Basketball Court Counter-Stories from Youth in Public Housing: A Critical Race

Approach

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Dedication

For the young people of Liberty Village and all of the residents who call it home.

Abstract

Key words: Counter-stories, Sport, Youth, Liberty Village

This research inquiry used critical race methodology to unearth the counter-stories of young people from Liberty Village, a public housing community based in the Niagara region. The community is highly racialized, low income and possesses a lingering, though unwarranted, reputation for crime and violence. The majoritarian or traditional story of the community and its residents perpetuates a negative image, one that often goes unchallenged. The counter-stories produced by the young people of the Liberty Village community actively challenge the status quo and highlight participant experiences with racism, and its intersections with oppression and marginality. These counter-stories highlight the importance of sport and, in particular, the community basketball/sport court, as a significant place in the lives of young people in Liberty Village. Their accounts also highlight the day-to-day racism that exists and the micro-aggressions subtly produced by the racial majority. These stories produce significant knowledge to help better understand marginalized youth experiences, sport for development programs, and the impact of racialized micro-aggressions.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The Niagara region in Southern Ontario is an area that is well known for Niagara Falls, canals, fruit orchards and wineries. The municipalities that make up the region are also known as being predominantly "white". In fact, only 6.3% of all residents within the region are of a visible minority, compared to the 22.8% of visible minorities within the rest of the province (Niagararegion.ca). Furthermore, there are very few neighbourhoods in Niagara where the majority of residents are of a visible minority. One such neighbourhood is Liberty Village[1]. Liberty Village is a public housing community in the Niagara region with a lingering reputation as a "ghetto". The housing community was once well known as a site of violence and crime, as reflected in a sampling of newspaper articles from over a decade ago reporting several shooting incidents at the townhouse complex, as well as armed robberies, and home invasions involving handguns. These incidents, and their media coverage, have painted an extremely negative image of the community[2]. However, many residents explain that in recent years the community has witnessed a drastic turnaround with a significant reduction in crime. Unfortunately, the housing complex is still haunted by a negative stigma, which continues to impact the young people who call Liberty Village home. As one young resident explains:

> … people still think that Liberty Village is still the ghetto when it's really not. It's so not whatever you think it is. It's so cultural based and so community based and everyone is still stuck on that it was a bad area to live or whatever. But now, it's

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[1] Liberty Village is a pseudonym.
[2] To comply with research ethics protocols I cannot directly reference any of these newspaper articles as they would reveal identifying details about the housing community at the centre of this research

nothing bad about it. It's grown to be a beautiful community. I heard one comment, so stupid -- I think the person was like 'I think someone got shot in Liberty Village'. When has anyone got shot in Liberty Village? I'm sorry but what? I don't think anyone has. I think just because it's so stereotyped as the ghetto. I don't know. They just don't have time to see it as the actual thing it is. They're just too afraid to come in and see what it actually is like. (Marutsa, age 22, June 11 2014).

As a kinesiology graduate, a soccer coach, and a certified physical education teacher, I am interested in the role of sport in young people's lives. This study pays particular attention to the ways in which youth from an underserved community produce their own sporting experiences within their neighborhood, specifically on the community basketball court, known to many as the heart of the community. In this research the term 'sport' is used to describe a wide array of physical activities including competitive sport, school sport and physical education, and recreational/community based sport and leisure activities (van Ingen, Sharpe, & Lashua, 2016).

It is well documented that sport can play an important role in the lives of young people. Sport participation can produce several positive outcomes for young people such as leadership skills, increased academic achievement, and increased self-esteem and self-efficacy (Haudenhuyse, Theeboom, & Nols, 2013; Branta, Lerner, & Taylor, 1996; Eccles, Barber, Stone, & Hunt, 2003; Holt, Kingsley, Tink, & Scherer, 2011). It can also provide a sense of challenge, comradery, concentration, and motivation for the youth involved (Turnridge, Cote & Hancock, 2014). Similarly, Johnson, Garing, Oliphant, and Roberts (2016) explain that youth sport engagement can prevent certain health risk

behaviors, and can promote character development and pro-social interactions.

As Nelson Mandela, the revolutionary civil rights activist and former President of South Africa, explains:

> Sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire. It has the power to unite people in a way that little else does. It speaks to youth in a language they understand. Sport can create hope where once there was only despair. It is more powerful than government in breaking down racial barriers. It laughs in the face of all kinds of discrimination (www.leftfootforward.org).

Yet for many families poverty is a barrier for youth sport participation, and leaves children from poor neighborhoods with limited options for organized sport and recreation (Scherer and Crossman, 2015). With the price of organized youth sports on the rise, it is becoming harder and harder for Canadian parents to afford to keep their children involved. According to Brady (2011), the annual cost of minor hockey in Ontario alone is around $1500 on average, and includes travel costs, registration fees and equipment. These fees can often seem insurmountable for families who reside in Ontario public housing communities, and pay up to 30% of their gross family income on rent alone.

So if the price of organized sport has become too high for parents to afford, especially for low-income families, what options remain? One solution to this problem has been the implementation of sport programs for youth living in underserved communities. These programs are community-based and fall under the Sport for Development (SFD) umbrella. These initiatives are designed to use sport to help youth achieve prosocial development, as well as to learn and develop essential life skills.

Yet, in many "first world" industrial, capitalist countries, communities and non-government organizations (NGO) tasked with program delivery have implemented SFD programs as a means to reduce crime and violence in order to curb delinquent behavior (Hartmann, 2012). In these approaches it is assumed that the key to crime reduction, particularly within racialized communities, is keeping youth preoccupied with sport. However, while these initiatives often succeed in creating sporting opportunities for youth in underserved areas, the programs are predicated on youth who reside in 'at-risk' communities, or 'priority neighborhoods'. This fact alone can further perpetuate the cycle of marginalization in these areas (Kelly, 2012). Marginalization is largely perpetuated because these programs are often only available for members of the 'at-risk' community, thus preventing important social interactions with peers from school and the larger community. These programs also reproduce rather than challenge established social relations and assume it is the youth themselves who are a problem that need to be solved. By targeting at-risk youth, these programs inadvertently treat the participants involved as 'special cases' who are in need of help from community outsiders (Kelly, 2012).

While sport is often seen in a positive light, and can be used to achieve positive outcomes in low-income communities, it is important to realize that it does have limitations. As such, it is dangerously optimistic to view sport as a panacea that is able to solve all the societal problems that young people face (Hartmann, & Kwauk, 2011). As this research highlights, members of the Liberty Village public housing community face persistent racial and economic inequities and obstacles. While sport remains unable to address the deleterious effects of racism and poverty, it has been noted by many in the

community as a unique space of enjoyment, socializing and opportunity. As one

participant, Matthew (age 16), explains:

> … it just takes like some of the kids here away from any other stuff that might be
> going on in like their house or whatever. It's like a way to get out of the house and
> just have like   your own free time.

Within Liberty Village there is a community court that has two mounted

basketball nets, with metal hockey goals positioned directly underneath. The entire court

is fenced in, with only one door that leads in and out. Inside the court there are two

benches that are placed along the south side, on either side of the entrance. There is a

small makeshift basketball net that has been attached to the east fence for young children

to shoot on. The youth net has a standard rim and backboard but instead of being

mounted to a pole, it has been attached to the fence surrounding the court using large

bolts, which have been secured into two large pieces of plywood. Along the top of the

court entrance hangs two murals created by neighborhood youth, depicting the vibrant

community. In its design and in its use, the Liberty Village court shines as a place where

many youth choose to congregate. The court is an important social and sporting hub and

one that is worthy of scholarly investigation.

The purpose of this study is to engage young people living in Liberty Village in

counter-storytelling to talk about their everyday experiences within their neighbourhood.

Counter-storytelling is a means of challenging the majoritarian stories that reinforce

racial hegemony and dominant narratives. In other words, counter-storytelling is a way

for young people to disrupt stereotypes and tell their own stories. In particular, I am

interested in understanding the meaning of sport in the lives of the participants, and the role that the community court plays in their sporting experience. The following research question framed the study:

- What does storytelling about the community court teach us about the lives of young people in Liberty Village?

The following chapter is a literature review on two main bodies of knowledge: Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Sport For Development (SFD). Critical Race Theory is the theoretical and methodological framework through which the project is constructed in order to examine how the counter-stories produced by the youth participants contrast to the majoritarian story that has been used to describe the community. The literature on Sport for Development identifies how sport can be used to achieve prosocial development, and critiques current programs engaged in sport for development. In Chapter Three I outline critical race methodology and the use of participant narratives as counter-stories. I explain the structure of the research project, and how the data was collected and analyzed. The chapter concludes with ethical considerations and study limitations, followed by research reflexivity, where I highlight my role in the research. Chapter Four is comprised of individual participant counter-stories drawn from the interview transcripts. These stories highlight participant experience and challenge the normative discourse that has become attached to Liberty Village. The chapter begins by introducing each of the youth participants to provide the reader with some background. The counter-stories are then presented in a way that retains the voice of each participant. In Chapter Five I conclude the research by articulating the study findings in relation to the initial research questions. In this chapter I analyze the main themes that emerged from

the stories of the youth participants and identify how these themes intersect with current

literature regarding young people and sport. In Chapter Six I describe the study

limitations as well as future directions.

Chapter Two: Review of Literature

Introduction

In this chapter I review two main bodies of literature that inform the research investigation, Critical Race Theory and Sport for Development. I begin with an examination of Critical Race Theory (CRT), as it is the epistemological lens through which the project is constructed. I discuss the origins of CRT and outline how it forms the theoretical framework for this research investigation. The main tenets of CRT are discussed, as well as how CRT has been utilized in previous sport research. In the second half of the chapter, I provide a review of the literature within the emergent field of Sport for Development (SFD), discussing both its justifications and critiques. This is followed by an examination of the literature on how youth are classified into an "at-risk" category. This chapter concludes with a discussion on how sport for development initiatives are used to target "at-risk" youth, and the varying outcomes that result.

Critical Race Theory (CRT)

What is CRT?

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is defined as "a framework from which to explore and examine the racism in society that privileges whiteness as it disadvantages others because of their 'blackness' " (Hylton, 2009, p. 22). CRT is an approach that puts 'race' and racism at the centre of analysis and examines how racism functions within society. It acknowledges that racism exists throughout society, and provides a theory through which discriminatory policies and practices can be understood and challenged.

Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, two researchers at the forefront of the critical race literature, outline the ways in which CRT is a transdisciplinary theory that seeks to "transform relationships of race, racism, and power" (2001, p. 3). While CRT was conceived in order to highlight and oppose racial injustice, it has since expanded to challenge forms of racism and discrimination across a multitude of fields, and oppose the subjugation of gendered or marginalized populations and ethnic groups, thus confirming its versatility as a transdisciplinary theory (Montoya, 1994; Arriola, 1997; Espinoza & Harris, 1998). Solorzano and Yosso (2002) explain that CRT has evolved since its inception, moving beyond racial injustices that are limited to a black and white binary, and include broader forms of racism and oppression, including those based on social class and gender. While CRT retains a central focus on race and racial inequalities, it is unique in that it highlights race alongside its intersections with other forms of privilege and oppression. It is a theory that does not solely view race as 'black and white', but considers all of the different levels of discrimination and oppression that exist within racism.

Kevin Hylton, who studies equality and diversity in sport, states that CRT legitimizes the narratives of marginalized voices that challenge the status quo, while confronting racial neutrality, and "institutional arrangements or policies that racially discriminate, subjugate, and oppress" (2009, p. 22). Various policies and practices exist within society that defend the idea of 'racial neutrality' or 'colour-blindness' which is the belief that people of colour are given equal opportunity despite being part of the racial minority. In many cases, this notion of 'colour-blindness' exists in nothing more than name, and is not actually evident within the given scenario. For example, despite the

Fédération Internationale de Football Association's (FIFA) best efforts to exclude racism from the game of soccer, in 2015 former Milan and Italian national soccer coach, Arrigo Sacchi, claimed that Italy had lost its dignity and pride because there were "too many blacks" within Italian domestic leagues. Black players in this league faced harassment and discrimination both on and off the field. Sacchi then denied any claims of racism, stating that he could not be a racist because he had previously signed non-white players to teams he had coached (sportingnews.com). This is a blatant, yet far too common, example of racial prejudice at the macro-level. However, racism is often far more subtle and insidious. Racism operates within the everyday in ways that are often overlooked or ignored. The term for this everyday racism is "racial micro-aggression" and is used to describe the commonplace, repetitive insults directed toward people of colour (Sue, Bucceri, Lin, Nadal, and Torino, 2007). As an example, the word 'thug' is used as a code word to signal blackness. Whether it is sport governing bodies like FIFA that emphasize colour-blind policies in a feeble attempt to deal with racism at the macro-level or the everyday example of the meaning behind racially charged language, CRT can be used to highlight the appearance and experiences of systemic racism.

Inauguration

Delgado and Stefancic explain that critical race theory originated in the 1970's within the field of Critical Legal Studies (CLS), as many legal experts had noticed that much of the racial advances for people of colour that were achieved in the 1960's had begun to slow in momentum, and in some cases, digressed towards repeal. Scholars who had realized what was happening decided that a new theory was needed to counter the emerging racism of the time (Delgado and Stefancic, 2011).

Some of the early founders of CRT, and key figures of the initial movement in the field of CLS, include Derrick Bell who is seen as the 'intellectual father figure' of the movement, Alan Freeman, who is noted for documenting racial jurisprudence of the U.S. Supreme Court, as well as Richard Delgado. These scholars saw that a CLS framework did not include concepts of race and racism, which they believed to be pivotal for achieving social transformation in policies and practice. This ultimately led to the conception of CRT (Yosso, 2005). These central figures were later joined by other scholars and activists who recognized that 'colour-blind' policies and practices within the U.S. were preventing true racial equality. The founding members, as well as their fellow advocates would go on to hold the first official conference on CRT in Madison, Wisconsin in 1989. In later years, the CRT movement expanded to support resistance against racial and oppressive injustices within the research fields of Latino/ Chicano studies, Asian, and Indian studies, as well as various gender-related studies (Delgado and Stefancic, 2001). Solorzano and Yosso (2002) explain that the roots of critical race theory originated from "literature based in law, sociology, history, ethnic studies, and women's studies" (p.25). This supports the understanding of Delgado and Stefancic (2001) who describe CRT as a theory that largely builds from previous "critical legal studies and radical feminism" (p. 4). Drawing from feminist ideology, CRT is also able to identify societal power relationships, as well as patterns of subordination and domination that exist within race, class, and gender. From critical legal studies, CRT adopted the notion of 'indeterminacy' whereby certain legal cases may not possess a 'correct' outcome, but rather, the outcome may be determined depending on how the facts are interpreted. This idea of interdeterminancy can be used to argue issues such as colour-

blindness, where policy makers may state that they provide equality for all, while evidence actually shows blatant inequalities for people of colour. Interdeterminancy can be further explained in the following passage: "One can decide most cases either way, by emphasizing one line of authority over another, or interpreting one fact differently from the way one's adversary does" (Deglado and Stefancic, 2012, p.5).

Central Tenets of CRT

Within the body of literature on CRT there are a few key tenets that help to ground the theory (Delgado and Stefancic, 2001; Solorzano, 1998;Yosso, 2005). Yosso (2005) drawing on previous work by Solorzano, outlines five tenets that are imperative for CRT within the field of education. However, these core CRT tenets apply to fields beyond education, including sport studies, and are central to the current investigation as it seeks to understand and identify lived experience, including experiences of racism and oppression being faced by young people within Liberty Village.

The first tenet of CRT explains that racism is pervasive and is embedded in nearly every facet of society. However, CRT is not solely focused on racial prejudice. Within society there exists multiple forms of subordination that go beyond race. While CRT asserts that race and racism remain the central focus of the theory, it examines various forms of discrimination as they intersect with the concept of race. In the same ways that individuals may be subject to discrimination based on their race, CRT explains that these discriminatory injustices extend into areas such as ethnicity, gender, sexuality, socio-economic status, religious beliefs, and so on. As CRT developed over the years,

researchers from different fields of study have been able to utilize CRT as a way to flush out forms of discrimination facing their specific cohorts of study.

The second tenet states that CRT actively challenges the majoritarian story and white privilege. Solorzano and Yosso (2002) explain that majoritarian stories stem from racial privilege, whereby 'white' privileges, meanings, and understandings are considered the societal norm. In essence these majoritarian stories are deeply embedded ideologies in which racial privilege appears as 'natural'. These normative stories extend beyond racial privilege and into broader areas such as class and gender. "A majoritarian story is one that privileges whites, men, the middle and/or upper class, and heterosexuals by naming these social locations as natural or normative points of reference" (Solorzano and Yosso, 2002, p.28).

