

**SOCIAL INTEGRATION THROUGH SPORT IN A CROSS-CULTURAL SETTING:
STORIES FROM REFUGEES LIVING IN CENTRAL FINLAND**

LANGA MOYO

University of Jyväskylä
Faculty of Sport and Health Sciences
Social Sciences of Sport
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DEDICATION

TO MY PARENTS AND MY BROTHERS, KHANYISA AND THULANI

*THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED LOVE AND UNCONDITIONAL SUPPORT
THROUGHOUT THIS PROCESS AND ALWAYS*

**AND IN LOVING MEMORY OF MY BELOVED GRANDMOTHER, SITHEMBISO
'MANDLOST' NGWENYA, AND MY UNCLE, LEVI KHAYA MOYO**

MAY THEIR SOULS REST IN ETERNAL PEACE

ABSTRACT

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Finland has rapidly become a desirable and popular destination for migrants and refugees seeking a better life fleeing from factors of societal discrimination, inequalities and oppressive regimes. In the advent of the prevailing situation of the migration of people from war-affected regions around the world, the research conducted in this paper aims at demonstrating the key concepts and processes through which participation in sport can contribute to refugees' bonding, bridging, linking and enhancing their social capital in society.

The purpose of this study is to identify the role that sport plays in the social integration of refugees living in a diverse cultural setting in the Central Finland region. Five research participants, between the ages of 19-53, emphasize the significance of the concept for facilitating the development of interlinking social issues of the host nation and refugee immigrants, with the emphasis on the refugees themselves.

Qualitative methodologies, primarily participant observations and semi-structured interviews, are applied in the five cases that illustrate how sport can have various meanings for young and old people alike. It may work in building social contacts within a sport club setting (Anup's story), but also highlights accessibility issues (Ahmed's story). It can define one's wish not to maintain their cultural identity (Sami's story), can become a way of life through civic participation (Anwar's story), and can reinforce aspirations of return migration (Issa's story). All five case studies, however, highlight how sport provides the respective individuals with a platform for socialization and cultural expression in attaining social capital.

Despite there being a language barrier in the initial stages of the integration process, their involvement or participation in sport is what matters, and previous research has shown that people from ethnic minority backgrounds value positive social interactions, while also contributing to their local community in an affirming and meaningful way.

Key words: cultural identity, immigration, refugees, social integration, sport.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The current EU migration crisis has illuminated the importance of sport towards those who have been forcibly displaced in helping to improve their circumstances in many ways. Since 2015, desperate journeys have been undertaken by those seeking to better their livelihoods in safer regions of the world. This study, therefore, explores the relationship between sport and integration processes for refugees by investigating how refugees use sport as a way of settling in their new social environment.

The experiences of resettled refugees seeking to build a better life in a new country are often analyzed from an 'integration' perspective. As a social and political construct, integration can be viewed as a two-way process "by which settling persons become part of the social, institutional and cultural fabric of a society" (Valtonen, 2004, p. 74), and requires adaptation on the part of both the migrant and the host society (Castles, 2002).

It is a two-way process that sees both parties being actively involved for the entire process to function well and be successful. However, for one to find the underlying cause of the integration puzzle it is important to highlight the differences between a migrant and a refugee as often the two can, somewhat, be easily misinterpreted from one another in the integration discussion.

A refugee is an individual who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war, or violence. The individual may have a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a social group. In most cases, if not all, war and ethnic, tribal and religious violence are the leading causes of refugees fleeing their countries (UNHCR).

A migrant on the other hand, is an individual who, in most cases, makes a conscious decision to move from their country not for any other reasons besides finding work or better living conditions elsewhere. There is no direct threat of persecution or death, and unlike refugees who cannot safely return home, migrants face no such impediment to return (UNHCR). Their movement into a new country could be to stay temporarily, sometimes for as little as a year, or to settle for the long-term.

It is easy to juxtapose the two and have them both simultaneously in one bracket. But as highlighted, the importance to differentiate the two cannot be understated or generalized. In the modern world we live in, the very fabric of society has become accustomed to labeling groups of people as a means of culturally identifying them be it through social factors such as age, gender, education and employment. However, the role of sport in the integration process is fast becoming increasingly acknowledged in international policy and research and is investigated in further detail throughout the course of this study.

The importance in the topic of social integration, therefore, has much to do with the investigation of individuals of minority groups entering a host society's social structure. The dynamics and social order of this structure are inevitably changed and reorganized with both positive and negative results possible over a period. However, the involvement of sport in this process fuels the need to bridge the often-sizeable gap between the newcomers in society and individuals who are already established in it for a sense of coexistence to be formed and sustained in time.

It is often easy for one to forget or turn a blind eye to something that does not necessarily affect them or have a direct bearing or influence on their own livelihood. However unique the status quo may be, forced migration has been, and continues to be, a growing issue to this day, not only in the central part of Finland nor the whole country in general, but the entire European continent as well. For as long as the world's superpowers continue to flex their respective military muscle on the political stage with war and threats of war in parts of the world already ravaged by conflict, many more dangerous and desperate journeys will be undertaken each day by those affected who look for relief and a new lease of life in foreign lands.

1.1 Aims and strategies

This paper aims to extend our knowledge and understanding of the social integration of resettled refugees through a critical analysis of the lived experiences of people from refugee backgrounds in sport living in the central Finland region. It aims to draw on research strategies that are particularly appropriate for gaining in-depth knowledge about refugee resettlement experiences among residents and community workers involved in sport from diverse socio-demographic backgrounds.

The aim is to dissect and understand the meaning of integration in its entirety from the perspective of individuals who, through no fault of their own, have been displaced and forced to flee an environment they once called home, and have somewhat found solace in a new 'haven' destination. With sport being the key denominator in the research, it is only appropriate that one conducts an analysis and, more importantly, listens to the experiences of those who can share what they have endured and encountered in sport vis-à-vis the bigger picture of their integration into society.

Often in society, what is experienced on the sports field mirrors that of the public. One can perhaps draw comparisons of the key elements of the integration process such as attitudes and behaviors, for example, in sport and society respectively. The aim is not to castigate or to only highlight the negative aspects of integration, but indeed, to find common ground in the co-existence between an original culture simultaneously engaging and interacting with that of other cultures.

Therefore, strategy is important in the makeup of the research from start to finish. Much like team sports, the idea is to have a formation that is set out by the manager or coach to be executed by the players on the field or court to win or obtain the best possible result. By the same token, strategically including and implementing what has been researched before about this topic and synthesizing it with the results of the lived experiences shared by the individuals in this research will, not only give more credence to this discussion in the 21st century, but also suggest developmental ideas on how to integrate refugees through sport moving forward in the future.

1.2 Structure of the Thesis

The first half of the paper considers the concept of social integration through sport, and the methods used to test this concept, while the second half of the paper focuses on the presentation and reflection on the research data collected that explores how the refugees being studied experience sport participation within a cross-cultural and diverse environment. The latter part of the paper is also morphed together with previous research findings that have been explored before, as well as other areas that have an influence on issues such as access to sport and sport participation, to name a few.

For one to present an effective presentation of the research and results of the topic, the structure and organization of the paper are highly important, and it is critical that the research task is

highlighted to the reader or audience from the onset. This then is followed up with how the implementation process will be initiated to tackle the research task in determining how one obtains the best possible results, and in the process creating, somewhat, a 'flow' in delivering an effective style of research work in the second half of the paper.

That said, the results and discussion part of the paper are then thrust into the spotlight with an analysis of the case studies of the research participants who were interviewed during the data collection phase, giving an insight into their stories about their respective experiences in and out of sport in attempting to integrate into Finnish society as refugees. The previous research findings and its core elements then bring a conclusion to the presentation together with a summary of the project, including developmental ideas that could be implemented in future for the smooth transition of refugees integrating in society through sport.

2. RESEARCH TASKS

This Master's thesis is based on qualitative research strategies dealing with refugees and their integration into a cross-cultural society, with a focus on the Central Finland region, while also dealing with challenges and sub issues related to the aspect of maintaining their cultural identity. This chapter serves to highlight the primary areas in focus and the size of the task at hand undertaken in the preceding 12-18 months. The exploration of the aims, purpose and research questions of this thesis are defined in chapter 2.1 which is explored in detail in the hope of executing and interpreting each point as objectively as possible.

2.1 Purpose and research questions

The purpose of the study is to answer and examine two key questions:

- (a) What role does sport play in the social integration of refugees in Central Finland; and
- (b) What sort of challenges and obstacles do refugees face in the integration process through sport?

There is no denying that individuals who have been forced to flee their home country and find themselves as refugees in a foreign land have their work cut out in being accepted and integrated in society. From the outset, they are already at a disadvantage in the social construct of the new host country and building social capital in aspects such as employment, housing, health and education may seem almost impossible in comparison to the host nation's citizens, or perhaps those who have relocated as migrants.

This is where sport comes in and provides somewhat of an 'outlet' for refugees and respite in their attempts to integrate into society by means of having access and their participation in sport. Sport can play a key role and has the potential to act as a bridge in integration processes for refugees, hence for the purposes and aims of this study it is fundamental to explore both sides of the spectrum – negative and positive connotations of social integration through sport – with the intention of underlining the fact that sport certainly *does* play some part in incorporating refugees into the dynamics of a foreign society.

2.2 Sport as a research object

Central in all of this is the role of sport in the social inclusion discussion. Sport can be seen in both a positive light as well as a divisive one in integrating an individual or group of people into a new society. Positivity brings about attitudes of a “feel good” factor in bringing and linking people together from different ethnic backgrounds as well as those from the host nation. Divisive because people from less favored ethnic backgrounds may not get the same opportunities or privileges to participate in sporting activities as their host nation counterparts which may reflect the status quo of that society in general in other social domains.

Moreover, “where inter-ethnic sporting encounters occur they may serve to highlight and reinforce group boundaries instead of bridging them due to the logic of competition that is inherent to sport, and because inter-ethnic tensions may be imported into these sports activities” (Krouwel, 2006, p. 176). Aspects of discrimination, aggression, and violence in sport can even lead to the reinforcement of group boundaries outside sport, which can have a detrimental effect on refugees’ bridging and linking social capital in other spheres of society, as highlighted in Figure 1. This is indicative of the complex inter-linkages between different domains of integration and the potential impact that actions in any of the domains can have on others (Ager & Strang, 2004).



Figure 1. *Issues Sport Addresses* (Krishna, 2017, p. 4)

Sport as, somewhat of a social adhesive, can, not only bring people from all walks of life together in one specifically organized setting, but also has the capability to address societal issues that we as a people encounter each day. These have much to do with the aspects of social capital that individuals strive for to have some sense of direction, identity, and purpose within the community and society in general.

In the case of refugees being resettled in a new host country, however, the issues highlighted above take on a more significant meaning for this group of people and are magnified even more so in the direction of those who are in positions of influence and power in passing key decisions. Often, sport is used as a “smoke screen” that resembles a tool or an agent of change when the more pertinent issues that need to be addressed are swept under the rug as will be further analyzed in the discussion section.

It all serves to highlight the challenges and obstacles that refugees may face in the integration process through sport, and how they maintain their respective cultural identity while making the transition into a new community. Considering this in detail as part of the research work on the subject matter, while also gathering relevant information in the field, helps one to better understand the core principles that go into defining the group dynamics that are evident in Finnish society today.

3. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Much of what has been researched before regarding this topic has much to do with understanding how integration, and the resettlement of refugees, has become an important aspect in public discussion and policy objectives. This chapter aims at further investigating aspects of integration that include socio-cultural factors, acculturation and assimilation, and the relationship between sport towards refugees and their social integration into society. This gives one an insight of what is revealed later by the results of the five research participants' stories that, perhaps, helps one to better understand the resettlement process from the beginning to the end.

According to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), there are more people now being forcibly displaced from their homes than ever before. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the majority of these come from war-torn regions of the world, primarily the Middle Eastern region which has had a long history of conflict and the continued displacement of its people, as illustrated in Figure 2.

