THE FACTORS BEHIND SUCCESFULL IMMIGRANT ATHLETES

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Abstract

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Immigration today is a current topic. Since the Arab-Spring, a new influx of refugees has been flowing towards Europe. This wave of immigration has caused comprehensive debate on, whether and how these immigrants are accepted on the receiving end of the future host countries. As a social phenomenon immigration has been a source of strong political debate and rhetoric.

The reasons why this research was conducted, was two dimensional; firstly, being able to acknowledge the opportunity immigration might present for additional success in sports for the host country, and secondly, this study to demonstrates sports participations effectiveness as a whole considering the integration process of immigrants. The aim of this research was to explore the reasons behind the apparent success of multicultural athletes. What is the background of their motivation to do well in sports? What kind of barriers are these athletes facing, how these barriers effect on the athletes?

The method used for this study was a qualitative one, applying narrative research tools. The main source of data was gathered from 5 different immigrant based athletes autobiographies. These narratives were combined with interviews collected from various different sources, such as, documentaries, theme-based radio-shows - journals and existing literature relevant to the topic.

The main results of the research were linked with the integration process and issues connected with the lack of various social capitals among immigrant athletes. During the process of integration, immigrant athletes experienced and had to cross various social barriers and obstacles. The integration process and facing the barriers occurred, differentiated the immigrant athletes in distinct ways in comparison to their host-country athletic peers. The main hypothesizes of this research, as factors behind successful immigrant athletes were generally connected with this differentiation and social heterogenation. In addition to differences in succeeding in elite-sports, the results of the research highlighted the positive role of sports participation as a whole, as an important tool in the integration process overall, as well as, in determining the immigrant's identity in a new social environment.

The research was able to demonstrate some distinguish, combining features which could benefit the immigrant/multicultural based athlete. However, because the topic as itself is so diverse and complex, it is difficult to determine complete and general answers whether immigrants in a larger scale actually have an extra incentive to do well in sports. Having said this, according to the data gathered within this research, it can be concluded that the bicultural background of the selected athletes, influenced their athletic progress during different stages of their athletic life course. Mainly because of the narrative nature of the research methods, this study accomplishes to describe the topic with a deeper, inside knowledge. However, for further study a mixture of quantitative and qualitative research is recommended.

Keywords: sport, multiculturalism, immigration, integration, social mobility

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1 Introduction

In 2004 German national football team rose from its recent slump when the national team coach Joachim Löw successfully combined traditional German efficiency along with the creativity of the ethnic minority players. Previously famous German football manager Ottmar Hitzfeld suggested paying more attention to the large number of gifted players of immigrated background (Blecking 2008). During the 1980-1990's, the German football national team had been largely successful due to their mechanic, efficient style of play. However, as the new millennium approached, the national team had been in a decline. A change was necessary and the German football system was revitalised form the grassroots. Partially as a result, a new generation of diverse, dynamic players, with a large proportion of immigrant based multicultural players emerged. Similar process had been experienced during France's glamorous and victorious campaign in the 1998 World cup, which was also accomplished with a highly multicultural and diverse team, in which, eleven of the 23 players had foreign immigrant roots.

Immigration is a significant topic today, largely as a result of the *Arab Spring,* which was a series of pro-democratic uprisings of several Muslim based countries starting in 2011. Since then, a new influx of refugees has been flowing towards Europe. The Finnish president Sauli Niinistö stated in Aamuposti (3.2.2016)*: "There is a great folk immigration going on at the moment.*" President Niinistö ponders whether this pilgrimage would just be considered as an economic cost, or whether this phenomena could be turned into an asset, an opportunity. As sports could be seen as a sort of a mirage of society as a whole, this wave of immigrants and the process of their integration, could have an inspiring effect to various disciplines in European sports.

 Finnish sport journalist Jussi Leppälahti describes the current situation in the Urheilulehti as following: " *In Finland, the systematic work within athlete upbringing and athlete career pathways has been going on for years, and suddenly, from another part of the world, migrated individuals emerge, whose attributes are on a different level. For Finnish sports, it is about a time to wake up, these immigrants are worth of diamonds.*"

"*Football is a great way to integrate immigrants, but the Finnish Football Federation should create a model and a resource in order to control the situation. At the moment, we are relying too heavily on the clubs.*" (Urheilulehti K1 3. 2016)

Historically, there has been various examples of successful immigrant athletes. This success has occurred among specific individuals, but also on a wider scale in sports and in societies as whole as well. There is a proportion of the population and political parties which consider immigration mainly as a threat. For instance, immigration was one of the main source of political debate and rhetoric's during the recent US presidential election in 2016. In today's global environment, immigration could be seen as a part of the occurring division between globalisation, open borders and protectionism. The aim of this research is partly to remind, that immigration, managed accordingly, possesses many opportunities as well. Historically immigration has been able to generate new businesses and global corporations. In fact, about 40 % of the Fortune 500 companies were originally established either by immigrants, or by the offspring of immigrants. Companies like AT&T, IBM, Coca-Cola, Microsoft, McDonald's, Goldman Sachs, eBay, Kohls, Comcast, Pfizer, Yahoo!, among others were all originated by immigrants or second generation immigrants. (The Atlantic 2017)

The main purpose of this research is to define and study the reasons behind the alleged success of multicultural athletes. What is the background of their motivation to do well in sports? What kind of barriers are these athletes facing, how these barriers effect on the athletes? One of the main theories of the research relies on the idea of sports role of a channel of social mobility. Famous contemporary sociologist Pierre Bourdieau describes this as movement on the stratification field. (Swartz 1997) The term "stratification system" refers to the complexity of social institutions and unequal control over valued resources. (Grusky 1994). In this regard, sport is seen as a way to attack certain social inequalities immigrants may face during their immigration.

This research also advocates for sports positive role in the integration process (OPM 2010, 16). Research shows, that sports is often the main source of organised activity among immigrants. Other cultural activities could be in many cases excluded from immigrants. Therefore sports operates as a "universal" language and as a result functions as a bridge between the host-country and the immigrant original culture (Salasuo et.al 2015). The aim is to demonstrate, how motivated athletes, appropriate integration policies and economical investments in combination could be able to generate additional success in elite sports.

1.1 Outline of the thesis

This master's thesis is divided into 5 chapters. After the introduction, the 2nd chapter displays the research methods utilized, starting with the presentation of the actual research question and the sub questions. In this chapter the methods are described and the reasons why those particular ones were selected is explained. The 3rd chapter introduces the theoretical background of the thesis. The chapter begins with the basic social theory of sports migration, clarifying for example the underlying themes like acculturation, social integration and sports related inclusion. The 3rd chapter concentrates on how sports is perceived as a free time leisure activity, and how this perception differs between immigrant/multicultural and host society individuals. The 4th chapter continues towards sports role on the integration process and to the various barriers and challenges immigrants might face during this process. This chapter also focuses on the push and pull factors of the acculturation progression, and how the host society institutions influence to these factors.

The 5th chapter is the discussion section which is divided into two different parts. The first part of discussion concentrates on the factors, how immigrant athletes are differentiated from their host society peers. This differentiation is examined through four different themes which have become visible from the data gathered for this research, including the previous research and literature. In the second part these themes are examined through the '*athlete's life course timeline*' framework of five athlete cases selected for the research. The timeline is divided into three periods (childhood, selection, elite sports). This section of the discussion chapter helps in understanding the various factors which have influenced the immigrant based athlete in different sections of their athletic careers. In the end of the 5th chapter, and in order to conclude the thesis, the summary of discussion along with the main results, limitations and recommendations for further study is been presented.

2. Research methods

2.1 The Research Question

The task of my research question, was to examine the role of multiculturalism in elite sports. The main research question is: *What are the reasons behind the suggested success of multicultural athletes?*

 The sub questions of this research are:

"What is the role of social mobility through sports for ethnic minorities?"

"How do multicultural individuals acculturate through sport?"

"How sports functions as a tool for social integration among immigrants?"

2.2 Methodology of the Study

The method of this research is a qualitative one. This qualitative method contains mixed research techniques. The main research technique with this study is the narrative method. More distinguishingly the narrative method is applied by using immigrant, or multicultural based athletes written autobiographies. For this master's thesis study, five autobiographies of professional athletes (Makwan Amirkhani, Shefki Kuqi, Zlatan Ibrahimovic, Mo Farrah and Thierry Henry) was utilized. This sort of data collection method for qualitative study is defined as a *Life History* method. In addition, for data collection, theme based documentaries (*Concrete Football*, Netflix), radio shows and journals were utilised in this research. These outlets consisted relevant interviews which were able to describe the topic with expertise from different angles.

2.3 Qualitative Research Method

Qualitative techniques are useful when a subject is rather complex, and for this reason, is difficult to be summarized by a simple yes or no hypothesis. While quantitative data can be able to express basic linear relationships between distinct variables, through qualitative technique produced data, the information gathered can be more rounded and insightful for describing underlying reasons and patterns within a phenomena. (Shuttleword 2008.)

Although qualitative data can be challenging to be mathematically analyzed in the same comprehensive way as quantitative results are, the fundamental reasons behind the phenomena can be more apprehensively explained and described by qualitative research

methods. With this master's thesis study, the aim was to examine the experiences of immigrant based athletes, and combine these experiences with the wider social structures and infrastructure of the host society. Within this regard, qualitative research method is more suitable than the quantitative one. However, it must be mentioned, that qualitative data is more open to personal bias and judgment, and so care must be taken to present the final results appropriately: as observation and not proof (Shuttleword 2008). Therefor as for future complementary research, it could useful to add more quantitative data.

2.4 Narrative Approach

Conducting in depth interviews would often be the most common and suitable way of gathering qualitative data. However, regarding the topic of this study, similar approach as interviewing the athletes has already been conducted, for example by Salasuo et.al. (2015). The conclusions of the results of these interviews are utilized within this master's thesis study. The narrative approach was conducted in order to be able to draw an even wider and deeper understanding of the topic. The narrative approach was conducted by using athlete autobiographies and sources of additional interviews. In this way the narratives, which were supposed to explain and create a 'story' around the phenomenon, come from mixed sources and from different angles. Combining these angles with the existing literature and research hopefully is able to create a larger and more complete picture from the topic.

Narrative approach can be specified as either: individuals interacting, narrating everyday lives and conversations, or by the manner the individual is associated within their social environment and society (Plummer 1995). Narrative has been defined as first and second order. The first order is the presenting of the individual's story, the ontological narrative. The second order comprehends the researchers' learned observation of other stories, presenting explanations of social and cultural knowledge (Carr, 1997). This is what Somers and Gibson (1994) term as the representational narrative.

Narrative is either presented in the first person, as the first person's story or is recounted to characters in a story, told by another. The narrative approach is often strongly linked with the discovery of social information and therefor can be successfully to be employed within the qualitative paradigm. (Silverman 2006.) The presentation of narrative generally generates a linear template, initiating in a certain place and then continuing moving forward logically presenting a beginning, middle and the end (Denzin 1989).

2.5Autobiography

Through autobiography individuals define themselves, by the way of their own voice to connect the present with the past and the future' (Holloway & Freshwater 2007, p.17). Often applied for emotional reflection and resolution, meaning can emerge for the storyteller through the device of autobiography. Autobiographies and biographies could be seen as conventionalized, narrative, expressions of life experiences. Autobiographies can express how lives are told, and create real appearances of real people. They involve assumptions of culture, family, class and gender, which are distinguished from fictions. (Denzin 1989.) Autobiographies could be divided as several forms: The comprehensive autobiography, focused on the main events in an individual's life. The topical autobiography on the other hand is constructed on a central theme. The selected theme can be also decided to be edited, in which case the researcher selects, positions and excludes topics. (Burgess 1984.)

The data gathered for this study, and the ways of interpreting the results, is consisted of mixed sources and ways. The main research tool and source of data is gathered from the autobiographies of athletes with relevance of the research topic. Therefore, in this research, the autobiographies and additional interviews as a source of information are considered as topical in nature.

Even though, the athletes chosen for this master's thesis have common backgrounds as immigrants, or multicultural individuals, it must be mentioned, that the weight of how much the research topic is actually addressed with in the athlete-autobiographies is diverse. As the narrative method, consisting the idea life history technique is commonly linear in nature, and the autobiographies are mostly written in a chronological manner. The books applied only include relevant information in sections. However, as the athlete's life course theme is one of the most potent ones in this study, the autobiographies actually show evidence, considering the hypothesis that the issues concerning immigration and athletic success are most evident during the childhood and early teenage period.

Life history observes how the individual manages with and is adjusted by their experiences; life events are the real features that interest the researcher (Pole & Morrison 2003, p. 35-39). Life history connects the impacting social, biological and cultural dimensions to the crucial turning points in an individual's life. As a consequence, the individual's ability to adapt to the changes enables them to make sense of the present and the future. The distinguishing feature of life history is that it assimilates the individual being researched contextually with a selected

theme. (Mandelbaum 1982.) Partially because of this contextualization, the life history method is prone to vast subjectivity and bias. Therefore, with in this research, data is also gathered from various interviews, journals and documentaries. Also, the data is positioned and mainly synchronized along with the previous literature of the topic. This is done in order to increase the validity of the research, but as well for the effort of clarifying the academic literature with direct, relevant quotations from the autobiographies. The table of applied autobiographies displayed in table 1 and additional sources in table 2.

Table 1. Used autobiographies

Athlete	Book title	Author (year)	Athletic discipline	Host country	Country of origin
Makwan Amirkhani	Makwan Amirkhani	Mari Sainio (2017)	Wrestling MMA	Finland	Iran (Kurdish)
Shefki Kuqi	Kosovon Härkä	Mika Wikström (2017)	Football	Finland	Kososvo
Zlatan Ibrahimovic	Minä- Zlatan Ibrahimovic	David Lagercrantz (2012)	Football	Sweden (2nd gen.)	Former Republic of Yugoslavia
Mo Farrah	Twin Ambitions	Mo Farrah (2012)	Long distance running	England	Somalia
Thierry Henry	Lonely at the Top	Philippe Auclair (2012)	Football	France (2nd gen.)	Guadeloupe

Table 2. Additional sources

Source	Description of the source	Interviewed individual	Relevance
Yle- Areena Puheen Aamu 24.9.2015	Radio theme show	Shefki Kuqi	Athlete
Yle- Areena Urheilu-Suomi, chapter 7	Radio theme show	Martti Kuusela	Football coach
Yle-Areena Lindgren&Sihvonen 26.2.2016	Radio theme show	Olli Mäki	Boxing coach/promoter
Concrete Football Netflix	Documentary	Several	Athletes, community workers

3 Theoretical background of the thesis

Within this chapter, the previous literature concerning the topic, the basic definitions and theories are explained. At first, the social theory of sport migration is explored, followed by the main general issues immigrants might face during their integration process. Later on, immigrant's participation in sports and the participations relationship with free time-space and level of organisation is discussed. This relationship between free participation and space is then compared and contrasted between the multicultural individuals and the host-society peers.

The initiative idea of this research, was to explore reasons behind the success of the multicultural athletes in elite sports. As this research aims to demonstrate, especially with global, traditionally working class sports immigrated, or second generation multicultural athletes have been performing proportionally well. This phenomena has various examples with sports like football and traditional combat sports, such as, boxing.