The concept of 'white privilege" has been described by Delgado and Stefancic (2001) as the benefits, advantages, and rewards that are received when an individual is a member of the dominant race. Bell (2003) explains that while much is written about the role of race and racism within society, there is a lack of analysis into how stories "perpetuate a racial status quo", or seek to challenge it. The irony of majoritarian stories is that despite their origins, they are seldom brought under scrutiny because they are so deeply embedded within societal structure that people come to view them as natural occurrences (Solorzano and Yosso, 2002). To reiterate, Bell (2003) explains the societal acceptance of the majoritarian story as follows: "the dominant story shapes the 'mindset' from which we observe and interpret the world, excluding other possible interpretations and making current social arrangements seem natural and fair" (p.5). Challenging privilege and the majoritarian story is accomplished by confronting claims of equality,

neutrality, and colour-blindness that have become deeply embedded within societal rules, regulations, policies, and practices. In order to oppose the status quo it is imperative that stories, which highlight the experience of the racially oppressed, are heard and included in mainstream discourses.

The third tenet stresses the importance of counter-stories to highlight the lived experiences of people of colour and other oppressed peoples. Specifically, counter-storytelling is an analytical framework used to challenge racism and other forms of oppression and work towards social justice (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). CRT is used to view these stories and the knowledge that these stories produce as legitimate. Understanding the knowledge and experience of the marginalized is a crucial aspect of CRT, especially as it pertains to challenging the status quo. Counter-stories are cultural narratives that contradict and challenge the majoritarian stories that form the status quo (Bell, 2003). White people and people of colour have a very different understanding of the world and often live according to separate realities. Bell (2003) explains: "individuals of color often understand their experience through an awareness of past and continuing discrimination" (p.4). This in turn shapes the lives of these individuals and determines how they see and understand the world around them. Counter-stories play a significant role within CRT and challenge "embedded preconceptions" that are used to marginalize people of colour within society (Delgado and Stefancic, 2012, p.42).

The fourth tenet outlines CRT's commitment to social justice. Researchers who use CRT strive for social justice by providing "liberating and transformative responses to racial, gender, and class based oppression" (Yosso, 2005, p.74). This means that through CRT, marginalized populations are able to use their stories to highlight the discrimination

that they are facing. In doing so, CRT is able to provide a sense of empowerment to groups of people who are faced with various forms of oppression, as their stories become legitimate testimonies through which social change can be achieved (Yosso, 2005). These stories hold importance because they able to unite subjugated voices that may have a shared experience of discrimination. This in itself can help to initiate movements to combat various forms of racism and prejudice as oppressed groups are able to rally towards a unified goal.

The final tenet of CRT is that it is transdisciplinary in nature. This means that the theory is able to draw from multiple fields of research and historical contexts in order to analyze various situations. This can include scholarship from "ethnic studies, women's studies, sociology, history, law, psychology, film, theatre and other fields" (Yosso, 2005, p. 74).

CRT and Sport

Sport has a significant role in society. Brian Wilson explains that sport is associated with "global capitalism, individualism, competition, celebrity, mass entertainment, violence, and spectatorship" (2009, p.13). As such, one would think that within the large field of sociology, which studies human behaviour, development, and organization, that sport would be a significant area of study. However, critical sports scholar Ben Carrington, explains that sport is often overlooked as a central construct of study. Carrington conducted a review of the sociology literature spanning the last fifty years, including major sociological journals such as the *American Journal of Sociology* (AJS) and the *American Sociological Review* (ASR). These journals have failed to

include sufficient literature on sport, and much less pertaining to the role of race and racism within sport. Even in current sociology of race literature when the topic of sport is mentioned, it does not receive in-depth analysis or discussion (Omi, 1994; Feagin, 2010; Collins, 2004). Carrington (2013) explains:

> … it appears that although sport is acknowledged within the sociology of race as an important site for the (re)production of racial meanings, discourses, and identities, leading theorists tend at best to offer only passing commentaries rather than sustained analyzes on sport (p.388).

However, as the sociology of sport literature expands, key researchers such as Kevin Hylton (2009, 2010), Gamal Abdel- Shehid (2005), C.L.R. James (1993), Douglas Hartmann (2011, 2012), Richard King (2008), van Ingen (2013, 2003), and others, have broadened the discussion on the role of race and racism in sport, and highlighted the significant disparities between whites and people of colour within sport. Most sociological research addressing race and racism in sport has been produced within the sub-field of sport sociology. The sociological literature on race and sport experienced two major periods of growth within the last fifty years. The first period, beginning in the 1960's through to the mid 1990's focussed on highlighting racism in sport, specifically identifying how people of colour were facing discrimination in professional sports. This largely included literature on disparities between Whites and African Americans in terms of playing time, wages, and sporting career opportunities (Frey & Eitzen, 1991; Washington & Karen 2001; Carrington, 2013). In contrast, literature produced since the mid 1990's has increased the scope of racism within sport, including all manners of discrimination and inequalities. Carrington (2013) explains that the current

literature has expanded beyond a black-white binary in order to critically analyze the complexity of racism in sport, and its intersections with gender, class, ethnicity, social status, and other forms of marginalization (Burgos, 2007; Iber & Regalado, 2007; King, 2008). As CRT is transdisciplinary in nature, it can be used to challenge the many inequalities that exist within sport. For example, through counter-storytelling CRT is able to help us understand the experiences of those who are "inadequately represented in the various conceptions of sport policy and practice" (Hylton, 2002, p.33). Sociologists Eric Anderson and Mark McCormack (2010) who explore the sporting experiences of male youth under the LGBTQ umbrella explain that CRT is imperative when analyzing the identities of non-white, and marginalized individuals, and understanding how these identities are constructed through sport. Hylton (2002) outlines that a CRT framework applied to sport culture is able to uncover social and institutionalized prejudices regarding race that are deeply imbued in sport and society. Therefore, because CRT highlights the underrepresented experiences of the oppressed, it can be used as a means to actively challenge sport policy and conduct.

Sport For Development (SFD)

In the following section I examine the literature on sport for development (SFD). I begin by outlining the central tenets of SFD, and explain the success that SFD programs can achieve when properly facilitated. However, SFD is not without its fair share of critiques. In the latter half of this section I review some of the literature taking a critical look at SFD initiatives and highlighting areas of the SFD field that are in need of improvement.

There is a large body of literature that links organised youth sports with a range of positive health-related, educational, and social outcomes (Haudenhuyse, Theeboom, & Nols, 2013; Branta, Lerner, & Taylor, 1996; Eccles, Barber, Stone, & Hunt, 2003; Holt, Kingsley, Tink, & Scherer, 2011). Although sport has historically been touted as a positive way to help youth develop life skills, the recent surge of interest into the developmental benefits of sport began in 2003 after the United Nations implemented Resolution 58/5. This resolution proclaimed that not only could sport be used as a tool for development on a global scale, but that sport itself could be used to facilitate the UN's eight millennium goals (Hartman & Kwuak, 2011). Below is a statement from the UN explaining the recent emergence of sport as a tool for development:

> The world of sport represents a natural partnership for the United Nations system. By its very nature sport is about participation. It is about inclusion and citizenship. Sport brings individuals and communities together, highlighting commonalities and bridging cultural or ethnic divides. Sport provides a forum to learn skills such as discipline, confidence, and leadership and teaches core principles such as tolerance, co-operation, and respect. Sport teaches the value of effort and how to manage victory as well as defeat. When these positive aspects of sport are emphasized, sport becomes a powerful vehicle through which the United Nations can work towards achieving its goals (United Nations, 2003).

There are numerous ways that sport can be used to achieve these millennium goals. Drawing from his own personal experience, Bruce Kidd, a key figure in the field of SFD, outlines how sport helped in the achievement of development goals in various countries. Kidd (2007) explains that SFD initiatives have been successful in: promoting

relationship building and reconciliation; promoting a truce or the cessation of hostiles; the protection of children; providing peace education; aiding in the rehabilitation of war victims including refugees and child soldiers; as well as remembrance and reflection of tragic events (Wilson, 2012).

It is widely believed that sport is an effective tool for personal development and possesses the ability to produce life skills (such as discipline, self-confidence, and social values) that an individual needs in order to function within modern society (Hartmann & Kwauk, 2011). However, while sport is often viewed as a means through which youth can build positive characteristics, there is a growing body of literature which argues that sport is not always the powerful tool for development that it is assumed to be (Hartmann & Kwauk, 2011). This means that while sport may indeed be able to help facilitate positive development it can also reproduce established and exploitative social relations. For SFD initiatives to work there needs to be appropriate programming and understanding of the everyday lives of disempowered, marginalized young people.

Coakley (2011) introduces the term 'sport evangelists' to describe those who see sport through a neoliberal lens and believe that the inherent 'goodness' of sport is able to develop youth in ways that will prepare them for success in life. This evangelistic ideology has been perpetuated in nearly all aspects of the media, as athletes, Non-Government Organizations (NGO's), and companies alike have adopted this approach in order to increase funding and bring awareness and support to their cause. Hartmann and Kwauk (2011) explore how the beliefs surrounding sports, SFD initiatives, and their impact are driven by heartfelt narratives, evocative images, and examples of successful community transformation. Unfortunately, the examples portrayed by the media are

usually grounded in anecdotal evidence, receiving little scrutiny or critical analysis. For example, Lebron James, arguably the greatest basketball player of all time, was born to a 16 year old single mother in Akron, Ohio. Despite unstable living conditions and a single parent income, James was able to make it to the NBA after being drafted in his senior year of high school (www.biography.com). Many up-and-coming basketball players idolize James as he was able to use sport to drastically change his fortune. However, sports programs that unequivocally stress basketball as a way to make it out of poverty, or marginalized communities and high crime areas, perpetuate a misleading and evangelistic narrative of social mobility through sport. Lebron James, like other elite athletes are part of a very select few who will actually achieve this dream. Not everyone possesses the skill set and physical attributes needed for elite competition, even with extreme dedication, training, and hard work. While sport may be able to provide youth with a range of beneficial skills and opportunities, it is not to be viewed as a panacea through which all societal problems can be solved. Brian Wilson elaborates on the 'evangelistic' emphasis on sport stating: "The problem, however, with these types of all upside portrayals of sport is that they are, at best, partial and somewhat deceiving, and at worst, dangerously one-sided and simplistic" (2012, p. 2).

'Plus Sport' and 'Sport Plus'

Within the sport for development movement, Coalter (2009) explains that there are two main approaches that describe how sport is used within SFD initiatives. The first approach is known as 'sport plus', a dominant vision which gives priority to sport, and the maintenance of sports organizations and programs, with a secondary focus placed on social justice issues. The second approach, known as 'plus sport', is more of an

interventionist approach whereby non-sport objectives and social justice issues are the primary focus of the program or initiative. In this approach sport acts as a mediator for increasing participation, attendance, and acceptance of the program. Some of these objectives could include youth education or disease prevention, where sport is used as a means to grab youths' interest in order to facilitate knowledge on these topics.

There have been many successful SFD initiatives that have incorporated either the 'sport plus' or 'plus sport' approach. For instance, the widely known non-government organisation, Right To Play (www.righttoplay.com), created in 2000 by Olympic Gold medalist Johann Olav Koss, largely implements a globally successful 'plus sport' approach (Nichols, 2009). While the emphasis remains on sport, Right To Play initiatives mainly target impoverished areas and developing countries, using sport as a means to address larger societal issues such as education, gender equality and healthcare.

In contrast, Hartmann (2012) highlights a large American initiative, which employed a 'sport plus' approach. The midnight basketball league program was widely implemented across the U.S. in the late 1980's and early 1990's. As a response to high urban crime rates, midnight basketball leagues were created in order to curb delinquent behaviour of adolescents during late hours of the night when street crime was perceived to be most rampant (Hartmann, 2012). The project was conceived with the idea that youth would be preoccupied with sports, where they would be developing fundamental life skills such as team work and cooperation, and thus less likely to engage in crime and street-related activity.

Both the sport plus and plus sport models have their merits, but one must also

consider the implications of these programs and their lasting effects. Coalter (2010) and

Hartmann (2011) argue that while sports can be used to help achieve positive

development at the individual level, the notion that sport is able to somehow achieve

broader social change without engaging systematic changes to economic and political

influences is nothing more than highly optimistic. Coalter and Hartmann argue that if

sport for development initiatives seek to actually bring about social change, they must

target the larger causes of societal injustice, and include sport as a resource within a

larger framework for social reformation. Other sport sociologists support this notion,

suggesting that the international development achieved by these SFD initiatives may not

be as progressive as they claim to be, especially as the SFD field as a whole is still in its

early stages of development (Darnell, 2007; Levermore, 2009; Black, 2009).

Another concern raised by Kelly (2012) is that NGOs and agencies responsible

for sport for development initiatives must apply for continued funding in order to keep

their operations functional. When this occurs, the initiatives can undergo a 'mission

drift', where they are forced to include certain criteria such as crime and risk reduction

strategies within their programming, in order to satisfy the requirements of the funding

bodies (Kelly, 2012). As a result, the image of the areas and communities involved can be

misrepresented or inaccurately labeled as 'deprived', 'at-risk', or 'priority

neighbourhoods' in order to secure funding for community improvement (Kelly, 2012).

Hartmann and Kwauk (2011) expand on this concept of mission drift, explaining that

SFD initiatives often fail to deliver on the promises of social intervention, and instead

focus on justifying their sport programs in order to maintain funding and on-going participation.

Many programs targeting 'at-risk' youth aim to prevent youth from engaging in delinquent and criminal behaviour through an early intervention approach. However, even when initiatives are able to produce positive outcomes, there are many concerns about whether the implementation of these targeted programs further stigmatizes the youth involved (Kelly, 2012). For example, the midnight basketball leagues of the early 1990's that were spread throughout urban areas and public housing across the United States, inadvertently reinforced negative stereotypes and perpetuated the marginality of young African American males by targeting black communities, and proposing that the key to crime reduction was getting black males off of the streets (Hartman, 2012). Midnight basketball programs originated in Maryland, as the local housing authority created these leagues in order to deter young adults from participating in illegal activities during the hours of the night when crime rates were highest (Hartman, 2012). Hartman (2012) explains that these programs unequivocally targeted young African American males by keeping them occupied on basketball courts in order to reduce crime. He further argues that the mass media campaigns used to promote these leagues perpetuated and reinforced negative stereotypes about black males as violent and dangerous individuals.

The midnight basketball program diverted attention away from the social and political conditions underlying the prevalence of high crime and poverty. Instead the focus remained on black male bodies as the social problem and sport as the solution. These 'quick fix' SFD approaches are not limited to North American sport initiatives. SFD initiatives using the plus sport approach have been used in developing countries. In

these cases, sport is used to help facilitate development without actually treating the larger social issues that breed injustices such as discrimination, poverty, and marginality. On a global scale, SFD initiatives based in impoverished or priority areas include a global citizen approach to youth development, where the goal is to ultimately produce more globally minded individuals. However, these approaches often emphasize western ideals as the norm, and in turn may identify ethnic and cultural ideals as inferior (Tiessen, 2011). This ideology is largely the result of SFD initiatives that originated as "developed countries helping underdeveloped ones" (Wilson, 2012, p.139). This view suggests that the countries creating these initiatives are more advanced and do not have similar problems or inequalities domestically (Wilson, 2012). When this ideology is put into practice, local knowledge and cultural experience become disregarded as the underdeveloped countries are assumed to have little to offer in terms of the knowledge and resources that is needed to address prominent social issues (Wilson, 2012).

Young People as Targets of SFD

Haudenhuyse, Theeboom, and Nols (2013) suggest that sports and sports programming can be used to actively engage young people in a leisure context while addressing various social issues such as education, employment and training, community leadership and healthy lifestyles. So if these sport programs can divert criminal activity and provide a means for positive development, what is the downside?