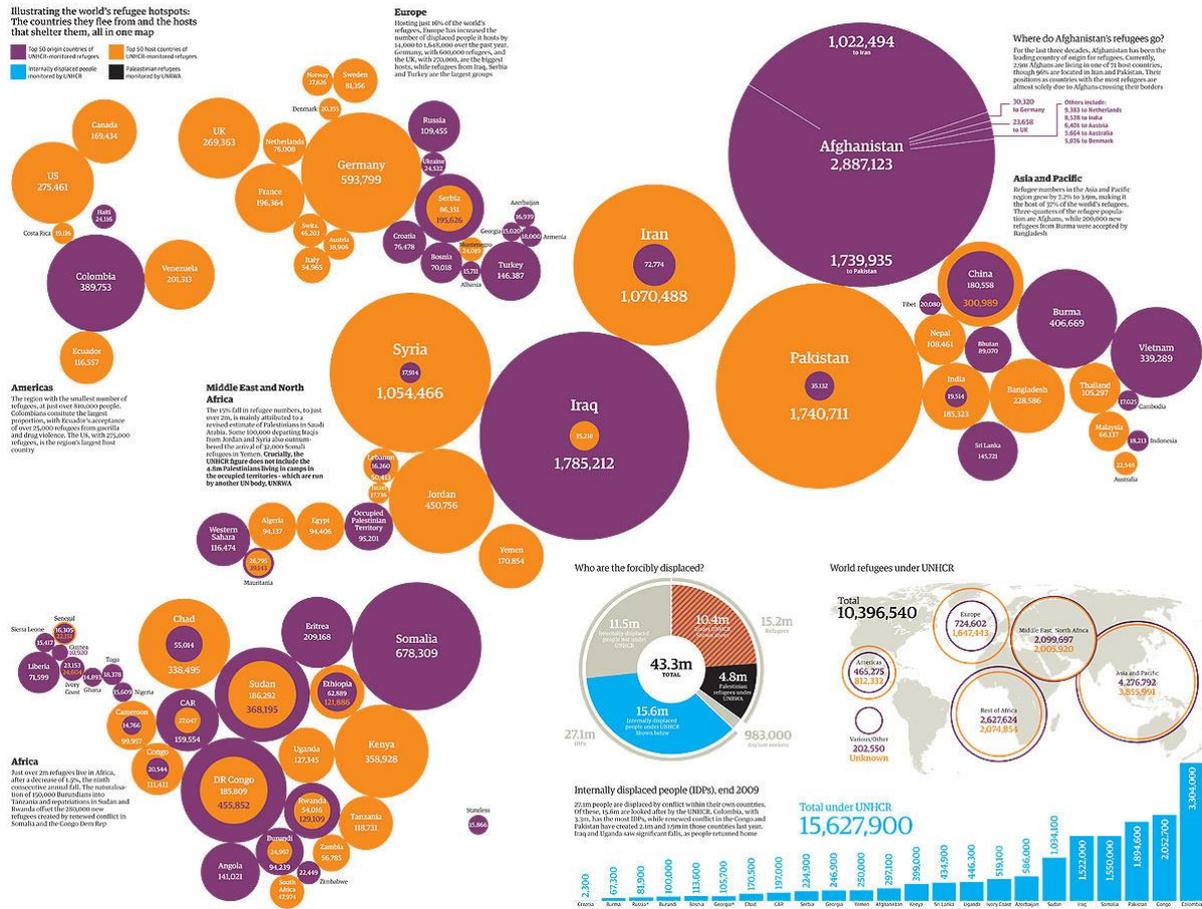


Figure 2. UNCHR refugee statistics mapped (theguardian DATABLOG)

But it is not just the Middle Eastern region with countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq and Iran dominating the displacement of refugees and migrants and their efforts of trying to reach Europe being the focus of attention in recent years. In total, nearly 200,000 people arrived in Italy in 2016 by sea, of which 90% travelled by boat from Libya. Those arriving in Italy in 2016 included people in desperate need of international protection with many being victims of trafficking and migrants seeking better lives (UNHCR).

In recent studies, “the concept of integration is a value-laden and contested one, which has received more treatment that is systematic, defined as the ability to participate fully in economic, social, cultural, and political activities while maintaining one’s cultural identity” (Spaaij, 2012, p. 1519). Sociological factors of field and forms of social capital are directly at play here. Sport and physical activities function as a field of social capital where the struggle for power is in focus with the aim of one becoming distinct from others in the field, and from those who aim at entering the field.

3.1 Sociological factors

Modern societies are made up of a milieu of individuals from different ethnic backgrounds that contribute to shaping an identity of a community and the creation of labels of certain population groups. A typical example are the millions of labor migrants in Europe and their descendants. The terms used to label these groups are manifold: *guest workers*, *foreigners*, *migrants*, *immigrants*, *people with migrant background*, or *post-migrants* (Thiel & Seiberth, 2017). Despite all of these being a part of a society, the individual or group identified with either of these labels is still perceived as being significantly different, and often must work their way up the social pyramid they will have entered with the aim to eventually not be classed as different.

Refugees fall under this category as well and, to an extent, are immediately at a disadvantage in the integration process in a new community in their quest to build forms of capital in the fields that are pursued as the most valuable, appreciated and useful in society. These include economic, cultural, and social capital, which serve to underpin the cultural differences and observations of various forms of domination and the battle for symbolic power. In addition, Ager and Strang (2004) identify four “markers and means” that are critical in the integration discussion: employment, housing, education, and health. These markers and means contribute to the social demographics of an area and determine whether there is a sense of community within a group of people in that area in the integration process.

Refugees and asylum seekers’ integration into host communities has often been talked of sparingly in migration and minority studies, when it carries weight as a topic on its own. One might argue that refugees, and even more so asylum seekers, represent the minority in that they face the same challenges and concerns that other established ‘ethnic’ minorities are facing in terms of cultural, social and economic integration (Amara, Aquilina, Argent, Betzer-Tayar, Green, Henry, Coalter & Taylor, 2005, p. 24).

Further, Ager and Strang (2004) go on to say that achievement in each of the four domains of employment, housing, education and health should not be viewed merely as an ‘outcome’ of integration, but also to that end because ‘success’ in these domains is likely to assist achievement in other areas. Be it in the social landscape in the community or on the field of play, these factors also contribute in breaking down barriers that refugees, and other ethnic minority migrants, may not otherwise have access to in supposedly exclusive areas in the public or private sectors respectively.

The immigration status of the individual or group in question comes into focus in this instance as much of the social and economic rights that a refugee or asylum seeker hopes to attain in the integration process often lies in their right of residency while seeking protection. This too can be a factor that is a barrier in climbing the social ladder but can also work to the advantage of those successfully resettling in a new society. In a sense, refugee status brings with it a set of rights and security of status and without these rights, forced migrants find it much difficult to settle and lack an incentive to do so (Amara et al, 2005, p. 21).

However, the markers and means of integration “do not fully explain what integration is about for people as they experience it in their lives” (Ager & Strang, 2004, p. 3), and that we should also focus on the role of social connections. Spaaij (2012) is somewhat in agreement by stating that “their viewpoint resonates with dominant political and policy interpretations of integration which emphasize the need for societal participation and inter-ethnic contact, and the divisive effects of ethnic enclaves and self-exclusion” (p. 1521). From this perspective, Schneider and Crul (2010) state that “successful integration” is discursively juxtaposed with the scenario of “parallel societies” (p. 1114), ethnically bound subgroups with supposedly very little connection to the wider society (Ibid).

3.2 Cultural significance

As is expected in the study, respondents recognize the importance of social connections across ethnic and social groupings, however, they vary in their views on what successful integration entails or how it can best be achieved. This diversity highlights the socially constructed nature of integration, the question of who is defining the term: policymakers, researchers, practitioners, and/or refugees (Castles et al. 2002; Korac, 2003). This paper approaches the integration process from an actor-centered perspective, that is, from the perspective of resettled refugees themselves.

The infusion of this social group, that is refugees, adds to the social dynamics of a society in defining the essential characteristics of a nation.

This represents the essentialist view of what culture is, and it is within this essentialist national culture pattern that “there is also a complex of sub-cultures which vary according to the features of smaller groups but maintain the major national characteristics” (Holliday, 1999, p. 38). Whereas the non-essentialist view of culture, on the other hand, “does not

impose pre-definitions of the essential characteristics of specific national cultures” (Ibid, p. 40).

Metaphorically, this is best illustrated with the “onion effect” whereby the outer layer represents the dominant national characteristics, that is, what one sees on the outside in terms of an individual or dominant group of people in society. By the same token, the inner workings of the onion represent the various subcultures that are hidden within the larger national culture, highlighting the essentialist view. The non-essentialist pattern, however, rather takes on the notion of ‘culture’ at different times depending on circumstance and situation.

Beyond the four domains that serve as a basis of social integration – employment, housing, education and health -- recreational sport, as a popular form of leisure, is a means and marker of integration. Sport serves as a significant site for civic participation, potentially enabling resettled refugees to foster social relationships with, and cultural knowledge of, the host community (Spaaij, 2012). In that sense, the academic literature regarding this topic is a good starting point in understanding the practicality of what an individual as a refugee must go through, regardless of environment or location, in assimilating in a host community.

Holliday (1999) investigates further how social relations are perceived when it comes to multicultural societies, where the idea of ethnic cultures is socially constructed by the discourses of ethno-politics produced by the government, the media and popular stereotyping. The third element mentioned is something that refugee individuals or groups must contend with and, often, identify or label themselves as a means of survival amidst a blend of other subcultures in society.

The notion of culture initiates a debate in understanding whether the term is a constraint or a resource. It is a synthesis of its two components, essentialist and non-essentialist views, whereby the former is constructed in similar ways to sexism and racism, attempting to fit the behavior of people into pre-conceived, constraining structures. The latter on the hand, looks to liberate culture as a resource for investigating and understanding social behavior, but is careful not to allow preconceptions about national cultural characteristics to constrain the investigation (Holliday, 1999).

Linking culture with the growing recognition of sport as a vehicle for development and peace, there has been a considerable increase in the use of sport for development programs and initiatives targeting underprivileged youth in the most at-risk areas of the world (Ha & Lyras,

2013). Olmos, Garrido, Pardo, and Garcia-Arjona (2012) distinctly support this view and examined it in detail by putting the role of physical activity and sport under the microscope in the social integration of young immigrants in Almeria, Spain. Taking four dimensions into account – mixed relationships, cultural references, norms and transnationality – data was obtained from a survey administered to the immigrant population between 14 and 24 years old.

The results showed that immigrants within that age range have a low level of participation in physical activity and sport with generation and origin appearing to be the main variables that predicts this participation (Olmos et al, 2012). However, the underlying line regarding this study is the focus of the dimensions considered – mixed relationships, cultural references, norms and transnationality -- and how they affect the assimilation of young immigrants in their quest to integrate socially with others around them.

By the same token, both young and old refugee individuals in the research conducted in this study are thrust into the spotlight in gauging their respective levels of participation in relation to their social integration in Finland. Added to that, the concept of acculturation comes into play at this point as the cultural modification of an individual group, or people undergoes change by adapting to or borrowing traits from another culture.

3.3 Acculturation and assimilation

At this point, it is important to highlight the differentiation between acculturation and assimilation with regards to integration. Young-Sook and Funk (2010) consider assimilation “to be the adaptation of migrants, which received increased attention after the Second World War when developed societies encountered growths in migrant populations” (p. 2). Their “viewpoint is that assimilation differs in directional process from acculturation, as acculturation emphasizes the ‘bi-directional process’, while the assimilation concept is ‘uni-dimensional’ towards the dominant group” (Young-Sook & Funk, 2010, p. 3). In that sense, acculturation may be defined as a culture change that is initiated by the conjunction of two or more autonomous cultural systems. The study conducted by Berry (1997) refines our understandings of what acculturation is, in which the author distinctly identified four outcomes of acculturation. The identified outcomes include:

- Assimilation - defined as the state when individuals do not wish to maintain their cultural identity and seek daily interaction with other cultures;

- Separation – defined as the state when individuals place a value on holding on to their original culture and at the same time wish to avoid interaction with others;
- Integration – defined as the state when there is an interest in maintaining one's home culture, while simultaneously engaging in daily interactions with other groups; and
- Marginalization – defined as the state when there is little interest by the newcomer in society in having relations with others (often for reasons of exclusion or discrimination).

Considering these four outcomes of acculturation, an individual or group of people going through the integration process can take something from each of these outcomes, or in a general sense, something from the 'old' culture (their home culture) and something from the new culture in the construction of their establishment in a unique social environment. European cultures are represented by this point as they have historically continued to evolve over the years, and that ultimately culture involves the creation of new hybrid ideas and artefacts (Bhabha, 1994).

In addition, the view taken by Young-Sook and Funk (2010) is distinct, though it tends to support that of Berry (1997) in one respect with regards to the dynamics of acculturation seen as the selective adaptation of value systems, the process of integration and differentiation, the generation of developmental sequences, and the operation of role determinants and personality factors. Because of prolonged contact, therefore, acculturation can be described as a merger and acquisition of cultures of a society which is often tied to political conquests or expansion and is applied to the process of change in beliefs or traditional practices that occurs when the cultural system of one group displaces that of another (Acculturation. n.d.).

The acculturation process is a socially enriching experience and, in a study by Leong (2008), highlights the social significance of the acculturation process from a multiculturalism standpoint. In the acculturation context, multiculturalism is, by definition, a deliberate form of diversity. Increased migration will introduce new social groups, behaviors, and customs to an existing country. The extent to which members of the host national group can tolerate these ambiguities will therefore be considered a key factor that will influence outgroup prejudice.

In this respect, cultures that rated high on uncertainty avoidance are likely to demonstrate greater outgroup derogation and express lower optimism toward multiculturalism. In addition, previous studies on the process also argue that recreational activities provide the migrant

communities with opportunities to adapt to their new homeland (Stodolska & Yi, 2003), and that acculturation is linked to migrants' physical activity patterns (Ryska, 2001).

Today, acculturation is still a critical issue in multicultural societies such as Finland and in other European countries. Most of the continent has diversified into multiple inter-linked cultures due to the continued incessant movement of refugees and migrants who have been affected by conflict in war-torn regions and from other parts of the world. It should, however, be recognized that there is much work to be done in this area for a more comprehensive understanding of recreational sports and migrants' acculturation.

The overriding central theme though remains on how sport can meaningfully be integrating "new arrivals" of increasingly diverse ethnic backgrounds into the sphere of a foreign society. A case in point is that of the Irish Football Association (IFA) who examined the role football authorities in Ireland can and do play in utilizing the game as a means of integrating ethnic minorities into everyday life (Hassan & Mccue, 2013). The IFA's approach included specific coverage of its innovative World United F.C. program, established in 2003 and which represented a purposeful response to growing demands on the part of new arrivals into Northern Ireland to play football in an environment free from the threat of racism, as well as other forms of intolerance and discrimination, such as the growing scourge of homophobia in the game (Ibid).

