

ICE IN THEIR VEINS: HOW BLACK PLAYERS PERSEVERED THROUGH
HOCKEY'S HISTORY OF DISCRIMINATION

by

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Master of Science
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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my mother and father. To my dad, Gene, for encouraging me in all my endeavors, and for continually reminding me – even in the most difficult times – to “never quit before the miracle.” To my mom, Mary, for providing the best example of how to love others without judgement, for being selfless and forgoing her own pursuits to provide me every opportunity to succeed.

I’d also be remiss to not dedicate this to some of the men who helped keep me alive through combat and the mental strife that resulted from it. Sam Griffin, Phil Rizzuti, Jacob Bonano, Fila Rodriguez, Hiram LaChapelle, Billy Marrero and Joe Morris—I’m forever grateful. *Semper Fidelis.*

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

NHL: National Hockey League

NHA: National Hockey Association

PCHA: Pacific Coast Hockey Association

WHA: Western Hockey Association

ABSTRACT

ICE IN THEIR VEINS: HOW BLACK PLAYERS PERSEVERED THROUGH HOCKEY'S HISTORY OF DISCRIMINATION

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George Mason University, 2018

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This thesis describes the history of discrimination encountered by Black hockey players in the National Hockey League. Hockey's history of racial discrimination is substantial, yet the sport's popularity, when compared to professional baseball, basketball, or football, has relegated the conversation to a status deemed less important. Allowing player stories to be dismissed as insignificant is dangerous to the diversity in the game. Because sports serve as a reflection of society, this negligence can ripple outward, impacting lives outside of sport as well. This thesis was designed to serve as a platform for players to tell their stories; and in doing so, this research will serve as an instrument of change in the conversation of acceptance and diversification in hockey.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

In January 1958, Willie O’Ree, of Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada, became the National Hockey League’s (NHL) first Black¹ player (White, 1997), an accomplishment on par with Jackie Robinson breaking baseball’s color barrier a decade earlier. Even more impressive of an accomplishment, O’Ree managed this feat (and experienced success) while hiding the fact that his right eye had been 95% blinded two years before his NHL debut after being hit by a puck (McGourty, 2007).

Despite his accomplishments, O’Ree’s career was marked and tainted by a myriad of reprehensible episodes of racial discrimination. As a Black Canadian, O’Ree experienced the worst forms of racism throughout cities in the United States, playing through black cats and cotton balls tossed onto the ice while remaining an easy target of heinous fan ridicule. “Go back to the South” and “Why aren’t you picking cotton?” were, according to O’Ree (2016), some of the jeers he heard from fans.

Hockey’s acceptance of Black players after O’Ree’s breakthrough was not remotely what was experienced in Major League Baseball following the debut of Jackie Robinson. Although it was a drawn-out integration process—not every baseball roster would feature a Black player until 1959—Major League Baseball teams did add other African Americans to rosters following Robinson’s debut in 1947. (Larry Doby and Hank

¹The term Black, instead of African American, will be used throughout this paper in order to be inclusive of international players of African descent.

Thompson also made their MLB debut in 1947; O’Connell, 2007.) The National Hockey League, however, would go a full 14 years after O’Ree’s last NHL game in 1960 before the next Black hockey player made an NHL team, when Mike Marson was drafted 19th overall by the Washington Capitals during their inaugural 1974 season (White, 1997).

Val James became the first Black American-born hockey player to play in the NHL in 1981. He spent the majority of his career playing in the minor leagues in cities like Erie, Pennsylvania, and Rochester, New York. During one particular minor league game in an opposing city, James found himself in the penalty box, a familiar residence for a player with a reputation as an enforcer and one considered “a revered and feared fighter” (Sommerstein, 2015). The penalty box, or “sin bin” as it is affectionately known among players and hockey aficionados, is a remote glass enclosure on the side of the ice opposite the team benches and is entirely surrounded by fan seating, an element of fan exposure unique to hockey. Given the proximity to opposing fans, players from visiting teams can expect to be taunted, and in the past, players have talked back to fans, sprayed water bottles over the glass in the direction of fans, or in a select case, even fought with the unruly spectators (Brown, 2001). The taunting experienced by Val James, however, was unlike anything endured by the vast majority of his fellow players, and for one reason: Val James is Black.

While seated in the sin bin during one particular game, a fan took hockey heckling to a disgusting level by tossing a toy monkey with a noose around its neck over the glass and into the box (Sommerstein, 2015). Despite the odious nature of this act, it would unfortunately not be an isolated one. James would experience a direct onslaught of

innumerable, unimaginable episodes of hatred by fans and opponents. Bananas thrown onto the ice, hideous slurs uttered seemingly every few seconds, and adolescents carrying watermelons engraved with “Val James” are just a fragment of the horrors he experienced (Sommerstein, 2015).

Hockey’s history suggests that Val James was not alone in confronting racial taunts (Drake, 2014), as other Black players have shared similar experiences, but being one of the few during any given time was extremely daunting. According to James (2015), “There was no one else in the building that looked like me, either on the ice or in the stands. As a Black man in a White sport, I was all by myself.” Throughout the seldom-discussed history of racial discrimination in professional hockey, Black hockey players have faced a formidable uphill psychological battle in a game considered to be, as James phrased, “a White sport” (James & Gallagher, 2015).

Statement of the Problem

There is ample literature that explores racism in baseball, football, basketball and soccer, but a dearth of research discussing racism in hockey. (Recent literature exploring racism in other sports will be explored in Chapter 2.) A deficiency of information can create the dangerous illusion that these problems do not actually exist in hockey. Furthermore, the limited exposure of hockey throughout parts of North America has relegated the stories and experiences of players like Val James and Willie O’Ree to a status of lesser importance. To change the perception of Black hockey players, it is critical for their *current* narrative, as well as their historical narrative, to be made exponentially more recognizable.

To date, minimal progress has been made to combat racism and increase diversity in professional hockey. Grassroots efforts are being undertaken by individual teams to encourage expansion of the game into non-traditional communities, but until 2016, nothing of substance has been initiated on a national or league-wide scale. Prior to the 2016 Bridgestone NHL Winter Classic between the Boston Bruins and Montreal Canadiens, the NHL partnered with the Ross Initiative in Sports for Equality (RISE) to raise awareness on matters of racial discrimination and work toward overcoming them. The RISE mission states:

Founded in 2015 by Miami Dolphins owner Stephen M. Ross, the Ross Initiative in Sports for Equality (RISE) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to harnessing the unifying power of sports to improve race relations and drive social progress. Led by an unprecedented alliance of professional sports leagues, organizations, athletes, educators, media networks and sports professionals, we use sports to promote understanding, respect and equality (Ross Initiative in Sports for Equality, n. d.).

The partnership's first step was to produce a public service announcement, featuring current and former players from the Canadiens and Bruins, issuing declarations that racial discrimination of any kind will not be tolerated (Jhaveri, 2015). Unfortunately, this effort has done little to create conversation or increase exposure to existing forms of racial discrimination. Furthermore, the announcement of the partnership, as well as the public service announcement, received minimal media coverage despite its strategic placement at one of the NHL's high-profile events, the Winter Classic. Perhaps the effort

will gain traction with time, but even as of March 2017, a simple web search of “NHL RISE” yields only the announcement of the partnership and the PSA, with no results since those published in December 2015.

Help, however, has come somewhat in the form of hockey’s growth into non-traditional markets. Tampa and Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, Glendale, Arizona, Raleigh, North Carolina, Los Angeles, Anaheim, and San Jose, California, Dallas, Texas, Nashville, Tennessee, and Las Vegas, Nevada, all have current NHL franchises. Auston Matthews, a native of Scottsdale, Arizona, and of Caucasian and Hispanic descent, was the first overall pick in the 2016 NHL Draft. Because of the NHL’s growth into Arizona, a non-traditional market, Matthews grew up attending Coyotes games, and the NHL now has a budding superstar.

The 2016-17 Nashville Predators unexpectedly reached the 2017 Stanley Cup Finals after making the playoffs as the lowest seed in the Western Conference. They eventually lost in six games to the Pittsburgh Penguins, but being on a national stage brought attention to the feverish hockey craze sweeping through the country music-dominated scene of Nashville, Tennessee. Throughout the playoffs, hockey pundits marveled at how enthusiastic—traditional northern hockey markets often scoff at expansion in southern cities—Nashville fans were about their club (Horgan, 2017). That type of expansive passion provides hope that, as was the case with Auston Matthews, younger and more diverse generations of hockey players will emerge as the game is embraced by young fans in non-traditional markets.

Despite the aforementioned semblance of diversifying participation in the sport, the following demographic data will reveal that progress had been made at nowhere near the rate of other sports. In the National Football League's 2014-15 season, 68.7% of rosters were comprised of African American players (Lapchick & Robinson, 2015), and in the 2015-16 National Basketball Association season, 81.7% of rosters were made up of people of color, a 5% increase from the previous season (Lapchick & Bullock, 2016). NHL rosters, meanwhile, currently have 50 players from Sweden, 35 from Finland, 34 from Russia, 31 from the Czech Republic, 12 from Slovakia, 11 from Switzerland, 9 from Denmark, 8 from Norway, 7 from Germany, and 3 from Austria, among the primary European national makeup of the NHL (QuantHockey, n. d.). Many of these countries possess a deep-rooted history of racism and discrimination (Haynes, 2012). Russia, for example, has been described as "a deeply racist country that holds minorities in open contempt" (Boutilier, 2014). With so many current NHL players coming to North America from such countries, it is easy to discern that the league climate for Black players, even today, isn't promising. While roster construction in hockey may never reach the level of diversity that has been achieved in football, basketball or baseball—baseball has seen a dramatic decline in Black participation, while the percentage of Asian and Hispanic players has soared—a sense of genuine equality and belonging is what continues to be absent and what must be pursued.

Despite efforts by trailblazers like O'Ree, as of March 2017, there are only approximately 25 Blacks playing in the National Hockey League; and there have only been 90 who have played at least one NHL game in the League's 101-year history ("List

of Black NHL players,” n. d.). (The NHL celebrated its centennial January 1, 2017.) To understand that fact contextually, there are 30 NHL teams, with each team carrying a roster size of 23 players (Hockey Operations Guidelines, 2017). That means only 3.3% of the 690 active NHL players are Black. The distinguishable lack of diversity is nearly identical in terms of which fans consume the sport. According to a 2013 Nielsen report, “92 percent of NHL viewers are White and only three percent Black” (Judd, 2015).

Although the barriers broken by players like Willie O’Ree and Val James are historically significant, the popularity and notoriety of their stories and the stories of others like them pale in comparison to that of Jackie Robinson and other stars of major North American sports. Out of the four major sports (football, baseball, basketball, hockey), the popularity of hockey is seldom viewed on the same plane as the others. In fact, in 2013, hockey ranked sixth in popularity among adults in the United States, behind pro football, baseball, college football, auto racing, and professional basketball (Costello, 2014). This popularity scale impacts the rate at which literature on the race dynamic in the NHL is produced and consumed.

One need not look further to see the neglect of hockey’s diversity than the annual Racial and Gender Report Card produced by The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport (Tides). Tides issued the following statement regarding the Report Card:

The Racial and Gender Report Card (RGRC) is the definitive assessment of hiring practices of women and people of color in most of the leading professional and amateur sports and sporting organizations in the United States. The report considers the composition – assessed by racial and gender makeup – of players,

coaches and front office/athletic department employees *in our country's leading sports organizations* [emphasis added], including the National Basketball Association (NBA), the National Football League (NFL), Major League Baseball (MLB), Major League Soccer (MLS) and the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA), as well as in collegiate athletics departments (The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport, 2017).

The NHL, despite being one of the big four professional leagues in the United States, is not even addressed in this definitive list, nor is it included among 2016 reports or in previous years.

Purpose of the Study

Hockey being significantly less mainstream than the other three sports has created a dynamic in which the tribulations faced by not only former, but current Black hockey players as well are either ignored or given significantly less attention. This study attempted to remedy the current dearth of information on the trials encountered by Black hockey players by amassing a collection of rarely explored player narratives. Doing so showed how, despite having this problem masked by matters misguidedly deemed more popular in the public eye, Black hockey players displayed perseverance, dedication and bravery in the face of continued oppression.

Bringing to light the racial injustices faced by Black players throughout hockey's history was long overdue. Stories and information discussed throughout this study should be consumed by hockey's already-existing community, as well as those oblivious to the history of the sport. Throughout history, sport has served as a microcosm of society. As

such, incidents occurring during a given game can often reflect greater issues being experienced by communities outside of sport. The players featured in this research have not only endured a battle for equality in everyday life, but have had to face the same battle in their recreational endeavors as well to gain footing in a white-dominated sport.

Research Questions

Using critical race theory as a guide, this research study's goal was to address the aforementioned deficiency in information sharing and general knowledge. The study sought to answer:

1. What are the adverse and positive experiences of players of African descent in the NHL?
2. How have these experiences impacted their participation in hockey?
3. How have these experiences affected their perception of the sport?
4. What strategic initiatives can improve the representation and experiences of players of African descent in the NHL?

Significance of the Study

Exposure to this information is vital. Race relations in North America have recently been at the forefront of social and political conversation, as the schism between human beings seemingly broadens every day (Thompson & Clement, 2016). Meanwhile, similar problems and histories of inequality are being and have been encountered by Black hockey players that play throughout North American cities, yet little to no discussion has been conducted on these matters. Sports are a microcosm of society; therefore, addressing these issues provided the reasoning behind this study, as doing so

has the potential to permeate into the life outside of sports as well. As mentioned, various grassroots initiatives have been taken by select teams in their local communities, yet efforts on a national/international scale have been minimal compared to other sport organizations.

The Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), for example, has hammered home the “Say no to Racism” campaign since its implementation in April 2006 (FIFA, 2011), vehemently denouncing racism by fans and players whenever a noteworthy incident occurs. The reason for the lack of discussion on racism in hockey, however, is certainly not a result of the gap between platforms (i.e., professional sport or athlete versus lower middle-class families), because an overwhelming wealth of attention was paid to Colin Kaepernick and other National Football League players protesting inequalities and police brutality (Wagoner, 2016).

Much of the current hockey literature observes the game’s origins in Canada (or argued otherwise), and its subsequent spread to northern U.S. cities such as New York, Detroit, Chicago and Boston. The experience of Black hockey players and the struggles they have encountered, though, is a topic long neglected in academic research despite the topic’s continued relevancy in the modern game. Previous discussions have been conducted through forums such as local news, personal memoirs or video accounts, yet large-scale academic research remains lacking.

Outline of Thesis

The goal of Chapter 1 was to detail the negligence of the public and sports world in terms of understanding and acknowledging the past and present issues of racial

discrimination encountered by Black hockey players. The popularity of the sport—minimal compared to the other major American sports—has relegated the aforementioned conversation to a category less pertinent, a dangerous dismissal and ignorance of some of the worst forms of human behavior. The minimal appreciation and understanding of hockey's problems with racial discrimination created a necessity for this research.

Chapter 2 begins by assessing the heavily contested origins of the sport, and includes an account of the game by one of its earliest participants, Charles Darwin. The rarely examined chronicle of the Colored Hockey League in the Maritimes is subsequently analyzed. The League in the Maritimes existed from 1895 until 1925, and its participants contributed innovations to the sport that are staples of today's game. Next, the 101-year history of the National Hockey League is explored, from its genesis and first games in Canada, to the "Original Six" years (1942-1967), to the first League expansion, and to its modern format.

Chapter 3 contains the methodology that will be used to approach this research. It will explore why using a narrative approach will provide a platform for the stories of Black hockey players, and the impact these stories can have.

The results of the narrative analysis and a discussion are found in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 provides concluding thoughts regarding the study. Finally, the epilogue features a telling excerpt from interviewee, "Pierre Giroux."

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Chapter one explained that the purpose of this study is to tell the stories of Black hockey players who have persevered in the face of discrimination. Currently, there is a lack of academic literature addressing racism endured by Black hockey players. This project aimed to remedy the deficiency of research by providing a platform for players to voice their experiences, thereby challenging the narrative—or the complete absence of an existing narrative—that racism is a minimal issue, or even not an issue at all. Chapter two will explore a recent history of racism in professional sports to show the relevance of the issue. This will be followed by an exploration of the historical evolution of hockey, as well as current hockey literature.

Issues of Racism in Sport

Incidents of racism have always taken place in sport. Even recently, racism in sport has been brought to light in the media. On June 1, 2017, LeBron James spoke out against racism in America after his home was vandalized with a racial slur spray-painted on his driveway gate (Blankstein & Silva, 2017). Less than a month earlier, Baltimore Orioles outfielder Adam Jones was subjected to racist taunts by fans in Fenway Park and had peanuts thrown at him when coming off of the field. Making the situation even worse were media members and fans who accused Jones of fabricating the incident. In a video on the players-only publication, *The Players' Tribune*, Jones responded to the doubters

saying, “Well, what I’d say to people is to come play center field and be in my shoes. That’s all I have to say... They don’t listen to what I have to listen to. Just come be in my shoes and your perspective in life will change drastically” (Perez, 2017, para. 4).

Recent literature has highlighted the prevalence of racial discrimination in sport similar to the incidents experienced by Jones and James. Hylton and Lawrence (2016), for example, discuss backstage racism among high-ranking sports officials, while specifically exploring the heinous actions of former Los Angeles Clippers owner Donald Sterling. “Backstage,” in this case, refers to acts of racism behind closed doors, of which Donald Sterling frequently engaged. During one particular incident, Sterling’s girlfriend recorded their conversation, and the tape featured numerous racist remarks about African Americans. The authors concluded that, while addressing frontstage racism—or racism expressed in public—is vital, advocates for equality should be equally mindful of racial ideologies imposed or expressed in private confines, thereby being able to resist it at its source.

Lee and Cunningham (2013) conducted a study in which they observed two controlled groups of college students, one group of white Americans at a college in the United States and the other a group of South Korean students at a university in South Korea. The authors sought to observe racial prejudice and anxiety of each student group as they spent time around Black students. Specifically, the authors observed the interactions of the students within a sports setting. They found that sports served as a method to break barriers and debunk stereotypes, and the more time students spent with

each other in this setting, the less conscious the students were of the concept of self and the more intergroup anxiety diminished.

Fenelon (2017) delved into the increasingly controversial topic of racism in the form of professional teams utilizing Native American mascots, exploring the origin of various team names during periods of institutional racism and how the society in which these teams play deny hundreds of years of colonial conquest. Fenelon claimed the majority of Native Americans find mascot and team names racist, and that media does not paint a true picture of the opinions of Native peoples. The book goes on to further analyze how the emergence of Native mascots came following a period of perceiving the Native as an enemy, and how that perception impacted the implementation of team names.

The perpetuation of racial stereotypes in the media has long been a relevant form of racism in sport. For a long time, the media openly discussed the ability of Blacks to play quarterback in the National Football League because there was an existing belief that they lacked the intelligence. With a 42-10 Washington Redskins victory of the Denver Broncos in Super Bowl XXII, Redskins quarterback Doug Williams, who is Black, “punctured a hole in the longtime invisible barrier that prevented blacks from playing positions of intelligence and leadership” (Plaschke, 2013, para.4). During post-game interviews, Williams still had to answer questions from reporters about his race and the corresponding intelligence factor. This, despite having just won the biggest game of his life on football’s most celebrated stage. It was this pattern of thinking that led to the

firing of long-time CBS sports broadcaster, Jimmy “The Greek” Snyder, who was quoted as saying:

The black is a better athlete to begin with, because he’s been bred that way.

Because of his high thighs that go up into his back. And they can jump higher and run faster because of their bigger thighs. This all goes back to the Civil War, when, during the slave trading, the slave owner would breed his big black to his big woman so that he would have a big black kid. That’s where it all started.

(Solomon, 1988, para.15).

Another increasingly relevant platform for racist behavior—social media—is investigated by Farrington and colleagues (2015), as they discussed specifically how social networking websites like Facebook and Twitter are shaping racism in sports. Instant online communication allows hate speech to be published to millions of people around the world. With that, the authors discussed the extent that social media is providing expanded platforms to spread and create racist ideologies. Additionally, Farrington and colleagues recognized that sport organizations, such as FIFA, have targeted racist fan behavior at sporting events. But while efforts to curb racism at sporting events have been at least moderately successful, the authors note that the venue-based success does not actually indicate the elimination of racism, but instead suggests a migration. Social media, the authors said, is a primary venue for excommunicated fans to spew hate speech and extremist ideals.

Racism among fans in English football was analyzed by Cleland and Cashmore (2016). These authors surveyed 2,500 English football fans on the extend of racism in the

sport, and found that 83 percent of the survey participants viewed racism as being culturally embedded within the sport. In terms of why these ideologies have persisted into the modern game, the authors found that consideration of class, education, and historical notions of white superiority have remained a part of English football culture.

Coakley (2017) explored the multitude of ways in which race and racial ideology influences sport participation and consumerism by looking at the role of various minority populations in sport, the way media influences sport, how to manage diversity, the process of integrating positions of power, eliminating racial and ethnic exclusion, and more. Many of the concepts highlighted in Coakley's research is discussed further in Chapter Four of this research project.

Despite the abundance of research on racism in sport, like the topics mentioned above, discussion regarding racism in hockey remains noticeably absent. Incidents like that experienced by Adam Jones in Fenway Park are far from isolated. The fact that he was compelled to address such ludicrous accusations proves that racism is not only alive and well in sport, but that many consumers are willfully ignorant to its existence, something reflected on a larger societal scale as well. Hockey, a less popular sport in America, experiences issues just like those endured recently by James and Jones, but with less response by those covering the sport in the lower 48. This chapter's subsequent sections will examine hockey's history, current hockey literature and academic literature addressing racial discrimination and complexities in hockey.

History of Hockey

The history of hockey's origin is hotly contested. Extensive research exploring the sport's history has been undertaken by a number of scholars, including Garth Vaughan, a retired surgeon and author-historian. Vaughan's (1999) research claimed that the sport of hockey began in Windsor, Nova Scotia, although it did not begin as hockey. From his thorough examination of the sport, Vaughan found the following:

Ice Hockey was not invented, nor did it start on a certain day of a particular year. It originated around 1800, in Windsor, where the boys of Canada's first college, King's College School, established in 1788, adapted the exciting field game of Hurley to the ice of their favorite skating ponds and originated a new winter game, Ice Hurley. Over a period of decades, Ice Hurley gradually developed into Ice Hockey.

Though there is nothing that specifies the year the sport originated, accounts like those offered by Vaughan are widely accepted to be the true story of hockey's birth. The only difference in other accounts are claims that the sport began in either Kingston, Ontario; Halifax, Nova Scotia; Montreal, Quebec; Deline, Northwest Territories; or Niagara Falls, Ontario. Recently, however, a book titled *On the Origin of Hockey* (2014) was published, in which three hockey historians (and members of the Society for International Hockey Research), Carl Giden, Patrick Houda, and Jean-Patrice Martel, challenged everything previously known about the sport's origins. Their work claims that hockey began in Britain, not Canada, and even had a famous scientist as one of its early participants.

Before publishing his most famous work, *On the Origin of Species*, Charles Darwin apparently enjoyed playing the game of hockey in his down time during the 1820s, something he described in a letter (dated March 1, 1853) written to his son, William Erasmus Darwin. ““My dear old Willy,’ the naturalist wrote. “Have you got a pretty good pond to skate on? I used to be very fond of playing Hocky [sic] on the ice in skates...”” (Proteau, 2014). Darwin was not the only significant British figure who enjoyed the sport; King Edward VII and Albert, Prince Consort to Queen Victoria often participated. Additionally, Giden, Houda, and Martel discovered the origin of the name, “hockey.” In “the first games in England, the puck was made from a cork bung that was commonly used as a stopper in beer casks; at that time, Hock Ale was a popular drink. Put the two together and you can see how the word came into the common vernacular” (Proteau, 2014).

With the publication of recently discovered information and research, the debate of hockey’s origin has heated up once again. What is not up for debate, however, is that hockey is a staple of Canadian culture, and there is a devotion to the sport by Canadians that is almost sacred. Blake (2010) described this cultural importance of hockey throughout Canada, whether through playing, coaching, or watching. Blake noted that Canadian fans, considering the sport to be their own, ascribe various cultural meanings to the game, essentially turning sport into patriotic myth.

Similarly, Lorenz (2016) delves into hockey’s role in Canadian society and culture by examining the sport through newspaper coverage between 1894 and 1907. By analyzing the cultural significance of the sport through the lens of early media, Lorenz

affirmed the notion that hockey is a Canadian essence. This approach, coupled with further analysis of hockey's history, provided insight into the development of regional rivalries, the scope and impact of media coverage at the time, community representation, and how violence meandered its way into the game's foundational pillars. Furthermore, Lorenz confirmed that the mass production of similar media narratives about the sport during that time period helped the Canadian national audience gain shared understandings and experiences, cementing hockey's place in Canadian culture.

McKinley (2009) provided a series of personal accounts of the origins of the sport, dating back to when it was played outdoors, and navigates a timeline up through the modern game to dissect how the sport has evolved into a multibillion dollar industry played by millionaires. McKinley also reviewed past participants who helped mold the game into what it is today, as well as legendary stories of great Canadian victories—both in international play and domestic—throughout hockey's history, tales that spurred on a sense of cultural pride and promoted a national bond with the sport.

The Colored Hockey League. In the 1890s, all-Black teams from towns in Nova Scotia began playing each other. Organized by Black Baptist ministers and intellectuals, the games were originally intended to be an outreach method to attract young Black men to Sunday worship, with those in the church promising games between churches following Sunday services. In 1900, with interest in the sport among Nova Scotia's Black population soaring, the Colored Hockey League in the Maritimes was created. This league would last until the mid-1920s (1895-1925), when "racism, World War I, and dramatic changes in the Nova Scotian economy all played a part in the League's demise.

The formation of the National Hockey League and its growing popularity in Canadian cities inevitably played a part of the Colored Hockey League's collapse as well.

Nonetheless, the Colored Hockey League of the Maritimes changed the way hockey was seen and played in early Canada" (Ito, n. d.). In the first written account of this particular part of hockey history, Fosty (2008) details the league's origins in Halifax, and how the league's players influenced the game and style of the National Hockey League, which would not come into existence until 22 years after the formation of the Colored Hockey League in the Maritimes. Fosty also claimed that the first player to ever use the slapshot was Eddie Martin of the Halifax Eureka. More innovations were copied by white players and never attributed to their Black architects, including the practice of goalies going down on the ice to stop a puck, versus a strictly stand-up style. Although the Colored Hockey League in the Maritimes continued to flourish until the mid-1920s.