Sport for development initiatives are generally used to target youth within underdeveloped countries or those who are considered to be 'at-risk'. In North America, these initiatives are directed towards the latter. Since the inception of the playground

movement at the beginning of the 19th century, sport-based interventions have been a common occurrence within the United States, especially initiatives that target racial minorities, or non-white areas. The playground movement was the vanguard of these intervention strategies, whereby children of working-class and poverty stricken immigrant and minority families were given distinct areas of congregation, and socialized into American culture through the use of athletics and recreation (Hartmann, 2012). Since the introduction of the midnight basketball leagues, many sports programs have been implemented as preventative crime reduction strategies for at-risk youth, with the notion that "prosocial development" will be achieved, and spare time for delinquent behaviour will be occupied (Kelly, 2013, p.262). Kelly (2013) explains that many governments, NGOs and sport associations alike have adopted this approach in order to deter youth from engaging in delinquent and anti-social behaviour (vaguely defined as likely to cause distress or harassment to other people). Essentially, these programs aim to divert youth activity through sport, and prevent opportunity for devious or criminal behaviour. However, Kelly (2013) argues that Black youth, and youth from ethnic minorities, are disproportionately targeted by crime prevention strategies. Although literature shows that these sports based programs are designed as crime prevention strategies, what criteria determines grounds for their implementation, and what categorizes a child as 'at-risk'?

Kelly (2012) explains that 'at-risk' is a label that can become synonymous with an area or region, and there are multiple risk factors for determining whether or not an area should be categorized as at-risk. The main criteria for assigning this label is a high crime rate within the area. Other social determinants can include high prevalence of welfare, low income, and unemployment. In general, the term is used to signify the level

of 'risk' and 'poverty' associated with the area. The term 'at-risk' is largely used to describe and categorize youth who live in marginalized environments. The term fails to acknowledge the structural contexts that produce these environments (Kelly, 2012).

So how does this label affect youth residing in these 'at-risk' areas? Loic Wacquant (2007) explains that residents of at-risk neighbourhoods can become marked as 'other' and 'inferior', and that these stigmatized areas are seen as a "blemish of place" which become permanently attached to local residents (p. 67). In other words, the residents themselves carry the stigma and become identified as 'at-risk' instead of the community in which they live. The impact and negative consequences of the 'at-risk' stigma can have long lasting effects (Wacquant, 2007). As a result, young people from underserved neighbourhoods are viewed as 'at-risk' and continually framed through the language of deficit. There is very little attention paid to the strengths of the young people who live in marginalized communities or to the positive aspects of their communities (van Ingen, Sharpe, & Lashua, 2016). Perhaps more importantly, the racism, poverty, unemployment, and other structural problems are ignored and 'at-risk' individuals are seen as the source of the problem.

The effects of stigmatizing labels on communities and their residents are significant. It is important to use language that reorients the stigma or blame away from the individual, and redirect it towards broader inequalities that structure society. An example of this is seen in the identification of areas as 'underserved' rather than 'at-risk'. Whitley, Forneris, and Barker (2014) define underserved communities as "areas with a shortage of personal services for residents, including economic, cultural, and linguistic barriers influencing their health and well-being" (p.218).

In the next chapter I introduce the methodology of counter-storytelling. Counter-storytelling is used in this research as it provides a meaningful way to challenge the majoritarian stories that often frame racialized youth as 'at-risk'. Counter-storytelling is a way for young people to disrupt stereotypes and tell their own stories about their community and their lives.

Chapter Three: Methodology

In Chapter Three I highlight the methodology that frames the research. I begin by introducing the theoretical framework used to guide the research investigation, as well as a justification for its role within the study. I also explain the specific methods used to conduct the research as well as highlight how I gained entry to the study site, selected participants and engaged in data collection and analysis. I also describe several aspects of the researcher role that were assumed during this research.

The purpose of this study is to engage the young people of Liberty Village in counter-storytelling to talk about their lives and everyday experiences within their neighbourhood. In particular, I am interested in understanding the meaning of sport in the lives of the participants, and the role that the community court plays in their sporting experience. This will be studied through the following research question:

- What does storytelling about the community court teach us about the lives of young people in Liberty Village?

Qualitative Research/Theoretical Framework

This study uses qualitative research methods. Glesne (1999) states that qualitative researchers seek to understand the nature and meaning of an event, phenomenon, or occurrence. A qualitative approach was chosen for the research because the study seeks to identify what sport means to the Liberty Village youth, and the role that the community court plays in their sporting experience. In terms of my own researcher epistemology, I believe that the world we live in is highly complex, and that an individual's reality is largely constructed from their environment and social interactions

(Glesne, 1999). As youth from underserved communities experience sport from an incredibly unique lens, comprehensive research needs to be conducted on how an individual's racialization, socioeconomic status, gender, and cultural background influence their sporting experience while growing up in an underserved area (Whitley, Forneris, & Barker 2014; Paraschak & Tirone, 2008). As such, I seek to discover the counter-stories produced by the young people of Liberty Village, with a critical focus on the interaction between youth, sport, and the neighbourhood community court.

Critical Race Methodology

The current study implements a critical race methodology in keeping within the framework of critical race theory (explained in Chapter Two). Solorzano and Yosso (2002) explain critical race methodology as:

A theoretically grounded approach to research that (a) foregrounds race and racism in all aspects of the research process. However, it also challenges the separate discourses on race, gender, and class by showing how these three elements intersect to affect the experiences of students of color; (b) challenges the traditional research paradigms, texts, and theories used to explain the experiences of students of color; (c) offers a liberatory or transformative solution to racial, gender, and class subordination; and (d) focuses on the racialized, gendered, and classed experiences of students of color. Furthermore, it views these experiences as sources of strength and (e) uses the interdisciplinary knowledge base of ethnic studies, women's studies, sociology, history, humanities, and the law to better understand the experiences of students of color (p. 24).

This study implements a critical race methodology in order to highlight the experiences and knowledge of young people of colour within Liberty Village. Critical race methodology revolves primarily around the use of counter-storytelling, whereby participants share stories that are not often told. Drawing from Huber (2009), counter-storytelling can be seen as a verbal journey given by an individual who is or has been marginalized. It is a chance for the participant to share their experiences, and reveal forms of racial, classed, or gendered discrimination that they are faced with. Solorzano and Yosso (2002) explain that counter-stories are a powerful tool for analyzing and challenging the majoritarian story, through the eyes of those on the margins of society.

Counter-stories highlight the personal experience and knowledge of the participant as they become the experts of their own narratives (Huber, 2009). These stories shed light on participant experiences and allow others to better understand their lives and how they interpret the world around them. The majority of residents in Liberty Village are a 'visible minority' within the greater Niagara region. It is important to note that, as Bannerji (2000) states, the term visible minority is contested and has been used by the racial majority to rename those who are 'othered' into a category that is separated from the centrality of whiteness. It is also important to acknowledge that race is not the only factor that must be taken into consideration – residents are also faced with poverty, marginalization, stereotypes about crime, and a lasting neighbourhood stigma that is associated with Liberty Village. Implementing a critical race methodology and highlighting youth counter-stories can shed light on areas overlooked by the majoritarian story and examine how the lives of these residents intersect with racism and other forms of oppression. As Solorzano and Yosso (2002) explain:

… methodologies that dismiss or decenter racism and its intersections with other

forms of subordination omit and distort the experiences of those whose lives are

daily affected by racism. In other words, downplaying the intercentricity of race

and racism in the discourse helps tell majoritarian stories about the insignificance

of race and the notion that racism is something in the past (p.31).

Study Site: Liberty Village

This investigation is a branch study that stems from a larger research project

called the Youth Sport Project developed by Drs. Erin Sharpe and Cathy van Ingen of

Brock University, along with Dr. Brett Lashua of Leeds Metropolitan University. The

Youth Sport Project explores the connection between neighbourhood stigma, sport, and

youth living in the Niagara region. All data collected for the study occurred within, or in

close proximity to the Liberty Village neighbourhood, a public housing community

within the Niagara Region. Due to participant availability, one interview was conducted

in Toronto, Ontario. The Liberty Village community is situated near the intersection of

two major roads, and borders on the back of a strip plaza containing a few local shops

and a grocery store. Within this community there are a total of 110 households, 63 of

which are 'single family' homes. There are a total of 239 children between the ages of 0-

18 year old living within the community (Appendix A)[3].

As Liberty Village is a public housing complex, there are a large number of

tenants who receive government subsidy as either full or partial source of income

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[3] Community statistics have been represented in Appendix A in order to maintain anonymity of
the study site.

(Appendix A). The residents of the community are culturally diverse, with a large number of youth identifying of Arabic/African descent, primarily Sudanese, Libyan, and Kurdish. There is also a large Muslim contingent within Liberty Village, which stands in stark contrast to the predominantly white Catholic/Christian residents of the Niagara region. According to statistical data taken from a regional census, the city in which Liberty Village is located only has 10% of the populace self-identifying as a visible minority (Niagararegion.com).

Niagara Regional Housing (NRH) is the organization responsible for Liberty Village. The NRH controls the allocation of all public housing within the region after a regional download from the provincial government in 2002. The NRH owns several complexes and works with building landlords across the region to provide subsidized housing to families in need. Unfortunately, there has been a steady increase in demand for public housing within the last 10 years, and families can be waiting anywhere from 1-10 years before being placed in affordable housing (Niagara Regional Housing, 2016). In fact, as of 2015 there were over 4500 households on the waiting list for affordable housing within the Niagara region (Niagara Regional Housing, 2016).

Gaining Entry

In order to conduct research within a given community, approval must first be obtained from certain community figures which Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) refer to as 'gatekeepers'. A gatekeeper is defined as a person in a position to grant or deny access to the study site and its inhabitants; as such, they are usually seen as the initial points of contact. (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). For this investigation approval to

operate within the Liberty Village community was first obtained from Niagara Regional

Housing, through the Regional Community Program and Resource Unit Manager. As my

Master's research developed out of the larger 'Youth Sport Project', ethical clearance for

my research was also obtained from the University Research Ethics Board. I also was

given access to work with the youth in Liberty Village through the Community Program

Team[4] (CPT).

The CPT is an organization that originated as a local shelter for teens living in the

Niagara region, and since 2006 they have been directing the operation of both the youth

and teen after school programs within select NRH communities. This includes the Liberty

Village Community house 'The Gathering Spot'[5]. The programs that the CPT deliver

allow youth to partake in numerous recreational activities, and receive help with their

homework in a safe and friendly environment. As some data collection was conducted

within the Liberty Village community house during scheduled programming times,

approval was obtained from the CPT program coordinator. Gaining access to a

community and its inhabitants in qualitative research can be extremely challenging.

Therefore, it is important to build trust and community rapport at the field site by

becoming a face of regularity (Creswell, 2007). To this end I embedded myself within the

community as a local figure through my time as a research assistant on the Youth Sport

Project. Over the course of a year and a half, I conducted numerous interviews with

young people from Liberty Village and became involved with many community events

such as the Unity Games (a physical activity and positive developmental event for

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[4] Community Program Team is a pseudonym.
[5] The Gathering Spot is a pseudonym.

underprivileged youth living in the Niagara Region), and a community skate night. I also worked hard to build a solid rapport with the local youth, as well as the members of the CPT programming team. During my time in the area I amassed a large quantity of personal reflections and ethnographic field notes pertaining to social, cultural, and economic trends, as well as perceptions of the court and its feasibility.

Participant Selection and Sampling Procedures

For this investigation, criterion sampling procedures were utilized. Creswell (2007) defines criterion sampling as the recruitment of participants using specific pre-determined criteria. Literature shows that criterion-based sampling is ideal when all participants possess a shared experience of a situation or phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). In this case, all youth involved were selected from the participant list of the larger Youth Sport Project and lived in Liberty Village. To that end, my research included a sample of nine participants ($N = 9$), ranging from 16-23 years of age. Those under the age of 18 were required to provide consent from their parent or legal guardian. This consent form outlined that I was collecting data that would be used for my Master's thesis. Those over the age of 18 were given consent forms to sign at the time of their interview. Before the commencement of the data collection process, the Brock University Research Ethics Board approved the dissemination of the consent forms for the branch study.

I directly contacted each participant and asked them to be involved in my research. I was also available to parents or guardians who wished to seek further clarification on the project. Participants and parents/guardians were given my contact information, including my email address and phone number.

Data Collection Procedures

Interviews

In qualitative research, the interview between researcher and participant is a pivotal source of data collection. It is a chance for the participant's voice to be heard and for the researcher to understand how the participant interprets the world around them (Creswell, 2007). Since the goal of an interview is understanding, it is important that the researcher develop a good rapport with the participants in order to help them feel supported and encouraged to share their experiences, stories, and perspectives (Fontana & Frey, 2005). I spent numerous hours within the Liberty Village community in order to familiarize and identify with the local youth, trying to see and understand the community as they do. Fontana and Frey (2005) explain that gaining participant trust is essential to the success of the interview. Interviewing is essential for critical race methodology as it provides a stage where counter-stories are heard and documented. From the interview, the participant is able to shed light on their experience and share the stories that often go unheard.

The type of research I am interested in conducting is focused on highlighting and reducing the inherent differences between the interviewer and participant in order to yield outcomes of greater meaning (Fontana & Frey, 2005). Reinharz (1992) explains the paradigm shift in the interviewing process, from researchers holding a position of power, to being on equal terms with the participant:

The emphasis is shifting to allow the development of a closer relationship between the interviewer and the respondent. Researchers are attempting to

minimize status differences and are doing away with the traditional hierarchical situation in interviewing. Interviewers can show their human side and can answer questions and express feelings (p.22).

In order to establish a more reciprocal interview process that maintains awareness of the power dynamics within interviews, and obtains meaningful data, the interview protocol for the study was semi-structured in nature. This means that as the researcher, I began the interview with a list of guiding questions about the neighbourhood and community court (see Appendix B). These questions were meant to elicit responses that could be elaborated on or explored in depth as opportunities presented themselves (Markula & Silk, 2011). In keeping with the vision of critical race methodology, it is the primary accounts from these participant interviews that become the backbone of the counter-story (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). The questions asked within the interview process allow participants to elaborate on their personal experience and uncover the "hidden transcripts or counter-narratives of subordinated groups that serve to confirm their experiences and bear witness to their lived reality in the face of a dominant culture that distorts, stereotypes and marginalizes that reality" (Bell, 2003. p.6). As an example, the interview process encouraged participants to speak to their experiences as *recipients* of programs that operated within Liberty Village that were administered by outside agencies. It also gave participants the ability to speak to their own self-directed sporting practices, including those that were located within their neighbourhood. This gave participants the space to speak to their experiences (i.e., provide counter-narratives) as youth whose experiences are missing from dominant narratives.

All interview questions were initially pilot tested, a method whereby preliminary interviews are analyzed in order to refine and adapt the initial research questions based on participant feedback (Sampson, 2004). Two pilot test interviews were conducted. These interviews were transcribed and analyzed by my thesis advisor and myself. After the initial pilot testing was completed, it was determined that interview questions might produce more substantial answers if the participants had time to think about their responses prior to the interview. This suggestion came from my thesis advisor who noticed that some of the interview questions produced answers that felt rushed or lacked certain depth. While I made every effort to provide the participants with an interview script ahead of their interviews, not all participants received the interview questions ahead of time. This occurred when interviews were arranged quickly based on the availability and schedule of the participant.

As previously stated, each participant received a consent form that explained the focus of my research and their rights as a voluntary participant. Prior to the start of the interview, I again discussed the focus of the research and their rights as research participants. I also gave them an overview of the interview process explaining the kinds of questions I would be asking. Once the consent forms had been signed by the participant or their legal guardian, I then proceeded with the interview. Each interview lasted between 30 and 60 minutes. The interviews were conducted at a location that was most convenient for the participant. Several of the interviews were conducted within the neighbourhood community house, known as 'The Gathering Spot'. A benefit of holding the interview there was the close proximity to the Liberty Village basketball court which helped participants recall their past experiences. A few interviews were conducted off of

the premises in order to satisfy participant availability. As in the larger Youth Sport

Project some interviews were conducted in local eateries (eg. Starbucks, Tim Horton's,

and Burger King). Participants were also given the option to select a refreshment of their

choice prior to the interview. The refreshments were purchased to show my appreciation

for the time taken by the participants to share their experiences. Fontana and Frey (2005)

also suggest that providing light refreshments can make the respondent feel relaxed and

welcome so that they may speak their mind freely. Lastly, because this study evolved out

of a larger research project where participants were provided with an honorarium for their

involvement, each participant received a 15 dollar honorarium for their time and

participation. Upon completion of their interview, each participant signed a release form

containing their name, signature, and the date that they received their honorarium. These

forms were then collected and stored in a secure office. All interviews were recorded

using a Google Nexus 5 cell phone with the 'Sound Recorder' App. All interview

recordings were moved to a secure USB device following the interview process, and kept

in a locked drawer within my office. All participants were given the option to review

their interview transcript prior to data analysis phase of the project. Upon request,

participants received a typed copy of the interview transcript and were given time to

review it and ask any questions, make any changes, as well as provide any more

information. Some participants asked for a copy of the transcript but no changes were

requested.