Sport participation is widely advocated as an effective and unproblematic way for interethnic contact and socialization, but this is not always the case. Krouwel (2006) examines this issue in detail by highlighting a study conducted in the city of Rotterdam "focusing on the motivations to participate in sport, showed that among participants meeting different people is less valued than expected, especially among marginalized migrant-groups who primarily want to confirm their ethnic identity through homogenous sport activities" (p. 165). The study also highlighted that sport encounters between different ethnic groups "makes it clear that, and particularly in soccer, these encounters frequently result in aggression and can seldom be labelled as trouble-free contact" (p. 165). Further, Krouwel (2006) puts it down to the natural "aggressive elements of the game itself as by the fact that inter-ethnic tensions from other social spheres are imported and even magnified in these sports activities" (p. 165).

It is clear, therefore, that both agree on the fundamental points of creating an atmosphere or environment conducive enough for migrant-groups to identify themselves and their culture while in the process of displaying or showcasing their individual talent on the playing field

(Hassan & Mccue, 2013; Krouwel, 2006). However, it is critical to point out that although recreational sports such as football might seem ideal for meaningful cultural crossovers, in practice ethnic differences are somewhat reinforced in this domain instead of bridged.

Again, the concept of acculturation is inescapable with attitudes towards diverse cultural backgrounds being the focal point in this instance. Leong (2008) identified three distinct frameworks to examine a host nationals' perceptions are proposed as opposed to examining them only from the immigrant's perspective, and these are based on:

- Intergroup relations,
- Individual level differences, and
- Cultural level differences.

The frameworks identified above center on the recipient nationals' attitudes towards immigrants and multiculturalism using attitudes toward immigrants as the common dependent measure. Influences of intergroup contact, national pride, perceived permeability, fairness, intergroup threat, and host community acculturation strategies are all examined in this instance.

Leong (2008) also notes that the whole debate between Hassan and Mccue (2013), and Krouwel (2006) assumes that attitude is a key determinant when considering the process of linking multiple cultures together in a specific social setting. In this case, attitudes toward immigrants is the common dependent measure used in the three distinctive frameworks examining the perceptions of the host national as shown in Figure 3.

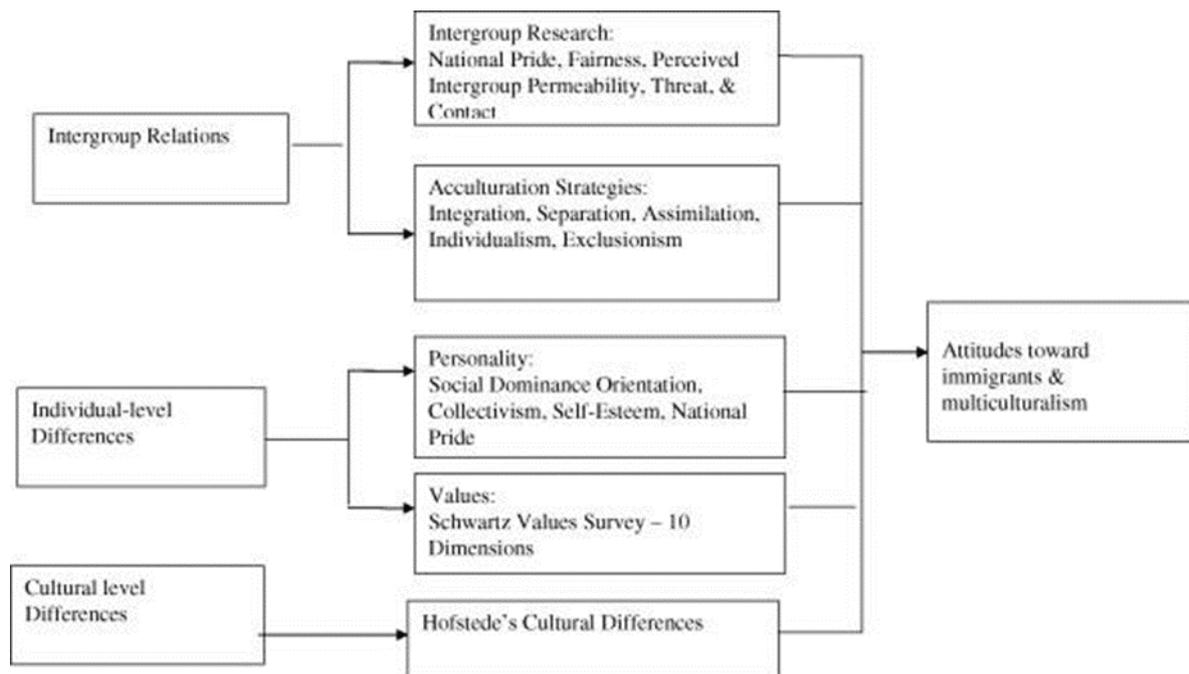


Figure 3. *Schematic outline of paradigm* (Leong, 2008, p. 116)

Each of the three frameworks provides a unique and distinctive lens examining, attitudes toward immigrants and the issue of multiculturalism within a community or society in general. Common ground essentially needs to be found among all parties involved for people from diverse cultures to come together harmoniously in one setting. As such, Hedges (2014) notes that “sport is a powerful means of engaging the public in conversations about diversity and appropriate behavior” (p. 614).

3.4 Relationship between sport participation and social integration

Sport can act as a go-between when linking two or more interethnic cultures in the multiculturalism discussion. Both Hedges (2014) and Krouwel (2006) agree and support the point in advocating sport participation as an effective way to engage conversations about diversity within the public domain. Inevitably, however, there are challenges and obstacles to consider and overcome for this theory to be successful in the long run.

One such challenge, and one that will be analyzed later in the discussion, is that of racism and the coping mechanisms that are implemented in dealing with the attitudes that reinforce this negative issue. As distinctive and unique the issue is, in one sense it offers one the chance to examine the differing and contested conceptions of identity, community and multiculturalism

articulated by participants and organizers and, more broadly, the role that ‘alternative’ events play in resisting or reinforcing dominant political ideologies (Burdsey, 2008).

3.5 Effect of sport events on refugees

Addressing the issue of the reinforcement or resistance of dominant political ideologies tends to, somewhat, support Hassan and Mccue (2013) in one respect but Burdsey (2008) goes a step further by conducting a case study of the Amsterdam World Cup (WK Amsterdam), an annual amateur football competition and multicultural festival set to primarily address three key issues:

- Consider the extent to which a tournament can provide a public space for community mobilization and -- as is the case with mainstream sporting events -- the articulation of ethnic, national and gender identities,
- Discuss associations between whiteness and national identity, and the role of alternative sporting events in facilitating the articulation of oppositional post-colonial identities, and
- Evaluate the tournament’s capacity to promote multiculturalism, cultural interaction and integration into a municipal Amsterdam identity (Burdsey, 2008).

Hosting this football tournament and festival, in which all nationalities of the capital compete against one another for the World Cup of Amsterdam, makes for an ideal situation whereby people from diverse cultural backgrounds to showcase their creative skill with the result being a combination of simple but powerful identity and vivid imagery. But this event is more than just about identity and imagery. The social connotations linked to the event, in the integration and multiculturalism context, cannot be ignored or understated as the event gives an indication of providing a platform for discussions and evaluations of social relations in Amsterdam to be considered and improved.

The analysis demonstrates that, whilst the tournament has the potential to play a significant role in challenging negative social issues such as racism and destabilizing white privilege in dominant local football cultures, analogues to many other supposedly ‘alternative’ sport events – reproduce the inequalities and exclusionary practices of mainstream sport (Ibid).

The point of staging tournaments or leagues that bring about social inclusion is underlined, not just on the field of play, but in all spheres of society and that help to break down barriers with negative issues attached to them from the bottom up. If the challenge in disputing these inequalities cannot be taken up by mainstream sport, then 'alternative' sport events such as WK Amsterdam can only be successful with the necessary resources and support needed which mainstream sport is able to provide. The two must work in tandem.

3.6 Racism

The issue of racism is one that cannot be ignored from a sporting perspective, and certainly not in the integration and multiculturalism discussion. To this day, racism still rears its ugly head both on and off the field of play and in the long run destabilizes the process, which is hard enough already, for ethnic minority groups to bed in and actively participate in a host national's society. Hassan and Mccue (2013) note in their study concerning racism in both the Northern part of Ireland and the Republic south is, in fact, the result of racist abuse on those suffering it remaining remarkably consistent, regardless of where the abuse takes place.

In the United States of America, obvious racial issues are still evident today amidst a melting pot of cultures in the country. The most recent and ongoing example of this issue of sport and race in America is the debate about whether National Football League (NFL) players should stand pitch side during the national anthem as opposed to taking a knee in protest to the oppressive and systematic racial profiling by law enforcement authorities towards African-Americans in society. Much of these issues stem from the source, the American educational systems, which have "fallen woefully short of providing equal educational opportunities" (Harrison & Clark, 2016, p. 230).

As a collective, the concept of racism comes down to attitude in the end, which determines how one's relationship is with another. As mentioned before, issues of discrimination, aggression, and violence in sport can lead to the reinforcement of group boundaries outside sport, which can have a detrimental effect on refugees' bridging and linking social capital in other spheres of society. However, attitude alone cannot be held accountable to the dynamic and fabric of a society as real change also constitutes of behaviors and the mindset of a people, and of how accommodating and welcoming they may be to other individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds.

Therefore, one must distinguish between race, culture and ethnicity within the ecosystem of sport to get an idea or a sense of understanding in the development of the social patterns within a society. As sensitive an issue as race is, the common view in the world today is that the concept has become a non-issue as fault lines, in terms of social acceptance, become few and far between in most parts of the world; yet racial problems in society persist. Perhaps what one sees as race is really ethnicity, which is best described as an ethnic group as one with shared ancestry, heritage, history, customs, and peoplehood (Banks, 2005).

Participating in sports and in arranged sporting events that stress equality in the community would be a good starting point in the struggle to overcome the reinforcement of these group boundaries which, in turn, will have a negative impact on refugees in their quest to gain a foothold in other areas of society. Hence the need for more research and work into other facets of the integration picture to be done to gain a broader meaning and understanding of the core principles of what social inclusion entails.

More research also means exploring the issue of 'whiteness' in the race discussion. Though this concept may be addressed and experienced in a subtle approach in Finland, and in most parts of Anglo-Saxon Europe, the issue of whiteness paints a different picture in America. Harris (1993) explains the issue from a historical context in that the conceptual foundations of whiteness as property are rooted in the truth of American history whereby African-Americans were enslaved as the property of Whites and Native Americans were the victims of conquest, removal, and genocide while having their land occupied in a legal system that validated the ownership by Whites.

It is imperative, however, not to get too carried away with the social aspects of color among people in society and perhaps pay more attention to activities in sport, and its perception and reality. The notion or perception of sport coming to the immediate aid of refugees should be thoroughly investigated to avoid the realities about the plight of refugees being masked and cast aside. Harrison and Clark (2016) stress the responsiveness of those in positions of making an impact in this sense and should "seek not only to increase physical activity in these populations but empower and equip them with the necessary knowledge to exert positive personal, familial, and community impact" (p. 237).

In sum, the previous research into the role of sport, in its various forms, shows that sport plays a key role in the social aspect of refugees' integration. Sport helps refugees to perform their duty in nurturing the next generation within their culture in the best manner possible within the

sphere of the host community system. The academic literature also highlights that sport can play a significant role in refugees' adaptation to challenges in an unfamiliar setting (Amara et al. 2004).

4. IMPLEMENTATIONS OF THE STUDY

As stated before, implementing the study involves examining or investigating two key questions:

- (a) What role sport plays in the social integration of refugees in central Finland; and
- (b) What sorts of challenges and obstacles do refugees face in the integration process through sport?

For the research questions to be successfully answered, the methodology of the study must be carefully considered for it to be as effective as possible from beginning to end. How the study will take shape largely depends on the quality of the data collected as well as how and where the data will be used in obtaining the desired results and outcomes of the study. As the name in the type of research suggests, the emphasis is on quality, and therefore the delivery in implementing the entire study is of utmost importance. In addition, the implementation of this study from the research design and collection of the data to its analysis are also included in this chapter.

As ‘quality’ is the overriding factor in the analysis and delivery process, quantity, somewhat, takes a back seat in this instance though one cannot essentially sacrifice the amount of research required to execute and present the best possible results from the data that has been collected and analyzed. The bottom line is implementation has all to do with putting a plan in motion and into effect to give one the opportunity to reach the optimum level, not only in one study conducted, but also in improving upon multiple other research studies across many platforms in sport and society discussions.

The plan for this study, therefore, is to engage and stimulate one’s own understanding about the aspect of integration into society through sport for refugees, or those that have been resettled coming from refugee backgrounds. Obtaining firsthand accounts from the perspective of the refugees’ respective experiences is one sure way that one can get to the crux of the matter, and is the initial reason why conducting semi-structured interviews on a one-to-one basis was decided very early on by yours truly in the research of this study.

Having collected or gathered the data, and having analyzed and decoded it, the idea was to then transform each piece of data into multiple case studies within framework elements such as sport

participation, access to sport, culture, religion and attitudes towards refugees within and out of sport. The presence of various framework elements allows for an in-depth cross-examination of the study.