This area of research includes plenty of historical background, as immigration and immigrant based athletes has long roots in history. This research draws examples of the success stories of multicultural individuals and also national teams, regarding mainly Central European countries, as these countries have experienced immigration in a larger scale. The literature reviewed also contains examples from different periods of time and immigrations, which aims to increase the validity of the research.

The integration and acculturation process of immigrants is constantly visible within the previous literature among the topic. Sports clubs especially have been important within the integration process. These clubs play a role in filling the void of the diminished national identity and in repairing the broken social networks. Integrating with the host-country clubs helps in learning the cultural values and norms of the host-society. The research also finds evidence that sports offers opportunities for social mobility. For several multicultural individuals sports could be the only ladder for increased social status, as many other cultural activities could be excluded from the immigrants.

3.1 Social theory of sports migration

Migration could be defined broadly as a permanent or semi-permanent change of residence. In the case of migration, there usually is a combination of factors associated with the area of origin, as well as, with the area of destination. These factors could be linked with the standard of living, safety or work based occupational issues. If migration presumably is originated in part by the various positive and negative factors at the point of origin and destination countries, then it could be assumed a high degree of diversity among areas should result in high levels of migration. (Lee 1966.) The theme of diversity, is one of the main issues as factors behind successful immigrant athletes are considered. Integration process and acculturation could be a way of managing this diversity.

The literature explored around the social theory of sport migration is based on Willian Crossans work, *Applying Social Theory to Sport Migration, (2012)*. Crossan refers to Coakleys (2003) definitions in social theory of sport migration. Also, figurational theory of Norbert Elias (1978) is influential when explaining migration in sport. Crossan (2012) divides sport migrations social theory into five categories: functionalist theory, conflict theory, Interactionist theory, critical theory and figurational theory.

Functionalist Theory: Those studying sport from a functionalist perspective are most concerned with how sport as a social construct fits into the life of a society or culture and thus affects or adds to the stability and progress of the whole society or culture. In terms of sports migration functional theorists examine the effect of the migrant athletes on the sending and the receiving culture. Functional theorists examine the phenomena from a cultural values and process perspective. (Coakley, 2003.)

Conflict Theory: Those studying sport migration from a conflict theory perspective are most involved with the ways how countries with capital and power utilise sports as means to promote certain attitudes and relationships which enable them to maintain power and privilege. (Coakley, 2003.)

Interactionist Theory: Those studying sport migration from an interactionist perspective are most concerned with the experience of those involved, the migrant athlete or the receiving team/country, and how it shapes/shaped their reality. (Coakley, 2003.)

Critical Theory: Thus their research focuses on specific groups of people in society as they strive to identify issues and problems. Critical theorists are seeking for pro-active methods for achieving more equal, democratic and open life for the subgroup their research focuses on. The ones applying critical theory on sport related migration are most interested with power relations within society. They focus their research on how sport impacts as a privilege or disadvantage in the sending/receiving society. (Coakley, 2003.)

Figurational Theory: Those studying sport migration from a figurational perspective are most concerned with the global spread of sport through the migration process. This theory can be found especially useful for global studies as it is able to be implicated with economic, political and social processes which are in relation to the global issues of sport. Hence, we see a significant body of sport migration research written from a figurational perspective which attempts to define terms and identify flows. (Elias, 1978.)

The prevalent theories applied in sport migration studies to date are first figurational, which views the matter from a historical perspective, and then interactionist, which focuses on the experience of the migrant athlete or the response of the receiving culture. These two social theories are most suitable in order to describe migration in sport. Functional theory could be applied as a secondary, supportive theory, as participation in sporting activities appear to be an integral part of the immigrant's integration process.

The interactionist theory is the most suitable in describing the reasons, why and how immigrant athletes are motivated to excel in sports. How the immigrant individual perceives the host society environment and the change of living circumstances could be one of the deciding factors on what kind of a role and significance sport participation plays in the immigrant's life. Functionalist theory on the other hand is relevant, because it aims to explain the structures set for integration by the host country. Whether these structures function as a benefit, challenge or as an obstacle is one of the key elements of this study. The interactionist theory is applied here within the narrative method, primarily using the selected autobiographies as a tool. Functionalist theory on the other hand is applied by the existing literature, where the main hypothesis is linked between organised and un-organised participation and spaces.

3.1.2 Acculturation

Acculturation consists the cultural modification of an individual or group of people by adapting to or borrowing traits from another culture. The social integration towards a new country can be considered from a social marginalization point of view, or from a social acculturation perspective. Immigrants are forced to consider the relationship between their original ethnic identity, and the motivation to adopt the norms and habits of the host country main population. (Paavola &Talib 2010.)

The attitude towards acculturation can be described with following terms; integration (adaptation to values of the host society), assimilation (Adaptation to the mainstream culture), separation (maintaining original ethnic heritage) or marginalization (unsuccessful adaptation to neither- the host country/ country of origin society). (Burrmann & Brandmann et.al. 2017.)

3.1.3 Social integration

Social integration is a process of individual progress of the immigrant, which main aim is for the individual to take part in working life and to participate in the functions of the host society, while maintaining the language and culture of the immigrant. The most important factors to social integration are for example level of education, language skills, age of immigration, health and previous experiences from unfamiliar cultures.

The immigrants own motivation and activity are also considered significant, but the social integration process is also influenced by the surrounding society and the attitudes of the main population. Learning the language is one of the most important factor of social integration. Language enhances the immigrant's possibilities to employment or to continue education. (Sisä-asiaministeriö 2012.)

3.1.4 Identity

During challenging life circumstances, such as immigration, the identity of the individual might fall into a state of confusion, as the personal, social and cultural identities are shaping ones idea of self-perception. In the matter of social identity, it is important to be included to a certain group of people. Through this social group the individual can mirror one's own position towards others and the society as a whole.

The identity of immigrant based individual is constructed simultaneously through the prior ethnic background and the new culture of the host country. Identity is a significant part of the

individual's personality. This personality is majorly influenced by the social environment of the individual, such as family, tribe or nationality. (Paavola & Talib, 60-62)

3.1.5 Sports related inclusion

The sports related inclusion, which ideally would be open to everyone, could for its own part, have positive affects to interaction, exchanging knowhow and experience between the main population and immigrants (OPM 2010, 16). In addition to club organized practices and games, trips and training camps can be a convenient way of being associated with the host country peers. During these events more time is spent with team mates and there is an opportunity to get to know others better. Also the unofficial events, associated with sports, may help the immigrant in social integration. Athletes might come to the scene much before practice and also stay and hang around there after practicing. This could be an opportunity for the immigrant to create crucial contacts. (Walseth 2006.)

However, the enhancement of interaction via physical activity and sports is only based on assumption, as the conflicts and quarrels occurred between different ethnical groups during these activities are rarely emphasized. For instance, football matches have not always had a positive impact on the feeling of brother hood between the groups of immigrants. (Myren 1999.)

3.2 Social relationships through sports

Taking part in physical activities is perceived of having positive effects on the construction and strengthening of social relationships. Interaction within sports can often be easier than in other parts of life, because perfection in language skills is not necessary for participation. Building of social networks in a new country may sometimes take a long time, even years. The support of family and other relatives is considered significant. This support can reduce the feeling of loneliness, especially when the social networks is still considered concise. However, sports can be used as a tool in building of these lacking social networks for its own part. (Zacheus et.al. 2012.)

There are differences in adaptation to a new culture between heterogenic and homogenic groups during the process of forming social relationships in a new country (Sheridan & Storchin 2009). Separation towards an own ethnic group can enforce the original identity of the individual, but could simultaneously hinder and slow the integration process to a new country. On the other hand, with a strong individual identity it could be easier to adjust to a

new culture without being completely left aside from basic human needs, such as, social relationships. For instance, it could be easier to integrate towards the host society, if the existing ethnic group is a more diverse one, as there could be a 'lighter' pull of the collective original ethnic group. Having said that, if for example, a stronger collective of an ethnic group joins sporting activities, they could be less motivated to adapt and integrate towards the host-country group. However, a strong-homogenic, separated group could function as a dynamic force for common participation in sports as a whole. In this case, the activity could become a part of a sub-culture, such as urban street football for instance.

3.3 Integration as a multidimensional concept

Ambiguously defined, integration at the individual level indicates to a process through which individuals become interconnected with social groups and as a result, possibly being a part of larger society (Esser, 2001). Through integration, immigrants may adapt to the mainstream culture of the host society (assimilation) or, vice versa, may try to maintain ethnic heritage through orientation towards the ethnic community which might already exist within the host society (separation). Whereas the assimilation alternative would support the 'melting pot' conception of society with its emphasis to homogeneity along with common shared values and social norms, separation might enforce multiculturalism and pluralistic societies. However, in many cases, perhaps ideally, immigrants may also combine both orientations in order to establish new connections and bonds with the host society, while simultaneously maintaining the cultural roots of their home country (bicultural integration). Finally, as worst case scenario, they become (marginalized) when neither of these adaptation concepts is applied. (Burrmann & Brandmann et.al. 2017.)

These types of models of integration, defined as broadly as above, can be difficult to find in real life. Migrants are usually more or less leaning towards both host society and country of origin. Their tendencies may vary during different phases of their lives, as they may alternate back and forth between both frames of reference, when experiencing ambiguities and setbacks. (LaFramboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993.) Especially adolescents, more frequently than their adult migrant peers, are presumably to be phased with divergent, inconsistent behavior expectations or ideals. These expectations may arrive through their family of origin, ethnic community members, or on the other hand, from institutions of the host society. Experiences of incompatible expectations and unfamiliar cultural norms and values may result in acculturative stress. Acculturative stress is more apparent when norms, values, habits and

prescriptions of the two cultures are further apart and less compatible with one another. (Berry, 2006;Rudmin, 2009.)

As sports could be considered as a tool for integration and assimilation, it possesses special features and relationship in the migrant's everyday lives. However, when it comes to professional- elite sports, the juggling between these four stages of integration in an individual level becomes significant. The acculturative stress caused by these alternating stages of integration could ideally be 'cured' with sports and therefor a special bond between the athlete and the discipline might occur. Sport may become a foundation, a base, kind of an anchor which stabilizes the turbulence caused by the frictions of the integration process and acculturative stress.

If we would think of a few examples, of how sports can influence and ease the transition phases of integration: considering assimilation, joining to a local sport club can teach the immigrant valuable values and norms of the host society. This process can be considered occurring in a relatively informal environment, which enables the individual to acquire a 'deeper-richer level of knowledge' of the host society customs and way of living. This knowledge and social capital within this context are usually provided by their activity with related peers, or supporting mentors inside the club activities. The lack of an authorative manner of this assimilative activity and the fact that is based on free will, might increase the immigrant's motivation towards integration.

Generally speaking separation usually has a negative tone on the integration process. Integration and assimilation are normally considered as beneficial to immigrant individuals, the host society and to the origin ethnic society as well. The deeper the level of integration between these parties is, the less tension, friction and acculturative stress usually occur. However, sometimes separation can create a great sense of belonging inside the original ethnic group. This sense of differentiation and set of distinguish cultural traits can become a great source of pride and strength. In a sporting context this 'us against the rest' and 'our way' mentality might become a source of motivation, but a source of differentiation as well. Being able to bring something completely different and outside of the ordinary to the table possibly creates a competitive advantage for the immigrant individual. These differentiations may be for instance style, mentality or work ethic related. Also the collective support of the perhaps

more compact ethnic groups may be beneficial in comparison to the host main population individuals.

If the assimilation and the separation processes would be in balance, in the sense that, both sets of values and norms would go hand in hand, as well as being interconnected with the host country institutions, this scenario would most likely be ideal for the development of the immigrant athlete. This idea of bicultural integration and 'melting pot' enables heterogeneity and richness of personal traits, cultural values and norms. Both sets are combining in a 'best practices' manner and the individuals are able to learn from each other's. In order to get the best possible results, the ruling institutions and organizations have to offer suitable support, which ideally takes account and combines the host and the origin groups of people.

If none of these adaptations are met, the immigrant individual is in danger to be marginalized. This scenario could be seen as the most significant cause of the acculturative stress. However, sometimes when the stress is at its highest, the end product might become the greatest as well. As we speak sports role as an anchor of life for the marginalized, it could be argued that the stabilizing activity becomes a main source of social capital and mobility. In this case the individual desperation could be nursed with the kind dedication and motivation which others in a more stable and less stressful environment do not necessarily have to possess. However, it must mentioned, that this kind of climbing the social and economic ladder is only possible for the very few. Therefor sports main role for the marginalized is in most cases rather an integrative and assimilative one.

3.4 Un-organized participation in sport

During the integration process, the immigrant individual is inside and between the mix of pull and push factors of the host society and the original ethnic group values and norms. Therefor it could be argued, that the surrounding social environment has a deep impact on the development of the immigrant athlete. In this study the role of the social environment and how it might be differently perceived by different ethnic groups is emphasized as the factors behind successful immigrant athletes are examined.

In sports there is an ongoing debate, whether excellence in sports is more influenced by genes or the environment (Elder et.al. 2009). Elder et.al. researched the role of sociological aspects considering success in elite-sports. They applied the craft of life course theory which

concentrates on the interplay between genes and the environment in order to explain human behaviour and wellbeing.

The role of social aspects have been somewhat ignored while examining excellence in sports. Fields of psychology, economics, biology and medicine have been prioritised in the funding of the research of behaviour and wellbeing. Unfortunately, this development undermines the role of sociology. However, a range of empirical evidence suggests that complex reasons behind human behaviour depend on the interaction between genetics and environmental factors. (Elder et.al. 2009.)

The prevalent question we are asking here, is which factors are the measures of champions? Within the sports sciences, elite performance is understood to be the result of both training and genetic factors. However, whether champions are born or made is a question that remains of considerable interest in the exercise sciences. Defining the balance between individual traits and the environment is significant, as it has implications for talent identification and management of sport organizations. This information is relevant on how sporting federations allocate scarce resources towards the optimization of high-performance programs. (Tucker & Collins 2017.)

The model for deliberate practice, as proposed by Ericsson et.al. (2014) determines that "the distinctive characteristics of exceptional performers are the result of adaptations to extended and intense practice activities that selectively activate dormant genes that are contained within all healthy individuals' DNA." Essential to this theory is that top-level performance is achievable for any individual, and is dependent primarily by the level of engagement and the quality of the available training resources. Ericsson has further developed this model to suggest that a specific volume of 10 000 hours of training must be accumulated over a period of approximately 10 years of structured training and contribution in a specific activity in order to achieve expert levels. (Ericsson et.al. 2014.) Ericssons framework of deliberate practice was conducted on a study concerning violinists in Berlin. According to the results of the study, the very top-level performers had accumulated just over 10 000 h by the age of 20. In contrast, those violinists estimated to be good or average had accumulated only approximately 7800 and 4600 hours respectively. (Tucker & Collins 2017.)

As such, studies of sporting performance that have examined variability are of considerable value. Talent identification requires an individualized approach, since individual development curves differ so significantly from one another. For instance, in gymnastics, athletes develop

and peak sooner than in team sports and endurance sports for example. (Kannekens, Elferink-Gemser & Visscher 2009.)

