society or facilitated internal connections within the Black community.

The task of the historian, in this case, is complicated by how much most Black women's accounts presented in this work have largely faded from memory. Most especially, Jean Lowe, a champion athlete during her time, did not leave an imprint upon Black Canadian sport history. Much of this is due to her performance in the context of WWII, which eclipsed a promising career. Nevertheless, her account is not any less significant. Her departure raises a question about the loss of talent in Canadian women's track and field to the US, not to mention softball and basketball's losses. Indeed, her later career as a high school coach and sport administrator in Mobile meant that Canadian track and field did not benefit from the legacy of one of its most prominent athletes. Lowe was not the only loss; Rosella Thorne went on to compete at the 1950 and 1954 Empire Games, as well as the 1952 Olympiads, then left Canada soon after. In spite of

that, the extrication of these narratives is not in vain; their dissemination still has pertinence and the power to contribute to the history of the Black experience, which imbues them with significant value.

2.3 Limitations and Future Research

The oral histories represent some of the most direct and compelling records of Black women's own views of their experiences of sport. Despite being hindered by their reliance on memory, they nevertheless give direct access to women's own voices. The instability of memory⁴⁸ is not a principal concern herein, given the work's aim and positioning as a re/constructionist exercise. This explanatory paradigm works under the assumption that socio-economic and political context already skews individuals' perspective, and, therefore, makes no positivist assumption about the past. Similarly, the newspapers represent a most compelling record of Jean Lowe's position within Toronto's sporting scene of the 1930s and 1940s. These records locate Lowe within a White Toronto and, through the records' lens, we observe how she navigated this social world. The caveat is that, in addition to being a secondary source, race (and possibly class) distanced the press media records from their subject. The two perspectives presented together give rich insight into the place and integration of sport in Black women's lives.

Furthermore, by asking *what* Black Canadian women's experiences of sport were in Southern Ontario, there is no intent to speculate at length about the psychosocial meanings attached to those experiences (i.e., the key individual internal motivations behind social people's social behaviour and engagements). In fact, under the assumption that, at its core, experience denotes a deeper subjective knowledge accessible only

through the subject under study themselves,⁴⁹ the ‘how’ or ‘why’ questions could not be answered at length through newspaper archives and archived oral histories. The sources hide part of the meaning that these activities held for the women who experienced them. Nevertheless, through discourse analysis, we can answer the ‘what’ question and reach a contextualized understanding of the social significance of sport for those women. This distinction is crucial.

It is also worth noting that, as a medium, oral histories provide the most direct source to recovering a history from the perspective of a group with little social history record, particularly pertaining to the topic of sport. Oral histories were especially effective, given that this dissertation is not an examination of the ‘ways of remembering.’⁵⁰ Yet, the pre-recorded nature of the oral histories selected for this dissertation constitutes a few limitations: a) the topic of discussion was not sport per se and, thus, interviewers may not have given their informants the opportunity to discuss sport; b) interviews were conducted decades after the events under study, which puts into question ‘exactitude’ of the memories. But, this does not undermine its legitimacy: In his doctoral dissertation about memories of deindustrialization and football in the United Kingdom, Neil Stanley observed that “people remember what they believe to be important, or what society has conditioned them to believe is important, not strictly what the historian believes consequential.”⁵¹ Oral histories, whether first- or second-hand, are not a ‘pure’ record; the reported experience is always removed from the social context in which it occurred, was interpreted, and through which it was given meaning. Therefore, interpretation of oral histories necessitates an acknowledgement of how dominant and hegemonic values in that time and place mediated one’s understanding of an experience,

regardless of whether they are collected first- or second-hand. It is also acknowledged that faulty memory is an important factor in remembering, a factor mitigated by a focus on qualitative, rather than quantitative, data.

With regards to the provenance of the oral histories utilized herein, it must be acknowledged that the MHSO's public history project originally aimed to record and preserve what informants deemed important about their lives as Black women in Ontario. But, from some informants' individual choices to discuss sport, there emerges the notion that sport particularly stood out in their lives, an aspect that may have been hidden in an oral history specifically about sport. In other words, the fact that sport was still raised as a topic in the interview, regardless of the fact that the topic was not sport, reveals a lot about its place in their lives which could have been hidden in a sport-specific interview. Informants who discussed sport suggested that their sporting experiences were as important to them as others that constituted their lives (i.e. those centred on work, family, and community).