4.1 Qualitative Research

As the research focuses on refugee resettlement challenges in society, with sport being the vehicle to address those challenges, a qualitative method is a rational choice to achieve a deeper understanding on the issues investigated. The research in question is a form of social inquiry that focuses on the way people interpret and make sense of their experiences and the world in which they live in. Andrews, Mason and Silk (2005, p. 2) have this as much to do with “the ways in which certain methods, designs and approaches can illuminate the investigation of physical human beings in their cultural worlds.”

It is important to be clear and concise about what the term “qualitative research” means in this instance, and what effect the concept may or may not have on the entirety of the research conducted. Investigating the subject, be it in singular or multiple form, is at hand in understanding the core principles and processes that are involved. With that in mind, the “word *qualitative* implies an emphasis on the qualities of entities and on processes and meanings that are not experimentally examined or measured (if measured at all) in terms of quantity, amount, intensity, or frequency” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p.8).

Cassell and Symon (1994, p. 1) go a step further and judge qualitative methods to be very appropriate to research questions focusing on organizational processes, outcomes, and trying to understand both individual and group experiences of work. According to them, organizational dynamics and change are major areas of interest in organizational research, and only qualitative methods are sensitive enough to allow the detailed analysis of change. Quantitative methods, on the other hand, are only able to “assess that a change has occurred over time but cannot say how (what process were involved) or why (in terms of circumstances and stakeholders)” (Ibid, p. 5).

Similarly, case study research can be seen in the same light as qualitative methods and is at the forefront of this study. From the perspective of the audience or reader, case studies can, somewhat, stimulate one’s own take on the matter being investigated, and perhaps even evoke feelings of empathy in the commentary being narrated of the subject’s own social experiences.

Hence why Remenyi, Money, Price and Bannister (2002, p. 5) declare that the case study will provide a multi-dimensional perspective that may be used to create a shared view of the situation being studied.

However, interpretation is key in the synthesis of the data collected, and in determining whether there may be shared views or not. Interpreting data means attaching meaning and significance to the analysis. The use of themes and connections help in explaining the findings of the research, and in deciphering what it all means as well as answering what and why it is important.

There are lessons to be learned, not least from the content that is to be analyzed and how it is collected, which has a bearing on the overall quality of the data presented. Text data might be in verbal, print, or electronic form and might have been obtained from narrative responses, open-ended survey questions, interviews, focus groups, observations, or print media such as articles, books, or manuals (Kondracki & Wellman, 2002).

All the elements are key in qualitative research processes, and in this instance, narrative responses, interviews, observations, and articles are the elements at the forefront of this study. These elements have a role to play in creating multiple categories within the study which, in most cases, influence the structure and design of the research being implemented. Depending on the purpose of the study, however, researchers might decide to identify the relationship between categories and subcategories further based on their concurrence, antecedents, or consequences (Morse & Field, 1995).

In theory, what has been researched or studied before about the subject has, to an extent, a bearing or influence in the lead up to what may be expected in the data that has been collected and analyzed. Existing theory may serve as a barometer or 'blueprint' for researchers as it also helps to uncover some of the patterns and connections within and between categories in the initial coding process. Hence why Potter and Levine-Donnerstein (1999) state that by using existing theory or prior research, researchers begin by identifying key concepts or variables as initial coding categories.

Considering this, however, qualitative research methods are not as straightforward as one may initially anticipate them to be. A lot goes into the preparation stages of the process before the data collection phase, and even then, if the planning and background work has not been implemented beforehand the information or responses gathered may not be what the researcher

would have had in mind. This affects the 'flow' in the quality of the work produced and, in turn, the research method and design structure of the study.

Further, Andrews et al (2005) back this up by highlighting concerns over deciding what questions to ask and how to go about answering them about, as do issues concerning methodological approaches that would suit an aspiring scholar's ideas about what questions should be asked and how they should be answered.

In this case, face-to-face semi-structured interviews are the logical choice in terms of gathering information on an individual or group, or an issue or subject for that matter which in this instance is ideal in understanding the purposes of this study. For this reason, "interviews offer a depth of information that permits the detailed exploration of issues in a way not possible with other forms of data collection" (Ibid, p. 105).

Patton (1990, p. 278) agrees and suggests that "interviewing begins with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit." Thus, as the approach falls under the qualitative paradigm, the idea behind implementing this approach in this study is to be knowledgeable and to gain understanding into the lives of those who lean on sport as an alternative to the norm within the social spectrum of the integration process.

Therefore, the choice of research methods in this study flows from its objective to capture the voices, experiences, and meaning-giving processes of the people being studied. Ethnography and other qualitative research strategies are considered particularly appropriate for gaining in-depth knowledge about refugee resettlement experiences (Korac, 2003).

Andrews et al (2005) agree with the point made by Korac (2003, p. 105) by stating that "participant observation and ethnographic methods can also be very important forms of data collection when building case studies; the use of documents, popular press, electronic media and other forms of data are also important."

Marcus (1995) goes one further by stating that the research should be designed around paths and conjunctions of locations in which the researcher establishes a physical presence, with an explicit logic of connection among sites. On the other hand, however, Shadish, Cook, and Campbell (2002) are somewhat in the "middle of the road" in the discussion between Korac (2003) and Marcus (1995) with their view neither in support of qualitative methods nor against it by stating that, clever design is critical in all research, regardless of the specific method used. This is further examined in the subsequent chapter in the implementation process.

In qualitative studies, therefore, the role of the researcher is to serve as an instrument in the data collection process. The data collection in qualitative studies are moderated through the researcher as a “human instrument”, unlike quantitative studies which uses questionnaires or machines (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). At the forefront of the successful execution of this study were the research participants themselves, and for the researcher to fulfill his role, the research participants had to first be reassured that their participation in the study would not jeopardize their status quo in the country or attract unwarranted negative attention towards them or their families for that matter.

4.2 Research design and methods

As already been mentioned, for the purposes of this study, and in addition to participant observation, the intention was to conduct multiple semi-structured interviews with residents and community workers involved in sport from diverse socio-demographic backgrounds consisting of age, education, and employment. In addition, conducting focus groups to complement the interviews also initially came under consideration for the purposes of adding variation to the data collection process but was eventually not undertaken nor implemented.

While the data collection process, vis-à-vis to the individual interviews that were conducted, was a success overall, the dynamics of a focus group can often produce data that would not arise from an interview in which questions have somewhat been scripted by a researcher (Spaij, 2012). However, the research that initially goes into gathering data or information on what is being discussed needs to reflect and “recognize the fluid and intricate interactions between people and the socio-historical worlds in which they exist” (Andrews et al, 2005, p. 5).

Individually, all our respective journeys begin from somewhere with us being the subjects in the spotlight of the very intricate dimension we all live in. The daily interactions and relationships we encounter are delicately inter-woven in the various social designs and strategies that are present in society today. Hence why Andrews et al (2005, p. 5) go on to say that this recognition speaks to a deeply entrenched, and at times quite bitter, battle within the field of research design – the debate over legitimate, or valid, research designs and methodologies – often manifested in a crude paradigmatic positivism versus interpretivism.

Research designs and methodologies may at times be a complex feature in sociological studies, and much of it comes down to the text being analyzed or investigated being made clear and concise in its meaning without it being confusing. This confusion is possible because according to McDonald and Birrell (1999), social life is composed of complex, often contradictory meanings and signifying systems accessible through...innumerable cultural artifacts or texts. Further, the meaning of a text is ideologically coded and affected by political struggles related to age, race, and class divisions (p. 291). However, the results of qualitative research offer a more complex, and arguably, therefore, more accurate picture of social interactions, which can be complex and ambiguous. Therefore, well-designed qualitative studies can have very strong internal validity (Andrews et al, 2005, p. 147).

Collecting data owes much to the work that goes beforehand in the preparation of the interview(s) that will define and determine the course that the research will take and how it is executed and delivered in the end. Potential data, as well as the beginning and the potential limitations of the investigations must be taken into consideration from the onset, or at least during the data collection phase.

Andrews et al (2005) look at this more critically and state that “qualitative research has an emergent quality – in many cases, data are only identified in the process of being collected.” As the study process continues, “the researcher may repeatedly exercise the option of expanding the pool of data to reflect new understandings of the project and newly identified data possibilities” (p.149).

The thinking that has gone into the design of this topic of research owes much to gaining an understanding of firsthand accounts of individuals who share a common theme in their experiences as resettled refugees, and how their participation in sport helps them in the resettlement process. Like the “top-down” approach of a pyramid, the results of the data collected and analyzed in each of the case studies presented in this research are approached and examined beforehand as the more pertinent aspect of the core of the subject.

However, it is not just their individual experiences – gathered through the sound of the microphone and textual analysis from the data collected in the interviews conducted – that is taken into consideration. Previous studies into the topic are acknowledged and are explored later in the study to give one a better sense of some of the issues that are concerned with the integration of refugees through sport. These include: sociological factors, racism, social capital,

cultural significance, acculturation and assimilation, the effect of sport events on refugees, and the relationship between sport participation and social integration.

The use of qualitative research methods is adequate to enable the researcher to collect and integrate data which can facilitate a well-rounded understanding of the research topic. To complete the data collection, therefore, the researcher conducted the first phase of face-to-face interviews with the participants in December 2017. Before then, the researcher paid a visit to the Gloria Multicultural Centre in Jyväskylä where initial contact was made with the participants.

To give some background information, the Multicultural Centre is an interactive forum where people and diverse cultures meet. Gloria offers together with visitor's multicultural activities for every individual in Jyväskylä. The center works for equality, against racism and prejudice by creating events and discussions on multiculturalism. In addition, for multicultural and ethnic groups, there is the possibility to use the facilities for voluntary activities.

Furthermore, multicultural groups meet in Gloria and the center offers accommodation to organize courses, events, conferences and exhibitions. The Multicultural Centre has a clear outline of its objectives and values, which are highlighted in Table 1.

Table 1. Objectives and Values of the Multicultural Center (Gloria)

OBJECTIVES	VALUES
○ Promoting multiculturalism	○ Respect
○ Supporting immigrants and different ethnic or national groups	○ Equality
○ Construction of an open and equal platform for all	○ Tolerance
○ Supporting the community	○ Humanity
○ Attention to sustainable development in all activities	○ Acceptance of diversity and fairness.

With that in mind, and for the purposes of this study, the researcher felt it best to have Gloria as a good starting point to begin the data collection process. The first phase of interviews took place in a meeting room at the Multicultural Centre over a two-day period (19th – 20th) December 2017, with each interview lasting approximately 30 minutes. Consent forms were signed by each participant, as well as an explanation about the reasons behind the research were also given to each participant prior to the commencement of the interviews.

In addition to participant observations and note-taking, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews to collect the data throughout the interview process. To digitally record the interviews, the researcher used a Samsung Galaxy 4 Tablet and a Sony Xperia XZ mobile phone, in addition to using a pen and an A4 size notebook to take notes during the interview process. It should be noted that during the three interviews conducted in the first-phase, the participants, of Middle Eastern origin, did not have an excellent command of the English language. Hence, though the participants were non-native English speakers, they also had a decent command of the Finnish language by the same token.

As a result, at certain intervals during the respective interviews, the participants required a third-party English and Finnish speaking translator, an employee at Gloria who was also involved in the interviews, to translate certain questions from English to Finnish that they may not have understood very well from the researcher. The third party involved in the proceedings would then immediately relay any responses in Finnish back into English for the researcher to note down. This did not occur too often, however, and in the main most of the respective interviews were conducted in English.

The initial thinking process for the researcher in the interviews was to allow the interviewee to tell their story in their own words from allowing one to know and to understand their background and their respective cultures, to them describing their experiences as refugees. Following that, the questions were designed in such a way that would allow the researcher to describe the lived experiences of refugees and their own perceptions regarding their participation in sport, and how much of an influence (if any) sport has had on them in the integration process.

The first section of the interview questions (see appendix 1) primarily centered on personal information regarding the participants' identification and their experiences in sport. This section helped the researcher to understand the participants' respective backgrounds including age, nationality, and the duration of their stay in Finland thus far. In addition, the first few

questions of the interviews also enquired about the type of sport or physical activity that the participants take part in, and how it makes them feel to engage in said sporting activity.

The second section of the interview process focused on asking why the participants decided on taking up the sporting activity that they do, as well as what it means for them to participate in the sport. Further, the crux of the matter of integration is brought up in this section to gauge whether the participants do feel a sense of 'belonging' in Finnish society due to the sport that they undertake.

This part of the interview initially proved to be a challenge as the question of integration required the researcher to present it in simplistic terms for the interviewees for them to better understand the terminology. Once this had been established, the researcher then continued with the questioning which also aimed at how participating in sport has had an impact on other social issues involved in their lives, such as education, employment, and social needs.

The third and concluding section of the interview was set to address the more hard-hitting issues at hand that come with tackling the research questions of this study, *vis-à-vis* to the role that sport plays in the integration of refugees in society. Related to this are the potential challenges or obstacles that they (refugees) face in this process such as negative attitudes and stereotypes towards them within or outside of sport, which must be considered and cannot be ignored in the discussion.

The idea behind this is was to investigate both sides of the coin, positive and negative vices, of the integration process. In some way, this also helps to determine the state of play by sports clubs and sports organizations and what sort of influence they may have in this aspect, which is a matter revisited later in the study (see chapter 6.2).