The best performing young footballers who will go on to play the sport professionally display superior dribbling skills, endurance capacity and tactical awareness compared to their peers, from as early as 14 years of age. These differences appear well before it is possible to accumulate 10 000 hours of practice. Yet predictions of which players will go on to achieve best performances as an adult can be made. The predictions concerning the level of performance before 10 000 of practice required, suggests that the actual effectiveness and response to training, rather than simply training, is a more valid indicator of success. (Ericsson 2013.)

According to the research displayed above, it could be argued that excellence in sport cannot be solely explained by simple connections between genetics and adequate training. In many sport disciplines, it can be difficult to set an environment, where the individual is able to practice the sufficient 10,000 hours. Also, as important as the quantity of practice, the how and when factors of practicing sports are equally vital. The importance of creating an appropriate environment for athlete to practice becomes significant.

From the sociological point of view, the environment is best conceptualized by drawing on the life course paradigm. Combining the gene-environment factors with the life course framework, which emphasizes variables like age, timing and interaction between individuals and the surrounding society-culture explains human behaviour and wellbeing adequately. (Elder et. al. 2009.)

Within this research, the role of sociological aspects in terms of excelling in sports is connected with a wider sociological phenomenon of large scale human migration. Therefore the craft of life course theory can be considered suitable, as during migration various cultures, norms and genes are interconnected, and therefor alter the environment where and how individuals function (Elder. et al. 2009).

This master's thesis study suggests the connection of social barriers, social mobility and cultural capital as one of the main benefactors to the success of multicultural athletes. However, sense of belonging and freedom in an unfamiliar environment may have an influence as well. During the data-gathering process from the selected autobiographies of immigrant/multicultural, this notion came more and more evident. It could be argued, that the relative success of the athletes, was rather an outcome of a quest for sense of freedom and

belonging than a goal-orientated process for a profession as an athlete. The argument of lack of goal orientation could be significant, as the climbing of the economic ladder has often been mentioned as the main motivator for the immigrant based athletes (Agegaard & Kahr-Sorenseb 2009).

The theory of social mobility and climbing the economic ladder for the under privileged could also be in relation with time and space. Individuals in different places, environments and conditions might perceive social mobility in a different light. This possibly has an effect on the importance of sport as a tool towards social mobility.

 Research in Brazil suggests that the residents of the Brazilian favelas tend to have a partially different interpretation of social mobility to its western society counterparts. For instance, for the residents in the favelas, social mobility is not necessarily a narrowly defined or fixed concept, which would mainly focus on changes in occupational or educational improvement and therefor towards improved economic and social status. Instead, they may often comprehend upward social mobility in more philosophical terms as increased control and autonomy over their own lives. In contrast, they tend to identify their lower social status and poverty with a sense of powerlessness. (Spaaijs 2011.)

This kind of quest for upward social mobility is characterised by a desire for a sense of freedom, rather than for purely socio-economic reasons. According to Sen (1999), individuals living in difficult circumstances often seek social mobility just to achieve a life which one has a reason to value, a sense of freedom and standard of living they could potentially achieve in the circumstances they are living in.

A youth educator from the suburbs of Parisian suburb, Ferhat Cisek, describes the notion of freedom with in the street soccer context:

" *Street soccer is freedom. The rules are just there, for it not to be a mess. In a club, you don't choose your partners. The coach is the one who builds the team. Street soccer teams are of all ages. It is like a second family. So freedom defines it best.*"

 (Cisek 2018, Concrete Football)

In other words, it is possible to decide and make your 'own' way of playing football with the rules and restrictions set by the individual, or the collective group taking part in the activity.

Professional footballer, Mehdi Benatia from Juventus continues explaining the importance of fun and togetherness:

"*11 players means work and passion. But the real fun is playing 5- a- side with friends. We bet, we laugh and play all night long. We can't do without it.*"

(Benatia 2018, b Concrete Football)

Zlatan Ibrahimovic shared his experience from free practice and sense of belonging, in the blockyard-games at the suburbs in Råsengord:

"*Me jatkoimme pelaamista väsymättä. Pelasimme hyvin pienillä kentillä ja silloin piti olla nopeat jalat ja hoksottimet. Varsinkin kaltaisillani pienillä ja hintelillä, jotka yleensä tyrkättiin sivuun kovilla taklauksilla. Opin häkellyttäviä temppuja koko ajan, minun oli pakko, muuten en saanut huomiota.*" (Lagercrantz 2011, p. 96)

"*We continued playing relentlessly. We played with very small fields and therefore we had to have quick feet and fast thinking. Especially, the likes of small and lanky, which were most of the time pushed aside with tough tackling. I learned remarkable skills all the time, I had to, otherwise I got no attention.*"

As Mehdi Benatia was highlighting the importance of fun, togetherness and freedom of street soccer, Zlatan Ibrahimovic is describing how he was able to learn skills which would later distinguish him from the others via practicing in out of the ordinary challenging spaces.

3.5 Free time, and the notion of freedom in doing sports

When explaining the development of an athlete as a craft of life course paradigm, the notion of childhood and youth becomes crucial (Glenn et. al. 2009). If we are willing to accept sense of freedom and unorganized practicing as an essential part in the process of development, it is important to be able to define what is meant by free-time.

Free-time for youth could be described as the time and space which is considered outside school. In many ways, school is determined as work for youngsters. Youth often associate free-time with positive images of freedom, individually selected functions, company and refreshments. However, free-time with goal-orientated activities are not completely separated from a labor like performance. It is arguable, whether the children whose spare time is defined by organized activities have actual 'free time' at all. (Määttä & Tolonen 2011)?

Myllyniemi (2009) defined, that between the 10-29 aged youth, the more organized and institutionalized the leisure action is, the less free-time like the action is perceived. Participation in an organization, or a club, is considered as less free-time like than the

unorganized, autonomous one. The same applies in how significant this time spend around these activities is regarded. For the most, spending time with friends and family was considered as more important than the activities taking place in clubs and organizations. (Myllyniemi 2009, p. 24-25,30.)

The most meaningful aspects of physical activity are often connected with enhancing physical condition, health, wellbeing and feel good factors. In addition, sensations and spending time with friends is defined as typical motivational factors for physical activity. Also, the joy and fun produced by these activities were considered essential. As a whole, there seems to be a need to achieve positive feelings of success, the need of self-improvement, joy factors and spending time with friends. (Koski & Tähtinen 2005.) This is in line with the previous literature of Amartya Sen (1999), as well with the quote of Mehdi Benatia (2018), that the feeling of freedom and joy might often be the primary-initiative reason for physical activity.

Solely from the participative perspective, the sense of freedom, social connections, and purely doing sports for fun seem as the key motivators for physical activity among young people (Määttä & Tolonen 2011). However, when it comes to competitive sports, the question could be more directed on the level and the quantity of organized, disciplined and institutionalized practicing. How much unorganized, free practice is allowed by the clubs, where would it be physically possible and, whether multidiscipline activities with other sports would be recommended or allowed? It could be argued, that the organized and supervised practices would not be adequate for the athlete. At the same time, the children seem to play less and less unorganized block and yard games, as the importance of this kind of informal-free practicing was previously highlighted by Zlatan Ibrahimović.

First of all, there are vast differences among the different disciplines. For instance, disciplines such as ice hockey, require resources concerning the actual physical space where the unorganized activity could take place. In other disciplines, for example in gymnastics, the culture of organized practice is very strict and severe in terms of quality, discipline and quantity. Therefore, there could simply be a lack of time and energy to practice extra in an unorganized manner.

The lack of unorganized activities should be considered in a larger sociological context, as physical activity is competing with other sources of leisure time, such as computer games and the increasing use of the social media. 78 % of Finnish adolescents between the ages of 11-15, spent their free time in front of the screen during school days more than the amount of

recommended 2 hours. During weekends the screen-time is almost duplicated. The vast amount of computer and console games is particularly a problem for the boys, especially during weekends. (HBSC 2010.) It could be debatable whether immigrants, or other groups in a disadvantaged position have the same access to these games as it seems to be the case among the main host country population. In addition for the lack of other 'competing' leisure time opportunities, un-organized-free practicing could have other distinguish advantages as well. Professional football player Yacine Brahimi described his relationship with free street soccer the following:

"I started soccer in the street, in my hood. My first games, my first great soccer moments, they were on the street. I tried out stuff I couldn't manage yet. Technical skills, dexterity, agility."

We've always had this must-win mentality, even in 2vs2 or against another city."

(Brahimi 2018, c Concrete Football)

Not only does the unorganised practising enable trying highly difficult extraordinary skills, the activities were also done in a competitive manner. This competitive environment often was created among their peers instead of organized discipline and instructions.

Riyad Mahrez continued emphasizing the importance of daily free practice:

"My friends were like my guinea pigs. See what I mean? I'd dribble them and they'd tackle me. We would try to keep the ball. In the hood, kids play all day long. Parents are pretty cool with that. They let us play and enjoy. When you play every single day, you improve your skills and your dribbles. That's why skilled players started in the street. Technically everything is allowed. Just look like players like Ousmane Dembele, Or Hatem Ben Arfa."

(Mahrez 2018, d Concrete Football)

It has been previously argued that the ability of an athlete would be considered a mixture of genes, appropriate amount of practice, social and physical environment and in the way the activities are organised. The only fixed feature of these would be the athletes genes, other features vary, can be modified and are experienced, perceived differently by the individual. The importance and relationship between these attributes differ among the disciplines as well.

Because the overall leisure time and possibilities for practice are scarce and limited, the importance of how much, in which way and where the activities occur becomes vital. In the

same time, how these activities are perceived, has an influence on the quality and in the level of practicing. Enjoyment and freedom of practice is frequently emphasized as an important factor in acquiring skills and improving technique. Especially this seems to be the case in acquiring individual skills in team sports. In this light, it could be argued, whether organized team practices offer adequately practice time-nor are the practices appropriately organized for individual development. Instead, unorganised activities seem to have fewer, if any limits in comparison to the organised practises conducted by the clubs and other institutions. There is little restrictions of time, rules and regulations. Practising remains as a fun activity, which is supported and also kept competitive by the fellow peers.

The idea and definitions of free-time and freedom might vary between immigrant-multicultural based individuals and their host-country peers. This could be partly because, the immigrants might have a different kind of relationship towards institutions, like schools, and in to many organized based cultural capital activities. The lack of these kind of opportunities could increase the immigrant's perceived free-time in total comparing to their more institutionalised host-country peers. It could also increase sport participations proportion of this free-time and at the same time, these activities are done in a less restricted environment and manner.

4 Sense of autonomy in space and public planning

If freedom and sense of individual choice and enjoyment are considered important for individual development, this hypothesis, especially when sports related is linked with space. For instance, if one wants to learn and master an instrument like drums, or electric guitar, practice might cause distress to others vacating that space. The same could apply, with kicking a ball on a yard next to the neighbor house. In order to being able to practice in complete freedom, the space for this activity ideally should be as autonomous and less restricted as possible.

In a larger social context, the use and ownership of public spaces influence the freedom of choice and availability of activities. The question is, to whom and for what purpose is the public space designed for? For instance in Finland, the importance of sports regarded as a tool for a proper upbringing has been used as a justification for building public sports venues in the urban environment as well as in the agricultural one. (Hasanen 2017.)

As new different disciplines and competitive activities have increased, so has the level of requirements and standards towards the public sporting venues. In Finland, as Ilmanen (1996) explains, the clubs were able to demand the municipalities to improve the standards of the venues. These standards were set to service the rules of competitive sports. At the same time the element of risk management for the facilities emerged, therefore the level of restrictions and standardization was increased and the level of free, untamed spaces decreased. The environment for physical activity shifted towards the public sector and the municipalities started to take control. Meanwhile, this standardization had also some negative impacts, as the role of local communities diminished. (Salmikangas 2015.)

The mutual social interaction without the supervision of adults has been defined as important for the youth in this study. For instance public spaces, such as streets, city centers, and abandoned spaces are significant because such spaces are able to provide opportunities for spontaneous activities. Young people are able to create a sense of autonomy and therefore there is a chance for identity building and self-reflection. These spaces are open for creativity, as it is possible to alter and make innovations to the space and the design of the venue. (Valentine 2004). Along with this sort of voluntary participation, new urban cultures may occur, as the autonomy and control of spaces have an active part in the social processes of emerging youth cultures (Massey 1998). In this light, it could be argued that advocating the importance of local communities and autonomous youth culture with public spaces

considering free-time and sports, could increase overall activity and participation in sports within these spaces.

Venues for sport have changed even clearer towards a single sports spaces, with greater demands for quality. The organized physical activity for youth and children is more and more placed in official arenas, further away from local surroundings. (Itkonen 2002, p. 83.) This arguably has decreased the overall availability for all among these venues. Sport practiced indoors has increased, as a larger proportion of youth has been brought up in a manufactured urban environment. Most adolescents are also used to being transported to far away located venues. Prior to this standardization process of sporting venues, public athletic fields and halls have been utilized as essential meeting places for free-time and were especially considered as the 'world' of the children and youth. (Saarikangas 2003, p. 406-408.)

This situation has changed through urbanization during the last 50 years. The diminishment of open spaces in the suburbs means that open spaces have been replaced by construction and means of transportation. (Saarinkangas 2002.) Free alteration of open spaces has also been affected by the increased demand for security by their parents. This might have social consequences, as free movement and exploring one's own limits seems to have become a right of the underprivileged, as the middle and upper classes spend their free time in a more institutionalized environment. (Koskela 2011.)

There seems to be a correlation between motivation, freedom, no restrictions, and open-modifiable spaces. This correlation of motivation is conflicted by the need for increased regulations and standardization of the venues, what is driven by the need to organize the activities for the purposes of competitive organized sport. (Hasanen 2017.)

This conflict has been lately taken into consideration in urban development and infrastructure. For instance in Finland, at the moment there is a trend to construct areas and fields for free movement inside the urban environment. These local-urban venues for physical activity are designed to be smaller in size, more informal and free. Typically these areas consist of different multidiscipline, small-field game arenas. These areas are designed to be in free use, without any booking system, as well as to be located close to the inhabitants and are easily accessible. (Järvinen 2014.)

The significance of these previously mentioned venues is also referred by successful Finnish professional football player Shefki Kuqi, as he described the importance of multifunctional sporting fields:

"Kangasniemi oli mukava pieni paikkakunta varsinkin tällaiselle urheiluhullulle. Sieltä löytyi hyvin hoidettu jalkapallokenttä, jota kiersi täysimittainen juoksurata. Kentän päädyssä oli korkeus- ja seiväshyppytelineet, ja toisessa päässä kuula-ja moukaririnki sekä pituushyppypaikka. Vietin siellä kaiken vapaa-aikani-heitin keihästä, hyppäsin pituutta, juoksin ja kävin välillä uimassa. Pelasin muiden kanssa myös futista, lentopalloa, koripalloa ja tennistä. Vain mielikuvitus oli rajana, ja siitä kaikesta oli taatusti hyötyä jalkapalloilijan urallani." (Wikström 2017, p.23)

"Kangasniemi was a nice little municipality, especially for this kind of a sports fanatic. There was a well-maintained football field, which was surrounded by a full-length track and field track. On the end of the field were places for high jump and pole vault, and in the other end, there was a rink for shot put and hammer throw as well as a space for long jumping. I spend all of my free time there- I threw the javelin, long jumped, ran and went occasionally for a swim. With others, I played football, volleyball, basketball, and tennis. My imagination was the only limitation, and all that activity certainly had an effect on my career as a footballer."

