An Intersectional Analysis of the Recruitment and Participation of Second-Generation African Canadian Adolescent Girls in a Community Basketball Program in Ottawa, Canada

Amina Haggar and Audrey R. Giles
School of Human Kinetics, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Ottawa, Ottawa, ON, Canada

Guided by the experiences and perspectives of sport practitioners, in this paper, an intersectional lens was used to examine age, gender, race, socioeconomic status, and religion and how they relate to the recruitment and participation of second-generation, low-income, African Canadian, Black Muslim, and Christian adolescent girls in a community-based basketball program in Ottawa, Canada. Semistructured interviews were conducted with 11 program coordinators and coaches involved in the City of Ottawa Community Centre Basketball League (CCBL), and reflexive thematic analysis of the data was engaged. The findings were threefold: (a) CCBL coordinators and coaches recognize the importance of representation to enhancing their support to program users; (b) CCBL coaches and coordinators make efforts to build trust with and increase buy-in from first-generation immigrant parents to improve girls’ program participation; and (c) CCBL coaches and coordinators make religious accommodations in response to the needs of Muslim and Christian program users. The findings illustrated that community-based sport programs serving second-generation African Canadian adolescent girls in low-income communities require multifaceted program and outreach strategies that consider the intersecting social experiences of participants to improve recruitment and participation. To conclude, policy and program design and implementation strategies to support the creation of inclusive, equity-driven community-based sport practices were proposed.

Keywords: community-based sport, representation-based hiring, parental trust, multi-oppression, religious accommodations

Community-based sport programs form an important part of the Canadian sport ecosystem (Mulholland, 2008). Particularly for low-income children and adolescents, community-based sport programs serve as a gateway to organized activities to which they would otherwise lack access. Notwithstanding the benefits of sport (e.g., Blomfield & Barber, 2009; Eime et al., 2013; Fraser-Thomas et al., 2005), the current body of literature on adolescent girls’ sport participation in Canada has revealed a marked decline throughout their lifespan (Wright, 2013). When female participation is disaggregated by socioeconomic status and race, ethnicity, religion, immigrant status, sexuality, and dis/ability, the data reveal differential impacts among these subpopulations. Namely, low-income and racialized persons (Biddle et al., 2005), ethnic minorities (Fleming, 2016), Muslims (Knez et al., 2012), Christians (Walseth, 2016), newcomers (Canadian Women & Sport, 2021), sexual minorities (Doull et al., 2018), and youth with disabilities (Goodwin, 2016) demonstrate the lowest levels of sport involvement and/or enjoyment. However, a persisting knowledge gap within extant research remains insofar as examining how the overlap of multiple intersecting identities and lived experiences influence the involvement of Canadian girls in sport.

In mainstream sport discourse, researchers have often problematized adolescent girls’ attrition and dropout rates by conflating the experiences of some girls as being representative of all girls’ experiences, or by failing to recognize the reciprocal nature of multiple inequality producing phenomena operating at a given moment (Flintoff et al., 2008). The impacts of the analytical status quo in sport studies are especially evident when examining the experiences of second-generation African Canadian Muslim and Christian adolescent girls. To date this population has received limited attention in sport recruitment and participation research or, in some cases, their experiences have been implicitly believed to be represented by/through the experiences of first-generation immigrants. As this cohort of the population continues to grow, it becomes even more important to begin to look at the ways in which their presence influences and is influenced by sport to promote an inclusive vision of sport program design and implementation in Canada.

Intersectionality’s use in sport studies has grown since its institutionalization in the late 1980s through the works of scholars like Kimberlé Crenshaw, Patricia Hill Collins, and Deborah Karyn King in legal studies, sociology, and feminism, respectively (May, 2015). The utility of applying gender, race, and class (or economic) readings (otherwise known as intersectional analyses) to the study of racialized women’s and girls’ inclusion in sport research, and more specifically Black females’ sport participation, has been documented by numerous scholars (Carter-Francique, 2017; Kalman-Lamb & Abdel-Shehid, 2017; Simien et al., 2019). The application of intersectionality in girls’ and women’s sport and physical activity (PA) participation in the United States and United Kingdom have provided a number of critical insights on the complexities of social identity and social structures in racialized women and girl athletes’ sport experiences. For example, Carter-Francique’s (2017, 2020) work in the United States on the racialized and gendered experiences of African American women and girls in sport as coaches and athletes, as well as Dlagkas (2016) work in the United Kingdom on racial and ethnic minority youth have advanced theoretical and practical understandings of marginalized women’s and girls’ experiences in sport. Nonetheless,
examples of intersectionality’s application in sport, PA, or related fields (e.g., leisure, physical education [PE], and so on) in Canada continues to be limited. In terms of explicit engagement of intersectionality, as compared with engagement of intersectional considerations not defined within an approach or theoretical framework, a number of examples of both genres of sport and PA research exist. For instance, Dagkas (2016) described the necessity of engaging intersectionality while examining social justice and its intersections with race, ethnicity, and class in youth sport in order to protect disadvantaged groups against further marginalization in school and community sport settings. Flintoff et al. (2008) discussed intersectionality and its application to PE while illuminating the challenges of researching “difference” in this context. According to Flintoff et al. (2008), the central issue with researching “difference” is the determination of which differences are relevant as well as the theorizing around how these differences interact with one another. Thorjussen and Sisjord (2020) examined inclusion and exclusion in multiethnic PE settings in Norway using an intersectional approach. Through 17 student interviews and field observations, the authors found that ethnicity and cultural background were deemed by the participants as not requiring consideration in PE settings, yet PE was also recognized by the participants as a space in which remnants of a majority culture permeated the activities taught in class. Employing a feminist, poststructuralist theoretical framework, Azzarito and Solomon (2005) problematized the knowledge gap that exists in youth sport with respect to gender, race, and social class analyses. Azzarito and Solomon (2005) argued that pedagogies of PE and PE curricula could benefit from “reconceptualization” to bring focus to racialized masculinities and femininities in PE.