Additionally, given that sport was not a focus in the interviews, it is important to recognize that 'silence' about sport cannot be overlooked as an indication of sport's absence in an informant's life.⁵² Equally of note is the fragmented way in which informants recalled and related their own memories, while they were more elaborate with regards to men's sport. While this is partly due to how interviewers handled the subject (with inconsistent follow-up questions), informants may have interpreted their sporting experiences as secondary to men's sport. Any 'silence' in the oral histories possibly reflects an interpretation of sport as unimportant in the context of their life stories and that is a question for future analysis. I cannot infer that sport was unimportant for those

who did not make explicit mention of it. Furthermore, a study of mixed gender sport is necessary to determine the prevalence and nature of women on men's teams. Related questions that were beyond the scope of this study are also raised by Dolores Shadd's coaching and umpiring, that is: Did women only coach women's teams? And, what does the positioning of women as gatekeepers reveal about gender relations in sport spaces?

Following that, future analysis should endeavour to conduct interviews with members of various other communities and gather local and personal stories, as well as archives, to supplement the shortcomings of our public archives. In view of the geographic location of this study, we must heed historian Afua Cooper's warning not to lose track of the fact that "Ontario is not Canada."⁵³ For instance, the Ontario context is much different from that of other localities wherein Black people resided, such as Nova Scotia. Indeed, one can find sociological assessments from the 1940s that established a parallel between the two provinces' populations.⁵⁴ But, while interpretations are divided about the exact extent of the effects of race on Blacks' socio-economic status, there was consensus as to the sociological differences between Ontario and Nova Scotia populations, due to diverging histories and provincial legislations.

Hence, future inquiry would do well to expand the scope of study to other provinces, by virtue of the different historical background of Black people in Quebec, the Prairie Provinces, British Columbia, and the Maritimes who lived under separate socio-economic and political conditions and given the difference in those regions' population sizes. Particularly, an account of Rosella Thorne, who may have been the first Black Canadian female Olympian, would be enlightening. It is also estimated that focused

attention on separate localities within Ontario would yield different accounts, in view of the demonstrated lack of uniformity between urban and rural experiences.

In that same vein, it is also important to examine instances wherein Canadians presented track and field athletes as pulchritudinous, beyond Jean Lowe's case. Note, for instance, that, while the media commonly described Lowe by skin colour, they also widely outlined her athletic achievements more than was the case for feminine idol Barbara Ann Scott.⁵⁵ A future analysis comparing major White athletes in 'feminine sports' and Black athletes in Canadian media would provide a compelling study. This is especially of interest due to the dissonance between Lowe's narrative and Black female athletes' characterization. It appears, indeed, that the Canadian context delineated black femininity in the sporting arena differently, thus, requiring further investigation.

In closing, it must be reiterated that the main objective here is to step away from a male and White centric lens in Canadian sport history, and endeavour to open the field for a range of stories about sport. This was done by articulating representations from the margins that are connected to traditional narratives and serve to augment them. This is in keeping with the Black Canadian scholars' call to question grand narratives and the finite nature of historical 'fabrications,' and emphasize the contradictory and diversified interpretations of accounts.⁵⁶ Accepting sociologists Anton Allahaar and James E. Côté's assertion that every society's identity foundation partly rests on its (often facile) creation myths,⁵⁷ it is incumbent upon historians to question, demystify, complicate, and nuance grand narratives to combat epistemological narrowing and homogenization of national narratives.

Moreover, the history of sport allows us to understand and analyze wider society, especially one, such as Canada, which has adopted a superficial image of social justice as compared to its more infamous neighbor. The long presence and persistence of Blacks and other non-Indigenous people of colour in the country has had the power to undermine the notion of a historically White Canada and, yet, that notion remains mostly indelible. It is within this framework that historical accounts which focus on people of colour thriving, working, struggling, and playing resists the normative and dominant narrative about what Canada has been, what it currently is, and what it may become.

Notes

¹ As R.R. Pierson notes, "...while we have mobilised difference in experience to redefine the criteria of historical significance, we have done so in the context of power relations, for it is not simply a matter of men's different experience. What is crucial, rather, is that the most important constituent of that difference has to do with dominance. In the feminist challenge to male historical writing and teaching, it has been women's difference, particularly difference in experience that has been to the fore." Ruth Roach Pierson, "Experience, Difference, Dominance and Voice in the Writing of Canadian Women's History," in *Writing Women's History: International Perspectives*, eds. Karen M. Offen, Ruth Roach Pierson, Jane Rendall, and the International Federation for Research in Women's History (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1991), 87.