If the venue Shefki Kuqi here describes, had been standardized for a single discipline, according to him, it would have had a negative impact on his development. Also, it is important to notice that this space worked as an important social meeting place.

Location and locality of the open spaces have significance as well. Open block yards offered opportunities for free-practice and social interaction. An adult intervention wasn't needed as there was no need for transportation. This refers to the argument of Järvinen (2014) that easy access to the area is significant and ideally there would be no need for extra resources or surveillance.

 The significance of the local neighborhood, as adequate space for skill practicing, is explained by Zlatan Ibrahimovic as following:

"Oma pihapiiri oli tärkein ja äidin talon alueen nimi oli Ruusunen. Siellä oli keinu, pieni leikkipaikka, lipputanko ja sitten jalkapallokenttä, jolla me kikkailimme päivät pitkät. Aina minua ei otettu mukaan peleihin, koska olin liian pieni. Silloin raivostuin."

"Rosengordissa oli monta eri pihapiiriä. Yksikään niistä ei ollut toista parempi tai huonompi. Pihapiiri oli se juttu. Välittämättä siitä mistä maasta vanhemmat olivat kotoisin."
(Lagercrantz 2011, p.96)

" Our own neighborhood was the most important and the name of my mother's neighborhood was Ruusunen. There was a swing, small playground, flagpole and then a football field, where we were dribbling all day long. I was not always included in the games because I was too small. That made me furious."

"In Rosengord, there were various different neighborhoods. None of them was any better, or worse than the other. The neighborhood was the thing. It did not matter which country were the parents from"

The notion of Zlatan Ibrahimovic shows there is often a sense of pride and belonging connected to these free spaces. These spaces also have an educational and character building feature, as the various social skills and norms are passed along by the older peers.

Because the activities possible in these spaces are not standardized and they are multifunctional and free of charge, it provides opportunities for the under-privileged to be active. Other sports disciplines, which have become more organized, require often financial investments. As Zlatan points out:

"Ajattelin oikeasti vaihtaa jääkiekkoon. Ainakin siihen asti kunnes tajusin miten paljon siihen tarvitaan varusteita. Helvetti, kokonainen haarniska! Ei meillä ollut sellaiseen varaa." (Lagercrantz 2011, p.101)

"I was seriously about to change my discipline to ice hockey. At least until I realized how much equipment was required to it. A whole armory! It was not something we could afford."

When we discuss the urbanization process and city planning, it is fair to assume the infrastructure constructed could often be planned and designed for a particulate purpose and with a certain function in mind. Urban-infrastructure fundamentally in most cases is designed for economic purposes and therefor the open spaces are less considered as free and unrestricted. However, sometimes these areas experience a socio-economical change when the area changes demographically and is occupied by the less-fortunate. During this process, often the open areas become less-standardized and regulated, which might alter the function of the area towards a more free-usage one. Philippe Auclair (2012) describes this change in Thierry Henry's living neighborhood in greater Paris:

"The white-collar, middle-class workers that the planners had tried to attract were quick to realize that they had been sold a pipe dream; as soon as they woke up, and it was very soon, they moved out to more genteel environments, leaving behind them empty tower blocks. Less-fortunate occupiers were sucked into this vacuum. In a matter of years, Les Ulis turned from social utopia to a zone sensible, literally "sensitive zone", a euphemism that should fool no one. In 2010, 40 percent of its population paid no income tax whatsoever." (Auclair 2012, p. 13)

In this case, an area which was disapproved by others became an opportunity for others. Deprived areas provided a sense of freedom and belonging:

"Les Ulis wasn't quite the 'urban hell' later described by some profile-writers, however, 'growing up, it didn't feel poor at the time, 'Thierry recalled in 2007. 'It was all I knew'." (Auclair 2012, p.15)

It can be assumed that considering certain areas and spaces, there are differences of perception regarding the living standards and possibilities of the neighborhood. What would be considered deprived for others, is more than adequate for others. According to the quotes gathered by the athletes originated from the so called deprived areas of Parisian sub-urbs, the fact that they have a high degree of autonomy of the spaces has a significant influence on the quantity, but as well for perceived quality in the physical activities committed. This is demonstrated by Thierry Henry, as he mentions; 'should *he be given the choice, he would wish to grow up in the cite again.'* (Auclair 2012, p. 15)

There certainly seems to be a sense of pride and belonging towards the living habitat. This could be described as 'less is more' kind of approach, as well as an indication of personal and collective identity. This source of identity and sense of belonging could be seen as motivational 'pull' factor with these athletes.

"He often reminded journalists that, contrary to legend, he 'had the chance to have a good education, good parents and some good facilities around me, somewhere where you could play football and basketball. Thierry and his friends played not on one of the council's fields, but on whichever improvised surface could pass as a pitch" (Auclair 2012, p.17)

There appears to be a certain level of contradiction, whether there is a lack of opportunities within certain areas and ethnical groups. Identifying the level of these problems could be difficult, due to the differences in individual perception. It can be difficult to determine what

kind of resources are considered as adequate. Or, whether the seemingly best quality of facilities brings out the best possible outcome. It could be assumed that in fact the intangible assets; autonomy, freedom, identity, and sense of belonging have stronger positive influences than the tangible ones. For example, a 'lower' level facility can be adapted as more than suitable, if the intangibles mentioned below are there. For instance, the character building virtue of an un-orthodox venue was described by Auclair in Thierry Henry's case:

"At other times they would head for the for the city's outdoor handball court, where as many knees were grazed on the tarmac as goals were scored, 'and our opponents, from the quartier des Amonts, weren't soft with him." (Auclair 2012, p.17)

Actually, among the youngsters in this Parisian sub-urb, the facilities provided by the municipalities were not preferred. Whether this decision was due to the dislike towards organized environments, or a preference for improvisation remains unclear. However, the space was multifunctional and the rough tarmac surface was later on described as a beneficial factor for Thierry Henry's career progress. Again, there seems to be evidence that free de-standardized areas might have a 'competitive' edge towards the standardized ones. It could be argued that individuals living in so called 'unprivileged' areas have both disadvantages and advantages in comparison to the main population. The professional football clubs in France have noticed this development, and therefor are having an eye on the emerging talent in the sub-urbs of Paris.

Ferhat Cisek, a youth educator from the Parisian sub-urbs explains the relationship of pro-footballers to their background:

"*Paris is a place full of really great players. It has international repercussions on soccer. They start taking kids when they are 13-14 years old and bring them to training centers' here and abroad. They go pro, but they never forget where they came from."*

 (Cisek 2018, e Concrete Football)

Even though it can be argued, that foundations of the skills acquired for these youngsters were originated on the streets, organizational club involvement is not only pronounced and evident, it is also very necessary at a certain stage for the final development of the athlete. As the development of the immigrant athlete advances, the connection towards the host society infrastructure and institutions becomes more significant.

If the progress of these multicultural athletes is considered in a wider social context, the integration process is essential. It is argued, that there is a correlation between sports and integration. In this case the integrational process is constructed by formal procedures of public planning using sports as a vehicle towards integration. (Hess 2014.) A contemporary example would be the famous 1998 French multicultural" rainbow" national football team which won the World Cup. The team was widely seen as the example of successful integration of immigrants in French society. In 2010, the German multiracial team did the same and was compared to the French team of 1998. There is a debate, how the government policies considering sports and immigration can be beneficial during the integration process. However, the long-term success of these phenomena's regarding integration remains to be seen. (Hess 2014.)

An example of successful government policies comes from Switzerland. In 2014, Switzerland has been at the forefront of European migration issues; 20 % of the population in Switzerland are from foreign nations, which is the second highest rate after Luxemburg. Since the 1990's, the Swiss Soccer Federation has been systemically building youth programmes from the bottom up. A key component of the success on the programs has been the help of integration for the immigrant children and second-generation immigrants. As a result, about 40 % of Swiss football professionals and 57 % of national-team players have a migration background. On 15 November 2009, 1.3 million Swiss watched the national U-17 soccer team win the U-17 football World Cup. The winning team consisted 13 immigrant based" secondo's" (Hess 2014). This research debates, whether the cause for the immigrants' success is individually motivation based, or constructed via public planning. The main procedures of public planning considering the successful immigrant based athletes, are involved with the actual sporting systems and designs allocated by the government and national sport federations.

In terms of willingness to participate in sports and being active, free, unorganized activities should be encouraged and promoted. However, when this participation is to be nourished towards competitive, professional sport, organized procedures are required. According to the experiences in Switzerland, the mixtures of these approaches would be ideal. Free movement and enjoyment should be refined by proper coaching and also through appropriate public planning. The harder the competition gets, the more structure is needed. This is where the clubs and academies should take more responsibility.

Considering the roles and the appropriate level of activity interveniance of organized sports, there are differences along the athlete's life course. The athlete's life course could be divided into three periods: childhood period, selection period and the elite sports period. In addition, the post- athlete period is also considered today. During the childhood period, supporting intrinsic motivation is important. Intrinsic motivation grows with enhancing experiences of individual capability, as well as a sense of autonomy and belonging. As continuing practicing the discipline and taking it to a next level is concerned, high task orientation, good coach-athlete relationship and a moderate environment of individualism becomes significant. Finally, when approaching the elite-level sports, the best athletes should work with the best, in the highest quality coaching and in the best possible conditions. (Mononen 2016, KIHU.) Considering the athlete's life course paradigm, timing, finding the correct balance and best practices becomes vital.

Overall, according to the athlete's life course theory, the basic set of skills should be acquired in a relatively free, autonomous environment, but as higher the level competition gets, the more there is a need to shift the balance from free and autonomous towards more organized and professional- high-quality environment.

Youth educator Ferhat Cisek explains the transition period of street soccer to organized activities:

"All over Paris, there are great players, but they don't get soccer is a team sport. A player's skills must be there to serve the team. But they learn that in the club. That's our job as a counselor. We let them enjoy and be free, with street soccer, but with teams of 11, we have to explain that their own talent must be all for the team. Street soccer means freedom. We don't want to take it away from them." (Cisek 2018, f Concrete Football)

As well as the transition period, what Cisek here is describing, could be in line with Amartya Sens' notion of social mobility. Practicing in the streets means freedom in a challenging social environment. The main motivator or source for social mobility does not necessarily come from career ambitions or other socio-economic reasons. Street football is a way to express themselves. This approach was also shared by Zlatan Ibrahimovic in a slightly different environment of block yard games in Sweden. Throughout this research, the need to express one's self appears to be significant. The challenge is how to combine it with structure. The importance of the third sector, as a provider for non-organised activity becomes significant.

4.1 The importance of sports to multicultural individuals as a way of expressing themselves and as a source of building an identity.

One of the main hypotheses of this research is that sport could have an extensive role in the lives of immigrants and multicultural individuals. By a large part, this has been determined due to the lack of possibilities to other sources of cultural capital, which are interlinked often with the host-society institutions. Further on it is discussed, if this relationship towards sports could be considered beneficial for succeeding in professional sports. In addition for sports alleged role on increased cultural capital, minorities might project their identity through sports, which might increase sports role as a whole in their everyday lives and routines in various ways. Rudman (1986) explored the relationship of African-American minorities towards sports and argued that:

It is expected that blacks are more likely than whites to identify with a favourite team or athlete. Blacks are expected to feel worse when a favourite team or athlete loses, and more likely to share in the joy of victory when a preferred team or athlete wins. Identification with a team or athlete is expected to serve as an alternative source of social prestige often lacking from work or occupational status. Second, blacks are more likely than whites to have a professional orientation towards personal competition in sport. As such, blacks are expected to incorporate sport into their daily routines and not limit involvement to competition on the playing field. Blacks are more likely to emphasize winning or losing, which should carry over into other daily activities. For example, it is expected that blacks are more likely to daydream about their athletic success and discuss personal athletic endeavours in everyday conversations. (Rudman 1986.)

Rudman is drawing links here to social mobility and the lack of cultural mobility among ethnic minorities. The emphasis on sport in various forms according to Rudman is originated from a lack of opportunities in other cultural forms and education. Although Rudman's' arguments could be slightly outdated (1986), it is important to understand that certain issues considering immigration and multicultural societies repeat themselves through time. The American slums and the Parisian sub-urbs draw similar conclusions on the perception of existing and lacking opportunities. In both cases, the individuals acknowledge some degree deprivation of opportunity to express themselves. However, this deprivation does not necessarily effect on their quality of life. Instead, the activities which are available become highly significant. The interest in sport appears to be comprehensive, a way of living. It can be assumed, that this creates intrinsic motivation to do well in sports.

City planning can have a special role in endorsing this relationship. Foundation owner from Paris Bernard Messi draws similarities in city-planning processes in the U.S and France:

"There are more and more urban city fields. It attracts more players and the levels go up. It is like basketball in the U.S. The level went up as urban playgrounds got build in the hood. It is the same here with soccer." (Messi 2018, g Concrete Football)

Building urban-city spaces is vital, but some of these venues should remain un-organized and de-standardized. During the process of constructing spaces for physical activity, the priority of easy accessibility should remain. In a way, the ownership of these spaces should be allowed to be advocated towards its users, in a manner where the individual is free to express one's self and have a strong sense of autonomy. In this way theses spaces can become a social -collective gathering place- a "living room", where in the process of being physically active, the individual is able to spend one's leisure time freely with friends without adult supervision.

4.2 The role of sports clubs on the acculturation process and ethnicization

 Sports clubs can be identified functioning as a bridge builder between different ethnic groups inside the society. In addition, at the same time, they work as an assimilative part on integration. The clubs may also have a separative role, which in this case often enhances and strengthens the original culture of the minority ethnic group. Therefor it could be argued that the clubs can resist the integration process and, in this case, enhance the immigrants own cultural traditions and values. (Blecking 2008.)

For Instance, during the historic migration of the Poles in Germany before the First World War, sports clubs helped Polish immigrant proletarians to counter with the difficult acculturation process in an industrial environment. The clubs played an important role in the formation of Polish communities. Clubs were able to transport Polish national symbols, and eased with the linguistic problems, therefor in part helped to resist the pressure of "Germinazation". (Blecking 2008.)

A similar process could be seen later during the immigration of Turks to Germany after 1961. Turkish community is a differentiated structure of clubs and communities. The various organizations are dominated by religious societies followed by sports clubs, mainly football clubs. With the help of the sports clubs, the networks of Turkish society were connected. These independent organizations provided assistance and protection in the process of acculturation, maintaining cultural traditions, values, and national identity. The clubs played a

big part in building bridges between the Turkish migrants and the ruling society. Football especially was considered as the most important social subsystem. (Blecking 2008.) However, it must be mentioned that it is not completely clear how women were connected with these sports clubs and how sports influenced their acculturation process. Therefore, generally when connecting sports clubs and acculturation, the cultural context of different ethnic groups should be taken into account.