In sum, the formulation of the method and structure of the first phase of interviews were taken in a semi-structured way which allowed one to get the perspective of the interviewees and their significant life events first, stimulated with a few initial questions. Thereafter, a questioning phase was initiated whereby additional questions were posed that addressed relevant issues to the topic of integration through sport such as sport participation, access to sport, and culture and religion.

4.3 Ethical and reliability issues involved in the data collection process

Issues pertaining to ethics need to be carefully considered in relation to refugees or those seeking asylum in a new host country due to the degree of sensitivity that cases of this nature are characterized by for the individuals involved. A degree of awareness needs to be heightened in the process of collecting the data required for research purposes while not jeopardizing the concerns of those whose lives are at the mercy of authorities or lawmakers.

At the forefront of ethics is the consideration of the players involved in their respective life experiences and situations that are in the integration spotlight. For many asylum seekers and refugees, it may take months, even years to be fully associated with a new society that they will have entered, particularly one of an autonomous nature. How long cases of asylum seekers and refugees take to be dealt with largely depends on how effective an action or plan will be implemented to integrate them into communities and their new surroundings. In the meantime, it is also worth considering concepts that define the nature of collecting data during this process and, for the researcher, much of these concepts have a lot to do with:

- Empathy
- Equality
- Respect, and
- Serving the needs before the wants of the people

Equality is an issue that has the potential to be divisive in a society, any society for that matter, flooded by the influx of refugees and migrants. However, considering this phenomenon in recent years throughout the European continent, issues of this nature need to be addressed further in integration processes for inclusivity to be attained at all levels of the socio-economic spectrum. This too includes gender equality which also takes its place in society and is discussed further in chapter 6.3 in the discussion section of this paper.

By extension, empathy is also one aspect that perhaps should be considered to try to understand what an individual or group of people may have experienced in their lives and respective journeys. Though it may be a slight consolation, empathy is a human emotion that is welcomed at the worst of times from those who understand the circumstances of what one or many may be going through in their lives. Hence, research cases of this nature cannot only be about getting a story for one's own interests or purposes for publication into the public domain, professionally or otherwise, without understanding the true nature of the case itself.

In any given situation, respect should be two-fold for there to be a mutual understanding between both parties in the dialogue. This component was initiated by the researcher in all the cases involved in this study and equally received in return from the respondents themselves. Creating a setting of respect is necessary as it has the potential to build pillars of trust -- more so from respondent to interviewer than the other way around – and allows for the collection of data to stand a better chance of being free flowing and reliable.

Consequently, the researcher is thrust in a position of, not only being a ‘mouthpiece’ per se, but of giving refugees a platform for their voices to be heard. It is essentially giving a voice to the voiceless and listening to the life experiences from the perspective of refugees gives one the duty to project their stories to be seen and heard in the pursuit of what is most critical to them: safety and security. This is not to dehumanize them. Far from it. But if one were to put themselves in the shoes of refugees, one would perhaps agree that the needs far outweigh the wants of what is hoped to be attained when faced with the situation of having to forcibly leave one’s own homeland to start afresh in pastures new.

So, in that sense, the ethical constraints regarding the matter at hand need to be considered before and during the data collection phase for there to be a clear understanding of the picture being portrayed, and how and whom it ends up in the hands of. Similarly, reliability factors fall in line together with ethics in defining what lines can or cannot be crossed in the extraction and analysis of the data gathered, as well as how useful the information is. However, not to be conflicted, there remains a job to be done, and underlining the researcher’s work in any study area means executing all the stages of the research as effectively and thoroughly as possible to deliver, not only a captivating and compelling piece for the audience, but indeed a true reflection of the story told.

The overriding principle, therefore, is in line with keeping the honesty and integrity of the process by which the expectation is for promises to be kept by those conducting the research. The intent is for less harm and more good to be done to individuals or groups of people who are, in the case of refugees, faced with the plight of having to rebuild their livelihoods from the bottom level of society without compromising an already complicated situation for them

4.4 Selection of research participants

The two main entities in this study focused on integration and refugees with the common denominator being that of sport. With that in mind, the researcher did not intend on only focusing on individuals who have arrived in Finland in recent years but those too who have spent a considerable amount of time in the country, first as refugees, then as integrated and resettled individuals.

Before that, however, the researcher first had to take note of the numbers that represent the largest influx of refugees or asylum seekers that come, not only to Finland, but mainland Europe in general. These asylum seekers generally live in reception centers while waiting for a decision on whether they would be granted asylum (Finnish Immigration Service, 2016). Reception centers provide asylum seekers with accommodation, food, healthcare, information about Finnish culture including legislation, employment, equality (such as gender roles and norms), and organize activities, such as language instruction. Centers are in various parts of the country (Anttila, Siljamäki & Rowe, 2018, p. 4).

Taking note of this, however, did not entail limiting the selection pool of the research participants due to one group from the same country of origin having more numbers of refugees over another group having a lesser number. All individuals, regardless of their country of origin, were considered by the researcher to make the study as diverse and viable as possible.

As stated before, the first stage of the recruitment process of the research participants involved the researcher taking the initiative by making initial contact with the Multicultural Centre (Gloria) in Jyväskylä. As this is a space that allows for diversity in the shape of different multicultural and ethnic groups to meet and use the facility for voluntary activities, it provided one an opportunity to identify potential research participants in the selection process.

From a refugee standpoint, diversity is important as it allows one to gain various insights into the mindset of how other individuals from diverse cultures and ethnic groups have a way about them in revealing what they may or may not have experienced in and out of sport. Hence the reason why the researcher had in mind to avail both male and female participants, where possible, in the interview process to compare the responses in the study from the respective genders.

With the help of a few of the employees and volunteers that work at Gloria, the researcher went ahead with the selection process in choosing the interview candidates that would best suit the

study -- primarily those involved in a sport in any capacity -- who would share their integration experiences from their own perspective before and after their involvement in sport. In other words, promoting a sense of inclusiveness within organized sporting activities for refugees to take part in with the intention to become integrated in society (Finnish society in this case).

An important note for one to consider, however, is that of the numbers of refugees present in Scandinavian countries and understanding why the region is a popular destination for many migrants and asylum seekers fleeing from war-affected regions around the world. Understandably, the push and pull factors vary case by case from each individual arriving in any of the Scandinavian states that of course pride themselves on being responsible and constructive on the global stage.

In Finland's case, the country has the second highest total in asylum applications in recent years. In 2015, for example, there were 32,476 asylum applications in Finland. The top three countries of origin representing refugees coming into the country include those from Iraq, Afghanistan, and Somalia as Table 2 illustrates, but by extending that further, Iran and Syria join the list in completing the top five. As a result, this is reflective in the interviewees selected by the researcher who represent one or more of the countries of origin arriving in Finland as refugees.

Table 2: Asylum applications filed in Scandinavian countries by top countries of origin, 2015
(MPI Migration Policy Institute)

Country of Asylum	Total Asylum Applications	Top Country of Origin	Second Country of Origin	Third Country of Origin
Sweden	162,877	Syria (51,338)	Afghanistan (41,564)	Iraq (20,857)
Finland	32,476	Iraq (20,485)	Afghanistan (5,214)	Somalia (1,981)
Norway	31,145	Syria (10,536)	Afghanistan (6,987)	Iraq (2,991)
Denmark	7,162	Syria (3,515)	Eritrea (1,276)	Stateless (702)

4.5 Coding procedure

Following the transcription and translation of 21 pages and approximately 160 minutes of interview material of the five interviews conducted, the researcher proceeded to develop concepts that enable the coding procedure of interview material to be initiated. In addition, abstract categories to the responses of the individual interview questions were also developed at this stage for the researcher to gain a better understanding of the experienced realities from the perspective of the individuals in their respective case studies.

From the interviews, the researcher then proceeded to constantly and consistently implement his own color coding theme or framework that identified or highlighted: useful information or material from the interview to be incorporated in the case study (**green**); information or material that may or may not be useful but would be considered in the case study (**amber**); and information or material that would not be useful or considered for the case study in question and to be disregarded (**red**).

This use of color coding was a strategy that allowed the researcher to have a clear and concise structure into the development of the overall picture told from the stories by the refugees themselves. Admittedly, the transcription process may be time consuming and does require a certain amount of patience in qualitative research strategies. However, the selection of the information gathered from the interviews was made that much easier as the color code tactic allowed the researcher to clearly identify the material useful for the respective case studies. Further, new insights were added to the research after the researcher had also coded additional themes that arose in the data.

All in all, as this was a qualitative research study, the overwhelming common denominator was to highlight the research approach from a narrative analytical standpoint. Narratives are transcribed experiences whereby every interview or observation has a narrative aspect attached to it which, in this instance, the researcher sorted and reflected upon. This was done to re-tell the stories of those individuals about their respective journeys to become resettled in a new society. Thereafter, the researcher enhanced the material from the interviews and presented the shared lived experiences in a revised format for the reader.

4.6 Role of the researcher

As an individual who has had the opportunity of living in different countries, being thrust into the role of the researcher in this study took on a more significant meaning from a personal point of view. I could utilize the experiences or expertise garnered over the years from being exposed to a variety of diverse cultures in my approach towards individuals or groups from ethnic minority backgrounds. This was beneficial in the sense that it allowed me to interpret the data from a purely subjective standpoint, mastered by the interview techniques learned from academic qualifications obtained from previous studies in journalism.

From the beginning of the research process, it was imperative to have the research participants 'onside' so to speak, to earn their trust as a researcher being given a glimpse into their respective life experiences and realities. So, for the purposes of the data collection process, the researcher made it a point to see and to spend as much time whenever and wherever possible with the refugees in a group setting from the initial stages of setting up the interviews through to the end of the research process. This included eight visits to the Multicultural Centre in Jyväskylä, for example, and taking part in the various activities that are offered at the establishment.

Activities involving drama, music, food, and art presentations are designed to showcase the different ethnic backgrounds and cultures from all around the world, all presented in an environment where they feel safe and can express themselves openly without prejudice. This too extends to the sporting field or court where their continued participation in various sports and physical activities may, in some cases, be determined by how other groups in society are receptive to their presence as refugees.

As sport is the key factor in this study, I paid closer attention from the onset to the group dynamics when the research participants, together with the other refugees and asylum seekers, took part in various sporting activities such as football and table tennis to note aspects of body language, mannerisms, and how engaging as individuals they are towards the sporting activity. Granted, their involvement in the activity at most times may only have been amongst themselves as a group, but it was still interesting to observe the camaraderie and the friendships developing from a sporting aspect.

Perhaps these friendships and rapport had already been forged in other diverse cultural settings away from sport considering that the research participants share a mutual understanding with

others in a similar position in the same group. However, participant observation is an ongoing investigative process which, in this case, required the researcher to pay closer attention into the day to day lives of the research participants as an outsider.

In addition, their performances, type of games and different sport practices were also taken into consideration for the purposes of gathering as much information as possible for this study. Having got to know a few of the research participants on a personal level, the researcher then engaged in general conversation with the individuals regarding the sports they play, their families, work, studies they undertake, and anything else they were prepared to share. Though this may have been to a minimum at times due to the evident language barrier with some of the individuals and perhaps a reluctance to share their experiences initially, it helped, somewhat, with the interview process when asking probing questions.

Moreover, the work that goes into becoming a part of the group goes further than just being a researcher, and in offering support to the research participants they, over a period, were happy and felt comfortable for my presence to be in amongst them. So, in a sense, this was my own 'integration' into the group in an inverted way, which I found interesting just through participant and environmental observation and conversing with the group.

All things considered, it's fair to say that the role of the researcher goes above and beyond being just that: a researcher. In this instance, being in the realms of just exploring what has been studied or uncovered before, and merely collecting data to be analyzed and reported for the purposes of a study may not be enough. Hence why as a researcher it was critical to make it a point – not to impose -- but to make my own presence continuously felt whenever possible to develop genuine relationships with the research participants in understanding their stories.

Finally, confidentiality was assured to all interviewees, and to ensure the safety of the research participants -- taking into consideration the sensitivity of each of their respective cases and the attention that this topic comes with in the public domain -- the names that appear in the case studies are pseudonyms.

5. FIVE STORIES OF SOCIAL INTEGRATION THROUGH SPORT

The multifaceted relationship between social integration and sport is explored in the analysis of five case studies. Subsequent sections in this chapter present the stories of Anup, Ahmed, Sami, Anwar and Issa. In each section, the idea was to formulate each story in a semi-structured narrative style which allowed one to get the perspective of the interviewees and their significant life events first, stimulated with a few initial questions. Thereafter, a questioning phase was initiated whereby additional questions were posed, aimed at addressing the crux of the matter in terms of relevance to issues such as sport participation, access to sport, culture and religion.

ANUP: “At first, I didn’t feel at home at all because the culture here is so different...”

Anup (23 years) is a sports enthusiast, as evidenced by the number of sports he participates in which include football, table-tennis, wrestling and parkour. His enthusiasm for sport has even led to him joining a local fight club in the city of Jyväskylä where he practices Wrestling with other Finnish wrestlers. Though he is of Iranian decent, Anup was born in Iraq and fled to Finland with his family in 2014 – because, as he puts it, of the injustices in Iran following the presidential and local elections the year before. These included the death penalty, human rights violations, freedom of expression and information, and the mistreatment of minorities to anyone who opposed the Hassan Rouhani led government.