² Chip Souba, "Leading Again for The First Time," *Journal of Surgical Research* 157, no. 2 (2009): 139.

³ This is especially predicated on the idea that, since the past is static, it and can reflect us a more tangible image of phenomena than the present, which is ever-changing. Thus, only through a historical lens can we understand current phenomena while avoiding distortions. Without an understanding of the past, there can be no appreciation of changes that have occurred, making it difficult to imagine a different future. W. H. McDowell, *Historical Research: A Guide* (London: Pearson Education, 2002), 3, 5.

⁴ It must be noted that, amongst those groups of women, some may not just be defined along the lines of those specific identities, but that like Black women, they may find themselves at the intersection of two or more social identities.

⁵ Kimberle Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics." *University of Chicago Legal Forum* (1989): 151-152.

⁶ *Ibid*, 155-156.

⁷ Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2002), 273.

⁸ Crenshaw, “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex,” 155-156.

⁹ Karen Flynn, “‘I’m Glad That Someone Is Telling the Nursing Story’,” *Journal of Black Studies* 38, no. 3 (2008): 444-445.

¹⁰ Roach Pierson, “Experience, Difference, Dominance, and Voice” 85.

¹¹ Emphasis in original. Roach Pierson, “Experience, Difference, Dominance, and Voice” 91.

¹² Flynn, “‘I’m Glad That Someone Is Telling the Nursing Story’,” 444-445.

¹³ Crenshaw, “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex,” 149.

¹⁴ Flynn, *Moving Beyond Borders*, 53.

¹⁵ See Lawrence M. Kahn, “Discrimination in Professional Sports: A Survey of the Literature,” *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* 44, no. 3 (1991): 395-418.

¹⁶ Ida C. Greaves, *The Negro in Canada*, McGill University Economic Studies; No. 16. (Orillia, ON: Packet-Times Press for the McGill University Department of Economics and Political Science, 1930), 60.

¹⁷ See Clayton James Mosher, *Discrimination and Denial: Systemic Racism in Ontario’s Legal And Criminal Justice Systems, 1892-1961* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 118; Barrington Walker, “Finding Jim Crow in Canada, 1789–1967,” in *A history of Human Rights in Canada: Essential Issues*, ed. Janet Miron (Toronto, ON: Canadian Scholars’ Press, 2009), 81-98; James W. St. G. Walker, *Racial Discrimination in Canada: The Black Experience*, booklet no. 41 (Ottawa, ON: Canadian Historical Association (1985).

¹⁸ Ann M. Hall, *The Girl and the Game: A History of Women’s Sport in Canada, 2nd Edition* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2016), 77, 123-4. Eastern High School of Commerce, *Eastern Echo 1936-37, Volume IX* (Toronto: Eastern High School of Commerce, 1937), 78.

¹⁹ “Negro Girl Can’t Train as Nurse; Mayor is Irked,” *Globe*, September 29, 1947, 15.

²⁰ Andreas Krebs uses the term to qualify the the dominant White society whose power derives from the colonial past. Andreas Krebs, “Hockey and the Reproduction of Colonialism in Canada,” in *Race and Sport in Canada: Intersecting Inequalities*, eds Janelle Joseph, Simon Darnell, and Yuka Nakamura (Toronto, ON: Canadian Scholars’ Press, 2012), 83.

²¹ Jennifer H. Lansbury, *A Spectacular Leap: Black Women Athletes in Twentieth-Century America* (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 2014), 63.

²² For a historical assessment, see for among others Anton L. Allahar, “When Black First Became Worth Less,” *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* XXXIV, 1-2 (1993): 44. For a contemporary demonstration of the enduring stereotypes’ effect on Black female athletes, see, among others, Cynthia M. Frisby, “A Content Analysis of Serena Williams and Angelique Kerber’s Racial and Sexist Microaggressions,” *Social Sciences* 5 (2017): 263-281; James McKay and Helen Johnson, “Pornographic Eroticism and Sexual Grotesquerie in Representations of African American Sportswomen,” *Social Identities* 14, no. 4 (2008): 491-504; Nancy E. Spencer, “Sister Act VI: Venus and Serena Williams at

Indian Wells: "Sincere Fictions" and White Racism," *Journal of Sport & Social Issues* 28, no. 2 (2004): 115-35; Jaime Schultz, "Reading the Catsuit - Serena Williams and the Production of Blackness at the 2002 US Open," *Journal of Sport & Social Issues* 29, no. 3 (2005): 338-57; Patricia Vertinsky and Gwendolyn Captain, "More Myth than History: American Culture and Representations of the Black Female's Athletic Ability," *Journal of Sport History* 25, no. 3 (1998): 532-561.