 In the light of the previous examples, it could be concluded that there were similar processes at work in the course of both migration movements, and the clubs played similar roles. These examples of integration also demonstrate that the acculturation process of the immigrants is often two dimensional. On one hand, it is important to maintain original cultural symbols and a sense of belonging. However, at the same time, it is as significant for the immigrants to be adapted to the norms and values of the host culture. Sports clubs can ideally offer both of these dimensions. Especially certain difficulties and barriers concerning learning the language and local customs and habits could be overcome within the sports clubs. This source of informal adjustment is a considered as non-pressurised acculturation. Finnish athletes Shefki Kuqi and Makwan Amirkahani describe this process as following:

"Jos jokin asia on vaikuttanut siihen, miksi olen niin suomalaistunut, se on Vaasan Toverit. Ei kukaan maahanmuuttaja syö tänä päivänä graavilohta. Me söimme, koska valmentajat opettivat meitä. Joka ikinen kisamatka kuuntelimme Suomoirokkia 1 ja Suomirokkia 2-kasetteja. Valmentajat myös opettivat, mikä on oikein ja väärin." (Sainio 2017, p. 67)

"If one particular thing has influenced on my acculturation, it was Vaasan Toverit. No immigrant eat raw-salted salmon these days. We ate because our coaches taught us to do that. During every competition journey, we listened Suomirokkia 1 and Suomirokkia 2-cassettes. Our coaches also taught us what was considered right or wrong."

"Olin täyttänyt jo kolmetoista, ja vaikken osannut suomea kuin muutaman sanan verran, uskoin pärjääväni paikallisten kanssa. Jalkapallohan oli kaikille sama, se yhdisti ihmisiä väriin, ikään ja kokoon katsomatta." (Wikström 2017, p.19)

"I had just turned thirteen, and even though I barely knew a few words of Finnish, I believed I could get along with the locals. Football is the same for everybody, it united people disregarded of color, age or size."

"Koulunkäyntikään ei ollut mitään ruusuilla tanssia, vaikka urheileminen sujuikin. Aloitin Mikkelin lyseon kuudennella luokalta-vuotta muita vanhempana-mutta muut olivat valovuoden edellä. En tajunnut puoliakaan siitä, mitä opettaja sanoi. Ne olivat välillä hiton pitkiä päiviä, vaikka motivaationi oli kohdillaan. Vei kokonaisen lukuvuoden, ennen kuin pääsin kärryille. Futiksella oli iso rooli siinä, että opin suomen kieltä, vaikka ujostelinkin pitkään puhumisen kanssa." (Wikström 2017, p.22)

" Going to school was no walk in the park, even though I excelled in sports. I started Mikkeli primary school from the sixth grade- a year older than the others, but everybody else was light years ahead of me. I did not understand half of what the teacher was saying. Sometimes the days felt really long, even though I was fully motivated. It took me the whole semester before I got on track. Football had a significant role in the learning of Finnish language, even I was really shy of talking it for a long time."

The notions of Amirkhani and Kuqi in a Finnish society, demonstrate that especially with first generation immigrants, the biggest barrier for integration seems to be the language. The language barriers might cause difficulties in acquiring the crucial lacking social networks.

Salasuo, Piispa, and Huhta (2015) identified sports clubs clearly the most popular forms of organized activity among immigrants. Sports clubs play an integral part on integration inside the Finnish society. In particular, sports role as a "universal language" is considered important in crossing certain barriers on the integration of the immigrants. For instance, sports clubs could assist in replacing some of the diminished networks (the void of national identity) with new ones within the host country. These new networks enhance social skills and teach the existing social skills, norms, and values of the host society.

Immigrants often have to leave their previous lives completely behind. There is a void of important networks, which they possessed in their country of origin. Family and friends might have been left behind and work and education might be difficult to find in a new host environment.

Shefki Kuqi describes, how sports can function as a bridge to overcome these barriers:

"Kangasniemen kentällä tutustuin myös Haapaniemen Esaan, joka kävi siellä hyppäämässä siellä korkeutta. Mähän olin aina paikalla. En osannut puhua suomea vielä kovin, mutta ymmärsin sitä kyllä. Esa jutteli mulle niitä näitä ja siinä sivussa kielitaitonikin koheni." (Wikström 2017, p.23)

" At the Kangasniemi field, I got to now with Esa Haapaniemi, who was high jumping there. I was always there. I couldn't speak Finnish very well yet, but I could understand it. Esa was always chatting with me this and that and in the side, my language skills improved."

This could be seen as a perfect example of informal adjustment and non-pressurised acculturation, which was applied by Blecking (2008) with various integration waves in Germany. Shefki Kuqis language skills improved in the sporting field and he was also able to learn Finnish customs during match trips. However, we can also see, that this form of acculturation does not always appear directly during sport club activities, as sport related friendships, match trips sand other informal social situations play an important role as well.

"Teimme pelireissuja henkilöautoilla, ja istuin yleensä tuppisuuna takapenkillä kuunnellen miesten juttuja. Se oli oikeastaan hauskaa. Pelikaverit olivat ihan kelpo kundeja, ja jostainhan munkin oli miesten pelit aloitettava. Se oli eräänlainen aikuistumisriitti, jonka suoritettuani olin valmis astumaan seuraavan askeleen." *(Wikström 2017, p. 24)*

"We traveled the match trips with a car, and I usually sat on the back seat silent listening the men talk. It was actually quite fun. My team mates were quite ok and I had to start my men's games from somewhere. It was a kind of a maturity rite, which helped me to take the next step."

Shefki Kuqi also highlights the opportunity to gain respect by showing an example. If an individual is willing to show commitment despite the barriers encountered, such as language problems. Sport can offer an outlet to show character without verbal communication. Shefki Kuqi explains the differences of sports clubs and schools in the integration process this way:

"Jos sä tsemppaat siinä, taistelet ja laitat itsesi likoon, siinä tulee sellainen fiilis automaattisesti että mä haluan tehdä samaa, toi kaveri tosiaan tarkoittaa sitä ja haluaa auttaa meitä, haluaa voittaa sen pelin. Yks, kaks- kolme kertaa se tekee sen, niin tulee sellainen fiilis, että mä tykkään tosta, mä haluun olla samaa ja me halutaan olla yhdessä, tää on kuitenkin joukkuelaji. Jos hän tekee, niin mäkin pystyn tekemään. Se esimerkki on se ero, mikä esimerkiksi koulussa penkillä istumisella on." *(Kuqi 2015)*

" If you are fighting and putting yourself down in the line, others have an automatic response to do the same. This guy really means it and wants to help us to win the game. One, two-three times he does it, it creates a feeling, that I like you, we want the same and we want to be

together, football is a team sport anyways. If he does it, I can do the same. This is an example of the differences to sitting on a bench at school."

In Shefki Kuqis case, it was in the football clubs where in which the most important acculturation and integration processes occurred. Kuqis way of integrating to the Finnish society happened through quite informal routes through his peers in the clubs. For Kuqi, the clubs offered a path towards learning Finnish values and norms in a more suitable way than the school. This supports the hypothesis, that sport as a universal language can cross various barriers of integration among immigrants and multicultural individuals.

Sport club activities offer great tools for integration because everyone involved is 'undressed' from their social habitus. Sport offers an equal platform for participation. Well known Finnish boxing coach and promoter Pekka Mäki answers the question related to his good work concerning social integration: *"Yes, without a doubt. In many ways sport is taking the role of the church as a provider for the disadvantaged. Everybody is willing to find good athletes and boxing has similar traits than going into the church. It is the same if you are yellow, green or red. You are on the same line when facing the coach. The same rules apply, and you will do as the coach says and that's it."* (Mäki, 2016)

The quotation of the promoter Mäki supports Shefki Kuqis comments on how status among peers can be achieved by merit in sports despite of the background. This can be one of the reasons, why sports could be appealing for immigrants and ethnically diverse individuals.

In sports like boxing, there are no social barriers. The laws and the norms of the discipline are straight forward equal and fair. A fair starting point is not necessarily something considered self-evident for immigrants. Sport can offer an equal platform for social mobility. This is appealing for these individuals, it motivates them. Similarly, highly motivated individuals are compelling to coaches, as ambitious coaches might favor these driven individuals. This scenario can create a mutually beneficial relationship between a multicultural athlete and the coach. In this scenario, a special mentorship can occur. Often this relationship goes beyond practicing and competing, as these coaches give assistance in, for instance, economical, bureaucratical problems and mental support.

These examples have emphasized the role of the clubs during the integration process. However, sometimes schools also may function as a gateway towards organized participation in sports clubs. Often, an immigrated individual in an unfamiliar environment needs local support, or a mentor to cross certain barriers. This support/ mentorship might occur from

various sources. The mentorship may come for example from a youth worker in non-organized sport, from clubs as from coaches or peers, and sometimes it might arrive from the local PE teacher. This support can sometimes be interconnected between these organizations. In some cases, the mentors change during the life course of these athletes. For example Olympic winner Mo Farrah describes the importance of the physical education in his school:

"*My biggest struggle in those days with my English. I could speak a few words but I couldn't read or write, and sometimes I had to communicate with people using hand gestures because I didn't know the word for certain things.*" (Farrah 2013, p.41)

"*Football was more than just a sport: it was a way of making friends at school without having to deal with the whole language thing. But it also got me noticed.*" (Farrah 2013, p.47)

"*Without a doubt, PE was my favorite lesson. It still lost out to football, but I enjoyed running in a competitive environment. Sports was my chance to shine. My English ability was never an issue, even if I occasionally misunderstood some of Alan's instructions. On the track, on the grass, all that mattered was how I performed. This was my chance to get involved. It made me feel that I was part of school life.*" (Farrah 2013, p.49)

Previously we have discussed, how sports clubs might be better suitable than other formal institutions in assimilation and acculturation processes of the immigrants. However, occasionally the school and the personnel included might have a strong influence on the initiative, introductive period. For example, Mo Farrahs PE teacher had a large influence on his enthusiasm in running. The teacher's support went beyond the PE lessons and he was also the first one to notice Mo Farrah's talent and therefor convinced him to take part in competitive running. Running also helped Mo's adjustment to the school environment. This is a prime example, how schools and clubs working together could offer gateways towards integration.

4.3 The role of the state in turning successful integration into sporting success.

Un-organized free practicing and autonomy of space have been identified as key factors for successful multicultural athletes. (Erkkilä 2018) With appropriate club activities and mentorship positive results are possible in sports participation, the level of the athletes and in the integration and acculturation processes as well. Depending on the individual, all these attributes can function as an entity, or as a singular phenomenon.

Free practice along appropriate club level functions can arguably build a foundation for success. However, reaching the ultimate top level in sports requires extremely high competitiveness and is possible only for the very few. Professional sports is a world of extremely tight margins, where every single detail becomes important. In the professional sports phase efficiency and high level of organization becomes significant. In the case of the immigrant athlete, this requires a wider connection towards the organizations and institutions of the host-country and a deeper level of integration.

For example, the progress of top-level football in Switzerland draws correlations between the success of multicultural football players and the role of government sports policies considering the integration progress of immigrants in Switzerland. The successful mentoring of kids with a migration background was seen as a key factor for the apparent re-emergence of a greatly improving competitive Swiss national football team. However, as the efforts of the Swiss Soccer Federation were credited, but wider integration policies should not be drawn from the success of a sole football team. It could also be argued, the success of these young immigrant athletes was due to their personal attitudes and their willingness to accept Swiss values in order to integrate into the ruling society. (Hess 2014.)

The extra motivation created by the multicultural background combined with appropriate public sport planning can create not only increased sporting success but help the integration process as well. The influx of players with multicultural background has made Switzerland more competitive in international football over the past 20 years. Debate remains about the origins and the main source of the success of these multicultural athletes. Having said that, this phenomena displays the success of the integration of these particular young men. It seems evident that Swiss Soccer Federation has not solely trained a new generation of talented and motivated multicultural soccer players, but in the same time, the federation has contributed to the integration of immigrant or second-generation children and youths. While the sporting

success is apparent, it remains to be seen if it carries any larger long term impact on the integration of youth in a larger, general scale. (Hess, 2014.)

Similar progress could be seen in Germany, where German football has risen with the revitalized and rejuvenated national team with players from ethnic minorities and foreign roots. The ethnic diversity of the German national side is a result of major political changes, such as easier access for citizenship aided with vast economical investment for the youth academies in football. (Merkel 2014.)

In total, eleven of the 23 players of the German national team had foreign roots. This colourful mix of the current German national team is the result of some major policies included with a production line of new talent nourished by the constructed football academies. These youth academies have made significant contributions to the integration process as well. The Bundesliga academies host boys from more than 80 countries. There is also evidence, that young players from migrant families are more committed, better motivated and driven by the desire to climb the social ladder via sporting success than their German peers. However, a considerable proportion of these youngsters were second generation immigrants, as they were born and brought up in Germany. This group of youngsters showed a particularly strong identification with German culture and society. (Merkel 2014.) This example from Germany demonstrates, how the bicultural integration combining with the appropriate assistance of the state sporting institutions, could deliver success in professional sports.

The multicultural player base can have an influence on the variations and heterogeneity of the teams playing styles, as Edward Van Gills, a founder of a street football tournament- Street kings of Amsterdam, describes the influence of multiculturalism towards certain playing styles:

"I think we play this way because the Dutch society is a multicultural society. There is a cultural melting pot here, with people from everywhere. Our street soccer is rich with the various cultures. It influences each player's technique and tactic and creates a specific style too. This is why the way we play here is much more technical and creative." (Van Gills 2018, g Concrete Football)

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4.4 National identity and relationship towards the host population

In the case of immigration, a large part of the constructed life is left behind in the immigrant's home country. Homes, social networks, familiar institutions and the crucial safety nets for the individual have to be built again. Also, the familiar cultural habits and norms might be transformed due to the change of social environment. Especially this would likely to be the case with the refugee-based immigrants. This change and a void, or alteration in the identity may be a cause of acculturative stress (Berry 2006). The most suitable way of reducing this acculturative stress could be the bicultural integration, where individuals could establish new bonds with the host society, while at the same time maintaining the cultural roots of their home country (Burrmann et.al. 2017).

It would be fair to argue, that the host-country would count on its bureaucratic institutions and the educational system in order to manage the occurring barriers and difficulties the immigrants would be facing. However, in many cases, organizations which are able to offer informal, often voluntary based assistance have an important role to play in the integration process. Pekka Mäki (2016) previously mentioned (chapter 4.2) the role of the church as an integrative institution for multicultural people. According to Mäki, church and sports have similar traits in the sense, that in both cases all people are considered equal regardless of color, social status or ethnicity. However, as the role of the church could be diminishing in modern western societies, informal activities, such as sports are filling that role as an integrating operator. For instance, Boyle (1963) argued that sports has played a wider role than the church or the educational system in the assimilation process of the blacks towards the American way of life.

Especially, the African-American sporting heroes like Muhammad Ali, Joe Louis, and Jackie Robinson have had a vast symbolical significance towards to the integration process of the African-American minorities In the United States (Hendersson 2009, p.103). The symbolic value of these icons is significant because these individuals display an example of a possibility of success and social mobility, regardless of their challenging backgrounds. This source of inspiration functions as a motivator and offers hope that everything could be possible with hard work and dedication.

Shefki Kuqi (2015) stated that integration and a sense of belonging is possible to achieve by showing an example, by this, he means that position inside the host society is earned by merit.