Observational Field Notes

Drawing from ethnographic research, a researcher should seek to become an

active participant of the community in order to listen, watch, and understand facets of

daily life (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Observational field notes are written notes taken from the field of study and recorded either simultaneously or at a later point in time, in order to be further analyzed by the researcher (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Creswell (2007) states that field observations should include details such as physical settings, interactions that take place, events and activities, as well as the researchers understanding of various situations. When recording field notes it is not possible to capture everything, therefore the researcher must determine what is most relevant and noteworthy, based on the given research questions (Wolfinger, 2002).

Similar to ethnographic approaches, I spent many afternoons and evenings conducting research or 'hanging out' in Liberty Village. Initially my time in Liberty Village was the result of being a research assistant on the larger Youth Sport Project. However, I developed relationships with many young people and continued to drop by the neighbourhood to connect with them before and during the data collection phase for my own research. Over the period of approximately 18 months I observed everyday life for the Liberty Village youth. I maintained a file on my computer that acted as a traditional research journal where I made observations and recorded bits of conversation that I was part of or that I overheard. I paid particular attention to the community court, including to the number of youth who used the court, who they were, and in what ways they used the court. For example I would note if the court was used for informal games, shooting hoops, or for competitive games of one-on-one. I also took notes about my role as a researcher in an effort to be reflexive and aware of the power dynamic created as I worked within their neighbourhood. I speak to issues of research reflexivity later in the thesis. The purpose of these observational field notes was to enable me to recall and

reflect on information that unfolded at various points in the data collection phase which then informed data analysis.

Data Analysis

In traditional qualitative data analysis all of the information that has been gathered in the field is used in order to describe trends, develop theories and hypotheses, and tell the story of what has been learned (Glesne, 1999). As explained by Hamersley and Atkinson (2007), while most of the data analysis occurs towards the end of the data collection phase, preliminary analysis can take place in the form of the researcher's analytic notes and observations from the field. However, as this study engages in counter-storytelling, traditional forms of qualitative data analysis that rely on approaches such as line by line coding are not suitable. Rather I use the interview data to compose counter-stories, stories that offer space to present insights, voices, and experiences that are often overlooked. CRT and counter-storytelling as a methodology focuses on understanding the role of race and racism. Unlike other data analysis processes that reduce large sections of interview excerpts in to a few codes, counter-storytelling offers a different approach. I should also note that there are, to my knowledge, limited examples within the scholarly literature that outline how researchers actually 'do' data analysis. In other words, there was no step-by-step focus on how the analysis and writing up of the data unfolded across various CRT research projects. After consulting my thesis advisor, I decided to take the following approach to data analysis.

According to Solorzano and Yosso (2002) there are three types of counter-stories: personal stories, other people's stories or narratives, and composite stories. Personal

stories are direct reports of experiences, something I could offer as a black male. However, this research is based on other people's stories, specifically those embedded in the interview transcripts, that when they are retold resonate as they speak back to the normal, even mundane standpoints of (White) authority or neutrality that erase racist, sexist, and classist narratives. Composite stories are when several narratives are re-presented and synthesized as an individual story. I did not engage in composite storytelling but wanted to give space to the individual stories shared by participants.

I approached data analysis by carefully reading and rereading all of the transcripts. In these readings it became evident that portions of the transcripts revealed stories, or even partial stories, that forefront race-based, class-based, or gender-based explanations that were useful to challenge the majoritarian or dominant narrative. I began by transcribing all of the interviews verbatim, making sure to keep the style of speech that was used by each participant. I then read through each of the transcripts at least three times while making notes in the margins and highlighting sections of the transcripts that told the stories of participants' everyday lives and experiences. Then I started to identify patterns that spoke to broader themes while still maintaining the individual voices of participants. Through this process of working with the data, it became evident that particular stories shared by the participants challenged the dominant narrative and the marginalized portrayal of the community.

My thesis advisor and I determined that an inductive and holistic analysis would be most beneficial as the open-ended questions in the interview guide gave participants the space to tell their own personal stories. Thomas (2006) explains that inductive analysis is:

… a systematic procedure for analyzing qualitative data in which the analysis is likely to be guided by specific evaluation objectives. It refers to approaches that primarily use detailed readings of raw data to derive concepts, themes, or a model through interpretations made from the raw data by an evaluator or researcher (p. 238).

Similarly, Strauss and Corbin (1998) describe inductive research, "the researcher begins with an area of study and allows the theory to emerge from the data" (p. 12). Elo and Kyngas (2007) echo this explanation reiterating that an inductive approach to data analysis looks at information from specific to general, taking selective pieces of data and combining them into larger themes and topics. This approach differs from deductive analysis where the data is analyzed in order to confirm whether or not the data correlates with hypotheses, theories and assumptions that were created prior to the research process (Thomas, 2006).

In Chapter Four, I present the personal counter-stories of the nine participants. I then interpreted and categorized the stories in to three sections: 1) The role of the court in forming social ties and participant identity; 2) The need for affordable programs that youth see as applicable to their lives; and 3) The presence of outsiders within Liberty Village. It is important that the stories are first presented with very little of my interpretation, other than organizing them in to broad topics at this stage. Then in Chapter Five I return to the stories and engage in further discussion and analysis. To do this, I return to the themes raised in the literature review and examine how the individual experiences and counter-stories reflect broader social patterns identified within critical race and sport for development literature. I do this because while counter-stories on their

own challenge dominant narratives it is important that the knowledge of young people in the study is given the opportunity to interact with published scholarly literature.

It should also be noted that all study information is completely anonymized to protect participant identity. This is discussed in further detail within the ethical consideration section below.

Trustworthiness

Field (2013) defines reliability as the degree to which data is generalizable across different situations. Validity is created when an instrument or test actually measures what it is designed to measure (Field, 2013). However, these constructs are typically upheld as standards for quantitative research, and therefore incompatible with the qualitative design of the current investigation. Glesne (1999) explains that qualitative research looks to find deeper meaning and understanding of an event and therefore does not focus on the generalizability of context. In contrast to these two constructs, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that a certain level of "trustworthiness" should be achieved within a qualitative research study. Trustworthiness can be seen as the qualitative equivalent to constructs of reliability and validity and is thus defined as the credibility of findings through multiple forms of support, such as: persistent and detailed observation, intense engagement within the study site, and the triangulation of data (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). CRT research that uses a counter-storytelling approach produces data that is context specific and that privileges the knowledge and experiences of the participants. This ensures that the data is trustworthy as it privileges epistemologies of people of colour.

Research Reflexivity

Within qualitative research it is important for the researcher to reflect on the impact that they have on the study. Finley (2002) explains that within qualitative research, the researcher selects and constructs the interpretation of data, therefore it is impossible to eradicate the presence of the researcher. However, by integrating reflexivity into the research project, the subjectivity of the researcher changes from a problem into an opportunity to discover what influences the researcher brings to the data. This concept is further elaborated in the passage below by Hammersley and Atkinson (2007):

> … the aim is not to gather 'pure' data that is free from potential bias. There is no such thing. Rather, the goal must be to discover the best manner of interpreting whatever data we have, and to collect further data that enables us to develop and check our inferences (p.102).

In this case, I entered the study as a 23 year old self-identified black male, from a middle class Caribbean family. I am also very well educated and have obtained two university degrees. Knowing this, it is important that I understand how these factors shape my epistemological lens and how the participants will see me. I will start by addressing each of these traits, and how I believe they impacted the study. First and foremost, I believe that my age gave me an advantage in identifying with adolescents of the community. As I am older than the participants, but have not yet reached full adulthood, many of the youth addressed me as an older brother/friend. I am also the same

age as the local CPT community leaders, who they respect and listen to, but do not view as conventional authority figures.

The Liberty Village community is ethnically diverse with residents from areas as far as Libya, Sudan, Jamaica, and Iraq. Because of my own mixed heritage and upbringing within a multicultural urban environment, I feel that these youths have been able to better identify with me as I am also a visible minority. Coming from a middle class immigrant family I identified with many of the struggles and beliefs that young people in the community held. I was also aware that my education made me 'different' than young people still in junior and senior high. Knowing this I was careful to leave academic jargon out of my interactions with participants and other members of the community. I was careful to explain my research interests and my role as a researcher in everyday language, so that they could really understand why I was there. I also tried to make sure that I did not say or do something that was culturally insensitive and that might make residents feel uncomfortable.

In addition, my role as a research assistant in the larger Youth Sport Project really contributed to the way that youth responded to me and accepted me into their community. As a research assistant I spent close to 150 hours in the field and became a familiar face to both the parents and youth of Liberty Village. I have come to know many of the youth by name, and in some instances have bridged the gap between friend and researcher. Because of my unique relationship in the community, I have been approached by several youth who wished to participate in the study and receive the opportunity to have their voices heard. As an athlete I realize that I was very interested to hear the voices of those who have used the court to further their athletic prowess, yet knowing this, I strove to

keep an open mind and listen to all stories about the court and the community in order to fully understand their meaning. This includes stories of those who used the court for social interaction and those who used it to forge their own personal identity. I am also a registered teacher within the province of Ontario, and currently work as an occasional teacher for various school boards. As such I tend to act in a position of authority around children and youth. However, within Liberty village I am a researcher first and foremost and have remembered to withhold my comments and actions, knowing that I am there to simply observe, as a guest in their community.

Ethical Consideration

First and foremost, before any research was undertaken approval was sought by the Research Ethics Board (REB) of Brock University. As this project began as a branch study of the larger 'Youth Sport Project', I was required to submit a modifications form to the REB that explained the ways in which my research was a continuation, rather than an entirely separate research investigation. The information letter and the consent form made it clear to research participants that I was conducting a separate research project for my graduate degree. Below I highlight the specific ethical codes that guided my research.

Anonymity

During the data collection process I collected certain identifiers in order to organize study information, this included the participant's name, address, name of school, name within neighbourhood residence, and some form of contact information (phone number, email address, Facebook name). Along with data collected in the field, this information was kept securely stored, with only myself and my thesis advisor possessing

immediate access to it. Creswell (2007) states that the names of participants should be

masked in the data in order to protect their identities, and any repercussions of their

participation in the study. I also was careful to use pseudonyms for each participant that

were culturally appropriate. Participants were informed that their personal information

and interview transcripts would be kept completely anonymous, and would not be shared

or discussed with any other participants. As a researcher it is important to ensure that

identity protection for each participant is of utmost concern.

Assent and Consent Forms

Since the study gathered data from participants under the legal age, written

consent was first obtained from participant's parent or legal guardian (Glesne, 1999). The

consent forms provided the guardian with information about the study, and what was

asked of their child. It also outlined that I would be conducting the interview and that the

study information would be used for my Master's thesis (Appendix C). As my research

developed as a branch of the Youth Sport Project, the Brock University Research Ethics

Board determined there was no need to collect new assent forms, as long as the consent

form clearly outlined the difference between my project and the larger research. In the

following comment, Glesne (1999) explains the importance of gaining informed consent:

> Through informed consent, potential study participants are made aware (1) that
> participation is voluntary, (2) of any aspects of research that might affect their
> well-being, and (3) that they may freely choose to stop participation at any point
> in the study (p.116).

Chapter 4: Counter-Storytelling

Introduction

In this chapter, I begin by briefly introducing each participant and providing a summary of their age, ethnicity, and the number of years that they have lived in Liberty Village. I do this in part to highlight that eight out of the nine participants are youth of colour. The chapter then draws on counter-storytelling to highlight the everyday experiences of young people who live in Liberty Village. The counter-stories also provide a way to explore the significance of the sport and, in particular, the community basketball court and what it means to the participants. The last section of the chapter focuses on stories about 'outsiders,' people who do not live in Liberty Village but who organize and run programs within the community.

A critical race framework is utilized throughout the chapter, as CRT highlights the ways in which the young participants represent themselves through stories that counter normalized discourses about living in public housing. Storytelling is an important tool for understanding the experience of youth in Liberty Village. However, while much of the literature outlined in Chapter Two supports counter-storytelling approaches and provides a significant rationale to support its inclusion within the current project, there is a profound lack of 'how to' instruction that demonstrates how stories are organized and the process that one must go through to construct counter narratives (Delgado, 1989; Baszile, 2015). As a result, I have followed an approach by Sandelowski (1991) and presented the participant stories in one full chapter with minimal researcher interjection. This way the reader may first "hear the participant's voices through the stories, without further descriptions, theorizing or analysis" (Sandelowski, 1991, p.162).

In this process I have amassed over 83 pages of transcription data between 9 participants, with countless hours spent transcribing and analyzing participant interviews. Due to the amount of data generated in this study, I was not able to include all of the stories and information shared by the youth participants. Rather, I included the most substantive and information rich accounts, while ensuring that the voice of each participant was present within the chapter.

Table 1: The Participants

Participant Pseudonym	Age	Ethnicity	Years of residency in Liberty Village
Yara	23	Sudanese	10
Elias	21	Sudanese	12
Jad	17	Sudanese	12
Marutsa	22	Sudanese	11
Sami-Jo	20	Sudanese	11
Sammir	17	Sudanese	9
Jaheed	17	Congolese	5
Jayden	16	Trinidadian	6
Matthew	16	Canadian	9

Yara

Yara is a 23 year old Black Muslim woman. She immigrated to Canada from Sudan, a country in North Eastern Africa, with her mother, older sister, and brother when she was 13 years old. When her family came to Canada they moved in with her grandfather and reunited with their father who had been living here for 12 years prior. Six months after moving to Canada, Yara's family moved into Liberty Village. She has moved houses three times while living in the community, due to the expansion of her family and birth of her younger sister. Yara is a well-rounded athlete and plays a variety

of sports including baseball, basketball, and soccer. She is also a member of the Community Programming Team (CPT).

Elias

Elias is a 21 year old Black Muslim man. He is a first generation Canadian of Sudanese origins. He is the second oldest male in his house and has one older brother and three younger siblings, one of which is Jad, another youth participant in the research inquiry. Elias moved around a few times before his parents settled in Liberty Village. He was born in Scarborough where he lived for seven years before he and his family moved to an apartment within the Niagara region. As his family expanded, they moved to Liberty Village shortly after they arrived within the region and have been living there since. Elias is an avid basketball player, growing up spending much of his time on the community court. Elias attends university in Toronto and is majoring in Political Science. He spends much of his time dedicated to his studies while fitting in a few games of basketball when he is able.

Jad

Jad is a 17 year old Black male. He is Muslim and a first generation Canadian of Sudanese origins. He is the middle child of his family with two older brothers and two younger siblings. Jad was born in Scarborough, a district within the eastern part of the city of Toronto where he lived until the age of four, before he and his family moved to an apartment within the Niagara region. As his family expanded, they moved to Liberty Village shortly thereafter, and have been living there since. Jad is an athlete who plays football for his high-school team and regularly frequents the gym. He attributes much of

his passion for staying active to his time spent on the Liberty Village basketball court. As a child Jad played a variety of sports on the court including basketball, dodgeball, soccer, and hockey.

Marutsa

Marutsa is a 22 year old Black Muslim woman. Marutsa was born in the United States before her parents moved to Vancouver. Her father originally emigrated from Sudan to the U.S. before her mother, and then moved the family to Vancouver a year after Marutsa was born. The family moved to the Niagara region when she was five, before settling in Liberty Village when she was 11. She lives with her mom, dad, brother, and two sisters (one of whom has since moved away for college). During her youth she participated in unorganized sport at the community court and frequently swam at the local YMCA. She now works for the CPT and directs the youth programs within various Niagara Regional Housing (NRH) communities. She also lives an active lifestyle and works out regularly at the local gym.

Sami- Jo

Sami-Jo is a 20 year old Black Muslim woman. She is also a first generation Canadian and younger sister to Marutsa. She was born in Vancouver but shortly moved to an apartment within the Niagara region with her family when she was three years old. As her family expanded, they moved to Liberty Village when she was nine. She currently lives on her own in the Greater Toronto Area where she attends college. While Sami-Jo does not participate in organized sport, she avidly participated in the CPT programs during her youth and describes using the court as an area of social congregation. She is a talented artist and has used her talent to teach others within the community.