Anup and his family are asylum seekers as they all came to Finland as refugees in their bid to find a safe place to live. His brother, who is also in Finland, used to play Football. The young sports enthusiast can be best described as a calm, level-headed positive thinker, which on its own is striking considering his and his family’s status quo as refugees in the country. But this does not deter the young man in his quest to be the best in whatever sport he takes part in, and this determination and focus is not only limited to the sports field, court or mat. Not only does his love of sport and being active make him feel good and energetic, but it has also allowed him to acquire and learn social skills related to the Finnish language due to his interactions with Finns at the fight club.

Anup has a rather optimistic and positive outlook on his time in Finland so far. He feels as though he is, somewhat, a part of the Finnish culture now though this was not the case when he first arrived in Finland. Undoubtedly, the same can be said for any individual moving to a new country, and aspects of trying to “fit in” or socially integrate in a foreign environment inevitably take time. This was very much the case for Anup initially as he found the difference in culture in Finland, compared to what he had been used to back in his home country of Iran, difficult to adapt to at first.

“For the first 6 months I didn’t feel at home at all, and I had a lot of problems with the language. With the culture, I feel Finnish people are more distant and when you don’t know the language it’s hard to get to know anyone. It was a struggle at first, but now I feel better.”

The feeling of being a part of a team when he engages in sport is very important for Anup. He sees this as a way that enables him to interact with others on the sporting field and, by the same token, invariably gives him the confidence to interact with other people away from sports. This team aspect has, somewhat, been the catalyst for Anup in the integration process as he claims to *“knowing more people and I have friends here so it feels more like home for me now.”* So, in a positive sense, the concept of social integration has been forthcoming for Anup in terms of being able to communicate with people by first learning the language and having hobbies, which is very much a part of Finnish culture.

Being a member of the fight club cannot be understated either. It is here that Anup feels a sense of ‘belonging’ as when he practices wrestling at the club *“everyone comes up to you to say hi and they’re really nice.”* This contrasts with the other forms of physical activity that he partakes in such as going to the gym, for example, where people (Finns) do not usually readily engage in conversation with others. So, for Anup the fight club, somewhat, serves as a springboard or initial jump start in his attempts to integrate into society as it is where he feels he can be a part of something, and to be both socially and emotionally connected.

However, it has not always been plain sailing for Anup in his quest to feel integrated into the Finnish fabric and way of life. In most cases of immigrants or refugees settling into a new country or society, elements of negative attitudes and racial stereotypes are almost always inevitable, and Anup’s case is no different. He has experienced this before since arriving in Finland, and most of what happens in these incidences would be *“someone telling me to go back to my country.”*

In a separate incident, albeit outside a sports setting, an individual approached him and his friends one evening and asked them if they were terrorists and affiliated with the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), a well-known extremist militant group that rules by Wahhabi/Salafi law. Anup, however, took it upon himself to diffuse the situation by engaging in conversation with the individual to avoid an escalation in tension between both parties. Remarkably, the conversation ended in a truce and an embrace between the two, and the individual in question had changed his tune about Anup and his friends declaring them good people.

Anup's story serves to highlight that social inclusion can ultimately be achieved or obtained through one taking the initiative to engage with others within a sport club setting. For Anup, dialogue is key. And in this case, success in socially interacting with others within sport can, in time, also lead to success outside of sport in integrating in society.

AHMED: “My dream in the future is to be a policeman...”

Ahmed (19 years) is a regular gym goer. He used to play Football, Volleyball, and participate in several Athletics events. Like his older brother Anup, Ahmed is also much the sports enthusiast, and he actively picked up the sports from the onset upon arriving in Finland as a refugee. However, lately Ahmed has had to scale back on playing sport as he does not have the time due to his current studies to become a practical nurse. Though this may be the reality in the present for Ahmed, his ultimate dream in the future is to be a policeman, hence the reason behind the shift in focus from active play in sports to regularly going to the gymnasium.

Ahmed goes to the gym, not only to maintain his fitness, health and physical wellbeing, but also to match his current studies as the profession requires one to be in good physical condition to assist patients by carrying them at any one time. Though this may be demanding at times, Ahmed appreciates having the opportunity to interact with patients who are predominantly Finnish at the Central Finland Central Hospital in Jyväskylä as these interactions, in some way, help his own situation to integrate into the society. However, Ahmed still maintains aspects of his own original culture despite his interest in wanting to experience and learn more about Finnish culture, and much of this cultural maintenance stems from the family values imparted to him by his parents which he still strongly upholds today.

“Yes, I do maintain my own culture, but I also celebrate and embrace Finnish culture and important dates such as Christmas, for example. So, it's a mixture of both, but because my

family is also here and most of my friends are from Iran, I have kept our cultural practices which are very important to us.”

Even though Ahmed does not have much time to participate in sporting activities, he doesn't take sport for granted and appreciates the element of team sports that he has experienced previously. From not having anything to do and not knowing anybody outside his family upon setting foot in Finland, and not having any friends that could perhaps inspire him to take up a sport or physical activity, Ahmed made a conscious and philosophical decision and *“decided to do something...and sport makes you feel good, powerful, and helps you to think about reaching your goals and dreams in life.”*

So, having taken up sport, Ahmed specifically identified team sports as those that he wanted to play – namely Football and Volleyball – affirming his belief that being a part of a team helps one to communicate with another. In that sense, participating in team sports for Ahmed has had a positive influence on him as an individual as it has enabled him to get to know people on the field of play which, in turn, has “broken the ice” and given him the confidence to do the same off the field making it easier for himself to be a more sociable person in that respect. In addition, Ahmed believes that playing sport *“does help because you get to know people and that's how you keep going and makes the process easier in my opinion”* with regards to engaging in daily interactions with other groups.

Easier said than done perhaps as, while he may be able to participate in sporting activities, access to sport or sports and physical activity facilities – such as the gym -- may not be so straight forward for other refugees. Ahmed highlights the local fight club that his brother Anup is a member of as an example as being expensive to join, which could have an adverse effect on an individual wanting to be a part of a sports club but not being able to because of the costs involved. In the long run, this results in refugees feeling potentially marginalized or closed off in society on top of their own individual circumstances they will be going through.

But this does not deter Ahmed. He believes that societal obstacles such as the *“language barrier”*, for example, are there to be broken down. For him, not knowing the language and *“not knowing how to express yourself is also a problem”*, which will not help in getting past the hardest part of integration at the beginning.

Having arrived in Finland as a refugee with his family in 2014, Ahmed has experienced minimal aspects of discrimination or prejudice in comparison to his older brother Anup and

sees a contrast in how behaviors of this nature are seen back in his homeland of Iran. Within sport, he has always wondered why a minority of people choose to look at others (refugees in this case, including himself) in a way that sometimes makes them feel undeserving or unworthy to be participating in a sporting activity. Something he did not experience back in his homeland when he played Football and practiced Kung-Fu for two years.

Similarly, the same experiences can be said away from sport for Ahmed, which at times leads to him having his guard up in preparation for any eventuality that may come his way. He explains this by saying:

“In our culture in my home country, people don’t usually look or stare at someone for no reason. Of course, if you know the person you’ll look at them, but for me it’s weird and disrespectful for someone to stare at you especially if you do not know the person.”

He puts this down to a touch of ignorance in some people and chooses to not give them much time or thought as he goes about his day to day business. It’s fair to say that, to an extent, there is a cultural disconnection of some sort, and one may argue that what signal one may gather from another may be lost in translation when perhaps the only thing evident between two individuals in society could just be innocent curiosity. Despite this, however, Ahmed feels that these isolated incidences have not made it hard for him thus far to work on developing stronger social ties to Finland. In some way, being a member of the gym does help in physically placing him in an environment whereby he can choose to socially participate with Finns and individuals of other ethnic groups.

SAMI: “I feel closer to Finnish culture because I want to be Finnish...”

Sami (29 years) has taken a liking to swimming. So much so that he does not have many other sporting interests other than going swimming, which he enjoys a great deal and helps to stimulate him to keep fit. Perhaps this is so because he learnt how to swim from an early age back in Baghdad in his homeland of Iraq where Football and Swimming are the two most popular sports that Iraqi youth primarily engage in, according to Sami. He does also have an affinity to Football and would play the sport too if it were not for him picking up a serious leg injury in a football match back in Iraq, which resulted in him undergoing emergency surgery. Hence his affection for all things Swimming.

It may be speculated that another reason why he enjoys swimming is because of the effective physical benefits that the technical aspects of the sport has on individuals rehabilitating from lengthy or serious injuries. Nevertheless, Sami appreciates every opportunity he gets to go swimming and adds that it's "*more fun being a part of a team*" as opposed to participating in the sport individually, competitively or socially.

Aside from his love of being in the water, Sami is a student of languages primarily at the Multicultural Centre in Jyväskylä and, naturally, his main ambition now is to master the Finnish language. As with most foreign nationals who come into Finnish society, the difficulty in understanding the structure of the language can be a major source of frustration and sticking point for those willing to learn and apply it in their day-to-day lives. For Sami, however, he puts immense emphasis on learning it each day as he believes that he will "*feel more confident*" to take up more sports, particularly Finnish sports.

So, because he does not speak the language fluently yet, he sees it as being the "*main barrier*" for him in communicating with people and being comfortable in interacting with people, both within and away from sport. Despite this, however, Sami has taken Finland to heart and appreciates the opportunity to live in the country without having any safety concerns, something he is quick to point out when he compares it to his home country. He declares that nowhere in Iraq is safe anymore, and it is primarily the reason why living in Finland makes him feel good and has become a place he calls home without any hesitation.

"I feel strongly connected to the people here and have built relationships with people in Finland. I feel closer to Finnish culture than Iraqi culture because I want to be Finnish so that's why I feel integrated."

He goes on to say that only the male members in his family, particularly him and his brother, were the ones who faced the most problems in Iraq at a time when Civil War had just broken out in the country in 2014, and the extremist group Islamic State (ISIS) had a growing network in the region and had infiltrated the country causing numerous atrocities. As a result, Sami and his brother both fled Iraq the following year with the former ending up in Finland, and the latter heading to Turkey.

Without question, the political instability and conflict back in his homeland in recent years has left a bitter taste in the mouth for Sami and has, somewhat, contributed to the shift in his mentality in not wanting to maintain his cultural identity. Along with his intention to learn and

master Finnish, he categorically states to seeking daily interaction with other cultures, and longs for the day when he will officially become a naturalized Finnish citizen.

Sami's case is representative of refugees who, through what they may have experienced previously in their home country, influences the level of connection to the new hosts' society and culture. In the two years he has been in Finland, he does not see himself as an Iraqi national, and would rather completely do away with conforming to the culture, religious codes and traditions that are followed in his homeland. For Sami, integration into Finnish society is not enough. His is a case of assimilation, or at least having the desire of wanting to assimilate into said society, which at this stage may still be at its orientation stage. In Sami's mind, however, the tip of the iceberg is just the beginning of how far deep he intends on going in his commitment to be thoroughly embedded in Finnish sport, culture, and society.

ANWAR: "I didn't know what would happen...maybe you die, or you get a better life"

Anwar (53 years) has Finnish citizenship but is Kurdish-Iranian. He came to Finland from Iran as a refugee in 1995 and has had vast experience with Football matters in Jyväskylä having held numerous positions in the sport as a player, coach, and now a licensed referee at league level.

To understand Anwar's journey, however, one must go back...way back to 1980 when Anwar found himself in the middle of a desert at Al-Tash camp – a refugee camp set up by the Iraqi government near Iraq's capital, Baghdad, at the outset of the Iraqi/Iranian war – having left his homeland in the same year. Anwar spent the best part of a year at this refugee camp before he, along with approximately 50 000 other refugees, were moved on by the Iraqi authorities to a new camp in the capital city. Witnessing refugee children growing up, and not having the opportunity to go to school, sprung Anwar into action as he took it upon himself to organize a school within the camp to teach the students to read, write, and to count. It was here too that Anwar began working as part of a sports committee that was established within the school which organized competition games in various sports, which for the next 13 years, would form the basis of his first involvement in Football.

By the time Anwar arrived in Finland in the mid-nineties, as part of the country's government policy to officially accept a fixed quota of refugees, his interest to continue to be involved in sport had not diminished despite the experiences he had lived through since leaving his

hometown. Growing up, he enjoyed playing Football, and between 1996 to 1999 he got himself involved with an Iranian football group that had been set up in Jyväskylä by other Iranian refugees, and which went by the name 'Irania'. The team not only consisted of Iranian refugees, but also included a Finn and an African, something Anwar is proud to point out as to how readily accommodating and inclusive the group was to individuals of other cultures and ethnic groups.

However, after playing together as a group for about 3-4 years, the team disbanded as many in the group moved away from Jyväskylä, which prompted Anwar to find other means to maintain his presence in football in his attempts to socially engage and get others involved in the sport:

"I became a referee in 2003 and at the time I didn't know a lot about Finnish society, and I didn't know I could qualify higher as a referee at league level. Nobody told me this. My aim was just to connect with people within the sport, and I only wanted to referee the game.

Then in 2010, I organized and coached a Kurdish football group for a year, so we could continue our original group. To this day as a referee, I feel anyone who comes into a new society should find a way to be associated with the society."

