SPORT, POLITICS, AND THE 2008 BEIJING OLYMPIC GAMES:
SYNTHESIZING IDENTITY POLITICS AND GLOBAL EMANCIPATION
THROUGH NEO-PRAGMATIC RADICAL DEMOCRATIC THEORY

THESIS

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By
Jennifer J. Hardes, BA (Hons).
The Ohio State University

* * * *

Master’s Thesis Committee:

Dr Melvin L. Adelman, Advisor

Dr Sarah K. Fields

Approved by:

____________________________________________________________________

Advisor
College of Education
This thesis examines a shift in sport sociology toward post-structurally underpinned identity-based politics. As a result, sport sociologists fail to reflect on macro level political issues such as human rights, due in large measure to the epistemological rejection of metanarratives of post-structurally oriented scholars. Implicit in this thesis is a tension between foundationalism and anti-foundationalism, which I synthesize through a Hegelian dialectical argument. I use the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games as an empirical example of the implications that rejecting metanarratives entails, and I argue that reconciliation of micro and macro level politics is essential through means of pragmatic radical democratic theory, in order to provide a moral purchase for scholars when dealing with issues requiring wide-scale emancipation, while, concomitantly, pertaining to sport sociology's calls for micro level identity-based work.
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VITA


2006.................................................................BA Coach Education &
Sports Development,
University of Bath, England.

2006-Present.........................................................Graduate Teaching Associate
at The Ohio State University

PUBLICATIONS

(Ed.) Coaching knowledges: Understanding the dynamics of sport performance

FIELDS OF STUDY

Major field: Education
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Does a focus on “identity politics” detract from wide-scale political action and emancipation through sport? The answer to this question lies in its interpretation, and many sport sociology scholars have construed it very differently (e.g., Bairner, 2007; Carrington, 2007; Helstein, 2007). “Identity politics” has become somewhat of a “buzz” word in sport sociology and could perhaps be described as the latest research trend. In the special symposium issue of the March 2007, Sociology of Sport Journal (SSJ), a group of scholars discussed this current trend of identity politics from a range of conceptual perspectives (e.g., Andrews, 2007; Bairner, 2007; Carlisle Duncan, 2007; Carrington, 2007; Helstein, 2007; King & McDonald, 2007; St. Louis, 2007; Yep, 2007). Identity politics can be simply understood as studies pertaining to localized, cultural groups, for example, in relation to gender, race, class, and sexuality (Helstein, 2007), which several scholars studying Michel Foucault have termed “micro politics” or “micro” issues of power (e.g. Norris, 1994, p. 187; Cousens Hoy, 1986, p. 134-5). Typically, a range of theoretical perspectives underpin identity-oriented studies, such as: Marxism, Neo-Marxism, modernism, psychoanalysis, postmodernism, post-structuralism, and/or Foucauldian theorizing (King & McDonald, 2007).
As a political movement, identity politics emerged in the 1960s and 1970s; a period which King and McDonald note was shared with the “linguistic turn,” or the “post-structural turn” (2007, p. 18). Although it would be incorrect to assume that all identity-based studies are post-structural, an abundance of post-structural theorizing in sport sociology is empirically clear (Helstein, 2007). David Andrews (2000) asserts as much and, further, suggests that post-structural work in sport sociology is “primarily Foucauldian” (p. 121). Yet, although identity politics has found a linguistic home in sport sociology, scholars have claimed that focusing on identity politics is either politically restrictive, (Bairner, 2007) or has the potential to be without adequate praxis orientation to research (Carrington, 2007). Michelle Helstein (2007), however, argues that studying identity has had considerable political implications, namely: opening doors to female voices; allowing new studies to emerge dealing with race and “whiteness”; enabling scholarship to explore issues of sexuality; and dealing with the problems of “normalization,” which have collectively contributed to a body of social and political knowledge in sport sociology and wider scholarly circles.

Despite such contention amongst sport sociology scholars with regard to the ability of identity-based studies to claim political purchase, philosopher Nancy Fraser argues that such studies of identity can be divided into two different strands: those aimed at the “politics of redistribution” and those focusing on the “politics of recognition”; the former of which, in Fraser’s estimation, has more political purchase. According to Fraser, although group rights were politically rife in the 1960s and 1970s, many of these social movements were grounded in a common goal of economic redistribution. However, due to the inception of post-structurally-oriented scholarly work, Fraser argues that scholars
studying identity from this persuasion are responsible for a shift from redistribution to recognition. As a consequence of this shift, Fraser suggests that post-structurally grounded identity work is problematic because identity becomes culturally reified, causing groups based on race, gender, and sexuality to center on their *differences* rather than common goals of alleviated social status. Accordingly, Fraser asserts that focusing on post-structural identity reduces scholarly attention to collective social, moral, and political action and citizenship.

Richard Rorty (1998), like Fraser, attributes this shift from collective social hope toward a focus on group difference to the changing nature of academia and the infiltration of postmodern tendencies in theory. Hence,

> The leftist ferment which had been centered before the Sixties, in the social sciences departments of the colleges and the universities moved into the literature departments. The study of philosophy—most apocalyptically French and German philosophy— replaced that of political economy as an essential preparation for participation in leftist initiatives (p. 77).

Fraser also views the politics of recognition’s disassociation from the economy as problematic. David Harvey (1990) concedes with Fraser, identifying the transition from a “Fordist” modern society of industrial mass production to a post-industrial, “post-modern” society as the turning point of the social movement’s political goals. Arguably, since political identity groups are now vying for rights in terms of other forms of recognition (not strictly economic), less concern for redistribution and, accordingly, justice in the sense of overcoming the economic inequality exists (Fraser, 1997, 2000). This lack of concern for redistribution is due in part to the nature of post-structural theory and its dichotomization of identity and community, thus stripping identity of its institutionalized nature. According to Fraser, post-structural identity is perceived as
cultural, and because culture is in flux and cannot be hypostatized, identity is reified (Fraser, 1997). In essence, a new focus on culture—as a consequence of turning away from Marxist theories of economic determinism and reductionism—means that identity loses its fixed base. As a consequence, while separate group politics once shared a common goal of equality and emancipation, now, argues Fraser, “identity” has been conflated with a concern for one’s group rights without recognizing a collective emancipatory goal.

Chantal Mouffe (1992) attributes this demarcation of “identity” and “collectivity” to a surge in liberalism and its rejection of communitarian values. For example, according to Mouffe, scholars defending individual liberty ground these claims in the assumption that individuals are primarily self-interested, rational characters. This Hobbesian conception of the individual is directly pitted against the communitarian tradition encompassing scholarly claims, such as those from Charles Taylor (1989, 1999), that individuals are not primarily self-interested, and individuals can collectively join as citizens to share broader social solidarity. Although Mouffe appears to agree with Taylor, the question for her is, “How can we defend the gains of the democratic revolution and acknowledge the constitutive role of liberalism in the emergence of a pluralistic democracy, while trying to redress the negative consequences of individualism?” (1992, p. 5) The division between these perspectives somewhat highlights the break between micro politics (liberal individualism) and macro politics (communitarianism).

This micro-macro divide may also be attributed to new understandings of power and knowledge that permeate post-structural discourse. For example, Foucauldian distrust of metanarratives leads to a different conception of power and oppression, which
diverges from classical Marxism in which power was viewed as class-based and the powerless proletariat was responsible for overcoming its marginalization (Marx & Engels, 1848). Foucauldian theory also departs from the hegemonic view of power which, while remaining class-based and institutional is also ideological and, thus, more complex and difficult to overcome. From the post-structural perspective, these views are limiting because power is regarded as fixed. For hegemony theorists, although “truth” was masked it could still be uncovered, while for Foucauldian scholars power is not fixed and “truth” is inaccessible, unknowable, and purely contingent.

According to Rorty (1998), political apathy and cynicism are linked to Foucauldian theory, and the majority of society born post-Vietnam war (the “New Cultural Left”) believe that “the nation state is obsolete” (p. 98). Progressive social hopes of the 1940s have, according to Rorty, “waned,” which he attributes to the influence of Foucault and Marx in creating an “endless attempt to make the intellect sovereign over the imagination” (p. 138). He continues, “the Foucauldian academic Left in contemporary America is exactly the sort of Left that the oligarchy dreams of: a Left whose members are so busy unmasking the present that they have no time to discuss what laws need to be passed in order to create a better future” (p. 139). Fundamentally, because concern with theorizing social problems has immersed Leftist academics, they have lost the ability to see any social hope or progress. Rather, society sinks into a paralyzing cynicism, which stifles any progressive means for political reform.²
Macro Politics and Metanarratives

This shift towards a different conception of truth and identity, and a somewhat skeptical view of emancipation, is central to this thesis and begs multiple questions. For example, if truths cannot be uncovered and a privileged perspective from which we can act out to invoke political change cannot be assumed, what hope is there of emancipation? This not only refers to emancipation in the sense of group emancipation, but also the wider implication that if power cannot be located outside of discourse, and grand totalizing narratives must alert suspicion because power is bound in this discourse, how can collective agreement ever be made without it being subject to critique as representing a discursive power? How can we join together and act politically to emancipate the oppressed if we cannot locate their oppression? Thus, despite the considerable role post-structural identity politics has played in sport sociology in opening up new avenues for research and challenging dominant beliefs and values, these studies fail to reflect on, or contextualize, the problems implicit in the post-structural rejection of metanarratives.

In sport sociology this objection is germane if scholars endeavor to see sport as a conduit for political or social change. In order to refrain from being “politically restrictive” as Ben Carrington (2007) has described, it must be possible to locate power and overcome oppression on a broader scale, rather than attempting to restrict alleviation to the inequalities of one’s own cultural “group.” This is not to say that such alleviation is unnecessary, for any kind of oppression necessitates change and reform; however, as I discuss throughout, a means of sharing collective hopes of change is needed to recognize that we all share the desire for the same thing; namely, equality.
The problem, therefore, begins with the issue of group politics, but also extends to an even wider issue of global emancipation. Not only has post-structuralism meant that identity has become contingent, fluid, and irreducible to “the institutional matrix” due to a questioning of dominant discursive power bound up in language (Fraser, 1997, 2000), it has also led to decreased social hope outside of one’s group, or even country. Social concern for “human rights” in other countries becomes difficult (if not impossible) to defend, because claims for human rights are grounded, according to post-structuralists, in a priori assumptions about reality. This, further, leaves us in a paralyzing cynicism, with little hope of rectifying the problems outside of our culture and, problematically, creates a case for cultural relativism.

**Bridging Micro and Macro Politics**

This thesis intends to broach the tension between rejecting dominant discourses and rejecting metanarratives—hence, questioning the “foundationalist” claims of truth and agency found in the liberalism and leftist politics of the 1960s and 1970s, (much of which is grounded in either natural law, rationalism, Marxism, or hegemony)—while concomitantly arguing that collective agreement on certain things such as justice, morality, and ethics is possible. I argue this through examining the issues concerning the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games as a site of contested human rights abuses. This is in line with requests from King and McDonald (2007) for, “a rigorous interrogation of the relationship between identity and inequality…for understanding the genealogy for our field, as well as the shape it might take in the future” (p. 13), and Carrington’s (2007) concern that we are “now in a putative postidentity movement” (p. 49) and need “critical
public sport sociology” (p. 49). This thesis intends to serve as at least as one step in answering these calls.

To elaborate, the purpose of this thesis is to question why an abundance of sport sociologists (e.g., Andrews, 1993; Bridel & Rail, 2007; Dworkin & Wachs, 1998; Foley, 1992; Heikella, 1993; Jamieson, 1998; Markula, 1993; Price & Parker, 2003; Pringle & Markula, 2007; Rail & Harvey, 1995; Sykes, 1998; White & Gillett, 1995) have embraced studies pertaining to “identity” or “micro” politics with underpinning post-structural theoretical frameworks. In response, I will assess the impact of this adoption on the field and discuss the potential drawbacks. Although I credit such scholarly work for pushing the boundaries of social inquiry in sport sociology, specifically, I will argue that implicit in these studies’ focus on group change and localized micro politics when based on a “politics of recognition” (Fraser, 1997, 2000), is a rejection of universal theorizing (Antonio & Kellner, 1996), which lacks the type of normativity crucial for what William Morgan describes as a “critical sport sociology” (1995, p. 25). As I will argue throughout, turning away from universals and dominant discourses, which Jean François Lyotard describes as “incredulity toward meta narratives” (1989), and Foucault describes as an awareness of “discursive power” (Foucault, 1969, 1979), has marked a significant, yet largely unmediated problem for sport sociologists. Ultimately, without some form of universal a severe lack of moral touchstone for those involved in the study of sport is available to draw on, particularly when dealing with issues of ethics and morality. Thus, a Lyotardian incredulity toward metanarratives, and an (early) Foucauldian distrust for dominant discourses bound up with knowledge and power, leaves sport sociologists in an ethically and culturally relativistic bind (Simon, 2001). However, as I will argue,
avoiding relativism and achieving this universal ideal without being trapped into generating further metanarratives is a complex endeavor.

In arguing this, universalism itself must not be essentialized; a search for universals does not necessitate a model of social hope built on foundationalist principles of justice and morality—hence a view such as Jurgen Habermas’ (1987) grounded in a shared universal faculty of reason. Collective agreement can, as I will argue throughout this thesis, originate from a more inductive, localized context and be upwardly constructed. Such a conception of universality, therefore, accounts for equality on a macro scale, and plurality on a micro scale. In this respect it would include both liberal individualism and communitarian equality, and sport sociologist’s skepticism of metanarratives, and foundationalist requirements for some form of moral touchstone when dealing with politically contentious issues.

Human rights lack significant exploration in sport sociology, despite being a broad-reaching, politically contentious concept. Although Bruce Kidd and Peter Donnelly (2000), in their article “Human Rights in Sports,” came close to identifying tensions implicit in human rights discourse and raised the important problem that I am dealing with in this thesis over “concerns about individualism and cultural imperialism” (p. 134), they discounted this issue, stating, “Nevertheless, we believe that both the liberal and the collectivist aspects of the Universal Declaration are essential” (p. 134). While I do not disagree that liberal and collectivist aspects of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are essential, little-to-no substantiation for their claims exists.

Interestingly, Carrington (2004) takes the question of human rights in sport to a higher philosophic level. Carrington, for example, offers a post-Olympic interpretation of
cosmopolitanism, which he relates to discussion on “fundamental notions of human rights” (2004, p. 87), and the “philosophical discussion concerning the extent to which such rights can resolve particularistic claims to cultural identity and religious belief in opposition to universal responsibilities to society and ethical duties of self/Other” (p. 87). Thus, Carrington’s goals are similar to those of this thesis; hence, to remain focused on wider political emancipation without negating the localized issues of particularity and identity. Carrington finds his post-Olympic cosmopolitanism in what he calls “strategic universalism,” which he describes as a “reworking of humanism” (p. 87).

Carrington clearly articulates the problems implicit in the notion of Olympism as a universal ideology, and expresses the need for “a cosmopolitan reflexivity” that “sees the universal as a political horizon rather than the basis from which politics starts and embraces diversity even whilst it critiques the limits of insular and fixed identitarian politics” (p. 96). However, although Carrington’s work is an excellent example of how studies pertaining to identity politics can be seen on a broader scale, his concern remains focused on the individual rather than the collective, and his concept of wider political emancipation is defined by the particular. By this, I refer to Carrington’s focus on racial identity, which allows him to construct a politics of racial identity on the micro level that he sees implicating the macro level. My concern for this thesis, however, is to consider the problem of multiple competing identities at the micro level, and how these may unite in order to establish a wider universal moral purchase beyond their own political needs. I, therefore, take Carrington’s suggestions for reconciling micro and macro politics as a point of departure, whilst remaining cautious that post-structural critiques of identity, such as Carrington’s, not only do not overshadow Fraser’s “politics of redistribution,” but
also do not overlook the inherent problem that restricting focus to one particular identity causes—specifically, a lack of political engagement with other identity-based groups toward wider moral agreement. Identity groups may not, for example, have a natural empathy for individuals in China who are suffering human rights abuses in the same way they may have a natural empathy for those who belong to a similar identity group as them. This thesis deals with the question of how such a moral empathy might be collectively built by searching for political, moral, and ethical commonality whilst maintaining group differences.

**Dialectical Argumentation**

As a thesis with a philosophical basis, this paper uses a Hegelian dialectical style argument to make sense of this issue. For Hegel, thinking is typically dialectical. For example, in the Kantian sense, every thesis will generate its own contradictory antithesis. Thus, propositions are seen as dichotomous (hence, “A” versus “B”). According to Hegel, such dichotomous thinking is unnecessary because both can be true and commensurable when viewed as part of an inclusive higher proposition. Hence, “It is in this dialectic (as here understood) and in the comprehension of the Unity of Opposites, or of the Positive in the Negative, that Speculative knowledge [original italics] consists” (Hegel, 1929, p. 73). According to Robert Osterhoudt (2006), “The spirit of harmonization…ran nowhere deeper than in the thought of Hegel. Hegel sought, as a grounding tenet of his organic vision, the harmonization of such classical polarities as universality and particularity, reason and nature, thought and being, mind and body.”(p. 271). Further, “According to Hegel, history develops by a dialectic process in which all
events are connected in mutual dependence and in which all events, or theses (i.e. broad dominant tendencies), give rise to separated opposites (to the inherently conflicting, or negative aspects of those events), which, in turn, give way to a conciliation, a resolution, of such opposition in a higher unity (a synthesis)” (Osterhoudt, 2006, p. 272). Hegelian dialectics thus comprise of a thesis (initial position), antithesis (opposing position), and synthesis (compromise between the two).

*Thesis*

In the case of this argument, chapter three outlines the thesis, which is the foundationalist ideological-type argument that I describe as “macro” politics. As a heuristic device I draw on human rights and use the Beijing Olympic Games as site where human rights are tested and contested, discussing the limitations of such a foundationalist view of power. This is an important example because a belief in human rights relies on universal agreement. For foundationalists, this agreement would be grounded in either: natural law, rationalism (a shared faculty of reason), the state (e.g. Marxism), or institutional power (Neo-Marxism/hegemony). Within this chapter I trace the inception of sport sociology as a field of inquiry, and discuss sport sociology’s use of foundationalist theorizing.