Sammir

Sammir is a 17 year old Black Muslim male who has lived in Liberty Village for the last nine years. He lives with his mother and three younger siblings. He also has a 20 year old brother who recently moved out on his own. His family is from Sudan and he is a first generation Canadian. Sammir enjoys playing basketball and currently plays on his high school varsity football team as a wide receiver. He grew up playing countless hours of unorganized sport in and around his neighborhood, and attributes his athletic disposition to his time spent at the community court.

Jaheed

Jaheed is a 17 year old black male of Christian faith whose parents immigrated to Canada from the Republic of Congo, a country in central Africa. Jaheed is a first generation Canadian living in the Niagara region, about 10 minutes away from Liberty Village. Jaheed lives with both his mom and dad and is the second oldest male in his family with 3 brothers, and a younger sister. His family has moved around the Niagara region numerous times, including living in Liberty Village when he was six years old, spending five years within the community. Jaheed is an exceptional basketball player and attributes much of that to watching his older brother play basketball, as he dominated high school ball in the region and obtained a scholarship to the United States. Jaheed still visits Liberty Village frequently as many of his peers use the court and live in the area.

Jayden

Jayden is a 16 year old Black male living in Liberty Village with his family. While Jayden was born in Canada, his father and mother are from Trinidad and Tobago.

He grew up in the Greater Toronto Area until he was ten, and his family moved to his current house in Liberty Village, where they have been living for the past six years. He lives at home with his parents, three younger siblings, and an older brother in college in California. Jayden is an all-around athlete and spends all of his free time being as active as he possibly can. He participates in a wide variety of sports and plays on most of his high school sports teams. He uses the community court to practice his skills and hangout with his friends on a daily basis.

Matthew

Unlike the other participants, Matthew is not an immigrant or a first generation Canadian, as both his mother and father were born in Canada. Matthew is a 16 year old white male with two older siblings and a younger brother. Matthew and his family moved to Liberty Village when he was seven, and have resided there since. Matthew lives in one of the few all white, non-immigrant households within Liberty Village and therefore has a unique view and understanding of the community. He is an athlete who uses the court whenever he can, and is always active in some way. He plays a variety of different sports and is exceptionally passionate about hockey. He plays on a local travel/select hockey team and often uses the community court to practice his skills, playing ball hockey and other sports with his friends and neighbours.

The Ball Court: The Heart and Soul of Liberty Village

Figure 1. Liberty Village court South Western view
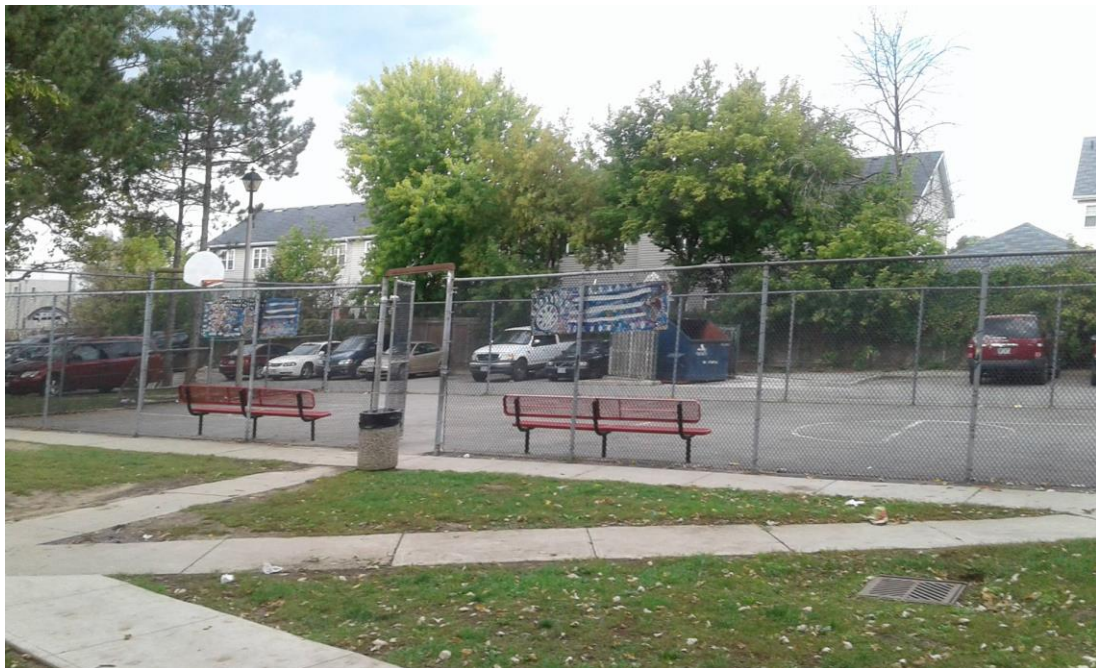
Figure 2. Liberty Village court Northern side view
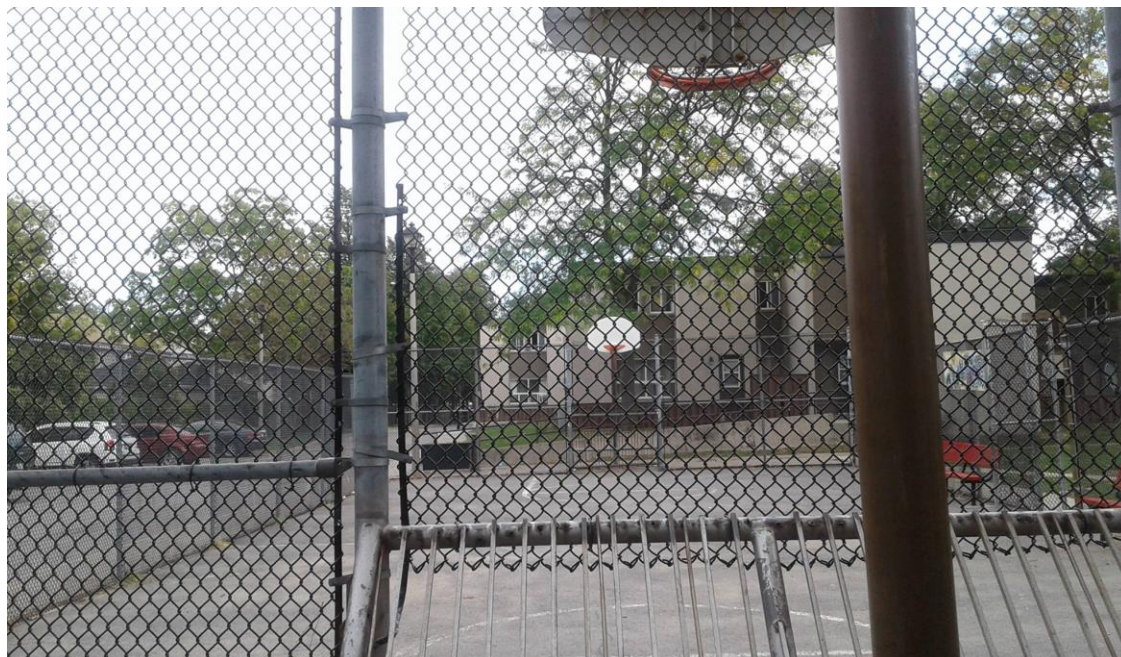
Figure 3. Liberty Village court Eastern side view

To the casual observer, the court at Liberty Village may look like any other basketball court. However, its unique design allows local youth to play a variety of games and activities and acts as a primary spot for social congregation within the community. The metal fence surrounding the court allows for multiple sports to be played and ensures that the ball being used never gets too far out of reach. The benches offer a comfortable area for youth to sit and hangout in between games or a place to watch games and socialize with their friends. The built in metal hockey nets located right below the basketball net allows young people to play a variety of sports, including soccer and hockey.

In what follows, youth participants share their personal stories. Keeping within the framework of critical race methodology, these accounts are based on personal experience where the participants are the experts of the knowledge produced, offering a

description of the world as they see it, which is seldom heard within the majoritarian story (Huber, 2009). These stories highlight the experiences of the young people who live in Liberty Village as well as the role that the community court plays in their sporting lives. They provide an opportunity for young people to share their thoughts and experiences and become a powerful tool for analyzing and challenging the majoritarian story. These stories are drawn directly from the interviews I conducted and are presented using the vernacular that was used in the interviews. The interviews were translated from oral to written text, but for readability purposes common utterances such as 'like' or 'uh' have been removed from the participant accounts. Participant mannerisms and slang, however, have remained to maintain a distinct sense of voice and identity.

<div align="center">You're out of the house and you're not doing anything bad</div>

The complex I had before [Liberty Village] had nothing, like nothing to do, it was kind a like an old person place so all it had was a pool, which is really only good during the summer on hot days. At the place I lived before that they had like a basketball court but they took down all the nets so it was basically just fenced in cement. When I came to Liberty Village, and I first saw the court I was so happy because there was a basketball net and a soccer net. Growing up and having a place like the ball court, it's so much more fun because you're much more active and you get to make new friends. You have a reason to stay up later at night and your parents appreciate it because you're out of the house and you're not doing anything bad, compared to being stuck inside the entire day or being out doing something bad. Kind of staying out of trouble, and that's about it.
[Jayden]

That's our hook, our go to place to hangout

Usually during the summer the basketball court is our hangout spot, because I know that during the day it's usually filled with little kids, but towards the evening it's mostly teens and everyone is just chilling. Usually our good friends we just go and bring a basketball to shoot some hoops or like play around the world and all that stuff. It's just like a good social area to be at, because in our community, that's like our hook, it's like our place to hang out. I don't really know how to explain it. Kids there would usually play around the world, or bump if we had enough people, sometimes we would even play like tag and stuff too. And like soccer because they have those hockey nets, but we use them as like soccer goals or whatever. Some of us don't use the court to play like full games, we use it to shoot around, hangout, chit-chat, talk, whatever, and just to kind of be out of the house you know what I mean? It's like a social gathering, or basically just a spot to hang out and use the court if we want to. Because it's so readily available to us we take advantage of it, and just sit on the bleachers if we wanted to hang out there and chill. Just being with my friends in that situation where we don't even have to play, we can just hang out makes me happy there. That's the go to place. [Marutsa]

Playing basketball and fraternizing

The court means a lot to me and the community. The court has always meant a lot, it's just that now people use it differently. Back when I was a kid we only used it for basketball, but nowadays a lot of younger kids are using it for hockey, and a lot of them are using it for soccer. Back then the court was used strictly for basketball, like if you weren't playing basketball, like get out! It was as simple as that. Like if you tried to come in with a hockey stick you're weren't getting in, right? So now I'm like glad that it

changed up you know what I mean. It's becoming more open you know? You have the Kurdish kids and like all of them are always playing soccer, you know what I mean? Lots of like the grade fives, like elementary kids play hockey, road hockey, and you have everyone else playing basketball really. All of them play basketball, everyone who is in the age group, like it doesn't matter if you're grade five it doesn't matter if you're high school, or if you're done school. There is still lots of socialization too, like people sitting there on the benches and talking even if they aren't playing. Now when I go home and use the court it's mainly just for basketball. Well basketball and just fraternizing, I guess -- If I have a basketball on me... because usually that's the dilemma right there [laughing], so if someone has a basketball, I'll shoot around. But yeah when I'm home I use it for playing basketball and if it's not that, just for socializing simply because there is benches and everything so it's a good use of urban space. [Elias]

Falling in love with the game

When I was a kid, from middle school up until all of high school actually, I was really, really into basketball. I guess it was because I grew up watching people play all the time, right? I discovered basketball in grade four and then going to the court all the time I picked up a lot of skill from everyone playing there. The court was where I like fell in love with the game I guess. You know what I'm saying? Like that's where I actually discovered one of my passions you know? So it means a lot to me because it was like the starting point of that. Because before living in Liberty Village I lived in an apartment building and there was no basketball court and no facilities like that, so I feel that if I never moved to Liberty Village I would not have discovered basketball until later on, you know? Even when I was growing up, like I didn't care about partying, I didn't care about

anything else, like it was just school and basketball right. Not to say I played basketball in high school or anything but I still loved playing basketball regardless. [Elias]

Back home women aren't allowed to play sports… The court helped me adjust to Canada

I moved to Liberty Village and first saw the court soon after I came to Canada actually. Back home women aren't allowed to play sports, it's only men, and we didn't have any active games, none of that. My life was just going to school, coming home, helping out around the house and all that stuff. So when I moved to Canada and I lived right in front of the basketball court, me and my brother would just go outside and play no matter what time of the day it was. Even in winter we would go outside and just play on the court, play around the world, or the other kids would come out and play with us, or we would play soccer. It was a lot of fun. I feel like the court helped me adjust to Canada, meet other kids, and play new sports. I feel like I opened up more to people when I was playing with them, I interacted with different people when I played sports, I just felt within my comfort zone and was able to open up to the people around me. For me, playing sports is kind of like going home, it's where you're comfortable, it's not having to be shy, like you don't want to be doing it, but you're comfortable doing it and the people that you're doing it with they're more like family to you, and they know who you are and how you are. All this time playing different games out on the court made me want to try other sports, not just the sports I was used to playing. For instance, I never thought I would try baseball, but because of all the sports that I played, and other people telling me that I should go for different sports, it gave me the confidence to go and try it out. [Yara]

Getting that respect and acknowledgement

The one time I was at the court and felt really, really happy, I think I was grade seven or eight, and there were a bunch of older heads there, like grade 12 and university students, who would always play basketball and they would basically run the court. So one time I was there and I was shooting around and they saw me hit 13 threes in a row. Yeah, I'm being dead serious not even exaggerating. And then getting respect from them and that acknowledgment, you know what I mean? It felt great, like it really made me feel happy about myself you know what I'm saying? Those guys… like I'm talking about guys who played basketball 24/7 out here and are ridiculously skilled, and then to do that in front of them and get that recognition from them means a lot I guess. [Elias]

My first dunk

I remember this one time I was with Amir at his house and we were just like looking at people, and looking up videos on YouTube of these people that could dunk and stuff. We were young so we didn't know like how to do it, so we were just like watching it, and watching it and watching it, so I was like okay let's go try it out at the court. So we just put our shoes on and started heading out to the court. We got there and then like, we first tried practicing to reach out to the rim and like try to hold onto it first before we tried to dunk. We would just run up and try to like get the right technique and like figure out how we would get up to our highest point, then we eventually got our wrist over the rim so we felt confident that we could achieve the dunk. So Amir went first and he almost got it, but then I went and I got it my first try, and I was pretty happy. It wasn't big, but it was like my first dunk in this court, and to me it was a big deal. Amir went up again and he got it too, so together we were just like really happy because growing up we weren't

the most coordinated and everything like that, we really had to work for it, so we were just like very excited that we were finally able to pull that off, at a young age. I think we were grade eight at the time. We had a ton of people watching us too, like all of our boys from the court and from our school and our team. Because we used to always run pickup games here so they were all watching. [Jaheed]

Legit ballers

The one thing that made this court really, really unique... Back in 2006 or 2007 before I was in high school this lady in Liberty Village she talked to the regional housing and everything and she got the keys from the community house and she ran a basketball team, a legitimate basketball team from co-op to co-op. And they would have legitimate competitions, they had jerseys and everything. Oh she was a sweet lady. She took time out of her day to run a basketball team, to provide them with jerseys, take them out on excursions, like she took everyone to a Raptors game! And whether she got funding or whatever it was, she took the initiative and that's what meant the most to most people right, that's what meant a lot to most people, and like the minute she moved -- that was cut right, but that definitely helped out a lot because it was just hyped up. Like I remember the one time we had a huge tournament in Liberty Village and they had speakers bumping from the Community House so there was good music and there were people eating pizza and everything, there was people running basketball, it was unreal man it was awesome. But I remember it vividly to be 100% honest, it was good times.