Gaining experience as a football referee in Jyväskylä has had its advantages for Anwar and has put him in a position where he can share his experiences and knowledge with other refugees who perhaps have arrived in Finland in more recent years. He firmly believes that sport can, undoubtedly, help one to socially integrate into a new society, and attributes this to – not only learning the language – but also implementing it within a setting where *"there is no politics, and through sport you can connect with individuals or other people."* He accepts that most Finnish people do not naturally initiate a conversation with other individuals, particularly foreign individuals. However, he believes that sport can break down such barriers referencing an example of how at the end of each football season all the referees in the league arrange a get together to drink and socialize, as well as meeting with the parents of some of the younger players and getting to know them on a more personal level at various points during the season.

But with advantages also comes disadvantages. And for Anwar who has lived in Finland for a much longer period than most other refugees, he has seen and heard more than most when it comes to negative attitudes and behaviors towards refugees in the country. He has experienced it both within Football and outside of the sport as well, though he admits that this does not happen often, and only isolated incidents occur in the game:

“Sometimes referees make mistakes in a game, and this one time I made a mistake and the coach of one of the teams said something racist to me in Finnish that maybe he thought I could not understand. I included it in my match report and he was punished by the league committee.”

Perhaps the most extreme case of this negative aspect related to Anwar involved his family when they used to live near the city center in Jyväskylä in the first few years of them having arrived in Finland. Visibly upset at describing the incident in the interview, Anwar recalls how one evening his two young sons were playing just outside their apartment building when a neighbor pointed a gun at the boys from their balcony telling them to go home, and that if they didn't they would shoot them. He adds that it was a tough time living in that area and acknowledges the difficulties and problems that he and his family had to go through in the early years of their settling in period in the country.

Though he now has Finnish citizenship, the concept of integration for Anwar may be overwhelming as it is tinged with elements of still being seen differently as a foreigner in a society he has lived in for over 20 years. On the one hand, he feels that he and his family have socially integrated and have *“found our place in this society”*, raising the point of how his children have been educated and have stable jobs in the country. On the other hand, however, he claims that the amount of taxes he pays is twice, maybe three times more than that of the average Finn according to Finnish law. Whether there is an element of truth behind this claim or not, it may not feel quite like his home country of Iran, but one thing is certain for Anwar: Football has given him the opportunity to pursue his goal to connect with people in a land that has, to an extent, accepted him as one of their own. And for that, he is grateful to no end.

ISSA: “I feel at home but I’m also missing my homeland.”

Issa (50 years) is originally from Liberia and came to Finland with his family in 2008 under medical grounds as his daughter was diagnosed with a crippling disease when she was just a year old, and that has since left her needing constant medical attention and wheelchair assistance. Like Anwar, he too has obtained Finnish citizenship since his arrival in the country. However, it is fair to say his is a curious case that accepts and acknowledges his integration into Finnish society while still holding on to the belief and hope of returning to Liberia someday in the future. As a man who identifies with and values the Christian faith, Issa feels blessed and

is grateful to have settled in his adopted country but feels the burden of learning the Finnish language as still evident as a barrier for him communicating with others in this society.

The process of resettling in Finland was not straightforward for Issa and his family. He fled Liberia for neighboring Ivory Coast in 1991, a few years after civil war had broken out in his homeland and spent the next 17 years there before their case was accepted by the Finnish government through the United Nations. As he recalls about the past in the interview to the period when he came to Finland, Issa thinks back to how things could have turned out differently if given the chance to relive the experience of resettling again:

“I didn’t get much of an education growing up, and high school was a challenge for me and I didn’t get to go to college. So, if I had the chance, I would have gone to college 10 years ago to go further in life, so I could have a better education and be proud of myself.”

In addition to placing high importance on education, Issa also brings up his lifelong love of sports, particularly Football. He readily admits to not having played the game professionally or at national level back in Liberia but taking part in other various sporting activities in his younger days has enabled him to continue to have the appetite for sport to this day as he maintains his health and fitness by running and cycling. Though he was older when he arrived in Finland, he wishes to have set foot in the country at a much younger age as he believes he would have continued to take part in a variety of sports that would have further enhanced his personal development in Finland.

It may be speculated that having spent the best part of a decade in Finland, Issa does not feel affected by any forms of negative attitudes or stereotypical behavior from individuals representing the host nation. He does not take being insulted personally anymore and gives an interesting example of how he has since become best friends with his neighbor now, despite an incident when his neighbor *“compared me to an animal.”*

However, socially integrating into Finnish society through sport has a far deeper meaning for Issa. Generally, there are many ways to integrate, he states, but he also believes and raises the prospect that more can be done by sports federations and local sports clubs to help refugees – both young and old – in the integration process, especially as sports clubs are admired and have the capability of recruiting people from other backgrounds:

“The sport club can make Finns and immigrants come together in one sport. For example, there is a sport club here in Jyväskylä called JJK made up of a lot of immigrants and many

other sports clubs can follow JJK's example and recruit other immigrants who are already here in Finnish society."

Though this is an idea that can be adopted and implemented by sports clubs to assist refugees' integration in society through sport in the present, the future paints a far different picture for Issa and his plans in the long-term. He does not wish to spend the rest of his days growing old in Finland but sees himself more as being on a journey that is preparing him to return to his home country of Liberia one day. He even goes as far as offering the same piece of advice to other refugees, perhaps oblivious to the fact that some individuals and refugee groups may not be as fortunate as he in obtaining citizenship and being able to return to their respective homelands. Nevertheless, he makes it clear that for now he is happy to stay and work in the country and would only want to make a return to Liberia before he becomes much older.

6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The results of this research paper highlight that sport:

- When used appropriately and judiciously, and supported by suitable levels of investment, really can contribute in a meaningful way to wider programs of community cohesion and integration,
- Can provide individuals with opportunities for socialization and cultural expression in attaining social capital,
- Has a role to play in bringing people from diverse backgrounds together within the same social and sporting milieu

In addition, the research results aim at demonstrating the key contexts and processes that are at play through which participation in sport can contribute to refugees' bonding, bridging, linking and enhancing their social capital in a new society. The research participants from different age and socio-economic backgrounds help to highlight the significance of such a context for facilitating the development of bonding social issues with other refugee immigrants, including those representing other ethnic minority groups.

Identifying the role that sport plays in the social integration for refugees living in Central Finland serves to underline the issues sport can potentially address, such as, health, education, psychological needs, developmental needs, to name a few. Further, the role of sport gives one the opportunity to explore the social dynamics or needs involved and is examined in detail in the discussion, linking the results analyzed and dissected with the existing research that has been collected and presented beforehand.

Generally, all five cases highlight that integration through sport among refugees from ethnic minority groups is indeed possible if the conditions provided are accommodating, welcoming, and that the individual, through their own desire and intuition, accepts to take on the challenge of the status quo that they find themselves in. Though the process of integration can often be fragile and precarious towards the individual -- due to a lack of support that refugee groups don't receive in other areas of society -- the very definition of engaging in interactions with other groups is by no means a feat unachievable.

With regards to how prejudice and discrimination tendencies were perceived, each of the individuals interviewed had varying degrees of this issue against them in their respective experiences, some expressed openly, some in more subtle forms to remind them indirectly of their *'foreign'* status in society. Hidden behind these negative messages is the use of the Finnish language which, despite being the common denominator in some of the cases, is a recurring theme that appears and takes center stage in the stories told by the participants of this research. Language is a crucial factor in the communication lines from one individual to another, and for refugees, it has a significant bearing in determining how successful one is to be socially accepted in Finnish society.

In Sami's case, for example, one sure way of obtaining social contacts and social bonds in society is by learning the language to a fluent level of speaking and understanding it with individuals of the host society and other ethnic groups that he makes it a priority above all else. This approach gives much credence to the essentialist view highlighted earlier in the sense that when it comes to *cultural influences* or *significance*, national culture is closely associated with national language, and language learning therefore involves culture learning (Holliday, 1999). This of course is undeniably important and, somewhat, backs up the claim made by Ager and Strang (2004) of focusing on the role of building social connections in the integration process.

However, building social connections isn't just limited to being actively involved within the social and cultural domains of society. The characteristics of sport have the potential to develop aspects of a sense of belonging for resettled refugees, and this study relied upon Spaaij's (2012) viewpoint, that sport is a significant setting that can enable the cultural knowledge of a hosts' community while also fostering social relationships. This is strongly relatable with the characteristics of Anwar's case whereby civic participation in sport, football in this case, has allowed Anwar to use that platform as an opportunity to be more socially engaging through the interactions he encounters as a referee.

Issa's case is one of an outlier in the sense that integration into Finnish society for him has, somewhat, served its course as he holds aspirations of making a return to his homeland someday. Whether it is a case of him returning permanently or for a specific period is inconclusive at this point but, nonetheless, it is a race against time for him because he intends to do so before he becomes much older while still living and working in Finland. Perhaps his is a case that could, to an extent, be linked to the outcome of marginalization proposed by Berry

(1997) in the sense that this shift in mentality has been brought about by having little interest in having an association with this society anymore.

The cases of Anup and Ahmed could not be more contrasting from each other when examining the role of membership within a sports club or local community. For Anup, membership is a necessary condition for one to have a sense of belonging in society. The local fight club where he practices Wrestling offers him the chance to be affiliated to a group within its confines.

In Ahmed's case, membership in a sports club may not be as forthcoming due to accessibility issues, for example, not having the financial resources to join a sports club. For him, this leads to a shift in thinking of how best to integrate in a society through other means other than sport. Perhaps it could be speculated that this may have been the catalyst that led to Ahmed replacing participating in regular sporting activities in football and volleyball with going to the gymnasium instead and focusing more on his training to become a practical nurse, which offers him another way to socially interact with others in society.

In a sense, not having access to sport participation within a club setting would set one back further from developing stronger ties and a long-lasting commitment to the sport or sports of interest, as well as to Finnish society. On the other hand, formal membership does not always guarantee acceptance, and refugees or individuals from other ethnic minority groups may still not be equal among their peers from the host society. Hence both formal and informal (membership and non-membership) conditions regarding integration through sports participation are equally important. Though the characteristics of the settings may differ, they both contribute in the long run to the development of a sense of belonging and the building blocks of social bonds for refugees.

The stories and accounts of the interviewees largely point towards experiences of inclusion in the context of sport both in the short and long-term stay of the respective cases of the interviewees' in Finland thus far. In the theoretical section, I cited Berry (1997) and his work on understanding the four outcomes of acculturation: assimilation, separation, integration and marginalization. Of these four elements, integration was declared to have been achieved by four of the five informants who cited social interactions with other like-minded groups as the reason behind their successful integration into Finnish society. Anup's association with the fight club where he engages in Wrestling is a significant setting for him to have a sense of belonging whereby he feels he can make progress to socially *"fit in"*. Ahmed prefers going to go the gym instead to *"maintain my mental and physical health"* but is also open to the

possibility of integrating through his current training to become a practical nurse, as well as when he has time in the future to play sport again.

Anwar's experience of living in Finland for over 20 years has seen him go through the ranks in his association with football in various capacities. But it is his civic participation as a referee that has had a defining impact in his integration into Finnish society in the last decade, along with having the feeling of being "*one of the guys*" in the referees' union since becoming a referee in 2003. Hence in all three cases, varying degrees of progress has been made in each of the respondents' individual situations in bridging and linking social capital through sport, and the formation of affective bonds in society.

Similarly, the curious case of Issa, who has also been in Finland for a lengthy amount of time (10 years), perhaps contains aspects of inclusion more from a societal point view than from a sporting context. This though is not to say that sport has not contributed in some way in his integration into this society in the past decade as he is regularly active in the sporting activities mentioned in his story. However, a sense of nostalgia dominates Issa's story as, despite being successful in socially integrating into Finnish culture, and now having the status of being a Finnish citizen, he is prepared to potentially risk his and his family's lives in returning to his home country.

Sami's case is one that perhaps does not occur often in one's efforts to, not only socially integrate, but also brings up the issue of maintaining one's own culture into sharp focus. His is a case that ticks all the boxes in the outcome of assimilation in Berry's (1997) study in showing a keenness to completely do away with his original cultural identity in favor of seeking daily interaction with his newly adopted culture and other subcultures found within the same domain.

Perhaps one may sense a hint of desperation in wanting to fully dissolve one's own cultural practices that they have been immersed with from birth in return for a completely new culture form, not to mention language. To be fair, however, everything about refugees is tinged with moments of desperation and sadness, and one must come full circle in the investigation of this topic to be reminded once more of the sources of where the journeys begin for refugees.

The conclusion of the matter through qualitative explorations takes in how the implementation of the study required a commitment to time and effort for the research work to be executed successfully. Perhaps in the future more time should be devised in gathering information both theoretically and in the field with regards to the study of social inclusion and maintaining of

cultural identity among refugees. One aspect that cannot be ignored though is the emotional aspect for refugees who will have gone through certain impactful, life-changing and, in most cases, negative experiences that many of us are fortunate enough not to have experienced.

The underlining point is that sport is indeed a powerful tool that can bring people from diverse backgrounds together in both a social setting and in sporting spheres. However, as is the case in all challenging circumstance in life, there is always hope in every situation that one faces. In this case, sport serves as a reminder of how powerful and useful a role it plays in bringing communities together, regardless of background and social standing, and for the foreseeable future cannot be taken for granted nor understated in bridging and linking people together for a positive common cause.

From the perspective of the interview participants, one perhaps gets a sense that sport does play a key role in helping refugees to adapt and adjust into a new society. Naturally, every story told is different. Theirs, however, is a mix of experience, allied with youthful exuberance, enthusiasm, and optimism in the stories presented, which collectively blend well together in shedding light on their respective journeys in their quest in finding a place to call as their 'home.'