Professional Hockey and the National Hockey League. The first professional hockey league, known as the International Pro Hockey League (IPHL), was formed in Michigan in 1904. After its quick demise in 1907, two bigger leagues, the National Hockey Association (NHA) and the Pacific Coast Hockey Association (PCHA), were created in 1909 and 1912, respectively. On November 22, 1917, a group of team owners met at the Windsor Hotel in Montreal to discuss what to do about the troublesome Eddie Livingstone, owner of the Toronto Blueshirts. "Livingstone was 'always arguing,' Ottawa manager and co-owner Tommy Gorman said, 'Without him we can get down to the business of making money'" (Marsh, 2013). The endeavor of "making money" meant the NHA teams (excluding Livingstone's Blueshirts) were branching off to form the

newly christened National Hockey League, officially established November 26, just four days after the owners' meeting. The exit of the teams, coupled with Canada's steadily increasing participation in World War I, signaled the end of the NHA.

The NHL began its inaugural season in 1917. The first National Hockey League games were played on December 19, 1917, when the Montreal Canadiens defeated the Ottawa Senators, 7-4, and the Montreal Wanderers beat Toronto Arenas, 10-9. The league was comprised of five teams during its first season: The Montreal Canadiens, the Montreal Wanderers, the Ottawa Senators, the Quebec Bulldogs and the Toronto Arenas, who would go on to become the Maple Leafs in 1927 (Marsh, 2012). The Wanderers, however, would fold quickly (and for good) only weeks into the season when "a defective electrical wire in the interstitial space" caught fire and burned down the arena (Prewitt, 2017). Fortunately, there was no game scheduled during the incident, so no one was killed in the conflagration.

The next 25 years would be a revolving door of league changes in terms of rules, scheduling format and franchise additions and subtractions. In 1924, the Boston Bruins became the first club from America to join the NHL, "and by 1926, six of the 10 teams were from the United States" (Marsh, 2012). By 1942, only six NHL teams remained: The Toronto Maple Leafs, the Montreal Canadiens, the Boston Bruins, the Chicago Black Hawks, the New York Rangers and the Detroit Red Wings. These six would remain the only teams in the league for the next 25 years, until 1967, when the league doubled its size to 12 franchises in what became known as the NHL's expansion era. The pre-expansion teams—Canadiens, Bruins, Black Hawks, Red Wings, Rangers and Maple

Leafs—would henceforth be (and are still) known as the Original Six (Hollingdrake, 2012).

It would not be until 1958, during the Original Six era, that a Black player would be among the NHL's ranks of players. In *Hockey Digest*, O'Donnell (2002) discusses that first player, Willie O'Ree, his most memorable moment (his first NHL goal), and the intense racial prejudice and discrimination he encountered in various minor leagues and during his time as a member of the Boston Bruins. Although a substantial gap existed between the time the League began and when O'Ree debuted, there is no record of any League-imposed restrictions on Black players. According to the African American Registry (1980):

Canada's entire Black population in the 1950s was just over one-tenth of one percent of the national total. There were only 120 NHL jobs and if all players were Canadian, the entire Black population of Canada would have been a single candidate along with four other contenders for one statistical position. In the mid 1960s, the six-team NHL had only one non-Canadian (Boston Bruin Tommy Williams of Duluth, Minnesota) (para. 3).

Recent Literature on Professional Hockey

Highlighted literature on professional hockey from the last five years is heavily oriented around concussion and injury awareness. Shahim, Tegner, and Wilson (2014) investigated concussions in professional hockey players and whether there is an association with elevated levels of proteins in the blood before and after concussions. Hutchinson and colleagues (2013) also explored concussions in professional hockey, but

endeavored to describe player characteristics and situational factors that may be associated with sustaining the injury. Siebenrock and colleagues (2013) delved into the prevalence of hip pain in elite level hockey players, while Jakoi and colleagues (2012) probed into the troubling trend of sports hernia injuries in hockey players and how surgery impacts performance.

Other available literature discusses topics such as game attendance throughout the League, whether having more players who speak the same language impacts success on the ice, a statistical analysis of penalty calls, how performance metrics impact team success, the impact of helmet visors on eye injuries, how fans coped with the most recent League lockout in 2012-13, and more. Nowhere to be found, however, is literature detailing the struggle of Black hockey players.

Recent Literature on Discrimination in Professional Hockey. On the topic of discrimination in the National Hockey League, Mongeon and Longley (2015) explored the relationship between penalties called by referees and player ethnicity, but through the scope of French Canadian versus English Canadian player-referee relationships. The authors analyzed data from over 2.6 million player shifts and found that French Canadian referees call penalties much more often on English Canadian players than English Canadian referees do. The authors believed that the data obtained was consistent with the historically high tensions between French and English Canadians. Christie and Lavoie (2015) claimed that Russian players, as well as some non-Russian European players, are discriminated against in terms of their draft selection range when compared to players of Canadian, French Canadian and American backgrounds. Cranfield, Inwood, and Ross

(2015) similarly investigated cases of discrimination against French Canadian players, even stating that in “American major league sports (basketball, football, baseball) the issue has been racial discrimination, but in major league hockey, which has historically been based on Canadian players, the discrimination has been ethnic” (p. 1), choosing to focus on discrimination experienced by whites (French Canadians/Europeans) while categorizing horrendous racial discrimination experienced by Black players as something experienced outside of hockey.

One chapter from the book, *Race and Sport in Canada: Intersecting Inequalities* (Joseph, Darnell, & Nakamura, 2012), discusses the concept of “racial stacking” experienced by Canadian Aboriginals, such as the Inuits. Racial stacking refers to the phenomenon in sports in which players of certain races are over- or under-represented in particular position groups. The argument could be made, based on this concept, that African Americans in the National Football League are grouped, or racially stacked, according to the belief that they thrive in playing more athletic. Similarly, Canadian Aboriginal players like Jordin Tootoo have been relegated to the role of enforcer as opposed to thriving in skill positions. To confirm this, the playing careers of every Aboriginal player in the NHL since 1974 were analyzed. The averages of penalty minutes per game, major penalties received per game, and fights per game were then compared with the rest of the league’s non-Aboriginal population. Resulting data indicated that between 1986 and 2004, Aboriginal players were penalized over three times more than non-Aboriginals, major penalties were assessed to Aboriginals at a rate of five times

more than the rest of the League, and Aboriginals fought between four and seven times more than non-Aboriginal players.

Lorenz and Murray (2014) examined elements of unfamiliarity on the part of teammates, coaches and League officials with goaltender Ray Emery, whose flamboyant style led to NHL traditionalists wanting to police and discipline him. Ray Emery's playing days and his choices of clothing coincided with the NBA's decision to start implementing a dress code. Emery, much like NBA superstar Allen Iverson, could be seen at team functions "wearing baggy blue shorts, a T-shirt that hung to his knees and a ballcap perched sideways atop his head" (p. 35). The discourse that framed perception of Emery was that of viewing him as an outsider because of his unique interests, a concept the authors referred to as "otherness" (p. 35). This concept suggests that, in the case of the hockey community, the white dominant culture permeating hockey's ranks is perceived as a "we" dynamic by its participants, while Emery, his beliefs, norms, and values are perceived as "they" or "other." While the authors of this publication described elements of racism, a concept of otherness only scratches the surface of what Black hockey players have encountered. This study, therefore, served to fill the void in the research, one that is exemplified by the topical material mentioned above.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Research Design

To fulfill the purpose of this investigation, a narrative approach was chosen to enable participants to tell their stories. According to Sandelowski (1991), the narrative research design “is one of many modes of transforming knowing into telling” (p. 162).

Furthermore, Sandelowski (1991) notes the following regarding the narrative design:

Narration, therefore, constitutes a kind of: a) causal thinking, in that stories are efforts to explore questions of human agency and explain lives; b) historical (as opposed to scientific) understanding that events cannot be explained except in retrospect; c) moral enterprise, in that stories are used to justify and serve as models for lives; and a kind of d) political undertaking, in that individuals often struggle to create new narratives to protest a perceived storylessness in the old ones (p. 163).

Using this approach allowed conversation to be used as an instrument of “moral enterprise,” as experiences of Black hockey players subject to trials and tribulations were revealed. Doing so built on extant knowledge and aimed to establish new knowledge.

Theoretical Framework

Critical race theory (CRT) was applied throughout the research and data analysis. Bimper (2015) describes CRT as a framework that “offers an operative lens to critically

explore how post-racial narratives circulate in sport” (p. 227). Hylton (2010) similarly notes that achieving social justice or change is primary goals of CRT. Though prevalent in academic research, CRT has not been used to analyze the experiences of hockey players. Doing so, as Singer (2009) writes, can “empower participants because it may enable them to critically reflect upon their social conditions and provide them with a voice that challenges the dominant discourse and stories that have been based on White norms and privileges” (pp. 105-106). Out of the modern big four sports in North America, none is more associated with “White norms” and in need of new narratives of inclusion and equal opportunity than hockey. Relating CRT to the narrative approach allowed for exploration into and illumination of racial oppression experienced by Black hockey players.

Data Collection

Because critical race theory and the narrative approach highlight the importance of subjective story-telling, a qualitative methodology was deemed most appropriate. Using a qualitative, narrative method provided a vehicle in which those who have been oppressed or silenced could tell their stories (Singer, 2009). The varying stories of these players challenge any existing narrative that may intentionally or inadvertently conceal hockey’s history of discrimination.

Interviews were conducted entirely through using phone communication, while Twitter and Facebook were the primary methods of initial contact. On occasion, the author would search for a difficult-to-locate player’s contact information through

whatever current profession they are in by searching the player's company website and locating contact information.

Once contact was established, semi-structured interviews were conducted, with open-ended questions allowing for further investigation into a myriad of personal experiences—both good and bad. Interview questions focused on the positive and adverse experiences of players of African descent in the game of hockey, how these experiences impacted participation in and perception of hockey, and strategic initiatives that can improve the representation and experiences of players of African descent. Sample questions included: “Was there a time when you realized this was going to be more difficult than just playing hockey? If yes, describe that moment.” And, “Did you experience backlash for being a non-white hockey player? If so, when did that first start? Did things ever get better with time, playing experience, or becoming a veteran?” A copy of the interview guide is included in Appendix A.

Each individual player was sent information containing the premise of the study, as well as a confidentiality agreement, informing them of their total anonymity as a participant in the study. The participating players then agreed upon the premise and consented to be recorded. Once agreed upon, the interviews were conducted entirely over the phone, and were recorded using a Toshiba recorder. Each interview lasted approximately 30 to 40 minutes, with open-ended questions allowing participants to delve into their unique experiences. All questions came directly from the questionnaire (Appendix A). Interview questions, study premise, and assent agreement information

were submitted to and approved by George Mason University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) in accordance with ethical considerations for conducting research.

Population and Sample

This study implemented a non-probability sampling technique, as non-random selection will occur, and the purposive sampling category was the best fit. The target population and sampling frame for this sample included all Black hockey players with NHL experience. A list of 90 Black NHL players was compiled through multiple online sources. First, Wikipedia ("List," n. d.) contains a list of every Black hockey player to have played at least one game. This list is continuously updated and was kept up to date from the time this study began until its completion, when the number of players increased from 89 to 90 after Jordan Greenway made his debut for the Minnesota Wild on March 27, 2018. Appendix B displays the comprehensive list, which features the nationalities, names, birthplaces, positions played, season(s) played, teams played for, and ethnicities of every Black player who has played at least one NHL game in the history of the National Hockey League. This list was then cross-referenced for accuracy with NHL.com, ESPN.com, and hockey-reference.com. Given the limited sample size and predicted low response rate, the author endeavored to attempt to contact the entire population. Doing so enabled information gathering of specific experiences and exposure to an array of stories.

Out of the proposed population of 90 current and former NHL players, contact attempts were able to be made for 29. Contact was attempted through Facebook messages, Twitter messaging, company emails (in select instances when the former

player now works in a different profession). Of those 29 players whose contact information was able to be located, 11 responded, and of those 11, eight agreed to be interviewed. The remaining three participants who were unable to be interviewed were due to personal time constraints.

To keep player anonymity in place throughout the following sections, pseudonyms will be used for the eight participants. Those participants were: (1) Pierre Giroux, (2) Antony Perreault, (3) Terrence Wall, (4) Mike Carter, (5) Earl Johnson, (6) Jamal Stewart, (7) Pete Gibson, and (8) Jordan Coleman. All eight players are former NHL players who have retired from the sport; none currently play in the league. Efforts to interview current players were unsuccessful. The combined career spans of the participants range from 1987 to 2010.

Data Analysis

Qualitative content analysis was used while observing the data being collected. Hsieh and Shannon (2005) define qualitative content analysis as “a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes” (p. 1278). Furthermore, Patton (2002) defines qualitative content analysis as “any qualitative data reduction and sense-making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies and meanings” (p. 453). These definitions meshed seamlessly with the social aspects of this study, as it allowed for a descriptive account of the information gathered and provided implications of what the future landscape looks like for the generations of Black hockey players yet to come.

