“Young Women Growing Graciously”: Considering Sport, Gender and Development in Diasporic Space

by

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Abstract

This thesis aims to expand our understanding of the relationship between gender, sport and development. Specifically, it asks 1) how a sport, gender and development program is conceptualized and deployed by members of a young Somali-Canadian women’s group in Toronto, Canada and 2) if female participation in sport is thought to contribute to new gender norms, roles and relationships within such a diaspora community. Working within a postcolonial/transnational feminist framework, the thesis utilizes focus group interviews and engages with issues of power, representation and knowledge production. The findings shed light on the influences that have both informed and constrained this particular community initiative, as well as the possibilities and limitations of using sport to negotiate new gender norms, roles and relationships within the Somali diaspora. In conclusion, several recommendations are made to researchers and practitioners invested in the burgeoning field of international sport for development.
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Larger social movements striving for causes such as women’s, civil, human and gay rights have often sparked social change within the sporting arena. But what is also claimed is the exact reverse; that sport has the ability to influence and change societal norms and values to affect individual and collective behavior outside of the sporting arena. Over the past two decades the number of initiatives, organizations and policies focused on utilizing sport as a vehicle for widespread social change has expanded exponentially under the banner of sport for development and peace (SDP). Among the most cited development goals is the promotion of gender equity through the empowerment of women and resistance of existing gender norms. However, despite a growing number of SDP projects and policy work that makes reference to the potential of sport to ‘transform’ gender norms, very little is known about how female participation in sport is thought to accomplish this goal, i.e. what is the 'logic model' for girls' and women's development, how their participation enables them to actively challenge the inequitable gender order of their respective cultures, and to what extent the social context is determining. Furthermore, SDP is a predominantly Western construct devised for beneficiaries residing in slums and refugee camps elsewhere, with far fewer programs being implemented in the slums of Canada, the United States and other countries of comparable wealth and development. It is somewhat ironic, then, that minority youth from these same Western countries are overlooked and denied sporting opportunities due to the significant social, economic and cultural barriers they may face. As Jennifer Hargreaves confirms, this has proven to be especially true for women:

There have been few organized initiatives in women’s sports which look beyond the struggle for greater equality with men, and which relate the gender dimension to wider social and political issues as part of the everyday life experiences of participation.
Historically, sport has been constructed as a ‘male preserve’ and has played an important role in maintaining beliefs about a ‘natural’ gender order that privileges masculinity over femininity. Despite sports’ integral role in the maintenance of male hegemony (and perhaps paradoxically because of it) many believe that sport is a useful tool for challenging gendered hierarchies of power. The “physical and action-oriented” nature of athletics is thought to make it especially powerful in contesting the existing gender order across different cultures and contexts – a unique avenue from which boys can gain respect and understanding of the “strength, capabilities and contributions” of their female counterparts. Yet how precisely this works in practice is unclear. Some have posited that the very presence of women in hyper-masculine sports such as tackle football, boxing, hockey, rugby, etc., is enough to expose the fallacy of sport being inherently masculine and masculinity being inherently superior. Others suggest that, given how social constructions of masculinity and sport are so tightly bound, and gender hierarchies so profoundly naturalized, efforts to resist and transform institutionalized gender norms through sport require a certain degree of intentionality.

Regardless of the necessary conditions or supposed mechanism(s), the physicality and embodiment of both sport and gender have made women’s participation in sport a particularly contentious issue where unequal power relations are continually negotiated and challenged. Gender and gender difference organize our world so thoroughly that challenges to this ordering system can be uncomfortable and at times threatening, especially to those with the most power and therefore the most interest in maintaining it. This is not to say that there are not those at the top – namely, white, upper-class men – who fight tirelessly alongside women to advance social equity and inclusion for all. Nor does it mean that there are not lower class women of colour who actively resist these same agendas. Recognizing these varying and often contradictory interests as they play out in different cultural contexts is vital in ensuring that an end goal of achieving more equitable gender relations through sport is not achieved at the participants’ expense. In fact, Brady suggests “enabling girls to enjoy greater freedom of movement while at the same time maintaining their safety and dignity is one of the most complex and socially significant challenges that sports programs face”. I believe that female participation in
sport is a potentially useful tool with which to challenge gendered hierarchies of power, but I am careful to heed Brady’s advice in that more needs to be understood to ensure that SDP programs – implemented both abroad and at home – can deliver a safe and positive experience.

1.1 The purpose and research questions

I hope to contribute to our understanding of the relationship between gender, sport and development through this thesis focused on a Toronto-based Somali women’s youth organization as they integrate a basketball program into their already impressive lineup of gender and community initiatives.

Specifically, I have explored:

1) How a sport, gender and development program is conceptualized and deployed by members of a young women’s group, located in a Minority World urban setting with cultural roots in both the Majority and Minority Worlds.

2) If female participation in sport is thought to contribute to negotiating new gender norms, roles and relationships within such a diaspora community.
Chapter 2
Theoretical Considerations

Many different approaches have been employed to theorize women’s presence, and marginalization in sport. That female participation in sport remains a social phenomenon requiring explanation at all is at the crux of any research investigating women, sport and development. Saavedra explains:

It is not that women and girls are unfamiliar with physical labor, nor that women and girls have not participated in what constitutes sport, leisure and play in their particular communities, especially in the ‘modern’ era. Yet, for many, sport still exemplifies and upholds essential masculine traits, and becomes a code for heterosexual male superiority and domination over the feminine. Female participants in the world of sport put their ‘femininity’ at risk and threaten the social order. Hence, female involvement in sport is often a transgression that needs to be explained, encouraged, prevented, or managed, but somehow is not ‘natural’.

And so it is that football pitches, basketball courts and skating rinks become unlikely arenas for one of the greatest cultural struggles of all to be waged in – that is the reinforcement/perpetuation of, and resistance to, hegemonic masculinity. This chapter will first unpack several key terms used throughout this thesis. It will then briefly review the liberal and progressively more radical feminist theories that became popular during early women’s sport advocacy and research. The focus then shifts towards a postcolonial and transnational feminist framework that draws attention to the absence of race/ethnicity, culture, class, sexuality and nation in early second-wave feminist theory, and how these forces shape power relations both within and beyond sport worldwide. I will then consider recent feminist thought that positions gender as a social institution in order to better understand the challenges and possibilities of shaping a more equitable gender order.
2.1 Disputed terminology

**Majority/Minority World**

Central to postcolonial feminist concerns is the issue of representation and how it works to empower and disempower, making the naming of self and ‘others’ a dilemma. Throughout this thesis, the language Majority and Minority World is used in favor of other commonly used terms such as Third/First World and Global South/North. This is meant to highlight that populations living in extreme poverty are the *majority* of humankind, and to define this global community in terms of the “rich cultural traditions that are in some cases more widely upheld globally than those of Westernized states”.\(^{14}\) It is also meant to be more geographically inclusive, acknowledging that poverty is not contained to the Southern Hemisphere, nor do the wealthy only live in the North. I first came across this terminology in Samantha Punch’s (2003) work, which notes that Bangladeshi photographer Shahidul Alam may have been the first to advocate for this language to be used in the early nineties in place of the more problematic “Third World/First World” dichotomy. No terminology is perfect, however, and I am aware that the language Majority/Minority World is not without its problems. In particular, I am uncomfortable with the fact that this terminology perpetuates the idea of a dichotomy (albeit flipped from how it is usually perceived), unduly homogenizing both world regions and erasing the many spaces in-between. This concern is especially relevant for this thesis, as it explores Somali-Canadian women occupying diasporic spaces in Toronto – socialized in Canada, these women are also deeply rooted in their Somali heritage. They are uniquely positioned to moderate between the values, beliefs and practices of their parents’ generation that find their origins in Majority World countries and cultures, and those adopted and adapted by the most recent Somali-Canadian generation born and raised in a Minority World country.

Despite the obvious tensions inherent in this particular terminology, I agree with Kay that the distinction between Minority/Majority Worlds at the very least “invites
reflection on the unequal relations, differences and resemblances between them”\textsuperscript{15} and will therefore use this terminology throughout this thesis in the absence of a more appropriate alternative.

**Development**

The term ‘development’ has long evoked images of impoverished children in “other” parts of the world, or even “other” communities within a country (think, for example, of Canada’s Native American peoples), and has traditionally been most closely linked to the economic wealth of a population. However, as ongoing feminist work continues to ask important questions about whose knowledge and values ‘count’ in development, it becomes necessary to adopt a more holistic definition. The *UN Declaration on the Right of Development* defines ‘development’ as:

…a comprehensive economic, social, cultural and political process, which aims at the constant improvement of the well-being of the entire population and of all individuals on the basis of their active, free and meaningful participation in development and the fair distribution of benefits therefrom.\textsuperscript{16}

Likewise, this thesis will consider ‘development’ as a multifaceted process, not working towards any one global standard (read: ‘Western capitalism’), but towards goals of equity and well-being that take into account the social, cultural and political needs of a population.

**Diaspora**
McGown cautions that current definitions of ‘diaspora’ contribute to the “marginalization of immigrant, minority and ethnic communities” by depicting diasporic communities as stagnant, bounded and “other”:

Diaspora is primarily a space of the imagination. It does more than describe the fact that a person is an immigrant, or that a person’s grandparents or great-grandparents were migrants. It does more than describe difference: a diasporic person’s skin colour, religion, and ethnicity might not be that of the majority, but on the other hand they might be. It does not necessarily describe estrangement, or societal apartness, or lack of political engagement, or an increased sense of political activism, although it can be a condition that underlies all of those things.  

McGown instead calls for a new working definition of ‘diaspora’ that makes room for the shifting identities members of diasporic populations experience within themselves and in relation to the wider society – shifts that “allow for the blurring of boundaries and for the complexity of multiple senses of ‘belonging’ and of multiple ideas of ‘home’”. This thesis will follow McGown in defining diaspora as a “space of connections”. In other words, to be in the diaspora is to identify oneself as connected to multiple places and to embrace a complex idea of self that “balances one’s understanding of those places and the way one fits into each of them.” These definitions have important implications for how we view culture (and the gender ideologies that go along with it) in an age of increasing transnational migration. It recognizes that one does not simply lose an old culture or have it exchanged for a new one, but instead “combines cultures and world-views in ways that are, unsurprisingly, complex and constantly shifting”.

Empowerment

‘Empowerment’ is a loaded word that lives at the very center of most gender, sport and development initiatives. The notion of ‘giving’ power starts with the problematic
assumption that recipients were powerless to begin with. Furthermore, what empowers
one woman is likely very different from what empowers the next, and yet these
differences easily disappear under the blanket of a single term. Perhaps most concerning,
however, is the problem of developing a “politics of empowerment” without truly
understanding the underlying structures of power or addressing how they work to oppress
people. Patricia Hill Collins comments on the implications this has for feminist praxis:

Offering U.S. Black women new knowledge about our own experiences can be empowering. But activating epistemologies that criticize prevailing knowledge and that enable us to define our own realities on our own terms has far greater implications.

This is an important lesson for sport, gender and development projects looking to achieve more equitable gender relations by raising the self-confidence or consciousness of women alone. Empowering individuals without also addressing the underlying oppressive social structures that order their lives may do little to evoke change. This thesis recognizes the many tensions inherent in notions of ‘empowerment’ and will continue to grapple with them throughout.

2.2 Early feminist sport discourses

Liberal approaches have dominated women’s sport advocacy and research since second wave feminism gained momentum in the 1960’s. Lobbying for equal opportunity among men and women in both amateur and professional sport, liberal feminists have been primarily focused on removing legislative barriers and amending policy in order to provide greater sporting access to women. Liberal ideology is reflected in the “add women and stir” approach that continues to be adopted by many sporting organizations and governing bodies throughout the Minority World today, and by an
increasing number of Minority World-funded SDP initiatives abroad. While nearly half a century of liberal feminist advocacy and research has certainly resulted in quantitatively more female involvement in sport, Lenskyj has argued that little has changed qualitatively.\textsuperscript{25} Liberal feminist approaches have fallen well short of achieving full and meaningful participation in sport for girls and women as it has largely ignored the underlying impacts of systemic racism, classism, ageism, ableism and homophobia, let alone the deeply-rooted ways in which the patriarchy reproduces and extends male-privileging practices and discourses. A widely held criticism is that liberal feminism shares the blind spots of the liberal capitalism that has tended to support it, namely that ‘solutions’ focus on the individual instead of systemic power and privilege. Failing to problematize the existing male-defined structure of sport, with its “emphasis on hierarchy, competitiveness and aggression”, has led to little widespread change.\textsuperscript{26} Rather, the shortcomings of this system have been perpetuated, not challenged, by both men and women who are required to adopt the values of hegemonic masculinity in order to succeed within the masculine preserve that is sport. Rooted more heavily in psychological rather than critical sociological theories, liberal feminism has also been accused of treating women as a homogenous category requiring only opportunity and a little more encouragement in order to become successful within sport.\textsuperscript{27} Adopting a liberal feminist approach to women’s sporting experiences effectively erases the varying socioeconomic, racial and ethnic backgrounds of women whose age, sexual preference and ability also contribute to very different expectations and understandings of sport. There are no generic women or men; continuums of femininities and masculinities exist between and within different cultures and ethnicities, classes, nations, ages, sexualities and eras, solidifying the understanding that gender has nothing to do with inherent or “natural” biological sex differences, but how societies construct and valorize what is ‘man’ and ‘woman’. The generic sporting woman on the liberal agenda, however, is constructed as a white, middle-class, heterosexual who’s (young) age and ability interlock and construct the package of invisible privilege she carries in her gym bag to her sporting and physical activity experiences.
Several feminist traditions have since emerged as a response to the limitations of liberal ideology and practice in sport and society.28 A radical feminist approach critically questions male power and adopts “an unequivocal women-centered perspective that recognizes and celebrates differences among women and at the same time seriously questions male-dominated and male-defined sport”.29 It has drawn important attention to male violence in sport which, as Messner points out, some men direct against women, against other men, and against themselves.30 Marxian and socialist feminism have also made valuable contributions to the advancement of women in sport by highlighting the role of capitalism in women’s oppression and its relationship to patriarchy. For Wong, socialist feminism is “the viable alternative to capitalism and world imperialism, which uses sexism, racism, colonialism, heterosexism, homophobia and class oppression” to dominate women around the world.31 In sport, socialist feminism has been particularly important in drawing attention to the sexual division of labor and power within sporting organizations and the disparities between men’s and women’s opportunities for sponsorship and sporting careers.32 In many ways, particularly in it’s attention to intersections of class, gender and race, (although often criticized for giving primacy to class oppression over the other power relations which structure women’s lives) socialist feminism is the foundation upon which other intersectional approaches –such as postcolonial and transnational feminism – have been built.

2.3 Towards a postcolonial and transnational feminist framework

Postcolonial feminist theory has provided new and important ways for thinking about gender, sport and development. By ‘postcolonial’ I do not mean to suggest that colonialism and its impacts are a thing of the past,33 but to instead consider how the material and discursive legacy of colonization continues to persist and shape the lived experiences of women around the world today.34 Postcolonial feminist thought is critically concerned with issues of knowledge production, representation and the
intersection of race, gender, and class among other ‘identity markers’.\textsuperscript{35} It questions the very way in which knowledge is produced, challenging “the unacknowledged and unexamined assumptions at the heart of western disciplines that are profoundly insensitive to the meanings, values and practices of other cultures”.\textsuperscript{36} Race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexuality, age, ability and nation all intersect to construct systems of oppression – what Patricia Hill Collins has called a ‘matrix of domination’\textsuperscript{37} – affording power and privilege along certain axes while marginalizing the same group or individual along others. Those privileged within this matrix hold the power to name, represent and theorize about “others” and can therefore exert significant influence over public consciousness and policy. Incorporating the voices of women of colour and other marginalized peoples into dominant discourse is an essential step towards disrupting this power imbalance,\textsuperscript{38} and as a theoretical framework, a postcolonial feminist approach can create space for traditionally subjugated knowledges.\textsuperscript{39} To do so, it must not only break down neo colonial discourses that position Minority World women as modern and civilized and their Majority World sisters as primitive and backward, but work to reconstruct them through locally grounded knowledge and strategies.\textsuperscript{40} Within the context of sport for development, Hayhurst, MacNeill and Frisby, among others, suggest that we adopt “new decolonizing methodologies that avoid misrepresenting, essentializing and denying girls and women’s meaningful input and control over development projects intended for them.”\textsuperscript{41} As Darnell and Hayhurst have recently argued, such a decolonizing methodology within SDP might take the form of feminist participatory action research (FPAR), whereby marginalized women and researchers collaborate to produce knowledge aimed at addressing social justice issues relevant to marginalized women and their communities as defined by them.

Sport does not exist outside the influence of these forces. Like all sociocultural phenomena, sport must be situated within the intersecting discourses of race, gender and class and the unequal power relations they perpetuate.\textsuperscript{42} This tangled web of oppression is further complicated as it crosses and re-crosses national borders. As Patricia Hill Collins writes:
In a transnational context, women of African descent have a distinctive, shared legacy that in turn is part of a global women’s movement. At the same time, due to the peculiar combination of the legacy of African cultures, a history of racial oppressions organized via slavery, colonialism, and imperialism, and an emerging global racism that, assisted by modern technology, moves across national borders at dizzying speed, women of African descent encounter particular issues...in this sense, women of African descent share much with women’s rights struggles globally, but do so through particular Black diasporic experiences characterized by substantial heterogeneity.  

As feminists we need to share in the common goal of challenging racism, sexism and classism, but recognize that what is not common are the unique histories and experiences belonging to individuals and groups of women who inhabit different social locations. These social locations can rarely be described in neat and tidy packages, and transnational feminist theory helps to direct attention to the spaces in-between. Subjugated voices are not static and cannot necessarily be located at a fixed geographical space or time. In an age of increasing transnational movement and border crossing, we must “recognize the flux, ambivalence and hybridity of cultures” and the need for equally fluid and collaborative methods of knowledge production and representation.

2.4 Framing gender as a social institution

Peterson and Runyan define gender as “the dichotomous and hierarchical relationship between the social constructions of masculinity and femininity”. It is not a physiological construct rooted in biological difference, a synonym for women, or even necessarily related to sex, but rather a deeply entrenched ordering system that pervades all aspects of human life, privileging some while marginalizing others. The power of gender is the way in which gender works to create and enforce dichotomous, hierarchical thinking that not only values and privileges all things masculine, but effectively maintains
“interlocking inequalities based on gender, race, class, sexuality, and nationality”. Gender in effect becomes a meta-lens through which our worldview is constantly framed so that gender difference is institutionalized as a dominant and taken-for-granted logic. Socialization processes are wrapped up in larger social relations of power that establish which norms are dominant over others. Those with more access to, and thereby more command over both symbolic and material resources are also more able to shape “symbols, meanings, lenses, norms, rules and practices” to justify and reproduce their positions of privilege. As the dichotomizing and ordering power of gender is internalized, we become deeply invested in this way of knowing; challenges to our ordering system are uncomfortable and at times threatening, making resistance difficult and change slow.