Second-Generation African Canadians

The centralization of low-income second-generation African Canadian Muslim and Christian adolescent girls within sport can provide critical insights on the lived experiences of and challenges faced by girls who currently rest at the intersection of numerous socially disadvantaged identity categories commonly studied in isolation (economically disadvantaged, racial, ethnic, and religious minorities). Statistics Canada (2017) projected as much as 49% of the population of Canadians under 15 years of age will have an immigrant background by 2036, which signals increasing diversity among young people in Canada. Through the adoption of the cultural attributes of their first-generation African immigrant parents and those of mainstream Canadian society, second-generation African Canadian youth are pushed into a cultural “grey area” that is not quite like newcomers or first-generation immigrants and not quite like Canadians of three generations or more. As a cultural hybrid between the dominant mainstream and their foreign-born parent(s)’ culture(s), second-generation Canadians are often described as being bicultural (Sodhi, 2008), which refers to “comfort and proficiency” with both heritage and host country cultures (Schwartz & Unger, 2010, p. 26). Tironne and Goodberry (2011) examined the relationship between leisure and biculturalism by documenting the experiences of racial minority second-generation Canadian youth in a longitudinal study. The authors found that leisure enabled the participants to develop synergies that allowed them to retain their heritage culture while also adopting the cultural norms of dominant Canadian society. Applying an intersectional lens to the study of the recruitment and participation of second-generation ethnocultural minority Canadian girls in a community-based basketball program can enable a nuanced understanding of the influence of overlapping systemic and structural inequalities within and outside sport (Azzarito & Macdonald, 2016).

Ethnic and Racial Minoritization in Sport

Fleming (2016) described how minority ethnic groups are problematically considered less interested in sport than White people, reinforcing the idea that ethnocultural attitude—as opposed to systems or structures that create exclusionary conditions—defines the under participation of ethnic minorities in sport. Under mainstream sport policy structures, ethnocultural differences have been overtly ignored for fear that acknowledging difference is akin to reinforcing prejudice. This has led to color-blind policies that disservce ethnicultural minority children and youth since their unique needs become invisible against the standard of White middle-class families. Fleming (2016) ascertained, “youth sport has been and remains a site for racism” (p. 290), and yet research around the pervasive impact of stereotyping, racialization, and racial discourse in sport in Canada remains largely unexplored. The effects of ethnic stereotyping and racism on the sport experiences of second-generation African Canadian girls must be unpacked further to draw deeper understanding of the barriers to recruitment and participation and how to combat the harms of discrimination and prejudice in sport.

The intersections of additional identity factors with race and ethnicity are not typically considered in sport policy development and research (e.g., the treatment of age as a social relation of power in sport research with racialized adolescent girls). The threat of sexism, anti-Black racism, and poverty (among others such as islamophobia) shape the lives of second-generation African Canadian Muslim and Christian adolescent girls in critical ways that must be considered to adequately understand the factors that drive their engagement with or disengagement from sport.

Girls and Women in Sport in Canada

Both government and nongovernment policy actors have played an integral role in promoting girls’ and women’s integration into the Canadian sport system at all levels. For example, the Province of Ontario’s Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism, and Culture Industries established the “Advancing Opportunities for Women and Girls in Sport” provincial action plan to augment women and girls’ representation in sport as athletes, coaches, leaders, educators, and administrators (Ontario Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries, 2017). Federally, Canadian Heritage (2017) developed the sport policy, “Actively Engaged: A Policy on Sport for Women and Girls”—which replaced Sport Canada’s Policy on Women in Sport—to bring attention to the recruitment and meaningful involvement of women and girls in sport-based activities. Cragg et al. (2016) literature review and report “Policy and Program Considerations for Increasing Sport Participation Among Members of Underrepresented Groups in Canada” to the Sport, Physical Activity Recreation Committee outlined recommendations for developing inclusive, welcoming, and meaningful sport and PA experiences for underrepresented communities (i.e., women and girls, low-income Canadians, newcomers, and so on).