Common themes emerged from this study by following an inductive reasoning process, as individual participant stories were built into thematic categories. Inductive reasoning begins by assessing specific information—in this case player narratives—and concludes by grouping or generalizing that information into themes or theories (Heit, 2000). Some of the themes that emerged in this study as a result of the inductive reasoning process included racial discrimination on the ice, which revealed itself in the form of negative treatment by teammates, opponents, or coaches; as well as racial discrimination off the ice, which was racism directed at players by fans, media, or in daily life situations outside of the sport. Another theme that emerged was that of positive support from teammates and coaches, as players who encountered racial discrimination had others stand up for them, many of them for the first time. The concept of perseverance emerged throughout the interview process, with each player pushing through the aforementioned racial discrimination—on and off the ice—to make it to the sport’s highest level. A sense of social responsibility materialized as another theme, with maturation bringing about the realization of being a role model to the Black community or other minorities. An additional theme was that of maintaining a positive outlook despite the history of racial discrimination, with each player in this study not only indicating no ill will toward the sport, but remaining actively engaged in it. On the topic of improving diversity and inclusiveness in the sport, themes that surfaced were the need to increase awareness and interest in the community, increasing opportunity once that interest was established, the necessity of reducing the cost of playing the sport, and the

importance of targeting youth demographics to shape the future diversification process.

These themes are explored in depth throughout Chapter Four.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The goal of this research was to address the dearth of existing information on racial discrimination encountered by black hockey players who have played at least one National Hockey League game. Because of hockey's popularity when compared to the other big three sports (football, basketball, baseball), conversation about incidents of racial discrimination in the sport have been minimal, creating the dangerous illusion that these problems do not often occur. It was the author's goal to use players' narratives as a vehicle to change that public perception by raising awareness about the experiences these select players encountered while playing a sport they love. In doing so, the research undertaken in this study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the adverse and positive experiences of players of African descent in the NHL?
2. How have these experiences impacted their participation in hockey?
3. How have these experiences affected their perception of the sport?
4. What strategic initiatives can improve the representation and experiences of players of African descent in the NHL?

Critical race theory (CRT) was applied throughout this research project, as the key tenets of CRT are affecting social justice and a transformation to an environment of equality and acceptance (Hylton, 2010). That framework of understanding greater

societal implications based on the player narratives came to fruition in the stories divulged by the study participants. Hockey has not been previously assessed using CRT, but it was the author's hope that in doing so, it would "empower participants because it may enable them to critically reflect upon their social conditions and provide them with a voice that challenges the dominant discourse and stories that have been based on White norms and privileges" (Singer, 2009, pp. 105-106). Player stories like those contained here are long overdue in academic research, and it is the author's hope that this study will inspire additional projects by academicians seeking to bring awareness to the historic trials of this population. Because sport serves as a microcosm of society, the implications of this research—and future research—are significant.

Adverse and Positive Experiences

This project sought to contribute to sport scholarship by analyzing the experiences of Black hockey players through a critical race theoretical lens. A universal concept in sport, and one that must be understood in its application to this research, is the following:

Ideas and beliefs about race and ethnicity traditionally influence self-perceptions, social relationships, and the organization of social life. Sports reflect this influence and are sites where people challenge or reproduce racial ideologies and existing patterns of racial and ethnic relations in society (Coakley, 2009, p. 276).

In collecting the narratives of the study's participants, it became evident that the notion of challenging racial ideologies, as well as the concept of those ideologies being reproduced by those instigating, permeated throughout their careers, whether it be

through interactions with teammates, opponents, or coaches, or through exposure to fans or other external sources.

Adverse: Treatment Discrimination. While positive responses like those mentioned above were a welcome sign by the participants of this study, the sad reality is that elements of racial discrimination were still occurring in modern times and at the game's highest level. A common trend that emerged throughout the course of the interviews was that the bulk of racial discrimination experienced by Black players, however, occurred primarily while playing outside of the NHL, such as in junior (under 18) leagues, the NHL's minor league systems, or some of Europe's top professional leagues. The number of incidents of racial discrimination that took place at the NHL level, when compared to these other playing environments, were much fewer and further in between. Being under the watchful eye of the vast public at the game's highest level certainly has an effect on that dynamic, as does the simple notion that white players may perceive that there is more to lose in terms of being punished for negative behavior while playing in the NHL. Whereas a player in the minor leagues or in Europe may give less thought to using racist language due to already playing in a lower league, an NHL player may fear that punishment could mean forfeiting a much-coveted spot at the top level.

This type of discrimination, both on and off the ice, is known as treatment discrimination, which refers to the act of directly discriminating against a person by affording them less respect, fewer opportunities or resources, and maintaining a consideration of only the person's background or social class instead of personal merit

(Cunningham & Sagas, 2003). Examples of this type of racial discrimination are expanded upon in subsequent sections.

Discrimination on the ice by players and coaches. Most of the on-ice adversity of racial discrimination experienced by the participants occurred outside of the NHL. While incidents like Giroux's described above certainly are noteworthy, the frequency of discrimination in the world's best league was less substantial. Worth mentioning is that the player who was attacked by Giroux's teammates during the game denied the incident ever took place and never apologized.

For Mike Carter, the on-ice incidents were rare, but one specific moment sticks with him. During an exhibition game, Carter's team played against an opponent who was trying to get under his skin through physical play and taunting. Inevitably, the opponent resorted to targeting Carter's race. But in a twist of fate, that player was cut from his team soon after the exhibition game, and Carter's team signed him. It was to Carter's surprise when he went to practice one day that the deviant player came out onto the ice wearing the same jersey. Carter seized the opportunity. "I didn't let him make it through the first practice," he said, laughing.

Playing in Switzerland, Jamal Stewart endured an onslaught of hateful conduct from opposing players, and as he notes, being one of the better players in that league only put more of a target on his back. "I was playing well and I could tell they were getting frustrated with my game, so they would ramp it up." In the championship series during one season in Switzerland, one of his opponents, who had racially targeted Stewart

throughout each of their matchups earlier in the year, finally made the self-described non-fighter snap.

It was a home game during the finals and I felt like I had the flu, so after the first period, instead of going on the ice right away, I went to the dressing room. And that guy followed me. He says, “Hey, chimpanzee, you going to get some more bananas?” And I just turned around and elbowed him, and I kept walking. He chased me down and started hitting me, and I said, “Thank you God, there’s no witnesses, just me and him.” And I started pounding him. I never hit someone as hard in my life. I dragged him into the dressing room. Everyone else was out on the ice. And I just kept hitting him and hitting him. And the trainer was there taking care of one of my teammates and she kept screaming, “Stop! Stop!” There was a coke machine I wanted to slam down on him, but it was chained to the wall. I was shaking. The guy didn’t want to get up. His helmet visor was broken. I broke his nose, his jaw.

As bad as Stewart’s account was, he was far from alone in his trials. And even with what these players went through, discrimination was not necessarily restricted to their playing days. During one game, Mike Carter, who was coaching at the time, was called a name by one of his team’s opponents who was on the ice. “An opposing player made a comment and I was way out of earshot, but a bunch of players on our team heard it, and there wound up being a fight in the hallway [when our players confronted the instigator].”

Off the ice—fans, media, other. The concept previously discussed by Coakley (2009) of racial ideologies being reproduced in a sporting venue is incredibly prominent in this study, especially when you tap into elements of off-the-ice (or off-field in other sports) treatment, specifically speaking in terms of spectators and sport consumers. Every player in this study experienced racial discrimination from opposing players or coaches at various playing levels, but nowhere did the vitriol rain down more than from fans in the stands. Similar to how players experienced less hatred from other players at the NHL level than elsewhere, all participants in this study indicated that the number of taunts they heard from fans were significantly decreased at the game's highest level compared to minor leagues, junior hockey, or when playing in professional leagues overseas. Furthermore, the racial discrimination directed at players by hockey's almost-entirely white fanbase is similar to the concept presented in the study by Cleland and Cashmore (2016), which assessed how white superiority was culturally embedded, based off of class and education, in fans of English football.

Earl Johnson, for example, played for a couple years in Germany during his pro career, and it was there he would receive the most backlash for his skin color. "Being a North American style goalie, I'd leave the crease and play the puck a lot, which really isn't the norm for European goalies," Johnson said. "And in one city, every time I came out to play the puck, the crowd started making monkey noises. And the next time we came there, they started throwing bananas on the ice."

Stewart echoed a similar story as Johnson's from his professional playing days in Switzerland. Toward the end of the regular season, Stewart's team was playing their rival

with a playoff spot on the line. Knowing the implications of the game, the fans brought their worst for the visiting Stewart. “That team needed to win that game badly to make the playoffs,” he recalled. “I got on the ice, and I see big blowup bananas from blue line to blue line with my name on it, so I said, ‘Uh-oh, this is not going to go well.’ There were monkey sounds. You know, it’s like Planet of the Apes in there. It was nasty.” As cruel fate would have it, Stewart’s team would wind up ascending in the standings at season’s end, only to face that same team in the playoffs, meaning he had to go back and play in that building three more times.

Like the other participants, Stewart, who comes from a Haitian family, attested that the treatment at the highest level—the NHL—was significantly better than his time spent in the minors, or even in junior hockey, when he was often called “Blackie” by other kids or confronted by other youth who refused to shake his hand after a game. As a teenager playing junior hockey, Stewart recalled how, during one game, fans of the opposing team taunted him mercilessly. “Hey, taxi! Taxi!” or “Go back to Africa!” fans would scream. “I didn’t even know there were a lot of Haitian cab drivers [there],” he said. “That was the worst game I ever played in my life. I had never experienced that before. All game long, every time I had the puck or I was nearby those guys, they were hard.” In the minors, Stewart was often called “Buckwheat,” referencing the black character from the show, “The Little Rascals,” and he remembers being told to “go back to basketball” or to “make sure you sit at the back of the bus.”

Terrence Wall recalled some of his negative fan interactions, commenting, “You know, the odd hick might tell me to go try basketball, or something like that. That happened

once, but again, I was the best player on the ice, and so, what's a guy gonna say, you know? He's got to try to get me off my game somehow...which didn't work...I scored a couple goals that game anyway."

Viewing this type of taunting simply as an attempt to get a player off of his game exemplifies the thick skin with which these players had to play. Pete Gibson reinforced the notion put forth by Wall while discussing the onslaught of racial comments on Twitter that were directed at Joel Ward after his 2010 game-winning goal in Game 7 of the Washington Capitals' playoff series against the Boston Bruins:

What are you going to say to a guy who gets the winning goal? You notice the only guys who get chirped like that are guys that are good? You can't say there are bad players in the NHL. There's nothing you can really say to a guy. To me, it's just as bad as saying something about a guy's wife. It's just a disrespectful thing to get a guy off his game. There's nothing you can really say to a black guy other than that, so they go right for the jugular.

Antony Perreault never experienced any incidents he considered noteworthy during his NHL playing days. (It perhaps helped his case that he was known as an enforcer who wouldn't hesitate to drop the gloves and fight anyone on the ice who challenged him.) But in 2004, the NHL locked the league out after the owners and players couldn't come to a new collective bargaining agreement. Players scattered to professional leagues all over the world to be able to play, and it was during that time that Perreault experienced the worst. "I was playing in Sweden and we were on the road, and one of the fans threw a banana on the ice," he said. "But in Sweden, they don't mess with that at all. The next

morning, the fan was on the newspaper and everything. They arrest you and take you to prison for that stuff over there.”

Despite racist ridicule like that experienced by Perreault often originating from the oftentimes safe confines of the stands, Jordan Coleman described one incident during a minor league game in which the taunting came from an unlikely source: the previously mentioned arena organist. Coleman recalled:

I remember we had an Asian guy on our team, and he got on the ice, and the organist started playing Asian-style music, mocking him. And when [another black player] and I got on the ice, the organist was playing jungle sounds. I sat on the bench and I'm thinking to myself, “You gotta be kidding me. This is a municipal building, and that guy is hired by the city, and this is what he's doing?” That was probably the worst thing I experienced as a professional, because it was coming from, you know, an employee of city.

Even though fans have served as the primary source of racial discrimination directed at players, such as that experienced by Val James and Willie O'Ree, spectators aren't the only source off off-the-ice racism. In Chapter Two, one of the racial incidents discussed from another sport was that of Baltimore Orioles outfielder Adam Jones being called a racial slur and having peanuts thrown at him during a game in Boston's Fenway Park. One of the unfortunate reactions to that incident was the questioning of the authenticity of Jones' account by members of the media. That, along with other examples, shows how media can either participate in or willfully ignore racial dynamics that exist in sport.

Another prominent example of media ignorance came in 1997, when white editors of Sports Illustrated ran a cover story titled, “What Happened to the White Athlete?” Coakley (2009) examined the makeup of the Sports Illustrated article and commented, “That story was based on their belief that blacks had taken over sports and that white athletes were fast disappearing” (p. 286). The story, however, looked at sport through a skewed lens, choosing to focus only on sports that generate the most revenue while ignoring “the fact that white athletes made up all or nearly all participants in dozens of other sports at all levels of competition” (p. 286). While Sports Illustrated’s article is an isolated example of misguided analysis of race in sport, it is not unique. As Coakley writes, “racial ideology regularly influences the selection of stories and the ways they are told” (p. 286). Such was the case with stories about black quarterbacks like Doug Williams, or the openly discussed opinions of sports broadcasters like Jimmy “The Greek” Snyder. The perpetuation of racial stereotypes by the media was equally prevalent in hockey.

Terrence Wall recalled how, growing up and playing hockey in Ontario, he would read things from reputable Canadian publications that claimed, “Black players couldn’t be good hockey players because they were apparently weak in the ankles,” he said. Into his teenage years, Wall picked up a copy of a national hockey magazine and saw, on the cover, a player who looked like he did, and one who would go on to be a star in the NHL. “That’s when I knew I could make it,” he said. “If we had weak ankles, why is this guy on the cover of the biggest hockey publication?”