In this way, gender can be theorized as an institution in its own right; “a set of organized, established, procedures or routines whose rationale is taken for granted”. Giddens (1984) explains that social institutions are “recursive human practices with the greatest time and space distinction”, stressing both their sociality and enduring nature. Drawing on debates dating back to the beginning of the twentieth century, Patricia Yancey Martin suggests we treat gender as a social institution in order to “help us avoid reductionist thinking, and make gender more visible and susceptible to intentional change, including dismantling”. She outlines twelve criteria for identifying social institutions in an attempt to illuminate how they are maintained, resisted and changed. For Martin, institutions must:

1) be profoundly social
2) endure across time and space
3) entail distinct social practices that are repeated by group members
4) both constrain and facilitate actions by group members
5) have social relations characterized by particular rules/norms
6) be constituted and reconstituted by embodied agents
7) be internalized by group members as identities
8) have a legitimating ideology that proclaims the necessity of their arrangement
9) also be inconsistent, contradictory and rife with conflict
10) continuously change
The advantage of addressing gender as a social institution is that it allows us to consider how it permeates, affects, and interacts with other institutions, such as sport and family, both of which are integral to this study. Martin reflects on how the interdependence of institutions can result in a domino effect, whereby “changes in one institution ‘unsettle’ conditions and practices in other institutions, causing disruption.”

Gender and sport initiatives with goals of utilizing sport to resist and transform the existing gender order and the power relations that sustain it could benefit greatly from adopting this framework. In an extensive study of female full-contact football in the United States, Josh Packard does exactly this, identifying at least four elements necessary for sustained and successful resistance to institutionalized gender norms. First, due to their stubborn and immutable nature, resistance to any institution must be an intentional activity, lest its taken-for-granted nature prevail. Secondly, both Martin and Packard find that “institutions are constituted and reconstituted by embodied agents.” To contest an institution, then, requires not only intentional action, but one by the material body that is considered deviant to practices which normally constitute (and reconstitute) the institution. The physicality inherent in sport, particularly contact sport, when practiced by women can be seen as a direct assault to the ordering power of gender:

The maintenance of a masculine and feminine hegemony which reinforces a male-privileged hierarchy depends upon the relationship between dominant models of masculinity and complementary femininity. Both of these are needed to keep women subordinate and reassert men’s privileged position. These women [female football players] challenge this relationship by embodying aggressive femininities that contradict or deviate from practices defined as feminine, threaten men’s exclusive possession of hegemonic masculine characteristics, and most importantly, constitute a refusal to embody the relationship between masculinity and femininity demanded by gender hegemony.
Deviating from traditional feminine practices alone, however, does little to challenge the legitimating ideology of institutions. As an institution, gender works to naturalize difference, justifying practices and social relations that valorize and privilege the masculine over the feminine. Those who benefit from current social arrangements are deeply invested in maintaining them, and deviant gender behaviours are often stigmatized or elicit a hostile reaction. As Packard notes, when this happens “the power of these actions to result in significant resistance is curtailed at least to some degree by the actor’s deviant and illegitimate status.”58 However, if the deviant behavior takes place in an otherwise legitimate context, the entire legitimating ideology can be called into question. For example, Packard argues that the female football players accomplished this by embodying traits of both legitimate masculinity (aggressiveness, competitiveness etc.) and femininity (engaging in ‘female’ activities such as childcare and shopping, maintaining a physical appearance that was unmistakably feminine), and are therefore able to resist categories of gender difference, thus calling this ordering system into question. In this way, the women in Packard’s study were able to challenge traditional (white North American) gender norms without being marginalized. Finally, “as the creation and maintenance of a social institution is an inherently social enterprise, so, too, is institutional resistance”.59 The strong team bonds forged among the female football players provided them with a great deal of courage and support that buoyed them against external societal pressures. Framing gender as a social institution will allow researchers and practitioners to better understand if sport and sport programs can be used to contest power imbalances and gender hierarchies both within sport and beyond.

These are the frameworks, assumptions and terms I use in this thesis. In the next chapter, I discuss the relevant literature and identify the gaps that have led me to frame this particular research.
Chapter 3

Literature Review

The following review of literature is divided into two separate but interrelated parts. First, I briefly historicize the international SDP movement in a way that acknowledges its postcolonial roots and questions the power imbalances inherent in current development processes. This history is invariably gendered, with sport playing an integral role in the construction and perpetuation of hegemonic masculinity across time and place. For this reason, the use of sport to achieve gender equity and empowerment proves to be especially contentious. Having established tensions between masculinity, sport, and development, the second portion of this chapter reviews how gender norms are navigated, contested and reproduced through sport in the Minority and Majority Worlds, and in the complex spaces in-between. This literature in particular is limited in its understanding of how sport is deployed by community development groups for young women and girls living in Minority World's many diasporic communities, and the significant influence culture, family and community have on their participation. My research seeks to address these gaps in the literature.

PART ONE: A gendered history of SDP

Shifts in how gender has been considered within development practices in general, and within development through sport more specifically, have coincided with shifting societal, political and theoretical paradigms. Evangelist, neoliberal, postcolonial, and feminist ideologies have all shaped and influenced the field of gender, sport and development as it is practiced today. Situating current work on gender, sport and development within its historical context is to recognize that the use of sport as a tool for
achieving social good is not a new endeavor but rather central to the history of women in modern sport.

3.1 Sport for more than sports’ sake: A brief history of ‘sport for good’

While a full history of the origins of ‘development’ and sports’ role in it is beyond the scope of this project, it is important to point out that sport has a long history of being used to achieve social development, both for better and for worse.

Colonizing missionaries frequently used sport as a means of disseminating Western values and ideals through projects that ‘civilized’ local peoples while simultaneously destroying indigenous games. Traditional sport and dance were dismissed as “immoral” and “barbaric” and were often replaced by activities that channeled human violence into more socially appropriate expressions of aggression. Sports’ colonial history foreshadows much of the current criticisms surrounding donor and recipient power relations within sport for development and peace initiatives today. Contemporary sport sociology has, however, considered the spreading of sport from colonizer to colonized to be a far more dynamic and complex process. It has at times resulted in an (albeit often unequal) cultural exchange, with ongoing struggles over the meaning and cultural relevance of sport shaping how it is adopted, adapted and modified into forms that are played around the world today (for example, European, American, and Aussie Rules football, lacrosse, martial arts and yoga to name a few). The SDP movement too has been shaped by globalization, allowing resources and knowledge to move ever more easily across borders. And although power in these forms inevitably flows from the top down (typically from multi-billion dollar transnational corporations, to international/national SDP governing bodies, to local NGOs on the ground), Hayhurst suggests that these relationships are more complicated than a linear hierarchy would
suggest, with much more room for agency, resistance and collaboration than might be expected.65

Also promoting the “civilizing power” of sport was an array of faith-based organizations dating back to the 19th century, the ideals of which are still reflected in the mission statements and policies of major SDP organizations today.66 But Kidd points to some important departures from earlier ‘sport for good’ projects seen in today’s sport for development movement, namely “its almost exclusive emphasis upon international development, its entrepreneurial youth leadership, its focus on individual empowerment as a strategy of social change, and its insistence upon non-governmental organization.”67 To some degree, these were borne out of the shifting political and economic landscape of the early 1990’s. The end of the Cold War saw liberal capitalism flourish, explicitly socialist projects fall by the wayside and many African and Asian socialist countries – by the force of capitalist power – develop market economies. As Kidd points out, the triumph of neoliberalism is reflected in both SDP’s “enthusiasm and blind spots”, particularly in its competition with government aid agencies and increasing promotion through corporate sponsorship.68 Further bolstering support are statements from high-profile individuals such as Nelson Mandela, Kofi Annan and Stephen Lewis, imbuing sport with almost magical properties. Nelson Mandela has been famously quoted:

Sport has the power to unite people in a way little else can. Sport can create hope where there was once only despair. It breaks down racial barriers. It laughs in the face of discrimination. Sport speaks to people in a language they can understand.69

Statements such as this, while incredibly inspiring, position sport as a “universal panacea” and fail to acknowledge sports’ long history of sexism, racism, classism, homophobia, and ablism.70 While sport might very well empower individuals, unite communities and teach tolerance under certain circumstances, so too might it alienate, divide and discriminate. Donnelly recognizes these dual tensions:
Each of these statements is absolutely true, and so is its opposite. Competitive sport is based on principles of social exclusion; and sport may be used to promote ideological conformity, nationalism, militarism and inequitable attitudes about gender, race and disability.71

Sociologists of sport have begun to theorize much of the current SDP movement in terms of colonial and patriarchal encounters between Minority World donors and Majority World recipients.72 This recent work cautions that, “just as the practices of SDP can be seen as benevolent, emancipatory and tied to sport’s apolitical and transcendent character, so too can sport be understood as ethnocentric, elitist and colonial”.73 Traditional forms of ‘evidence gathering’ privilege knowledge developed by academic institutions with Western ideals and largely discredit those on the front lines of SDP programs.74 This same privileged knowledge has provided the foundation for several UN mandated reports and working groups, creating a dominant discourse surrounding SDP that is increasingly normalized with the release of each official document.75 Hayhurst maintains that this discourse is one that speaks uncritically of the potential (and limitations) of sport as a tool to achieve development goals, positions Majority World countries as “passive recipients of SDP policy”, and continues to be neo-liberal in nature.

3.2 Women and SDP: Tool for empowerment or a form of tokenism?

It is clear that SDP has not emerged without its own colonial and patriarchal legacy. In fact, it was not until the 1990’s that sport and physical activity entered the international discourse on gender and development. Led by actors in the Minority World, several campaigns, legislation, and organizations were created to encourage and advance the participation of girls and women in sport. Brighton’s 1994 World Conference on Women
and Sport, the first of its kind, sparked the formation of the International Working Group on Women and Sport, and Women’s Sport International. Progress made within the women in sport (WIS) movement helped to advance the gender and development movement more generally, first through liberal discourses focused on issues of access to sport and recreation for women in the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action. More recent aims of the gender, sport and development movement are increasingly radical, seeking to address issues of gender equity and power via sport both within the sporting institution and beyond. Indeed, among the most cited development goals in international policy discourse is the promotion of gender equity through female empowerment and resistance to existing normative gender hierarchies. Kay and Spaaij provide insight into how the priority these sport programs attach to individualized development outcomes, such as empowerment and self-confidence, might be in direct conflict with the collectivist culture and family structures of the communities they target:

As in the Minority World, Majority World family structures and orientations have been affected by the political, economic and cultural shifts of the modernization project and are marked by great cross-cultural variation… Notwithstanding these developments, collectivist value systems remain dominant among many Majority World populations, with family membership less narrowly and rigidly defined than in Western societies… This orientation to family as a wide system of reciprocal social relations requires children to be instilled with respect towards older generations. Collectivist ideologies therefore tend to value a high level of authority exerted by parents over children (especially girls), obedience by children to their parents, and the suppression of individual self-interest by family members in favor of advancing collective family status and well-being.

While the pursuit of gender equity is certainly a necessity to ensure more favorable conditions worldwide, SDP projects must consider how Minority World values are being imposed on Majority World recipients, and the unintended effects that disrupting social relations in this way may have on participants. Furthermore, while Larkin, Razack and Moola suggest that “enhanced gender flexibility and changing gender norms appear to be
outcomes associated with participation in sports for girls and women in both high-income countries and LMICs”, evidence of such outcomes has been limited to observations by a few academics and policy makers. Nicholls also raises some excellent questions about whose knowledge counts in sport for development work:

When youth in developing countries are subjected to homogenizing discourses and conceptualized as ‘poor’, ‘disempowered’, ‘illiterate’ and in need of ‘development’, any contribution peer educators could make to furthering understanding of the use of sport-in-development is instantly discredited, and therefore subjugated.80

Here Nicholls points to the wealth of untapped expertise in the field of SDP that will remain marginalized until the power imbalances and colonial history that provides the frame of reference for SDP are unpacked. An overwhelming number of peer educators in the Majority World are female, making it especially pertinent for those undertaking gender and SDP projects to challenge these power imbalances and inform their work by grassroots experience.81

Despite mixed understandings of the role sport might play in shaping more favorable conditions for the world’s women, governments and NGOs are forging ahead. In 2008 the International Platform on Sport and Development identified 30 projects as somehow dealing with gender.82 Just two years later, this author counted 63. Saavedra is concerned that the pursuit of gender equity in the Majority World has evolved into a form of tokenism:

Gender mainstreaming, following the path of WID [Women in Development], WAD [Women and Development] and GAD [Gender and Development], has become the widely adopted buzzword for dealing with the ‘woman question’ in development work… yet it has morphed into a standardized approach in which all are responsible, yet none are accountable, allowing development actors to check off ‘gender’ from their to-do list.83
When considering SDP projects today, this trend is of particular concern. Sport, with its long history as a stronghold for male privilege and power, is a site where women can very actively, and often publicly, challenge existing gender norms. However, Saavedra cautions that practitioners and participants alike must be prepared for obstacles when seeking to make room for women in space that has traditionally been defined by male hegemony:

Sport in general, or more likely, a specific sport, such as boxing or football, is often coded in a society as highly masculine. A women or girl seen to dishonor her referent group or overstep gender boundaries may face physical and social punishment from the family or retribution from elements within the community.

In cases where challenging gender hierarchies is taboo, actors looking only to cross off gender from their list can do far more harm than good. Instead, careful planning and collaboration with participants and their families and communities is required to ensure both the emotional and physical safety of female sporting participants. Much more needs to be done to understand the outcomes of gender programming through sport, the necessary conditions required to achieve these results and, most importantly, the impact these programs have had on the women and girls who participate.

3.3 A way forward: Adopting a “critical supporter” position on sport, gender and development

For all its flaws, sport holds a great amount of potential in the future of community development. In his above address, Mandela – certainly not blind to the neo-liberal agenda, or unaware of the contradictions sport for development brings – echoed what so many others (myself included) have experienced through participation in sport. As Kidd points out, “sport can be an enjoyable, affirming culture of citizenship, providing
important experiences and rewards, and is promised by UNESCO and the IOC as a human right”. The physical way it can engage is a source of pleasure for many women and men, and an active assault on traditional gender norms, roles and relationships across many different cultures and contexts. These, along with a myriad of other positive physical, psychological and social benefits of sport experienced individually and collectively by participants around the world, are important reasons to continue as “critical supporters” of sport, gender and development so that we may find more effective and responsible ways of sharing the joys of sport in development initiatives.

PART TWO: Negotiating new gender norms, roles and relationships through sport

3.4 Sport and the maintenance of male hegemony

Hegemonic masculinity is the “taken-for-granted, ideologically approved characteristics of a ‘real’ man in a specific sociocultural context”. It refers to the ways in which male power shapes our worldview. Peterson and Runyan’s concept of the “power of gender” unpacks how gender works to order the social world in a way that values and gives power to masculine entities (bodies, practices, organizations, institutions, etc.) over those assigned as feminine. Ultimately it is this gender difference that is naturalized and institutionalized as dominant logic across cultures worldwide. The physicality and embodied nature of sport has ensured that it is thoroughly entwined with social constructions of this gender difference. Historically, sport has been organized as a male preserve, created by and for (some) men. Female participation in sport, particularly “men’s sports” can invoke a strong, surprisingly aggressive, reaction. Messner hypothesizes that this may be because the encroachment of women into the masculine realm of sport destabilizes the ‘natural’ male/female hierarchical dichotomy on which men’s very sense of self is built. The privilege and power of maleness is not only always
understood in opposition to the subjugation and disempowerment of femaleness but requires this binary to be sustained. Alternatively, “others may resist women’s inclusion in sports because they know (or sense) that the equation of athleticism with men and masculinity has served as an important ideological underpinning of men’s social power and privilege”. 92

Sport as a male preserve is a tradition that remains one of the most uncontested masculine social institutions around the world today. 93 As Lenskyj articulates, “existing sporting systems and practices have long been compatible with socially and biologically based notions of what it means to be male” and have been “treated as an essential component of boys’ physical development and socialization into manhood”. Many of the hallmarks of hegemonic masculinity (aggression, toughness, suppression of emotion, development of physical musculature) are continually reinforced and performed through competitive sports such as football, boxing, hockey and basketball. These activities and the men who play them constitute what Messner has referred to as the ‘center’ of sport, a powerfully masculine space that is fiercely defended through daily interactions as well as the multi-billion dollar sport-media-commercial complex. 94

Despite sports’ integral role in the maintenance of male hegemony, many consider female participation in sport to be a potentially transformative tool in challenging gendered hierarchies of power. 95 To paint a picture of women in sport as oppressed, victimized and powerless would do a great disservice to the many (extra)ordinary female athletes who have pushed the gender boundaries of sport and challenged traditional notions of femininity. Yes, sport as a social institution is rooted in notions of sexual difference and heterosexual male superiority; however, the equally long history of female resistance to hegemonic masculinity in sport suggests that there are cracks that have formed, resulting in what is perhaps better described as a “leaky hegemony” more susceptible to change. 96

As women and girls continue to negotiate new physical identities and positions within the gender regime of sport, they are met with varying degrees of support and resistance. The story of women in sport is one of power at play – “of challenges to the center, operating at the level of everyday group practice, of institutions, and of cultural symbols – that are
variously resisted, crushed out, ghettoized, and partly incorporated into the center”.\textsuperscript{97} For Messner, how the institution of gender in sport reacts to these challenges “will have a profound ripple effect on the larger gender order”.\textsuperscript{98}

3.5 Contesting the gender order through sport

Sports’ potential utility in contesting and transforming the current gender order and power imbalances that maintain it is perhaps more sensed than it is proven. Most research has focused on how sport fosters self-esteem and other related constructs such as self-empowerment or self-efficacy.\textsuperscript{99} How/if these psychological measurements contribute to transforming oppressive gender norms or destabilizing unequal power relations without addressing broader systemic issues is unclear; however, this conclusion is often drawn in major reports and policy published on the subject.\textsuperscript{100} Larkin, Razack and Moola do point to a handful of studies in both the Minority and Majority Worlds that demonstrate how female participation in sport has decreased the restrictive nature of conventional gender roles, but caution, however, that these are observed outcomes rather than empirical evidence.\textsuperscript{101} The following is a summary of the specific literature outlining cases where gender ideology may have been contested through sport, first in Minority and Majority World contexts, and concluding with new opportunities for research within diasporic spaces.

3.5.1 …in the Minority World

A central issue throughout much of the gender and sport literature is the interplay between structure and agency, or how the ordering power of gender embedded within sporting structures can both constrain certain forms of agency while enabling others. Cooky shows how, when adults running sports programs for girls engage in cultural
discourses that naturalize gender differences, they reproduce male hegemony in sport and constrain girls’ interest. Conversely, adult agency can be transformative if it intentionally contests taken-for-granted ideology surrounding gender and gender difference, and the power imbalance this difference constructs. More often, it appears that women and girls’ sporting experiences lie on a continuum between reproductive and transformative, as demonstrated in Appleby and Fisher’s exploration of female rock climbers. Through semi-structured interviews, the authors revealed that on different occasions the women within the rock climbing community were either compliant with hegemonic gender norms, questioned these norms, or resisted them. As with much of the research on gender, sport and physical activity, there was no analysis of how these sporting experiences might impact gender equity outside of sport. Thorpe’s exploration of masculinities in snowboarding is an exception in that she highlights how female participation in snowboarding can lead to greater gender reflexivity, or questioning conventional notions of femininity in other social domains. This reflexivity seemed to increase with age as men began to move across a greater number of social fields (home and family, work, different sporting environments) or began participating in the sport alongside their girlfriends and wives.