Nongovernment sport organizations have also supported the development and implementation of sport equity initiatives involving girls’ and women’s recruitment to sport in Canada. Canadian Women & Sport (CWS) (2012) (formerly the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport and Physical Activity) produced a resource entitled “Actively Engaging Women and Girls: Addressing the Psycho-Social Factors” to raise
awareness among sport policy and program makers, academics, and practitioners alike on the barriers to women’s and girls’ involvement in sport and PA. In the same document, Canadian Women and Sport recommended introducing recruitment campaigns, strategies, and initiatives to sustain long-term active lifestyles for women and girls. Despite the plethora of policy interventions, lower rates of women’s and girls’ participation in sport persist, including within free, drop-in programs such as the Girls’ Community Centre Basketball League (CCBL).

**Role of Sport Practitioners in Sport**

Sport practitioners play a vital role in the front-end delivery and back-end planning and development of grassroots level sports such as those offered after-school, drop-in programs, and community-based programs. Grassroots sport practitioners serve two primary functions: program delivery through coaching, chaperoning, and on-site supervision; and/or program planning and development through staff training, program design, budget allocation, resource and equipment purchase, program promotion, and program outreach. Sport practitioners’ sphere of influence on program planning and implementation can lead to negative outcomes for program users when practitioners lack the ability or understanding to create inclusive program environments (Spencer-Cavaliere et al., 2017). However, sport practitioners can also contribute to positive user experiences by fostering social cohesion and through interpersonal interaction, relationship building, and strategic decision making (Sabbe et al., 2018). In this research, the experiences and perspectives of coaches and coordinators for the CCBL program in Ottawa, Canada, were leveraged to cocreate knowledge on the sport recruitment and participation of their socially disadvantaged adolescent girl program users using intersectionality as a means to develop a more robust conceptual understanding of the enablers and constraints.

**Theoretical Framework**

Intersectionality is a feminist theory that points researchers to (re)conceptualize the social position of individuals or groups who face multiple forms of disadvantage (Bowleg, 2008). As a challenge to the traditionally fixed ways of understanding inequality, intersectionality offers an alternative mode of examining oppression and privilege (Dill & Zambrana, 2009). The critical engagement of intersectionality elevates those who have been marginalized within society (Dill & Zambrana, 2009) by making the invisible effects of sociopolitical location visible (Hancock, 2013). The term “intersectionality” can be traced back to Kimberlé Crenshaw with the publication of her distinguished journal article in 1989 (Crenshaw, 1989). Crenshaw (1989) presented three Title VII antidiscrimination court cases in the United States in which the claims of Black women plaintiffs were rejected for being too similar to other cases where remedial legislation had been enacted, or too different and therefore excluded from the protection of the Title VII Act. Title VII is legislation written as part of the 1964 Civil Rights Act for the protection of employees against prejudicial or otherwise unfair treatment in the workplace. Crenshaw argued that the experiences of Black women, who were simultaneously victimized by racism and sexism, were conflated with White women or grouped with Black men in discussions concerning discrimination recurrence. In doing so, the distinct victimization of Black women in the workplace, sometimes singularly, and sometimes simultaneously by racist and sexist prejudice, was conceptually erased. As a result, the Black female defendants were void of protection from the very antidiscrimination laws putatively created for them and other disenfranchised citizens. Crenshaw’s (1989) distinguished critique of antidiscrimination legal doctrine illustrated the inconsistencies of sameness/difference rationales (Cho et al., 2013) by presenting the conceptual limitations of grouping Black men’s and White women’s experiences as representative of Black women’s, while also maintaining that Black women represent neither group’s experiences. The analytical traditions of single axis understandings of discrimination and inequality, critiqued by Crenshaw, form the contours of sport studies as evidenced by the compartmentalization of factors such as age, gender, race, ethnicity, class, and religion within adolescent girl sport attrition and dropout research. The application of intersectionality as the underlying theoretical framework for the present investigation has enabled a nuanced analysis and understanding of CCBL coordinators’ and coaches’ interview data on the facilitators and barriers to the participation and recruitment of adolescent girls with intersecting marginalized identities in community-based sport.

**Methods**

**Study Context and Design**

The factors involved in the recruitment and participation of second-generation African Canadian adolescent girls in the CCBL in Ottawa, Canada, were investigated using intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991) and a feminist participatory action research (FPAR) approach (Langan & Morton, 2009). The CCBL is a City of Ottawa–operated and Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities–funded program that runs out of recreation facilities and community centers in predominantly low-income neighborhoods in Ottawa, Canada. Many of the families who access the programs and services offered in the four centers involved in this study are low-income and members of equity-deserving communities (i.e., newcomer, racialized, Muslim, and so on). CCBL program stakeholders have identified a longstanding trend of considerably fewer girl participants compared with boys in the CCBL program despite an equivalent male/female population in the centers’ program catchment areas.