²³ Linda D. Williams, "An Analysis of American Sportswomen in Two Negro Newspapers: The *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1924-1948 and the *Chicago Defender*, 1932-1948" (PhD dissertation, The Ohio State University, 1987), 7; Lansbury, *A Spectacular Leap*, 45.

²⁴ Lansbury, *A Spectacular Leap*, 61.

²⁵ Later, Wilma Rudolph contended with similar subversions, where her image of a "lady who happens to run fast" was sexualized in the media. Lansbury, *A Spectacular Leap*, 64, 65, 117, 260.

²⁶ Vertinsky and Captain, "More Myth than History," 547-48.

²⁷ Lansbury, *A Spectacular Leap*, 65.

²⁸ It is unclear whether Lowe was able to access Canadian institutions. However, it is clear that during her time (in the 1940s), it was still common for Blacks to be refused entry to some schools in Ontario because of their racial identity (see section 7). Also, Lowe does not appear to have enrolled in school in the years she spent in Toronto after high school.

²⁹ She was a part of a singing group and a member the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority. *Defender* (Chicago), Mar 25, 1950, 10, col. 4.

³⁰ Jennifer H. Lansbury, "Champions Indeed: The Emergence of African American Women Athletes in American Society, 1930-1960" (Doctoral dissertation, George Mason University, 2008), 72.

³¹ Lansbury, "Champions Indeed," 59-60.

³² According to Lansbury, when Booker T. Washington founded the Institute in the late 1800s, he intended for it to accomplish what he estimated that the Reconstruction has failed to do: allow Black Americans to be economically dependent. Lansbury, "Champions Indeed," 66.

³³ Lansbury, "Champions Indeed," 67.

³⁴ According to Lansbury, Coachman and her siblings used to pick cotton to supplement their parents' modest income and she was introduced to a middle-class. Lansbury, "Champions Indeed," 61.

³⁵ Barrington Walker, "Finding Jim Crow in Canada, 1789-1967," In *A history of Human Rights in Canada: Essential Issues*, ed. Janet Miron (Toronto, ON: Canadian Scholars' Press, 2009), 85-86.

³⁶ Walker, "Finding Jim Crow in Canada," 88-89.

³⁷ Women were found to be willing to endure the stressors of poverty that came with living in Harlem, because it mean being able to live amongst other Black people. Leith Mullings, "Resistance and Resilience: The Sojourner Syndrome and the Social Context of Reproduction in Central Harlem," *Transforming Anthropology* 13, no. 2 (2005): 82.

³⁸ Walker especially underscores the lack of equality in the Canadian justice system, which lacked any ‘racelessness.’ Walker, “Finding Jim Crow in Canada,” 89-90. For more on the ‘raceless’ Canadian legal see the works of Constance Backhouse and James St. G Walker on the racist legal history in Canada. Constance Backhouse, *Colour-Coded: A Legal History of Racism in Canada, 1900-1950* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press: 1999); James W. St G. Walker, “Race”, *Rights and The Law in The Supreme Court of Canada: Historical Case Studies* (Toronto, ON: Osgoode Society for Canadian Legal History & Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1997).

³⁹ As explained by Anton L. Allahar, primordial attachment to social groups is a key component in individuals’ decision making and are perceived to shape the economic realities of the members of a said group. Anton L. Allahar, “The Politics of Ethnic Identity Construction,” *Identity: An International Journal of Theory and Research* 1 no. 3 (2001): 199.

⁴⁰ Greaves, “The Negroes in Canada,” 48; Harold, H. Potter, “Negroes in Canada,” *Race* 3, no. 1 (1961): 51.

⁴¹ Afua Cooper, “Constructing Black Women's Historical Knowledge,” *Atlantis: Critical Studies in Gender, Culture & Social Justice* 25, no. 1 (2000): 45.

⁴² Valerie Jerome and Stuart Parker, “The Conservative Vision of the Amateur Ideal and Its Paradoxical Whitening Power: The Story of Valerie Jerome in 1950s and 1960s Canadian Track and Field,” *Sport in Society* 13, no. 1 (2010): 15.