Packard goes further in providing a ‘checklist’ for challenging institutionalized gender norms, developed through interviews with over 20 women participating in a full-contact American football league. Collectively, this literature is uniform in its portrayal of gender norms, roles and relationships, and is greatly enhanced by Majority World studies that focus greater attention to intersections of race/ethnicity, culture, class, sexuality and nation.

3.5.2 …in the Majority World

Research conducted in the Majority World has highlighted the dilemma and contradiction of using a male preserve to challenge gendered power relations, especially in contexts
that are further complicated by a history of colonialism. A handful of studies have identified negative consequences for female athletes who cross gender boundaries by participating in sport, ranging from stigmatization and verbal abuse to sexual harassment and violent punishment. Several strategies have been identified for practitioners to minimize such risks, namely to map the socio-cultural environment and ensure programs are both culturally sensitive and appropriate. Given the fluid nature of gender norms across time and space, Saavedra recognizes that SDP projects are especially vulnerable to “cross-cultural misunderstandings and complications”. Fully integrating female participants, their families, and communities into the planning and implementation of SDP programs are essential steps in ensuring that initiatives are culturally sensitive. A “sport plus” approach – pairing sporting activities with other program components such as education, vocational training, micro-financing or health services in order to address broader social issues – is often required to attract interest and support. Pairing sporting activities with other incentives that are beneficial for both girls and their families may help to smooth over many of the tensions that arise at the prospect of women participating in sport over, for example, earning income, domestic and childcare responsibilities, or religious practices. The Ishraq program in rural Egypt is one initiative that appears to have found a balance between challenging ideas about gender-appropriate roles and carving out a safe space from within which to do so. In this “conservative, traditional” and predominantly Muslim setting, Ishraq offers organized sports to adolescent girls alongside a literacy program, reproductive health awareness and other skill-building activities. The program was faced with several challenges, including frequent harassment of the girls in public space, concerns over female dignity and reputation, and subsequent tight regulation of their mobility. Part of creating a safe and supportive space for the girls to practice sport required using youth centers with walls around the playing fields to ensure their privacy. Brady argues that although the girls in the Ishraq program were hidden from the public eye, their very presence in the youth centers challenged assumptions about girls’ use of public space. While it is unclear from available research how the larger community has responded to the program or the girls who participate, it appears that Ishraq has been successful in providing many female adolescents with an opportunity to explore their identity outside of the “conventionally
assigned” roles of future wife and mother. Moving the Goalposts in Kilifi, Kenya, the MYSA program in Mathare, Kenya, and the GOAL program piloted across India are other exceptional gender, sport and development projects operating in the Majority World that have provided many valuable lessons for academics and practitioners alike.

3.5.3 …in diasporic spaces

The literature cited above on sport’s potential role in negotiating new gender norms, roles and relationships for women in both Minority and Majority World settings provides an important starting point for further exploration of these questions as they emerge in transnational spaces that lie somewhere between the Minority/Majority World dichotomy. It is here where it becomes especially clear that what constitutes a ‘conventional’ or ‘traditional’ gender role – and therefore how, why and who believes it might require changing – varies greatly across time and place. Kay and Spaaij note how gender relations are often bound up in family structures, and that these can differ greatly both between and within Minority and Majority world countries. A majority of societies, Somalia included, follow a patrilineal kinship system whose core tenets are largely incompatible with ideologies of gender equity:

The wider-spread unilineal descent systems present a deep-rooted, culturally embedded obstacle to gender equity that is continually reinforced in the daily social relations acted out in family life, and may present a formidable obstacle to sport programmes that promote gender equity.

A handful of studies on the sporting experiences of girls and women from different diasporic communities in Canada have echoed this finding, demonstrating that cultural,
religious and familial norms can play a powerful role in enabling and constraining the female sporting and physical activity practices of immigrant children. Taylor and Doherty studied the experiences surrounding sport and physical activity among adolescents who were “recent arrivals” to Canada. They found that language, feelings of unfamiliarity and exclusion, and work and family commitments were especially large barriers to participation for females, but that sport was also considered to be a fun and engaging way for youth to improve their English and learn about Canadian culture.118 Ramanathan and Crocker explored the physical activity practices of female adolescents in the Indian diaspora and found that cultural heritage and familial attitudes greatly impacted physical activity norms, attitudes and patterns among this group.119 Finally, Nakamura explored the sport and physical activity experiences of Muslim women living in Canada and highlighted differences between Islamic and Western physical activity frameworks and beliefs. She debunked the myth that Islam prohibits women from participating in sport, and outlined several provisions that better allow Muslim women enjoy sport and physical activity on their own terms and within the boundaries of their faith.120

What has not been considered to date is the role that female participation in sport might play in shaping gender ideology within diasporic communities, especially when done so intentionally through gender, sport and development initiatives. Considering SDP in this unique, in-between space can make a valuable contribution to the growing body of literature on gender, sport and development. First, the culturally flexible character of diasporic populations makes a particularly interesting context in which to consider sports’ potential influence on gender ideology (that may or may not already be in flux). Second, the fact that different generations within a given diaspora have often been socialized in very different worlds adds an extra layer of convolution to an already intricate web of cultural, religious, and family practices. And third, while most research on sport for development and peace has been conducted in the Majority World, examining a project happening in transnational space opens this research up to a different level of complexity – of doing research not quite “here” nor “there” – where questions of positionality and reflexivity must be carefully considered.
In summary, from previously published research we know that many different actors are using sport in equally diverse contexts around the world in attempts to “empower” women and girls. We also know that this trend continues to grow despite a long and problematic history of development, a limited understanding of the supposed mechanisms and outcomes of these programs, and often little regard for how they are received and taken up by different cultures. The purpose and driving questions of my thesis grew out of gaps in this body of literature. I attempt to fill in these gaps by exploring the case of a specific sport, gender and development program that aims to empower young disporic women in the urban Minority World through basketball, and to help them negotiate new gender norms, roles and relationships within such a community. My work aspires to add to our overall understanding of sport, gender and development by considering how members of a Toronto-based Somali-Canadian woman’s group view the potential role of sport in their programming. This particular case expands on current definitions of ‘sport for development’ to include initiatives happening in diasporic spaces and provides a distinct analysis of the intersections of culture, family and inter-generational negotiations surrounding gender norms, roles and relationships.
Chapter 4
Methodology

In the previous chapter I reviewed the research on SDP through a gendered lens, with a particular focus on how sport both helps to construct and contest hegemonic masculinity and gendered hierarchies of power in the Minority and Majority Worlds, and the many spaces in-between. In particular, we have a limited understanding of initiatives happening in diasporic spaces and the unique interplay of culture, family and inter-generational negotiations they present. This thesis represents an attempt to address these gaps by exploring how a sport, gender and development program was constructed by a women’s organization, located in a Minority World urban setting (Toronto) with cultural roots in both the Majority and Minority Worlds. The thesis also questioned if female participation in sport is thought to contribute to negotiating new gender norms, roles and relationships within this diasporic community. The process and rationale for how I went about addressing these questions will be outlined in the following section.

4.1 Research site: Gashanti Unity

In order to address these questions, I embarked on a search for a group in Toronto that intentionally uses sport as a tool to empower women and girls, and to help challenge the gender hierarchies and power relations that structure their lives. It was not an easy task. While there are many organization that offer sports and physical activity programming to girls and young women in the city, finding initiatives that went beyond providing sporting opportunities and expressed intentionality in using sport as a platform to achieve gender development goals was more difficult. I eventually came across Gashanti Unity, an organization formed in 2007 by small group of young Somali women concerned with
the lack of city programming for young, Muslim women of colour. Their mission is to “provide girls and young women a safe atmosphere to develop their gifts, abilities and positive relationships…through the provision of leadership and mentoring programs, consultation and information services, and through community capacity building and training and education”. They envision these opportunities as “enhancing personal growth, autonomy and the empowerment of girls and young women” so that they may “achieve fulfillment and maximize their potential”. Over the past 5 years Gashanti Unity has organized an impressive array of creative and innovative projects that address key issues in the lives of young Somali women living in Toronto. These initiatives aim to provide participants with opportunities to have their voices and stories heard and to start a dialogue across cultural and generational divides about the “tribal, religious and patriarchal barriers in the Somali community that hinder the involvement of Somali girls in mainstream programs”.

After learning of their work, I approached Gashanti Unity in September 2010 about collaborating on a project that aligned with their vision, as well as fulfilling requirements for my Masters’ thesis. In what at the time seemed to be an act of fate, I was informed that the Gashantis were about to pilot a 10-week basketball program for young girls in their community; a program that they hoped would achieve similar goals to those I had described in my email. Excited at the prospect of collaboration, we embarked on a journey that I hope sheds light on issues surrounding sport and physical activity important to young Somali-Canadian women in Toronto, and informs future cross-cultural partnerships in SDP research and practice.

4.2 From Mogadishu to Dixon: A brief background of Somali migration to Toronto

The modern day history of Somalia is one of unfathomable violence and displacement. The civil war sparked by clan-based politics, and the eventual ousting of dictator Siad Barre from power in 1991, displaced hundreds of thousands of Somali people. Their
subsequent search for asylum led them to all corners of the world – to neighboring Somali communities in the Horn of Africa, Arab nations in the Middle East, and farther still to Europe and North America. There are now over 614,000 officially registered Somali refugees worldwide, and an additional 1.4 million internally displaced Somalis remaining in the war-torn country. The bloody battle between Islamic warlords and militia, and a shaky Transitional Federal Government and supporting African Union troops continues today. Recent drought and famine have only exacerbated current conditions for civilians.

Canada hosts one of the largest Somali populations outside of neighboring Kenya and Ethiopia. The majority of these migrants to Canada followed family and friends to Ontario, settling mostly in either Toronto or Ottawa. The Dixon high-rises in Toronto’s Rexdale community became known within Somali refugee camps in Ethiopia, Kenya and Yemen as the North American destination of choice between 1988 and 1997. As Kusow and Bjork note, the resulting influx of Somali refugees into this community represented “the first major culture clash between the Somali diaspora and the Canadian society, and North America in general”. McGown has suggested that this clash forced diasporic Somalis to re-evaluate their identity, particularly as Muslims:

This re-examination occurred because they could no longer take their Muslim identity for granted, and because they and their children were faced, for the first time, with an apparently bewildering array of competing faiths and practices... these challenges forced immigrant Somalis to wrestle with their identities and to answer questions for themselves about who they were and why. They did not have the luxury of time at their disposal. Even as parents hastened to secure public housing, jobs, English training, and sources of halal meat for their families, their children were integrating – almost instantly – into schools and the world of their peers. Parents’ greatest fear in the Diaspora was of ‘losing’ their children to an alien culture, one that did not include Islam.

The result, as McGown explains, was that many Somalis became more – and differently – religious. Women especially have acted as the glue holding their families and
communities together, leading the redefinition of Somalis’ practice of Islam in the diaspora. Charged with the responsibility of instilling Somali and Muslim culture in their children, mothers began reading and interpreting the Qur’an for themselves. Although not traditionally segregated or kept out of the public eye in Somalia, many began to wear the *hijab* and other head-coverings as a way to underline their observance of Somali religious and cultural practices.132

Somalis are by no means a homogenous group. Divided geographically between North and South, and then further still along lines of clan loyalty, the Somali people are a wonderful mixed bag of language, culture, religious beliefs and practices that they carried with them to their new homes.133 With this caveat in mind, McGown notes how the Somali experience might provide a unique opportunity to explore “the cultural ‘interface’ between Islam and the West and the way in which integration works:”

[Somalis] represent a significant non-Asian, non-Middle Eastern Muslim voice and as such have much to add to the debate over the nature of Islam and how it is interpreted... Because they are black but do not identify themselves with sub-Saharan Africans or their Caribbean or North American descendants, and because they are Muslim, but not Arab or South Asian, they demand a confrontation with much of the accepted wisdom about the nature of racism and the position of Muslims, immigrants, and non-whites in relation to the larger society.134

Most of the literature published on the Somali immigration experience corresponded with the mass migration that occurred during the civil war throughout the 1990’s.135 Consequently, most of this work focuses on issues of settlement and integration for this first wave of refugees. Much less has been written about the experiences of the very young first generation of Somalis born abroad but socialized in Canada.136 This group is uniquely positioned as a bridge between their parents’ generation (marked by the many hardships of war, flight and re-settlement) and the youngest generation of Somali-Canadians who have grown up less immersed in their culture and heritage. The women
of Gashanti Unity fit into this middle category. Self-described as “generation 1.5”, the Gashantis are anchored in their Somali culture but focused on designing a “new blueprint” for future generations of Somali-Canadians, something they feel is necessary to ameliorate the frustration, fear and guilt experienced on both sides of the generational divide as identities continue to be challenged, negotiated and changed. The Gashantis’ own stories of flight and resettlement are chillingly similar, connecting them before they had even met. When war broke out in Somalia, the Gashantis were too young to grasp the profundity of the situation. They were swept up in the family support system of aunts, uncles, cousins and family friends while arrangements were made to move to a neighboring Arab nation (Syria, Cairo, Abu Dhabi). From here, often one parent secured a US Visa (easier at the time than a Canadian Visa), flew to New York City, and shortly after claimed refugee status at the Canadian border. After often a long period of working and saving this parent could then sponsor the rest of the family to join them in Toronto. Upon arrival, all of the Gashantis stayed in the same Scarborough shelter while their families found their footing in their new home, and then later moved to the neighborhood in which they now lived.

4.3 Role of the researcher: A postcolonial approach to reflexivity and positionality

Qualitative research that cuts across racial, cultural, and/or national lines of difference requires a great amount of reflexivity on the part of the researcher. Meaning must be extracted from a variety of sources and presented in such a way that remains true to the people who have opened themselves up to be scrutinized. It is in these collaborative spaces where questions of positionality, reflexivity and identity become imperative. In her work on postcolonial feminism and border crossing, Richa Nagar argues that traditional approaches that have centered on the politics of representation and the identity
of the individual researcher have often led to an “impasse”; a stalemate between researcher and researched, theory and practice. Instead, Nagar calls for a:

…postcolonial and transnational feminist praxis that focuses explicitly and deliberately on a) conceptualizing and implementing collaborative efforts that insist on crossing multiple and difficult borders; b) the sites, strategies and skills deployed to produce such collaborations; and c) the specific processes through which such collaborations can find their form, content and meaning.\textsuperscript{137}

A true postcolonial and transnational methodology, then, is to work within a space that provides a real equal opportunity for all actors – the researcher and the researched – to contribute and shape a project at all stages of the research process. This is not unlike a participatory action research agenda, as advocated by Wendy Frisby and Michelle Fines\textsuperscript{138} among others, yet it is one that, in my experience, is difficult to do justice to. As Frisby notes, successfully engaging in feminist participatory action research (FPAR) requires “reconceptualizations of power relations between researcher and research participants, the negotiation of diverse discourses and agendas, time-intensive data collection techniques, and new ethical considerations regarding the ownership of data”.\textsuperscript{139}

I grappled with all of these challenges over the course of this research.

At the outset of our collaboration, one of the co-founders of Gashanti Unity cautioned that, while they were eager to support me on my research project, at the moment they had little capacity to do so. Seeing as it was early on in the research process, and that their program might be able to benefit from my background as a basketball player through our partnership, we decided to proceed. However, several months passed between this initial discussion and the next time Gashanti Unity was able to work on the project. As time wore on, the possibility of me being able to include Gashanti Unity in all stages of the research process became less and less likely.
I feel that many of the requirements needed to complete a Masters’ thesis within the academe are also at odds with these key tenets of participatory action research. As Nagar argues:

What we need is to rethink and extend theoretical and political frameworks through spaces of collaborative knowledge production – spaces in which academic agendas and frameworks can get interrogated and recast, and where we can generate new transformative possibilities in the fissures, gaps, absences and fallibilities of our critical frameworks whose cutting-edge status we have taken for granted.¹⁴⁰

Some questions I personally struggled with throughout the research process: How to collaborate on the formation of a research agenda when protocol demands a full research proposal be evaluated prior to any such group collaboration? How to claim ownership of a thesis (and therefore a degree) as your own when it is only made possible through the contributions of others? Who is allowed to defend the thesis? If all contributors are at minimum invited, whose voice is privileged in such a defense? And finally, if these and all other hurdles to conducting responsible FPAR as a Masters’ student can be overcome, how to accomplish all of this in two years before funding runs out?

For these reasons, I was unable to conduct feminist participatory action research with members of Gashanti Unity. However, in the spirit of postcolonial/transnational feminist praxis I attempted to take many steps in this direction. I entered into this work with great humility and a genuine desire to learn from the Gashantis who must be celebrated as the real experts, working on the front lines of community development each day. I also understand that, as Stake has suggested, “however moved to share ideas, however clever and elaborate their writings, case researchers, like others, pass along to readers some of their personal meanings of events and relationships – and fail to pass along others”.¹⁴¹ I hope that being cognizant of these issues of power, interpretation, and representation has helped to mitigate any meaning lost in translation.
As my understanding of Gashanti Unity grew, I realized that what I could bring to this partnership paled in comparison to what this particular collective of women already knew. Why they agreed to open their doors to a graduate student – one largely ignorant of the Somali diaspora experience or Somali culture in general – in the first place was probably due to a combination of their own personal pursuits in higher education and their experience with the power of community networking as a budding organization. Regardless, I am thankful that they did and hope that it was a mutually positive experience. Still, I am aware that, in part, it was my position of power as a researcher that helped to secure this partnership from which I benefitted. I approached this work conscious of the many racial, ethnic and religious borders that might be explored, defended and crossed throughout the research process. I will never claim to know what it is to be Somali-Canadian, a woman of colour or of Muslim faith, nor will I claim to speak as an expert on these matters. Instead, I aim to follow a postcolonial feminist framework, “speaking with” members of Gashanti Unity with an “openness to their influence and the possibility of them ‘speaking back’.142

Still, Nagar urges researchers to move beyond such simple self-positioning or “transparent reflexivity”, as she believes it perpetuates the idea of difference and “reproduces the idea of a detached, universalizing gaze”.143 Instead we are called to explore how the researcher herself is shaped through the research process, entering a collaborative space that is not perfect but contains both equal measures of understanding and misapprehension. “The researcher, instead of being firmly located, is marked by ‘absences, fallibilities, and moments that require translation’”.144 This thought could not sum up more perfectly my focus-group experience of this project. Self-admittedly a ‘rookie’ interviewer, I worried more than once throughout our group sessions, and later during the [painful] task of revisiting my voice on the tape recorder, that my insecurity would be mistaken for incompetence. Thankfully, if I was a rookie, my interviewees were veterans. It quickly became evident that the Gashantis were not only experienced in group discussion and other related collaborative exercises, but were incredibly comfortable, if not eager, to share their experiences and express multiple (and sometimes competing) views. As a collective, they were warm, reassuring and on multiple occasions
outwardly sympathetic of my nervousness. This led me to reflect on the possible role exposing such vulnerability might have had in creating the type of non-threatening environment necessary to build trust, mediate power imbalances, and ultimately lead to the type of border crossing and collaboration that characterizes a postcolonial and transnational feminist framework. Although I was certainly an outsider to the women of Gashanti Unity in many ways, I could relate to them in others – namely as a young, female basketball player. The dynamics of the group interviews were such that, although I had only met these women a few times, they were so comfortable with each other that I too felt swept up in their camaraderie. In fact, I was most struck by the candidness they expressed in the relatively little time we had known each other. As a researcher, I was not firmly located but existed in an in-between insider-outsider space.