Bringing together feminist methodologies with community-based participatory action research principles, FPAR was employed to conduct this research (Langan & Morton, 2009). According to Fonow et al. (2005), feminist methodologies’ guiding principles include the centralization of gender and gender asymmetries, examination of relations of power, consciousness raising as a methodological tool, and concern for the ethical implications of research with particular attention to the exploitation of women. FPAR users explicitly support participatory action research principles (Langan & Morton, 2009), which require collaboration, equitable ownership, and shared control between investigator(s) and participant(s) in all phases of the research process (Israel et al., 1998). Participatory action researchers aim to “democratize research” (Sullivan et al., 2005, p. 989) through cocreating knowledge alongside the project stakeholders (e.g., community members) and building the investigation from the ground up (Holkup et al., 2004). According to Reid et al. (2006), the notion of action in FPAR can invoke different meanings, but the authors offered a definition of action to mean the “multi-faceted and dynamic process that can range from speaking to validate oneself and one’s experiences in the world to the process of doing something”, such as taking a deliberate step toward changing one’s circumstances” (p. 317).
Consistent with feminist thought and FPAR tenants, participatory research principles (Anandhi & Velayudhan, 2010) were used at the outset of this project’s development to establish a community advisory board. The community advisory board included City of Ottawa role program managers, CCBL coordinators, and CCBL coaches who together shared insight on the development of the research question, research design, and project timeline, supported participant recruitment, and shared any concerns over feasibility and ethics. CCBL program users and their parents were not recruited as members of the community advisory board due to practical constraints related to the COVID-19 pandemic and general disinterest. However, FPAR principles were honored notwithstanding the pandemic-related impossibility of involving CCBL girl participants in this project by centering the empowerment of sport practitioners as agents of change to address the longstanding participation gap between girl and boy program users. The role of the research participants in this knowledge project was threefold: (a) to create knowledge on the facilitators and barriers to the recruitment and participation of second-generation African Canadian adolescent girls to the CCBL, (b) to identify challenges to recruitment and participation, and (c) to codevelop actions in response. The research outcomes are described in the “Discussion” section.

Fieldwork and Data Collection

Approval was obtained from the University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board and the City of Ottawa to conduct this research. Prior to data collection, the first author spent April 2019 to March 2020 volunteering at the Girls’ CCBL program at McClaren Community Center (pseudonym). The first author’s personal engagement with stakeholders and community members in 2019–2020 enabled trust-building with the McClaren Community Center coaches and coordinators prior to engaging in recruitment and data collection activities. The first author’s fieldwork ended abruptly in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which ended the CCBL and all other City of Ottawa–operated recreational programs and services. Thereafter, data collection activities transitioned from in-person to online.

A purposive nonrandom sampling approach and snowball sampling was used to recruit 11 CCBL coaches and coordinators (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The inclusion criteria for participants included present or past involvement (in the last 2 years) in the CCBL program in the capacity of coach and/or coordinator. Coaches were defined as individuals involved in the front-end delivery of the program and coordinators as individuals involved in the back-end planning and development (collectively referred to as “staff”). After obtaining informed consent, the first author completed a total of four semistructured interviews in-person prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and seven semistructured interviews using Zoom video conferencing software. Interviews lasted between 35 and 65 min and questions were divided into three thematic segments.

During the first interview segment, participants were asked about what they felt could be done to mediate the constraining factors around ethnocultural minority adolescent girls’ participation in community-based sports programs (e.g., To your knowledge, what are some of the barriers young girls are facing accessing your sport programs?). For the second interview segment, participants were asked questions to obtain a sense of the challenges they encountered (if any) in the delivery of the CCBL as well as other sport programs to ethnocultural minority adolescent girls (e.g., What has been done to date to mediate challenges around retention in the CCBL or other sport programs at the Centre?). In the final interview segment, participants were asked questions regarding what strategies they put forward (if any) to account for cultural diversity in the delivery of the sport programs at their respective centers (e.g., What considerations have program staff and volunteers made to multiculturalism in the delivery of sport programs at the center?). Participants were also given the opportunity to speak about their identity and lived experiences, and if/how it supports their engagement with program users in the CCBL or other programs at the community centers. Canadian Women & Sport provided each participant a $100 honorarium through joint funding under the Sport Information Research Centre Researcher/Practitioner Match Grant.