Off-the-ice discrimination, while prominently discussed in this study in the context of fans, media or social network platforms, is of course not relegated to those select contexts. All of the players in this study experienced racial discrimination away from the game at least in some capacity. Daily interactions, such as attending school or living in the cities in which they played, made players—some significantly more than others—aware of their skin color. One of the more startling examples of off-the-ice racial discrimination by participants in this study happened to Jamal Stewart while he was playing professionally in Europe. While visiting a German town on the Germany-Switzerland border for an away game, Stewart and a white teammate decided to head into Switzerland to do some shopping. Each had their eyes on a particular watch from a catalogue they had picked up.

Making it across the border into Switzerland went without incident, and after visiting the watch store, they made their way back to the border. Upon arriving at the Germany border, Stewart's white teammate realized he had misplaced his wallet, leaving him without identification. Stewart and the teammate went into the border control office to explain the situation, that they were professional hockey players playing nearby and one of them had misplaced his identification. But despite the white teammate being the cause for the hiccup, only Stewart was apprehended. He was pulled into a room guarded by men with rifles, who asked for his identification and began questioning him. The armed guards dumped his wallet out, then told him to remove his jacket, then his shoes, then his shirt, then his pants. "I was completely naked," Stewart recalled. "And all of it was just to fuck with me." He was then told to get dressed and that he and his teammate

could be on their way. Stewart's white teammate was never questioned. "I didn't speak for a couple days after that," said Stewart. "You know, I don't own a gun and I never have owned one and never wanted to use one on anyone, except for that moment."

Off-ice incidents like the one involving Stewart, or any for that matter that take place outside of the sport, make the fact that these players experienced—and continue to experience—racism on the ice even more disheartening. Many view recreational activities as a means to escape problems encountered on a daily basis, but because sports often reproduce societal ideologies, the players in this study, and others like them, weren't allowed that escape that most enjoy. Instead, they continued to endure the same vitriol in an activity they love as in any other area of their lives.

Positive: Support from Teammates and Coaches. Understanding the significance of peer support and what it meant to the participants of this study requires an understanding of how intricately race relations are woven into sport. According to Coakley, sports are "more than mere reflections of racial and ethnic relations in society: they're sites where racial and ethnic relations occur and change" (p. 276). The sites of ethnic and racial relations in this case are on and off the ice in the hockey world. Throughout this study, it became evident that relations and interactions for Black players improved in the higher spheres of professional hockey, especially in the NHL. For example, Pierre Giroux noted that, "in the NHL, [racial interactions] were actually pretty good. I didn't grow up in the time of Willie O'Ree, so I didn't go through what he went through." Jamal Stewart remarked, "I think it was definitely better in the NHL. But when I played pro in Europe, it got way worse."

While the number of incidents occurring at the highest level may have decreased since the days of players like Willie O'Ree or Val James, they still do take place. It is when they did happen at the NHL level that these players actually witnessed positive responses or outcomes that they had rarely, if ever, experienced in other league environments. These positives came in the form of teammates and coaches passionately speaking out in defense of Black players, decrying the incidents and racism's place in the game or in society. Or, in select instances, the defense came in the form of teammates physically going after the instigating party.

During one particular NHL game in the early 2000s, Giroux lined up during a face-off across from a player known around the League as an agitator. Before the puck dropped, the player opposite Giroux began calling him "monkey about 10 or 11 times," he said. The altercation had noticeably shaken Giroux, but unlike incidents he experienced in hockey's lower levels, where he often felt isolated and without help, Giroux marveled at the response and support on the part of his teammates and coaching staff, and he recounted the event vividly, noting, "I was shaken up on the bench. My teammates could tell. I told them, and the awesome part about this, without asking, the guys on my team, they jumped him. They opened him up on the face. It was awesome to see guys sticking up for you." Surprisingly for Giroux, the support didn't stop there or even during the game for that matter. He recalled:

Even better than that, as the visiting team, we were on the bus inside the Staples Center, getting ready to leave to be taken to the plane. And where it picks you up, you can see the other team, because that's where the guys are parked. And

coincidentally, [the player who insulted me] arrived to go to his car. And when he did, our coach came off of the bus and he went after him. And once he did that, our entire team followed him. And that was one of the most powerful things that I'd been through. I'll never forget that 'til I die. I didn't ask for anything, but my team and my coach were so disgusted that they went after him. Showing that there was no place for that. It really warmed my heart to see that.

Similarly, Mike Carter experienced one significant incident in which he was called a racial slur by an opposing player, but noted that the response by his teammates was to uniformly rush to his defense and offer support, without him having to say anything. Another player, Terrence Wall, commented, "My teammates always rallied behind me. Even in college, I was voted team captain, and my teammates sort of judged me for the person I was, honest to God. I don't even think they viewed me as being black." Jordan Coleman recounted one game in the minor leagues, when the organist would actually play Asian-themed music when an Asian teammate would be on the ice. It wasn't long before the bench boss had had enough. "The coach actually went up into the stands and went after the organist," Coleman said. "He was one of the best coaches I ever had. He was in full support of all of his players—definitely a player's coach. And if you messed with one of his players, he went after you. He was like that."

Hockey being predominantly white has led many of these players, as extreme minorities, to identify with the experiences of the early pioneers in baseball, such as Jackie Robinson, who was cited throughout this study by about half of the participants as an inspiration in overcoming obstacles in their own careers, a testament to the power of

Robinson's story. As Robinson did when he broke Major League Baseball's color barrier, these players clung to any support on the part of teammates and coaches that they could. Coakley (2009) discusses the racism endured by Jackie Robinson, and notes that, "To control his anger and depression, he needed support from [Brooklyn Dodgers owner Branch Rickey], his coach, and his teammates" (p.306). Like with baseball during Robinson's era, Black hockey players today can feel marginalized because of the player, fan, manager, trainer and owner demographics, which are inevitably predominantly white.

How have experiences impacted the players' participation in and perception of hockey? Despite the various incidents endured by the participants throughout their careers, every one of them has, in some capacity, turned those negatives into positives by either displaying admirable perseverance in the face of discrimination, allowing those experiences to spark a sense of social responsibility and activism in a pursuit of social change and acceptance, or finding the silver lining and viewing their careers in a positive light. Each of these themes emerged throughout the data collection process and are supported below.

Perseverance in the face of discrimination. This theme was anticipated by the author upon entering into the study and was significantly reinforced following the data collection process. The perseverance on the part of the players, and their ability to deal with immense human hatred while pursuing a game they love, is admirable. Furthermore, the players' long-term takeaways from their experiences and insistence on a big-picture

mentality only serve to accentuate the mental fortitude they were frequently forced to rely on.

Battling to control the inevitable emotional wave resulting from racial taunts was a struggle in and of itself. While fighting is engrained in the game of hockey, it is seldom done out of revenge. Instead, fighting is used strategically as a way to awaken a slumbering team and shift momentum. Therefore, players often knew that the best way to get back at another player who was taunting was to outperform that individual. Keeping emotions in check, however, is easier said than done, as noted by Earl Johnson, who commented:

It was fierce, and you had to be able to survive. That's how it came out sometimes, you know, guys would resort to whatever they had to do to beat you, and if you succumb to it, you'd lose. You'd always lose. You had to learn to toughen up and take it and get back at guys through your performance. Like I said, [racist incidents] were more out of frustration [by the opposing players] because I was playing well and guys are trying to get me to not play well, and it worked. I got kicked out of the game both times [I reacted] for fighting. So, I failed, you know what I mean? But the game is so up and down—sort of like life...good days and bad days. I don't think I've had a day where it was so bad that I wanted to quit playing hockey.

Viewing Johnson's account as a failure is hard to fathom after gaining an understanding of what these players endured. However, that vantage point on the part of the players that they needed to exercise restraint in the face of heinous ridicule was a common one, and

one that serves to exemplify the mental strength they had to maintain while participating in an activity designed to be fun for persons of any demographic. This non-confrontational approach also could be the product of fearing repercussions. Enduring such different treatment than their white counterparts, it's likely many Black players who made it to the National Hockey League knew they could easily be swept aside if white management became angered due to a confrontational response to racism. Black players have not often been in positions of power or privilege like those of their white counterparts.

It was this dynamic and non-confrontational approach that led then-Brooklyn Dodgers owner Branch Rickey to choose Jackie Robinson as the first Black player in Major League Baseball. There may have been plenty of players in the Negro Leagues who were more talented than Robinson at the time, but Rickey believed Robinson's background made him the best candidate. Well educated and married, Robinson was viewed as someone who could learn to keep a level head when the racial epithets inevitably started flying. In fact, when Rickey started hurling racial taunts at Robinson as a test, Jackie responded, "Mr. Rickey, do you want a ballplayer who is afraid to fight back?" Rickey insisted he didn't, but that he instead wanted "a ballplayer with guts enough not to fight back" (Oshinsky, 2011, para. 9). Robinson acquiesced, and Branch Rickey made him one of baseball's most historical figures because of that relationship.

Pierre Giroux exercised that restraint when he lined up for a faceoff and was insulted by the previously discussed player who was known around the league for being an instigator. "When he started calling me a monkey, I honestly wanted to hit him in the

head with my stick, but I know he just wanted a reaction. And if I did that, I probably would have been suspended forever.” Outside of the massive fight he had in the Swiss league’s locker room, Stewart recognized the important role restraint played in his ability to overcome overwhelming ignorance, and as discussed, he was forced to recognize that at an early age while playing in junior hockey throughout Canada. “It was really difficult,” he said. “I felt alone on the ice. No one would defend me. I felt totally alone. I couldn’t skate. I couldn’t play. And I told myself, if I wanted to be a hockey player, I needed to sack up and have thicker skin.”

Antony Perreault often felt he did not need to respond to unwarranted criticism strictly because of the recognition that things of discriminatory nature were originating entirely from ignorance. “You just can’t fix stupid,” he said. “This is probably as good as it’s going to get. I think it’ll always be there, so I didn’t want to respond, but I don’t think there’s any way to completely eliminate the problem. But maybe I’m just pessimistic.” Recognizing ignorance, as well as what can and cannot be controlled, were foundational principles followed by Mike Carter throughout his career. Carter recalled feeling that even acknowledging there was anything significant about his skin color only served as a mental hindrance. “I didn’t feel I could think that way or pay much attention to it and still make it as a hockey player,” Carter said. Skin color cannot be controlled, he added, so there should not be a focus on it. “I’d stand up for myself if anything came to it,” he said, “but I couldn’t dwell on things that I couldn’t control. And that approach helped me.”

Additional sources of inspiration that helped these players persevere through unspeakable discrimination were other players or figures who paved the way prior to

their playing. The importance of a positive role model in the life of any individual cannot be overstated, but the presence of someone who may have endured similar trials to what another is going through can serve as an incredible motivational factor in the face of adversity. For these players, those who came before, whether in hockey or outside, served as consistent reminders that they, too, could overcome the emotional strife they were enduring due to mistreatment and ignorance from other players.

For some of the study participants, the Jackie Robinson of hockey—Willie O’Ree—had the inevitable effect of being a role model because of his position as a Black pioneer in the sport, but there were many more figures who players plucked examples of character and bravery from to apply to their own lives. “When I first heard Willie O’Ree’s story, I thought my experience was easy in comparison,” Jamal Stewart said. “It helped me put things in perspective.” Terrance Ward commented:

I believe I wouldn’t have made it if it were not for Willie O’Ree, Mike Marson, Bill Riley, Val James, Bernie Saunders, Ray Neufeld. But the guy who really kicked it for me was during the time I was hearing blacks couldn’t play hockey because we had weak ankles. I found out that was a bunch of bull crap when I saw Tony McKegney on the front page of The Hockey News, because the only guys who go on the front cover are star players. And that was a moment I realized that I could do it.

For Antony Perreault, the player who motivated him is arguably one of the most successful Black athletes of all time:

I always looked at Grant Fuhr as the greatest. I wasn't a goalie, but I loved watching the Oilers. Even now, I play goalie in my men's league because Grant Fuhr was always my idol and someone I always thought I wanted to be like. He was the biggest star of color who I grew up watching, so he kind of paved the way for me, and made me realize, yes, I could do it if I want.

Earl Johnson also looked at Grant Fuhr, the great Edmonton Oilers goalie of the Wayne Gretzky dynasty years, as a role model, but looked outside of hockey for his biggest source of inspiration. "I was a big Philadelphia Eagles fan because of Randall Cunningham," he said. "Being one of the only black quarterbacks in the NFL, I identified with that, so I took a liking to him and really admired his game."

Jackie Robinson himself serves as an inspiration for many players. Joel Ward of the San Jose Sharks continues to wear number 42 as a tribute to Robinson and the impact he had on promoting racial equality across all sports and society. Pierre Giroux also identified with Robinson's story as something to push him through his most difficult times. As a child, Giroux's sister gave him a children's book on Jackie Robinson, and the inspiration was immediately ignited. The ability of Giroux and players like him to look at a historical model like Jackie Robinson allowed for the mentality of "if he can do it, so can I" to take hold. (Giroux's full story of his childhood experiences and the significance of the Jackie Robinson book are featured in the epilogue.) Not only did those who came before these players provide them a model to emulate in their own pursuit of becoming a professional hockey player and a respectable individual, but they sparked a realization that these players, too, could make a lasting impact on the lives of others.