4.4 Data collection

Two primary methods – focus group interviews and document analysis – were used to gain an understanding of the cultural, social and political worlds young Somali-Canadian women navigate, how Gashanti Unity grew out of this context, and of the new and emerging role of sport in their programming. The rationale for choosing such methodology was as much pragmatically driven as it was theoretical, and is described in detail below.

4.4.1 Document analysis

According to Hodder, documents are useful for qualitative research because they are generally easy to access and low in cost, and yet can provide valuable context to the issue
at hand. Wilson and Hayhurst\textsuperscript{146} have also noted the growing importance of the Internet for the formation and functioning of sports-related NGO’s, making Gashanti Unity’s webpage an important site to examine. In addition to the webpage, Gashanti Unity provided me with access to three documents pertaining to the organization and the proposed basketball program; 1) their mission, values and goals as an organization, 2) a letter to the Ontario Basketball Association sent at the start of their collaboration, and 3) a second letter outlining their vision of their basketball program sent in an attempt to secure additional funding. All of these documents were used to provide the background of the organization and basketball program and a richer context for the study, and they were also useful as a platform that informed more in-depth focus group sessions with key members of the organization.

4.4.2 Focus groups interviews

Gashanti Unity is a collective of women whose cooperation and collaboration of strengths define the exceptional programming they provide to Somali-Canadian women in Toronto. It therefore seemed natural that, when the Gashantis agreed to take part in interviews with me, they requested that the interviews be conducted as a group. This also facilitated scheduling. Cresswell has noted that group interviews – also referred to as focus groups – are advantageous in similar situations where interviewees are close-knit and their interaction will produce richer data that is both cumulative and elaborative.\textsuperscript{147} Some studies have even shown that participants find the experience of participating in focus groups “more gratifying and stimulating” than one-on-one interviews.\textsuperscript{148} In her research on focus groups and feminist research, Madriz also demonstrates how the collective nature of the group interview can tip the balance of power from the interviewer to the group, empowering participants and validating their voices and experiences. She believes that focus groups are “an important element in the advancement of an agenda of
Social justice for women, because they can serve to expose and validate women’s everyday experiences of subjugation and their individual and collective survival and resistance strategies.\textsuperscript{149} Semi-structured, group interviews were therefore appropriate for the nature of this research.

**Recruitment**

After an initial email exchange with one of the co-founders of Gashanti Unity, (what Cresswell, among others, has called “the gatekeeper”) I was put into contact with Hameeda, fellow co-founder and basketball program coordinator. As Willis, et al., have noted in their work on focus groups in public health research, forming a relationship with these trusted leaders becomes paramount in focus group work when recruiting participants and organizing a meeting time and place that accommodates the often busy schedules of multiple participants.\textsuperscript{150} After setting up an initial meeting to discuss details of our partnership, Hameeda contacted other potential participants on my behalf. Recruitment was done in this way to maintain the anonymity of Gashanti Unity members who did not wish to participate. Five young, educated Somali-Canadian women between the ages of 21 and 30 agreed to participate. All were ‘core’ members of Gashanti Unity – three were considered co-founders of the organization and two had been instrumental as basketball coaches. The collective nature of the organization (and of Somali culture more generally) makes it somewhat unfair, however, to narrowly define the roles of these participants in this way. It was apparent that all of the participants were deeply invested in the goals and vision of Gashanti Unity, and particularly in implementing the basketball program. There were two other Gashantis – a co-founder and a basketball coach – with whom I attempted to secure interviews, but it unfortunately never came to fruition. As Willis, et al., communicate, the time required to set up focus groups can become “formidable”\textsuperscript{151} and, as expected, I encountered many of these time-intensive ‘hiccups’ throughout the research process. Although I was ultimately only able to secure group interview sessions with five individuals, I felt that the group dynamic and the multiple
views it elicited produced a richness of data capable of addressing the research purpose and questions.

**Group sessions**

Focus group sessions were held on two separate occasions at a community space in Scarborough that Gashanti Unity shares with a handful of other groups. The first group session took place inside the rented space with five of the co-founders and basketball coaches in attendance. During the second meeting, approximately a month later, I met with four of the same participants outside of the building on some picnic tables. Although it was out of my control, this new location gave me a more nuanced feel of the community in which Gashanti Unity works. It was not uncommon for other women, children and young men to pass by as we sat and talked.

Managing group dynamics, being sensitive to the evolving patterns of group interaction, and eliciting responses from all members of the group are challenges of the group interview that I remained attentive to throughout the interview process, although I was admittedly helped immensely by the expertise, enthusiasm and camaraderie shared by the participating members of Gashanti Unity. It quickly became apparent who the natural leaders of the group were. While these individuals did command more airtime than the others, it was also apparent that group members shared a great deal of mutual respect for one another and easily made space for views to be debated and elaborated upon.

All participating members provided informed consent prior to beginning the group interview (see Appendix A – Informed Consent), and also agreed to the session being audio-taped. Each session lasted approximately two hours. Prior to our first group meeting, Huwaida and I met to discuss the appropriateness of the Interview Guide (see Appendix B – Interview Guide) and make additions/revisions as necessary. The Guide was meant be used as such – a framework from which to spark conversation as opposed to a rigid questionnaire. This semi-structured approach complemented the group interview
setting better than a structured one as it allowed greater room for participants to build on and diverge from each other’s ideas.\textsuperscript{153} Participants were encouraged to speak on tangents, and the conversation flowed easily.

4.5 Data analysis

Following Braun and Clarke, the data collected from both the relevant documents and the focus group interviews were subjected to “thematic analysis”, a widely used method for “identifying, analyzing and reporting (themes) within data”.\textsuperscript{154} Braun and Clarke have argued that although thematic analysis is frequently used as the method of analysis in qualitative research, it is rarely acknowledged as such:

[Thematic analysis] can be seen as a very poorly ‘branded’ method, in that it does not appear to exist as a ‘named’ analysis in the same way other methods do (e.g., narrative analysis, grounded theory). In this sense, it is often not explicitly claimed as the method of analysis, when, in actuality, we argue that a lot of analysis is essentially thematic – but is either claimed as something else (such as discourse analysis, or even content analysis) or not identified as any particular method at all – for example, data were ‘subjected to qualitative analysis for commonly recurring themes’.\textsuperscript{155}

While Braun and Clarke provide some practical steps to follow throughout this process, they also caution that the process of thematic analysis should be seen as more “recursive” than “linear”, and that the researcher should be free to move back and forth throughout the different stages of analysis as required.\textsuperscript{156} Similarly, writing is a central part of the analysis, beginning in phase one with the tentative scribbling of ideas or coding schemes and continuing through to the completion of the finished product.\textsuperscript{157}
As a starting point, interviews were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim from these tape recordings. Special attention was given to identifying speakers, unraveling what was often overlapping speech, considering the group dynamics of the discussion (i.e., who assumed a leadership role, major points of consensus and disagreement among the group), and recording both verbal and non-verbal cues (i.e., the use of humor, laughter, and silence). I carried out the transcriptions myself and found it to be much as Bird has described, an interpretive act whereby connections and meanings began to form as I intimately engaged with the data. In this way, the transcription process became more than just the act of producing a detailed record of what was said, but an integral part of the qualitative research process.

Prior to coding, all documents and final transcripts were read in their entirety to further familiarize myself with the data. I then began to manually code the data – assigning single words to represent larger phrases, paragraph or ideas in the text – in the right hand margins of the documents and transcripts while simultaneously ‘memoing’ thoughts and points of connection on the left. After this initial coding, coloured highlighters were used to help collate codes and extracted segments of text, together under preliminary themes. These themes – groups of extracted data that hung together to explain some phenomena of the greater data set – continued to be revised and refined, until all relevant coded data extracts found a home within a thematic map that made sense within the context of the research questions and purpose.

4.6 Ethics

This study received ethics approval from the University of Toronto’s Health Sciences Research Ethics Board (see Appendix C – Ethics Letter of Approval). An amendment was submitted to conduct group interviews in July 2011, and was subsequently approved. All potential participants were leaders in their community who work collectively on projects to empower women – they are not a vulnerable group nor made so through this
research. The level of risk to participants was therefore minimal and managed by guaranteeing participant confidentiality to the greatest extent possible. Raw data from interview transcriptions was saved in a password-protected computer and on an encrypted USB memory stick. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym to be used to identify them in transcriptions and interview notes, and one list matching these pseudonyms with the names of participants was kept in a locked security box. These precautions were taken to ensure that, to the best of my ability, participants and their contributions were kept confidential, and all group members were asked to keep the responses of fellow participants private and confidential. A certain amount of trust was placed in members of the focus group, and all participants were informed of the possibility that other participating members could make some of the discussions public and that confidentiality could therefore not be guaranteed.
Chapter 5
Findings and Discussion

The findings are presented in two major sections that correspond to the research questions guiding this investigation. First, a discussion of the influences that have both informed and constrained Gashanti Unity’s basketball program sheds light on how this Somali-Canadian young women’s group conceptualizes and has come to engage in sport, gender and development work. Secondly, a discussion of Gashanti Unity’s raison d’être – the inter-generational conflict and emotions driving a need for change, the new cultural blueprint they wish to negotiate, and the role they afford to basketball in such deliberations – allows us to consider the possibilities and limitations of using sport to negotiate new gender norms, roles and relationships within this particular community.

PART ONE: Influences shaping Gashanti Unity’s sport, gender and development work

5.1 A commitment to participatory action, monitoring and evaluation

The word ‘Gashanti’ has its roots in the Northern regions of Somalia and means “young woman growing graciously”. It is meant to depict the feelings of in-betweenness experienced by many young Somali-Canadian women – not still a girl, not quite a married woman; rooted in the strengths of Somali culture, but engaged in the larger community; Somali and Canadian. Acutely aware of the many divisions that still remain among Somali people living both abroad and in the diaspora, the Gashantis very
intentionally added the word ‘UNITY’ to their name shortly after beginning their work in Toronto. As Munirah explains:

…we’re actually for all Somali girls. So once people have interacted with us and they’ve actually truly, genuinely seen that… that you can see a hijabi girl in the group, you can see a girl from the West end, or the South, and ok, they’re inclusive! So we’ve modeled it. Modeled it intentionally, modeled it because we actually just believe that.

This emphasis on inclusion is a departure from the efforts at community development that were made in the early 1990’s, when multiple support groups sprang up in order to support and service Somali refugees from different clans and sub-clans. This “legacy of mistrust and pain” carried forth from the inter-clan conflict of the civil war is also one of the reasons why Somali people settled in very distinct pockets of Toronto, with many of these divisions still remaining in the city today.\footnote{161} In fact, Gashanti Unity’s proudest moment was the successful organization of their first forum that brought together a hundred Somali girls from all corners of the city in May, 2010. The event, entitled “Igniting the Flame: A Forum to Engage Young Minds” was led by a panel of young female leaders from the Somali community and provided a platform for discussions about culture, community and identity. Gashanti Unity’s future programming is continually informed by the stories and lessons that emerge from these types of inclusive spaces. Their strategic planning and program development is guided by the needs and ideas of the young women in their community, and is made possible through their effort to provide all participants with a sense of ownership of their initiatives. Gashanti Unity is engaging in the type of grassroots, decolonizing development praxis sociologists of sport are urgently calling for.\footnote{162} As Munirah articulated during a focus-group session:

Munirah: When stuff is organized by somebody else, there’s always that ranking…but with us, we’re like, it’s for us, we did this, we’re gonna benefit, we’re just like everybody else. We’re not like, oh, we wanted to put this thing together because we know. It’s like, no no no. We’re gonna figure this out together. So we give everybody ownership, and be like, this is for you so if you have
suggestions feel free to let us know. If you want to do something let us know, we can make it bigger than just what it is right now.

In adopting such a commitment to participatory action, monitoring and evaluation, the Gashantis have established themselves as not only an integral part of the Somali youth community in Toronto, but leaders in research and practice in the field of youth development. In fact, Julio Cammarato and Michelle Fine, among others, have dubbed participatory action research and other ‘alternative methods’ of knowledge production as the way forward for youth activism and development research.\textsuperscript{163}

The genesis of Gashanti Unity’s basketball program similarly grew as a collaborative effort. Strategic planning has been informed by the Gashantis’ common love for the game, as well as their gendered experiences with sport and moments of transnational knowledge exchange. The actual implementation of the program has, however, been constrained by funding and resources, parental support and cultural expectations. These issues are now further explored to gain an understanding of how sport, gender and development work is conceptualized and deployed by members of this particular diaspora community.

5.2 Opportunities for transnational knowledge exchange

In 2002 the Federation of Canadian Municipalities initiated a capacity building partnership between the City of Toronto and a municipality in Botswana, drawing on the strengths of staff in both countries and facilitating an exchange of skills and expertise. One of the outcomes of this partnership was a collaboration between Commonwealth Games Canada, the Mathare Youth Sports Association of Kenya (MYSA), and UK Sport that established a youth-led soccer league in South-East District, Botswana. The South-East District Youth Empowerment League (SEDYEL) utilizes the Kicking AIDS Out curriculum, a series of educational games designed to deliver knowledge and promote
awareness about HIV/AIDS. Since its initiation by EduSport, a Zambian-based NGO, Kicking Aids Out has expanded into an international network providing training and support to community initiatives around the world. The International AIDS Conference in 2006 provided an opportunity for Toronto Public Health to showcase this partnership. Kicking AIDS Out delegates from Botswana put on workshops for several of Toronto’s youth-run community groups; among them were members of Gashanti Unity:

Munirah: …there are all these topics that are, like, taboo to talk about. So, like, sex for example…they got to participate in that…

Idman: Kicking AIDS Out

Munirah: Yeah, exactly. So, like, they came back so energized, the tools they got…but, because I’ve heard of that program, and because of how that worked is why I really wanted to adopt something like that for our program, and, like, talk about self-esteem, talk about healthy eating, talk about sexual health, sexual transmi…all of that stuff. And in our community, girls wouldn’t even get a chance to participate in that kind of activity because parents are gonna be like, “Whose putting it on? “Where is it? Ok, I don’t know anything about it, you’re not going”.

(group laughing and agreeing)

Munirah: So if we were to put it on (laughing)…If we put on something like that, it would be like “oh…oh it’s Gashanti”. Like, right now we kinda have that thing going on where they, like, they know we’re trying to bridge the culture and the society we live in, and we’re trying to do better for their children. We want to, like, even though basketball is fun and cute and all that stuff, but we want to use it as a tool – a vehicle – to teach things that we learned along the way the hard way, but we can package it up and make it fun and make it easy and accessible.

Being a part of this unique opportunity legitimized sport as a viable community development tool and provided Gashanti Unity with a template for this type of programming. Furthermore, the workshop provided the Gashantis with inspiration to incorporate a sexual health and education component into their own programming – an
extremely sensitive issue within the Somali diaspora. Although the Kicking AIDS Out workshop provided the idea and the tools to address sexual health issues through sport, Munirah explains how this knowledge would be otherwise ineffective without the type of groundwork of trust and respect already laid by the Gashantis within the Somali-Canadian community. Here, the importance of a nuanced understanding of context and culture cannot be underestimated. Still, some group members expressed concern that the organization’s good standing within the community might not be enough to persuade mothers of the value of such a program, and possibly even jeopardize the reputation they had worked so hard to build. As Idman explains:

Idman: But at the same time, like we said sex is a big taboo in our community…so even if they do hear Gashanti Unity, and then they hear, oh sexual health, that might deter them, and they might start saying you know what, that’s it. You’re banned. I don’t ever want to hear Gashanti come out of your mouth again (laughing, nervously). So we have to go at it from a certain approach…

The ability to engage with the broader international discourse of sport, gender and development practices, but be also able to adapt this knowledge to the specific needs of their community, is of the utmost importance for the success of Gashanti Unity’s sport, gender and development programming. This finding mirrors what critical supporters of sport for development have been advocating as ‘best practice’; namely, that initiatives be community-driven and “directly involve the intended beneficiaries in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation”.¹⁶⁴
5.3 Resources and funding

5.3.1 Mapping the neighborhood

The former city of Scarborough has experienced a steady intensification of poverty over the past 20 years. United Way’s Poverty by Postal Code report shows that between 1991 and 2001, the number of Scarborough neighborhoods characterized as having ‘moderate’ to ‘high’ poverty increased from 52 to 81. The resident profile of these higher poverty neighborhoods has also shifted, from one where twenty years ago the population was largely comprised of Canadian born residents, to one today that is predominately newcomers and visible minorities.

Although we never spoke explicitly of the Gashantis’ social class or that of their families, the women shared several stories that helped to illustrate the socioeconomic reality of the neighborhood in which they lived. They were all new university or college graduates, and mentioned on one occasion the financial aid that had allowed them to do so. The grants Gashanti Unity had received allowed some of the women to now work full time with the organization. The Scarborough community in which they lived and provided the majority of their programming was a mix of middle and lower-class families. While several of the women drove cars to our meetings together, a major barrier Gashanti Unity had encountered in recruiting girls to their program was transportation. Parents were rarely available/willing to drive their daughters, and felt unsafe allowing them to take public transport. They also commented that there were no basketball nets in their neighborhood, and that the fact that basketball required minimal equipment to enjoy was one of the reasons they had fallen in love with the game:

Huwaida: Yeah, you just need a basket, you know you don’t need much
Muna: Yeah, you don’t need much
Iman: It’s so true
Muna: You don’t need to set up the nets and all that stuff
Iman: I mean, come on look at, like, right here in our community…
Muna: There’s no basketball nets
Iman: …and every year we managed to find a way to make a net (laughing). Whether it’s turning a shopping cart upside down, like, we’ll make a net.

Although often overshadowed by our discussions surrounding gender, culture and generation, class was certainly intertwined in these debates and influenced the sporting experiences of both the Gashantis and the Somali-Canadian girls they now mentored.

5.3.2 Grants and strategic partnerships

Gashanti Unity is supported by a handful of local and global organizations including the Toronto Youth Challenge Fund, Laidlaw Foundation, Grassroots Youth Collaborative, Toronto Community Housing, Schools Without Borders, and most recently the Maple Leaf Sport and Entertainment Team Up Foundation. Over the past five years these groups, among others, have provided support in the form of funding, gifts-in-kind, and strategic community partnerships and have, as a result, both directly and indirectly shaped the direction of Gashanti Unity. The group credits their first partnership and grant with providing them with the foresight and tools for long term sustainability:

Munirah: Even when we did our first grant we actually wanted to go straight into programming, but then it was like, ok, you know…
Huma: “You should do capacity building instead”
Munirah: You should do capacity building instead, but at the same time it was…
Huma: “What’s capacity building?” (laughing)
Munirah: Yeah, what that meant…So we got pushed to capacity building and it worked out for us in the long run, because we learned a lot
and we’re the only existing group since our funding round that’s still around...

This same partnership and grant was not, however, supportive of Gashanti Unity’s vision to begin sport, gender and development programming. Even after the Kicking AIDS Out workshop had provided the group with training, tools and inspiration, Gashanti Unity remained largely at the mercy of funding agencies and their private agendas:

Hameeda: …even though we were excited we were like, we still couldn’t do it because we were still stuck to that capacity building grant, and we didn’t have money to do anything that had to do with basketball.