Research Participants

Table 1 provides an overview of the participants’ profiles including their sex, the name of the community center at which they work, their staff role (i.e., coach or coordinator), and the number of years they have been involved in the CCBL program. Five of the participants were male (n = 5) and six of the participants were female (n = 6) for a total of 11 participants (n = 11). Four participants were CCBL coordinators (n = 4) and seven were CCBL coaches (n = 7). The majority of participants were McClaren Community Center staff (n = 5), followed by Waverley Community Center staff (n = 4), and finally Capilano Community Centre (n = 1), and Milltown Community Center staff (n = 1). The average number of years staff members were involved in the CCBL as either a coach or coordinator was 6.6 years, with 12 years being the highest and 1.5 years being the lowest. Among the nine staff who self-identified their race, ethnicity, or heritage—six were Black and of African heritage, while three were White and of European descent. Two did not explicitly disclose their race, ethnicity, or heritage but described their minoritized identity in terms of immigrant status (being a first-generation Canadian) or religion (being Muslim and raised by an immigrant mother). The racial and ethnic differentiations were determined by the participants who in some cases stated their race, and in other cases were more specific by stating their ancestry or heritage. In terms of generation status, the participants of African descent were either first-generation Canadian, second-generation Canadian, or 1.5 generation Canadian (defined by Zhou, 1999) as a foreign-born individual who migrated to the host nation between the age of 5 and 12.

Data Analysis

Braun and Clarke’s (2019) reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) was used to analyze the CCBL coaches’ and coordinators’ interview transcripts. RTA requires engagement with the data in terms of the level of analysis; the approach to coding and theme development; and the ontological, epistemological, and theoretical assumptions informing the study (Braun & Clarke, 2019). In the analysis process, the lived experiences of the program coaches and coordinators took primacy over a priori knowledge gained through reviewing literature on the facilitators and barriers to adolescent female sport recruitment and participation. The authors engaged with positionality and subjectivities throughout the analysis process.

Subjectivity

The first author is a 1.5 generation Canadian of African descent, Black, heterosexual, and cisgender, who grew up accessing
community-based sport programs as a child and youth. Her personal and professional experiences in community-based sport programs allowed her to develop an intimate connection to the cultural and social contexts of community-based program spaces offered in low-income communities. Her ethnorial and ethnocultural identity as a Muslim African Canadian female who navigated a multiplicity of marginalized identities when accessing sport throughout her childhood, adolescence, and youth informed the development of this study. The second author, who is a second-generation Canadian of English and Welsh decent, White, heterosexual, and cisgender, did not interact with participants, but she drew on her experience with providing community sport programs in diverse environments while engaging in the data analysis process.

Findings

Using RTA, three themes concerning how CCBL coaches and coordinators address the recruitment and participation of second-generation African Canadian girls in a community-based basketball program in Ottawa, Canada, were constructed: (a) CCBL coordinators and coaches recognize the importance of representation to enhancing their support to program users, (b) CCBL coaches and coordinators make efforts to build trust with and increase buy-in from parents to improve participation outcomes for program users, and (c) CCBL coaches and coordinators make religious accommodations in response to the needs of Muslim and Christian program users.

Representation Through Shared Identity and Lived Experience

All four of the CCBL coordinators shared similar views on the importance of hiring CCBL coaches who can relate to program users. Clare, who is a CCBL coordinator at the Waverley (pseudonym) Community Center, described her efforts to staff the CCBL with individuals who could relate to the program users on a personal level and/or through lived experience.

I made sure I didn’t staff a program that had a lot of different cultures participating in it with two people that were unaware of the culture. Like [I want the staff members to be able to say], “You know what? Today’s a no hijab day. Let’s take everything off. Let’s just be girls” . . . I watch my staff go over and beyond just to make these girls feel comfortable . . . make sure that they know they’re welcomed, and they’re wanted here . . . . I have goosebumps about it because it’s like that’s something that I personally can’t do myself. My staff who does CCBL now, she came up through CCBL. She was a participant . . . she can tell the girls the challenges she faced. She can provide her absolute life experience in the program to make them keep coming back.

Yusuf, who is a long-time CCBL coach for the boys’ team and assistant coach for the girls’ team, illustrated a key feature of the hiring model used at many of the Community Centers involved in this study:

. . . if we were to check the staffs that we have here, I think if I would say 75% went through a program called I Love to Mentor so it’s like almost all the staffs, they’ve gone through that program, through that training, and now they work . . . they lived here, and now they volunteer, and then they get that job.

Three among the six African Canadian CCBL coaches in the study discussed how their identity enabled them to better support program users. Malek shared how his background allows him to understand the program users’ experiences:

For myself personally, I don’t feel that much challenge . . . to get them involved—how their household might operate, I can approach them in a certain type of way, so I don’t feel that much challenge . . . to get them to participate and all that kind of stuff.

Dohra, who is a coach for the Girls’ CCBL, described how her lived experience helps her understand how to support program users. As an oldest child who experienced the same barriers, she remarked the negative impact of babysitting duties on the girls’ participation in the CCBL. Notably, six of 11 program staff described babysitting as a barrier to girls’ retention:

. . . when kids stop showing up without like an excuse or something I kind of just . . . ask them questions and not attack them . . . Not give them a hard time or anything like that but

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant (pseudonym)</th>
<th>Sex (M/F)</th>
<th>Community center name (pseudonym)</th>
<th>Staff role</th>
<th>Number of years involved</th>
<th>Race/ethnicity or heritage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Malek</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>McClaren</td>
<td>Coach</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>South Sudanese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Dohra</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>McClaren</td>
<td>Coach</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Afar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Yusuf</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>McClaren</td>
<td>Coach</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Somali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Alain</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>McClaren</td>
<td>Coach</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Congolese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Amy</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>McClaren</td>
<td>Coordinator</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Clare</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Waverley</td>
<td>Coordinator</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Deborah</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Capilano</td>
<td>Coach</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>African Canadian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Lada</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Milltown</td>
<td>Coach</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Undisclosed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Houman</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Waverley</td>
<td>Coordinator</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Undisclosed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Jane</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Waverley</td>
<td>Coordinator</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Nour</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Waverley</td>
<td>Coach</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>Somali</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. M = male; F = female.