Social Responsibility. Having a role model to look up to, like those the players discussed in the previous section, inevitably leads to self-awareness on the part of up-and-coming players that they, too, will be in a position of being a role model. That consciousness can create, from generation to generation, a pay-it-forward dynamic to benefit younger players. Each participant in this study followed that pattern to an extent and claimed to experience a sense of social responsibility not only because of their platform, but because of the trials they were enduring and the examples they could set in terms of the right way to handle those experiences.

At times, the social implications of what the players were experiencing would reveal themselves without the player even realizing the impact just playing a sport was having. During one of the away games in which Jamal Stewart experienced taunts by both fans and players, he wore a microphone. With everything caught on tape, Swiss papers ran a major story about what Stewart was enduring. It was then that he began seeing the effect he had on others.

After every game I played after that, there would be a mother with her kid or with an adopted black kid coming to thank me because their kids were also getting that sort of treatment all the time. And it made me realize that sticking up for myself and playing through things was appreciated by other people. So that was big. Also, my black teammate, who is one of my best friends now, told me that there was never anybody in his life that stuck up for him and that he had to fend for himself ever since he was five years old. So just doing your job and going through things...it meant a lot to people.

When Stewart retired, he reached out to Willie O'Ree, who was getting more involved with the NHL's philanthropic efforts at the time. Stewart went on to work for four years as an ambassador for an NHL program in its infancy that was promoting equality in the game. Jordan Coleman, meanwhile, says his experiences help him in his current profession; after retiring, Coleman became a police officer. "Those experiences in sports are something that can be applied to life," he said. "You don't just learn about hockey when you play. And you don't just learn about football or baseball when you play those. You learn life lessons, and I think my experiences in hockey help me apply those lessons of equality, respect, responsibility, to my work a police officer."

That same concept of life lessons being applied from player experiences was mentioned by Antony Perreault, who says he has tried to translate those lessons into coaching techniques he uses while coaching various teams and players ranging from 11 to 17 years old. Mike Carter, Pete Gibson, Earl Johnson, and Terrence Ward have all applied these lessons to some form of coaching or mentorship on teams or in hockey skill clinics. Ward runs several skills clinics and schools for both youth and professional hockey players to attend. "The bulk of the hockey community is made up of great people," Ward said, "and those people trust me – white people trust me – to basically help raise their kids because my message is a positive message to their children and they look at me as a role model for their kids."

While Pierre Giroux never applied his experiences to the world of coaching, he nevertheless took his playing resume and put it to great use in social theater. Giroux hosts a radio show in Canada in which he has a platform to tell his stories, he wrote a book

detailing his experiences in and outside of the sport, and frequently appears for public speaking events to discuss his background while promoting racial inclusiveness. “You know, that Jackie Robinson book had such an impact on me when I was young, that I thought maybe I could tell my story and have a positive impact on even one person out there,” Giroux said.

Positive outlook despite experience. Despite enduring things most players will never have to go through, the participants in this study bear no ill will toward the sport. Instead, all participants fondly recalled playing, and would not allow select negative experiences to detract from the greater whole. Their perception of the sport is reflective of that. “No matter what we went through, it didn’t change our love of the game,” Mike Carter said. “And if you’d ask most players whether they consider themselves to be a black hockey player or just a hockey player, they would say they’re a hockey player.”

Giroux indicated that it was the experiences of those who came before that helped him maintain a positive outlook during and after his playing days. “I would look at what Willie O’Ree went through and how he paved the way for us and know that, sure, what I’m going through may be bad, but it’s minor compared to him,” he said. “Things are getting better. There are still incidents, and it’s sad it still happens in 2018, but it’s a great game, and you can’t let those things take away from that.”

Terrence Ward echoed Giroux’s sentiment in providing his big-picture outlook about the sport, noting, “Honestly, I’ve had a great experience in hockey. Because of my experience, I’m still in hockey, staying involved in the game running my clinics and schools. There is racism everywhere, but there is also good that can drown out the bad. If

the majority the hockey community were not decent human beings, they would not send their kids to my hockey camp every year.”

Many of the players in this study, while they experienced their share of hateful behavior from fans and other players, focused on the fans and teammates who contributed to positive experiences instead. As Earl Johnson stated, “There are a handful of people who unfortunately spoil it for the greater whole and possibly make things seem like things are worse. People tend to focus on the negative so it becomes magnified. The positive majority should start speaking up more. Maybe then the reality would show through more.”

No single experience by any player was more emblematic of turning something negative into something positive than a one-on-one interaction Terrence Ward had with a teammate when he was in college:

I started off on the wrong foot with one guy. He was new and the coach asked me to welcome him to campus. We were in a car with other teammates, and out of the blue, this guy I had just met five minutes earlier says, ‘You guys want to hear a joke?’ So, he starts telling it and I can tell the punch line is going to be the N-word. I said, ‘If you say the punch line, I’m going to come back there and beat the shit out of you.’ And he said it, so I jumped in the backseat. We had several more fights about that. Finally, I just told him how hurtful it was. I said, ‘Listen this is really offensive and this is why.’ And it was weird. He just stopped instantly, and he and I became absolute best friends and we’ve been best friends for 30 years.

And my teammates, I love those guys like brothers and I know they feel the same way about me.

Strategic Initiatives to Improve Diversity and Inclusion

Spreading the sport of hockey into minority communities requires a multifaceted approach. As a product of the participant interviews, the factors needed for this approach became abundantly clear. As hockey continues to expand into non-traditional markets, such as Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Phoenix, and more similar locations, it becomes critical for the NHL and its players to expand their efforts of targeting the community in which they play if the overarching goal is to grow fanbases and attract people to the game.

Many of these communities, especially in Southern U.S. towns where there are several minor league teams operating, have little to no knowledge of the sport or the players living in their community. Targeting the community in ways that can boost awareness and enthusiasm for the sport, therefore, is imperative. Doing so generates interest at all levels, including among the youth, which is the target demographic when wanting to buck any long-lasting or systemically-instilled trend. Generating an awareness in the community is the first step, and in succession, if interest is there for youth to play the sport, it has to be accessible and it has to be financially feasible. Awareness and interest can lead to the establishment of programs, and those programs must be made affordable. Only then will the influx of minority youth in hockey truly spike. These principles of diversifying the game are explored below.

Targeted Community Outreach

Increasing awareness/interest in the community. Earl Johnson spent plenty of time playing minor league hockey in the United States, a career that took him into markets most people never even knew had a hockey team. Johnson, who grew up in hockey-rich Canada, was amazed at the public's obliviousness to the sport's existence in some of the cities in which he played. That realization never served as a deterrent between the team and the community, however, and as Johnson described, being a black player in these communities allowed him and the rest of the team to increase outreach, which inevitably increased community interest:

I got to play a lot of places, places South Carolina or Jackson, Mississippi. And you talk to those communities—the black community—especially down in Mississippi. I'd go get a haircut at a local barber shop, and obviously, my accent is Canadian. The guys there would be like, "Where are you from?" And they'd say, "What are you doing down here?" I'd tell them, and they'd say, "Damn, I didn't even know black people played hockey." It's funny, because you get to those places and black people there were never exposed to hockey, and through meeting them in the community, we'd get them to come out, and we'd see them after the game at autograph signings, and the community loved it. And I don't think that's just the case with black communities, you know...it's southern communities. Football is a huge sport and so is baseball. You go down to Texas, and high school football is bigger than NHL hockey. So, it's exposure, and once they were exposed and saw the games, [the black community] really took to it.

Antony Perreault, Pete Gibson and Jordan Coleman all spent significant time playing in the NHL's minor league systems throughout some of America's southeast and south-central regions, and discussed the actions on the part of their organizations that made a significant difference in the public's awareness and perception of having a hockey team.

Perreault's team would frequently venture into the community and interact through various team-sponsored community relations efforts. Building playgrounds for the kids, serving Thanksgiving meals to the area's homeless population, conducting clothing drives, and more were some ways Perreault's team made the community aware of the team's presence. "When you actually go out into the community and help improve someone's life, it creates a special relationship between an athlete or a team and their community," he said. "Because when you allow someone to get to know you as a person and you get to know them, they'll start to care about you as an individual and that can lead to them becoming fans too. People want to cheer for athletes they actually care about, you know." And while none of the efforts were designed specifically to target minority communities, the areas in which they played and the economic makeup of local neighborhoods made those communities default demographics for the various outreach efforts.

Similarly, Gibson's and Coleman's respective teams participated in various elements of community engagement, which in turn, also sparked community interest in the teams. Both described similar community projects as Perreault, as players went out into the community to interact with prospective fans and assist with projects, such as

school construction efforts, learn to read programs for kids, Christmas present drives, blood drives and medical screenings. These efforts increase mutual interest between the teams and the communities in which they play, and developing these bonds ripples into the development of team fans and hockey fans.

Increasing opportunity. An increase in community awareness of the sport and of the teams playing locally resulted from an array of community engagement efforts like those mentioned above. It is an additional effort, however, that is often undertaken once that community interest is sparked that propels an average consumer of any sport into one who participates in said sport. The effort of increasing the opportunity to play hockey for local communities is one that, unlike a sport such as basketball that necessitates little in terms of equipment or specialized venues, requires a significant number of measures put in place to make it happen.

Once diverse communities begin interacting with local teams and athletes, the opportunity to introduce individuals of traditionally non-hockey-playing demographics becomes a reality. Hockey, however, is a unique sport due to not only the equipment required to play, but the need of a specialized venue. Going to a football field or basketball court provides immensely easier access to those respective sports than the availability of ice time. In warm climate areas, where outdoor hockey would never be an option, rinks can often be scarce, and the availability of those rinks even more so. Therefore, raising awareness and sparking the communities interest is well and good, but a real effort to diversify the game at the youth level requires much more. Beyond

community outreach through non-hockey activities, teams need to engage in hockey-related ones as well, and that's something the participants of this study recognized.

Almost uniformly, the players featured in this study implied that, in their experience, teams incorporate some element of increasing local communities' accessibility to playing hockey. However, the players indicated those efforts could be much more substantial. Some players, for example, discussed hosting open skates with local elementary schools, or even conducting visits at those schools and playing floor hockey with the students in the school's gym. Efforts beyond a simple introduction to playing are harder to come by, however, as summarized by Pete Gibson, who said:

Not much happens beyond that. You know, we could go out and hang out at a school for an afternoon and give them their first real exposure to any sort of hockey, get them pumped up about it, high-five students, give away merchandise and jerseys, sign autographs after, but then what? Now the kids are interested, sure, but they still have no means to actually go and play consistently. And there aren't enough programs where teams are hammering away at getting those kids involved on a routine basis. It's great on the surface, but there needs to be more for sure if you want to sustain any sort of diverse involvement.

Reducing the cost of Hockey. Many of the characteristics of discrimination discussed in this research are overt in nature, in that things being done or said to the players are outwardly expressed. One must acknowledge, however, the existence—and prominence—of covert racism in sport. Coates (2008) defined covert racism as being “far more subtle” than overt racism and “less identifiable in terms of specific individuals

committing the acts” (p. 211). Additionally, covert racism “remains submerged, entangled in the centuries-old tentacles borne of exploitation, extortion, and hyperoppression...manifestations of covert racism may be triggered by social, political, and cultural crises and unrest” (p. 211). One element of covert racial discrimination that has been in place for far too long is the factor of the expenses associated with participation in select sports. Due to the exorbitant cost of playing hockey, it is, almost by default, systematically white. This would be considered covert in nature because it is not outwardly declared as a hindrance to minority participation in sport, but the unspoken exclusion of lower income families from the sport is significant. Every player who participated in this study uniformly agreed that to increase diversity in the sport, two things must happen: (1) The initiative to diversify hockey has to begin at the youth level, and (2) in order for it to start at the youth level, the game must be made more affordable to economically-strained communities.

Coakley (2009) notes that, “The most significant forms of racial and ethnic exclusion today occur at the community level where they are hidden behind the fees and other resources required for the sports participation” (p. 306). This is a major factor impacting sport participation across America today, as an increase in the cost and number of privatized club sports have prohibited lower income families from having their child participate. As Coakley writes, “People can claim to have ethnically open sport programs when in reality their location, fees, and the lack of public transportation preclude ethnically inclusive participation” (p. 306).

Antony Perreault was adamant about improving the aforementioned dynamic, and recognized it as the barrier that Coakley (2017) described, stating:

The biggest obstacle in hockey is not necessarily the race thing. I mean, yeah, “Hockey is For Everyone...if you can afford it.” We have an organization here that does a great job with public funding, where they can get kids from lower income areas just to play the sport. The NHL is doing that same thing with the Learn to Play Hockey program, where I think for one hundred dollars, you get like six weeks of ice time and equipment. But if someone says, “I want to put my kid in hockey,” realistically, how are they going to sustain it? Because it’s so expensive. I played pro and got equipment for free, but now I’m on the other end where I have to buy stuff for my son, and the kid’s foot grows an inch every year and I’m dropping 900 bucks on skates that I know aren’t going to fit him in six months, and we’re just talking about skates! Ice time, sticks, equipment...it’s a big financial burden for a lot of families. It’s almost like, if you’re not at least middle class, it’s impossible to sustain.

Pierre Giroux echoed that sentiment, saying, “The financial part is everything...it’s everything. That’s the saddest part, because hockey is such an expensive sport, you already start out behind the curve if you’re black.” Mike Carter acknowledged the same, saying, “There are probably a ton of great athletes who just never have the opportunity because they can’t afford to even start playing the game.”