In Gashanti Unity’s experience, funding groups and their granting criteria rarely allowed space for sport and physical activity. This was particularly constraining to their vision of creating a sport, gender and development program given that they needed to satisfy these funders and their criteria in order to secure financial support and survive as an organization:

Munirah: …it was hard to get the funder to incorporate it [basketball] into whatever their funding criteria was, even though it was one of Gashanti’s things that we wanted to do…Sports, any fun little program…there was really no support for it. You could use the sports’ program as a tool to do what you wanna do, we believe that, but some of the funders…would be like, no, female empowerment and basketball don’t go together in their head. And we were like, actually, we can make it work!

It was not until a call from the Ontario Basketball Association (OBA) in 2010 that Gashanti Unity’s dream of starting a basketball program – hatched years before Gashanti Unity existed as a formal organization – would become a possibility. In a serendipitous
turn of events, the OBA saw a feature in a Toronto newspaper on one of Gashanti Unity’s co-founders. In it, she mentioned their early days playing basketball together in the community and how their dream to start *something* for young Somali-Canadian girls had hatched. Acting on a mandate to increase basketball participation among minority groups, the OBA offered to provide training for coaches, gym space and equipment for Gashanti Unity’s pilot program in the fall of 2010.

Finding the right funding and resources can certainly be a struggle for any organization or non-profit in the business of community development. Gashanti Unity’s experiences provide some valuable insight to the larger sport for development movement. Moving forward, SDP needs to stop operating in a separate peripheral sphere from the rest of the development world. It appears that, in Toronto at least, this will require dual action from mainstream community development funders and grassroots sport for development practitioners. Not only must the larger field of community development be convinced of the unique contribution that sport can make to development work, but SDP initiatives must work to form partnerships with groups that can provide expertise in other areas of community development (e.g., education, health, employment/life skills training, etc.) in order to deliver more holistic programming.\(^{165}\) Considering sport for development initiatives alongside the social and material conditions of the communities they are implemented in will not only likely improve program outcomes, but also go a long way toward carving out a legitimate space within mainstream development work.

5.4 Individual and collective experiences with sport

With the exception of what has been relatively minimal exposure to the international sport for development movement, Gashanti Unity’s sport, gender and development work has largely grown organically from the co-founders’ individual and collective experiences with basketball. As always, these encounters with sport took place within a
very specific cultural context and were invariably shaped by the participants’ gender, age, family and social standing. These varied experiences and their impact on Gashanti Unity’s sport, gender and development programming are explored now.

5.4.1 Sport as an opportunity to meet and connect

In my very first meeting with Hameeda, she explained that before there was ever ‘Gashanti Unity’, there was basketball:

Hameeda: When we were younger…we always went to basketball programs, like, whether it was at the mosque, or…this, um, lady…she organized, like, if we wanted to play ball and go to her house after just to talk or whatever. And we used to go there once a week…we had fun, we liked it, we used to see each other there…

Growing up, this was an experience six of the seven founding members of Gashanti Unity shared. Basketball kept them connected while attending different middle and high schools and, as Inas noted, continued to hold “that special spot” as they matured into young adults. In fact, during one focus group session the group affectionately reminisced about a basketball that had claimed a permanent spot in the trunk of Huma’s car to be brought out and scrimmaged with frequently after meetings. As the above quote shows, the Gashantis’ early enjoyment of basketball was linked to 1) its attachment to other social and educational activities, and 2) it being an opportunity to meet and connect with peers. Growing up, opportunities for the Gashanti’s to play basketball were often paired with additional chances to socialize and communicate with one another, ranging from informal post-game get-togethers to more organized ‘study circles’ provided by the local Mosque. In a way this was Gashanti Unity’s first introduction to what came to be recognized as the ‘sport plus’ approach, where sporting activities are teamed up with other interventions
such as education, health or life skills in order to provide more holistic and effective programming (a format later adopted by Gashanti Unity for its own programming).\textsuperscript{166} The opportunity to meet and connect with peers outside of the home and school was considered to be valuable in itself, as this was not something routinely encouraged or permitted by parents. Furthermore, the Gashantis commented on feeling left out of groups designed to provide young (white) Canadian girls with spaces to meet, connect and learn new skills:

Hameeda: …we didn’t really have anything to really go to, like, that was, like, Brownies or, you know how little girls went to Girl Guides, or whatever. Like, we didn’t really have anything as young people to just, you know, kinda go and do for fun or whatever. So it’d be nice to…
Munirah: For girls that look like you…
Hameeda: Yeah, it’d be nice to have that network, just from when you’re young

In part, it was lack of consistent, culturally sensitive programming that inspired the Gashantis to collaborate and start an organization that could address the needs of young Somali-Canadian girls in a way they never experienced growing up.

5.4.2 Connecting gender, culture and physicality

Feminist theorists have long explored the question of whether sport could be a source of women’s empowerment.\textsuperscript{167} For many, the empowering potential of sport is tied to its physicality – a corporeal activity where women can experience and develop bodily skills, strength and muscularity, features traditionally reserved for men’s empowerment.\textsuperscript{168} As sport, gender and development work continues to proliferate worldwide, others have questioned the relationship between sport, gender, physicality and empowerment and
how it might contribute to destabilizing the current gender order. Kidd suggests that what is distinctive about sport in a development context may be the “culturally normative, physically embodied way it engages people”, and yet the “impact of these unique attributes is rarely studied”. Teasing out any unique contribution sport might make towards gender equity or empowerment will be an important step in moving forward with sport, gender and development work.

The Gashantis expressed a combination of pleasure and concern over how they used their bodies during basketball competition. For Munirah, her enjoyment of basketball was directly related to the experience of physical embodiment:

Munirah: I played a lot of sports but actually I liked basketball the most because, like, volleyball is just like you’re on one side, the other team’s on the other side...there’s no connection.

Mel: like physicality?

Munirah: EXACTLY, that makes it a whole lot better. The contact, the plays, like all that was just exciting.

Many women engaging in sports ranging from football to mountain biking and triathlon have articulated this same desire for physical contact and/or pleasure derived from being physical with their bodies. For Packard, it is precisely this desire that “challenges institutionalized gender relationships by refusing to complement and support an exclusive realm of aggression and physicality reserved only for masculinity”. In other words, women embracing the type of physical contact traditionally reserved for socializing boys into men might disrupt our ideas surrounding ‘appropriate’ gender norms and open us up to new possibilities.

Munirah also, however, recalled how she had concerns over how her body might become more muscular if she pursued sports training. While these fears were no longer something she wished to pass on to the younger generation of Somali-Canadian girls Gashanti Unity now mentored, it did constrain her own participation growing up:

Hameeda: We’d say keep playing, don’t stop in high school like most of us…
Munirah:  Don’t stop! Yeah, I stopped playing ‘cause I didn’t want to be physically, like, deezed.
Mel:    Really!?
Munirah: Honestly! Someone scared me.
Hameeda: We didn’t have a team in highschool! I don’t know about you guys…
(group chatter)
Munirah: Oh, basketball we didn’t have a team, that’s why I became a volleyball player, but then track, I was like “oh my god, I’m gonna be very muscular” … because that’s the message I was getting, like, oh my god if you run too much you’re gonna be muscular, you’re not going to be feminine.

The contrast and contradiction between these two excerpts reminds us that for as long as women have participated in sport, there have been questions and controversy surrounding their femininity and sexuality. This generally holds true across cultural settings, and yet can intersect with faith in different ways. Nakamura explains how both male and female anxiety over ‘defeminization’ can constrain Muslim women’s participation in sport and physical activity. This anxiety may stem from a belief similar to Munirah’s that women will become more muscular and therefore take on a more ‘masculine’ appearance, or simply by women entering a traditionally male public domain. Idman further expresses how some women’s concerns surrounding physicality are not necessarily limited to a binary understanding of masculinity and femininity, but are closely connected to cultural and religious expectations:

Idman:  But not only deezed [muscular], it’s like…there’s certain things, like, you can’t go outside…I know for me, for example, I’m not the skinniest girl. And my Mom comes outside and sees me running around on a ball court with my boobs bouncing in the air and it’s like, “oh my god…get them in the house, you’re embarrassing yourself”. And you know, you shouldn’t be wearing something that shows your body, because that’s religiously incorrect, you know? That’s why we need somewhere where it’s just a female space, where parents can feel comfortable and know that, you know what, yeah your daughter can wear shorts and she can wear, you know, she can wear ball shorts and run around and she doesn’t have to worry
about a guy trying to touch her ass, or you know, your name going out there and getting a bad reputation.

Here, Idman’s mother’s primary concern surrounding her daughter’s participation in sport was that her body and/or sexuality would be publicly displayed. Although female modesty is an important element within Islamic doctrine, Nakamura reminds us that fundamentally speaking, Islam does not forbid women from being physically active and that low sporting participation rates of Muslim women in non-Muslim countries has perhaps more to do with existing social structures failing to meet women at their specific cultural needs. The (limited) literature on Muslim women’s sporting experiences in Canada has revealed that providing controlled access to a sex-segregated physical activity space is perhaps the most basic requirement for creating truly inclusive and ‘safe’ sporting environments for women. Inas echoes how it is important for Gashanti Unity to be able to create this type of environment and allow Somali-Canadian women to participate in sport on their own terms:

Inas: People our age, there’s us who are more outgoing and things like that, and then there’s the other group of girls who maybe stay at home and they’re completely more reserved. Whereas when they see that Gashanti is doing something…they know it’s going to cater to them. Like, they can be in a safe environment where they can throw off their hijab and just get raw, like, put on their shorts. Whereas, obviously they wouldn’t be seen in the public eye like that, like you know what I mean? So I feel like, I don’t know, because it is Somali run, a lot of girls are completely open to the fact that we’re doing things and they wanna come out and be involved.

An important issue in understanding women’s concerns surrounding sport and physical activity are the varying meanings and symbolic significance attached to women’s bodies across ethnicity, culture, time and space. For many Muslim women, culturally and religiously constructed “taboos, norms and values” inform their perceptions and
experiences with their bodies. A failure to observe these codes can be seen as a “rejection of Islam and Muslim cultural identity” and contribute to the type of ‘embarrassment’ expressed earlier by Idman. Inas also reminds us that, in diasporic spaces, women negotiate and balance their identity in different ways as manifested in the wide variety of cultural practices and beliefs displayed by Somali-Canadian women, including if/why/how they decide to participate in sport. For many young Somali-Canadian women wishing to participate in basketball, great comfort is derived from knowing that the opportunity is provided by women sympathetic to their needs and understanding of this tricky in between space.

5.4.3 Cultural expectations and parental support

The influences of Somali culture and parental support on the Gashantis’ basketball experiences are difficult to tease apart. As mentioned in the previous section, it is not that Islam forbids Muslim women to participate in physical activity, but that the very public and physical nature of sport requires some interpretation and accommodation to allow women to participate within the boundaries of their faith. Parents who do not trust that these accommodations will be met can act as a significant barrier to their daughters’ participation in sport. Furthermore, sport is rarely a top priority for refugee families who have given up everything in order to survive:

Inas: The moment you bring anything that’s not educational to the, to the forefront…
Idman: (imitating parents) “we came here to…”
Inas: (imitating parents) “I didn’t bring you here to this country to play basketball.”
(group laughing as Inas’ imitation)
Idman: …yeah! It’s like, the guilt trips, you know? But they always work, they do. ‘Cause when you hear their stories, you’re like…no matter
how many times I hear their stories, I’m still heartbroken. I’m just like, yes I know, I know, I know.

During our interviews, each of the Gashantis demonstrated an enormous amount of respect for their parents and the sacrifices and hardships they endured to give them a better life. Growing up, this created a great deal of dissonance for these young women as they began to engage more and more in Canadian culture and pursue ideas and interests different from those of their parents. The lack of parental support the Gashantis received when participating in extracurricular activities growing up was heavily rooted in the dominant cultural gender ideology that continues to define the acceptable roles and activities of Somali women and men:

Hameeda: There are definitively different expectations for, like, a young boy or a girl in the home, definitely. It’s, like, more accepted for a guy to, like “oh, he’s playing basketball today”, you know? And it’s like…
Munirah: …no complaints. Even to have a hobby of playing basketball. Let’s, let’s say a guy is done school, or whatever, and he joins a league outside of work, that’s what he does on his time…
Hameeda: It’s a good thing…
Munirah: It’s a good thing. But if a girl says “oh, I joined the team!” …What are you doing wasting your time? Like, you’re going to sweat and every Saturday that’s what you do? (group laughing)
Iman: It’s a fight, like, all the way…

Demonstrating a degree of modesty, spending time in the home, and focusing on family and future all became more important as the Gashantis transitioned into womanhood, as reflected in the degree of parental support they received for their sporting endeavors:

Inas: I think it’s like, they’ll push you when you’re like, in middle school and public school… I was pushed to go to every basketball game, I
was pushed to go to every practice. But whereas, when you hit puberty and you start to get older, then they completely do a 360° because they realize you’re becoming a woman, and they don’t want your life to be a life of basketball or a life of a girl, like, taking track serious cause they feel as though extra, like sports and things like that, you can’t make a life out of that, you know what I mean? You can’t be successful, especially being a Somali woman. Because then you’d have to be in the public eye, and no parent in our culture is going to condone a Somali woman being in the public eye, because you’re supposed to be more reserved and at home and things like that.

Mothers especially act barriers to their daughters’ participation in sport. The Gashantis frequently cited difficulty and frustration in convincing their own mothers of the value of basketball, as well as the mothers of the girls who wanted to participate in their basketball program. Prior to implementing their sport, gender and development program, the Gashantis quite literally had to go door-to-door canvassing for support:

Inas: We have the manpower, there’s a lot of us, but it’s like every mother has ten pillars in front of her that you have to knock down, like, you know what I mean? You’re mentally and physically exhausted after one. It’s like, we have the rest of Scarborough? I’m not doing this, I swear…

Idman: No, but there’s only so much tea you can drink! (laughing)

Meeting mothers’ at their cultural needs (for example, staying to drink tea and establish rapport) remains an essential component to earning the trust and support of the Somali community, and is something the women of Gashanti Unity take very seriously. However, considering that sport, gender and development programs aim to contest a gender ideology that positions women as subordinate, it is particularly difficult to unpack the fact that it is often the mothers, aunts, older sisters, and the like who act as the greatest opposition to their daughters’ achieving greater freedom and expression.
Traditionally, Somalia has been considered a strongly patriarchal society. The enormous exodus of Somali people into the diaspora during the civil war placed the responsibility for instilling Somali and Muslim culture in their children on women’s shoulders more heavily than ever before. Paradoxically, the onus to defend and preserve these patriarchal practices and beliefs was left largely to women. Perhaps the need to preserve Somali culture upon entering the diaspora, patriarchy and all, became a greater priority for many women than lobbying to change their subjugation within it. This would explain why the mothers were resisting their daughters participating in a sport that takes them into an unfamiliar world, a world that despite its masculinizing qualities, gives women new strengths and possibilities. The Gashantis attempt to shed light on this troubling contradiction:

Inas: You have to realize that culturally, fun doesn’t exist for our women…Everything has a means to an end, like, you’re going to school in order to get straight A’s, get a good job. You know what I mean?
Idman: mhmm
Munirah: You’re gonna marry a guy…
Inas: You go to the Mosque, you, pray, in order to get to heaven. You read the Quran, in order to…you have…everything has a means to a higher end. Like, you know what I mean? And its like, when you present something like, “Oh, I’m gonna go play basketball.” It literally doesn’t compute with them. They’re like, “What does that even mean? Go clean the dishes”.

Here, the dominant Somali gender ideology is painted as pragmatic, with little room to venture outside its heteronormative and domestic script. And while the Gashantis did not claim to speak for all Somali-Canadian households, their personal experiences growing up and more recent struggles in recruiting for their basketball program provide compelling evidence that recreation and leisure opportunities remain unequally divided among young Somali-Canadian men and women.
As we see in the following sections, the Gashantis developed many strategies to consolidate their dual Somali and Canadian cultural identities, negotiate for greater extracurricular experiences as women, and participate in a traditionally masculine realm on their own terms. Their goal as was to now share these strategies with their younger Somali-Canadian sisters.

PART TWO: Possibilities and Limitations of Using Sport to Negotiate New Gender Norms, Roles and Relationships within the Somali-Canadian Diaspora

5.5 Gender and generation trouble within the diaspora

“Being a Somali woman is a layered cake” — Munirah

This was the image Munirah evoked when I asked her to describe what it was like to be a Somali woman living in Canada.

Munirah: One, you’re a woman. Then you’re Muslim. And then being here, we’re a colour. So, and then there’s the clan politics. Then where you live in the city….

(group agreeing)

Hameeda: Yeah, where you live in the city…
Huma: Hijabs, non-hijabs…
Hameeda: Girls who wear the scarves…
Munirah: So there’s all those layers, and then…it’s the balance of all of them

These multiple layers – gender, religion, race, culture, ethnicity, history, age, nationality and even the degree to which you chose to cover your body – overlap in different combinations to shape the power relationships that structure Somali-Canadian women’s
lives. The Gashantis were very aware of these intersections and the power certain combinations could provide:

Hameeda: I think it starts when you’re younger. The whole power thing…
Inas: Yeah!
Hameeda: …it starts from, like, when a girl’s born and when a guy’s born. It’s like two different upbringings. First, like, right off the bat.
Munirah: Yup. First strings vs. benchwarmers.

I could not have scripted a better sports’ analogy if I tried. The Gashantis expressed special frustrations with the sexual division of labour between Somali men and women, and how early these inequalities manifested themselves in the way their brothers, male cousins and peers were socialized. The gender norms and roles the women would have been expected to fill if still living in Somalia now seemed incompatible with the gender ideology they had developed growing up in Canada. This dissonance was a source of tension across generations in the diaspora:

Hameeda: My Mom is always … she feels like she has to teach me hardship… But then, like, with my brothers and stuff…it’s like she’s preparing them for a different lifestyle. Like, you guys go out and work but when you get home your food's on the table. So it’s like, you prepare the guys for a certain lifestyle, and then you prepare the girls for a certain lifestyle. But now it’s like, we’re in Canada! I’m going to work too! I’m going to school! I’m doing all the things you’re doing, but I’m still getting, like, put all that responsibility on me.
Munirah: We have it worse.
Hameeda: Everything’s shifted though now that we’re here. In Somalia, it probably worked out so much better, you know? (group agreeing)
Hameeda: But bringing that system here? It’s so different cause I feel like we’re equals, like…I have to go to school too!
While parents expected their daughters to live a predominately domestic lifestyle inside the home, the Gashantis envision earning a double income, being engaged in the community and having the opportunity to travel (As Munirah exclaimed, laughing in disbelief, “I took all that OSAP loan for me to stay inside the house!!?”). Meanwhile young men were given much more personal freedom, encouraged to socialize, network and pursue more extracurricular activities. As Munirah again explained, “You’re a guy. That’s all you have to be”. When asked how their brothers and male peers responded to the unequal gender blueprint adopted within the Somali diaspora, the Gashantis’ replied:

Hameeda: They know! They know the imbalance! (laughing)
Munira: And it actually works to their best interest…
Hameeda: Yeah, so why would they say anything?
Munirah: …because they’re like, am I going to go with a girl like my sister who’s been the rebellious one? No…she’s never going to cook. Or am I going to go with a girl who is going to put my dish on the table when I come home from work?
Hameeda: And our Moms want them to go for those girls!
Inas: Yeah…
Hameeda: Because that’s the life, you know what I mean? They even tell them, like, “Oh, you’re going to go for that girl?” It’s like, they really want them to go for the girl who's more like the…
Huma: She’s not…she works 24/7…
Hameeda: Yeah! Like…her?
Munirah: She has a lot of ‘ambition’.
(group laughing hard)
Hameeda: So, yeah.
Munirah: We’re doomed…we have too much ambition.