Table 1 Study Participant Profiles
explain to them that I understand because my parents were strict growing up . . . so I understand, and I relate to them because I too had to babysit some of my siblings and skip out on programs . . . .

Program coaches and coordinators of non-African cultural backgrounds also expressed how their lived experience helps them to support program users. Lada, a coach for the Girls’ CCBL, shared how her background as a first-generation immigrant makes her sympathetic to the position of the girls as well as the parents:

...for the multicultural [girls] is so hard, but since I am immigrant too, I can understand, I can relate too. I know why the parents think about that, why the parents do that. I used to help the girls: I try to help them. To accept the parent’s thinking and they [can] add their own . . . . I know what it’s like.

Parental Buy-In

When discussing some of the challenges encountered in the recruitment and participation of second-generation African Canadian adolescent girls, the program staff frequently discussed parental buy-in, approval, and trust. Several staff members described situations in which they made accommodations for users at the request of parents; in some cases, the accommodations illustrated a divide between what program users wanted versus their parents.

Houman shared his experience of mothers bringing forward concerns and noted the difference between the program users’ views compared with their mothers’ views:

[Girl program users] don’t have an issue with continuing coming to the Community Centre where there’s a lot of guys, playing basketball in front of a group of guys, having a male coach. It’s not necessarily a problem for them, but it’s a problem for their parents . . . .

Similarly, Dohra described her experience of trying to ease the concerns of parents who were reluctant to have their daughters participate in the program. She signaled the differences in how parents value the programs versus their daughters:

If a girl is saying, “Well, I can’t really come to program because my mom and my dad don’t want me to play basketball,” then I’d kind of go out of my way and have a conversation with the parent and explain to them that, listen, like, “she’ll be playing basketball, and if you want her to do more homework then I could offer my help and help her with her homework.” That’s things that I’ve done in the past just to get the kid in the program . . . .

Clare described her efforts to address the concerns of mothers about their daughters attending CCBL practices at a neighboring community center. She described building trust with mothers through a peer group:

Every Wednesday morning, I meet with the mothers. We call it ladies who lunch. We talk about things. We talk about the kids. We talk with communities, but it’s like I’m trying to now be that face to the Community Centre so the mothers are more trusting . . . . But it’s like what can I do as a full-time staff to make sure these girls are coming? So, we arrange staff walking them [home], picking them up [because that’s what the mothers want], but then you have a 17-year-old who’s like, “I don’t need to be walked.” So, it’s very tricky.

Nour, who is African Canadian and played and coached in the CCBL, explained the challenge of getting first-generation African Canadian parents to buy into the concept of girls in sport and in the CCBL: “parents don’t have that much trust, I guess, in the system. . . . They’re not very familiar [with] the way that sports and females are—sort of can be intertwined and can also be a good thing . . . . Their parents already have other commitments for them [the girls]. Like familial commitments.”

Religious Accommodations

Seven of 11 program staff described various considerations that were made for program users for reasons relating to Christian or Muslim faith. Through observing Islamic customs such as daily obligatory prayers and fasting during Ramadan, program staff strove to accommodate Muslim program users. Jane described the changes that were made to CCBL practices to accommodate Muslim program users who were fasting and/or needed a private space to pray:

During Ramadan, [we do things like] changing the time so everyone can break fast or moving the program to later so that everyone has the chance to be with family and eat and then can come play basketball. Trying to be very flexible, understanding that we’re gonna leave early if you have to go because there’s prayer . . . .

Yusuf shared examples of what had been put in place to make the program space more welcoming to hijab wearing program users:

We have a girl as a coach. [We ask], “okay, do you want no males in the building?” No problem will have a female staff. “You wear hijab?” No problem, the building will be shut down from 11 to 12 if you want to play, take your hijab off, there are no boys [in the] building . . . . We have a girl as a coach. [We ask], “No problem will have a female staff.

In addition to accommodations made on behalf of Muslim program users, both Yusuf and Deborah mentioned how practice scheduling was changed from Sundays to accommodate Christian program users who had obligations to attend Church service with their families: “I know that some of our programs have changed on Sunday just to respect the religion aspect of people wanting to do or go to Church.” Deborah mentioned the negative consequences of scheduling the CCBL program on a Sunday due to conflicts with Church service.