*Antithesis*

The antithesis of this thesis can be expressed simply as the post-structural theorizing underpinning identity politics. This is discussed in chapter four, as a rebuttal-type argument to chapter three’s foundationalist views on human rights. Thus, at this
level, political action can be described as “micro politics.” Sport sociologists absorbed in micro political issues highlight the problems and contentions surrounding “metanarratives” or “dominant discourses”; they account for individual group identities found in culture rather than institutions and, therefore, oppose the foundationalist perspective. From the micro level, the foundationalist attention to human rights constitutes a metanarrative in and of itself. Hence, human rights become a totalizing grand narrative or dominant discourse, and one in need of questioning and challenging. A post-structural perspective is skeptical of a universal “truth” or way of knowing, and, therefore, human rights, which purport to hypostatize morality, should be questioned. Since morality is discursive and cannot be reified, post-structural scholars are skeptical of a true morality for all to abide by.

*Synthesis*

Finally, the synthesis of these two arguments draws on the best of both aspects. It argues that reconciliation is necessary and possible because the two perspectives are not incommensurable. Reconciliation is necessary because human rights cannot, and should not, discount local voices or consider certain values held in society to be a priori natural or a priori rational, (hence, we cannot take it as given that human rights are value-free, authoritarian, and rationally defined entities) as a foundationalist perspective supports. Foundationalism is problematic in situations in which cultural groups have suffered oppression, and narratives and discourses in society have acted in suppressing them. Although Marxist and Neo-Marxist hegemonic views of emancipation attempt to overcome suppression, post-structuralists consider such attempts limiting because they
remain fixed in the belief that emancipation is possible through either an overthrow of capitalism (for Marx), or locating and challenging ideologies in institutions (hegemony theory). Conversely, assuming human rights and universals can be rejected outright is problematic because claiming that “genocide is wrong” loses any normative value. Moral and ethical claims without resorting to cultural and ethical relativism must be recognizable.

Reconciliation of these perspectives is possible, since post-structuralist scholars, such as Foucault (1984) and Jacques Derrida (1992, 1994), identified the limitations of post-structuralism’s rejection of grand narratives, and Derrida has illustrated the need for emancipatory politics at the macro level. The 2008 Beijing Olympic Games as an example of a morally contentious site of human rights abuses highlights the need for normative ethics. Normativity can be described as having reasoned standards of evaluation, in contrast to subjectivity (personal preference/perception) or objectivity (independent of preference/perception) (Simon, 2001). This can emerge from an amalgamation of foundationalism and post-structuralism, but not from only one perspective, since foundationalism is often regarded as too objective, while post-structuralism too subjective. Such commensurability can be found in the scholarly work of Nancy Fraser, Chantal Mouffe, Ernesto Laclau, Richard Rorty, Judith Butler, and Michael Walzer, amongst others. In arguing for reconciliation, I highlight a contrast between micro level politics and macro level politics, which is evident in research agendas of sport sociologists (e.g., Andrews & Ritzer, 2007).
Conclusion

This thesis should not be viewed as a bifurcation of “West” versus “East,” “identity” versus “collective,” or “micro” versus “macro.” Rather, I intend to challenge privileged Western hegemonic views of power through post-structural analysis, whilst also showing that such a theoretical perspective has limitations when it faces moral and ethical situations that necessitate widespread, universal agreement. While it is not within the scope of this thesis to firmly conclude a philosophical position that can amalgamate the two perspectives into one clear synthesis, I will propose a means of rectifying the problem that ought to be further considered. I conclude that addressing micro politics in terms of redistribution rather than recognition allows for a synthesis of micro politics and macro politics, in order to develop shared goals amongst groups who feel they have been suppressed, and in developing these shared goals and understandings it will help form part of the basis for developing a more global level emancipation needed in order to deal with issues such as human rights at the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games.

First, however, I begin with an overview of the situation in China in relation to the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. As a current politically contentious issue which has received wide-scale media attention, the political, moral, and ethical issues surrounding the Games have been somewhat neglected in sport sociology literature.
CHAPTER 2
THE 2008 BEIJING OLYMPIC GAMES AS A POINT OF DISCUSSION FOR SPORT SOCIOLOGISTS

This chapter examines the human rights abuses of China in the context of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. I provide an overview of the socio-political situation in China, and how this relates to the distinction between macro and micro politics and the forthcoming discussions of foundationalism and anti-foundationalism. Specifically, I examine China’s “alleged” human rights abuses including: the “People’s Republic” and lack of democracy; the reeducation-through-labor scheme; censorship of the press and denial of free speech; the displacement of the poor for construction of Olympic facilities; China’s role in Tibet; and, finally, China’s role in the genocide in Darfur. The Beijing Olympic Games is an empirical example of a global, political, moral, and ethical issue directly related to sport. The purpose of identifying China’s assaults on human rights is to elucidate the extent of the issue at hand, and the need for conversation in sport sociology with regards to moral and ethical issues which require normative value judgments. This chapter serves as a means of explaining a global issue, in order to set the foundation for later chapters which discuss the concept of human rights. When theoretical arguments are fought regarding the nature of “rights,” failing to contextualize them is
easy. It is important, therefore, to consider the empirical nature of theoretical claims with regards to rejecting metanarratives, and to recognize the implications when addressing real, current, and controversial issues such as those occurring in China.

**China, Human Rights, and the Beijing Olympic Games**

July 13th, 2001 marked the election of Beijing, China’s capital, as the host city for the 2008 Olympic Games. Much media spectacle has surrounded the socio-political, moral and ethical issues in China and its hosting of the Beijing Games, covered extensively through newspaper articles, television and Internet media, and political activist groups such as “Reporters Without Borders,” “Amnesty International,” “The Global Human Rights Torch Relay,” and “Team Darfur,” to name only four of many who have raised campaigns. Celebrity opponents of the Beijing Games have also been granted an abundance of media coverage, including: actress Mia Farrow; actor George Clooney; film-director Steven Spielberg; professional basketball player LeBron James, in addition to multiple other actors, actresses, musicians, and athletes.

Strangely, however, it is the genocide in Darfur that has attracted most media attention in opposition to the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. Although acting in opposition to genocide itself is clearly not incongruous, China’s own human rights abuses have lacked substantial criticism. For example, the United Nations has pressurized China to comply with their sanctions on Sudan (BBC News, 2007), however, little has been discussed regarding China’s internal problems, such as their totalitarian and somewhat oppressive governmental regime, their reeducation-through-labor scheme, their denial of free speech and press, the “dying rooms” and infanticide, China’s occupation of Tibet,
and forced confessions under torture. Some of these issues will be briefly discussed to provide an overview of the human rights abuses for which China is held responsible.

The “People’s Republic” and Lack of Democracy

According to news reports, much of the Chinese population’s suffering is due to the “People’s Republic” and the lack of participatory democracy and freedom in politics. The Chinese government operates a communist regime, whereby Chinese citizens have little-to-no role in the election or the functioning of their government. Clearly this is at odds with Western democracy, and caution must be taken when describing the events in China in order to avoid Western imperialism. Although it might be argued that it is the burden of those suffering oppression to report these issues, and Western scholars and politicians should not impose their ethnocentric views onto others, as two Chinese reporters, Ten Biao and Hu Jia, (2007) now living in the United States explain,

In June 2006, Fu Xiancai was paralyzed from the neck down from being beaten by police after he had given an interview to a German media organization. In March 2007, Zheng Daqing was beaten and detained after being interviewed by the BBC. On September 7, he was abducted, taken back to Hubei, and put under criminal detention (p. 89).

Much danger in China prevents people speaking freely about their oppression. Silencing Westerners for trying to speak on their behalf does little to alleviate the situation.

Reeducation-through-labor scheme

An additional example of maltreatment comes in the form of China’s “reeducation-through-labor” scheme, which is essentially a means for the government to detain individuals or groups they perceive as a threat for up to four years without court
trial (Biao & Jia, 2007, p. 90). Many imprisoned in these schemes are human rights activists and religious group leaders, who are “tortured by electric shocks, burning, the use of electric needles, hanging for prolonged periods, sleep deprivation, forced injections of substances that damage one’s nervous system, needles forced into fingers, and more” (Biao & Jia, 2007, p. 90). According to Chinese media reports, efforts were made last year, in 2007, toward reviewing the controversial reeducation-through-labor scheme (Jiao, 2007). However, since these publicized claims that reform would occur, little evidence of such reform has been reported.

*Censorship and Denial of Free Speech*

Censorship of the press and denial of free speech has also elicited significant media concern. Western journalists have reported China’s media lockdown, and Chinese authorities have gone to extensive efforts to censor sensitive information from the media. As recent London Telegraph (2008) and New York Times (2008) newspaper reports indicate, Chinese authorities have already done much to prevent media leakages of “human rights” related issues (e.g., Barboza, 2008; Knight, 2008); particularly with the Beijing Games in sight and their lagging efforts to meet their promised commitment to the United Nations and the International Olympic Committee of a “People’s Olympics” through efforts to improve the standard of living of Chinese citizens (IOC, 2008).

Much dispute had been raised at the time of China’s election as the host country for the Games with regards to the appropriateness of such choice, however, concerns had been partly assuaged due to the hope that being elected host city would alleviate, rather than aggravate, the political dimension of the country (Drukier & Cuthbertson, 2008).
According to Drukier and Cuthbertson (2008), the European Parliament had warned against giving the 2008 Games to China, for the same reasons it was denied being the host in 1993; hence, due to its history of human rights abuses, which, in 1993 had been heavily related to the Tiananmen Square incident. While the IOC deny the claim that hope was pinned on the Games as way to alleviate human rights issues, the Chinese Olympic committee had, reportedly, admitted to their human rights abuses, stating that, “By entrusting the holding of the Olympic Games to Beijing, you will contribute to the development of human rights” (Drukier & Cuthbertson, 2008).

Despite such optimism towards the hosting of the Games as a way to alleviate human rights abuses, China has continued to receive harsh press coverage from Western media sources, and China’s strict press censorship is a growing concern (e.g., Draper & King, 2008; Drukier & Cuthbertson, 2008). Lately, coverage of new media and technology, specifically the Internet, has occupied the press regarding the Beijing Games. According to an article in the *London Telegraph* newspaper on February 2nd, 2008, Chinese authorities have already begun to establish a “Great Firewall:”

The ‘Great Firewall’ blocks access to international media sites, including BBC News, and dissident groups, while search filters weed out politically sensitive strings such as ‘Tiananmen Square’, ‘Tibet’, ‘human rights’ and ‘freedom’. Chinese internet hosting firms themselves police chatrooms, forums and blogs, fearing legal and commercial retaliation. Transgressions are punished severely.

For example, Google, one of the world’s largest Internet search engines has also received much negative media attention, particularly surrounding its cooperation with Chinese authorities and its agreement to abide by China’s censorship issues during the Games (Google, 2007). Additional press reports have indicated multiple convictions of Chinese citizens due to press-related issues, and although Article 35 of the Chinese Constitution
states that citizens have the right to free speech, evidence suggests otherwise, with multiple human rights activists imprisoned (e.g., London Telegraph Newspaper, 2007; Reporters Without Borders, 2008).

**Housing**

Citizens of the Olympic host country are also susceptible to displacement from their homes, and the situation is no different in Beijing. According to Ten Biao and Hu Jia, reporters who have lived within, and escaped, China’s walls, “1.25 million people have been forced from their homes to make way for the construction of Olympic facilities” (2007, p. 87), and another 1.5 million more displacements were forecast as the Olympic Games approaches.

**Tibet**

The latest display of media attention leading up to the Games has been granted to China’s role in Tibet. Historically, the Chinese government claims that since the 13th Century Tibet has been under Chinese rule, yet after a series of disputes, in 1912 Tibet declared its independence. It was not until 1951, however, that Tibet’s government was officially recognized as independent. However, during this time China seized control of Tibet once again and forced its government into exile, led by the Dalai Lama in India. Since “retaining” control of Tibet, China has imposed harsh sanctions on its religious, cultural, and political practices. In 1989 Tibetan outbreaks were linked to the Olympic Games, in addition to the Tiananmen Square incident. Recent Tibetan protests against China’s oppressive role on their freedom have emphasized this political, cultural, and
religious tension, and, according to *New York Times* (2008) reports, the Dalai Lama has claimed that China is waging a “cultural genocide” on Tibet. Such Tibetan protests have been highly publicized, perhaps due to the impending Olympic Games to be held in Beijing. China is claiming that the government in exile, led by the Dalai Lama, is to blame for the recent outbreaks, which have resulted in at least 99 deaths (BBC News, 2008). Although tension exists between some Tibetan’s calls for independence from China, and others following the Dalai Lama who believe such independence could lead to greater problems, both agree that more authority for Tibetans is necessary, in order to be relieved of their oppression under Chinese rule. Despite the situation in Tibet, the Dalai Lama has urged a meeting with the Chinese government, and has stated that the Olympic Games should continue to be hosted in Beijing.

**Genocide in Darfur**

China’s links to the genocide in Darfur has also magnetized Western media attention. Actress Mia Farrow openly referred to the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, as the “Genocide Olympics,” as she shunned Steven Spielberg’s cooperation with China in preparation for the Olympic ceremony. Farrow dubbed Spielberg “China’s equivalent to Leni Riefenstahl,” and is not the first to have spoken out about the troubling economic connection between China and Darfur. This political relationship has attracted much media attention, particularly since China has offered Sudan political and economic support and failed to impose any pressing form of international sanction on Sudan in congruence with requests from the United Nations (Cooper, 2007; Steele, 2007).
To briefly explain the situation, Darfur is a region of Sudan which has suffered a tremendous political injustice, with over 200,000 people killed and more than 2.5 million displaced to date due to genocide. According to sources at the *Washington Post*, the crisis in Sudan emerged in the 1970s over competition for natural resources (Wax, 2005). In 2003, African Muslims rebelled against their ruling elite, the Arab Muslims, due to the vast inequality within the country. In response, and in order to prevent outbreak, the Khartoum government armed local militias to “crack down on mainly three ethnic groups: the Fur, Masalit, and Zaghawa” (Foreign Policy, 2007). Currently, the Sudanese government is actively supporting an Arab militant group, the Janjaweed, and by doing so, is funding a campaign of ethnic cleansing.

Although China may not have an active and direct role in the genocide, China’s economic arrangements with Sudan in terms of oil has prevented government intervention at a level Western governments and human rights groups deem necessary and, as reporters for *Foreign Policy* have identified, “China is a convenient whipping boy” for Western powers, since it has failed to comply with the UN Security Council’s resolution condemning Khartoum (Foreign Policy, 2007).

Recently, Steven Spielberg, who cooperated with China as its artistic advisor for the 2008 Beijing Games, has withdrawn his support due to what he feels is a lack of effort on the part of the Chinese authorities to end the “continued human suffering” in Darfur (BBC News, 2008). Spielberg stated that the Sudanese government is the instigator of this humanitarian crisis in Darfur, the international community could, and should, do more, and China is in a position to offer aid for which it is not following through (BBC News, 2008).
Moreover, although British athletes, in particular, have been warned not to overstep the mark and display public protests at the Games in Beijing, the “Team Darfur” campaign comprising of multiple elite athletes intends to do just this. According to BBC News (2008), American speed skater Joey Cheek instigated the campaign, and much support in Britain has been a result of the British Olympic Association’s (BOA) warning to British athletes that, if they partake in any form of recalcitrant political demonstration, severe consequences will follow and they will be prevented from competing in the Games. Consequently, athletes have been required to sign a “no criticisms” contract stipulating that athletes are not to discuss “China’s politics, human rights issues, or the illegal occupation of Tibet” (Draper & King, 2008). Due to the nature of the Olympic Games and political propaganda campaigns, links have already been drawn to the 1968 Mexico Games and the “black power salute” of black American sprinters, Tommy Smith and John Carlos. Such spectacle is prohibited of British athletes in Beijing (Draper & King, 2008).

**International Olympic Committee and Human Rights**

These aforementioned issues quite clearly clash with the 1949 United Nation’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the International Olympic Committee’s (IOC) averred support of “universal fundamental ethical principles” (Olympic Charter 2004, Fundamental Principles, paragraph 1). Ironically, however, the IOC charter appears to be used in support of both anti-political statements of the Games and, conversely, provoking political appeals to human rights-related issues. For example, in the British Olympic Association’s (BOA) statement to the press in relation to their “no criticisms
contract,” the BOA referred to Article 51 of the Olympic Charter which prohibits political propaganda and demonstrations at Olympic venues. Olympism, the underpinning philosophy of the Olympic Games, also offers similar support for “international understanding,” “education,” and “independence,” (Aplin, 1995), which connotes a relativistic perspective of politics, ethics, and morality since it supports the view that each nation should show respect, rather than imposing ethnocentric views on one another. However, athletes are still calling on “fundamental principle 1,” which supports universal ethical values to ground their rights to free speech at the Games. These “universal ethical principles” are themselves questionable, however, since, if they reflect the values of Olympism, such claims would be inherently contradictory. In order to begin to understand this contradiction, which lies at the center of this thesis—hence the implicit tension between universal theorizing grounded in a foundationalist epistemology, and more culturally and ethically relativistic theorizing, grounded in an anti-foundationalist epistemology—locating this contradiction in the context of micro and macro politics is important.

**Micro versus Macro Politics**

The distinction between micro and macro politics is imperative when approaching human rights. As previously identified, foundationalist epistemology typically underpins human rights, which are viewed as fixed, universal truths, as the United Nation’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights purports (and also evident in the tremendous public opposition to the Beijing Games in terms of athletes and other activists). Thus, human rights would be considered “macro” political issues. Consequently, problems arise
when attempting to justify human rights from a post-structural advocacy which is typically micro-political. This is not to suggest that post-structural theory allows no room for normative ethical or moral decision making—just that such decision making becomes more complex when one cannot rely on an authoritative source such as the United Declaration of Human Rights without considering it a dominant discourse or metanarrative.