Back in the day, it didn't matter where you were from, everyone would come to Liberty Village to play, that was just THE spot. I remember vividly a lot of people from Southpoint would come play and a lot of people from Notre Dame they would always

come and play basketball at Liberty Village, always. I don't know what I find, it's gonna really bias obviously because I am from there, but Liberty Village bred a lot of really, really good basketball players, because that's where all the best basketball players in the city came together. [Elias]

Elias recalled the court as an important site for competitive basketball that was organized, for a period of time, by someone in the community. Sammir also discussed organized games and "actual teams" but could not recall who the organizer was. His story was focused less on the ball that was played and more on the court as a gathering place. He explains,

When we were younger, people would come from everywhere to play basketball here, it was fun, and a good place to meet up. To be honest, back then they would just come here, people that didn't even play basketball would just come here and chill or smoke weed, and watch their friends play ball, and it was just the place to hang out, everyone gathered up here. [Sammir]

Similarly, Jad recalled how he spent lots of time watching "legit" basketball games on the court. He explains that it was the older guys, the older brothers of young kids, or who he calls "the elder people" that framed his memories of the court as a young kid. He recounts:

When I was really young, there used to be a whole bunch of older guys, along with my brother that used to ball here all the time. It would be like the elder people, so like the guys back then who were in high school, like my brother and his friends. They would all get like a nice five on five game going, or like American or elimination and one-on-one games of like King of the court or whatever. They just organized these games

constantly so they could keep it going and people would just play. For some reason I just thought it was really cool to watch, because I was amazed at their skills, and they used to have pickup games here, like legit ones, like Liberty Village versus Tower Park and stuff. I remember we had our own neighbourhood team but I don't know who they would play specifically. I don't know I guess it just felt good that we had something that we held on to, because our community is kind of built off of this court because everybody comes here and balls or does some cool tricks in the court or whatever. Growing up there would be like a lot of kids around my age that would just come out to watch and ball, especially right after their games, or sometimes we would just shoot around. Like this whole court wouldn't be as empty as it is now it would be legit clustered. It would be packed. [Jad]

Back when Liberty Village was bad

I had one really bad experience at the court. A couple years ago my brother and his friends were out playing in the court and a couple of these teenagers were walking by and they were drunk and stuff. My brother and his friends were talking to each other and laughing and making jokes so the other teenagers thought they were talking to them and they started fighting. I was doing my homework, I look outside and it's my brother fighting so I ran outside with my socks on, midwinter, snow everywhere and then I was trying to get them off of each other, so I got one off and I saw another person getting beats, I ran to the other side of the court and I was running in circles trying to get these guys off of each other, and he punched him and broke half of his tooth, and I was running back to get the guy off of my brother, and there was one that was standing beside me. He whipped a bottle at me and it just missed me, and he had a knife in his pocket and he put his hand into grab it and he cut himself so there was a blood trail down the road and they

just left. We called the cops as soon as they left. The guy with the broken tooth, his mom came and then we took descriptions and stuff and I spoke to officers too, then my brother's friend and his mom went to the hospital because the broken tooth had his lip split open.

It was a really rare case, and it happened back when Liberty Village was bad, like two years after I moved here. I think the community was worse back then because the person that was in charge of the complex wasn't really here often to check on everything, and people were here from the morning until night drinking and smoking on the green boxes like they didn't care. There were bottles everywhere, and when there were kids try to play on the court, the people smoking and drinking wouldn't leave, they didn't care. Unfortunately, that kind of influenced the kids to become who they are today, because some of them are following in those footsteps and it's kind of hard to see them that way.

[Yara]

Jad recounts a similar story from his youth, describing a time when Liberty Village was considered 'bad', with 'gangsters' or 'thugs' in the community:

For example the guys that I tell you about who used to ball in the court, most of them were like whatever you want call them gangsters or thugs, or drug dealers right because they were in that business for whatever reason. And some of them just have a quick temper like that so they'd get pissed or they would like start fights or something, but other than that if anything, there's just some fights about stupid calls that have been made that shouldn't have been made, or should have been made but haven't been made if you know what I mean. But there's been an arrest in this court before, and it's crazy because I remember I was sitting right here over by my house and the cop comes, and the guy

already knew the routine like he'd probably been to jail before many times, this guy comes out, turned around puts his hands on the fence and gets arrested. That guy's basically like 'I know the deal'.

He didn't really do anything in the court or community, he probably got arrested because he had like a warrant out for his arrest, or they were looking for him. This guy was wanted, like around the same time the month before, he was arrested again, but over by that fence right there. Like this guy tried to book it (run away) but a cop came from behind and got him, it's so much crazy stuff. [Jad]

I think it's really important for teens to have a place to play at night

In the summertime there's always someone there at night, they're always shooting hoops at night or something like that, like I know a bunch of the boys that live closer to the court will be there, but it's more so older people that come out at night. Somebody used to come at like 9 o'clock and they had to lock it up, to make sure no one was playing on it. That didn't really stop anybody because after they locked it up the kids would just pop over the fence to play some more, so it wasn't really a big deal I guess. I know that they usually locked up every day but I remember this one time they forgot to lock it up and the kids found out it was open, they were like "Yo, they left it open let's play inside!" and it was a big deal. But yeah they just stopped locking it up after that, probably because they knew that we would hop over and just go play some more.

Other than team program that's run in the community house, there's not many programs or places for kids to be active at night, because the community program finishes at like 8:15, and other than that there's nothing really, kids just go home at that point. [Marutsa]

In the excerpts below, Elias, Matthew, and Jad each discuss using the court at night, and the lack of options that are available for them to spend their time during late hours.

I think it's really important for teens to have a place to play at night, like 100%. In my opinion, I wouldn't say it distracts... Let me think of the word it... it makes you focus on more positive things I guess you know? Like if you're playing basketball on the court, and then security comes and locks it off at 11. It's like okay, but then you think, like what do I do now right? You're going to be more tempted to go out, party, get into some stuff possibly. But if you actually just focused on basketball, or focused on one thing then you'll be focused on it. But if they go and take that away from you it's like, what do you do now, you know what I'm saying? [Elias]

I didn't like when people used to come in and lock the kids at night because that's like when some of the older kids came out, and they could just play. Like what are these kids supposed to do? Like what do they do with their downtime at night? Because like I remember like over the summer, we just come out every single night and like even if it's a late-night soccer game or just shooting around the ball. It just takes like some the kids here away from any other stuff that might be going on in like their house or whatever. It's like a way to get out of the house and just have like your own free time.

Like if the court wasn't here, I think, well sometimes like me and my friends we just go along Marshall Street to see what's going on, but I feel like other kids might be getting into like mischief if this wasn't here because this is kind of like a distraction, from like whatever's up. [Matthew]

I was balling here not so long ago with my brother and a couple of friends, between like 11:30 to 12:00 or one in the morning. Somewhere around the time when people are trying to sleep, and we're just balling and you can hear the loud noise of the backboard and the rim just shaking and the ball bouncing. Then a police cruiser comes by so you would expect that something specific or sketchy is happening, but like he just approached us and was started talking to us and told us to stop playing because it's like midnight, and we just obeyed we said like okay sorry about that officer, and so on. But you don't really expect that to happen like it rarely happens, is just sometimes you shouldn't ball at night I guess, yeah. It wasn't anything bad I think it was just too late, yeah. I don't know, I guess it's important to have a place like this because sometimes at night I'm completely clueless, like I have nothing to do at all, so if I get bored I'd rather spend my time watching the game or actually playing a sport or working out so I want to benefit from not wasting my time, to actually using it preferably with like what I can. Yeah man because there's not many things to do at night. [Jad]

Outsider Presence

In the section below, the participants express their feelings about outsider groups (social service groups, churches, charitable agencies) that come into Liberty Village to run events and programs. As many SFD initiatives look to run programs in underserved communities, the stories offer insight into how these programs are received by the young people that they are designed for. It is often the case that information regarding these initiatives comes from the program organizers or sponsors. These accounts allow the reader to understand what the programs are like for the youth who actually use them.

We are not a charity case

I think like if they're not from the community then they don't really have a connection, like last time we had the church come, like Griffin's church or whatever from Waterloo, they came and they had the bouncy house and all this stuff. I'm not sure if that was them but there was a bouncy house, like the kids liked it but I felt that it was like we're a charity -- we are not a charity case, like we're just a community. Like don't bring like expensive stuff, like don't act like we are the poorest people in the world. That made me mad. To make it worse they weren't even from around here, they came all the way from Waterloo to do this. [Matthew]

Oh, so this is some charity thing?

I always thought: "Well why do we have these programs in Liberty Village and not in other places?" Because the first time the community program opened I was like "Oh they probably just brought it here because they know that there's a lot of kids around here", but then later on it kind of revealed itself that it was because we lived in low income housing, and then it was like 'oh so this is some sort of charity thing' and it kind of obviously made me mad, and then I was like you know, where else am I going to get this from because my parents are not going to be able to provide like games and activities like this.

I don't think there was anything wrong with the programs being run inside low-income housing. Like there's nothing wrong with it, it's just like we weren't told right? Like you weren't told that you are living in low income housing, you kind a just had to figure it out by yourself. As a child like I'm sure my parents knew, but they never really explained that to me, but for these programs to be successful and for the kids that don't

get the opportunities to do things that kids who are not in low income housing, the

programs need to be the same as what the other kids can afford right?

I think some things about the community program could be changed, like I

shouldn't spend all day inside like gluing feathers to like popsicle sticks and making little

houses or whatever, I know that's also important but I would rather be learning about

other things. Like at one point before I left for school they brought in a woman I believe

her name is Mary, and she was teaching us about how to manage our money and she was

teaching us about credit cards and like saving money and everything, you know? Like life

skills. I thought about it afterwards, like this is so important but nobody was showing up

to the program so it just kind of like fell through. But I thought it was so important and

everything she said kind of stuck with me, especially because I'm living on my own so it's

important now, like if I didn't know any of the information that she told me I probably

would be like dropping out of school... What I'm saying is, I think it's important to have

programs that are going to be beneficial rather than just having a program.

Like I don't want a distraction, I want something that's going to benefit me.

Maybe start off with the distraction first so I'm embedded into the program and I get

comfortable with what's going on… Kids that aren't low income, they probably are

smarter and get a lot more life skills because of the things that they get to do rather than

what we are doing. Because they just can afford it and we can't and at the end of the day

that's just the bottom line. So bringing programs that are important to us and we can

benefit from that's just really key, it can make the program seem like it fixes everything.

Because if someone who wants to donate to the program, like to United Way or to The

Community Program Team, if they came and said 'Okay give us like a list of people who

have benefited from this program', like what list is the Program Team going to show? Who are they going to show? 'Oh this little girl learned how to use a glue gun'... Like you know what I mean? Or 'Oh this guy knows how to get a gold medal on Mario kart' like that's not... You know? We would rather have someone who is like successful and has a steady job or whatever.

I remember the first time we opened the Community House and we asked them what why are we having these program in the first place because we've never had this before, and they said 'Well we want to make sure that you guys are in here doing activities rather than out there learning things that you shouldn't be or that are bad'. It's like the whole thing about distracting us, back then we just thought it was okay I guess we will have more fun doing something else rather than just being outside and being bored or doing nothing. [Sami-Jo]

Similar to Sami-Jo, Sammir echoed feelings about his desire for programs that focused less on distraction, and more on skills that could prepare him for life after high school:

When the Community Program Team comes in and runs events I feel like a lot of kids come out, but I think they're lacking some things that could attract more people to them. Like for older teens, I know I would like it if they could have some like some motivational speaking about what going into University is going to be like, and stuff like that you know, and just getting us ready for University or College. For the younger teens you could have like, trips to go out to movies and stuff. But I feel like at first, when the community programs first started, the people that were leading the programs weren't able to really connect to the kids as much, you know?

I feel like some of the program team members we have now like Yara and Marutsa, they're able to connect with all the kids and have a bigger impact because they know where they are come from, because they were raised here. [Sammir]

This chapter focussed on highlighting participant voice and experience, without the analysis and interjection of the researcher. In Chapter 5 the main themes of these stories are analyzed alongside existing literature in order to understand their meaning, and how they 'counter' the majoritarian story.

Chapter 5: Discussion -- What Do Counter-stories Teach Us?

In this chapter, I describe and analyze the stories shared by nine young people from Liberty Village. In doing so, I draw upon critical race theory to explore the research question that framed this study. The research question was:

- What does storytelling about the community court teach us about the lives of young people in Liberty Village?

Upon beginning the research project I had hoped to highlight the positive changes that had been unfolding in the community and challenge the majoritarian story that is often heard about Liberty Village and its young people. In doing so, I sought out counter-stories that recognized the strengths and knowledge of young people of colour and that highlighted how they themselves understood their everyday lives and their community (Delgado & Bernal, 2002). While working as a research assistant on the Youth Sport Project, I saw how the basketball court had become an important place for many young people in the community. However, it was through observations and interviews with them that I learned just how central the court was in their everyday lives. The counter-stories of the youth who live in marginalized communities are seldom heard, and it is my hope that sport scholars, educators and practitioners working in sport for development will gain access to the stories and experiences from young people living in racialized communities like Liberty Village. We can learn a lot from listening to their stories and hearing how they understand sport and community.

In this chapter, I highlight three major themes from the participants' counter-stories. I then consider how these thematic findings relate to the research questions that

shaped this study. Thematic analysis is a qualitative data analysis method that provides a way to share the experiences of youth in marginalized communities, and the role of sport within their lives. This approach refers to the way I identify, analyze and report key patterns in the counter-stories and determine how their experiences and insights are reflected in critical race theory and sport for development literature. This process helps to understand how the experience of youth relates to previously understood knowledge, and how the study contributes to current literature.

The three themes identified are: 1) The role of the court in forming social ties and participant identity; 2) The need for affordable programs that youth see as applicable to their lives; and 3) The presence of outsiders within Liberty Village.

How the Data Analysis Unfolded

This research project draws on critical race theory as both a framework and methodology. Within this study critical race theory offers two important lenses. The first is that as a theory it outlines the ways in which racism and its intersections with various forms of marginalization are engrained in society. The second important offering from CRT for this project is the requirement of focusing on participant narratives (counter-stories) as sources of knowledge that challenge majoritarian discourses. Drawing from Solorzano and Yosso (2002), the counter-stories I highlight are from youth who live in a racialized, lower income and therefore stigmatized neighborhood. It is important to highlight these narratives as they counter the majoritarian (white) narrative that most often describes the community through a racist, sexist and classist lens.

With this approach, I identified three themes that were generated from the participant stories: 1) The role of the court in forming social ties and participant identity; 2) The need for affordable programs that youth see as applicable to their lives; and 3) The presence of outsiders within Liberty Village. Using these themes as a template, I then examined the ways in which participant accounts intersected with the literature framing this study. This process allowed me to see if the youths' narratives offer similar perspectives to the scholarly literature or if their counter-stories expose gaps in the literature.

The Role of the Court in Forming Social Ties and Participant Identity

For each youth participant, the Liberty Village court held personal meaning, often reflected in the ways that they choose to use the court. For some individuals the court was a second home, providing refuge and a slower pace from the busyness of everyday life. To others, it was an important place for social gathering, a place where they could catch up with their friends, hang out, observe the skills of players on the court, and bond with other young people in their community. The court was even described as the place responsible for fostering a lifelong passion for sport, as some participants developed their skills and 'love for the game' through countless hours of play and practice. For example, Elias explained that for him the court was:

> ...where I fell in love with the game I guess. You know what I'm saying? Like that's where I actually discovered one of my passions you know? So it means a lot to me because it was   like the starting point of that.

An important aspect of an individual's sporting experience is the social interaction that takes place between them and other participants. Erickson and Cote (2016) state that youth sport participation is often socially motivated as young people are able to engage and interact with their peers in a unique space. For the many youth who live in Liberty Village, the court is more than just an area for sports and recreational activities, it is an important gathering spot where young people are able to hangout, socialize with each other, and build friendships. Marutsa shared that the court was "a good social area to be at, because in our community, that's like our hook, it's like our place to hang out… It's like a social gathering". Elias noted "when I'm home I use it for playing basketball and if it's not that, just for socializing simply because there is benches and everything so it's a good use of urban space". Yara highlighted that while playing on the court she "opened up more to people" as well as had the opportunity to interact with different people. She explained that it was a place where she "just felt within my comfort zone and was able to open up to the people around me."

Erickson and Cote (2016) explain that sporting areas where youth are able to play and socialize with their peers are extremely important because when young people are able to build positive social connections during informal sport settings, it can facilitate on-going sport participation. Erickson and Cote (2016) highlight:

> … relatedness (i.e., positive social connections) is a basic human need,
> satisfaction of which   contributes to more intrinsically motivated behavior (e.g.,
> continued participation)… given their essentially social nature, informal sport
> play contexts might then be a particularly relevant avenue for future sport
> participation and physical activity (p.8).

Therefore, having sporting areas like the Liberty Village court where youth are able to freely congregate and build positive relations can play a pivotal role in their continued participation in sport, especially if it is affordable and accessible to the community in question.