This particular program, it’s on a Sunday . . . . [Parents say to their daughters,] “where do you think you’re going”? So, it’s like, “well I want to go play basketball.” It’s like, “No. You can’t go play basketball with Church . . . . you need to do “this” and tomorrow’s school. So no.”

These quotes aptly display the complex nexus of factors that inform low-income, second-generation African Canadian Muslim and Christian adolescent girls’ recruitment to and participation in the CCBL.

Discussion

Guided by Braun and Clarke’s (2019) RTA method, three themes were produced based on patterns of meaning identified in the analysis: (a) CCBL coordinators hire CCBL coaches and devote resources to
developing leaders from the surrounding community who can relate to the CCBL program users through shared culture and/or lived experiences; (b) trust and buy-in from first-generation African immigrant parents is critical to CCBL coaches’ and coordinators’ experiences recruiting and bolstering the participation of second-generation African Canadian program users; and (c) CCBL coordinators and CCBL coaches introduce tailored accommodations designed to address the needs of Muslim and Christian program users by way of program planning and community center operations. Below, intersectionality theory will be used to discuss the findings and to highlight the practical and theoretical implications of the thematic segments.

Representation-Based Hiring Practices

The underrepresentation of women and members of marginalized communities (BIPOC, LGBTQ+, and persons with disabilities) in coaching and sport leadership positions has been widely documented in sport management and leisure studies (Cunningham, 2008; Picariello & Angelle, 2016). Additionally, there exists little research in sport studies on the value of representation-based hiring practices to enhance support for members of equity-deserving communities. In contrast, the substantive volume of literature on the benefits of cultural competency, unconscious bias training, and recruiting certified professionals to support inclusive service delivery (Schleien et al., 2009) suggests a domination of hiring frameworks that reward those who are not members of communities that experience marginalization. The representation-based hiring model used for the CCBL program illustrates the power of diversity in promoting the inclusion of adolescent girls whose needs are often overlooked in circumstances where program leaders are unable to predict how operational decisions may lead to unintended challenges for program users who are not members of the mainstream. More robust attempts to respond to the intersectional needs of marginalized population groups may be achieved through representation-based hiring models like the CCBL, where lived experience plays an integral role in service delivery and the reflex to include, rather than exclude, members of the community being served is prioritized.

As a practical implication of this research, implementing the representation-based hiring model of the CCBL could serve as a buffer against the othering tropes to which racialized adolescent girls are exposed elsewhere in society (i.e., meaning outside the community center space) through constructions of being obedient and well-behaved daughters who stay at home, take care of their siblings, listen to their parents, and do not engage in “un-lady like” behavior such as basketball. Adolescent girls must navigate pressures brought on by their peers, community, parents, and society, which all construct and convey an image of an ideal girl—sometimes in ways that contradict one another and leave second-generation ethnocultural minority girls with a “fractured sense of self” (Rajiva, 2009, p. 78). Sport program leaders sharing identities and/or lived experiences with program users (e.g., low-income, racialized, African Canadian, and/or Muslim) can contribute to better accommodating users’ needs and enhance relationships with users and their parents.

Parental Buy-In and Trust

Building trust and buy-in is required to obtain active parental support for second-generation African Canadian adolescent girls’ sport program participation when considering that not all parents subscribe to normative constructions of sport as being inherently beneficial for their daughters. When trust and buy-in is absent, recruiting program users and retaining their participation is more difficult as compared with circumstances where parents are in complete agreement and comfort with their daughters’ involvement in community center activities. Research on the effects of parental expectations concerning the leisure choices of their second-generation Canadian children has revealed tensions and incompatible wishes with respect to approved activities. Second-generation Canadians of Eastern heritage in Western cultural contexts (such as first-generation African Canadian immigrants) face issues related to Eastern and Western value system conflicts that can lead to feelings of alienation, confusion, and emotional conflict when reconciliation of differences is not possible (Ali, 2008).

Given first-generation African Canadian parents’ potentially differing values in relation to mainstream Canadian views surrounding sport; a second practical implication of this research is advanced through recognition of the potentially differing views of African Canadian parents. To be more specific, community-based sport program promotion must be tailored in such a way to account for the obstacles second-generation African Canadians girls face with parental buy-in. Such differences are represented through the prioritization of school over leisure as well as differing preferences from their daughters on matters of mixed versus sex-segregated sport. The World Health Organization (2010) noted, “In many low-income countries where people work every day just to survive, the concept of leisure time is not always well understood and nor is it a priority” (p. 36). As such it is conceivable that African Canadian parents who have immigrated from economically disadvantaged countries or conditions may have a different value relationship to leisure and how it is spent. As sport leaders, organizing events that appeal to the interests of families in the community may serve as one strategy to reach first-generation immigrant parents more broadly (and particularly mothers) and increase opportunities for their interaction with program staff, which may in turn increase parental trust and program buy-in.