In a recent paper regarding the problems associated to the study of globalization in sport, David Andrews and George Ritzer (2007) touch on this issue. They acknowledge a scholarly withdrawal from studies of the global and “grocal,” toward studies centered on individual actors that privilege the “local hero.” Although not explicitly related to the focus of this paper, which draws on the divide between micro and macro politics, the parallels are evident and their conclusions are germane. Particularly since Andrews and Ritzer (2007) assert that many of the issues associated with the lack of studies at the global level as opposed to the local can be attributed to those who advocate postmodernism as a theoretical framework:

Another cause of this imbalance in the study of globalization is remnants of the impact of postmodernism. While few of those who adopt the positions being criticized here can be seen as postmodernists, they seem to have been affected explicitly and implicitly, by many of its tenets and critiques of modernism. This leads, for example, away from a focus on such totalizations as globalization (and perhaps grobalization) and toward a concern for narrower and more specific elements such as the actor, the local and even the glocal” (p. 149).

Thus, Andrews and Ritzer (2007) acknowledge that focusing on the local (identity) and “glocal” (in the case of this thesis, “micro”) as most who study identity politics do, even if they do not explicitly accept many of the tenets of postmodernism, results in a lack of wider macro level studies at the global level. Since micro studies reject “totalizations”
(Andrews & Ritzer, 2007), or metanarratives, it leaves scholars in a dilemma when then hope to develop an ethical or moral normative critique of socio-political issues like those occurring in China. Such a dilemma leads to questions such as: how can we collectively agree on issues of ethics or morality when we reject appeals to universal rights and freedoms?; or, can post-structural scholarly work pertaining to issues of identity, which is grounded in the questioning of dominant discourses and discursive power, also accept that at some level certain issues can collectively be agreed on as “right” and “just”?

Conclusion

Thus, the Beijing Olympic Games is just one example of a politically contentious site of human rights abuses, and how ethical and moral issues must, therefore, be dealt with appropriately. Should China be subject to international reproach because of the issues within their country, or should each nation merely respect the fact that China has different ethical and moral standards to other countries, and what is considered appropriate for their country should be acceptable to all others? Should those involved in the Games accept the tenet of Olympism which advocates “international understanding” as opposed to international criticism?

The purpose of the following two chapters is to provide a genealogy of how these moral and ethical issues developed within sport sociology literature, in addition to social, political, and philosophical theory. Consequently, I use of the first two stages (thesis and antithesis) of the Hegelian dialectical argument, in order to establish grounds for the synthesis, which will be discussed in chapter five. I situate this dialectic in the context of the wider theoretical debate between foundationalist theorizing and anti-foundationalist
theorizing (specifically, post-structuralism) which has occurred in sport sociology literature, and I relate this literature to human rights and the Beijing Olympic Games. Initially, I explain the thesis (the original position) which is the foundationalist perspective of human rights abuses, particularly, though not limited to, the genocide in Darfur and censorship of the press in China. I will discuss the perspective of a universal standard of morality in relation to foundationalism in terms of natural law theory, rationalism, and critical theory, in order to establish the common factors uniting a foundationalist view of human rights. In chapter four I counter these claims with the antithesis (the opposite position). The antithesis is the post-structural view of human rights issues in China, which provides a rebuttal-type argument to the thesis; it highlights the problems of accepting metanarratives and discounting local voices, and argues that each culture should respect one another without impingement.
CHAPTER 3

THESIS: “FOUNDATIONALISM” IN SPORT SOCIOLOGY

Genealogy is gray, meticulous, and patiently documentary. It operates on a field of entangled and confused parchments, on documents that have been scratched over and recopied many times.

Michel Foucault, 1977, p. 139.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a genealogy—specifically that of North America and Europe—of the conceptual underpinnings of the emergence of sport sociology and the theoretical emergence of this sub-discipline over its life-span. Since this thesis aims to understand why micro level, socio-political issues have taken precedence over macro level issues in sport sociology, it is important to understand how and why sport sociology developed and the relation of this development to current-day scholarly work.

A genealogical excavation departs significantly from a linear historical, reconstructionist, account of history. It departs from “meta-historical development” and “opposes itself to the search for ‘origins’” (Foucault, 1977, p. 140). According to Morgan (2006), “genealogy is a way of trying to understand, explain, and evaluate a cultural
practice by telling a story of how it came about or might have come about” (p. 14). In undertaking a genealogical excavation of the literature in sport sociology along with the wider theoretical and political movements and debates surrounding the field, genealogy is useful in that it recognizes the process is non-linear. It, thus, allows the past to be recounted in full acknowledgement that history is not a “timeless and essential secret” (Foucault, 1977, p. 142). In undertaking a genealogical excavation of sport sociology in this chapter, I explain the multifaceted nature of the conceptual underpinnings of sport sociology which are bound up with other linguistic issues such as varied definitions of theoretical terms and divergence in scholarly goals. I also endeavor to clarify the dominant perspectives in the field of sport sociology. However, in doing so, I recognize the limitations of failing to account for every nuanced detail of theoretical contention.

While genealogy seeks meticulous erudition, as Foucault asserts, “history becomes effective to the degree that it introduces discontinuity into our very being— as it divides our emotions, dramatizes our instincts, multiplies our body and sets it against itself” (1977, p. 154). Tracing the emergence of sport sociology should aim to account for the complexities involved in such emergence; it should recognize the limitations in attempting to specify causal relations. It should also seek to explain the subtleties, as well as the harsh divergences, involved in theoretical development. Such a conception of historical development might seem at odds with the Hegelian dialectical argument I sought to explain in the previous two chapters. Hegelian arguments are typically linear; they characterize and specify a thesis, antithesis, and synthesis, identifying cause and effect. Additionally, a Hegelian world view concedes to a universal vision of truth, and is
representative of a metaphysical view which Foucault (1977) explicitly states should be avoided.

However, echoing Hegel, the *very purpose* of this thesis is to break away from such dichotomous thinking and to show how seemingly contradictory statements can be synthesized and reconciled. Of course genealogy tends to challenge historical development and so-called truth. However, it can be argued that a Hegelian vision does not necessarily contradict such a view. It is important to both recognize the limits of historical reconstruction as Foucault does, as well as others before him (e.g., Nietzsche). Yet it should also be recognized that touchstones are needed—whether these are historical, moral, or otherwise—in order to stake a place in the world from which we can act out and create change.

To put this in more practical terms, the development of the sociology of sport should be approached with an understanding that it is certainly not a straight forward progression from A to B; that it did not emerge in the 1960s based on foundationalist assumptions, and move in a linear fashion to where it is today; nor should it be considered that certain events in the emergence of the field did not have very relevant impacts on the direction of scholarly work. To claim such causality necessitates a way of locating change in history, which cannot be achieved solely through genealogy. Accordingly, Hegel’s metaphysical worldview in this respect is useful to this study in the context of the development of sport sociology and the issues surrounding the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. Hegel allows a viewpoint which synthesizes binary thinking and can be both universal and local (macro and micro) and inductive and deductive. In doing so, his position accounts for the foundationalist ontological concerns that necessitate a
stake in the world, and the Foucauldian/post-structuralist ontological concerns that require a cautious avoidance of perdurable human truths.

Thus, in this chapter I cover several key issues: firstly, the changing theoretical nature of the sport sociology field; secondly, how this changing nature relates to the wider sociology field and the paradigmatic shift(s) occurring (hence the change of epistemology, ontology and axiology of researchers); and thirdly, how this has reflected the type of research questions asked and the type of research questions avoided. Finally, this chapter relates the human rights issues of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games to sport sociology literature and wider studies on the notion of “rights” in order to contextualize the previous chapter amongst the scholarly work in the sport sociology sub-discipline.

Due to the interdisciplinary nature of “sport studies,” much over-lap exists between sport sociology literature and other sport-related fields of inquiry such as: history, literature, cultural studies, and philosophy, and to some extent management and science. Thus, bracketing sport sociology is itself a complex, but necessary, task in order to limit the text. Primarily, I refer to scholarly work in four sport sociology Western-edited, peer-reviewed journals: the International Review for the Sociology of Sport (IRSS); the Sociology of Sport Journal (SSJ); the Journal of Sport and Social Issues; and Quest. All four journals have a significant sociological bias. Being the only non-specified sociological journal, Quest is pertinent with respect to sport sociology’s development through the 1960s, when the field emerged in association with the branching out of physical education scholars to sociologically-oriented work. In further efforts to narrow the field of sociology, and sport sociology more specifically, other works cited such as books and book chapters pertain to the American Sociological Association’s (ASA)
definition of sociology being “the study of social life, social change, and the social causes and consequences of human behavior” (ASA, 2008). Before I delve into these issues, a brief overview of the terms “epistemology,” “ontology,” and “axiology” is necessary to gage the theoretical nature of the field (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, 2003).

It is crucial to comprehend sport sociologists’ paradigmatic assumptions in order to understand the beliefs and values underpinning their work. A Kuhnian view purports that a paradigm is a scientific community’s beliefs, values and associated research endeavors (Kuhn, 1961). In this case the “community” is the field of sport sociology and the wider sociology discipline *sui generis*. Within each paradigm are assumptions about reality, namely: ontological assumptions (the nature of reality and existence); epistemological assumptions (the relationship between the research and the researcher); and axiological assumptions (the nature of ethics and ascetics). Researchers’ choice of method also indicates or reflects their paradigm (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, 2003).

**Emergence of the Sub-Discipline**

A group of scholars in sport, physical education, and sociology tentatively founded the sociology of sport as an academic terrain at a meeting in Geneva, 1964, later named the International Committee for the Sociology of Sport (ICSS). Although this marked the inception of the sport-sociology field, much collaboration occurred between scholars of physical education in the 1960s. Such collaborative efforts of scholars seeking to expand the ever-emerging field of academic inquiry into sport and physical activity forged links between sport and the humanities. Sport sociology, therefore, should not be seen as emerging in isolation, but as one of the many outgrowths of physical education
Following the discussions and efforts at the Geneva conference, the ICSS was formalized the following year at a conference in Warsaw, and is now known as the International Sociology of Sport Association (ISSA). Associated to the ISSA is its journal the *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* (IRSS), first published in 1966. Gerald Kenyon and John Loy’s “Toward a Sociology of Sport,” published in the *Journal of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation* in 1965 also paved the way for the sociology of sport sub-discipline. In the late 1970s and early 1980s further expansion of the field transpired through the inception of other peer-reviewed journals, including: the *Journal of Sport and Social Issues; Culture, Sport and Society; Leisure Studies; Sport Behavior* and the *Japanese Journal of Sociology of Sport* (Sage, 1979). Later, in 1984, Andrew Yiannikis and Susan Greendorfer fronted the commencement of the North American Society for the Sociology of Sport (NASSS), with twenty-one founding members, and its’ associated *Sociology of Sport Journal* (SSJ).

According to Loy (1978), the field of sport sociology lacked a “critical mass” of scholarship, despite Gunther Lüschen’s observation that by 1978, 2583 journal articles and 723 books had already been published attending to the sociology of sport (Lüschen, 1980, p. 318). Loy (1978), however, held the staunch view that those publishing on the sociology of sport did so only as a secondary interest, and were not fully engaged in sport sociology as their primary area of study. This perhaps reflects George Sage’s (1979) observation that these founding scholars of sport sociology emerged from other disciplines and, thus, were unable to commit to studies of a wholly sociological and/or sporting nature. As the field of sport sociology has grown over recent years, including increased university programs offering sport sociology and other humanities-related sport
programs, the literature has increased exponentially. Nevertheless, pressure from sociology departments who view the study of sport, leisure and play as “non-serious and non-productive” (Harris, 2006, p.82) and kinesiology departments who more willingly accredit scholars engaged in “scientific” research (Andrews, 2008) has kept sport sociology on the fringe of sociology and kinesiology disciplines (Coakley & Dunning, 2000).

**Theoretical Affiliation**

According to Sage (1979), sociology was characterized as multi-paradigmatic, and although competing paradigms were constantly “vying for hegemony,” no paradigm had “discipline-wide dominance, nor unquestioned supremacy in a specific area within sociology” (p. 27). Although sport sociology may have reflected a multi-paradigmatic model in the late 1970s, such plurality of theoretical approach is less evident in today’s scholarly work. According to Andrews (2000), for example, sport sociology has seen a surge of post-structural theory since the 1990s, which is primarily Foucauldian.

Despite these contentions regarding the inclusiveness (or exclusiveness) of theoretical approaches in the sport sociology sub-discipline, an empirical transition in theoretical frameworks is noticeable from the inception of the field through to today’s theoretical climate. The key debates and “political conflict” in the field’s early stages were regarding paradigmatic assumptions of sport sociologists, reflecting debates in the wider sociology discipline over the nature of reality (ontology), methodology, and whether sport sociology should be basic or applied (epistemology). Echoing Sage’s (1979) analysis, Lüschen identified most earlier work in sport sociology studies in the
1960s and 1970s as broadly focused and grounded in multiple paradigms, though most specifically structuralist, functionalist, and/or interactionist ontological and epistemological assumptions, underpinned primarily with Marxist, Neo-Marxist and hegemonic theorizing (e.g., Whitson, 1984). Such studies addressed: social change (Czula, 1979), sport and work (Rigauer, 1969), and sport as the cause of oppression (Brohm, 1978). Despite their common goal of social change with a pseudo-political emphasis, according to Sage (1979) the key debate was between whether inquiry and analysis should be “value-free,” as structural-functionalists advocated, or, following the more interactionist perspective of Marx, whether the “value-free” debate is mythical and “deludes us into believing something that cannot exist,” thus ignoring the “responsibilities that sport sociologists have; that is as social critics, even reformers” (Sage, 1979, p. 27).

Although Sage, echoing Ritzer, acknowledged the plurality of ontological and epistemological assumptions of sociologists and sport sociologists alike, sociologists Wallace and Wolf (1995) identify the 1950s as a period where structural functionalism was not only the dominant theoretical perspective, but, moreover, sociology and functionalism were practically indiscriminate. While Sage (1979) is correct that sport sociologists by no means universally uphold one sole paradigm, clearly certain perspectives are favored more than others. The division between structural functionalism and interactionism most clearly emerging in the social sciences in the 1960s was reflected in the divide in sport sociology. Ritzer’s view that “sociologists would be better advised to engage in efforts to articulate their paradigm and assess the intellectual merits of opposing paradigms than to engage in verbal assaults on other sociological paradigms”
(1975, p. 203), did little to dilute the paradigmatic disputes between sport sociologists (Sage, 1979).

During this timeframe much political activism and appeals to social change occurred in American society, including reactions to the Vietnam War, and multiple other social movements (including what Fraser [1997, 2000] labeled a “politics of recognition”). For example, feminist politics and issues of gender acquired extensive scholarly following in sport sociology, from an eclecticism of Marxist, Neo-Marxist, and interpretive readings (e.g., Birrell, 1988; Deem, 1988; Hall, 1988; Messner, 1990; Theberg, 1985).14

**Foundationalism**

These approaches to sport sociology reflect a wider theoretical position known broadly as “foundationalism.” According to Rorty,

> Foundationalism is an epistemological view which can be adopted by those who suspend judgment on the realist’s claim that reality has an intrinsic nature. A foundationalist need only claim that every belief occupies a place in a natural, transcultural, transhistorical order of reasons—an order which eventually leads the inquirer back to one or another ‘ultimate source of evidence’ (1999, p. 151).

In other words, a common factor uniting foundationalist perspectives, which is central to this thesis, is the ability to form universals. Thus, foundationalism rests at the same end of a spectrum as what Thomas Brante (1990) calls “universalism,” as opposed to “substantialism.” Equally important in identifying this is how such a perspective implicates justice, ethics and morality, since, as Brante (1990) explains, “universalism is based on the realization that in order to be legitimate, an ethical principle must be acceptable to all citizens” (p. 1040). What Brandt and Rorty both describe is a universal
perspective ensuring that justice, ethics and morality applies to all people, regardless of
class, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, or any other variant. Such principles are grounded
in some form of foundation; whether this is in science (e.g., logical positivism); from a
higher authority (e.g., natural law theory); an individual’s faculty of reason (e.g.,
rationalism and Kantian ethics); and/or social structures and institution, or any form of
materialist base (e.g. Marxism, Neo-Marxist hegemony, and critical theory). Thus,
foundationalism covers an array of theoretical perspectives which could be used to
defend human rights. The plethora of perspectives is decidedly significant, since it
highlights the difficulty in grounding a moral or ethical principle when confronted with
competing ontological, epistemological, and axiological scholarly assumptions.

In sport sociology, this plethora of perspectives highlights the “multiparadigmatic” nature of the sub-discipline. For example, foundationalism grounded in
logical positivism reflects the desire of the social sciences to emulate the natural
sciences—something that sport sociologists were pressured to conform to in the early
1960s as the discipline emerged (Sage, 1979). In addition to explaining the emergence of
the sub-discipline of sport sociology, I will also use this part of the discussion to outline
how these theoretical underpinnings typically support macro-political studies which are
either studies of redistribution and social change, or studies of recognition grounded in
economic change.

It is important to account for these multiple perspectives because, like all
theoretical perspectives, foundationalism should not be essentialised, nor seen as
monolithic, and although not all variants can be given due weight in the context of this
thesis the key differences of some of the main perspectives can be briefly explained in
order to provide a general overview which will set the basis of how theoretical
progression could, and should, be made in chapter five. Thus, to begin I will explaining
the key tenets of logical positivism, natural law theory, rationalism and critical theory,
and finally explain how these can be commonly referred to as “foundationalist” theories.

Logical Positivism

Logical positivism, or the view that the social sciences can replicate the natural
sciences in their research endeavors through using rigorous hypotheses testing to strive
for empirical objectivity, played a considerable role in the work of sociologists in the
1960s and 1970s (Hempel, 1966; Kinciad, 1990, King et al, 1994). As the sub-discipline
of sport sociology evolved, much reaction against logical positivism arose, acting as a
significant driving force behind the direction of the field to date. Although logical
positivism does not currently ground the majority of sport sociologists’ work, it continues
to play a significant role in the sociology parent discipline (Brady & Collier, 2006), and
should, therefore, be considered as an important tool for interpreting socio-political,
moral, and ethical issues in sport sociology. Moreover, it is imperative to understand the
basic tenets of a theoretical perspective before accepting or rejecting it, and since many
sport sociologists tend to reject logical positivism (i.e. all scholars listed in sport
sociology who conform to a Marxist, Neo-Marxist, interpretive, or post-structural
advocacy), some form of explanation as to why this is ought to be given.