The Gashantis of course made no apologies for their ambition; their work aimed to inspire a younger generation of Somali-Candian women to do the same, and make it easier for them to do so. What this interchange illustrates is how both men and women are implicated in the production and reproduction of gender difference, and how this dichotomizing power of gender is internalized through the socialization processes. The Gashantis spoke of “those girls” who lacked ambition and fed the same myths about gender roles the Gashantis were working to dispel, as well as mothers who wanted for
their sons the same life of comfort they worked to provide their family and therefore encouraged them to find a (Somali) woman who would unequivocally put them first. Despite their praise of such subservient women, Somali mothers themselves were not portrayed as submissive or weak, but as fiercely strong-willed in their own right and determined to preserve their daughters’ sense of culture and heritage:

Inas: The women are…like, you’d think in a culture, women are supposed to express their emotions and things like that, and it’s like, in our culture the women are literally the men…They don’t show…well, they show anger (laughing) but that’s about the only emotion that they express.

Idman: Yeah

Inas: Anything else is a form of weakness and is not allowed. Like, you know what I mean? And it’s just, like, they just dismiss everything, like, it’s not serious, and so after a while you’re like, why, why bother? I’m just going to continue doing what I do, she’s going to think I’m a ‘bleep’, so why not?

Although the Gashantis expressed frustration at the current state of gender relations within the Somali diaspora, and the disconnect they felt between generations of Somali-Canadian women, it is important to note that it was not also without a great amount of respect and understanding for their parents, who came from a world whose system of values, practices and beliefs were not somehow ‘less than’, but simply different from their own. They recognized that change was a process – one that would continue to evolve as they started families of their own- and at times during the interviews even defended their parents:

Hameeda: As generations pass, things will change, but don’t be like…you know? They can only learn so much
It is this compassion and understanding that guides Gashanti Unity as an organization, echoed in their mantra “anchored in our culture - focused on our future”. With feet planted in both worlds, the Gashantis advocate for a new cultural blueprint to bridge the generation gap between Somali women and negotiate new gender norms, roles and relationships with men. The above is admittedly a two-dimensional picture of what is certainly a much more complicated reality of gender relations within and between generations in the Somali diaspora. While a complete analysis is beyond the scope of this project, this chapter is meant to give a taste of why Gashanti Unity feels that advocating for a ‘new cultural blueprint’ is necessary.

5.6 Advocating for a new blueprint

Munirah: The parents are losing the younger ones so once again they’re fearful, and once again they’re in a position to negotiate. But the thing is, nobody wants to hear the old community heads that have started things. All they’ve done was prepare us for settlement…survival. But not how to be part of the community, how to be engaged, how to network…So we’re at a point where our generation, yeah, we’ve done what we can do, but there’s a wave of a new generation and the parents are still not equipped and they’re not ready.

(group agreeing)

And the people they used to go to? Don’t have any answers.

(group laughing at how passionately Munirah is talking)

They don’t have the answers. We have the answers!

Part of this ‘answer’ was to negotiate and adopt a ‘new cultural blueprint’; a term Munirah coined to describe a different set of gender norms, roles and relationships she and her fellow Gashantis envision for the Somali-Canadian diaspora; one that is anchored
in Somali culture and tradition, yet provides greater freedom of movement, opportunity and equity to its women. After over twenty years of navigating between two different worlds, the Gashantis believed that their generation was in a unique position to bring greater understanding and harmony to gender and generational relationships within the Somali diaspora:

Huma: I think from my opinion, we’re sort of the generation that’s stuck in the dual identity, cause the younger ones are sort of more assimilated with Canadian culture, and then the older ones are, like, more Somali. And, we’re the ones that are like…

Munirah: We try and do the change of like
Hameeda: Back and forth…
Inas: Yeah, it’s like pleasing both sides
Huma: Literally

Helping others navigate these ‘dual identities’ and feelings of in-betweeness is at the heart of Gashanti Unity’s existence. Growing up, the Gashantis learned to move between the values and expectations of home and those of the larger society largely in isolation. Often she was the only Somali girl in the classroom, on the team, or (in Huma’s and Munirah’s case) the entire school; opportunities to connect with peers who could understand and relate to the types of challenges they faced were often limited to older siblings and close family friends. In other circles, however the Gashantis found their “authenticity” questioned because of the non-Somali friends, ideas or practices they chose to adopt. Munirah and Hameeda briefly describe these experiences and why they laid the foundation for Gashanti Unity:

Munirah: You respected the values at home, but you also knew that there was another society, and you were a part of it, and you did the balance, but then…where the challenge lies is you get older, and … then you start figuring out what you want, but then you meet
other Somalis who have only been around themselves, and then they make you look like you’re not a…

Hameeda: Somali (*laughing*)

Munirah: Authentic, yeah! (*laughing*) you’re not authentic Somali because you have non-Somali friends, and you’re more tolerant to things that they’re not because they’ve been only around their kind!...

Hameeda: Or there are other kids who will only have, like, friends that are non-Somali, and they don’t know a place where they can come, like, just see Somali people and like, just feel like, you know? So it’s like, I don’t know, for us in a way it’s kinda like running this program for them is, like, just saying you know we understand too, you know? We’ve been there, so now we’re doing this for you guys and you can always talk to us about anything. Or, like, we understand, we’ve been through it and it was rough, like you know?

…

Munirah: There’s ways that we’ve learnt how to navigate through this parent machine and this society. So it’s like, we’re gonna provide all of that to the younger generation, whether it be through sports, education, accepting your own identity, balancing the two identities…its like, all of that is kinda what Gashanti really started out on.

The many emotions conveyed throughout the Gashantis’ stories - frustration, fear, anxiety, guilt- revealed that the process of negotiating new identities was a trying experience for mothers and daughters alike. Mothers were fearful of ‘losing’ their daughters (and of their daughters losing their virginity) to a culture that was not their own. Daughters were frustrated at the narrowly defined gender norms and roles they were expected to adopt, and at the level of misunderstanding and mistrust within their relationships with their mothers. The Gashantis felt that they had often conceded to living a double life whereby pleasing parents and fulfilling their own desires meant keeping their mothers uninformed of their activities or whereabouts:
Inas: That’s why it’s a shame, like, you know what I mean? That you have to lie to your parents in order to get a little sense of freedom... They feel as though especially the mother- they feel as though the moment her daughter is out of the house and she’s not doing something productive, she’s automatically doing something that’s completely immoral, like, unjust, and just... scantily clad. (getting the group laughing again)

Munirah: Parents are not having conversations with their kids, or if they are they’re not talking the same language. (group laughing/agreeing). So it’s like, imagine not having that avenue with your parents, and then not having another girl who feels the same way, like, or a place to even talk about it. So, really we have a big job ahead of us.

But what exactly would this ‘new blueprint’ look like? It is not a concrete sociocultural map, but an idea that greater equity and understanding could be forged amongst peers and parents alike. This vision was scattered throughout the stories shared in our group sessions, a common thread tying them together. For the Gashantis, negotiating a new blueprint for Somali women meant achieving greater personal freedom and movement along with a piece of mind that this could be enjoyed with their parents’ consent and, perhaps one day, encouragement. This new set of gender norms, roles and relationships rejected traditional sexual divisions of labour and encouraged girls to form their own identities and play an active role in their communities. Perhaps most importantly, this ‘new blueprint’ embraced Somali heritage and worked to mend cultural divides - the remnants of a brutal and ongoing civil war - still present within the diaspora.

Idman: And then they can’t just be sitting there cleaning, and then just sit, you know? They’re gonna be, like, so secluded. You know, they need to network. They need to see other girls from the community and they need to get to know eachother. And I was like, we get girls from the east, west and know, like from central areas, and we get them together in one room, and that doesn’t happen with the Somali community unless you’re at a funeral or at a wedding.
Inas: I would have to say that that blueprint would start with, like, when we’re trying to invite girls out and things like that, just start with the parents, and let them know that just because your Somali daughter, which is so accustomed, or you’re so accustomed to being at home even just catering to the family, or school and then just being present with the family, it doesn’t necessarily have to be like that, like you know what I mean? You’re in a Western society, things are run differently, and it’s like, trying to get accustomed to the lifestyle here, not necessarily saying she has to lose all of her, um, like all of her, like um, heritage and things like that, but they have to understand, like, there can be an equal balance.

Finding this “equal balance” is a central theme that has coursed through Gashanti Unity’s initiatives and will likewise be incorporated into their gender, sport and development programming. The Gashantis believe that sport can contribute to their vision in a unique way, and this imagined role of basketball will be explored now.

5.7 Imagined role of basketball

5.7.1 Promoting healthy active living

The array of health benefits offered to women who actively participate in sport are well established in the literature and are certainly the most direct outcome sport, gender and development programs can currently claim. The Gashantis expressed concern with what they believed to be declining physical activity levels among girls and women in their community:
Munirah: I remember when we were, when I was growing up, track and field, *every* sport I took part in. And then, now I see the young generation and it’s like “eww”, sports? Sweat?” And I’m like, what is going on here?

The Gashantis attributed an increased obsession with social networking technology and screen-time, as well as a decline in basic physical literacy to deteriorating physical activity levels among the younger generation of Somali-Candians. Munirah also credited this inactivity to parental beliefs and fears surrounding the community and culture in which they now lived:

Munirah: My little cousins are really young and they don’t go outside, like they don’t run around outside, and that’s what all I did, run...even if you don’t have an organized sport, just to be physically active and to be outside. And it’s like, they’re just so scared of the outside, and it’s like, go outside with them! But it’s so foreign to them. Because back home the neighbourhood was the community. You could trust your child to run wild in the neighbourhood... But here they’re so scared of their neighbor, that they’re scared of everything, that it’s like you’re not going outside! ... So it’s like, there’s that, that whole cultural thing in the community that there’s really kids who are not active at all. So, it’s...we don’t want you to become basketball players, we just want you to be physically active. For your health! For, just to move around. Like, come on girls....just, be fit!

While basketball was the Gashantis’ personal sport of choice, Gashanti Unity as an organization placed promoting a healthy active lifestyle above winning or competition in basketball. They also found that when recruiting girls to participate in their program it was the health/wellness argument that resonated most strongly among mothers. Promoting the program from a health or educational perspective was far more likely to
buoy support than arguments based on the social benefits of sport and was one of the many strategies used by Gashanti Unity:

Muna: I think that you’ve brought up a good point, that you have to spin it in a different way…
Iman: Yeah, yeah…
Muna: …to be like, ok health and the wellness…if you go from that aspect, you’ll get that support. But the fun?
Huwaida: Oh, it’s over…
Iman: Oh, are you even kidding me?
Ishwaq: You have to realize that culturally, fun doesn’t exist for our women.

This passage was one of several that illuminated how recreation opportunities in Toronto continue to be divided along lines of gender, race and class, and are often further complicated by the fact that it is both men and women who guard these boundaries. For this reason, the significance of basketball being added to Gashanti Unity’s programming reaches beyond merely improving the fitness of Somali-Canadian girls towards shaping new ideas about what are ‘acceptable’ roles and activities for these young women.

5.7.2 A new platform to meet and connect

As the Literature Reviews on Sport for Development and Peace point out, aside from the well-established link between physical health and physical activity, many of the other claimed psychological and social benefits of sport as commonly cited by sport for development programs and policies “appear to be an indirect outcome of the context and social interaction that is possible in sport rather than a direct outcome of participating in sport”. It was, however, precisely this opportunity- the unique way sport allows women
to meet and connect with one another, different from other social gatherings or group discussion - that the Gashantis wished to harness in their program:

Munirah: The things is, in our culture it’s like if you really really examine just what we know, it’s like, there’s really no areas of outlets where girls connect...within the culture. Like, the only places we see each other are holidays, religious holidays at the mosque...at a wedding...so there is no space for you to really go outside of your own little circle and your own perspective. So imagine, like, coming to something like this is, gives you an opportunity to meet other girls who look like you...but then it’s a different perspective

Basketball provided a departure from Gashanti Unity’s other programming that engaged Somali-Canadian women in what were often difficult conversations on sensitive subjects. For example, Gashanti Unity’s monthly “shah and sheekos” (tea and talks) invited debates on controversial topics such as patriarchy, clan politics, religion, and sexuality that could lead to disagreements between group members:

Idman: And then, like, having that girl who has a different perspective on life... and then she’ll say something to you, and will directly offend you. And it’s like, hold on. So we both speak the same language, we come from the same background, but we obviously grew up differently because the way you think about...your whole outlook on life and mine are completely different, on two different scales.

For Hameeda especially, basketball could provide a new way for women with different opinions to connect on common ground:

Hameeda: Basketball is just a place, like, the people you play ball with, its like, you just come and you just bring your, like you know, you just bring your game.

(group agreeing)
Hameeda: That’s it. Like, there’s no…like, it doesn’t matter if you’re rich, you’re poor, you’re not the most popular girl in school, like you know? Like, you don’t have the most things, but when you come it’s like, that’s it.

Munirah: It’s just you and your skills

Hameeda: And I love that! … And I don’t know, sometimes you just have this sort of, like, respect for each other, and I think that’s why I wanna kinda move away from- like, we do do the whole social thing and like, I love that, it’s great- but I wanna also have the girls meet in that sense, and like, you know? Know each other in that way.

It was within this new environment that Gashanti Unity wanted to continue having tough conversations, building on the respect and camaraderie they believed could be fostered on the court:

Munirah: So there’s the connection between young Somali girls, like, that would be one big thing and also, just learning from others, like, you’re here, you’re learning the sports but you’re also, there’s conversations that was happening…and then that information exchange while you’re actually working out, while you’re having fun, while you’re doing a sport

The Gashantis believe they could provide the type of safe environment that would allow Muslim women come and play basketball however they chose, and, importantly, will appease their parents as well. A large part of disrupting unequal power relationships between young Somali-Canadian men and women requires also addressing current relationships between generations of Somali-Canadians women. Learning how to negotiate greater freedom of expression and movement with mothers was an important skill the Gashantis wished to impart through their program:
Munirah: Or even learning the negotiation skills. Like, this is important to me, I want to do this, this is what I plan to get out of it, and I need you to be ok with it. Like, parents…it’s like NO. And then you take the no, and you don’t even know...you haven’t even put your case forward of why it's important. Your parents know why they’re saying no. Their fear! Their fear is just telling them no.

While their basketball program was certainly a more ambitious endeavor than convincing parents and daughters to come and discuss controversial issues over tea, the Gashantis felt that it could be a different platform for Somali women to also connect across generations:

Iman: Like, obviously it’s something…it’s going to be challenging. It’s going to be very challenging, but I think once we, um, we earn the parents, like…it’ll be rewarding to see the parents acknowledging that we’re doing something, or maybe if we do a big basketball event to see parents come out and watch their, the girls like playing basketball, like that would be epic. (*laughing*)

Providing a space for Somali women of all ages to meet and connect is not exclusive to plans for their basketball program, but a theme that runs throughout Gashanti Unity’s initiatives. Interviews with the Gashantis suggest that basketball is unique, however, in the way it allows women to connect. Its physicality challenges beliefs about appropriate behavior for Somali women in the public sphere and allows women to know themselves and one another in a new light.
5.7.3 Engaging girls differently

In Gashanti Unity’s experience, sport, gender and development programming could be used to engage Somali girls differently in three ways. On one end of the spectrum, there were both girls and parents who did not feel comfortable with their daughter participating on teams or leagues in Toronto when certain conditions regarding the dress code and controlled (female-only) access to the space were not met. Reiterating Inas’ comment from above, it was because Gashanti Unity intimately understood these needs that they could provide these women with “a safe environment where they can throw off their hijab and just get raw”. On the other hand, the Gashantis had noticed that basketball also attracted a different subset of young women to their organization in a way that none of their other programming had done before:

Munirah: There was so many things that we’d do, but when we played basketball people that are not maybe involved in those other things, come out. So, we’d know every time we’d put basketball…girls who don’t come to our program will come to basketball.

Mel: Right.

Munirah: And that’s where we can educate them, and we can give them information, but it’s like…and parents are so resisting something that…your kids will come dedicated every Friday if we tell them to!

The Gashantis saw basketball as an opportunity to attract youth who were perhaps less engaged with their Somali heritage and promote this within the program as well. Gashanti Unity believed that maintaining a level of respect and understanding for their Somali roots was an important component of the new cultural blueprint if they were to
find a happier middle-ground upon which different generations of Somali-Canadians could relate.

Finally, the Gashantis spoke of how activities such as photography, theatre, music etc. were often grouped with sport under the banner ‘extracurricular activities’, all of which ranked low on the list of priorities in many Somali-Canadian households:

Munirah: With this basketball thing, like, even there’s so much other stuff that is not encouraged in the community, like, if a kid wanted to do arts. It’s like, arts? What’s the arts? You know? Like, there’s so much stuff that is not encouraged or nourished, so like, it could be, like…this could be like the beginning of pushing the button and going, ok they’re other things other than the academia stuff. Like, not every kid … school’s not for everybody! You can’t tell that to a Somali woman.

For this reason, the Gashantis hoped that growing acceptance of their basketball program might lead to greater support and opportunity for young Somali women who wished to pursue interest or careers in the arts as well.

5.7.4 Fostering self-confidence and empowerment

As noted in the ‘Disputed Terminology’ section of this thesis, empowerment and its associated constructs self-worth, self-confidence, self-esteem, self-efficacy, self-perception, and enhanced personal freedom are tricky to define and should be used with caution. However, a great deal of research surrounding sport, gender and development work has focused on these related constructs and found that there is some evidence that suggests that women and girls who engage in sport and physical activity reap these many ‘self-’ benefits. The Gashantis also believed that this was one of the positive outcomes
their sport, gender and development program could provide, and added insight into why buoying young women’s self-confidence was especially important within diasporic spaces:

Munirah: Cause, it’s so hard, I mean, you’re always being told one message and then you don’t know where you’re at with yourself, so self-esteem is really big and it’s something that’s really downplayed. Cause, in our culture we’re from the tough, tough love, tough everything. Like, “Oh are you crying? You couldn’t be crying…” So it’s like, the kids are actually kind of stuck in between a culture where it’s like “Express your feelings” to…“DON’T express your feelings! HOLD your emotions together!” It’s conflicting messages, so the kid’s self-esteem is really big because there’s a duel identity. You’re Somali and then your Canadian. Canadian-Somali.

As in all of their programs, the Gashantis hoped to provide the tools and support to help young Somali women confidently navigate these two worlds. What was perhaps unique to their basketball initiative from some of their other programming was how it could build confidence through skill mastery. Inas reflected on the effect that Gashanti Unity’s 6-week pilot project had had on the girls that she coached:

Inas: And, like, you could…throughout the weeks you could see the ones that were more reserved, and like, didn’t wanna play, who just came, like…flourish… you could tell that they’re getting better and so they feel better about the game… Like, their confidence was rising. It was so good to see.