Gender on the court: Bonding with other males

The primary demographic using the Liberty Village ball court in this study was young boys and male adolescents. This is reflected in the study sample as six male participants shared their experience of the court, while in contrast; only three female participants came forward to talk about their sporting lives. In addition, during my time as a research assistant, I often observed that the court was predominantly used by males, particularly those between the ages of five and twelve. This could be due to a number of factors, many which are outside the scope of this research inquiry. I do, however, want to focus on the way that sport and the court played an important social role in the lives of male and female participants.

Many of the male participants stated that growing up and watching older males and siblings play basketball on the court is what first piqued their interest into the world of sport, and had a significant impact on their desire to emulate them and follow in their footsteps. Elias acknowledged that he "grew up watching people play all the time" and that he "picked up a lot of skill from everyone playing there" and it was where he fell in love with basketball. Jad explains that for him it was "really cool to watch, because I was amazed at their skills". He also recalled that there were lots of other boys his age that would go to the court to not only play but to watch others play.

Schrack-Walters, O'Donnell, and Wardlow (2009) report that sports often play an important role in the lives of young males. Their work is useful for explaining why so many male participants talked about the court as a place where they learned how to follow in the footsteps of older brothers and boys who had "street cred" because of their athletic skill. Schrack-Walters et al. (2009) state:

> … males generally are reported to become interested in sports because they are introduced to a world created by and comprised of other males, can excel in developing their bodies to   compete aggressively with other males, and, less frequently and as a peripheral benefit, obtain gratification from relationships they construct with other males (p. 85).

Matteo (1986) states that the world of sport is a masculine domain and that sports participation is synonymous with masculinity. However, this narrow focus on sport as masculine is contested and needs to be identified as a dated concept given that females constitute 40% of all athletes (Hanson, 2012). It is important to highlight the significant, and at times distinct role that sport has in the lives of the male participants. To this end, Steinfeldt, Steinfeldt, and England (2009) explain that a young male's socialization through sport influences his athletic identity, as well as his gender role and expectations. They explain that understandings of masculinity are often entrenched within sports contexts, and that sporting environments can serve as a primary contextual influence on how young males construct their masculinity. Sport possesses the ability to maintain the societally embedded values of masculinity while serving as a pivotal space of socialization for young men (Steinfeldt, Steinfeldt, & England, 2009).

In Chapter Four, many male participants described that they experienced 'respect' and 'accomplishment' when they performed well in front of their peers and elders. In particular, Elias shared that after hitting 13 three-point shots in a row he was "getting respect from them [other males watching] and that acknowledgment." He explained:

> … it felt great, like it really made me feel happy about myself you know what I'm saying? Those guys… like I'm talking about guys who played basketball 24/7 out here and are ridiculously skilled, and then to do that in front of them and get that recognition from them means a lot.

Jaheed shared a similar story, explaining that when he and a friend successfully completed their first dunks on the court that it was "a big deal… We had a ton of people watching us too, like all of our boys from the court and from our school and our team."

The pursuit of respect, specifically the respect of other males in the community, informed the experiences of some of the male participants as they worked to hone their skills, and demonstrate their athletic abilities on the court. The Liberty Village court was an environment where young males obtain valuable experiences which contributed to their sense of development as both a man and an athlete (Matteo, 1986; Steinfeldt and Steinfeldt, 2012).

Gender on the court: Girls got game

In the previous chapter, Yara shared her experiences of moving to Canada from Sudan at age 13. She spoke about the different opportunities she experienced living in two different countries. As a Sudanese born Muslim, Yara explained that girls in Sudan were not allowed to play sports due to preconceived cultural and societal norms: "back

home women aren't allowed to play sports, it's only men, and we didn't have any active games none of that. My life was just going to school, coming home, helping out around the house and all that stuff."

Mirsafian, Doczi, and Mohamadinejad (2014) explain that there are many cultural groups around the world that are limited in their ability to participate in sport. One of these groups is Muslim women, who can face gendered and religious restrictions on the activities in which they are allowed to partake. In many countries the progress of equal sport opportunities is slow, due to gender-based constraints and discrimination which expands beyond sports settings, as most aspects of society within these countries remain male-dominated (Harkness, 2012). It is within these societies that women receive pressure to adhere to traditional conceptions of female conduct, including their behaviours, roles, and appearance. To this end, Harkness (2012) states that, as gender roles and stereotypes begin to change worldwide, female sports participation outside of westernized countries is steadily increasing.

There are many individuals and organisations working to promote the right to female sport participation, improve women's sport, emphasize female ability, and break down barriers to female participation (Mirsafian, Doczi, & Mohamadinejad, 2014). Female sport participation is on the rise globally, with an increased number of SFD initiatives focussing on giving young girls access to sporting opportunities. Critical sport for development scholar Lindsay Hayhurst (2014) describes this movement, stating that over recent years there is an "increasing use of sport as a tool to achieve gender and development objectives (SGD); the expanding involvement of transnational corporations (TNCs) in creating, funding and implementing development programs; and the 'girling'

of development" (p.297). Hayhurst (2014) explains that in 2005 a program was created under the auspice of Nike called the 'Girl Effect'. This initiative focused on female development in impoverished countries through an emphasis on sport, social entrepreneurship, microfinance, and education. After the implementation of the 'Girl Effect' program, many sport for development initiatives have begun to use sport as an avenue to create social change for women including: Right To Play, Girls Rise Up, and the International Women's Group (IWG). It should also be noted, however, that girls and women in Canada still face inequalities accessing and participating in sport.

When Yara moved to Canada and began her life in Liberty Village, living in close proximity to the court enabled her to explore an athletic side of her that had been previously stifled.

> When I moved to Canada and I lived right in front of the basketball court, me and my brother would just go outside and play no matter what time of the day it was. Even in winter we would go outside and just play on the court, play around the world, or the other kids would come out and play with us, or we would play soccer. It was a lot of fun.

Yara explained that by frequenting the court and playing with other youths, she was able to socialize and adapt to her new life in Canada as she gained friends, learned the language, and developed new skills.

> I feel like the court helped me adjust to Canada, meet other kids, and play new sports. I feel like I opened up more to people when I was playing with them, I

interacted with different people when I played sports, I just felt within my comfort

zone and was able to open up to the people around me.

Yara's socialization into Canadian culture including her use of the community court

aligns with trends in the literature, specifically as Maxwell, Foley, Taylor, and Burton

(2013) explain that community sports participation is an important space for societal

integration, as it possesses the ability to facilitate social inclusion for new immigrants and

marginalized groups.

While youth sports participation can be seen as an important tool for socialization,

this research inquiry highlights the need for a greater understanding of youth sporting

experience for young people who immigrate to areas where they can access sport. As

highlighted by van Ingen, Sharpe and Lashua (2016) literature on youth sport has failed

to adequately focus on the experiences of Muslim females in Canadian sport. Muslim

females, often despite their citizenship and Canadian residency, face different cultural

and religious challenges including Islamaphobia, which can limit their sport participation.

The Need for Affordable Programs That Youth see as Applicable to Their Lives

In Canada, the cost of organized sport is steadily on the rise. In a study by Trussel

and McTeer (2007) youth participation in organized sport was found to be directly related

to house hold income, showing that the "financial demands associated with organized

sport can create inequity in Canadian children's opportunity to participate in organized

sport" (p. 115). This means that for families that utilize any number of the government

offered financial aid programs, youth sport participation often remains low on the list of

financial priorities. Lee (2014) states that parents in disadvantaged communities may be

faced with economic burdens such as low incomes, unstable employment or hardships in paying bills, and thus may be less able to provide the resources, transportation, or time needed to engage in organized sport. Some of the participants explained that the price of organized sport in Niagara is quite high, with some teams/clubs offering 'sponsorship' opportunities for those who can't afford it. Yara elaborates on this:

> It didn't cost me anything [dance classes] because I got a scholarship for it, but I know for each class I think it's about $20, for each class you attend. It's not that hard to keep up with the costs, but it depends if you have a car and whether or not you can get there and if it's close to here because most of them are not near here. And then how are you can be paying it that was the main thing. Now there are places that will pay for you to go and try sports, or you can get scholarships from the clubs like they give you scholarships to come and participate for free.

Jaheed also explains his experience playing highly competitive basketball, and the fees that are associated:

> Yeah, actually they're pretty expensive to be honest [Niagara based teams] because like there's not a lot of kids around so like, they have like a very selective choice, so they probably like raise the price a bit more. Because I was offered to play for like an AU team in Toronto, and I was offered to play here too, and the one in Toronto was a lot cheaper than playing here, so I would probably say like here is more expensive just because it is not a lot of people so they probably want to try to get a bit more money out of the system.

In their interviews, Jaheed, Yara, and Jayden talked about the importance of a free public space like the community court for athletes that cannot afford to play in organized sport. Jaheed states:

> I think it really means a lot to someone who like doesn't have the money to play for like an AU team or a travel team. Because being able to play on a court where other people are like supporting you and encouraging you to do things that they can do, it will just build up your character and build up your self-esteem and make you want to work hard and hopefully not even have to worry about paying, just getting like a free ride on the team, just because you that good you know? So like coming out here, I think that's where people learn to grind and get tough. They learn like how basketball should be played.

Yara agrees with this sentiment and adds, "that was a big thing- if you didn't have the money for it then the court was your best friend." Jayden explains his use of the court:

> Yeah, I use it a lot [the Liberty Village Court] because, you can use the court to practice your skills without having to pay money and stuff like that. Plus you can get help from other people that are better than you that play actual sports, because everyone uses it too.

In Liberty Village, Jayden, Jad and Sammir and Yara choose school based athletics as they provide an extremely low cost opportunity to play organized sport. Jayden describes this as follows:

> At school I play soccer, basketball, football, ball hockey, and if we had an ice hockey team I would probably play. At my school we don't have to pay for teams, everything is free basically. Except for an ice hockey team that would probably be

like 100 bucks. I actually don't play on any outside teams. I only play at my

school, just because it's not like I have a job, and my parents need the money so

I kind of have to stay within my boundary of where I can go.

Yara and Jaheed have explained that some clubs and teams provide 'sponsored' programs by waiving all or part of the registration fee to join a team, providing disadvantaged youth with an opportunity to participate in after-school sport. While these sponsorships help to alleviate the need for after-school activity, some participants claim that evenings are when they are most active, especially on weekends when they have lots of free time or are bored without viable options to spend their time.

Youth living in low-income housing often rely on youth programs in their own communities in order to access some of the same sport opportunities that middle class youth do. Yet, in Liberty Village the teen program only operates on weekdays from 6:15-8:15 PM. Even the local YMCA that offers a Youth Action program on Friday nights is only offered from 7:00-10:00 PM, and it is only available for youth aged 9-14. Some participants shared that this leaves them with a lack of options. Marutsa captures this:

Other than team program that's run in the community house, there's not many

programs or places for kids to be active at night, because the community program

finishes at like 8:15, and other than that there's nothing really, kids just go home

at that point.

Jayden explains that the court acts as an outlet for local youth to enjoy themselves during later hours of the night and keep themselves out of trouble:

… having a place like the ball court, it's so much more fun are because you're

much more active and you get to make new friends. You have a reason to stay up

later at night and your parents appreciate it because you're out of the house and you're not doing anything bad, compared to being stuck inside the entire day or being out doing something bad. Kind of staying out of trouble.

The Presence of Outsiders Within Liberty Village

In the case of Liberty Village, the community court acts a place of refuge for many youth in the community. The court is a place that they have claimed as their own, and they often get to decide what goes on, and do so on their own terms. However, since organizations based outside of Liberty Village also use the court space when they run after school programs within the community, it is vital that the youth who live in Liberty Village and attend these programs are asked about their experiences. Matthew, Sami- Jo, and Sammir each shared stories about the outsider presence within Liberty Village. They also offer suggestions for what can be done differently.

Sami-Jo recalls attending, for the first time, a program run by "outsiders", people who were involved in outreach and social service work but who were not part of her community.

> I remember the first time [at] the Community House and we asked them…Why are we having these program in the first place because we've never had this before? And they said well we want to make sure that you guys are in here doing activities rather than out there learning things that you shouldn't be or that are bad. It's like the whole thing about distracting us.

Sami-Jo's testimony clearly reflects how low-income and racialized youth are engaged through at-risk programs. Similarly, Coakley (2011) states:

… programs involving participants from low-income and poverty areas in wealthy

nations often focus on providing activities that young people can do after school,

on weekends, and during school breaks in a safe environment where there is adult

supervision and access to sport facilities, equipment, and coaching (p.312).

Coakley (2011) describes that these programs are largely focused on providing at-risk

youth with opportunities to spend their time, thus preventing them from being out on the

streets, or engaging in criminal behaviour. It is not to say that youth programs merely

distract kids from delinquent alternatives, but when there are no options for youth, it is

easier to get involved in mischief or delinquent behaviour.

Hartmann (2012) explains that within many urban areas youth crime and

delinquency is most persistent during late hours of the night. However, Elias shares that

even when community youth chose to use the court during these late hours of the night,

there was not always guaranteed access to the court as neighbourhood security (an

outside security company hired for a period of time by Niagara Regional Housing) would

lock the doors to the court on occasion to prevent youth from creating too much noise and

disturbing nearby residents. Elias states:

I think it's really important for teens to have a place to play at night, like 100%. In

my opinion, I wouldn't say it distracts... Let me think of the word it… it makes

you focus on more positive things I guess you know? Like if you're playing

basketball on the court, and then security comes and locks it off at 11. It's like

okay, but then you think, like what do I do now right? You're going to be more

tempted to go out, party, get into some stuff possibly.

In a conversation with the Community Programs/Unit Resource Manager of Niagara Regional Housing (NRH), she explained that the NRH had previously hired private security firms to monitor specific areas during the summer months, such as being responsible for locking the community court at night (Personal Communications, November 16, 2016).

Being "locked out" or unable to access the court was something that Matthew also experienced. It left him feeling upset, and made him question what options were left for him and his peers:

> I didn't like when people used to come in and lock [up]... Like what are these kids supposed to do? Like what do they do with their downtime at night?... It just takes like some the kids here away from any other stuff that might be going on in like their house or whatever. It's like a way to get out of the house and just have like your own free time…but I feel like other kids might be getting into like mischief if this wasn't here because this is kind of like a distraction, from like whatever's up.

The main reason that the first Midnight Basketball Program out of Washington DC was implemented, was to target at-risk young men between the ages of 17-21 during late hours of the night and reduce crime rates (Hartmann & Depro, 2006). As a result, midnight basketball leagues have been criticized for targeting low-income black communities, by keeping young black men occupied as a means to deter crime and quell delinquent behaviour. What Hartmann argues is that these programs only bring basketball into a community and do not do anything to address the problematic social conditions plaguing black youth and their communities (Hartmann, 2012). This is a significant

criticism of sport for development initiatives, particularly when targeting racialized youth.

Alongside this tension, it is important to keep in mind that young people want opportunities to play sport and should be able to access sport without being depicted as potential thugs. Hartmann acknowledged that while the midnight basketball program had many shortcomings, it did succeed in providing viable sport options for youth in these communities who otherwise lacked options and spaces to play sport in the evenings. Participants in Hartmann's study explain often there is not compelling options for viable activity programs that are affordable and accessible, even more so during late hours, when youth are looking for something to do. This same sentiment is echoed by Jad:

> I guess it's important because to have a place like this because sometimes at night I'm completely clueless, like I have nothing to do at all, so if I get bored I'd rather spend my time watching the game or actually playing a sport or working out so I want to benefit from not wasting my time, to actually using it preferably with like what I can. Yeah man because there's not many things to do at night.

When organizations that are based outside the community create programs to specifically target youth in low-income areas they also play a role in further perpetuating the marginalization of that community. Most organizations enter these communities as outsiders and deliver their programs with a very uneven power dynamic (Harris and Adams, 2016). This dynamic can lead to a situation whereby program leaders are viewed as outsiders, and are unable to fully connect to the participants. Sammir explains:

> I feel like at first, when the community programs first started, the people that were leading the programs weren't able to really connect to the kids as much, you

know? I feel like some of the program team members we have now like Yara and

Marutsa, they're able to connect with all the kids and have a bigger impact

because they know where they come from, because they were raised here.

Sammir notes that there are significant differences when program leaders are from within

the community rather than from outside of it. Matthew echoes this comment:

I think like if they're not from the community then they don't really have a

connection, like last time we had the church come like Griffin's church or

whatever… To make it worse they weren't even from around here, they came all

the way from Waterloo to do this.