For logical positivists, a view of human rights would indubitably be grounded in
scientific inquiry, aiming to establish a logical basis of human rights abuses. One such
example is found in the work of Emile Durkheim (1958), who, in Professional Ethics and
*Civic Morals*, endeavored to build objectively factual, scientific moral and community values. Human rights, therefore, from this perspective, subscribe to formalistic standards of morality, whereby physical restrictions, obligations, and sanctions constrain each and every individual. In terms of the Beijing Olympic Games, sanctions should be imposed on China since it fails to morally conform to the positivistic standards of human rights, which would have to be pre-decided based on empirical testing and measurement.

Problematically, however, as Bryan Turner (1993) explained through his emphasis on positivistic standards of sociology, Durkheim failed to account for a normative or evaluative standpoint. According to Turner (1993), positivistic sociology “attempts to avoid any engagement with normative debate by aiming at a causal analysis or a descriptive account of values” (p. 491) and is, therefore, “unlikely to approach problems of justice within a framework of human rights discourse” (p. 491).

Rorty (1993) expresses similar views to Turner in the dismissal of the positivistic school of thought. According to Rorty (1993), to describe something as scientific is to attempt to control it, and in order to do so, “subjective elements” should be “eliminated” (p. 158). For scientific success, “the more metaphysically comfortless and morally insignificant our vocabulary, the more likely we are to be ‘in touch with reality’ or to be scientific” (p. 158). Thus, a logical positivistic ontology and epistemology, underpinning a scientific framework is unlikely to provide a normative framework at the level needed to acknowledge and intervene in human rights abuses, since such abuses can only be quantified, for example in terms of providing statistical data, and cannot adequately deal with moral issues which require explanation and the discussion of meaning.
Natural Law Theory

Unlike positivism, the natural law theories of Thomas Aquinas and John Locke, rest on the shared principle that certain rights of man exist a priori, independently of social and political life (Regan, 1988). For Aquinas and Locke, these laws were naturally granted by, and derived from, God (Hacking, 1988). For example, Locke (1690), in his Two Treatise on Government, explained his belief that every human being was entitled to life, liberty, and property. Natural law has had little-to-no significant impact on the sport sociology sub-discipline directly; however, an implicit belief in natural law may very well have influenced much earlier work grounded in sport and social change.

Despite sport sociology’s reluctance to utilize natural law theory, in the context of human rights natural law theory is highly significant. It assumes an a priori view of rights owed to each and every human being. For example, according to Locke, man as a social animal and the maker of all things had natural rights owed to him, and each and every human being recognizes these rights in others which leads to the formation of a social contract theory of the state. Such a view of human rights supposes that every individual collectively agrees on the existence of certain inalienable rights, which operate as a necessary function in society, and the state exists in order to protect these rights. As Maritain, in The Rights of Man and Natural Laws (1944) stated:

The only practical knowledge all men have naturally and infallibly in common is that we must do good and avoid evil. This is the preamble and the principle of natural law; it is not the law itself. Natural law is the ensemble of things to do and not to do which follow therefrom in a necessary fashion and from the simple fact that man is man, nothing else being taken into account (Cited in Oppenheim, 1957, p. 45, italics Maritain’s).
In terms of human rights, then, natural law theory could clearly provide grounding for the claim that “genocide is wrong,” since it would be collectively agreed upon and implicitly known as a universal truth for each and every human being. The “rights” of man to life, liberty, and property, as Locke described, would prevent genocide and other similar moral tragedies. However, like logical positivism, according to Oppenheim (1957), natural law theory still fails to project a normative view of human rights since “it consists in assertions about the truth or falsity of normative statements, rather than of the statements themselves” (p. 42). Moreover, rationalism, as will be explained next, heavily criticized natural law theory—specifically, Lockean natural law.

**Rationalism**

Numerous strands of rationalism exist; however, Thomas Hobbes’ (1651) *Leviathan* that indirectly articulated the issues implicit in Lockean natural law theory. For Hobbes, man is not an inherently social animal, and instead is self-interested. Thus, in comparison to Locke, for Hobbes (1651) the state of nature was “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short,” which led individuals to enter into a social contract in order to avoid such an unpleasant life. Although such a view of rationalism departs from the natural law theorist’s beliefs in the divine rights of man or the social contract, rationalism still conceives of rights as a priori. For example, although other views of rationalism developed during the eighteenth century Enlightenment period, which built off and departed from the Hobbesian view of rationalism, in his political writings on *Theory and Practice*, Immanuel Kant proposed that universal laws are a priori, and suggested the following:
It is in fact merely an idea of reason, which nonetheless has undoubted practical reality; for it can oblige every legislator to frame his laws in such a way that they could have been produced by the united will of a whole nation, and to regard each subject, in so far as he can claim citizenship, as if he had consented with the general will (In. Reiss, 1979, p. 79, italics in original).

Such a view is grounded in the notion that every individual has a shared faculty of reason therefore supposing, in Kant’s words, a “general will” exists amongst man, leading to collective agreement and acknowledgement on universal moral principles. Such belief in a general will is reflected in Kant’s “Categorical Imperative,” whereby each individual should act according to universal maxims that determines whether actions are moral or immoral.

This Kantian perspective is often linked to the view of “cosmopolitanism,” which derives from the Greek word “kosmopolítês” meaning “citizen of the world” (Heater, 2002). In the Kantian sense, cosmopolitanism regards rational agents to have the right to world citizenship (Kant, 1798). Actions, for Kant, can only be justified if they can be made into a maxim that could apply to all rational agents. Such a view rests on the Stoic notion of world citizenship due to the universal faculty of reason (Ferrara, 2007). Nussbaum further confirms this through her reference to Kant as having a “deep familiarity” with the Stoic ideal of world citizenship (1997, p. 5). Thus, Kantian liberals, such as John Rawls (1971, 1999) and Habermas (1987), continue to argue that a universal system of justice is essential in order to bring about a cosmopolitan world with stronger international relations.¹⁶

From the natural law perspective of those such as Aquinas and Locke, to the rationalism of Kant’s Enlightenment cosmopolitanism, human rights can be defended through reference to a culturally transcendental system of morality. In other words,
justice and morality can be universalized and used to determine how all human beings
should act in a moral and just way. Rationalistic assumptions are more prevalent in sport
sociology, but this has tended to come from a combination of rationalism with
interpretivism (e.g., found in the works of Rob Beamish who utilized Max Weber’s social
theory, which will be discussed later). Little in sport sociology has been directly related
to Hobbesian or Kantian formalism (e.g., Rational choice theory is never utilized, nor is
Rawls’ (1971) *Theory of Justice*). Use of these scholarly perspectives in the sport sub-
disciplines seems to be more prevalent in sport philosophy circles, although even here
they are limited).

In the context of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, rationalism, like natural law,
has crucial implications, since both regard human rights as universal and owed to each
and every human being. As such, the United Nation’s *Universal Declaration of Human
Rights* (1948) is grounded in a combination of these theories.¹⁷ For example, according to
the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (1949)
much debate surrounded the Declaration at the time it was established—not over the
content of the Declaration—but, rather, over the “source” of the rights (p. 8). Hence, as
Woodcock (2006) explains, much of the issues regarding the Declaration were reduced to
how to substantiate the claims to “rights” (p. 246). Woodcock (2006) argues that natural
law and the “Ciceronian Maxim *lex initustia non est lex* (an unjust law is not law)”
formed the very basis of the Declaration (p. 246), however others have argued that human
rights are founded on rationalism.
Critical Theory

Other perspectives such as Hegelian philosophy, and, later, Marxism, Neo-Marxism, and the critical theory school of thought, significantly depart from both natural law and rationalistic perspectives—particularly the latter perspectives, Marxism and Neo-Marxist hegemony theory, which were far more prevalent in sport sociology literature. Critical theorists, for example Hegel and Marx, questioned the Kantian idea of rationality. For Hegel, the Kantian perspective was problematic in that it conceived of a transcendental soul. However, through synthesizing the mind-body dualism into an all-encompassing, unified world-view, Hegel sought to overcome this (Aiken, 1956). Marx, however, saw Hegel’s views as too idealistic and in need of more of a praxis-oriented, sociological approach which sought emancipation.

Yet, critical theory, which originated from the German philosophic tradition with a keen discernment for the practical application of philosophic theorizing to enable human emancipation was later adopted in reaction to, and replacement of, Marxist theorizing. In terms of sport sociology, Marxism underpinned some of the key sociological literature, such as Jean Marie Brohm’s (1978) Sport as a Prison of Measured Time, and Bero Rigauer’s (1969) Sport and Work, both taking a critical approach toward sport as a social institution and highlighting its role in maintaining a class structure and instigating negative and oppressive effects on individuals.

As Morgan (1994) outlines, the two main critiques of Marxism were: (1) “it underplays the determinative power of human agency” (p. 63) and; (2) “it misconstrues the relative autonomy of sport in functionalist terms—that is, the so-called autonomy of sport is linked exclusively to its ability to reproduce the social totality” (p. 63). Hence, as
Horne et al, (1999) explain, from a Marxist perspective, sport is an “instrument” of the dominant class (p. 206). However, this perspective is regarded as problematic since it is too “deterministic” and does not allow enough room for human agency (Hargreaves, 1982, p. 12). As Morgan explains, in sporting academia, the New Left is “defined by its practical, emancipatory intent” (1994, p. 19) and is wary of “idealistic studies that ignore…material, historical roots” (p. 20). Antonio Gramsci’s “hegemony theory,” which is of a Neo-Marxist orientation, was adopted in sport sociology circles, particularly influencing the new wave of cultural studies scholars in the early 1980s Britain (Morgan, 1994, p. 60), and the critical theory tradition expanded in sport sociology circles in classic sporting texts such as Richard Gruneau’s (1983, 1999) *Class, Sports, and Social Development*, and John Hargreaves’ (1986) *Sport, Power, and Culture*.

However, while Marxist and Neo-Marxist readings reflected the significant shifts in patterns of thought within the sport sociology sub-discipline, a fundamental belief in foundationalism remained, despite many advocates of hegemony theory possibly believing that Neo-Marxism marked a break with foundationalism. Hegemony, unlike Marxism, or indeed natural law and rationalism, had attempted to stage the view that ideology existed in social practices and institutions rather than in the “minds of the masses” (Althusser, 1971). Thus, according to Sage (1998), ideologies make themselves accessible for hegemonic influences since they can be used to explain, justify and legitimise dominant power relations’ values in society. Hence, for sport sociologists of this Neo-Marxist affiliation, “sport is an ideological tool, misleading the masses to sustain bourgeoisie control” (Giulianotti, 2005, p. 32). At the time, these hegemonic theorists saw this shift from Marxism as radical philosophizing, and felt a significant
ontological and epistemological problem had been overcome. Thus, for Neo-Marxists, such a rendering of sport was revolutionary.

To understand how such perspectives would implicate human rights, it is important to consider the fact that hegemony, like Marxism, remains rooted in a materialistic basis. It pays little attention to “power” per se, but, rather, the determinant of truth remains located in the material base of society. For hegemony theorists ideology conceals truth and, through recognizing ideologies, the goal of uncovering the truth can be achieved. Although post-modernism and post-structuralism represent a questioning of dominant discourses and metanarratives, ideological critique such as that found in the works of Mannheim (1960), Gramsci (1971), and others, also show tendencies to question dominant truths or ways of seeing the world. The key difference between these modern theorists, as opposed to their postmodern and post-structural counterparts, is rooted in their ontological perspective of truth. For example, for Gramsci (1971), ideology was seeing things the wrong way up or back to front; as a type of illusion and concealment of the way things really are, preventing us from seeing the truth of reality. Foucault departed from hegemony theory on the notion of truth seeking, yet he still shared the fundamental questioning of power and knowledge. Foucault, like Lyotard, questioned the ability to see truth as something which was bound up in a materialistic view of reality, as Gramsci and Mannheim did; instead, for Foucault truth is bound up in discourse and is not something which could be traced to a structure (hence the term “post-structuralism”).

In considering these notions of truth and ideology, a Neo-Marxist reading of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games would indubitably ground human rights issues in a form of
hegemonic power struggle. For example, disguising the concept of human rights as natural and axiomatic might be seen as an ideological tool to impress Western neoliberalism onto the international community. Thus, hegemony does not believe that human rights would be forced onto nations through coercion in the sense that Marxist readings would, but rather, hegemony is more complex and is grounded in a notion of consent, whereby individuals are led to believe that the hegemonic perspective of human rights is the only, or the most obvious, perspective to adopt and therefore it becomes accepted. Such axiomatic acceptance constitutes ideology. Those who orient themselves within a Neo-Marxist framework might attempt to uncover the truth and, therefore, question these proclaimed self-evident rights and challenge human rights as a hegemonic, dominant, and dogmatic ideological tool of Western nations who wish to impose their views on subordinate nations in a way which conceals enforcement.

**Interpretivism**

In contrast to the structural-functionalist perspective, interactionism, also known as interpretivism, emerged as an alternative paradigm which challenged the ontological assumptions of structural functionalists (Sage, 1979). In a genealogical vein, although neither of these paradigms should be seen as monolithic—each with their own internal nuances—generally speaking, interactionism challenged the objectivist ontology grounded in the functionalist analysis of sport sociology. It marked a period where scholars were keen to address the social struggles emerging during this time frame (Ingham & Donnelly, 1997). Although Ingham and Donnelly (1997) attribute much of this changing theoretical allegiance to the social movements at the time, parallels can also
be drawn between the outgrowth of sport sociology from the physical education discipline, and the break from this toward a separate study of sport sociology (Ulrich, 1979). Hence, sport was to become a realm of sociological study of its own accord; quite apart from objectivity-oriented human movement, behavior, and kinesiology it had been combined with under the umbrella of physical education.

These concerns were later reflected in cultural anthropologist John MacAlloon’s address at the North American Society for the Sociology of Sport (NASSS) conference in 1986, as an “outsider” when he advised to those in the discipline to start taking sport “as seriously as society does all around them” and stop perceiving themselves as “Quixotes” if they “are ever to cease acting and uniting like Sancho Panzas” (1987, p. 1). In other words, MacAlloon’s critique of sport sociology, through this reference to Miguel de Cervantes’ classic novel, *Don Quixote* was the “quixotic” or overly romanticized nature of sport sociologists. From MacAlloon’s perspective, the discipline needed to get to grips with wider academic studies and theory, thus broadening its horizons, since he accordingly remarked that “American Sport Sociology” was in an “unsatisfying state both intellectually and politically” (1987, p. 1). As Janet Harris (1987) later remarked, some scholars, who were less inclined to favor the “hermeneutic turn” that MacAlloon advised, resisted MacAlloon’s calls to sport sociologists to move beyond their classic quantitative and empirically-oriented views of sport. As Harris warned, “there may be some danger of becoming overly committed to this new, currently fashionable theoretical framework just as he suggests happened in our romance with earlier ones” (1987, p. 135).

Yet, despite some of the negative appraisal MacAlloon received, following his prompt to the field to progress as a scholarly discipline, academics such as Loy (1987)
further pushed researchers to undertake multiple frameworks, particularly favoring C.W. Mills’ (1967) historical-sociological approach. These calls to draw attention to the “hermeneutic turn” and humanistic interpretivism (Loy, 1987, p. 108) reflected a wider departure from the mechanistic epistemology and ontology of positivistic assumptions of the social sciences grounded in structural functionalism. Greendorfer’s (1987) article, “NASSS Then and Now,” identified the progress of sport sociology and reminded researchers such as MacAloon to “embrace and respect contrasting perspectives and approaches” (p. 301), due to the emerging pessimism towards the state of the field.

However, appeals to sport sociologists to “come out of the ivory tower and boldly come to grips with some real societal problems” (Yiannakis, 1989, p. 66) followed in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Though these somewhat controversial words sparked academic debate amongst scholars (e.g. Chalip, 1990; Ingham & Donnelly, 1990; Yiannakis, 1989, 1990), the resounding voice (and one which came from MacAloon’s student) echoed that “applied sociology of sport must become sociology that empowers” (Chalip. 1990, p. 172). A more pragmatic view of sport sociology was, therefore, seemingly sought after, notably during the period 1986-1990, which Denzin and Lincoln (2003) identify as the “crisis of representation.”

Debate continued in the early 1990s, particularly between Hargreaves and Tomlinson (1992) who advocated a Neo-Marxist hegemonic orientation to scholarship, and scholars such as MacAloon (1992) who pressed for the inception of a more ethnographic, anthropological account of scholarly studies. Despite Hargreaves and Tomlinson’s (1992) attempts to distinguish themselves from the Frankfurt school and classical Marxism which they saw as too functionalistic due to its base-superstructure
grounded in economic determinism—instead, concluding in a similar vein to Raymond Williams that although dominant, hegemony is “never exclusive” (1977, p. 113)—they suffered critique from MacAloon (1992) regarding their insistence on studying what Morgan (1994) described as “big structures and large processes” (p. 310). According to MacAloon (1992), this Neo-Marxist, Frankfurt-school perspective discounts the cultural agent, and despite efforts from Hargreaves to merge hegemony theory with Foucauldian views of power, MacAloon insisted that Hargreaves “clings to the localization of power in class agents and the state, as well as to other elements of the grand modernist narratives that Foucault is dedicated to destroying” (p. 106). In his endeavors to settle the dispute between these two perspectives, Morgan (1994) argued that a less reductive view of society is needed which does not overlook the local cultural agent. Hence, “important specificities and distinctions of cultural practices” (p. 327) may not be discounted, particularly if we are to hope for any kind of social change on the level that hegemony theorists envisaged. However, Ingham and Beamish (1997) felt Morgan’s effort at “conflict resolution” was “bogus in bogus, so to speak,” (p. 161), much like their opinion of MacAloon’s theorizing. Thus, the debate continued over whether sport sociology should move toward linguistic analysis and deconstruction, or maintain a stake in human agency through foundationalist theorizing such as hegemony theory.

The “interpretive” or “hermeneutic turn” that scholars such as Loy and MacAloon called for was grounded in a different set of assumptions regarding reality. Interpretivism, like other foundationalist approaches previously described, should not be regarded as monolithic; however, many forms of interpretivism share a fundamental regard for the study of language. Many of these assumptions derived from a Wittgensteinian approach
to understanding the contingency of language and were born out of anthropology (Harris, 1989). As MacAloon (1992) explains, interpretivism is culturally-oriented as opposed to structurally-oriented. Thus, in relation to Fraser’s politics of recognition, interpretivism marks the inception of a politics of recognition based on identity and culture.