In many ways, an arts program run by Gashanti Unity could have much the same impact as a sports program in terms of enhancing the girls’ sense of personal freedom, skill mastery and self-confidence and expanding the scope of ‘appropriate’ roles for Somali-Canadian women outside of the home. However, because of its physical nature basketball
evokes questions surrounding a woman’s use of her body in public space in a way that other activities do not. For the Gashantis, participating in basketball challenged the idea that sport was an exclusively masculine realm and that being ‘modest’ (a Somali culture code for ‘feminine’) was incompatible with being athletic:

Inas: And like, now that we’re older I feel like our passion, we can carry onto the other generations. That we can tell them, like, you know, we’re girls, we’re modest, but at the same time don’t be afraid to play basketball. Don’t be afraid to get into sports. It’s not necessarily all for boys as much as our culture would like to present it that way, like you know what I mean?

Idman: Well said. (group agreeing)

That Somali women can be both modest and physical was an empowering lesson the Gashantis wished to pass on through their program, and an important revelation in the pursuit of more equitable gender norms, roles and relationships.

5.8 Components For “Sustained, Successful Resistance”

Martin has argued that framing gender as a social institution may make it “more susceptible to intentional change.” Packard builds on Martin’s work in what is, to my knowledge, the first attempt to determine the mechanisms that must be in place in order for women to destabilize the larger gender order through sport. Such an understanding would be invaluable to sport gender and development researchers and practitioners looking to tease apart the unique contribution sport might make towards empowering women and resisting oppressive gender norms, roles and relationships. Applying a postcolonial and transnational feminist lens to this framework allows us to better consider
the multiple intersections and constant flux of power within the Somali-Canadian diaspora and other slippery, in-between spaces.

5.8.1 Expressing intentionality

Packard explains that as a social institution becomes internalized over time, “the logic that supports it becomes taken for granted”.\textsuperscript{188} The Gashantis discussed how many of their male peers would unwittingly display this type of ‘taken-for-granted’ logic:

Hameeda: I’ll tell you something though. Even, like, with Somali guys and stuff, like, they know how it is because that’s how they were raised in their house, they know that girls were, you know, raised differently than them. So you go to school with them, you know them, you’re friends with them, and you think they think like, really differently, you know what I mean? Like, you think oh, you know they see you as their equal, everything’s good. And then, later on one day…

Munirah: They slip up.

…

Huma: They’ll eventually be like, “aand I want my wife to be in the kitchen”

Inas: Yeah!

\textit{(group laughing, agreeing loudly)}

Hameeda: Trust me! Like, you think they’re cool but they’re not! ... It’s just their upbringing.

Munirah: It’s embedded in them…

Hameeda: They’re not even aware sometimes.

Any assault on this dominant gender ideology, then, must be an \textit{intentional} act lest its taken-for-granted nature prevail. Just as there is no singular gender ideology that stretches across cultures, religions, countries or generations, ‘intentional’ resistance to institutionalized gender norms will manifest itself in many different ways within different

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contexts and programs. For example, in Mathare, Kenya the MYSA football program trained women for leadership roles and reconstructed its division of labor to have boys share in those tasks usually reserved for girls (i.e. washing football jerseys). In rural Egypt, the Ishraq program challenged assumptions about gendered uses of public space by starting the community’s first ever sports programming for girls in a local youth center. Both programs were intentional in challenging societal perceptions about the possible roles for women, yet remained culturally sensitive within their respective contexts and took practical steps to ensure the safety of participants (for example, the MYSA program always schedules girls’ football matches before dark and the girls’ participating in the Ishraq program did so within the privacy of a walled space).

When asked if they thought sport could make a special contribution in challenging the dominant, gender ideology internalized within the Somali-Canadian diaspora, Hameeda articulated that she agreed that a degree of intentionality would be key to making a sustainable impact:

Hameeda: I think it all depends on how serious we are about the program.  
Mel: Right  
Hameeda: Like, I don’t know, if we’re, like, really serious and we make this into something then I think it will have like a real impact. But cause I’ve seen so many girls’ programs and stuff, or girls’ basketball, like drop in, like start and then finish and then it’s over, like you know what I mean?  
Mel: Mhmm  
Hameeda: But I think if we really take it seriously and its something really long lasting, then I think it will make a huge impact.

The Gashantis felt that carefully structuring their program would not only set it apart from the typical girls’ sports programming they had encountered in their community, but also contribute to its longevity and ‘impact’. Basketball alone would not be enough to accomplish their larger goals. The Gashantis planned to follow a “sport-plus” approach reminiscent of their days scrimmaging and attending study circle at the mosque as youths,
and more formally introduced to them through the workshop delivered by Kicking AIDS Out. The imagined content of the “plus” component of the program was less agreed upon among group members at this stage, with suggestions ranging from instilling ‘life skills’ to more radical sexual health education. What was clear from the interviews, however, was Gashanti Unity’s vision to use basketball as a platform to promote a new cultural blueprint that allowed space for girls to negotiate their own identities:

Inas: …we wanted, throughout basketball, for them to gain a sense of who they are, and what they like from what they don’t like, and just have a sense of themselves … stronger. Like, know that, ok, I have a voice and what I say does matter in this world. I’m just as important as everybody else type of thing.

5.8.2 Deviance within an otherwise legitimate setting

Packard notes that contesting an institution such as gender requires not only intentional action, but one that is considered ‘deviant’ or outside of those practices that normally constitute and reconstitute the institution; “a refusal to embody the relationship between masculinity and femininity demanded by gender hegemony”. In Part One of this discussion, I considered how a combination of parental and cultural expectations limits the number of Somali-Canadian women participating in sport, particularly after a certain age. Inas explains the low number of women playing basketball is connected to the expectation that they remain out of the public eye and within the home, and the pleasure she receives from disproving this preconception:

Inas: Yeah, I was just going to say that with guys in our culture, because they expect girls to stay home and stuff, when they see
girls taking part in physical activities and sports … they’re like really? You guys are into that?
Huma: *(in background)* they feel intimidated too…
Munirah: That’s “cute”…
Hameeda: *(laughing)* that’s cute, yeah…
Inas: Yeah! Like, recreation, you actually take part in this? For me I think it’s cool cause they don’t see that aspect of us, like you know what I mean? … So when they see that they’re just like, okkkk *(impressed tone)* … like, she knows basketball, you know? It’s still in her. And I’m just like, yeah! You know, I’m just as capable of shooting a damn three as you are! *(group laughing)* So I don’t know…I think it’s cool when guys see that we’re not in that confined box.

Huma and Munirah comment that boys were “intimidated” and sometimes delegitimized their participation in sport by qualifying it as “cute”. Packard notes that these types of sanctions are commonly used against women who disrupt gender norms in an attempt to “restore the existing, hegemonic order”.\(^{191}\) Stigmatizing women who play basketball works to diminish the power their actions may have to bring about change. Packard further explains:

*Resistance that effectively challenges a social institution without becoming stigmatized must reside in an otherwise legitimate environment. That is, the “troublemakers” must be seen to some extent as legitimate actors expanding the range of possibilities that other legitimate actors could see themselves embodying. There is a certain power gained when women who embody otherwise hegemonic notions of femininity (e.g., heterosexual, mothers, engaged in women’s work, etc.) also embody characteristics of hegemonic masculinity (e.g., aggression, violence) by participating in an activity outside the bounds of what is conventionally acceptable.*\(^{192}\)

For Inas, earning respect from male peers through basketball is largely dependent on her ability to compete with them on the court. And while there are undoubtedly many Somali-Canadian women like Inas who are not only comfortable but *enjoy* publicly
displaying their physicality and competitive spirit, the Gashantis realize that the widespread reach and impact they envision for their program will be undermined if it does not take place in an otherwise legitimate setting, that is within the confines of a private, female-only space. Creating this type of environment allows women to practice modesty (central to hegemonic notions of femininity in Somali culture) while participating in an activity that expands the boundaries of what is acceptable for Somali-Canadian women.

5.8.4 Operating within a social support network

Social institutions are constructed and sustained by social practices repeated over and over by group members. Thus, resistance to a social institution (such as gender) must also be a social act. Packard identified strong team bonds as being crucial to protecting women against the many “risks and sacrifices” they face as the aforementioned “troublemakers”. Similarly, the Gashantis considered themselves as “new renegades”, slowly chipping away at a patriarchal ideology that structured Somali women’s lives:

Mel: But, um…do you think that in order to achieve this, this new blueprint, or this new middle ground, you’re going to have to engage the men your age or older in a new way? Or is this a battle that’s fought between you and your mothers?
Munirah: I think it’s…
Hameeda: It’s fought everywhere! (laughing)
Munirah: It’s fought everywhere.
Huma: It’s fought everywhere.
Munirah: I think we will have to get there because it’s just like…it’s more in our face now.
Hameeda: Oh, it is…
Munirah: It’s really in our face. So it’s like, the conversation is overdue. But now it’s like, honestly, we are going to become the new renegades.
(group laughing)

Munirah: …because we’re always the ones challenging everything. If we put something like this together, it’s like “these girls (threatening voice)…they’re pushing every button. We let them have their little group, we let them have their basketball, but now!? They’re going to go into the imbalance of something that’s been before their time!”

The Gashantis know that they continued to move deeper and deeper into hostile terrain.
Their strength lies in the collective of women they have built from the beginning, a support network of Somali-Canadian girls that continues to grow today. And although Gashanti Unity’s sport, gender and development program exhibits all of the necessary components for “sustained, successful resistance” to gender’s ordering power, this story has shown that such resistance cannot be understood outside of the cultural context it permeates. For Gashanti Unity, challenging the existing gender order is as much about mediating generations of Somali-Canadians in the bewildering dynamic of the diaspora as it is about altering binary notions of masculinity and femininity.

5.9 Summary of Findings

These findings shed light on influences that have informed and constrained Gashanti Unity’s sport, gender and development program, as well as the possibilities and limitations of using sport to negotiate new gender norms, roles and relationships within the Somali diaspora.

As an organization, Gashanti Unity’s strategic planning and program development is guided by the needs and ideas of the young women in their community. The genesis of their basketball program similarly grew as a collaborative effort, informed by the Gashantis’ common love for the game and their gendered experiences with sport. These findings suggest that sport represents an important meeting space outside of school and
home for the Gashantis, and that there is a complicated relationship between Somali-Canadian culture, the experiences of physicality and embodiment offered by basketball, and how these are translated into empowerment and ‘development’.

The actual implementation of the program has been constrained by the socioeconomic landscape of the communities in which the Gashantis live and work, funding and resources, cultural expectations and parental support. The opportunity to engage with the broader international discourse of sport, gender and development practices, but then adapt this knowledge to the specific needs of their community, has been key to the success of the program.

The Gashantis are acutely aware of their layered lives, (like a cake!) and have developed many strategies to consolidate their dual Somali and Canadian cultural identities – strategies which they aim to share with the younger Somali-Canadian generation within the supportive network that is Gashanti Unity. For the Gashantis, a new cultural blueprint for Somali-Canadian women embraces the strengths of their Somali heritage while negotiating for greater personal freedom and movement for women. Basketball is thought to be able to contribute to this vision in the way it can 1) promote healthier, active living, 2) provide a different platform for women to know and support one another, 3) engage participants, and 4) foster self-confidence. Gashanti Unity’s sport, gender and development program appears to exhibit many of the necessary components to resist gender’s stubborn ordering power; however these findings also suggest that challenging unequal gender relations in the diaspora may be as much about forging new understanding between generations of women as it is about changing relationships between men and women.
Chapter 6
Conclusions and Recommendations

This thesis expands our current knowledge of sport, gender and development practices by considering its potential in disporic space. It provides a distinct look at how gender norms, roles and relationships differ across generations, and reminds us that any role sport might play in shaping a new gender order can only be understood within its unique cultural climate. Conclusions pertaining to each of the research questions are summarized in the following section, followed by some recommendations for those engaging in sport, gender and development practice and research.

6.1 Research Question #1: How Sport, Gender and Development is Conceptualized and Deployed in Diasporic Space

- Gashanti Unity conceptualizes their sport, gender and development program as a “sport plus” initiative that, in addition to basketball skills and fitness, can provide young Somali-Canadian women with a new space to meet and connect, a safe environment to express and enjoy their physicality, and the negotiation tools necessary to earn parental support.

- There is a lack of consistent, culturally sensitive sports programming for Somali-Canadian women in the city of Toronto. In part, it was this paucity that inspired Gashanti Unity to collaborate and start an organization that could address the
needs of young Somali-Canadian girls in a way they never experienced growing up.

• In addition to the Gahantis’ personal experiences with basketball, Gashanti Unity’s sport, gender and development programming has been informed by an opportunity for transnational knowledge exchange. This opportunity to engage with the broader international discourse on sport, gender and development was both inspiring and informative. The success of the program, however, has relied on Gashanti Unity having the freedom to adapt this knowledge to the specific cultural needs of their community in order to earn the trust of parents and recruit participants to their program.

• Access to funding both enabled and constrained Gashanti Unity’s sport, gender and development programming. While mainstream community development grants have helped to ensure the long-term sustainability of the organization, they do not generally support or recognize sport as a viable tool for community development.

• Recreation and leisure opportunities remain unequally divided among young Somali-Canadian men and women. Cultural expectations surrounding gendered norms and roles contribute to this inequality, particularly those which dictate the use of women’s bodies in public space. More generally, there is lack of parental support within the Somali diaspora for extracurricular activities that take time away from pursuing education and career. These barriers have slowed the progress of Gashanti Unity’s sport, gender and development program considerably.
6.2 Research Question #2: The Imagined Role of Sport in Negotiating New Gender Norms, Roles and Relationships

- For the Gashantis, negotiating a new cultural blueprint means working across generations to attaining greater personal freedom and movement for Somali women. This new set of gender norms, roles and relationships retains the strengths of Somali heritage, but rejects traditional sexual divisions of labour and encouraged women to form their own identities and play an active role in the community.

- Basketball is thought to be able to play a unique role in negotiating this new blueprint, particularly in the way it allows women to meet and connect. Its physicality challenges beliefs about appropriate behavior for Somali women in the public sphere and allows women to know themselves and each other in a new light.

Basketball engages girls differently. Gashanti Unity intimately understands the cultural needs of Somali women and can provide a sporting environment that both mothers and daughters feel good about. Basketball also acts as a “hook”, enticing many Somali-Canadian girls into Gashanti Unity’s program and support network.

Basketball helps to foster the self-confidence necessary to navigate between dual Somali-Canadian identities. It provides girls with a sense of skill mastery and expands the scope of ‘appropriate’ roles for women outside of the home. Demonstrating that as a Somali-Canadian woman you can be both modest and physical is an empowering message for women.
• Within diasporic spaces, challenging the existing gender order can be as much about mediating generations as it is about altering binary notions of masculinity and femininity. Gashanti Unity has taught us that sport, gender and development programs that aim to empower women and challenge gendered hierarchies of power must be attentive to the complicated histories woven across generations and the way these enable and constrain participation in sport.

6.3 Recommendations for practitioners and researchers

• The 2010 Toronto Report Card on Physical Activity notes that girls, children of low-income parents and children of immigrants are among the city’s most inactive populations. My findings suggest that there are many nuanced cultural and familial barriers that can complicate women’s participation in sport, particularly for daughters of immigrant parents (who also often happen to live in low-income neighborhoods). If the city is serious about increasing physical activity levels within its many unique and vibrant diasporic neighborhoods, it must enlist the expertise of leaders from these communities in order to better understand these barriers and effectively engage both youth and parents.

• Moving forward, sport, gender and development programs must work to carve out a legitimate space within mainstream development work and stop operating in a separate and peripheral sphere. Funding, expertise and best practices need to be shared across sectors, organizations, and levels of the “aid chain” if development work is to start providing the type of holistic, sustainable and wide-spread reach it so desperately needs. Sport, gender and development practitioners should begin by partnering with groups and organizations with expertise in gender development outside of sport in order to attract funding from different sources, and to better
address the social and material needs of its participants. Sport, gender and
development researchers should actively seek partnerships with experts in
different fields to share knowledge on best practice and advocate for the inclusion
of sport as a piece of the development puzzle.

• Sport, gender and development researchers need to continue to work towards
decolonizing methodologies and participatory approaches of inquiry.
Furthermore, the academic agendas and frameworks within which this research
must live needs to be scrutinized for the ease at which it truly allows subjugated
voices to be incorporated. Sport, gender and development practitioners need to be
encouraged to conduct their own participatory monitoring and evaluation, and
provided avenues to share their findings with the full range of SDP stakeholders –
other practitioners, academics, private and corporate funding bodies, etc.

• More research needs to be done in a variety of spaces where sport, gender and
development seeks to operate. The goal of contesting a gender order that – while
more fluid than some would claimed – continues to be accepted as taken-for-
granted logic is both lofty and impossibly convoluted. Investigating how sport
contributes to this goal across different cultural settings, generations and nations
will help to continue to shed light on its unique possibilities and limits in
community development.
6.4 Recommendations for Gashanti Unity

The strength of Gashanti Unity lies in that they are a group run by Somali women for Somali women. My knowledge and understanding of the needs of their community pales in comparison to their own, and as such, any recommendation I can make to them should be taken with a grain of salt. With that in mind, based on these findings I would encourage Gashanti Unity to:

- Explore funding opportunities available through some of the leading local and national charitable sporting organizations, including Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment’s Team Up Foundation, Canadian Tire’s JumpStart Program, the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women in Sport (CAAWS), and the Toronto Community Foundation.

- Continue to look for ways to engage both girls and mothers in the basketball program.

- Pair basketball with Gashanti Unity’s other existing initiatives. Continue to partner with leaders in the Somali community so that you can offer sport as part of a larger, holistic programming effort.

- Continue to monitor and evaluate your basketball program in any creative way you see fit, and look to share your findings with a wide range of local and international sport for development stakeholders (your website is an excellent platform to do this, as is the International Platform on Sport and Development –
www.sportanddev.org). The lessons you can teach the sport for development community are invaluable.

6.5 Limitations

Conducting sport, gender and development programming (and research) in the diaspora is neither straightforward nor quick. Gashanti Unity’s summer plans for initiating the second phase of their basketball program (to which I was set to attend) was curtailed by a combination of funding issues, religious holidays, and the lengthy process of recruiting girls (and by extension, parents) to the program. While the link between physicality, culture and empowerment was hinted at throughout the focus group sessions, these findings would be greatly enriched by further qualitative research that explores the actual experiences of girls participating in their sport, gender and development program.

Given that this is a story about relationships across generations of Somali-Canadian women, the voice of the mothers is missing in this thesis. In order to better unpack why it is often these older women who seem to act as the greatest opposition to their daughters achieving greater personal freedom and expression, future research must include these voices as well.

I feel that this analysis was also limited in the extent to which it was able to engage in participatory action research and evaluation. While I am forever grateful to Hameeda, Munirah, Inas, Huma and Idman for sharing their stories and insights with me, I believe we need to continue to work towards new methodologies that allow the researcher and the ‘researched’ to produce truly collaborative knowledge.

Nonetheless, the women of Gashanti Unity provided invaluable insight into the challenges and possibilities of using sport to negotiate new gender norms, roles and
relationships in the Somali-Canadian diaspora, an important starting point in changing how we think about sport, gender and development in diasporic space.