⁴³ This includes provincial level human rights policies and a revision to the Immigration Act. See chapter two.

⁴⁴ In the summer of 1955, Till, a 14-year-old boy from Chicago, was murdered by two White men while visiting relatives in Money (Mississippi). After the teenager reportedly whistled at a White woman in a public place one afternoon, he was kidnapped from his uncle’s house and brutally murdered for it by two White men. The funeral and trial (in which his murderers were acquitted) drew the ire of the Black American community and marked an important turning point in the decade that gave momentum to the Civil Rights Movement. Bruce Adelson, *Brushing Back Jim Crow: The Integration of Minor-League Baseball in the American South* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1999), 153.

⁴⁵ “Vivian Bradshaw,” *Boston Herald Notices*, accessed February 22, 2018, <http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/bostonherald/obituary.aspx?page=lifestory&pid=158738695>

⁴⁶ An investigation into patterns of emigration is beyond this work’s scope and I acknowledge that this is a convenience sample.

⁴⁷ As the accounts in the oral histories occurred before or around 1950s, this suggests that there would not have been much surprise at the Negro League’s gender integration. This also offers insight into gender relations in Black communities. The three women, Toni Stone, Mamie “Peanut” Johnson, Connie Morgan, joined the Leagues in 1953 and 1954. For more on this, see Tracy Everbach, “Breaking Baseball Barriers: The 1953–1954 Negro League and Expansion of Women's Public Roles,” *American Journalism* 22, no. 1 (2005): 13-33.

⁴⁸ Neil Stanley, “The Ruin of the Past: Deindustrialization, Working-Class Communities, and Football in the Midlands, UK 1945-1990” (Doctoral dissertation, The University of Western Ontario, 2017), 30.

⁴⁹ Roach Pierson, “Experience, Difference, Dominance and Voice,” 83.

⁵⁰ Stanley, "The Ruin of the Past," 30.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² That the oral histories used for this study were not collected as a methodology to answer a research question or for the purpose of a specific study represents an advantage. They were collected with no analytic objective, but rather, in order to "recognize Ontarians from every background." Furthermore, interviewers followed a life history pattern, which allowed the narrators to engage in subjects on their own accord in an effort to reflect on their childhoods, young adulthood, and adult lives during the interview. Interviews thus conducted by non-historians may have blindsides concerning aspects of the informants' lives. Sport is not a sensitive personal subject along the lines of sexuality and other taboo or traumatic subjects and, therefore, any omission concerning experiences of sport indicate memory loss or lack of investigation of those experiences. It should not be assumed that interviewees who did not bring up sport did not have sport experiences, nor that those who did exhausted the subject. For instance, Wanda Harding-Milburn only minimally discussed her track and field, basketball, and golf playing days, yet, according to a niece and a nephew, she also participated in a women's baseball team during WWII and was quite the track star. Hence, archived oral histories are fragmented and incomplete, but, in this, they are no different from all other historical evidence or from original oral histories. They remain a legitimate source of evidence. What is more, they are a valid source for answering the research question herein. This study's exploratory objective also justifies use of archived oral histories, as the findings present an entry point for future studies in this area about this group's experiences in sport. Multicultural History Society of Ontario, *Ontario's African Canadians, 1865-1915* (Toronto, ON: Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 2000), 1.

⁵³ Cooper, 2000, 47

⁵⁴ See "The Negro in Canada," *Negro History Bulletin* 12, no. 1 (1948): 5, 19-22; Fred Landon, "The Negro in Canada," *Negro History Bulletin* 4, no. 7 (1941): 149-150, 158-160, 167; Ruth Danenhower Wilson, "Note on Negro-White Relations in Canada," *Social Forces* 28, no. 1 (1949): 77-78.

⁵⁵ Bobbie Rosenfeld, "Sports Reel," *Globe*, October 16, 1946, 15.

⁵⁶ See Boulou Ebanda de B'Béri, Nina Reid-Maroney, and Handel Kashope-Wright, eds., *The Promised Land Project: History and Historiography of the Black Experience in Chatham-Kent's Settlement and Beyond* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 33.

⁵⁷ Anton L. Allahar and James E. Côté, *Richer and Poorer: The Structure of Inequality in Canada* (Toronto, ON: James Lorimer & Company, 1998), 3, 33, 23, 24.

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