Interpretivism might be thought of as a middle ground between foundationalist assumptions and post-structural assumptions, due to the new-found emphasis on culture as opposed to structure. For example, Boudieau exemplifies a key interpretivist theorist who published in sport sociology, so much so that sport sociologists have embraced (and continue to embrace) his calls for studying the body, and bodily practices in sport (e.g., Brown, 2006; Clement, 1995; Cushion & Jones, 2006; Defrance, 1995; Kay & Laberge, 2002; Laberge, 1995; McGannon & Mauws, 2002; Monaghan, 2008; Stempel, 2005; White & Wilson, 1999; Vaugrand, 2001).

Despite the surge of interest in interpretively-underpinned, culturally-oriented sport sociology, and scholarly beliefs such as those of Hall that, “Whatever the theory, it must be an emancipatory one” (1988, p. 136), Nixon’s (1990) warning reflected the concerns of others in the field (e.g., Chalip, 1990; Yiannikis, 1990):

My concern is that in turning to more cultural perspectives and simultaneously turning away from more conventional structural approaches from sociology, we may lose sight of important dynamics of social interaction and important constraints from larger social structures in society that may form the boundaries and shape the dynamics and outcomes of significant cultural practices (Nixon, 1990, p. 285).

Regardless of these warnings and criticisms from scholars such as Stanley Eitzen (1987), sport sociology took a decidedly interpretive turn; a turn that was a stepping stone towards post-structuralism.
This stepping stone, so to speak, is evident when examining issues relating to human rights and the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. Analyzing human rights from an interpretive perspective would lead to a more culturally-oriented study of “rights” as opposed to an a priori configuration, or an institutional one. Although interpretivist approaches found in Bourdieu had not reached the Foucauldian level of challenging issues of power and knowledge—thus, had not rejected metanarratives or dominant societal discourses—a culturally-oriented focus remained prominent which led to increased fascination with issues pertaining to identity construction in scholarly work, particularly in terms of studying the body and gender. Interpretivist studies of the 1980s and early 1990s were on the borders of crossing over into Foucauldian, post-structural territory.

Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted the foundationalist assumptions of sport sociologists that were accrued throughout the period of the 1960s at the inception of the sub-discipline, through to the late 1980s, early 1990s. It has elucidated the key theoretical perspectives under the umbrella term “foundationalism,” and has related these theoretical debates to the context of the Beijing Olympic Games and human rights abuses. The following chapter provides the post-structural antithesis to foundationalism. It traces the emergence of post-structuralism—specifically, Foucauldian theory—in the sport sociology sub-discipline, and highlights that, although foundationalist theorists maintain grounding in rationalism, institutions, or language, post-structural studies question the concept of power and knowledge and argue that the aims and goals of social science, in
this case sport sociology, should not be an uncovering of truth or an aim to make social science more “scientific.”
The purpose of this chapter is to continue the genealogical excavation of sport sociology, inter-linked with the wider theoretical analysis of post-structural theory underpinning much contemporary sport sociological research. With respect to human rights, the key points to take from the overview of foundationalist theories provided previously are as follows: (1) human rights (including the United Declaration) appear to be grounded in natural law theory and rationalism; (2) this is problematic because human rights viewed in this way are a priori and derivative of either a higher principle or grounded in reason; (3) although Marxism attempted to overcome such idealism through grounding (and actually critiquing “rights”) in structure, Neo-Marxists, who felt that such a perspective allowed no room for human agency critiqued Marxism; and, finally, (4) post-structuralist perspectives have significantly departed from Neo-Marxist hegemony theory, since they claim that although it allows room for agency, hegemony is still rooted in materialistic foundationalism. This final perspective will, therefore, subsequently be expanded and further explained.
The Inception of Post-Structuralism

Perhaps unwittingly, MacAloon’s (1987) reference to Don Quixote was more in line with another scholar’s citation of this famous work than he envisioned—a scholar who was to become a very familiar name to sport sociologists in the 1990s—Michel Foucault. For Foucault, Don Quixote is “the hero of the same” (1970, p. 51). He is not a man “given to extravagance, but rather a diligent pilgrim breaking his journey before all the marks of similitude…”; a man who “travels endlessly over that plain, without ever crossing the clearly defined frontiers of difference, or reaching the heart of identity” (p. 51). Whether this was the Don Quixote that MacAloon had in mind would be a presumption, but through pinpointing identity, challenge, and difference, Foucault certainly painted the picture of change that sport sociologists followed. While Yiannakis and Chalip’s appeals had been built on foundationalist ontological and epistemological assumptions, the subsequent period of 1990-1995 has been attributed to the postmodern period in sociology (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003), rejecting earlier theoretical and conceptual underpinnings. King and McDonald have also credited the “linguistic turn” (2007, p. 18) as influencing the shift in sport sociology research agendas during this time frame (e.g., Andrews, 1993; Foley, 1992; Heikkala, 1993; Markula, 1993, 1995; Vertinsky, 1990; White & Gillett, 1994).

To date, following the lead of these early instigators of post-structuralism, an abundance of literature in sport sociology employs post-structuralism and/or post-modernism to theoretically and conceptually ground research. Although a profusion of sport sociology scholars have quickly adjusted to the post-structural turn (e.g., Andrews, 1993; Bruce, 2000; Foley, 1992; Fusco, 2005; Heikkala, 1993; King, 2005; Markula,
1993, 1995, 2004; McDonald, 2005; Vertinsky, 1990; Walton & Butryn, 2006; White & Gillett, 1994) others have been more reluctant to follow (e.g., Bairner, 2007; Beamish, 2007; Messner, 1998; Nixon, 1991). Regardless of post-structural skepticism, the influence of sport historian Patricia Vertinsky’s *The Eternally Wounded Woman* (1990) and, later, Andrew’s article “Desperately Seeking Michel: Foucault’s Genealogy, the Body and Critical Sport Sociology” (1993) on the sport sociology field is lucid. They, amongst other scholars at the time, highlighted the ability of Foucauldian theory to explain the disciplinary techniques on the body that challenged the role of power and search for truth evident in foundationalist and materialistic theories (i.e., Marxism and Neo-Marxist hegemony theory). For example, they questioned ideas of power, knowledge, discourse, panoptic technologies and technologies of the self (e.g. Andrews, 1993; Markula, 1995, 2003). Since the inundation of post-structuralism in sport sociology, numerous researches have begun to recognize the significance of the narrative approach to human behavior (e.g., Bruce, 2000; Liberti, 2004; Markula & Denison, 2005; Sparkes, 2000; Tsang, 2000), arguing that sport sociology cannot only be understood and represented in terms of biological facts and fixed, perdurable human universal truths, but instead requires more nuanced, discursive scholarship (Denison & Rinehart, 2000).

Though the female sporting body had already elicited scholarly attention in sport sociology (e.g., Duff & Hong, 1984; Hall, 1988; Messner, 1988), post-structural discussions on the female sporting body were popularized in the 1990s (e.g., Markula, 1993, 1995; Vertinsky, 1990). During this timeframe, and into the early 2000s, discussions on the male sporting body emerged in gender studies and also began to receive attention in sport sociology, in contrast to what was once a more feminine issue.
Philip White and James Gillet’s study in 1994 affirmed the need to develop this aspect of sport sociology, yet the masculine body received relatively scant post-structural attention until very recently. For example, note Richard Pringle and Pirkko Markula’s (2004, 2006) current attention to the male body within the hyper-masculinized sport of rugby.

Sport sociologists have found the power dimensions of post-structuralism especially useful in explaining, not only issues relating to the body in terms of physical body image, but also the “normalization” of other “identities” such as gender and sexuality (e.g., Bridel & Rail, 2007; Dworkin & Wachs, 1998; Jamieson, 1998; Price & Parker, 2003; Sykes, 1998) and further the notion of “hybrid identities” (Shogan, 1999). Lately, issues of race and “whiteness” have also been discussed with reference to discursive power and race as a social construct (e.g., Fusco, 2005; King, 2005; McDonald, 2005; Walton & Butryn, 2006). Again, these studies question the scientization of society in line with the transcendence of post-structural ideas. Debra Shogan (1999), in The Making of High Performance Athletes, also shares the merits of Foucauldian studies in the field of sport ethics and the importance of understanding, (1) the power structures in society, (2) how athletes are “normalized” and, (3) the inability of traditional sport ethics in attending to these more nuanced issues.

Identity Politics and the Politics of Identity

The inception of post-structural research in the 1990s highlighted above has been categorized as a focus on “identity politics” (e.g., Carrington, 2007; Helstein, 2007; King & McDonald, 2007). King and McDonald (2007) clearly articulate the development and emergence of identity politics both inside and out of sport sociology. As explained in the
thesis introduction, in summary, their key assertion is that studies pertaining to identity have utilized a variety of theoretical approaches, from psychoanalysis, Marxism, Neo-Marxism, queer theory, critical race theory, feminism, standpoint feminism, modernism, and postmodernism. However, of recent years, post-structuralism has been most frequently used. 19

Identity politics emerged as a social and political movement of the New Left in the 1960s and 1970s, in which cultural groups such as those involved in the Civil Rights Movement, women’s liberation movements, and multiple student movements during the Vietnam War, sought to challenge their oppressed positions in society (Farred, 2000). According to Fukuyama (2007), identity politics materialized to fill a void of group politics in liberal democratic theory. Though much academic scholarship reflected this shift to identity politics-as-activism (which Fraser regards as a politics of recognition based on “status”), culturally-minded scholars in the sociology of sport moved with the linguistic turn to examine these issues within a post-structural conceptual framework. Thus, a difference can be drawn between scholars studying identity that emerged alongside the typically Leftist political activism of the 1960s and 1970s, and post-structuralist scholars studying identity from a cultural studies perspective. It is the latter that I am interested in for the purpose of this thesis, though certainly the activist movements and theoretical shift to post-structuralism are not entirely disconnected, and it is the former that I endeavor to utilize in the forthcoming “synthesis.”

Much internal debate between advocates of identity politics exists over its theoretical underpinnings (King & McDonald, 2007). In the March, 2007, special symposium edition of the SSJ, Yep dubbed this internal debate the “multiple axes of
stratification” (2007, p. 112) where scholars of identity pertain to different theoretical perspectives. For example, Helstein (2007) suggested an amalgamation of psychoanalysis and post-structuralist theoretical perspectives to underpin feminism. Likewise, Bairner critiqued identity politics for being politically restrictive, but within the context of class, which is another localized identity. Carrington also cautioned that identity politics remained “applied” and politically relevant, and Yep (2007) highlighted the difference between “radical sociology” and “political activism” (p. 115) where the former appeals to “research and assessment for groups who engage in political intervention” and the latter is “moralist sociology” which “integrates activism within the scholarship” (p. 115).

While these debates center on how identity politics is studied, the debate does not explicitly capture the essence of the argument regarding identity politics and wider political studies per se. To clarify, theoretical discussion between scholars dealing with issues of identity qua identity might be viewed in contrast to this study, which seeks to explain the difference (and address the similarities) between the local and the global, or identity and the wider cosmopolitan community. In scholarly circles outside of sport sociology, primarily liberal scholars following Argentinean political theorist Ernesto Laclau have asserted a revived “post-identity” interest in universalism (Lott, 2006). According to Lott (2006), numerous critics of identity politics have noted the “political inadequacy of postmodern theory” (p. 163), since it fails “to draw up any account of an overarching collective or united front” (p. 163). Before critiquing postmodernism or post-structuralism, however, it is essential to understand their underlying tenets.
Post-structuralism in Sport Sociology

As Andrews has explained, post-structural theory in sport sociology is primarily Foucauldian (2000). Yet several scholars argue that such classification of Foucault is problematic and post-structuralism cannot be reduced to Foucauldian theory (Stronach, 1996; Cousens Hoy, 1986). Moreover, while post-structuralism has been tied to issues of identity, sport sociologists also use the term “post-modernism” frequently (e.g., Andrews, 1998; Bruce & Greendorfer, 1994, 1998; Rail, 1998). Rail (1998) explains the complexities of the term “post-modernism,” since it can be viewed as a style, an epoch, a method, an artistic practice, and a discipline. For Rail (1998), Foucauldian theory is often bracketed into both post-structural and post-modern conceptions of reality that concur in their emphases on “the inadequacies of metanarratives” (p. xiii). Post-modernism and post-structuralism are also viewed as marking a shift or transitory period in theorizing, away from modernist and structuralist assumptions of reality grounded in Enlightenment idealism (e.g., Helstein, 2007; Rail, 1998), although bifurcating modernism and postmodernism, structuralism and post-structuralism in this way has been critiqued quite severely (Harvey, 1990). Regardless of theoretical loyalties, my central concern here is with scholars who also display “incredulity towards metanarratives;” a Lyotardian-coined phrase, yet one which also adheres to the theoretical underpinnings of Foucault and Derrida (Denzin, 1986). Metanarratives are generally conceived to be “philosophical stories which legitimate all other discourse” (Cahoone, 2003, p. 259). Lyotard, for example, argues that the following are examples of metanarratives:

. . . the Christian narrative of the redemption of original sin through love; the Aufklärer narrative of emancipation from ignorance and servitude through knowledge and egalitarianism; the speculative narrative of the realization of the
universal Idea through the dialectic of the concrete; the Marxist narrative of emancipation from exploitation and alienation through the socialization of work; and the capitalist narrative of emancipation from poverty through techno-industrial development (1993, p. 25).

Similarly, Foucault is skeptical of grand totalizing narratives, and his use of the terms “power,” “discourse,” and “discursive power,” demarcate themselves from modern and structural terminologies. For example, Foucauldian “power” describes the use of knowledge in society, which differs from the materialistic view of power as an “institution” or “structure” (e.g., Andrews, 1993; Horne et al., 1999; Maguire et al., 2002; Poster, 1984; Vincent, 1992) and the hegemonic view of power as “the sphere of the state” (Rail & Harvey, 1994, p. 166). These materialistic and hegemonic views are essentialist and, thus, accept an objective “truth value” (Foucault, 1969), or “material distinction” (McNay, 1992, p. 25). For Foucault, and many post-structural sport sociologists, knowledge is “bound up with historically regimes of power and, therefore, every society produces its own truths which have a normalizing and regulatory function” (McNay, 1992, p. 25). As a result, these “omnipresent” powers (Rail & Harvey, 1995, p. 166) act in suppressing individuals through perceived truths. In this respect, power is “tacit,” and cannot regarded as belonging to a dominant group but, rather, is a “social strategy” (Andrews, 1994, p. 157). Thus, Foucauldian power and knowledge are interrelated concepts, where neither in and of themselves are explicitly bad nor negative (Kritzman, 1988), yet, they become problematic when knowledge is used as a power tool for suppression (Markula, 2004).

Scholars using Foucauldian theory in sport sociology have typically argued that identity is constructed “via experiences that are linked to the workings of discourse,
power relations, disciplinary techniques and the process of active self-negotiation” (Markula & Pringle, 2006, p. 99). Thus, certain dominant stories (discourses) in society contour us to think in a certain way. Discourse is much like the Lyotardian metanarrative, formed in society over time, shaping what we believe to be the truths of the world. Foucault explains how “ready made syntheses” must be questioned: “those groupings that we normally accept before any examination…we must oust those forms and obscure forces by which we usually link the discourse of one man with that of another” (1969, p. 24). Power relations in society are intertwined with discourses, which become prevalent and thus lead to forms of discursive power.

Understanding power, knowledge, and discourse in this way has helped sport sociologists explain how many groups are marginalized due to gender, race and/or sexuality. Foucauldian theory is used to suggest that hegemonic and modern liberalist views of power identify the individual as an entirely existential agent and, consequently, accountable for their own actions and, thus, their suppression. Lyotardian theory again, in this respect, is much the same. For example, according to Lyotard (1993), the hegemonic Western voice grounded in culturally imperialistic tendencies can become trenchant and dominant over local voices. As a further result, according to Edward Said (1986), “We many finally believe with Foucault and Lyotard that the great narratives of emancipation and enlightenment are over” (p. 153).

**Macro Politics**

Due to such skepticism toward metanarratives and dominant discourses, post-structuralism denies the possibility of a universal, objective perspective and, thus,
scholars advocating this theoretical framework are unable to question ideas of “human rights,” implicating China and the Beijing Olympics (as only one example). Such reasoning is grounded in the post-structural assumption that to privilege human rights is to support the belief in the existence of knowable “truths” in the world, and that certain ways of living are better than others. Human rights cannot be defended from those of a post-structural advocacy because they are perceived as dominant societal discourses, or metanarratives, which should be challenged rather than accepted axiomatically. For example, Susan Brownell’s (2004) discussion of “Post-Olympism” challenged the Western colonial desire to locate issues of human rights in China, arguing instead that a focus on human rights was a return to modernity and a step backward. Instead, Brownell spoke of the “future of the Olympic movement” lying “in its diversification” (p. 51).

Problematically, however, Brownell’s (2004) insistence that a return to modernity is a return to Western colonialism is misplaced. In discounting Western calls for human rights in favor of an understanding for the perspective of “the Other” (p. 62), as she labels China in the Olympic movement, Brownell bifurcates the visions of modernity and post-modernity, and errs on “side” of the Chinese. Hence, “Why are we so concerned about changing China and not about China changing us?”, asks Brownell.

Brownell and others who argue in a similar “post-Olympic” vein (e.g., Carrington, 2004; Sydnor, 2004) are clearly correct in many of their assertions and contribute a vital perspective to the Olympic debate over human rights in addition to the wider debate regarding foundationalism and post-structuralism. The “Other” that Brownell speaks of certainly has a voice that should not be negated. However, fear of discounting the “Other” should not mean that discussions of ethics or morality cannot
prevail at a universal level. For this reason, post-structural (and post-modern) theorizing has been critiqued for its lack of social hope due to its extreme claims of anti-essentialism against universal ideals such as human rights (Ashley, 1994; Best & Kellner, 1997), and, ultimately, its rejection of cosmopolitanism, which is the view of every individual being a “citizen of the world” (Nussbaum, 1997).