6.6 Concluding Remarks

It is my hope that this thesis changes, in some small way, how we think about gender, sport and development. These findings affirm that sport can make a distinct contribution in challenging gender norms, roles and relationships and suggests that perhaps its biggest strength is its ability to act as a platform for women and girls to meet and connect – differently. It builds on previous findings surrounding the influence of culture, family and community on women’s sporting experiences, but calls for more to be done qualitatively to distill the link between physicality, culture and empowerment. These findings urge researchers to continue to search for more collaborative ways of producing knowledge, and call for greater partnership between stakeholders in community development (including NGOs, government agencies, funding bodies, and community leaders with different expertise) in order to provide more holistic and sustainable programming to participants. Perhaps most importantly, these findings encourage us to expand our definition of sport, gender and development to include initiatives happening in the many wonderfully complex diasporic spaces here in Canada.
Notes

1 Messner, *Taking the Field*.
2 United Nations, *Toward Achieving the Millennium Development Goals*; SDP IWG, *From Practice to Policy*.
5 Hargreaves, *Sporting Females*.
7 Brady, ‘Creating Safe Spaces’; van Beek and Leibman, (she’s into sports); Saavedra, ‘Dilemmas and Opportunities’.
8 Brady, ‘Creating Safe Spaces’, 47.
9 Hall, *Girl and the Game*.
11 Moreover, who is ‘in power’ is a relative idea, as evidenced when the oppressed becomes the oppressor. For example, low-income males lacking other means of power may exert their dominance in the form of violence over women and children to maintain a sense of power and control (Anderson, 1997).
12 Brady, ‘Creating Safe Spaces’.
13 Saavedra, ‘Dilemma and Opportunities’.
15 Ibid, 3.
16 United Nations, *Declaration on the Right to Development*.
18 Ibid, 6.
19 Ibid.
20 Ibid, 8.
21 Ibid, 15.
22 Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*.
23 Ibid, 191-192.
24 Lenskyj, ‘Women’s Issues’.
25 Ibid.
26 Hall, *Feminism and Sporting Bodies*.
28 Hall, *Feminism and Sporting Bodies*; Lenskyji, ‘Women’s Issues’; Lenskji, ‘Power and Play’.
29 Hall, *Feminism and Sporting Bodies*.
31 Wong, ‘Socialist Feminism’, 292.
32 Scraton and Flintoff, ‘Sport Feminism’.
Hall, ‘When was ‘the post-colonial?’’, 242-160. Some scholars, such as Hall, have argued that the hyphen sometimes used between ‘post’ and ‘colonial’ suggests that colonialism is a thing of the past.


McEwan, ‘Postcolonialism, Feminism and Development’, 94.

Collins, Black Feminist Thought, 246.

Mohanty, Feminism Without Borders, McEwan, ‘Postcolonialism, Feminism and Development’.


Mohanty, Feminism Without Borders; Hayhurst, MacNeill and Frisby, ‘Postcolonial Feminist Approach’.


Scraton, ‘Reconceptualizing Race, Gender and Sport’.

Collins, Black Feminist Thought, 250-251.


Ibid.

Peterson and Runyan. Global Gender Issues.

Ibid.

Peterson and Runyan, Global Gender Issues; Packard, ‘Running Off-Tackle’.

Peterson and Runyan, Global Gender Issues.

Ibid.

Packard, ‘Running Off-Tackle.’


Packard, ‘Running Off-Tackle’.

Kay and Spaaij, ‘Mediating Effects of Family’.

Ibid.


Packard, ‘Running Off-Tackle’.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Kidd (2010) has argued that SDP is “but a new manifestation of the ambition of ‘sport for good’ that dates back at least to Thomas Hughes’ Christian socialism of the 19th century”; Levermore (2009) and Darnell (2010) have traced SDP’s neo-liberal agenda; several postcolonial feminists have questioned the way knowledge within the field of SDP has been produced and advocated for new decolonizing practices (Darnell and Hayhurst, 2011).

Levermore and Beacom, Sport and International Development; Murphy, Sheard and Waddington, ‘Figurational’.

Darnell and Hayhurst. ‘Sport for Decolonization’, 186-196; Darnell, ‘Power, Politics and Sport for Development’, 54-75.
Murphy, Sheard and Waddington, ‘Figurational Sociology’.

Murphy, Sheard and Waddington, ‘Figurational Sociology’; Saavedra, ‘Dilemmas and Opportunities’.


Kidd lists a variety of organizations who promoted ‘sport for good’ in theory and practice, ranging from “Christians in the YMCA and Catholic Youth Organizations, to reforming Jews in the Young Hebrew Associations, to secular municipal reformers in the playground movement, and socialists and trade unionists in the Worker Sport Associations” (Kidd, 2011, 608).

Kidd, ‘Cautions, Questions and Opportunities’, 608.

Nelson Mandela, as cited in Donelly, ‘Sport and Human Rights’, 381-394.

Ibid.

Ibid


Darnell, ‘Power, Politics, and Sport for Development’.

Nicholls, Playing Games with Power.

Hayhurst, ‘Power to Shape Policy’.


While not a wholly neoliberal document, mention of sport in the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action centered around providing greater access to sporting opportunities (p 108) and facilities (p 29) to girls, and fell short of addressing the complicated way in which gender, culture, class etc. intersect and often complicate women’s full and meaningful participation. (United Nations, 1995).

Kay and Spaaij. ‘Mediating Effects of Family’.

Larkin, Razack and Moola, ‘Gender, Sport and Development’.

Nicholls, Playing Games with Power.

Ibid.

Saaedra, ‘Dilemmas and Opportunities’.

Ibid.

These concerns are echoed in recent criticism of the “girl effect”, a “growing but understudied initiative that assumes girls are catalysts capable of bringing unparalleled social and economic change to their families, communities and countries.” (Hayhurst, MacNeill and Frisby, 2011). Also, Lyndsay Hayurst’s forthcoming doctoral dissertation will unpack the “girl effect” in even greater depth.

Saaedra, ‘Dilemmas and Opportunities’.
100

[297x699]100 Brady, ‘Creating Safe Spaces’.
Kidd, “Cautions, Questions and Opportunities’, 604.
I would like to thank Peter Donnelly and Bruce Kidd for teaching me that it was possible to be both critical and an idealist.
Lenskyj, ‘Women’s Issues’. Original emphasis.
Saavedra, ‘Dilemmas and Opportunities’.
Messner, Taking the Field.
Saavedra, ‘Dilemmas and Opportunities’.
van Beek, and Leibman. (she’s into sports); Brady, ‘Creating Safe Spaces’; Saavedra, ‘Dilemmas and Opportunities’.
Hall, Girl and the Game.
Messner, Taking the Field.
Ibid.
Larkin, Razack and Moola, ‘Gender, Sport and Development’.
United Nations, Towards Achieving the Millennium Development Goals; SDP IWG, From Practice to Policy.
Larkin, Razack and Moola, ‘Gender, Sport and Development’.
Brady, ‘Creating Safe Spaces’; Saavedra, ‘Dilemmas and Opportunities’; van Beek and Leibman, (she’s into sports); Brady and Banu Khan. Letting Girls Play.
Brady and Banu Khan, Letting Girls Play; Brady, ‘Creating Safe Spaces’; van Beek and Leibman, (she’s into sports).
vан Beek & Leibman, (she’s into sports).
Saavedra, ‘Dilemmas and Opportunities’.
Coalter, Wider Social Role for Sport, 71.
Brady, ‘Creating Safe Spaces’.
Ibid.
Saavedra, ‘Dilemmas and Opportunities’. Founded in 2001 by Sarah Forde MTG and has since grown into an extensive grassroots effort with over 150 teams for nearly 3000 girls and women. The organization uses local and youth-centered approaches to combat social issues plaguing the region and has developed their own monitoring and evaluation practices, carried out by a volunteer team made up of girls in the community.
Brady and Banu Khan, Letting Girls Play. The Mathare Youth Soccer Association, operating in the slums of Nairobi since 1987, has made a concerted effort to include women and girls in their programs. Brady and Banu Khan have shown that girls’ participation in football appears to be related to the way male
footballers perceive their roles. Particularly, males in the MYSA program have not only adopted positive and supportive attitudes towards girls’ involvement, but “watch out” for MYSA girls off of the field as well.

115 Kay and Spaaij. ‘Mediating Effects of Family’, 14. The GOAL program was first piloted in India. With financial support from Standard Chartered Bank, and in partnerships with local NGOs, the program pairs netball with health, communication and finance education modules for low-income adolescent girls. Kay and Spaaij found that the program has contributed to cultural change in gender roles and relations as girls became more “articulate and assertive, allowing them to occupy more influential positions within the family, and disseminate the knowledge they obtained to and through family members.”

116 Kay and Spaaij. 'Mediating Effects of Family'.

117 Ibid.

118 Taylor and Doherty. ‘Adolescent Sport, Recreation and Physical Activity’, 211-238.


121 Gashanti Unity, ‘Who We Are’.

122 Gashanti Unity, ‘Who We Are’.

123 Gashanti Unity, ‘What We Do’. Gashanti Unity’s programming addresses a wide range of issues important in the lives of Somali women living in Toronto. These issues include but are not limited to: racism, sexism, self esteem, cultural alienation, school dropout, Islamophobia, anger management, career planning, positive role models, family communication, developing self-control, stress-management, responsible decision-making, social problem-solving, and communication skills.

124 Gashanti Unity, ‘Initiatives’.

125 Section title borrowed from Abdi Kusow and Stephanie Bjork’s edited book From Modadishu to Dixon: The Somali Diaspora in a Global Context.

126 Kusow and Bjork. From Modadishu to Dixon.

127 Refugees International, ‘Somalia’.


129 Kusow and Bjork, From Mogadishu to Dixon.

130 Ibid, 2.


133 McGown, ‘Tradition and the Inner City’.

134 McGown, Muslims in the Diaspora, 5.

135 McGown, Muslims in the Diaspora; Kusow, Putting the Cart Before the Horse; Kusow and Bjork, From Mogadishu to Dixon.

136 We look forward to Rima Berns McGown’s more recent work which “focuses on interviews with Somali-Canadian in their early 20s- born in Somalia but schooled and socialized in Canada- on questions of identity and belonging” to be published.

Frisby, Reid, Millar and Hoeber. ‘Putting ‘Participatory’ into Participatory Forms of Action Research’, 367-386; Cammarato and Fine, Revolutionizing Education; Weis and Fine. Research and Social Justice.

Nagar, ‘Collaboration Across Borders’.

Stake, ‘Case Studies’, 703-715.


Nagar, ‘Collaboration Across Borders’.

Ibid.

Hodder, Interpretation of Documents and Material Culture’, 703-715.


Cresswell, Qualitative Inquiry.

Madriz, ‘Focus Groups in Feminist Research’, 835-850. Indeed, in an e-mail exchange with one of the Gashantis after our first focus-group session, she commented that it had been a positive experience for the group that allowed them to share certain stories for the first time (in conversation with Hameeda, Monday May 16, 2011)

Madriz, ‘Focus Groups in Feminist Research’.


Fontana and Frey, ‘Structured Questions to Negotiated Texts’.


Ibid, 86.

Ibid, 86.

Ibid, 86.


McGown, Tradition and the Inner City’, 236. During one of our focus group sessions, the Gashantis informed me that in Toronto, Somalis who originated from the North of Somalia tended to reside in the East end of the city (Scarborough), while Somalis who originated from the South of Somalia tended to segregate in the West.


Cammarato and Fine. Revolutionizing Education. See also Frisby, Millar and Hoeber, ‘Putting ‘Participatory’ into Participatory Forms’ and Darnell and Hayhurst, ‘Sport for Decolonization’.

Kidd, ‘Cautions, Questions and Opportunities’. See also, Kay, ‘Developing Through Sport’, 1177-1191; Darnell and Hayhurst, ‘Sport for Decolonization’.

Kidd, ‘Cautions, Questions and Opportunities’.

Kidd, ‘Cautions, Questions and Opportunities’.

These are many of the same culprits the dominant discourse surrounding the “obesity epidemic” attributes to rising inactivity levels among Canadian youth. Some sport and health sociologists have argued that framing recent increases in population weight gain and obesity as an epidemic “reconceptualizes these conditions in terms of moral panic, as propagated by groups with an interest in the obesity epidemic narrative”. Using language that casts obesity in the same light as pathogenic diseases (for example, SARS) “helps to propagate fear, to privilege medical discourses and expertise, to open previously private domains of consumption and parenting to surveillance and intervention, and to legitimate the stigmatization of obese individuals”. (Lockie and Williams, 2010).

SDP IWG, ‘Literature Reviews’.

Title borrowed from Packard, ‘Running Off-Tackle’.

Ibid.

Ibid, 326.
References


Brady, M. ‘‘Creating Safe Spaces and Building Social Assets for Young Women in the Developing World: A New Role for Sports Author(s)’. Women’s Studies Quarterly 33, no. ½ (2005)


Appendix A- Informed Consent

My name is Melanie Belore, and I am a graduate student in the Department of Exercise Sciences in the Faculty of Physical Education and Health at the University of Toronto. As part of my Masters’ thesis, I am conducting research under the supervision of Dr. Bruce Kidd and Dr. Peter Donnelly in the Faculty of Physical Education and Health. I am inviting you to participate in my study entitled: “Exploring sport, gender and urban social development in an ethno-culturally diverse city”.

The Research Project: Recently there has been an influx of ‘sport for development’ projects worldwide which claim to use sport to empower women and challenge traditional gender norms in different cultural contexts. This is happening despite a limited understanding of the potential and limitations of these programs. The purpose of this project is to explore sport, gender and social development initiatives in Toronto.

Specifically, I am interested in investigating:

1) How sport for development is conceptualized and deployed by members of a Somali-Canadian women’s group.

2) If female participation in sport is thought to contribute to imagining and legitimizing new gender norms, roles and relationships within the Somali Diaspora in Toronto

Details of Your Participation: The study involves interviews with members of [name of Organization]. If you agree to participate, the interviews will be arranged at a time and place most convenient to you and will be completed within one (1) hour. You may choose to participate in a one-on-one interview with myself, or a group interview with other members of [name of Organization]. The interview questions have been designed to gather information related to how [name of organization] understands and engages with sport, gender and development, as well as your thoughts on sport's potential role in empowering women in your community. All information obtained in this study will be kept strictly confidential and anonymous.
Your interview will be recorded on audiotape with your permission. Please note that you may choose not to have the interview audiotaped, but continue to participate in the research (written records will be secured – see below). Even if you consent to having your interview audio-taped, you are free to request that the recorder be turned off at any point in the interview or to request that certain recorded information be removed. At any time, you may decline to answer any question. Any information you disclose during the interview will not be reported on an individual basis to anyone, including your superiors and other study participants.

It is important to note that there are no anticipated risks associated with this research, and your participation is completely voluntary. Your choice to either agree or decline to participate in this study will be respected and kept confidential. Your role and relationships within [name of the organization] will not be affected in any way through your participation in this study, or by your decision to not participate. You may withdraw from the study at any time and have all data pertaining to you destroyed, also without penalty to yourself or to the organization.

Privacy & Confidentiality: Unless otherwise indicated by you, all information obtained in this study will be kept strictly confidential and anonymous. Raw data from interview transcriptions will be saved in a password-protected computer and on an encrypted USB memory stick. Each participant will be assigned a pseudonym that will be used to identify interview notes and/or audiotapes of the interviews. One list that matches pseudonyms with the names of participants will be kept in a locked security box. I, Melanie Belore, will remain the sole key-holder to this box, and will be the only person with access to the raw data and numerical participant codes. Also, no personally identifying information will be used in the written work or presentation of this material.

The Products: The data from this research will provide the basis for a case study analysis of a gender, sport and development program in Toronto. In turn, the case study will function as a central feature of my research thesis. You will be consulted throughout the research process for feedback on matters pertaining to the analysis and representation of data generated through our talks, and will be provided with both a summary of the research findings and a copy of the final thesis upon completion. Other possible research products might include academic conference presentations and scholarly articles.

Please read the consent form carefully. If you agree to participate, please sign on the following page. Should you have any questions concerning your rights as a participant in this study, please contact the ethics Review Office at ethics.review@utoronto.ca or +416-946-3273.
I understand that any involvement in the interview will last no more than 1 hour at a time and take place on a date convenient to me. I am aware that my participation is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time, without fear of penalty. If I do withdraw, interview transcripts of my interview will be destroyed, and my decision to withdraw will be kept confidential to minimize any negative perceptions from peers. I have retained a copy of this letter for my files.

I understand that all information collected in this research will be used for research reasons only and that interview audiotapes will only be available to Melanie Belore. I understand that my privacy and real name will be protected at all times during the research by using my pseudonym on audio-tape labels, in all research reports and in presentations if I am quoted or discussed.

I understand raw data from interview transcriptions will be kept confidential and saved in a password-protected computer and on an encrypted USB memory stick.

I understand that the group interview setting is a safe and judgment-free space, and that the responses of my fellow group members are to be kept private and confidential.

I, ____________________________, agree to participate in an interview for the project on “Exploring sport, gender and urban social development in an ethno-culturally diverse city”.

I, ____________________________, agree/do not agree to this interview being audio-taped (please circle appropriate response).

Signature: ____________________________
Date: ____________________________

For more information, please contact:

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Appendix B- Interview Guide

Exercise Sciences
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

The interview will cover the following areas:

1. A brief history of the organization and how the participant became involved.
2. The participant’s current role in the organization.
3. The ways in which the organization works to address important issues in the lives of young Somali women in the participant’s community (mission, goals, programs etc).
4. The participant’s experience with sport.
5. The participant’s familiarity with/understanding of ‘sport for development’.
6. How the basketball program was started and the participant’s role in the program.
7. The participant’s perception of the goals of the basketball program.
8. Challenges/successes of implementing the basketball program thus far.
9. Expected/unexpected outcomes of the program thus far.
10. If the participant and/or organization views the basketball program as a ‘sport for development’ project.
11. If the participant feels that sport (basketball) can be used as a tool to help address important issues in the lives of young Somali women in her community.
12. If the participant feels there are attributes unique to sport (basketball) that might help the organization accomplish its mission/goals.
Appendix C- Ethics Letter of Approval

PROTOCOL REFERENCE # 26219

March 28, 2011

Dr. Bruce Kidd and Dr. Peter Donnelly
Faculty of Physical Education and Health
University of Toronto
40 Sussex Avenue
Toronto, ON M5S 1J7

Miss Melanie Belore
Faculty of Physical Education and Health
University of Toronto
40 Sussex Avenue
Toronto, ON M5S 1J7

Dear Dr. Kidd, Dr. Donnelly and Miss Belore:

Re: Your research protocol entitled, “Exploring sport, gender and urban social development in an ethno-culturally diverse city”

ETHICS APPROVAL

Original Approval Date: March 28, 2011
Expiry Date: March 27, 2012
Continuing Review Level: 1

We are writing to advise you that the Health Sciences Research Ethics Board has granted approval to the above-named research study under the REB’s delegated review process. Your study has been approved for a period of one year and ongoing projects must be renewed prior to the expiry date.

All your most recently submitted documents have been approved for use in this study.

Any changes to the approved protocol or consent materials must be reviewed and approved through the amendment process prior to its implementation. Any adverse or unanticipated events should be reported to the Office of Research Ethics as soon as possible.

Please ensure that you submit an Annual Renewal Form or a Study Completion Report 15 to 30 days prior to the expiry date of your study. Note that annual renewals for studies cannot be accepted more than 30 days prior to the date of expiry, as per federal and international policies.

If your research has funding attached, please contact the relevant Research Funding Officer in Research Services to ensure that your funds are released.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your project.

Yours sincerely,

Daniel Gyewu
Research Ethics Board Manager- Health Sciences

OFFICE OF RESEARCH ETHICS
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