It is because of these debilitating costs that Blacks are also overwhelmingly underrepresented in the world of college sports. By not having the access to play a variety

of sports during their formative years, the focus of minority athletes centers around two or three of the major sports. Coakley (2009) addresses this element, saying:

Even today, 41 million black Americans are underrepresented in or absent from most sports at most levels of competition. This fact is often overlooked because a few of the most popular spectator sports involve high proportions of black athletes. People see this and don't realize that African Americans are absent or nearly absent in thirty-nine of forty-four men's and women's sports played in college, most of the dozens of sports played at the international amateur level, and all but five of the dozens of professional sports in the United States (p. 293).

Diversification at Youth Level. As with any societal effort to affect change, the best place to start is at the youth level. The efforts by the NHL to diversify the game should start at that level across minority youth, according to Pierre Giroux. "Hockey is such a great game," Giroux said. "And I think the NHL is doing a better job involving minorities with the different programs that they have. Because also, they know if they want hockey to be more popular, they have to get it more popular with other ethnicities to be more popular in the U.S." Wall similarly recognized the League's efforts, noting:

I'm proud of what the league is doing, because hockey is for everyone, whether you're gay, straight, black, white, Asian. You've got China making a splash in hockey, hockey in Spain, hockey everywhere, even in Jamaica. The NHL is leading the way on spreading that message and the players have embraced it, and that's been one of the biggest things to inspire kids of all colors and all backgrounds to look at hockey as an option, and not just the traditional sports.

Mike Carter believes that message discussed by Wall is gaining traction, but acknowledged there is a long way to go. Still, he said, “There are a lot of different nationalities now, so at this point, I think organizations are finally looking for the best hockey players, pure and simple. Because I think there was a point where organizations might have been looking for the best white hockey players.”

Antony Perreault coaches his son’s youth team, and the mentality he brings to the equation as a coach is one that he and the rest of the participants share in that promoting equality at a young age translates to valuable life lessons. Perreault commented:

Our team actually has three girls on it. The way we look at it is, hockey for everyone. Doesn’t matter if you’re a boy or girl, black or white. That has nothing to do with it. And I love that part. I love the energy that girls bring to the team. I love how all the players react around them. The only black kid that’s on the team is my son, but as far as everything else, I just love watching kids being kids. And you know, you’re not born racist. It’s something you learn from your parents or your surroundings. I love watching these kids develop and play for each other, no matter of their, sex, sexuality, their color. That’s what makes it fun for me to coach and that’s what I love about this program is that we include everyone in it. As coaches, yes, winning is awesome, but you’re teaching these kids life lessons, so by me sitting a kid just because he’s not as good as another kid, it doesn’t make sense if he’s working just as hard. I just try to teach the kids about responsibility and accountability. That’s what I love.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

The goal coming into this project was to remedy the lack of available research on racism in hockey. As discussed in Chapter Two, ample literature exists that explores racism in the other American and international sports, but academic research discussing racial discrimination in hockey is scarce. Having virtually no available research on a particular topic can contribute to the illusion that these problems do not occur within the sport, which creates a dynamic of dangerous misinformation. Additionally, it was important to note that limited public exposure to the sport throughout parts of the United States has diminished the significance of the stories and experiences of Black hockey players. While some of these stories may be well known throughout Canada or parts of the northern U.S., it was theorized that it would be unlikely that any similar knowledge would exist through a region like the southern U.S. To address this lack of information, this project sought to incorporate the current and historic narratives of Black hockey players so that their stories would be more recognizable, and in turn, ripple outward beyond sport and into society, because sports serve as a microcosm of greater social theater. Furthermore, it was the author's hope that exposing these stories and experiences, while discussing the predominantly white makeup of the sport, would create a discussion on how to improve the game's diversity as well.

Summary of Findings

Using critical race theory as a framework, this project sought to enact change through promoting equality by revealing the experiences of players, and also endeavored to promote diversity in the game by identifying existing problems and exploring potential solutions, as discussed by the study participants. To accomplish this, three research questions were posed:

1. What are the adverse and positive experiences of players of African descent in the NHL?
2. How have these experiences impacted their participation in hockey?
3. How have these experiences affected their perception of the sport?
4. What strategic initiatives can improve the representation and experiences of players of African descent in the NHL?

First, adverse experiences came in the form of treatment discrimination, both on and off the ice. Players experienced racial discrimination from opposing players, coaches, teammates, media and especially fans. Much of the worst racial discrimination was experienced in leagues other than the National Hockey League, whether in minor or junior leagues throughout North America or in professional leagues scattered throughout Europe. Counter to those negative experiences was the positive reinforcement and support these players received from teammates and coaches. For the players featured in this study, the moment a teammate or coach stood up to discrimination on their behalf was monumental, as most had never had another person stick up for them before.

In terms of how the players' experiences impacting their participation in and perception of the sport, multiple themes emerged throughout the interview process. Perseverance was a prominent theme, as players had to play through psychological abuse their white counterparts would never have to. The mental strength required to press through every example of racial discrimination made that concept prominent. Another commonality revealed following the data collection process was that players, each in their own way, felt a sense of social responsibility, as they came to the realization of serving as a role model in some capacity. Additionally, players reported to have no ill will toward the sport despite their experiences. Instead, each maintained a positive outlook about their playing careers and affectionately discussed the role hockey has played in their lives. The majority of the study's participants remain actively involved in the sport on some level.

Finally, the players discussed ways to improve diversity and racial inclusiveness in hockey. Themes that emerged throughout the discussions included the need to increase awareness of and interest in the sport in communities in which teams play, as doing so will create more fans of the team and of the sport. Next, increasing opportunity to play the sport in those communities is equally important. Once the interest and awareness of the sport develops, the next logical step would be to provide the opportunity for the community to put that interest to practice. To do so, decreasing the exorbitant costs associated with playing the sport must occur. Currently, hockey is almost systemically white due to costs effectively eliminating lower-income households from being able to sustain a long-term passion for the sport on the part of children. Once the cost is softened,

the players agreed that to diversify the sport, the target demographic must be the youth. Teaching equality and respect, along with other life lessons through sport, will have an influence at the youth level that can ripple throughout generations.

The results and answers to these questions are significant because they have not been asked in the context of academic research of hockey. The player narratives featured in this study are unique and largely unknown, and the information produced should shed light on a still-relevant topic that has been either intentionally or unintentionally ignored by the vast public, especially in the United States, where hockey's popularity is minimal behind that of football, baseball and basketball. Much of the information gathered through player narratives is consistent with that of the experiences of black athletes in other sports, yet there remains a stark contrast between available research of the other sports and hockey.

Data collection provided an intricate look into the positive and adverse experiences of each player of African descent featured in this study. Although none of the player stories necessarily contradicted the author's expectations, the descriptions and depth of pain experienced by players who played in the modern era, and especially the adversity they faced as children, was something that is difficult to prepare for going in to the research process. A full account of one participant's childhood experiences in particular can be found in the Epilogue section of this report.

Study Limitations and Recommendations

The primary restriction in this study was the inability to incorporate a wider variety of player experiences due to limited access to current and former players. The

small total population of Black players with at least one NHL game played (90 players) meant that a response rate like the one featured in this study (eight participants) could miss decades-worth of Black player involvement in the NHL. Because sports often reflect ideologies of greater society, leaving decades of player experiences out risks the exclusion of potentially significant narratives that would reflect the social climate of the time in which they occurred. As previously discussed, the career range for the eight participants was from 1987-2010. Therefore, the year range was a limitation. Researchers who have more connections to the NHL and its players may have greater success with the data collection process.

Geography was also a limitation. The author is located in the Washington, D.C. area, and did not have the ability to interview participants in person. Instead, the extent of contact was entirely through social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter. It is reasonable to expect that, if the author was geographically proximal to any number of players and could inquire about study participation in person, there may have been more receptiveness to participating. Furthermore, physical proximity could potentially allow for better contact opportunities than the aforementioned social media version of “cold calling.”

It is recommended, therefore, that future studies produce additional player narratives from the time periods not included in this study. Doing so will allow for a more in-depth depiction of the experiences of Black hockey players across multiple generations. Racism experienced by players like Willie O’Ree or Mike Marson, for example, may have been more prevalent on the ice and throughout the game than that of

the players featured in this study. Similarly, players who have played post-2010—the last year played by a participant in this study—have continued to experience incidents. As discussed, in February 2018, Devante Smith-Pelly of the Washington Capitals was berated by fans of the Chicago Blackhawks while sitting in the penalty box (Sullivan, 2018).

An additional recommendation for future research would be to incorporate study participants outside of the population used for this study, such as league executives, community relations personnel, and personnel from any diversity initiatives being undertaken. Having a study centered on subjects like these to focus entirely on league diversification initiatives within minority communities would be beneficial to gauge the progress being made to diversify hockey, and would present a vantage point of the organizations rather than only player perspectives.

Implications

This project is an example of the consistent presence of challenges burdening individuals based on race and ethnicity. Negative ideologies, like anything else, are not engrained in us at birth, but rather learned through societal interactions that form a basis for many people on which to judge another individual. Sports, as a vastly consumed platform, have the unique opportunity to reach people of all races and demographics. Through messages of acceptance and by denouncing intolerance or hateful treatment of any single race, ethnicity or orientation, sports can serve as a transcending platform on which to promote racial equality. Doing so, however, requires an understanding on the part of sport participants and consumers. As Coakley (2009) stated:

[Those challenges] will exist as long as skin color and ethnicity influence people's lives and are viewed as socially important. This is not new, nor is it unique to sports. Managers and coaches must now be ready and able to work with players from multiple cultural and national backgrounds, meld them into a team, defuse and debunk players' racial and ethnic stereotypes, and facilitate respect for customs and lifestyles they've not seen before (pp. 308-309).

Facilitating respect and promoting equality for minorities were the ultimate goals of this research. Bringing to light previously unheard stories of NHL players is critical in accomplishing that goal within the sport of hockey and in greater society. Because sports serve as a microcosm of society, the author's hope for this research was that a greater awareness of the discrimination experienced by Black hockey players would not only spur on a sense of inclusiveness and equality within the sport, but permeate throughout the multicultural makeup of North America and the world.

The results of this study have implications on both individual and societal levels. From an individual standpoint, understanding the stories of these players has the potential to fill a void of knowledge about racial discrimination in hockey and in society. Gaining that understanding should encourage individuals to act on behalf of minorities to increase equality and acceptance in both society and in sport. Additionally, the participants in this study understand the role they play and the responsibility they have in promoting racial equality, whether through coaching, working for hockey organizations, motivational speaking, or in non-hockey roles, such as the police officer featured in this study.

Individuals can have significant influence in their immediate social circles, and this research should be used to promote the goal of this research in those personal networks.

Similarly, organizations should use this research to work toward diversifying the sport and eliminating the barriers associated with keeping minority communities from participating in hockey. Hockey organizations, from the youth level to the National Hockey League, can take the information used in this study and apply it to promoting positive social change throughout the sport in the form of increasing inclusivity and understanding of racial discrimination. The organizational sphere of influence and potential for outreach, especially at the game's top level, is vastly more substantial than that of the individuals listed above. Therefore, this research should serve as a catalyst for executives and community relations personnel to spearhead efforts to promote social change. This organizational effort can target specific communities, regions, or the national level. Furthermore, this sense of promoting equality and diversification is applicable all the way up to the societal level, where this research should lead to the promotion of racial inclusiveness in all things, sport or otherwise.

EPILOGUE

The following excerpt was from the interview conducted with Pierre Giroux. His description of his childhood and the way in which he was forced to mature without any help—even from family—was something that should be of note while trying to improve access to minority communities. It is the author’s hope that improving the diversity in the game will eliminate stories like the one below, and that children who want to do something as simple as playing a game can do so without experiencing the torment Giroux did as a child.

When you’re seven years old, and people are calling you names like that, you don’t understand that stuff. My parents, they were like, “You gotta stop playing.” My parents didn’t want me playing anymore because they thought it was such a bad environment. And if I kept playing hockey, they thought I was going to be fucked up. And they didn’t want me to go through that, because, how many kids, when they grow up with hatred, it fucks them up when they get older, right? So, because of that, they didn’t want me in that environment, so they would tell me to stop playing. But I didn’t want to, for two reasons. The first is I love hockey so much that I wanted to fight through that. But the second is that, even though soccer as a kid was my favorite sport, and I was pretty good at both sports, when everyone was calling me names, obviously I can fight back [in hockey].

My parents stopped going to the games, because there was too much racism, so I had to go on my own. Because they couldn't stand it. There would be fights in the stands all the time because it was so bad. It was so crazy. I went on my own, and I knew that I couldn't show them that it affected me when I got home, so sometimes I cried in silence, in my bedroom when I would go to bed, so they couldn't see me, because if they saw me crying, they could pull me back out of hockey. And I didn't want that, so because of that, I didn't say anything, which is insane. They didn't know.

So, what I did was, when they would tell me to quit, I would tell them that, if I quit, they (racist people) are going to win. I was eight, nine years old when I was telling them that. That's insane. I wanted to prove them wrong, that I was going to make it, and they would see that they were all wrong. And I mean you're saying that to your parents when you're eight years old, nine years old...I can't tell you a Cinderella story with parents supporting you, wanting you to play hockey, they loved it, you know. My entire family thought I was a bum because I was always telling everybody I was going to play in the NHL, but they didn't even know what it was (parents were Haitian), and they were like, "He's crazy."