As expressed in the former chapter, a critical theorist perspective may appear to challenge ideology in the same sense as post-structural theory challenges metanarratives or dominant discourses and, thus, may suffer the same criticism of being wholly pessimistic. However, the difference between these perspectives is that from the critical theorist tradition(s), emancipation is considered possible because people can locate ideological and hegemonic power; it is fixed, and, therefore, surmountable. Conversely, for post-structuralists, power is not linear or fixed and it is not top-down; rather, every individual is bound up in a complex web of power relations which makes locating power and, therefore, widespread emancipation, difficult. Moreover, the critical theorist tradition can prescribe a view of justice, ethics, and morality, since such perspectives believe that universal truths can be uncovered. Conversely, post-structuralism does not regard truth as something to be uncovered; rather, truth does not exist. As Denzin and Lincoln (1994, 1998, 2003), echoing Baudrillard exclaim, in this sense, postmodernism (and, arguably, post-structuralism) marks the end of sociology.

According to Antonio and Kellner (1994), Foucault’s rejection of macro-politics, which in this case refers to politics attempting to establish universals, is problematic because it “undermines efforts to develop theoretical languages to address regional, national or international publics about global social issues… and to facilitate large scale
collective actions or interventions” (p. 141). Although foundationalist advocates such as Antonio and Kellner (1994) necessitate the ability to develop these theoretical languages in order to develop some form of political action and intervention on a global scale, from a post-structural perspective such as Foucauldian theory, efforts to develop these shared languages are totalitarian and embedded in privileged dominant discursive power. Post-modernist, Lyotard, has even critiqued these efforts for being “terroristic” because they privilege a certain vantage point (1984, p. 63-64). Thus, implicit in the post-structural rejection of “truth,” is the refutation of foundational and structural attempts to theorize culture (Ashley, 1994). This, consequently, resorts to what has been termed a perspective of “cultural relativism” which assumes that no perspective or cultural practice can be deemed better than another, or can claim to hold a privileged or dominant position, because this dominance becomes dogmatic.

**Relativism and Human Rights**

Although a relativistic perspective is certainly not new to philosophy, and has been traced back to the Ancient Greeks, specifically Herodotus and Protagorus, linguistic relativism saw its inception following Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations*, published posthumously in 1953 (Baghramian, 2004). For Wittgenstein, linguistic relativism represents the view that each of us is involved in a language game, and each language game has a disparate conception of reality (Black, 1959). Thus, no macro-level universal view of reality and no fixed, universal truths can exist, because our experiences are entirely derived from the language game in which we are involved. Thus, while literary scholars such as Noam Chomsky (2000, 2002, 2006) have argued that linguistics
can still contain universals, following Wittgenstein, some pragmatic, post-modern, and post-structural scholars have maintained that “there is no single commensurating language known in advance” (Rorty, 1991, p. 215).

Regardless of relativism’s numerous strands, the common conception to all relativistic perspectives is that fixed, fundamental truths in the world are fictitious and, therefore, cannot be uncovered. From this perspective, in terms of human rights, natural rights (as natural law theorists such as Aquinas and Locke upheld) are imaginary, as are rationally-derived universally valid principles (such as the theoretical perspectives of thinkers such as Kant, Rawls, Habermas, and other “modernist” thinkers who subscribe to such rationalistic ontology). Furthermore, emancipation cannot be found in structures and institutions (i.e., Marxism/Neo-Marxism/critical theory), and macro-politics, which relies on truth-talk and emancipation, is, therefore, non-existent for post-structural scholars (Norris, 1994). From the relativist’s perspective, no culture can be more “right” than another; hence, no position can be granted as more ethical, moral, or just, because such views themselves are relative and are entrenched in our language, cultural practices, and institutions (Donnelly, 1984).

Conversely, belief in the existence of morals and ethics at a level beyond the subjective, relativistic perspective underpins universal cosmopolitan aspirations of social reform. This is the foundation, for example, of the United Nation’s *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* signed in 1948. Debates continue over whether these fundamental universal rights ought to be owed to each and every human being, for example the right to freedom of speech and freedom of the press, or whether it is deeply flawed due to its grounding in Enlightenment humanism’s core values (Kant, 1795). For
example, relativists argue that such a position is, itself, a metanarrative or dominant
discourse, because it is highly ethnocentric and endeavors to establish universal values
based on the beliefs of one culture. Imposing views onto other cultures is unjust and
immoral because no evidence can support the claim that cultural practices in other
countries that Westerners deem “abusive” are indeed so. Instead, relativists argue that
what is right for one culture should be respected.

Robert Simon (2004) discusses the issue of ethical relativism—hence when
universal ideals of morality are discarded—in relation to ethics and sport. Simon’s (2004)
argument identifies the problems of ethical relativism which occur when belief systems
of normativity dissipate. According to Simon, and many others who share his skepticism,
ethical relativism removes the opportunity for a moral touchstone and is problematic
because it allows no way of justifying why one perspective is better than another. It,
therefore, leads to a wholly subjective view of reality in which ethical decision-making
need not be substantiated and is based on mere preference.

Thus, in post-structural theory, the dismissal of not only the objective, but also the
normative, leads many to suggest that post-structuralism is wholly pessimistic (Rorty,
1999). As Antonio and Kellner claim, “the lack of strong currents of global and critical
theory within professional circles greatly diminishes the resources for sensitizing social
sciences to the broader contexts of specialized work and for stimulating public discourse
about it” (1994, p. 141). In the case of the Beijing Olympic Games, if post-structuralism
claims that human rights cannot exist because they privilege some people’s values and
beliefs over others, then the United Nations’ *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*
cannot be substantiated. This leaves issues such as the genocide in Darfur, and China’s
issues of censorship and denied freedom of the press in dire straits. One can no more persuasively argue that “genocide is wrong,” as they can that “genocide is right.” In fact, one of the major concerns of historians and numerous philosophers alike, which led many to dismiss post-structural theorizing, has been the rejection of the Holocaust in Nazi Germany (Simon, 1997).

Neo-Marxist hegemony theory, in contrast, would not be accused of a similar fate, since hegemonic-oriented scholars believe that exposing ideologies could lead to an uncovering of truth, and emancipatory potential (e.g., Mouffe & Laclau, 2001). Conversely, since post-structuralism locates identity and truth in complex cultural webs of power rather than in a material base, such uncovering of reality is impossible since it is not fixed in the materialistic, foundationalist sense. Thus, problematically, scholars of a post-structural affinity seem more willing to concede to the notion that metanarratives are politically constraining and suppressing, more so than they are emancipatory. Rather than viewing universally applicable theories as a tool for emancipation, they become questioned and challenged. Arguably, it is partly due to this pessimism towards global scale optimism which leads post-structurally-oriented academics to resort to more locally and culturally grounded and/or ethnocentric studies, as opposed to appealing to wider, communitarian and cosmopolitan visions of justice. Since scholars who accept post-structural theorizing cannot adequately answer questions that require universals, in this case human rights, they are better adept to utilizing frameworks which challenge these universals which is, resultanty, restrictive of the types of questions that can be asked. Specifically—returning to the very beginning of this thesis—these studies tend to focus
on “identity politics” as “recognition” rather identity politics as “redistribution” (Fraser, 1997, 2000).

However, although post-structuralism’s alleged lack of emancipation dominates this critique, much can be said in support of the post-structuralist perspective. For example, in the case of the Beijing Olympic Games, it is important to remember that; (1) China is not monolithic, and cannot, therefore, be seen in such a way as to negate the complexities and ellipses involved in the genocide and with censorship; (2), in stating this, the situation must not be viewed as an East meets West critique, where Western views are held to be dogmatic; (3) Western values themselves are often hypocritical and exposed in media for sensational affects to induce emotive responses; sometimes the media elicits sheer fabrications, other times elements of truthfulness or “verisimilitude” pervade (Markula & Denison, 2005, p. 181). Thus, Western perspectives may be dominant, but they are not necessarily “true.”

According to the post-structural perspective, understanding cultures and nations as monolithic fails to account for the diversity of the citizenry, the multiple voices, the attachment of the people to their culture and country, in addition to a whole host of other factors. Thus, essentializing Chinese culture does not consider a whole host of other complex issues concerning China’s relationship with Sudan and its role in the genocide, nor does it consider the issue of censorship from the perspective of China. Attacking Chinese culture from a Western perspective does little to give credence to an argument because such an argument does not recognize the cultural values implicit in China; it also does not consider the notion of “Chineseness” and what it means to be Chinese (Ang, 2001), nor does it consider the non-homogeneity of culture in itself.
Foundationalist perspectives of human rights, in contrast, hinge on the idea of universality; they concur with the notion of a unified, common moral language to which every individual can collectively concede, in order to result in a consensus of beliefs and values. Even critical theorists, who critique the dominant social structure and the notion of “rights,” still believe that consensus and emancipation can be reached on a universal scale. To rearticulate this claim using the example of human rights: scholars upholding a foundationalist ontology and epistemology, do so with the belief that human rights are either: (1) naturally innate, so each human is owed them through nature (or from a higher order); (2) each individual has the internal faculty of reason which they can use to determine whether certain actions are right or wrong based on the exercise of their rationality; or (3) they believe that social hope is grounded in the structure of state apparatus and/or human agency. Although not all foundationalist ontologies hold exactly the same view of how human rights are acquired and inscribed in society, the generic foundationalist assumption supports a universal world view; a view that allows human rights to have either a natural, rational, or structural basis and place in all of human life, regardless of culture, creed, race, ethnicity, gender, or sexuality. Human rights apply to all people.

According to those who identify with post-structuralism, such a conception of human rights is wholly problematic. In grounding human rights in nature, reason, or structure, human rights are essentialized and reified and, thus, the concept of human rights is given concrete form and this hypostatization results in the formation of a metanarrative or dominant discourse.23
Post-structuralism and post-modernism’s questioning of Enlightenment universals, grounded in rationality and an objective, knowable search for the truth, therefore, represents a questioning of what Christopher Norris (1994) has termed “macro politics,” and a move towards “micro politics.” As Norris (1994) explains, micro politics represents “unpredictable ‘conjunctures’ brought about by the absence of any large scale unifying movement” (p. 187). It marks a shift from “talk of ‘truth,’ ‘principles,’ ‘justice,’ ‘emancipatory interests’…and a corresponding will to bend all one’s energies to various short-term ‘specific’ projects of localized resistance and critique” (p. 187). Thus, studies which are focused on identity and grounded in post-structural thought tend to be skeptical of totalizing theory since they consider it a metanarrative inscribed in dominant discursive power (Andrews, 2000; Helstein, 2007). For example, according to Peter Brooker, “Lyotard, along with deconstruction generally, can be said to have authorized a consciously decentered postmodernism and micropolitics, keyed to social heterogeneity, the local, provisional and pragmatic; its political and ethical judgments undecided in advance” (Brooker, 1992, p. 140). Foucauldian theory has similarly been described as critiquing ideology and focusing on cultural group politics, rather than large-scale universal emancipatory ideals (Said, 1986).

Defenders of postmodern and post-structural theory argue that opponents of post-structuralism—“opponents” being “essentialist/materialists”—(Helstein, 2007, p. 79) base their critique on the fact that post-structuralism “does not allow for political action” (Helstein, 2007, p. 79). Helstein, however, claims:

the de-centered subject of poststructural… theorizing does not make knowledge, political action, and/or social change impossible, rather it implies that identity (and the knowledge and consciousness implied in the concept) needs to be
rethought, reassessed and reimagined so that fragmentation, contingency, and the power of desire are given space within political action (p. 80).

Although I concur with Helstein that post-structural theorizing does not “prevent political action and/or social change,” Helstein, like Carrington (2007) and others cited previously who engage in studies of identity, have failed to define the type of social change they imagine likely through the adoption of this theoretical framework. While Helstein (2007) is correct that social change can occur, the central problem is that social change from this theoretical perspective can only ever be made possible at the individual socio-cultural level in terms of group change. However, the critique moves one step further, because group change per se is not problematic; in fact, it should be encouraged. Rather, group change post-structurally underpinned is demarcated from what Fraser calls “the institutional matrix” (1997, 2000).

Scholarly debate between Michael Messner (1996, 1998), and Judy Davidson and Debra Shogun (1998) highlights the conflicting views in sport sociology over the nature of identity politics. For example, defending critiques from Davidson and Shogun (1998) over his scholarly work on sexuality in sport, Messner (1998) expressed caution over the idea of “deconstructing identity categories around which subordinate groups have organized to win some significant social changes.” He suggests, “scholars might contribute to a discourse that negotiates the differences between “post” theories and practical politics... without emptying out the verb politics that motors social change” (p. 369). Messner, it appears, shares a similar perspective to that of Fraser; namely, that the politics of recognition should not trump the politics of redistribution.
As I will argue in the forthcoming chapters, maintaining ties to the institutional matrix is essential if identity is not to be reified and if we are to ever conceive of change on a more global scale. For example, striving for political action at the level needed to make appeals to human rights postulates a difficult task through post-structural theorizing because its framework does not support appeals to a universal cosmopolitan morality. Such a universal morality can only be found when we find some level of commonality amongst the particular identity-based groups (Butler, 2000).

Thus, rather than entering the theoretical debate at the micro level and asking which theoretical framework can best challenge oppressed cultural groups, I instead question these issues of identity politics from both the localized “micro” perspective of group politics, and from the “macro” perspective, in the context of Gruneau’s work in *Class, Sport and Social Development* (1983, 1999), arguing for studies of identity to be viewed in unison with wider-scale socio-cultural issues. For example, in contrast to studies of identity, I here refer to issues dealing with communitarianism, cosmopolitanism, human rights, and wide-scale emancipation that rely on collective thought and action. This is not to imply that collective thought is independent of individualism and identity but, rather, that a post-structuralist or post-modern conception of identity does not allow for any appeal to collective convergence on wide-scale political issues due to its rejection of metanarratives. Although I use the terms “micro politics” and “macro politics” to distinguish between these modes of inquiry, this is not to suggest that no means of possible reconciliation between the two perspectives exists. Instead, I differentiate between the terms “micro” and “macro” with caution, in order to avoid bifurcating politics to the extent that one is pitted against the other. These terms are
simply used because they are constructive in setting up the main points for this argument. Later, I will use the Hegelian dialectic to show how they can be synthesized. A germane example of a politically and morally contentious site is the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. I refer to the issues bound up in the Beijing Games, as “macro political”; yet to reach a consensus over issues of justice, ethics, and morality bound up in the socio-political context, micro consensus in terms of group politics is necessary, which will be discussed in the subsequent chapter.

Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted the transition from wide scale socio-political studies in sport sociology, beginning in the 1960s at the inception of the field, to the trend toward identity politics following the linguistic post-structural turn in the 1990s. A distinction has been made between macro and micro politics which, for the purpose of this thesis, is used cautiously to explain the post-modern and post-structural rejection of foundationalist essentialism, grounded in modernism and structuralism. I have explained how, instead, these theories/ theorists are skeptical of the appeals to universalism, metanarratives, and dominant discourses evident in macro-based studies. Foucault and Lyotard show distrust for emancipatory politics that are necessary when attempting to deal with political issues requiring an appeal to a universal ethics and morality (e.g., human rights). With the 2008 Beijing Games fast approaching, China is a germane example to illustrate this contention between micro and macro politics.

Thus, approaching the Beijing Olympic Games from the perspective of human rights is relevant in explaining how synthesized views of micro and macro politics (and
between identity politics and communitarian visions of hope) are necessary. The following chapter examines a means for theoretical progression in sport sociology. It examines the perspectives of Mouffe and Laclau, who engage in a synthesis between hegemony theory and post-structuralism through what they term “radical democracy.” Such a view will be considered in relation to how a theory which adequately addresses the issues inherent in the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games can be built, and how it might also be used to deal with other macro level issues appearing in sport. Scholars can use this new theoretical perspective, it will be argued, to study both micro and macro level social and political issues, thus allowing for a synthesis within sport sociology theory on a broader scale.
CHAPTER 5

SYNTHESIS: NEO-PRAGMATIC RADICAL DEMOCRATIC THEORY

This chapter aims to synthesize the thesis and antithesis explained in the previous two chapters, in order to deal effectively with situations that arise requiring a normative theory of sport. Such a theory must account for wider reaching political action that does not conform to a strictly foundationalist, or post-structural perspective. I will discuss the inherent problems that arise with an “either-or” position, since both the micro and the macro (or the local and the global) perspectives are necessary in ethical decision-making. This reflects a Hegelian metaphysical ontology that argues in favor of an inter-subjective perspective that does not discount either (1) the individual or the collective, (2) the inductive or the deductive, (3) the local or the global, or (4) the subjective or the objective. Instead, these binaries are reconciled to form a new perspective. I propose this new perspective to be found in a combination of neo-pragmatic philosophy and democratic political theory. I draw on discussions among Mouffe, Rorty, Fraser, Walzer, Laclau, Butler, and Derrida in order to formulate a new theoretical position for sport sociology scholars and those in wider “sport studies” to consider.
**Synthesis: Normativity and Pragmatism**

In the previous two chapters I explored the contrasting perspectives of foundationalism and post-structuralism over human rights, which is also inclusive of discussions related to justice, ethics, and morality. Post-structuralism is just one strand of anti-foundationalism—much like natural law, rationalism, interpretivism, and critical theory are only four of the multiple strands of foundationalism (and even these perspectives have been grossly essentialized for the scope of this thesis) (Rockmore, 1992). For example, as Tom Rockmore explains, examples of anti-foundationalism include, though are not limited to: “Aristotle’s practical theory, classic American pragmatism, such forms of post-Husserlian phenomenology as Heidegger’s fundamental ontology or Gadamer’s hermeneutics, as well as the neo-American pragmatism of Rorty, Quine, Joseph Margolis, and others” (p. 9). Many forms of anti-foundationalism also take the “anti-Cartesian” perspective, such as Lyotardian post-modernism (Rockmore, 1992).

Anti-foundationalism in its most basic form questions the idea of knowledge or truth being found in foundational structures of society. The main premise of all of these positions which is central to this thesis, however, is the question of universality.

According to Butler (2000),

> The question of universality has emerged perhaps most critically in those Leftist discourses which have noted the use of the doctrine of universality in the service of colonialism and imperialism. The fear, of course, is that ‘universalisability’ is indissociable from imperial expansion. The proceduralist view seeks to sidestep this problem by insisting that it makes no substantive claims about human nature, but its exclusive reliance on rationality to make its claims belies this very assertion (2000, p. 15).