6.1 Challenges related to the interlinkage of sports and refugees

The relationship between sports and refugees is a complex and multi-layered union that goes far deeper than what is seen on the surface, as evidenced in Figure 4.

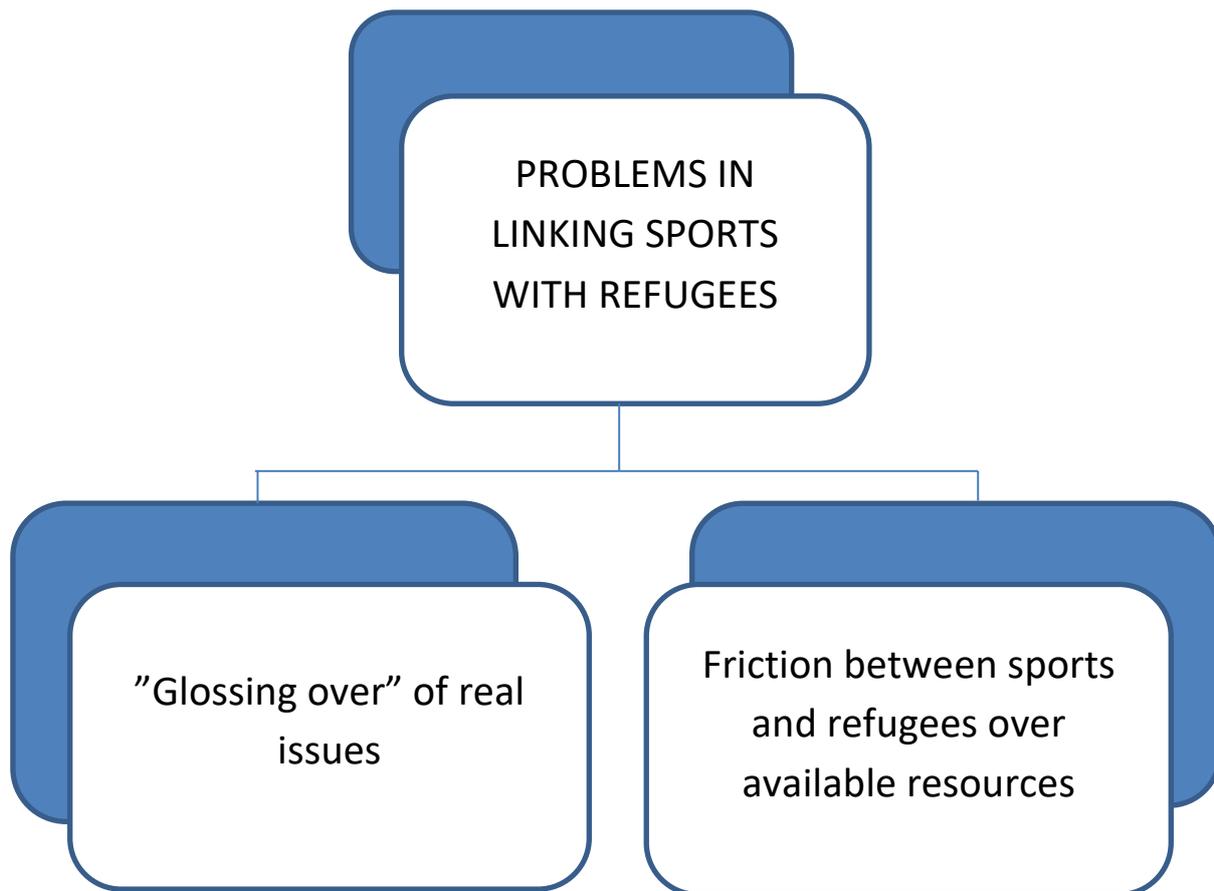


Figure 4: *“Glossing over” of issues in society* (Krishna, 2017, p. 7)

It is one thing to address problems related to social, economic and legal issues through sport, and another to follow through on the policies or measures that may be implemented in the short-term in addressing these problems. For refugees, social integration into local communities in society is a long-term feature that will remain so for the foreseeable future, and often, sport is used as a ‘pawn’ by politicians or policy makers to give a sense of an issue being resolved in the glare of media attention or the public domain.

There is no question that sport has the capability to bring people together. Individuals representing the host society and new arrivals certainly can find common ground by working hand in hand in building social connections while developing a mutual understanding with each other through sport. In addition, the positive values found within sport can help in fostering and promoting gender equality, peace, as well as maintaining the rights of every individual, which should be the norm in any given society. Thus, sport should not just be used as a publicity stunt and have issues in society being unresolved or “swept under the carpet”, leaving refugees more confused and in limbo in their efforts to integrate.

So, in a sense, the glossing over of real problems evident in society cannot be downplayed and sport has, unfortunately, been projected onto a pedestal that is often expected to solve all of society's problems on several occasions in many countries before. Harrison and Clark (2016) give their insights on this based on American physical education literature by stating that "race and related concepts such as privilege and oppression are often glossed over or diluted by more politically correct but nonspecific concepts such as multicultural issues, diversity, or social justice" (p. 233). South Africa hosting the Rugby Union World Cup in 1995, a year after gaining its independence from the oppressive apartheid regime, is another example in underlining this point. The tournament was hailed as a watershed moment that would bring all citizens of the country under one flag in a "rainbow nation" into an era of peace, prosperity and reconciliation. However, over 20 years later since hosting the event, there are still elements of racial incidences and tensions between the black majority and white minority populations in the country to this day.

Then there is the issue of available resources for both sports and refugees in their efforts to coexist with each other in society. While there is praise for helping refugees to engage socially through participating in sporting activities, the outcome of this may result in sport taking the brunt of the responsibility by having to lend some of its infrastructure to accommodate refugees. Reception centers in Finland have in recent years come under pressure to continuously house the increasing numbers of refugees in the country resulting in local authorities having to close these establishments up and down the country. Sports clubs and other recreational centers, for example, are then left to take up the baton in dealing with the refugee project in local communities.

Though sport is a global phenomenon and popular worldwide, not everyone may be on the same page in allowing sport to have the financial resources to tackle the problem of refugees' integration in society. Law and policy makers in government may argue that other symbolic social structures, such as education and health, have a higher bearing or standing in society and should, therefore, take precedence ahead of sport.

By the same token, plenty of sports opportunities aimed at asylum seekers and refugees are based on the provision of key donors that are of a non-sport-based entity. Similarly, these organizations' principal areas of concern are to welcome this group of people to their new communities, supporting and providing advice on other welfare issues – in addition to health and education -- such as housing and work. As a result, sport for these organizations is a lower

priority issue (Amara et al, 2005). Hence why this being another barrier towards the interlinkage of these two entities of which sport, ironically, can address such issues pertaining to health and education in the integration conversation.

6.2 Developmental ideas on how to integrate refugees through sport

Nowadays, new arrivals are encouraged to take part in a wide variety of educational programs and courses at institutions that are aimed at promoting a sense of unity and togetherness among refugee groups. As mentioned earlier in the paper, the Multicultural Center in Jyväskylä is one such establishment that has led the way in this respect. Developing sporting initiatives and after school club programs would, not only enforce the point further, but would also bring about a sense of inclusivity and more access points for refugees to tap into in socially engaging with other groups in the host society.

In addition to introducing sports initiatives and after school programs, getting refugees to be involved in youth work that is closely associated with volunteerism is another aspect that could be incorporated regarding refugees' integration in society. The concept of volunteerism is a key factor in the structure of sport in Finland and is heavily linked to the promotion of health and wellness across all settings as well as encouraging "sport for all" among all age groups. Refugee groups should not have to feel marginalized when arriving in a new host society and including them in this concept will serve to enhance the process of inclusivity and a sense of belonging.

However, to pick up on the last point in the previous chapter, because sport comes down lower in the pyramid for some organizations, the delivery of sport to a consistent level in Central Finland in recent years among refugees has, somewhat, been slow and could still be in its infancy. Though there has been some progress in some cities and communities nationwide, the challenge of developing sustainable structures and programs in sport for refugees in this area of the country remains.

Outside of central Finland, a comparison can be made with Kallio – a district and neighborhood in Helsinki – that has played host to refugee football games set up by an informal community group called "Kallio 'Meet the Neighbors'" which runs weekly football sessions for refugees, asylum seekers and Finns. Such campaigns must also be adopted and implemented on a wider scale in neighborhoods in the central Finland region, and could be the catalyst and driving force behind the commingling of different ethnic groups together with Finns. As mentioned in

chapter 4.2, the Gloria Multicultural Center is a useful setting and a springboard that can be utilized further in Jyväskylä to set up more games or services of the same nature to aid minority groups in their integration to society.

Ultimately, however, it comes down to education and many ways that the message of acceptance, and that of social inclusion, can be effectively delivered through sport or physical activity. This should not only be tailored towards asylum seekers and refugees, but also to those in a position to make a difference and influence in society in getting the message across to all parties involved in the discussion.

One such way already being enforced and touted in Jyväskylä is the training of teachers and would-be teachers in physical education through dance to be better prepared at tackling issues of inclusion and cultural pluralism in a diversified setting for refugees. The venture is not only geared at teachers' performances in projecting this message but also aims at achieving inclusivity for asylum seekers and refugees in their attempts at learning the language, for example, and becoming well versed in other cultural elements of society in Finland.

Educational environments continue to diversify to this day, and PE teachers need also to keep themselves abreast in understanding trainee students' experiences in their interactions with individuals from other ethnic minority groups. The impact of this intercultural connection has the potential to extend beyond the PE class or dance floor for all parties involved and, by extension, emphasizes the importance of mutual and dialogical interaction between different people and cultures for fostering intercultural understandings and cohesion (Alasuutari & Jokikokko, 2010).

Though this may be a teacher training initiative, communication is the underlining factor above all, and this is not only limited to speech communication, but also aims at investigating the role of non-verbal communication through dance techniques and its components to understand body language and movement.

Undoubtedly, courses of this nature need to be developed further for PE teachers and coaches alike to be in sync with the prevailing situation, not only in schools, but everywhere else in society regarding refugees' integration. The social dynamics in Finland, and the rest of Europe for that matter, are ever changing at an incredible pace because of the growing migration levels in the current world order. Consequently, the knowledge and interaction skills of the next

generation of trainees and professionals is at the forefront of bridging any potential gap developing in society between asylum seekers and refugees in the host society.

6.3 Future research ideas to address limitations of the study

All the respondents in the study were all male participants and this, in a way, casts a shadow over what may have been drawn or learned from the female perspective. Generally, the age range of the male respondents in the study represented a diverse group of individuals and their respective backgrounds. However, the perspective of one or more females in the study would have gone some way to counter balance that of their male counterparts in understanding the experiences and journeys of women involved in sport.

For refugee women, the barriers are two-fold. Before the aspect of inclusion in society through sport can even be taken into consideration, women – particularly those of a Middle Eastern background or those who identify with the Islamic faith – still need to be allowed to have a platform to showcase their talents on the sporting field. In some cases, it is not even about having talent. Just the mere fact that, to this day, women in most Islamic countries aren't allowed to participate in sport or other forms of physical activity already sets one on the back foot in attempting to engage about integration through sport for refugees.

Though this may have limited the study, somewhat, some Islamic countries are now beginning to relax their religious codes of conduct and measures to encourage women to participate in sport. Though the process may be painstakingly slow, it is an encouraging development which gives hope for the future of, not only refugee women, but women in general to be a part of an inclusive society through sport, which has the potential to address issues related to gender equality.

Engaging Finnish citizens is another idea that potentially could be considered and implemented in future research cases on the topic. Undoubtedly, firsthand experience is invaluable, and collecting the perspectives of the research participants on their lived experiences and respective life journeys as refugees was always the goal at the planning and implementation stages of this study. However, hearing it from the other side of the coin, from the perspective of people from the host nation, is an intriguing prospect that would give one an insight into the mindset of what the general population of Finland thinks about refugees arriving and settling in the

country. Perhaps not everyone is for it nor against it. But it is a point of reference certainly worth investigating and addressing in the current social climate.

Of course, the focus is not only on refugee women from a Muslim background, but a case of applying social science protocol, through sport, in investigating all refugee women in general -- regardless of ethnic background or religious beliefs -- as a way forward for future research on the matter. The same applies to the engagement of individuals or groups of people from the host nation society. This gives a true reflection of how potentially powerful a tool sport can be in diversifying and underlining inclusivity among all people from all walks of life.

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APPENDIX 1. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- 1) Personal identity – name, age, place of birth (**pseudonyms** will be used in final draft to protect individual's identity)
- 2) How long have you been in Finland?
- 3) How do you feel about living in Finland?
- 4) What form of physical activity or sport do you do, and do you prefer to participate in team sports or in individual sports?
- 5) Why did you take up the sport you participate in? (if the answer to the previous question is that they do participate in a sport)
- 6) What does playing sport, or taking part in a physical activity mean to you?
- 7) Do feel “at home” in Finland? If yes, why? If no, why not?
- 8) What is your definition of integration?
- 9) How can sport help influence the integration process?
- 10) Have you experienced stereotypical and/or negative attitudes within or outside of sport and physical activity?
- 11) What more can be done by those in charge of sports organization's and sports clubs to help improve the integration process for refugees?
- 12) Do you have any reasons to think you will ever feel “socially and culturally accepted” in Finland?

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