I did it on my own, and that's what's crazy about it, when you talk about the power of the mind when you want to do something...that's what I did. You go

through that at a young age, and getting mad and frustrated about all the hatred... I used that as a motivation. And in the back of my mind, I was like, "One day, I'm going to make it. And you're going to regret everything that you said." And when I did make it, it was like I said, I dedicated my career to everyone who called me bad names because I knew it kind of gave me the emotional fuel I needed to make it to the NHL. When people would call me names, I would never show them that it affected me. It was that machismo. And I didn't want to cry and show them they were affecting me. At night sometimes I was crying, but nobody saw that. Nobody knew about this. Only me, and I was like, "OK Pierre, you gotta be strong here."

That's why the Jackie Robinson book helped me a lot because, just when I was really weak one time and I was like, "Oh my God, I don't know if I can do this anymore," my sister had a child version of a biography of Jackie Robinson. And when I read that, that's when I realized that, what he went through to make it to the major leagues, it's like I had to go through the same thing to make it into hockey. So, when I saw that, I start accepting what I was going through, just like he did, and I was like, "OK. I'm going to be like Jackie. If Jackie went through that, I can do it also." So, he became my model, even though it was in a different sport, we both had to battle the same thing.

APPENDIX A

Sample Questionnaire

1. Name?
2. Number of years played?
3. Number of NHL teams played for?
4. What is your favorite career highlight and memory?
5. What is your worst career highlight and memory?
6. Did you experience racial discrimination or differential treatment prior to playing hockey?
7. Was there a time when you realized this was going to be more difficult than just playing hockey? If yes, describe that moment.
8. Did you experience backlash for being a non-white hockey player? If so, when did that first start? Did things ever get better with time, playing experience, or becoming a veteran?
9. How do you react to the various incidents you faced or that other black players have faced? How did your friends and family react?
10. Why do you think these incidents don't receive the same attention that they would in other sports?

11. What were the toughest challenges you faced, and were there particular cities or opponents who made things even more difficult than usual?
12. What type of support, if much at all, did you experience from white teammates and coaches?
13. How did those who played before you help you in your career and how do you plan to help future generations of black hockey players?
14. Do you see the game spreading to black communities more or less than before? If more, what do you feel are the most effective methods to reach minority communities and expand the diversity of the game?

APPENDIX B

List of Black Players to Play at Least One Game in the NHL – All Time

Nationality	Name	Birthplace	Position	Seasons Active	Teams	Ethnicity
Canadian	Willie O'Ree	Fredericton, NB	W	1957-1961	Bruins	Afro-Canadian
Canadian	Mike Marson	Scarborough, ON	LW	1974-1980	Capitals, Kings	Afro-Canadian
Canadian	Bill Riley	Amherst, NS	RW	1974-1980	Capitals, Jets	Afro-Canadian
Canadian	Tony McKegney	Montreal, QC	LW	1978-1991	Sabres, Nordiques, North Stars, Rangers, Blues, Red Wings, Black Hawks	Bi-racial, Nigerian
Canadian	Bernie Saunders	Montreal, QC	LW	1979-1981	Nordiques	Afro-Canadian
Canadian	Ray Neufeld	St. Boniface, MB	RW	1979-1990	Whalers, Jets, Bruins	Afro-Canadian
American	Val James	Ocala, FL	LW	1981-1987	Sabres, Maple Leafs	African-American
Canadian	Grant Fuhr	Spruce Grove, AB	G	1981-2000	Oilers, Maple Leafs, Sabres, Kings, Blues, Flames	Bi-racial
Canadian	Brian	Montreal,	RW	1983-	Red Wings	Afro-

	Johnson	QC		1984		Canadian
Canadian	Darren Lowe	Toronto, ON	RW	1983-1984	Penguins	Afro-Canadian
Canadian	Eldon "Pokey" Reddick	Halifax, NS	G	1986-1994	Jets, Oilers, Panthers	Afro-Canadian
Canadian	Steven Fletcher	Montreal, QC	LW/D	1987-1989	Canadiens, Jets	Bi-racial
Canadian	Claude Vilgrain	Port-au-Prince, Haiti	RW	1987-1994	Canucks, Devils, Flyers	Haitian
Canadian	Paul Jerrard	Winnipeg, MB	D	1988-1989	North Stars	Bi-racial, Jamaican
American	Mike McHugh	Bowdoin, ME	LW	1988-1992	North Stars, Sharks	African-American
Canadian	Graeme Townsend	Kingston, Jamaica	RW	1989-1994	Bruins, Islanders, Senators	Jamaican
Canadian	Reggie Savage	Montreal, QC	C	1990-1994	Capitals, Nordiques	Jamaican
Canadian	Dale Craigwell	Toronto, ON	C	1991-1994	Sharks	Afro-Canadian
Canadian	Darren Banks	Toronto, ON	LW	1992-1994	Bruins	Afro-Canadian
Canadian	Nathan LaFayette	New Westminster, BC	C	1993-1999	Blues, Canucks, Rangers, Kings	Afro-Canadian
Canadian	Fred Brathwaite	Ottawa, ON	G	1993-2004	Oilers, Flames, Blues, Blue Jackets	Barbadian
Canadian	Sandy McCarthy	Toronto, ON	RW	1993-2004	Flames, Lightning, Flyers, Hurricanes, Rangers, Bruins	Black-Mi'kmaq
American	Donald Brashear	Bedford, IN	LW	1993-2010	Canadiens, Canucks, Flyers, Capitals, Rangers	African-French

Canadian	Craig Martin	Amherst, NS	RW	1994-1997	Jets, Panthers	Afro-Canadian
Canadian	Joaquin Gage	Vancouver, BC	G	1994-2001	Oilers	Afro-Canadian
Canadian	Jason Doig	Montreal, QC	D	1995-2004	Jets, Coyotes, Rangers, Capitals	Jamaican
Canadian	John Craighead	Vancouver, BC	RW	1996-1997	Maple Leafs	Afro-Canadian
Canadian	Rumun Ndur	Zaria, Nigeria	D	1996-2000	Sabres, Rangers, Thrashers	Nigerian
Canadian	Sean Brown	Oshawa, ON	D	1996-2006	Oilers, Bruins, Devils, Canucks	Afro-Canadian
Canadian	Anson Carter	Toronto, ON	RW	1996-2007	Bruins, Capitals, Oilers, Rangers, Kings, Hurricanes, Canucks, Blue Jackets	Barbadian
American	Mike Grier	Detroit, MI	RW	1996-2011	Oilers, Capitals, Sharks, Sabres	African-American
Canadian	Jamal Mayers	Toronto, ON	RW	1996-2013	Blues, Maple Leafs, Flames, Sharks, Blackhawks	Bi-racial, Barbadian
Canadian	Jerome Iginla	Edmonton, AB	RW	1996-present	Flames, Penguins, Bruins, Avalanche	Bi-racial, Nigerian
Canadian	Peter Worrell	Pierrefonds, QC	LW	1997-2004	Panthers, Avalanche	Barbadian
Canadian	Kevin	Toronto, ON	G	1997-	Panthers,	Barbadian

	Weeks			2009	Canucks, Islanders, Lightning, Hurricanes, Rangers, Devils	
Canadian	Georges Laroque	Montreal, QC	RW	1997-2010	Oilers, Penguins, Coyotes, Canadiens	Haitian
Canadian	Tyrone Garner	Stoney Creek, ON	G	1998-1999	Flames	Afro-Canadian
Canadian	Jean-Luc Grand-Pierre	Montreal, QC	D	1998-2004	Sabres, Blue Jackets, Capitals, Flames	Haitian
American	Francis Bouillon	New York, NY	D	1999-2014	Canadiens, Predators	Haitian-French
Canadian	Bryce Salvador	Brandon, MB	D	2000-2015	Blues, Devils	Afro-Brazilian-Ukrainian
Canadian	Sean McMorrow	Vancouver, BC	LW	2002-2003	Sabres	Afro-Canadian
Canadian	Ray Emery	Hamilton, ON	G	2002-2015	Senators, Flyers, Ducks, Blackhawks	Bi-racial
Canadian	Nathan Robinson	Scarborough, ON	C	2003-2006	Red Wings, Bruins	Afro-Canadian
American	Greg Mauldin	Holliston, MA	C	2003-2011	Blue Jackets, Islanders, Avalanche	African American
Canadian	Trevor Daley	Toronto, ON	D	2003-present	Stars, Blackhawks, Penguins	Bi-racial, Jamaican
American	Gerald Coleman	Romeoville, IL	G	2005-2006	Lightning	Bi-racial
Canadian	Anthony Stewart	LaSalle, QC	RW	2005-2012	Panthers, Thrashers, Hurricanes	Bi-racial, Jamaican
American	Dustin	Roseau, MN	D	2005-	Blackhawks	African-

	Byfuglien			present	, Thrashers, Jets	Norwegian
Canadian	Shawn Bell	Edmonton, AB	D	2006-2011	Wild, Canadiens, Oilers, Avalanche	Afro-Canadian
Canadian / Kazakhstani	Nigel Dawes	Winnipeg, MB	LW	2006-2011	Rangers, Coyotes, Flames, Thrashers, Canadiens	Bi-racial, Jamaican
Canadian	Mark Fraser	Ottawa, ON	D	2006-2015	Devils, Maple Leafs, Oilers	Bi-racial, Jamaican
Swedish	Johnny Oduya	Stockholm, Sweden	D	2006-present	Devils, Thrashers, Jets, Blackhawks, Stars	Bi-racial, Kenyan
Canadian	Joel Ward	North York, ON	RW	2006-present	Wild, Predators, Capitals, Sharks	Barbadian
Canadian	Chris Beckford-Tseu	Toronto, ON	G	2007-2008	Blues	Jamaican-Chinese
American	Robbie Earl	Chicago, IL	LW	2007-2011	Maple Leafs, Wild	African American
Canadian	Theo Peckham	Richmond Hill, ON	D	2007-2013	Oilers	Bi-racial
American	Kyle Okposo	St. Paul, MN	RW	2007-present	Islanders, Sabres	Bi-racial, Nigerian
Canadian	Kenndal McArdle	Toronto, ON	LW	2008-2012	Panthers, Jets	Trinidadian
Canadian	Derek Joslin	Richmond Hill, ON	D	2008-2013	Sharks, Hurricanes, Canucks	Bi-racial
Canadian	Paul Bissonnette	Welland, ON	LW	2008-2014	Penguins, Coyotes	Bi-racial
Canadian	Wayne Simmonds	Scarborough, ON	RW	2008-present	Kings, Flyers	Afro-Canadian

Canadian	Chris Stewart	Toronto, ON	RW	2008-present	Avalanche, Blues, Sabres, Wild, Ducks	Bi-racial, Jamaican
Canadian	Maxime Fortunus	Longueuil, QC	D	2009-2014	Stars	Haitian
Canadian	Evander Kane	Vancouver, BC	LW	2009-present	Thrashers, Jets, Sabres	Bi-racial
Canadian	P.K. Subban	Toronto, ON	D	2009-present	Canadiens, Predators	Jamaican-Montserratian
Canadian	Ryan Reaves	Winnipeg, MB	RW	2010-present	Blues	Bi-racial
Canadian	Akim Aliu	Okene, Nigeria	RW	2011-2013	Flames	Nigerian-Ukrainian
American	J.T. Brown	Burnsville, MN	RW	2011-present	Lightning	Bi-racial
Canadian	Devante Smith-Pelly	Scarborough, ON	RW	2011-present	Ducks, Canadiens, Devils	Afro-Canadian
American	Emerson Etem	Long Beach, CA	RW	2012-present	Ducks, Rangers, Canucks	Bi-racial
Canadian	Darren Archibald	Newmarket, ON	RW	2013-2014	Canucks	Afro-Canadian
American	Justin Johnson	Anchorage, AK	RW	2013-2014	Islanders	African-American
American	Seth Jones	Arlington, TX	D	2013-present	Predators, Blue Jackets	Bi-racial
French	Pierre-Édouard-Bellemare	Le Blanc-Mesnil, France	LW	2014-present	Flyers	Bi-racial, Martiniquais
Canadian	Anthony Duclair	Pointe-Claire, QC	LW	2014-present	Rangers, Coyotes	Haitian
Canadian	Darnell Nurse	Hamilton, ON	D	2014-present	Oilers	Bi-racial, Trinidadian
Canadian	Malcolm Subban	Toronto, ON	G	2014-present	Bruins	Jamaican-Montserratian
American	Justin Bailey	Buffalo, NY	RW	2015-present	Sabres	Bi-racial

Finnish	Christopher Gibson	Karkkila, Finland	G	2015-present	Islanders	Saint Lucian-French
Canadian	Nicholas Baptiste	Ottawa, ON	RW	2016-present	Sabres	Haitian
Swedish	Oliver Kylington	Stockholm, Sweden	D	2016-present	Flames	Swedish-Eritrean
Canadian	Gemel Smith	Toronto, ON	C, LW	2016-present	Stars	Afro-Canadian
Canadian	Josh Ho-Sang	Toronto, ON	RW	2017-present	Islanders	Jamaican-Jewish
Canadian	Madison Bowey	Winnipeg, MB	D	2017-present	Capitals	Bi-racial
Canadian	Tyrell Goulbourne	Edmonton, AB	LW	2018-present	Flyers	Afro-Canadian
American	Jordan Greenway	Canton, NY	LW	2018-present	Wild	Bi-racial

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