Therefore, according to Butler (2000), attempts to find an all-encompassing universal perspective have failed because they rely on Kantian formalism and the notion of...
rationality. One such example is Habermas’ (1987) communicative “versus Subject-centered” reason (p. 575). Essentially, as explained in chapters three and four, although Habermas concurs with the post-structural ontology that totalizing knowledge cannot exist, following the Kantian tradition, he believes that rationality is universal and each individual has a shared faculty of reason.

It is essential to consider the implicit tensions in the very idea of Butler’s universalizability, because it is, as discussed in previous chapters, typically defended from a foundationalist perspective. From the post-structuralist perspective, the human rights issues of the Olympic Games are susceptible to critique because human rights typically rely on being grounded in the uncovering of a universal “truth.” Conversely, because post-structuralism is heavily critical of dominant discourses or metanarratives, it is difficult to envision how human rights can be defended without laying claim to a “truth” of some kind. For example, although post-structuralists may argue over the source of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and suggest that we cannot adequately defend human rights based on reason or natural law, and that we should question the Declaration as an example of a dominant Western metanarrative whereby the West is trying to invoke its perspective on others. As Woodcock, (2006), referencing the UNESCO (1949), argues, the Declaration was “not simply in the Western, common law, Judeo-Christian world. The Declaration incorporates input from Asia, Islamic, and African Cultures as well as substantial input from the Communist nations, particularly the Soviet Union” (p. 246). Thus, it is unclear how the United Declaration may be viewed as a metanarrative or dominant discourse if it were collectively agreed upon without coercion.
Problems with Dichotomization

A significant problem when addressing post-structural and post-modern theory is the tendency to demarcate it from Enlightenment modernity and structuralism. Although post-structuralism and post-modernism are regarded as a reaction to, and a breaking away from modernity and its associated problems—such as its essentializing and totalizing nature—Harvey (1990), for example, argued that such “breaking away” should be seen as more of a fluid transition, than as a movement reinforcing an unnecessary binary. Dichotomizing these theoretical perspectives does little to locate the complexities involved in the emergence of new paradigms. Foucault’s theorizing, which sport sociologists primarily consider “post-structural,” exemplifies this problem. For example, Denzin (1990) and Larrain (1994) bracket Foucault in the post-structural camp and Lyotard in the postmodern, thereby identifying a crucial difference between Foucault and Lyotard. According to Larrain (1994), Foucault and other post-structuralists, here including Hindess, Hurst, Laclau and Mouffe, “do not dissolve social reality into fragmentary images and signs, and...see the possibility for a variety of collective subjects to be politically constituted by progressive discourses which resist power or aim at socialism” (p. 290). In contrast, post-modernism “is a label which should be applied preferentially to those authors such as Lyotard and Baudrillard who do not hope any longer that meaningful change can be attempted and tend to dissolve reality into incommensurable language games and/or simulacra” (p. 291).

Conversely, according to Norris (1994), Lyotardian and Foucauldian theory are comparable in their distrust for universals and rejection of essentialism and reductionism, and little can “distinguish Foucault’s situationalist attitude to issues of ethics, politics,
and justice from Lyotard’s postmodernist treatment of such issues as belonging to a realm of ‘sublimely’ incommensurable truth-claims and hence as allowing no appeal to shared standards of criteria of judgment” (p. 188). Moreover, debate surrounds Foucault’s authenticity, due to criticism received from intellectuals such as Habermas (1987) for contradicting his earlier rejection of modernity, while others argue he was merely progressing naturally in the context of his work (Allen, 2003). Stronach (1996) suggests, for example, that Foucault was initially labeled a “structuralist,” then a “poststructuralist,” and has now been placed under the term “postmodern.” As Cousens Hoy (1986) remarks, this may be because Foucault—like many other intellectuals—was constantly evolving in his scholarly work, or, it may simply be the idiosyncrasy of the reader’s interpretation.

Although Foucault shares with Lyotard a skepticism of metanarratives, or, in Foucault’s terminology, “dominant discourses,” Norris (1994) identifies the difference between Foucault’s theorizing and Lyotard’s postmodernism with respect to the latter’s “terrorist morality, vis-à-vis the claims of legal obligation or citizenly virtue” (p. 189). Foucault, in some respects, acknowledged the necessity of “certain moral imperatives” that “hold for any conscious subject in possession of the relevant facts, and whose validity cannot be relativized to this or that ‘phrase-regime,’ ‘discourse,’ or ‘cultural form of life’” (Norris, 1994, p. 190). This, as Foucault (1984) regards it, is the idea of “non-acceptance of what is happening” (p. 377) Hence, Foucault draws on Poland as an example:

it is clear that we quickly reach the point of saying that there is nothing we can do. We can’t dispatch a team of paratroopers, and we can’t send armoured cars to liberate Warsaw. I think that, politically, we have to recognize this, but I think we
have to agree that, for ethical reasons, we have to raise the problem of Poland in
the form of a non-acceptance of what is happening there, and a non-acceptance of
the passivity of our own governments. I think this attitude is an ethical one, but it
is also political; it does not consist in saying merely ‘I protest’, but in making of
that attitude a political phenomenon that is as substantial as possible, and one
which those who govern, here or there, will sooner or later be obliged to take into

According to Norris, Foucault has an “eminently Kantian concern to explain how ethical
judgment is, on the one hand, a matter of autonomous, freely willed choice, since always
to some extent undetermined by the factual evidence—and on the other, obliged to take
account of such evidence in order to justify its actions, commitments, or evaluative
priorities” (1994, p. 191). Thus, Foucault’s later views appear to oppose much of his
earlier work, particularly in The Order of Things, which drew on Nietzschean relativism
(Paras, 2007), and, as Norris (1994) explains, “Had Foucault lived longer, this resistance
might have taken a more overt and polemical form, a challenge to many of the orthodox
notions now canvassed in his name” (p. 191). Considering these ellipses within post-
structuralism may allow for a better understanding of how universality can be achieved
from a perspective which partially accounts for post-structural advocacy.

**Post-Structural Ethics: Agreeing on the Common Good?**

For the purpose of this thesis, central to these debates over scholarly allegiance to
theoretical frameworks is how they address the issue of human rights and issue of ethics,
morality, and justice *normatively*. Theoretically, much contradiction between post-
structuralism and foundationalist theories is apparent, yet foundationalism appears to
provide some form of emancipatory potential and identify social hope, while post-
structuralists have been criticized for failing to offer any means of reform. This is perhaps
unfair. As noted above, Foucault identified such tensions in his own work—particularly later in his career (Paras, 2007). Although he did little to resolve these tensions, we cannot predict whether Foucault’s later work would have attempted to do so. While scholars such as Rorty, Mouffe, Fraser, Laclau, Butler, Foucault, and others, have different ways of addressing the issue of metanarratives, they do share a concern for the bigger moral picture, and question how collective agreement can be achieved on issues of morality, ethics and justice without having to conform to rationality, or natural law. They also share a level of skepticism toward dominant discourses and metanarratives, and they are all “pragmatic”—although to different extents—as to how these issues should be resolved. The problem with Foucauldian theory is its inherent lack of emancipatory content (Rorty, 1997), and, while this is not to say that Foucault’s work offers no emancipatory potential, at the macro level, even Foucault admitted such emancipation was difficult to conceive. Others such as Rorty, who share, anti-foundationalist ontological assumptions with Foucault, find emancipation not only possible, but essential. However, the question remains as to the sense in which this is achievable, given that any form of universalism appears to be rejected as “totalizing” and, therefore, a metanarrative or dominant discourse.

How can We Generate “Anti-Foundational” Universals?

The central question for scholars involved in contemporary debates surrounding the issues of universalism, appears to be “how can we collectively agree on universals without subscribing to foundationalist assumptions?” This question has been addressed in various ways. For example, according to Rorty (1997), scholarly work should envisage
the idea of justice as a “larger loyalty.” In order to generate justice we can share our views with other cultures and hope that through acts of persuasion (rather than coercion) collective moral agreement can occur. Hence, as Rorty argues, “we should peel apart Enlightenment liberalism from Enlightenment rationalism” because, in addition to the problems implicit in rationalism’s correspondence theory of truth, justice must be approached as permitting “the West to approach the non-West in the role of someone with an instructive story to tell, rather than in the role of someone purporting to make better use of a universal human capacity” (p. 147). For example, in Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity, Rorty explains that opposition to ideas “like ‘essence’, ‘nature,’ and ‘foundation,’ does not mean that action cannot be regulated; but, rather, action must be regulated under the recognition that, although we know our beliefs are contingent, we can still think them “worth dying for” (p. 189). Rorty further appeals to what Wilfred Sellars calls “we-intentions.” These are moral obligations to other beings, and “the point…is that our sense of solidarity is strongest when those with whom solidarity is expressed are thought of as “one of us,” where “us” means something smaller and more local than the human race” (1989, p. 191). As Rorty explains, universal validity and universal reach are two different concepts. It is the latter that Rorty conceives as possible, in comparison to the former which he attributes to foundationalist thinkers such as Rawls and Habermas.

The notion of “us” or “we” as opposed to “them” has stark implications when discussed in terms of identity politics. Problematically, returning to Nancy Fraser’s initial point, as soon as identity is seen as culturally fluid rather than fixed, and as soon as we focus on “difference” and begin to demarcate ourselves from other cultural groups, we lose the solidarity that Rorty describes. Suggesting this is a problem with post-
structurally underpinned identity politics does not necessarily devalue individual appeals for political recognition. Inequality at any level is problematic, including its presence at the micro level in terms of group identity. Rorty and Fraser do not negate the importance of group rights, for example, rights based on race, gender and sexuality. Rather, the problem appears when demarcation from others occurs on the basis of these rights (which is quite contradictory because the very purpose of poststructural identity is built on the assimilation of the “Other”), because we lose a sense of collective belonging.

For Laclau, particularism such as this is problematic in its demarcation from the collective good. When micro politics prevail exclusively, without any shared goal with others facing inequality, it is “self-defeating” (1996, p. 26). Thus, isolating group politics from one another is problematic because, not only does it essentialize identity as Fraser (1997) believes, but, according to Laclau, groups do not, and should not, exist independently of one another, because identity is fashioned in an “elaborated system of relations with other groups” (p.48). Furthermore, Laclau, argues that other “norms and principles which transcend the particularism of any group” (1996, p. 48) will always govern the relations between each group. Concomitantly, Laclau (1996), in addition to Butler, also argues that as soon as groups appeal to their rights in terms of difference, their identities appeal to a universal maxim and are, consequently, essentialized. Thus, “there is no particularism which does not make an appeal to such principles in the construction of its identity” (p.26). For example, in Emancipation, Laclau (1996) argues that identity formation occurs in terms of “difference” rather than similarity, but, resultanty, identities share an “incompleteness.” It is this incompleteness that Judith Butler (2000) draws on to argue that “paradoxically, it is the absence of any such shared
content that constitutes the promise of universality” (p. 31). To clarify this point, universality can only be found in shared (similar) differences between particulars. Presenting the universal enables an understanding of how it is inseparable from the particular. To clarify this strange, paradoxical tension, Butler explains how we can speak of “women’s human rights” as leading “…to a strange neighbouring of the particular and universal” (2000, p. 39).

Viewing the universal and particular in this way is one avenue for resolving the tension between micro and macro politics. Logically, it may be argued that bridging identity politics with wider collective hope allows universality, due to the inseparability of the micro and the macro. This view of universality is also useful because it does not see the concept as “all encompassing,” since “universality belongs to an open-ended hegemonic struggle” (Butler, 2000, p. 38). The difference between this inductive account of the universal and Rorty’s “larger loyalty,” however, is that Butler and Laclau still view identity—and, subsequently, universality and particularity—from what might be described as a (quasi)-foundationalist perspective and one that is both discursively and institutionally grounded (hence their appeal to hegemony through a synthesis of Gramscian and Foucauldian theory).

While Rorty differs from Butler and Laclau in this respect, they do share a respect for plurality when regarding identity and justice. It is useful to draw a parallel here between these views and Michel Walzer’s (1990) conception of universalism in Nation and Universe, a conception also evident in his work Thick and Thin. For Walzer, universalism can be differentiated between “covering law universalism” and “reiterative universalism.” The former is associated with a type of universalism that is inclusive of
what he calls “thin” morality. This view proposes that we can all express our claims to rights within a shared conception of justice, and we can also express the need for emancipation within a shared narrative account of the world. The latter, in contrast, is a “thick” vision of morality which believes in a plethora of conceptions of what is right. Rorty likens Walzer’s account to Annette Baier’s view that morality is about developing “reciprocal trust” amongst small family groups and friends, and then extending this to others. It begins with a “thicker” conception of morality because it identifies plurality amongst different groups, but ensures that morality is not restricted to such grouping. Instead, morality can build outward and develop inductively, much like Rorty’s view of justice being a loyalty to a larger group of people. Viewing the micro as a crucial part of the macro overcomes the dichotomy of micro and macro politics, or particularism and universalism, allowing loyalty and solidarity to formulate.

**Difference or Similarity?**

Rorty’s (2000) view also contrasts to those of Butler and Fraser in terms of failing to acknowledge what “difference” implies. For Rorty, identity politics is problematic because it overemphasizes the need for diversity. He argues that emphasizing difference in order to build a moral community does little good because it negates the commonalities between identity groups. Thus, difference acts as a means of demarcation, rather than encouraging solidarity. Rorty questions the work of Butler who appeals to difference, and asks why “recognition” came to be seen as “recognition of culture” or “cultural difference” rather than “a recognition of common humanity” (2000, p. 10). Rorty also believes that it makes little sense to emphasize difference between groups, and
suggests that it would surely be better to decrease emphasis on difference, in order to have a more accepting community. He states further, “I kept wondering why in order to overcome homophobia we have to accord positive recognition to gay and lesbian sexual specificity rather than just raising children to think that being gay or lesbian is no big deal” (2000, p. 16). Still further, according to Rorty, because the Left has become so concerned with developing arguments around recognition, they have failed to account for what Fraser calls the “politics of redistribution” and the economic inequality of citizens.

In the former respect, with regards to difference, Rorty’s views differ to those of Fraser and Butler. For example, Butler has argued that Rorty’s perspective essentializes cultural differences, and, instead, she argues that cultural differences are an important aspect of identity. Where Butler and Rorty do agree, however, is that when we begin to identify with specific groups, we fail to see the commonalities we have between groups. However, from Butler’s perspective, this does not mean that we should negate group differences in favor of the “assimilationist” view that Rorty appears to purport. Instead, we should see how we might form hybrid identities across these groups, while maintaining our individual differences.

Fraser, instead, offers an important argument in way of synthesizing identity politics and the universal collective good. She does this through her analysis of identity as cultural. Fraser perceives “an identity politics that displaces redistribution and reifies group differences is deeply flawed” (2000, p. 1). Consequently, she attempts to appeal to a reformulated politics of recognition where identity is viewed in terms of social status rather than as a cultural form, at the same time as appealing to a politics of redistribution. For Fraser, this is achieved through what she calls “participatory parity” (2003, p. 36). To
achieve parity of participation, Fraser (2003) suggests a necessary appeal to both redistribution and recognition, the former being the “objective condition,” and the latter being the “inter-subjective condition.” Fraser argues:

the objective condition brings into focus concerns traditionally associated with the theory of distributional justice, especially concerns pertaining to the economic structure of society and to economically defined class differentials. The inter-subjective condition brings into focus concerns recently highlighted in the philosophy of recognition, especially concerns pertaining to the status order to society and to culturally defined hierarchies of status (p. 36).

In this way she accommodates the perspectives of both Rorty and Butler. Rorty’s because she acknowledges the need for redistribution, and, further, that individuals should not be burdened with excessive ascribed ‘difference,’ and Butler’s because she acknowledges the necessity of recognition, and that individuals “distinctiveness” should not be disregarded entirely (2003, p. 36).

**Macro Level Emancipation?**

It is difficult, however, to conceive how these views might help us defend the statement that “genocide is wrong” or that political action is required in the case of the Beijing Olympic Games and its reported freedom-of-the-press denial. For example, if Rorty’s perspective is to be subsumed, in order to argue against the Beijing Olympic Games we would have to accept that, while we cannot impose our views onto other cultures forcefully, we can begin to agree collectively on moral issues within our local cultures. In this way the more people we can persuade or demonstrate to that our way of living is a better alternative, the more chance we have of building a global democracy. Rorty’s conception of morality begins through a necessary identification with one another
at the level of the micro or particular level, (i.e., what Walzer describes as developing a “thick” morality), and then builds up inductively toward a thinner conception of morality where other cultures recognize the values in living the same way as we do.

Although such views appear to appeal to both micro level issues and macro level issues, critics have accused Rorty of being culturally imperialistic (e.g. Taylor, 1991), or ethnocentrically relativistic (e.g., Van Brakel & Saunders, 1989). For example, these critics argue that Rorty’s cross-cultural discussion is implausible because it (1) essentializes groups; (2) essentializes culture, and; (3) maintains a perspective which is couched in a privileged Western rhetoric. According to Mouffe, a more grounded perspective is needed, one that is based in a revised conception of democracy. Mouffe suggests that Rorty does not “fully acknowledge the complexity of politics and that this is linked to his dismissal of any kind of theoretical inquiry into the nature of the political realm” (1996, p. 6). Thus, as Mouffe summarizes:

The enemies of human happiness in his view are greed, sloth and hypocrisy and no deep analysis is required to understand how they could be eliminated. What ‘we liberals’ should aim at is to create the largest possible consensus among people about the worth of liberal institutions. What is needed is a bigger dose of liberalism- which he defines in terms of encouraging tolerance and minimizing suffering- and a growing number of liberal societies. Democratic politics is only a matter of letting an increasing number of people count as members of our moral conversational ‘we’. Like his hero John Dewey, Rorty’s understanding of social conflict is limited because he is unable to come to terms with the implications of value pluralism and accept that the conflict between fundamental values can never be resolved. He hopes that with economic growth and the development of more tolerant attitudes, harmony can finally be established (p. 6)

Thus, Mouffe draws a comparison between Rorty and Habermas, suggesting that their liberal hopes are grounded in a shared belief for “undistorted communication;” despite their different paths to achieving it (p.7). Mouffe clearly has some important criticisms of
Rorty, but these are seemingly not wholly insurmountable, particularly since they (she and Rorty) appear to be arguing for the same thing; namely, democratic justice.