Tailored Accommodations

The third theme highlights the need for religion-based considerations in community-based sport program delivery. Namely, by countering conventional sport models that do not consider the religious obligations of Muslim faith users (Nakamura, 2002) nor Christian faith users, sport practitioners can challenge normative and Eurocentric expectations around Muslim and Christian girls’ involvement in sport programs. The implementation of protocols such as moving practice times from Sunday mornings to avoid overlap with Christian church service, modifying the intensity of practices during Ramadan for fasting Muslim players, and restricting male access to the gym for the girls who wear hijab represent practical applications of the research findings.

Ongoing challenges in connection to babysitting that place girl program users under pressure to provide childcare for their younger siblings signal how family socioeconomic conditions—which contribute to parental challenges in finding affordable childcare services—place girls in a position whereby their involvement in sport activities is contingent on whether they must babysit their younger sibling(s). Mohammed (2020) found that first born adolescent girls reported their birth order as a constraint to sport participation at a significantly greater frequency than only, youngest, and middle child adolescent girls of both immigrant and nonimmigrant backgrounds. Low-income and working-class families are particularly vulnerable to childcare access barriers and present a greater need for such services (Braveman et al., 2018).
Given that the age cutoff for after-school recreational programs coincides with school age, parents must rely on private or public childcare services offered at an institution by a babysitter, or family member (e.g., an older sister) to fulfill childcare needs for their preschoolers. The practical implications of these findings signal the need to consider the socioeconomic realities of families when planning programs as low-income adolescent girls may be confronted with childcare responsibilities that limit their ability to participate in sport programs.

**Theoretical Implications**

Intersectionality theory offers a framework through which researchers can explore how identity and lived experience together shape and are shaped by internal and external factors. The theoretical contributions of this research include building upon and demonstrating the utility of intersectionality and its application to sport sociology research on recruitment and participation. This study demonstrates that the overlapping effects of inequalities concerning age, gender, race, socioeconomic status, and religion must be considered to enhance second-generation African Canadian adolescent girls’ sport recruitment and participation. By adopting an intersectional approach to community-based sport program recruitment and integrating intersectional considerations into all program development and implementation measures, community-based sport program leaders may be better able to promote second-generation African Canadian girls’ long-term engagement in sport. Furthermore, the application of intersectionality theory to sport sociology research can serve as a challenge to grand normative constructions that produce one-size-fits-all sport policies, resist hegemonic ideas around how (all) girls are expected to participate in sport, and circumvent the “othering” of minority adolescent girls and their experiences in sport program development. Thus, the value of using intersectionality theory to assess the recruitment and participation of marginalized Canadian adolescent girls in community-based sport contexts is evidenced in this research paper.

**Conclusion**

The sporting experiences of mainstream girls have often taken precedence in research and sport policy development, leading to the neglect and othering of minority, racialized, and/or low-income girls (Azzarito & Solomon, 2005). The findings from this study present an opportunity for researchers, sport leaders, and policymakers to learn from the experiences, challenges, and successes of practitioners who are presently working with low-income, second-generation African Canadian Christian and Muslim adolescent girls in Ottawa, Canada. Discussions with CCBL coaches and coordinators confirmed that the identities and lived experiences of the program users in the CCBL are linked to complex social inequalities related to age (adolescent), gender (girl), race (Black), socioeconomic status (low), cultural minority status (African heritage), and religious status (Christian and Muslim). Such complexity calls on those in the sport community to engage with intersectionality throughout the recruitment and retention of second-generation African Canadian Christian and Muslim adolescent girls to community-based sport programs in ways that address the needs of this population.

For FPAR, it is important to document the action component of the research. This research served as a stepping-stone for the community to identify existing strategies (i.e., hiring model, religion-based accommodations) and implement new ones (i.e., gaining parental buy-in and building trust, rectifying inequitable childcare responsibilities) to promote tangible changes for the community involved in the project. This research and its findings allowed the CCBL coaches and coordinators to reflect and act on their engagement strategies and program decisions involved in developing and leading the Girls’ CCBL program. The findings from the project also inspired a larger knowledge translation project that resulted in the development of an infographic on key barriers impacting the recruitment of second-generation African Canadian adolescent girls in community-based sport. Finally, the City of Ottawa’s awareness of the factors driving the recruitment and participation of the Girls’ CCBL program increased and contributed to ideas for policy and program development to enhance the sporting experiences of girls who face numerous forms of intersecting social disadvantage.

Centering the perspectives and experiences of CCBL coaches and coordinators in this research unlocked critical insights on the facilitators and barriers to second-generation African Canadian adolescent girls’ involvement in community-based sport and deepened understanding of the role practitioners play in creating inclusive experiences for program users through relationship building and program design decision making. Taken together, the practical and theoretical implications of this research can support community-based sport leaders’ recruitment and retention of second-generation African Canadian girls, and help challenge sport scholars to consider the complex intersectional needs of this growing segment of the Canadian population.

**Acknowledgments**

The authors would like to thank the community advisory board, the participants, and Canadian Women & Sport for their invaluable contributions to the project.

**References**