It could be argued that earning this merit calls for a greater source of motivation for immigrants and other underprivileged groups of individuals. (Kuqi 2015)

Gaining social mobility through education is difficult due to language barriers. Immigrants may have a sense of duty towards the host society. They might also experience prejudice and racism. Earning acknowledgment from the host citizen by merit is a good way of fighting against prejudice. As learned before, sport can offer an equal social platform to acquire respect by merit. Success in sports can be acquired by hard work an effort regardless of capital and social status.

For example, adapting to the main population can be challenging, as Makwan Amirkhani describes his challenges in the Finnish schools and his relationship towards Finnish society:

"Ensimmäisen luokan alkaessa toivoin vai kahta asiaa. Halusin, että ihoni olisi vaalea ja nimeni olisi oikeasti Ville tai Kalle."

"Koulun ruokalassa istuin aina yksin. Paikkani oli pyöreässä pöydässä akvaarion vieressä. Kukaan ei halunnut edes leikkiä kanssani." (Sainio 2017, p. 13)

"At the beginning of the first grade, I wished for only two things. I wished, that my skin would be fair and my name would be really Ville or Kalle

" At the school cafeteria, I always sat alone. My seat was at a rounded table next to the aquarium. Nobody wanted to play with me"

The experiences of Amirkhani describe that first generation immigrants could often experience a sense of isolation and loneliness. They have an urge to fit in but schools might be a difficult environment to gain merit and respect among peers.

Because of the barriers and prejudices, the immigrant face among vital host-country institutions, their participation in sports related activities might increase. There is some evidence of statistical difference on the behalf of ethnic minorities considering participation rates in sports. Ethnic minority youngsters seem to be more motivated in creating a career in sport, although the research also shows, that in the long run, only a small proportion will achieve social mobility through sports. (Agegaard & Kahn Sorenseb 2009.)

Immigrant athletes might be more determined and mentally tough than their host country counterparts. This is largely explained by the challenges encountered, such as learning a new culture, language, and new sports systems. Athletes originated from the host-country might

have other options for social mobility than sports as well. According to top level coaches, there is a significant contrast in the hunger and determination between the host country and the immigrant based athletes, as the host-country athletes were often described as soft, lazy and spoiled. (Schinke & Mcgannon et.al. 2013.) Immigrants might see a career in sports more viable than their host country peers due to lack of other possibilities. Also the barriers and difficulties these individuals have come across during their integration process, but also the hard times faced in their original environment might create a 'mental edge' in comparison to their peers from a more stable environment and upbringing.

For example, Makwan Amirkhani explained the differences in culture and mentality among immigrants and their peers:

"Ajattelen välillä ihmisistä, että "what a shame", että asut Suomessa, etkä käytä kaikkia mahdollisuuksia hyväksi, mitä täällä on". Kasvat täällä, etkä vaadi itseltäsi mitään, vaikka mahdollisuuksia olisi vaikka mihin." (Sainio 2017, p. 66)

"Sometimes I think of people, that "what a shame", that you live in Finland, and you are not using all the opportunities which exist here. You grow up here, and you don't demand anything from yourself, even if you have all the possibilities.

Amirkhani is arguing that the host people suffer from complacency and are too accustomed to all the opportunities around them. Here he continues describing the Finnish society:

"Suomessa on todella moni asia paremmin kuin hyvin. Olen kiitollinen kaikesta siitä, mitä tämä maa on minulle antanut. Välillä kuitenkin törmään asioihin, jotka saavat minut raivoihin ja kiroan suomalaista asennetta ääneen. Kerran olin kaupan edessä auton ratissa ja odotin ystävääni. Toisella puolella oli kaistan verran tilaa mennä ohitse, mutta eräs nainen jäi autoineen taakseni ja tööttäsi. Ajattelin, että vittu, minä en liiku mihinkään. Nainen avasi ikkunan ja alkoi huutaa. Teki mieli huutaa takaisin, että tuolla on maita, joissa satelee pommeja, ihmisiä, jotka kuolevat nälkään ja sinä tulet tööttäämään kun et jaksa ajaa autolla ohi. Tämä on ongelma tässä yhteiskunnassa. Ihmisillä on liian hyvä olla." (Sainio 2017, p. 20)

"In Finland, many things are more than well. I am grateful from all this country has given to me. However, occasionally I bump into things, which enrage me and curse the Finnish attitude at loud. Once I was in front of a store waiting for a friend of mine. There was a lane full of space to go past, but the woman insisted on staying behind me and honked. I was

determined not to move anywhere. The woman opened the window and started shouting. I was tempted to shout back, that there are countries where bombs are flying, people are starving and you are honking because you don't care to pass with the car. This the problem in this society. The people are too well off."

"Yksi asia, jota en voi todellakaan tajuta Suomessa, on asenteemme vanhempiin ihmisiin. Kaikilla pitäisi olla samanlainen meininki kuin meillä. Vanhemmat ja lapset loivat WhatsApp-ryhmän ja siellä sovimme siitä, kuka on milloinkin menossa mummon luo, ettei hän joudu olemaan yksin. Harvoin täällä myöskään vanhemmat auttavat lapsiaan muuttamaan tai tekevät talkootyötä." (Sainio 2017, p.20)

" One thing which is really difficult to understand in Finland is the attitude towards older people. Everybody should do as we do in our culture. The parents and the kids created a WhatsApp group and there we were able to agree, who would go visit grandmother that she wouldn't have to be alone. Rarely do the parents help their kids to move here, or volunteer to work."

With these comments, Amirkhani is perhaps referring to Finnish people's relationship to one another. He is arguing that things are too well of in Finland and Finns tend to complain too easily. Also, he thinks that people don't support one another enough, and perhaps rely on the support of the institutions in Finland. This supports the notion of a strong sense of belonging and mutual support among the immigrant society. This could be partly a cultural issue, but we could also argue that the support experienced inside the families is necessary because support is more difficult to find from the Finnish institutions for the immigrants.

Even as Makwan Amirkhani is criticizing certain aspects of the host society, there is also a deep sense of gratitude and appreciation towards it. If an athlete is able to combine the positives of both cultures, the origin, and the host culture, the athlete might have an advantage towards the main population.

"Minusta olisi voinut tulla elämäni aikana ihan mikä vaan. Olisin voinut tulla narkkariksi tai kääntyä tekemään jotain todella pahaa. Jos joku on ollut kallion jyrkänteellä hyppäämässä alas, minä olen ollut siinä. Olen kääntänyt kaiken negatiivisen positiiviseksi. Sen tiedän, että jos jossain on mahdollisuuksia, se on tämä maa." (Sainio 2017, p. 73)

"I could have become anything in my life. I could have become a junkie or turn into doing something really bad. If someone has been jumping down from the cliff, it wasn't me. I have

turned everything into positive. One thing I know, if there is a place where opportunities exist, it is this country."

The immigrants might have a feeling that their host country peers have had it too easy in their lives, even though the host-country individuals are not without problems, the problems often could be considered as smaller in scale in comparison to the countries which are economically poorer or in the middle of a conflict. Also, due to the existing social and cultural capital, networks and familiarity with the institutions, it could be argued that the host country individuals do not necessarily have to work as hard as the individuals who have to start everything from the start. Mo Farrah describes the differences in Somalian and western cultures:

" *Perhaps we didn't have some of the things that children in other countries take for granted, but for us, this was never a big deal. In some ways, it was an advantage. In Djibouti, everybody had to work hard for what they had. No one got given anything on a plate, but you wouldn't find people sitting around feeling sorry for themselves. Everyone rolled up their sleeves and got on with it. We learned to appreciate what we had. We learned that you didn't get anywhere in life without putting in the work. In that sense, Djibouti made me tough."*

(Farrah 2012, p. 25-26)

"*I did go for a run once. I remember it being a blazing hot day. The temperature was in the high thirties, but it was still quite early and I thought, 'I should probably go for a run a before I get too out of shape.' I got dressed, put on my running shoes and bolted out of the front door. Almost as soon as I started running through the streets, a bunch of kids started chasing after me. They were laughing and shouting, 'Hey, hey! Crazy man! You crazy man!' As I said earlier, people don't run in Somaliland.*" (Farrah 2012, p.138)

Mo Farrah's comments display the different realities immigrants have faced in their lives, in different environments and cultures. It is fair to say, that the possibilities for a better life exist in the host country. However, sometimes the hardship experienced in a rougher environment may toughen up the individual, improve work ethic and widen their perception of life.

Zlatan Ibrahimovic continues by describing how he interacted with the Swedish culture:

"*Olin kolmetoistavuotias ja siihen aikaan joukkueessa oli pari muutakin ulkomaalaista. Tony Flygare muiden joukossa. Muuten kaikki olivat ruotsalaisia. Osa oli sellaisia Limhams-tyyppejä, siis yläluokan kakaroita*"

"Tunsin olevani marsilainen. Enkä vain sen takia, että isä ei omistanut isoa omakotitaloa ja seissyt kentän laidalla kannustamassa. Puhuin erilailla. Harhauttelin. Olin kuin tikittävä aikapommi ja saatoin tapella kentällä" (Lagercrantz 2011, p.101)

"I was thirteen years old and by that time there was a few other foreigners in the team, Tony Flygare among others. Everybody else was Swedish. Part of them were the Limhams-type, upper-class brats."

" I felt I was from Mars. Not only because my father did not own a house and never stood by the field cheering. I talked differently. I dribbled. I was a ticking time bomb and I sometimes might have fought in the field."

"En minä toisaalta halunnut olla kuin ne muut. Tai ehkä vähän halusinkin! Halusin oppia niiden tapoja, etikettiä ja sellaista. Mutta enimmäkseen vedin omaa linjaani, se oli minun aseeni." (Lagercrantz 2011, p. 105)

"I had no wish to be like the rest. Or maybe fora little bit! I wanted to learn their manners, etiquette and such. But for the most part, I kept my own style, which was my weapon.""

Zlatan argues, that he has attributes which are not common or familiar in Swedish society. According to him, these attributes partially originate from the Balkans' culture and mindset. This way he is able to bring certain heterogeneity into the team, which in his case was considered as a strength.

"Periaatteessa sinun on hyvä olla vähän erilainen ja röyhkeä, mutta pitkällä tähtäimellä siitä on vain haittaa. Tosi paikan tullen kukaan ei halua valita joukkueeseen mutiaisia tai sekopäitä, jotka vetävät kentällä jotain brassikikkoja jatkuvalla syötöllä."

"Yleensä juniori käyttäytyy nöyremmin. Minä ajattelin toisin, ei ollut mitään hävittävää. Annoin kaikkeni. Annoin palaa täysillä ja huomasin kyllä, että ne alkoivat puhua minusta: Mikä tuo luulee olevansa? Ja muuta sellaista sieltä kuului. Mutisin takaisin jotain helvettiin painumisesta ja jatkoin pelaamista." (Lagercrantz 2011, p.117)

"In principle is good to be different and arrogant, but in the long term, it only harms you. Eventually, nobody wants to pick 'brownies' or nutters into their team, the ones who are dribbling like Brazilians all the time."

"Normally a junior is more humble. I thought differently, I had nothing to lose. I gave everything. I was going full steam and I noticed how they were starting to talk about me:

'Who does he think he is, and stuff like that. I mumbled back something like 'go to hell' and continued playing."

Zlatan Ibrahimovic is talking about arrogance and attitude here. He describes these traits as a weapon, a strength, something which distinguishes him from the rest. These features enable him to get to be noticed, both in good and bad ways. Behaving arrogantly and showing extra attitude might be seen as a sign of ambition, but this kind of behavior may also face resistance by the existing values, norms and prevalent hierarchy. Zlatan Ibrahimovic quite consciously used his divergent attributes and traits for his own benefit, as a competitive edge, more often this different attitude of immigrants is directed towards gaining acceptance from the host-country society.

Boxing coach and promoter Pekka Mäki explains the trait differences of immigrant based athletes this way:

"Mä sanoisin ehkä näin että, ehkä se niin kuin nyrkkeilyssä on olemassa sellaine old-slogan sanottuna kun- mestarit tulevat slummista. Se kertoo ehkä siitä lajista aika paljon. Kyllä nyrkkeily ja jalkapallo maailmalla, on avannut tällaisille slummien ihmisille ja köyhistä oloista tulleille mahdollisuuksia sellaiseen normaaliin elämään. Ehkä tästä taustasta voi ajatella että tää maahanmuuttajatausta tukee sitä ajatusta että he pyrkivät saamaan kantaväestössä sitä hyväksyntää ja muuta, joka on aika luonnollista. Totuus on myös se, että nyrkkeily ei ole kuitenkaan minkään ylemmän sosiaaliluokan laji. Eli kyllä sieltä vähän tavallisista perheistä ja heikommista perheistä niitä harrastajia tulee. Meidän salilla Ring Side Gymillä Pitäjänmäessä meillä on paljon maahanmuuttajataustaisia nyrkkeilijöitä-nuoria. Sanotaan, että 35-40 prosenttia." (Mäki 2016)

"I would say it like this, that maybe it is like, that in boxing there is this old slogan as 'champions come from the slums'. That tells pretty much from the discipline. Boxing and football globally have opened opportunities individuals from poorer environments towards a normal life. Considering it from this perspective, perhaps the immigrant background supports the hypothesis that these individuals are looking for acceptance and other things from the main population, which is a quite natural thing. The fact is, that boxing is not an upper class sport. So, the athletes come from normal, or under privileged families. In our Ring Side Gym in Pitäjänmäki, we have a lot of immigrant based boxers-youth. Let's say around 35–40 percent."

If an individual is a combination of genes, traits and the social and experiences molded by the social environment, it could be argued that the individual is partly a product of its social surroundings. Boxing coach Pekka Mäki (2016) argues here, that immigrants may have a different sort of mentality compared to the main Finnish population. It is difficult to specify which of these components has the most significant consequence on the mentality differences. However, according to the insights gathered with in this study, in addition to opportunities for social mobility, the interaction and clashes of different cultures appears to be significant.

Among the athletes utilized with this thesis, there are differences in how the individuals are willing to be integrated towards the cultural norms and values of the host country. Some of them have the will, and the need to integrate into those values, as others want to resist the change and maintain their original cultural identity. As for instance, Shefki Kuqi had a strong need for adapting and getting acceptance, there was more resistance with Makwan Amirkhani and Zlatan Ibrahimovic. This source of bicultural integration partly worked as an advantage for them, even though they experienced difficulties and prejudice on the way as well. Occasionally, individuals are shifting in the between of these cultures. For example, how the individual perceives the individual and the collective have cultural differences. The same could be applied to ambition, work ethic and sense of freedom. All these attributes have an effect on the success of the athlete.

Zlatan Ibrahimovic describes the differences in mentality between the Balkan and the Swedish culture:

"*Elin samaan aikaan kurinalaisesti ja villisti. Johdin elämänfilosofiani siitä. Juttuni oli se, että minä sekä puhun että teen. Ei siis vain tyhjiä sanoja tyyliin minä olen paras, kukas sä oot? Sellainen en halunnut olla. Mutta en myöskään sellainen kuin ruotsalaiset starat, jotka saattavat olla hyviä, mutta sitten puhuvat vain nössöyksiä. Halusin olla sekä paras, että rehvakas.*" (Lagercrantz 2011, p.91)

"*I lived disciplined and wild at the same time. That was my philosophy. My style was to speak and to act. Not only empty words, like 'im the best, who are you?' I didn't want to be like that. But neither did I want to be like Swedish stars, who may be good, but lack in personality. I wanted to be the best and a bigmouth.*"

Zlatan Ibrahimovic had a strong need to make an impression.