It is often the case that programs targeting communities like Liberty Village will

optimistically try to create positive social change while aiming to deter youth

delinquency, and provide youth with opportunities that might not otherwise be available

to them. Yet, community interventions from good-willed individuals and organizations

can create two related problems. The first is that outside individuals and organizations

come to believe that their programs are ultimately beneficial, often without involving

youth participants in planning, evaluation, or the ongoing implementation of the program.

The second problem is that programs that specifically targeted low-income and racialized

communities further the myth or stigma that residents are in need of these programs

because they are inferior or substandard. I explore these two problems in more detail

below.

Research suggests that "outsider presence" within communities like Liberty

Village may create an imbalance of power, as organizations with more resources and

supports are seen as helping those who are "in need". Kretzmann and McKnight (1993)

argue that when outside groups try and attend to the lack of resources within marginalized communities, it can actually lead to the formation of hierarchies of dependence. In other words, instead of developing assets from within the community, Kretzmann and McKnight explain that some communities remain dependent on outside organizations that do not support effective community-building strategies. The result is that communities are not mobilized through the process but remain dependent on the outside organization and its funding. At times these outside organizations also view themselves in a heroic light, furthering the stigma of the community as in need of help. Matthew's comments capture this:

> I felt that it was like we're a charity- we are not a charity case, like we're just a community. Like don't bring like expensive stuff, like don't act like we are the poorest people in the world. That made me mad. To make it worse they weren't even from around here, they came all the way from Waterloo to do this.

It is important to keep in mind that communities that are identified as priority areas for outreach often face complex and multi-faceted forms of oppression and marginality, barriers including racism and under-employment. The targeted initiatives that are brought into communities can often do little to tackle these broader social conditions (Kelly, 2012). Moreover, these communities have numerous strengths that should be acknowledged, including those that have been highlighted by the counter-stories of participants in this study. For example, Sammir noted that he preferred when Yara and Marutsa, two youth leaders from within Liberty Village, were involved with youth programing, rather than just "outsiders".

In addition, when "outside" organizations offer programs that are solely targeted to youth from low-income and racialized areas it restricts the ability for youth to interact with others outside of their own community. In other words, it keeps youth of colour separate from white youth in Niagara. Youth from Liberty Village are often given access to programs created within and for their community but not necessarily connected to other youth-based initiatives in the broader city. This leaves them on the margins and serves as a constant reminder that they are low income and racially 'other'. As Wacquant (2008) would argue this is a form of territorial stigmatization. Communities that are stigmatized become known as 'no go' areas "rife with deprivation, immorality, illegality and violence" (Wacquant 2008, p. 270). It is here that the majoritarian story begins, as the voices of the residents involved in these programs are cut off from those outside of the community.

The young people in this research had several things to say about being recipients of programs and offered the following counter-stories and feedback. Their perspectives are extremely important, yet are often overlooked. Sami-Jo explains:

> I think some things about the community program could be changed, like I shouldn't spend all day inside gluing feathers to popsicle sticks and making little houses or whatever, I know that's also important but I would rather be learning about other things…bringing programs that are important to us and we can benefit from that's just really key, it can make the program seem like it fixes everything… What I'm saying is, I think it's important to have programs that are going to be beneficial rather than just having a program.

In this excerpt, Sami-Jo highlights why it is vitally important to involve young people in programming decisions and evaluation in meaningful ways. Similar to Matthew's earlier comment, Sami-Jo also recalled her deep disappointment when she learned that outsiders viewed her beloved community as a place in need of charity. She explained that although youth from their community may not be able to afford some of the activities that these programs provide for them, it is important that the programs conducted in their community are aware of the power relationship between themselves and the residents, as well as how youth are responding to this 'generosity':

> I always thought, well why do we have these programs in Liberty Village and not in other places? Because the first time the community program opened I was like "Oh they probably just brought it here because they know that there's a lot of kids around here", but then later on it kind of revealed itself that it was because we lived in low income housing, and then it was like 'oh so this is some sort of charity thing' and it kind of obviously made me mad.

It is important for any sport for development or activity-based intervention program to listen to participant voices and be receptive to feedback in order to produce truly meaningful programs. Coalter (2011) explains that for most North American based programs, the concept of "development" revolves around providing socialization experiences that maintain or extend opportunities for "privileged youth" while compensating for what is missing in the lives of "disadvantaged youth". However, such deficit views that separate youth programming based on the level of privilege may inadvertently widen the gap of social inclusion between the two groups, as the privileged and disadvantaged are only socialized with those who receive the same level of privilege.

To this end, some participants have explained that there is a distinct separation between their school friends and their "home-friends" (who live within the community). Marutsa describes her experience with having these different friend groups:

> I think my high school, it was kind of a separate thing. Like I didn't really bring my high school back home with me. Like school stayed at school and home stayed at home. I didn't bring the two together. I didn't really want to because I wanted it to be like a place where I can go home, like a private place of my own. And it sounds selfish but I didn't want anyone knowing what I'm doing at home.

While this separation is created from a number of unique factors, it is clear that the underlying reputation of the community plays a large role in how young people in Liberty Village interact with their peers.

As suggested by the youth participants, one of the ways to change these programs might be to offer them in neutral locations outside of targeted communities, thus allowing youth from different social, cultural and economic backgrounds to come together without feeling as if they are being singled out. While it is important to have viable options for youth in underserved communities to participate in sport, Marutsa suggests it would help to "make it so that everyone can make it there, so location is big. Even transportation, maybe you could get a discount with buses or something." Matthew echoed this statement arguing that programs can be offered outside of the community as long as it is easy for youth to access, in particular it would be necessary to include transportation options. He explains:

I think you need to find like a place where it's more densely populated and you can have a lot of kids, like you wouldn't have it out in like rural communities because that would be too far away. And even if you did it at any local high school or any school or whatever, it would be nice if there could be like bus stops or the bus could come pick them up.

In the final chapter I reflect on my journey throughout the research process, and offer insight into the research design and my role as the primary researcher. I explain why I chose to implement the current design, and other ways that the research could have been conducted. I then discuss how this knowledge could be used to inform future projects and youth programming initiatives, and conclude with a summary of why I chose to research and write about the Liberty Village area.

Chapter 6: Final Thoughts and Future Directions

Upon reflecting on the research process undertaken in this study, I want to revisit why I employed CRT as both the theoretical approach and methodological framework. I return to this because it is something I have been asked several times over the course of my MA program. For example, when I presented preliminary results from this study at a graduate research conference I was directly asked why I had chosen critical race theory. Of course, there are a number of methodological choices I could have made in this research inquiry, including the use of case study, ethnography or several other approaches. Yet, a different methodology would have decentred the central role of race and racism along with its intersections with various forms of oppression. My central goal in this work was to produce findings based on the counter-stories of young people of colour that actively challenged the majoritarian story. I wanted my research to offer space to and present research grounded in the experiences and knowledge of young people of colour who live in Liberty Village.

As the day-to-day experiences of people of colour are filled with micro-aggressions that are subtly perpetuated by the racial majority, being a researcher who is part of the visible minority enabled me to identify with the youth participants. I was able to achieve a particular level of understanding that might not have been achieved had I been a member of the majority race.

My time spent as a research assistant on the Youth Sport Project provided me with an opportunity to become embedded within the Liberty Village community for a period of about eighteen months. During this time I became familiar with, and gained the

trust and, hopefully, the respect of the youth I spent time with. I believe that this relationship made participants more forthcoming with their stories during the interview process, as they felt comfortable with the nature of our conversation. Had I not had time to spend alongside youth within the community, I may have also been seen as an outsider, and failed to gain the trust of participants. My time spent as a research assistant also provided me with the opportunity to understand the community and meet with other residents, including parents and adults who were not participants in this study. This was pivotal for developing a deeper understanding of the community and for being able to have the support of parents and guardians who provided approval to involve their children in the research process. It would be an interesting and meaningful research project to engage parents and guardians in a study about barriers and supports for youth sport participation in Liberty Village.

As many young people in the community actively challenge the societal depiction of Liberty Village youth as 'thugs' or 'hoodlums', it may be worthwhile for future researchers to continue to engage in critical race theory and highlight the strengths, insights and counter-stories of young people that offer opposition to the majoritarian narrative. In Liberty Village, many of the youth participants went on to post-secondary education and are heavily involved as leaders of their community. These facts are often left unheard, and must be continually voiced if the image of Liberty Village is to be changed.

Personal Reflections

I am currently an elementary school teacher, a soccer coach, and co-founder of a small Toronto based charity called United Play. United Play is an organization which provides sports equipment and sporting opportunities to youth around the world. Therefore I have a vested interest in the field of sport for development and the outcomes it can achieve. This research investigation has made a considerable impact on how I view the world around me and provided me with insight into the systemic inequalities faced by those of the racial minority. I have also learned about the role that sport can play in the lives of marginalized youth, and the options that are available to them. Perhaps most importantly, I have learned just how important it is to engage with youth outside of "deficit storytelling" (Solorzano and Yosso, 2002).

As I move forward in my own career, there are numerous ways I can utilize the learnings and findings from the study to enhance my teaching and coaching pedagogy, and inform my own sport for development work. I would like to continue to highlight critical race theory and the ability of counter-stories to challenge the majoritarian narrative so that societal inequalities become more transparent, and equitable opportunities are provided for all.

Conclusion

The stigmatizing discourse surrounding the Liberty Village community is one that has painted an extremely negative image of the area and its residents. The stigma has become personal for the participants in this study as it shapes their lives and everyday experiences. The majoritarian stories that are often used to portray areas like Liberty

Village ignore the deeper underlying issues impacting underserved communities and instead often highlight violence and crime as common occurrence, thus creating the belief that these communities and their residents are dangerous and immoral. These areas and their residents become marked as 'at-risk', a label synonymous with crime and deprivation, which is stamped on to the residents and identifies them as special cases within the larger community.

As a largely Muslim, and visible minority community, Liberty Village residents are faced with multiple forms of racism and marginalization through day-to-day micro-aggressions that are largely unchallenged and become seen as normal conduct. The counter-stories produced through this research oppose the majoritarian narrative of the community and explain how the young residents have constructed their lives despite these misconceptions. As a central space for youth congregation, the community court is highlighted within these stories as it maintains a vital role in the lives of the young people in the community. It is important to understand the significance of this court as it relates to how local youth experience the world around them as they grow up along the margins of society.

Through this project, the youth of Liberty Village have been able to share their side of the story and have their voices heard. They have given accounts of resourcefulness, community pride, sporting excellence, and individual success. All of which are seldom heard within the stories about the area they call home. These young participants have shown how a community court can be used as a space for social congregation, physical activity, individual freedom, as well as a place for personal growth and development. They have shed light on what makes the court so appealing to

youth, and how programs and policies can learn from their testimonies to produce meaningful programs for youth living in similar conditions.

It is my sincere hope that this knowledge can be used to change the negative image associated with the Liberty Village community and highlight positive stories about the young people living there. I would also like to see future programs targeting youth within this demographic consider the suggestions brought forth by the young participants, and understand the deeply rooted marginality these youth are faced with so that their programs avoid perpetuating negative stereotypes. These youth have stated that they have been able to produce significant social and sporting outcomes by utilizing certain aspects of the courts that appeal to them. As an educator, I believe that if youth from one of the most negatively perceived areas of Niagara are offering suggestions on what they believe would make future programs successful, then it may be worthwhile to use this knowledge to plan future programs in a pro-active manner.

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Appendix A

Liberty Village Demographics July 2014

Children between 0-18 Years of Age

Number of Children		Age Range
84		0-6
74		7-12
81		13-18
Total	239	

Number of Households: 110

Number of Tenants with Spouse: 47

Number of Single Family Households: 63

Monthly Income Source(s)

Number of Tenants	Income Source
29	Earned Income (employment or EI)
37	OW
24	ODSP
2	CPP
1	Support
0	OSAP
2	Earned/ ODSP
3	Earned/ OW

110 Townhouse Units

Number of Homes	Size
50	3- Bedroom
44	4- Bedroom
16	5- Bedroom

Appendix B

Story-Based Interview Guide

Interview focus: Young residents use of the neighborhood basketball/sport court in Liberty Village.

Background: Story-based questions are useful for generating in-depth, responses. Story-based questions ask participants to provide full stories about something meaningful in their lives.

Review with participant: I am doing my research on sport and games that young people play right here in Liberty Village – specifically on the basketball/sport court. You have already participated in an interview for the "Youth Sport Project" and I wanted to interview you for my Masters research because you have talked about using the court to play on. So I want to ask you to tell me some stories about times you have used the court or watched others use the court.

Icebreaker: start with a general question:

It has been a while since the last interview for the Youth Sport Project – what kinds of activities (sports/leisure) have you been doing?

1. Tell me a story about the court, a time you remember vividly where you felt really happy to be there. When did that episode happen? What were you doing? Who was there? What was said? How did the events progress? What were you feeling and thinking?

2. What other experiences have you had playing on the court? What specific games/activities have you been involved in? What was happening? What were people doing?

3. What does the court mean to you? To your friends?

4. How does the court get used by other kids? Do adults use the court?

5. Do you use the court anymore? (summer, winter, etc.). Can you describe the kinds of games and sports that get played there? Who is playing? Who is watching? Who is never on the court playing? Is anyone in 'charge' of the court?

6. Is there anything else we haven't talked about in terms of the court that I should include? *ask for elaboration when needed.

Appendix C

Date: **December 2015**

Project Title: **Young People, Sport, and Neighbourhood Project**

Principal Investigator (PI): Erin Sharpe, Associate Professor

Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies

Brock University

Phone: (905) 688-5550, ext. 3989; Email: esharpe@brocku.ca

MA Candidate: Tyler Collymore

Faculty of Applied Health Sciences

Brock University

Phone: 905-550-7116 Email: tc09mv@brocku.ca

INVITATION

We would like to invite your son/daughter to continue to participate in our research project. The purpose of our project is to investigate lives of young people who live in your neighbourhood and especially their lives and experiences in sport. For Tyler Collymore's MA research, he is interested in the ways young people use the community basketball court for sport and physical activity. Specifically, we would like to invite your son/daughter to participate in an interview to talk more about the basketball court and their sport experiences.

WHAT'S INVOLVED

Research participants will participate in an interview conducted by Tyler Collymore, MA student, Brock University. There is a set list of questions, where your son/daughter will tell the interviewer about what is important to them about using the community court. Interviews will be approximately one hour. With your permission, Tyler will use a digital voice recorder to tape the interview. We will also contact your son/daughter after the interview and ask if they would like to look over a written version of the interview, to ensure that what is written is accurate. Research participants will receive a $15 honorarium for their participation.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS AND RISKS

We hope that the project will make a difference to how people think and make decisions about young people living in Liberty Village. We do not foresee any risks associated with participation in this study.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The information your son/daughter provides will be kept confidential. The only exception to this rule is if learn of suspected child abuse or neglect, or child pornography. We are legally required to share this information with the appropriate authorities.

When sharing the results of the study with the research advisory team, the neighbourhood, or wider audiences, your son/daughter's name will not appear in any report resulting from this study, nor will be the name of the neighbourhood. However, with your and your son/daughter's permission, anonymous quotations may be included in research presentations and reports.

Data collected during this study will be stored in a locked file cabinet in the home office of Tyler Collymore, and all electronic data files (transcriptions of interviews and audio-recordings) will be stored on a password-protected computer. All electronic files of the data will be kept for the duration of the project, after which time they will be deleted.

Access to this data will be restricted to the investigator and research team for the project.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Your son/daughter's participation in this study is voluntary. He/she may decline to answer any questions or participate in any component of the study. Your son/daughter can withdraw from this study at any time and still receive an honorarium. At that point, we will ask if your son/daughter would like the information shared up to that point to be included in the analysis or destroyed.

PUBLICATION OF RESULTS

We will share our findings with a wider audience, through papers published in professional journals and presented at conferences. If you are interested in receiving a copy of any written reports, please contact the Principal Investigator by email.

CONTACT INFORMATION AND ETHICS CLEARANCE

If you have any questions about this study or require further information, please contact Erin Sharpe using the contact information provided above. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Research Ethics Board at Brock University **14-029**. If you have any comments or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Research Ethics Office at (905) 688-5550 Ext. 3035, reb@brocku.ca.

Thank you for your assistance in this project. Please keep a copy of this form for your records.

CONSENT FORM

I consent to my son/daughter's participation in the study described above. I have made this decision based on the information I have read in the Information-Consent Letter. I have had the opportunity to receive any additional details I wanted about the study and understand that I may ask questions in the future. I understand that I may withdraw this consent at any time.

Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Name of son/daughter:
_____