Mouffe’s radical democratic theory explains how the “privileging of consensus,” an inherent stance in Rorty’s theorizing, is not faithful to a true conception of democracy. Mouffe takes a more post-structural view of democracy which accounts for Derridean deconstruction, and supports the argument that deconstruction “reveals the impossibility of establishing a consensus without exclusion” (p. 9). For Mouffe “every consensus exists as a temporary result of a provisional hegemony, as a stabilization of power, and that it always entails some form of exclusion” (p. 10). We have to be realistic, argues Mouffe, and recognize that a conception of politics and justice such as Rorty’s and Habermas’s are purely ideational and quixotic. They can never be achieved because the very concept of democracy undermines and prevents their achievement. Thus, from Mouffe’s perspective, consensus can never be reached because, if it were, it would undermine the theoretical foundation of democracy itself. Put simply, for Mouffe, as with Butler, Laclau, and Fraser, difference is a vital aspect of democracy and, therefore, any emancipatory theory must respect difference. However, for Rorty, difference is merely a barrier to democratic reform. But where does such a view leave us if we want to build inductively towards a universal conception of morality. It is here that Fraser’s politics may once again be useful in amalgamating Mouffe’s view of democracy as difference, and Rorty’s view of collectivity grounded in an ironic acceptance that “we – liberals” have no foundation to justify our beliefs— but we will continue to support them anyway (Rorty, 1989).
For Fraser (1997, 2001), two key issues are at stake: firstly, the problem of redistribution is displaced by recognition, and secondly, identity is reified and humanity neglected. Taking Fraser’s concerns into consideration, the most tenable solution may be found in borrowing aspects of all these theorists, rather than necessarily conforming to one perspective. Thus, from Fraser, we can locate the importance of bringing the politics of recognition and redistribution together. From Butler, Mouffe and Laclau, we can take the significance of difference which results in a radical democratic order achieved through “articulation,” whereby “nodal points” are identified in a non-essentialist way, in order to unify a plethora of group politics (e.g., based on gender, sexuality, race, class).  

Thus, in viewing the dilemma in this way, these differences can be preserved, while at the same time a common identity can be formed. Also, bringing in Rorty’s “justice as a larger loyalty,” Mouffe, Laclau, and Butler’s “difference” can be synthesized with Rorty’s “consensus.” This appears to be possible because, although Mouffe critiqued Rorty for his consensus-based politics, it appears that in some respects she believes that consensus can be met to some degree. Otherwise, democracy would have no basis whatsoever.  

At this point it is useful to bring to the fore a key point that Derrida highlights. Derrida has described the intricate nature between identity and difference as a “double bind,” and it appears that Mouffe has critiqued Rorty for falling on one side of the divide (namely, identity), but she does not recognize that in doing so she has undermined her own intermediate position. Surely a conception of “justice as a larger loyalty” such as Rorty’s is possible, even when accepting Mouffe and Laclau’s radical democratic theory. In fact, in following Mouffe and Laclau’s view, a mutual exclusion between identity and
difference is unnecessary because it would seem logical to argue that the “nodal points” which Mouffe and Laclau suggest can serve to unify citizens toward a common struggle, offer a similar kind of unity that Rorty aspires. Perhaps, therefore, all three theoretical perspectives have the potential to be unified after all.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has discussed the need to synthesize foundationalism and post-structuralism in order to build universals that do not rely on a priori foundationalist assumptions, and that consider the need for bringing the particular into the universal, rather than demarcating them from one another. Using a combination of theoretical approaches, I have argued that both micro and macro political issues are essential for scholars of sport sociology to consider. In recognizing this, I have suggested a neo-pragmatic reading of radical democratic theory, which merges Rorty and Fraser’s unity with Derrida, Mouffe, Laclau, and Butler’s appeal to difference. These perspectives can be combined within Walzer’s distinction between thick morality which is built at the micro level, and thin morality which develops inductively through consensus and collective moral, political, and ethical agreement.
CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Issues arise in the sociological study of sport which require wide-scale emancipatory intent on the part of other’s liberty—not only our own, or that of our cultural group. However, due to post-structuralism’s increased skepticism of metanarratives, or dominant discourses, many academics have questioned values of truth, power, and knowledge. This questioning has moral and ethical implications, because without the ability to locate agency and power, values such as “right,” “wrong,” “good,” “bad,” “just,” “unjust” are difficult, if not impossible, to normatively substantiate. When belief systems of normativity shut down, sociological thought sinks into a paralyzing cynicism which ends up stifling any progressive measures for political reform. Let us not forget the call of Gruneau (1983) who pressed the need for multiple frameworks, rather than becoming a sub-discipline that ostracizes scholars who endorse different frameworks. This is to say, while sport sociologists are certainly diverse in their field welcoming a range of studies, researches should not be so aloof as to negate the importance of other perspectives. During the early phases of post-structural inquiry, sport sociologists still undertook studies grappling with ideas over hegemony and ideology;
however, as post-structural ideas have infiltrated the ranks of the sport sociology academic community, less attention is paid to foundationalist theorizing.

Though a certain degree of skepticism towards one universal system of morality is warranted, it does seem that post-structural scholars have been too quick to eschew the concept of macro level emancipation. Arguably, the majority of people do believe that certain actions are fundamentally right or wrong, as the continuing instigation of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* indicates. Thus, while the concept of universalism is often belittled as no more than idealism, and current paradigmatic assumptions do not support any form of moral essentialism which larger framed issues such as the human rights abuses related to the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games require, an element of commonality is apparent in our views of morality at the group level, which is a foundation for macro level emancipation.

As I have argued throughout this thesis, universalism should be seen in two different ways rather than as a monolith. Appealing to a universal form of justice, ethics, or morality does not mean necessitating a priori natural law or a priori rationality, which are typical groundings for human rights claims. Instead an inductive vision of human rights accounting for liberal individualism and group rights, in addition to communitarian visions of wider social hope at a macro level can be found. A combination of neo-pragmatism such as Richard Rorty’s in addition to radical democratic theory such as Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau’s can help develop this contingent universal vision. This is found in a combination of foundationalism (Gramscian hegemony) where scholars should recognize that group politics are bound up in an “institutional matrix” as Nancy Fraser asserts, and anti-foundationalism (Foucauldian and Derridian views of power,
contingent truths, and the importance of “difference” as inseparable from commonality). Identity politics and global emancipation should not be mutually exclusive in sport sociology.

As discussed, other positions such as neo-pragmatism, more commonly debated in sport philosophy circles than in sport sociology, are also rejected for being overly deterministic, despite the fact that many pragmatists and neo-pragmatists such as Charles Taylor (1992) and Richard Rorty (1997, 1999) share some commonality with the post-structural wave of thought. Both theories, for example, are anti-foundationalist and diverge from positivism, yet, while post-structuralism rejects theoretical models of society for being unable to represent reality, pragmatists have maintained that reality can be realized through theory. As Antonio and Kellner (1994) explain, “in contrast to postmodernists, classical theorists believed that the social world has a complex coherence that could be analyzed empirically and expressed theoretically” (p.133-134). Moreover, pragmatists claim that if theories are merely reduced to being metanarratives, Foucauldian and Lyotardian theorists assert, it would leave little scope for any basis for democracy. Mouffe and Laclau’s radical democratic theory is a useful way to view democracy and account for difference in the deconstructive vein which coincides with much post-structural theorizing. As previously discussed, its appeal to a synthesis of hegemony and post-structuralism allows for a vision of universality when combined with neo-pragmatism of Rorty that may enable a more inclusive and politically charged Left.
Implications for Sport Sociology

What does this synthesis mean for sport sociologists? Essentially, one can conceive from the perspective of liberal individualism that focusing on group inequality and pointing to prejudices suffered is a necessary feat of scholarly work. Scholars should continue to fight for equality in terms of race, gender, class, and sexuality, in addition to other identity-based political groups. However, scholars should also be cautious when bracketing individuals into these groups through their focus on “difference,” without some means of viewing collectivity as a crucial part of difference—otherwise scholars may fail to recognize the goals they share with other groups who have similar aims.

Focusing on identity politics could be restricted, therefore, to a focus on how this can help solve inequality, rather than reifying identity and hypostatizing culture. Scholars might consider their work as part of a greater collective body, working toward the same political emancipatory goal. This focus on group politics will help to establish Walzer’s envisioned “thick morality,” in which the distinction between the foundationalism of Fraser’s group politics becomes blurred with the anti-foundationalism of Butler’s. Both accept the need to identity difference, and both recognize the need to form universals within this difference, but they have different ways of reaching this synthesis. From Butler I take the argument that it is essential to recognize group differences as long as we can see these in hybrid form and we do not need to conform to only one group, but from Fraser’s perspective I accept that these hybrid identities must be grounded in an “institutional matrix” rather than being purely contingent and cultural. This combines both Gramscian and Foucauldian theory because, although Gramscian theory appeals to rights based on emancipation through social status and economic redistribution, this does
not mean that identity must be regarded as fixed, and it also does not mean that a “true” identity must be uncovered.

Whether scholars choose to remain fixed on research which focuses on the rights of particular groups, or whether they then decide to deal with more global political issues such as the human rights abuses at the Beijing Olympic Games, scholars need to be aware of the implications that Foucauldian post-structuralism, and anti-foundational theories more generally, can have on wide-scale emancipation if metanarratives are rejected. Once this is understood, scholars in sport sociology can begin to recognize the role that their micro level studies can play in working toward a wider common goal, or what Walzer calls a “thin morality.” Undertaking identity work in sport sociology can still use post-structural theory, but use it wisely in acknowledging that group politics share goals with other group politics, that difference (in terms of Derrida’s “double-bind”) also entails similarity, and that the micro is a part of the macro rather than a separate sphere of politics altogether. It also means that foundationalism and anti-foundationalism should not be dichotomized, because Enlightenment hopes of emancipation are still timely; particularly in relation to issues such as the 2008 Olympic Games. Common agreement to defend justice, ethics, and morality, cannot be achieved without micro scale democratic agreement, and the eventual goal for sport sociology is to work towards building an inclusive and unified political Left.
NOTES

1 Although Fraser and Mouffe’s perspectives differ, they share the same belief that individualism has superseded communitarianism. However, Fraser essentially blames post-structural theorizing—which is most pertinent to this thesis. Its pertinence lies in the fact that post-structuralism also rejects metanarratives, which is the latter part of my argument as to why it is a problematic paradigmatic stance for sport sociology scholars to broach. Mouffe, however, highlights rationalism as the key cause for a rejection of community values, yet this perspective, as will become evident in chapter three, relies on foundationalist assumptions. Thus, when synthesizing individualism and communitarianism, or micro politics and macro politics, foundationalism allows for this more so than post-structuralism if we concede to a traditional vision of what constitutes universality. It will become clearer in chapter five how both Fraser’s and Mouffe’s perspectives can be combined in order to form a new version of universality, which, in fact, accounts for both Mouffe’s critique of rationalism, and Fraser’s critique of post-structuralism—this new perspective will be found through “neo-pragmatic” radical democratic theory
Rorty’s perspective is clearly different to Fraser’s as she seems to believe that hope can be found in neo-Marxist readings, whereas Rorty regards himself as “anti-philosophy” altogether.

Here I refer to Foucault’s genealogical excavation of power, knowledge, discourse, and his distrust for Kantian Enlightenment universals, which is particularly considered in his work *The Order of Things* (1970). In contrast, much of his later work, such as *What is Enlightenment* (1984) and his interviews with Paul Rainbow (1984) indicate a changing nature of his theoretical alliances. This is not to say, as Christopher Norris puts it (1994), that Foucault was Kant’s “prodigal son” who recognized the error of his ways. Rather, Foucault began to acknowledge some of the problems which might occur when belief in systems of ethics and politics shut down.

Note that this thesis was edited until April 14th, 2008. Reports on the status of China and the Beijing Games are being updated daily and it is not in the scope of this thesis to continue to edit information past this date.

Fundamental principle one is as follows: “Olympism is a philosophy of life, exalting and combining in a balanced whole the qualities of body, will and mind. Blending sport with culture and education, Olympism seeks to create a way of life based on the joy found in effort, the educational value of good example and respect for universal fundamental ethical principles” (IOC, 2008). However, there is nothing within this statement to suggest what these universal fundamental ethical principles are.

Essentially this can be explained as meaning that “globalization is bounded by grobalization,” where grobalization is “the imperialistic ambitions of nations,
corporations, organizations, and the like, and their desire, indeed need, to impose themselves on various geographic areas,” and “glocalization” is “the interpenetration of the global and the local, resulting in unique outcomes in different geographic areas” (Andrews & Ritzer, 2007, p. 135).

7 And also preferring the terms “post-structuralism,” “Foucauldian theory,” or even preferring not to be classified at all.

8 Furthermore, there had also been development in Western Germany in the 1950s, such as Popplow’s *Towards a Sociology of Sport* (1951) and Plessner’s *Sociology of Sport* (1952) (Bandy, 1981).

9 This account does not do justice to the variety of debates over scholarly affiliation at the time of the field’s emergence. There was much discrepancy over the direction of the field of sport sociology, its ties to physical education scholarship, and its theoretical basis. Take, for example, Celeste Ulrich’s (1979) debate over the difference between human movement and sport. Ulrich argued that scholars the “Big Ten physical educators had decided to base their “Body of Knowledge” study of physical education around traditional departmentalization patterns with a focus on sport instead of human movement as the core of physical education, rather than sport as a modus operandi of human movement behavior” (1979, p. 13).

10 See also the International Sociology of Sport Association (ISSA) (2008) website for a historical overview of the professional body.

I owe this breakdown to Lüschen (1980).

An additional point to note is the difference between scholarship in America and in the remaining Anglo world. Such differences can be attributed, in part, to the use of Marxism in explaining class division in countries such as the United Kingdom, while in America such class tension was of less concern.

As Melvin Adelman (1983) identified, sport academics have failed to give enough credit to political/social roots of the field.

As Brady and Collier (2006), and others argue, much reasoning for this continued presence of positivism in sociology in addition to other social science disciplines is because of the credibility it is deemed to give studies and the need for a “predictive” social science rather than merely a “descriptive” social science.

Craig Calhoun (2002) critiques Habermas’ position in that it would be difficult to establish any form of community in the sense that Habermas envisions, based on the “thin identities” which would be formed. This concept of “thin identity” means that even if a shared identity was formed, it is likely that this would only be grounded in the commonality of belonging to the same country, and not necessarily having a thicker sense of shared thoughts. Being born into a community does not mean that everyone in that community will collectively agree, which resorts back to the multi-cultural and identity politics perspective, as previously discussed. Calhoun, therefore, asserts that “the legitimacy and solidarity” of a constitutional patriotism should be considered with caution (Calhoun, 2002, p. 157). Rorty (1989) argues that a more inter-subjective perspective ought to be taken, which is not as deductive and based on reason as is
Habermas’ view, but rather one that comes from a more inductive approach. Rorty emphasizes Habermas’ communicative reason, but only after it has been stripped of all its transcendental features. Hence, returning to the critique of objectivity, Rorty argues that Habermas’ perspective is still too deductive because it relies on reason and, therefore, a universal top-down vision of morality. Although Habermas and Rorty are in agreement that there needs to be consensus at the national level prior to the international, Habermas still follows Kantian reason and, therefore, sees morality as a priori, whereas for Rorty morality is constructed historically and socially through language.

Interestingly, so is the United States’ constitution: hence,

> We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; ... whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it, and to institute a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness (Jefferson, 1990).

For further discussion see Messner (1997).

As King and McDonald (2007) explain, post-structuralist theories, which are vast in themselves, tend to share several key ontological assumptions. They question the type of universal theorizing implicit in structuralist or modern ontologies. That is, “an understanding of reality that is not a transparent medium that connects one directly with a ‘truth’ or ‘reality’, but rather as a structure whose parts derive their meaning from their relation to one another; a conceptualization of cultural meanings and categories as inherently unstable; a skepticism to scholarly claims to objectivity of neutrality; and the critique of the notion of a universal and coherent modern subject” (2007, p. 18).
Ian Stronach (1996) argues, for example, that Michel Foucault was initially labelled a “structuralist”, then a “poststructuralist” and has now been placed under the term “postmodern”. As David Cousens Hoy (1986) remarks, this may be because Foucault—like many other intellectuals—was constantly evolving in his scholarly work, or, it may be because due to the idiosyncrasies of the reader’s interpretation.

This is particularly explored by Foucault (1990).

It is also important to recognize that it is not only post-structuralists who questioned the concept of human rights from the perspective of natural law and rationality. Hegel (1964) for example, questioned the concept of self-evident truths and a reliance on God. He also said that pure reason cannot be a guidance for moral actions.

There are numerous other issues which could be explored at this point regarding how and why post-structuralism departs from modernism. Yet, in keeping with the aims and limitations of this thesis, such perspectives will not be discussed.

Helstein (2007) herself notes as such, based on Andrews’ (2000) indictment that most postmodern and post-structural theorizing in sport sociology is grounded in Foucauldian theory.

This is not to suggest that I comply with Gruneau’s hegemonic perspective per se, since, as Morgan (1994) addressed, multiple problems exist with regards to hegemony theory. However, Gruneau’s work exemplifies the contrast between micro and macro level issues which is useful to reference as an illustration of the difference between identity politics and wider scale issues of social hope.
Nodal points are produced in discourse, and they act as a “discursive center” (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p. 112). The term derives from the Lacanian “point de caption” and is basically used to describe subject positions. The purpose of the concept of the nodal point is to explain how as subjects, our connections with one another are constituted through our differential relations.

One may ask why democracy is such a desirable outcome. Particularly due to the fact that, as Anna Marie Smith (1998) identifies, slavery was accepted in democracy for some time. Such a question would constitute an entirely different thesis aim, and it is not within the scope of this thesis to challenge the concept of democracy. However, to provide a brief conception of how it may be argued from a radical democratic perspective, as Smith advises, to deal with this, we just have to accept that slavery is now unacceptable because “contingent political struggles gained substantial strategic ground and institutionalized their values such that they became integrated into the take for granted background knowledge that structures the democratic tradition (1998, p. 104).
REFERENCES


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