"*Inhosin pelien ulkopuolelle jäämistä. Inhosin myös häviämistä. Vaikka ei niissä peleissä voitto ollut aina tärkeintä. Tärkeintä olivat harhautukset ja siistit kikat. Piti olla mahdollisemman paljon sellaista wau-efektiä mukana. Tehtiin jotain ja pyydettiin muita katsomaan. Kavereihin piti tehdä vaikutus tempuilla ja harhautuksilla, joita sitten harjoiteltiin niin kauan, että kukaan ei osannut samaa temppua yhtä hyvin.*" (Lagercrantz, 2011, p. 92)

"*I hated being left outside of the games. I also hated losing. Even though winning in those games was not important. The most important things were the tricks and dribbles. There had to be the 'wau' effect. We did tricks and asked others to watch. We had to impress our mates with tricks and dribbles, which I practiced as long as nobody else could do the trick as well as me.*"

The mentality of Zlatan Ibrahimovic is not only to be the best but to make sure everybody knows it as well. He wants to be flamboyant and entertaining and show his character. This kind of mentality is not necessarily familiar in Nordic countries, where modesty has a reputation of being considered as a virtue.

Zlatan Ibrahimovic continues:

"*MBI:ssa, isät seisoivat kentän reunalla ja kannustivat: Hyvä pojat, hyvä yritys! FBK Balkan oli erilainen. Kentän laidalla oli ketjussa polttavia Jugoslaaveja. Sovin joukkoon välittömästi. Loistavaa, juuri kuin kootona, täällä nautin olostani.*" (Lagercrantz 2011, p. 96)

"*In MBI, the fathers were standing on the side of the field and cheered: Well done boys, good effort! FBK Balkan was different. On the side were standing chain smoking crazy Yugoslavians. I fitted in instantly. Amazing, just like home, this is where I enjoy myself.*"

There seems to be resistance towards Swedish values with Zlatan Ibrahimovic. He feels that he is able to express his character in a more familiar environment and considers this as a divisive strength compared to his Swedish peers.

Immigrant athletes like Zlatan Ibrahimovic, have often experienced a harder and less stable life in difficult circumstances and rough environment. This environment could force the individual to battle through hard life with various barriers and obstacles ahead. Overcoming and resisting these circumstances appears to alter and perhaps evolve their character and mentality. Mo Farrah explains the origins of his mental strength:

"*I had this compulsive desire to improve-this determination to win. There are some extremely talented people who fall into a trap of believing that because they have talent, they don't have to work hard. I was never fooled by that. I took the toughness and the work ethic that I'd learned as a child in Gebilay and Djibouti and carried it with me into competitive running.*

 (Farrah 2012, p.61)

Mo Farrah's acquired mentality also helped him within handling conflicts among his peers;

"Some kids probably looked at me and thought, 'Yeah, here's someone we can push around.' They didn't know me. I've never been afraid to stick up for myself. I'd had a tough childhood- tougher than a lot of kids. From a young age, I had to learn to be a fighter." (Farrah 2012, p.41)

Transforming the battle mentality acquired in challenging environment into performing in sports was apparently a key to Mo Farrah's athletic success. Often the social environment is highly competitive and rough, and that mentality mirrors in the character of the athlete. Professional footballer Riyad Mahrez describes the competitive nature of urban street football in the suburbs:

"The hood is win or die. As kids, all we had was a ball, nothing else. That was it. Just people playing. You didn't play if you were bad. To play you had to be good at it. Be bad and you are a goalie. So you end up playing soccer all the time. Then you become a natural."

"Sometimes in tournaments you could hear 'kill him!'. We grew up with it. So when you go pro, in a 1to1 situation, you know you have to pass and make a difference." (Mahrez 2018 h, Concrete Football)

According to Riyad Mahrez, the pressures created by the environment and his peers increased his mental strength and ability to cope with pressure. Stressing circumstances were part of their daily lives. It could be argued that the everyday pressures are not so evident among their main population peers.

An unstable environment might also improve certain social and problem-solving skills. Surviving in stressing circumstances teaches social skills which could be useful in sports where group dynamics are important. In Thierry Henry's autobiography, there is a description of how his living environment influenced towards his learned social intelligence:

"Thierry was clever. He was quite shy to start with so that people would accept him. 'Once they had done so, Thierry could move on, to other aims, to other people. This 'respect', to use the lingo of the banlieue, is not the most attractive of characteristics, but one should not forget it is a tool for survival first, for domination second." (Auclair 2012, p. 53)

It is often mentioned that succeeding at the very top is primarily a matter of mental strength and character. At the very top level, the differences in talent, technical and physical attributes are marginal. Dealing with high pressure, competitive, stressing situations requires certain traits. These traits are influenced by the combination of genes and the socio/cultural environment. There are various ways of managing highly stressing situations. Philippe Auclair (2012) described how the Afro-Caribbean cultural traits combining with the harsh environment of the banlieau had a role in rejuvenating Frances football:

"Gerard Houllier, who had been mindlessly pilloried in the press for the 1994 debacle, felt fortunate to rekindle his love for football in the company of this group of youngsters, who were quite unlike any who had preceded them at this level. To start with, a number of them were sons of first-generation 'immigrants' of Afro-Caribbean origin who had been raised in the high-rise estates now encircling most of Frances biggest cities. In that respect, Thierry was just one of many. What they brought with them was a certain insouciance, a love of fun, but also the mental toughness that is required to be your own man in the harsh environment of the banlieau- or the football academy, like the Clairefontaine." (Auclair 2012)

This case of Thierry Henry and the rejuvenation of French football could be seen as a prime example of immigration, and the blending of different cultures, environment and infrastructure. In this example, three different variables exist, which are combined in this French football rejuvenation; the mixing of cultural traits, the urban-banlieau environment and the finalizing role of state-organized academy activities in Clairefontaine. The Clairefontaine football academy is the national football center established in 1988, which specialized in training French football players. Only the best players from the Parisian region trained there. The academy is known from a very strict discipline and extremely high level of inner competition. It could be argued, that the immigrant-based raw talent from the Parisian suburbs was nurtured and fine-tuned in the state-run academies.

The example from France supports one of the main hypothesis of this study, which is to display evidence that there could be extra potential in immigrated and multicultural individuals in professional sports. Ideally, this pool of potential individuals could be nurtured

to success with appropriate support and organization. Here is how Finnish sports journalist Jussi Leppälahti (2016) describes this potential:

"*Suomessa on tehty vuosia pelaajapolkuja ja systemaattista kasvatusta ja äkkiä ilmestyy toisella puolella maailmaa kavereita, joiden ominaisuudet ovat aivan eri tasoa. Nyt pitää herätä, maahan on tullut timantteja*" (Leppälahti 2016)

"*In Finland, we have created different athlete career pathways and systematic upbringing for years, and suddenly from the other side of the world appears individuals whose attributes are from a completely different level. It is about time to wake up, we have received diamonds for this country.*"

Finnish professional football coach Martti Kuusela continues within the same lines:

"*Kun mä katsoin tuolla maailmalla esimerkiksi Afrikasta ja tuota köyhästä Etelä-Amerikasta tulevia pelaajia, niin niillä ei ollut mitään muuta mahdollisuutta selvitä tästä elämästä kun tehdä hyvin töitä jalkapallon eteen. Mä olen sitä mieltä, että näistä jotka nytkin on tulleet ja myöhemminkin, niin niistä on meidän urheilulle suunnatonta apua, jos me valmentajat-johtajat osataan käyttää heitä oikein. Hyväksyä heidät sellaisina ihmisinä, sellaisena kulttuurina mikä heillä on takana. Siellä on myös se rikkaus.*" (Kuusela 2018)

"*What I saw around the world, for example, players coming from Africa and South-America that they had no other possibility to survive from this life than work well and hard for football. In my opinion, these who have now arrived and later also, that they will be massively beneficial to our sports, if we coaches- leaders are able to utilize them properly. If we are able to accept them as the individual they are, as the culture they carry behind. There lies the richness.*

These opinions highlight the importance of recognizing the potential, understanding the cultural differences and the integration process. As this study has discussed before, managing this opportunity with best possible practices is vital. Sports clubs should have the adequate and appropriate resources and readiness to capitalize this opportunity. The coaches and club officials would have to find the correct balance between pushing towards cultural assimilation and at the same time maintain the richness of cultural diversity.

4.5 Social capital and mobility through sports

Sport can be perceived as a vehicle for generating different forms of capital, most notably economic, cultural, social and symbolic capital, from which certain benefits can arise, which may improve or maintain ones social position and status. (Bourdieau, 1986). Succeeding in sports could enable seemingly impossible achievements and upgrades in the quality of life, which for instance, the lack of proper education has hindered from these individuals. Through sports, one can gain valuable expertise and knowledge. This expertise could increase their chances of climbing up the social ladder in society.

Social mobility refers to the movement of individuals or groups between different positions within the system of social stratification. Social stratification generally refers to societal rewards which are unequally distributed. More specifically social mobility can be described as changes in an individual's social position which involves significant alterations in one's social environment and living conditions. (Spaaij 2009.)

These changes in the social position of individuals could be identified with vertical and downward social mobility. Social mobility appears in two principal forms: as the rise of the individuals of the lower stratum to an existing higher one; and as a creation of a new group by such individuals. (Sorokin 1959, p.133.) Non-structural social mobility refers to the extra value an individual may generate with certain acquired expertise. This expertise might be a result of for example education, experience, specific knowledge or individual relationships and networks. (Spaaij 2009.)

When it comes to a certain social status, or an alteration to this status via social mobility, the road, or the tool which makes it feasible can be described as various capitals. Häkkinen, et.al. (2013) describes the roles of different capitals to an infant's development:

"A *child's life and future is influenced by how much does the family have to offer different sorts of capitals. In addition to economic capital, the child will acquire both social and cultural capital through the family. These capitals are referred and linked with social networks, sense of trust and civilization. By family capital is referred to, how occupational valuations, norms, and mindsets are transferred towards adolescents." (Häkkinen et. al. 2013)*

This study argues, whether sports has a role in enhancing or compensating these various capitals, which might be lacking among certain groups of people, for instance immigrants. This argument is backed by Pierre Bourdieus (1986) social theories in sport; Bourdieau claims, that participating in sports offers improvement in the position on the stratification system field, in other words, sports might be able to compensate the distribution of social capital.

Upward social mobility has different meanings and dimensions. In sports narratives created by the media, we often learn about the "rags to riches" types of stories. However, Boyle (1963, p. 259) construes, that from the minorities point of view, sports in most cases function only as the first step of the social strata ladder. Sports is able to help minorities in the integration process towards the ruling society, but romantic success stories occur statistically in rare cases. The first steps Boyle mentions is often comprehended as, employment or just a sense of freedom or safety. As these basic human needs are not necessarily self-evident among ethnic minorities, this group of people might try to compensate it with other social and cultural capital. (Boyle 1963.) For instance, Rudman (1986) argued, that blacks in the United States are more likely than whites to believe in the social and economic benefits of sports competition. Blacks are more likely to focus not only on the use of sport as a way of upward economic mobility but also in controlling other social problems such as juvenile delinquency. In this sense, sports is seen as a way of dealing fairly and openly various forms of social problems. (Rudman 1986.)

For example, Mo Farrah stated how sport restricted him from various social problems:

"*At Feltham there were kids from my year who ended up in gangs, taking drugs, that sort of a thing. I wasn't close to these guys personally, but living in the area, you'd hear the stories from time to time. So and so's in trouble. This could have been me slipping between the cracks. Easily. If it hadn't been for running, who knows where I would have ended up? Not somewhere good, I can tell you. Life is tough in Hounslow. Things happen.*" (Farrah 2012, p. 56)

Any kind of distraction like sports or other past time activities, can be a way out of juvenile defiance and bad behavior. Socially excluded young people might fail to establish social networks beyond their immediate circle, which could restrict the wider support and opportunities available to them. (Webster et al. 2004.) Evidence of how the 'wrong kinds' of social capital can limit the upward mobility of children and young people is present in the

literature. For instance, a lack of positive role models, poverty, lack of ambition and risk aversion may serve as barriers to social mobility. Also, a lack of contact with people who have experienced higher education could be a powerful factor affecting the educational decision-making of youngsters. (Nunn, et. al. 2007.)

For Mo Farrah, this 'wrong kind' of capital and lack of positive role models could be seen as replaced and compensated by the 'right kind' of social capital provided by the athletic environment. Through this positive social capital acquired, sports could ideally create opportunities for upward social mobility. However, the actual role of sports in upward social mobility, in general context, is a minor one. The dream of being a professional athlete is only possible for the very few selected, whether the individual's background is a multicultural one or not. This myth was challenged by Dubrow and Adams (2010). Their research was interested in the socio-economic backgrounds of professional basketball players. The research results challenged the general view or myth that the NBA players would especially rise up from poor or unfavorable environment. According to their research, 93 % of the white and 66 % of the Afro-American male players were originated from middle-or upper-class families. (Dubrow & Adams 2010.)

Similar results were also acquired in Finland, as the 2012 youth barometer argued, that the child's family household income was in correlation with adolescent's relationship with competitive sports. From the upper-class children, 20 % were involved in competitive sports, as for the lower income families the proportion was only 6%. (Myllyniemi 2012, p. 54.) This supports the claim, that competitive sports is mainly middle class. However, there seem to be differences between this correlation among the main population and multicultural families. In general, according to research, competitive sports appears to be middle class, but with the multicultural athletes, the proportion of the lower socio-economical class seems to be greater.

The importance of proper role models and idols cannot be overestimated. Through sports, minorities have been able to achieve things which would be considered difficult, if not impossible to achieve (Marletsuo 2015). Sports is seen as a substitute for the lack of education for the African-American minorities in the U.S. Sports can be defined as a way out of the slums. (Scully 1979)

Professional football player Serge Aurier explains the importance of these role models and their significance for the local identity:

"When someone from Sevran (Parisian suburb) makes it, kids think they can too. 'Why not try?' maybe I'll make it."

"When I talk about Sevran, people think I'm just a guy who lives for the hood, but I'm just proud. Sevran taught me that when it gets tough, when there's no money and nothing to meet ends meet, you got to aim higher. You got to aim for the best. That's how I made it in soccer."

(Aurier 2018, I Concrete Football)

Serge Aurier argues that there is a kind of a symbiosis between the neighborhood and the successful individual. The neighborhood teaches valuable lessons in social skills, builds character and as the individual is able to overcome these obstacles, it creates hope and optimism for others. The successful individual offers an example of how everything could be possible even in a challenging harsh environment. At the same time, the individuals who have made it, are often willing to 'payback' their roots by being involved and in contact with the neighborhood after being successful.

These success stories and narratives of athlete heroes combined with the socio-economic problems faced by the minorities could emphasize the glamorous role of professional sports. Sports may become appealing and consequently, talented ethnically diverse individuals are likely to direct their energies towards developing their existing athletic abilities.

Success in sports can be seen as an alternative to stigmatization in society. Sport is seen as one way of increasing cultural capital, as other forms of cultural activities could be largely deprived of the ethnic minorities among lower social classes. (Eitle & Eitle 2002.) This notion re-affirms Salasuo et. al. (2015) findings on the pathways of multicultural athletes in Finland.

Ex-professional soccer player Abdel Nour explains sports role for the disadvantaged:

"Soccer is the sport for the poor. Soccer makes Blacks, Arabs, Chinese play together. We play and focus on the game. Never a problem unless it's about the game. For a guy from the hood like me who never studied, bro', there's only rap or sport." (Nour 2018, J Concrete Football)

It is well worth to notice that music as a cultural form can function in a similar way in offering social capital lacking among the minorities. Music and sports have similar traits, as neither of them necessarily require education or financial capital. Both cultural forms operate

within a 'universal language' which is useful for both, the integrational and identity-forming processes.

4.6 Barriers and Prejudices faced by Immigrant Athletes

Athletes from migrated and/or ethnic minority backgrounds often face various barriers and challenges on their path towards elite-athlete status, as previous experiences of Zlatan Ibrahimovic and Shefki Kuqi have demonstrated. During the acculturation process, these barriers and challenges concerning cultural differences associated with the home and the host country can work either as a disadvantage or an advantage for the athletes. In other words, overcoming these barriers can function as a motivational source. (Schinke, et.al. 2013.)

Within the literature, there seems to be a notion that is difficult to be the only one different in the team. The difficulty of making friends is explained by cultural and social class differences. Immigrants often have a feeling of alienation during taking part in sports. The feeling of alienation is explained by a lack of language skills, prejudice and with the feeling of discrimination. (Walseth 2008; Doherty&Taylor 2007.)

Immigrants might experience difficulties in joining the sporting activities because of prejudice. For instance, in Finland, there were cases, where immigrants would have liked to play floorball, but they were unable to find a team to play for. They experienced that the Finnish did not want to include stranger foreigners because they had a hard time of believing that foreigners would actually be able to play floorball. When the Finnish saw that the men could play, they were included gladly. (Myren 1999.)

As the immigrants found it difficult to join the floorball clubs due to the conceit of their ability to actually play the game, Shefki Kuqi was excluded from football clubs in the early parts of his migration for more personal reasons. He explains this rejection as following:

"Ihmettelin ääneen, miksi piti vaihtaa seuraa. Sitten ymmärsin: ne eivät halua mua. Kyyneleet kiersivät silmissäni. Otin palloni ja haistatin niille pitkät. Vannoin että ne katuisivat vielä päätöstään." (Wikström 2017, p. 19)

"I wondered out loud, why I had to change a club. Then I understood: they don't want me. Tears were pouring from my eyes. I took my ball and told them where to get off. I swore, that they would regret that decision."

Shefki Kuqi wanted to prove his discriminators wrong. Immigrants or other individuals representing ethnic minorities, who have gained this upward social mobility by merit and sometimes as 'against the odds' have symbolic value for the people who they can be identified with, but also towards the host society. These individuals might be able to pave the way for easing these existing prejudices. Therefore this symbolic value of the ethnic minority sports heroes could have a two-dimensional effect; as a motivational-inspirational effect for their ethnic group peers, as well as for altering and enhancing the public- main population opinion towards the immigrants.

Because of the symbolic importance of these migrant athletes, the media tends to build romanticized and mystified narratives on these successful multicultural athletes. In order to construct a valid and objective conclusion of immigrant athletes, it is important to determine the backgrounds behind the ways, how multicultural athletes have developed themselves into elite-athletes. For example, issues like faced racism have influenced significantly to the ways, how multicultural athletes have developed themselves into elite-athletes. Provided sporting possibilities, but also the various barriers faced within the host society, have influenced the success of the multicultural athletes. (Salasuo et al. 2015.)

While sports clubs are considered as tools for integration and acculturation, immigrants and individuals of ethnic minority background often face resistance by their peers inside the club activities. Makwan Amirkhani describes how he had experienced racism and prejudice during club activities:

"*Painikisoissa oli paljon rasismia. Pisteitä otettiin pois, välillä tuomittiin häviäjäksi, vaikkei asia todellakaan ollut niin. Näimme sen haasteena, vaikka emme pitäneet siitä, miten meitä kohdeltiin. Palattuamme ensimmäisistä kisoista, aloimme treenata kunnolla.*"

"*Koska meitä ei hyväksytty täysin painipiireissä, se ajoi meidät tilanteeseen, jossa oli pakko menestyä kisoissa. Olimme kaikki hyvin temperamenttisia. Kun meitä kohdeltiin kaltoin kisoissa, nousimme saman tien niskakarvat pystyssä seisomaan ja puolustamaan itseämme.*"

(Sainio 2017, p.70)

"*We faced a lot of racism during the wrestling competitions. Points were reduced, we were judged losing even clearly that was not the case. We saw it as a challenge, even if we did not like the way we were treated. After returning from the first competitions, we started training properly*"

"Because we were not accepted fully in the wrestling circles, it drove us into a situation where we had to succeed in the competitions. We were all very temperament. When we treated unfairly during competitions, we stood up to defend ourselves."

Instead of feeling distraught by the unfair treatment, Makwan Amirkhani turned this behavior as a source of motivation. Amirkhani had to show character and merit to receive the respect and acceptance by the surrounding environment.

Shefki Kuqi shares his experience on the same issues:

"Menin Siis Kissoihin ja aloin harjoitella niiden kanssa, mutta kaikki ei sielläkään sujunut ihan niin kuin elokuvissa, jäin ulkopuoliseksi. En saanut kavereita. Kaikki tiesivät, että olin pakolainen. Selkäni takana naureskeltiin. Olin erilainen myös pelityyliltäni. Tahdoin tehdä aina parhaani ja harjoittelin kuin viimeistä päivää, mutta se ei auttanut tilannetta. Palasin usein itkien kotiin ja yritin saada isää kertomaan, mikä mussa oli vikana. Isä lohdutti sanomalla, ettei vika ollut mussa vaan niissä. Ehkä ne olivat vaan kateellisia ja pelkäsivät oman asemansa puolesta: pakolaiset tulevat tänne ja vievät niiltä työt ja kaikki. En voinut käsittää mitään sellaista. Olin vielä puoliksi lapsi. Taas kerran jouduin pettymään. Miksi kaikki halusivat meille pahaa?" (Wikström 2017, p. 19)

"So, I joined Kissat and started practicing with them, but it was not a fairy tale there either, I was left as an outsider. I did not get any friends. Everybody knew I was a refugee. I was laughed at behind my back. My playing style was different as well. I always wanted to do my very best and practiced vigorously, but it didn't help my situation. I often returned home crying. I tried to get my father to tell what is wrong with me. My father consolidated me saying that it was not my fault, instead, the other ones were to blame. Perhaps they were jealous and afraid of losing their status: the refugees would take their jobs and everything. I could not understand things like that. I was still half a child. Once again I was left disappointed. Why does everyone wish bad for us?"

"Olin pelannut jo Kissoissa yhtä ikäluokkaa ylempänä, eli A-junioreissa, enkä osannut pitää pitää kovin kummallisena ajatuksena, että lähden miesten peleihin etuajassa. Mutta kohtelu oli siellä erittäin kovaa. En tiedä, johtuiko se ulkonäöstäni ja taustastani, mutta mua potkittiin jaloille ihan surutta. Ja vieraspeleissä sain kuulla vaikka mitä: vitun pakolainen, tule hakemaan leipää!" (Wikström 2017, p. 23-24)

"I had already played one age-class- the Ajuniors for Kissat, and I did not think much about joining the men's in advance. However, the treatment was extremely harsh. I am not sure if it was because the way I looked or my background, but I was kicked heavily without mercy. During the away-games I got all kinds insults: Fucking refugee, come get some bread!"

The way Shefki Kuqi reacted towards racism and prejudice was a slightly different way than Amirkhanis. As Amirkhani appeared to react defiantly to his treatment, Shefki Kuqi was rather distressed. He seemingly took the abuse in a more personal manner, as Amirkhani applied 'us against them' sort of strategy. As Amirkhani's used his temperament as a source of strength, Kuqi grew in persistence and resilience. These attributes mirror well the athletic characteristics of these individuals. It could be argued that they have been born with these personality traits, however, hardship encountered no doubt amplified these characteristics.

Occasionally the ruling norms and values are in such contradiction with values and culture of the multicultural athlete, that the resistance becomes a collective hunt against the individual. Zlatan Ibrahimovic described his problems adjusting the Swedish society:

"Aiheutin kuhinaa ruotsalaisten joukossa. Niiden vanhemmat halusivat minut ulos joukkueesta. Joku urpo pelaajan isä alkoi kerätä nimilistaa: Zlatan on saatava ulos joukkueesta. Ne kiersivät listan kanssa ja mumisivat, että Zlatan ei kuulu tänne, se täytyy heittää ulos jengistä. Valmentaja Ake Kallenberg vilkaisi listaa: 'Mitä ihmeen naurettavaa paskaa tämä on?' Sitten se repi listan paperisilpuksi" (Lagercrantz 2011, p. 101)

"I created a stir among the Swedish. The parents wanted me out of the team. Some moron, a player's father started to gather a list of names: Zlatan must be kicked out of the team. They circled around with the list and mumbled that Zlatan doesn't belong here, he must be thrown out of the team. The coach Ake Kallenberg had a look of the list: What kind of ridiculous shit is this? Then he tore the list in shreds.

Zlatan Ibrahimovic also felt that he needed to show more desire and ability than his Swedish peers in order to get respect and recognition:

"Yhden asian opin sen vuoden aikana. Kaltaiseni kaveri saa kunnioitusta vasta, kun se on viisi kertaa parempi kuin Leffe Person tai minkä nimisiä ne nyt olivatkaan. Kaltaiseni piti treenata kymmenen kertaa kovempaa. Muuten ei ole mahdollisuutta." (Lagercrantz 2011, p. 102)

"One thing I learned during that year. I guy like me only gets respect after he is five times better than Leffe Person, or whatever they are called. A guy like me had to train ten times harder. Otherwise, there was no chance."

Overall, there are various ways of confronting the obstacles and barriers set by the ruling society. Obviously these challenges, more often than not, are unbeneficial to the athlete, however, if handled in an appropriate manner, overcoming these challenges could function as a source of intrinsic motivation and strength. Having proper and suitable support without a doubt would help. Often this support can develop into flourishing mentorship between the athlete and the source of support.

4.7 The Importance of support from coaches, mentors and organizations

The various challenges faced by immigrant athletes might require special attention from the coaches and other club officials. For instance, immigrants could have economic and language problems. As the American researcher George Borjas (1987) points out, the background of the young males of ethnic minorities is not always beneficial, instead many barriers to social mobility can occur. Many times these youngsters need extensive support and sponsorship from the higher social classes (Agegaard & Kahr Sohrenseb, 2009).

As we have learned from the cases of French and German football, the managers think there is a pool of talent, rough diamonds to be found among ethnic minority groups. As it occurred in Zlatan Ibrahimovic's case, from different backgrounds, it is possible to find something identified as outside of the norm. Special skills and traits are in demand for the clubs because it is believed that these individuals could offer something outside of the box, and therefore, these individuals could be able to create a competitive advantage. In most cases, this additional support originates purely from humanistic aims, as a will to help the individual in need. However, sometimes sports clubs could see the situation as a 'return on invest' kind of a scenario, where they acknowledge potential for future gain.

 One of the most prevalent barriers for sports participation is the challenging economic situation of the immigrants. For instance, in Denmark, some of the clubs are trying to support the immigrants economically, so despite the economic struggles, these individuals could carry on playing. However, at a higher level, there were cases when players could not afford to pay the fees and therefore were excluded from the teams. In these cases, the players were often forced to switch for a less expensive club, and perhaps for a lower level of competition. (Agegaard & Sörensen 2010.)

In the case of individually diverse obstacles in participation, it could be difficult for the club to set cohesive rules, regulations, and standards because every individual problem and barrier would often be very different in nature. Setting underprivileged immigrants in favor might cause distress among their host-country peers. Therefore this extra support was in some cases offered informally, as individually based actions, which were not necessarily set in the guidelines of the club principles and activities.

In addition to economic support, perhaps even greater influence, support for an underprivileged immigrant athlete could become from the coaches. Often immigrant athletes, at some point in their careers, have had a coach with whom a special supporting relationship has been formed. In many cases, this coach has actually been the person who has persuaded the athlete to practices in the first place. As we previously noticed in Shefki Kuqi's case, the role of these "introducers", who encourage immigrants to take part in sports in the first place is significant, as the barriers faced at the initial stage could be the hardest ones. After the initial stage, the importance of the coach (s) was also significant considering which kind of initial experiences the individuals receive from the activities (Junkkala & Lallukka 2011, p. 27-29).

 This was evident in Zlatan Ibrahimović's case, as he describes his relationship towards one of his coaches:

"Valmentaja oli bosnialainen, joka oli pelannut melko korkealla tasolla Jugoslaviassa. Valkku oli meille kuin toinen isä. Se kuskasi meitä kotiin ja saattoi vipata muutaman kruunun jäätelöön tai ruokaan, jotta selviän pahimmasta nälästä." (Lagercrantz 2011, p.96)

"Our coach was Bosnian, who had played at a relatively high level at Yugoslavia. The coach was like a second father to us. He drove us home from practice and sometimes offered us money for ice cream or food, so we could survive from the worse hunger."

As we had previously learned from Zlatan Ibrahimovic's experiences, it is worth to notice that this particular coach had an immigrant background. In his case, many of the Swedish coaches had been less supportive, even counterproductive. It might be that this coach was able to identify himself with these multicultural young athletes and therefore was more sympathetic and supportive.

Occasionally the support might come from a non-sporting direction. Asylum center workers could have a pivotal role as introducers. For example, like in Shefki Kuqi's case, the asylum worker supported him in the very beginning of his career:

"*Aika tuli pitkäksi, koska saatoimme vain olla ja odottaa. Meitä ei huolittu kouluun, eikä isällänikään ollut töitä. Vastaanottokeskuksen työntekijät keksivät meille tekemistä parhaansa mukaan. He veivät meidät pelaamaan lentopalloa, koripalloa ja futista. Saimme pelata myös muita vastaanottokeskuksia vastaan.*"

"*Kysyin Marjukalta, yhdeltä työntekijöistä, voisinko päästä johonkin oikeaan jalkapallojoukkueeseen. . Marjukka oli heti juonessa mukana. Hän selvitti, minne voisin mennä, ja tarjoutui myös viemään mut sinne.*" (Wikström 2017, p. 18)

"*We were bored because all we could do was be still and wait. We were not accepted at school yet and my father did not have any job yet. The asylum center workers tried to entertain us as best as they could. They took us to play volleyball, basketball, and football. We also got to play against other asylum centers.*"

"*I asked Marjukka, one of the employees, would it be possible to join in a real football team… Marjukka was immediately on it. She made inquiries on which club would be possible and also offered to take me there.*"

"*Ensimmäiset harjoitukset menivät hyvin, vaikken ymmärtänyt, mitä mulle puhuttiin. Musta otettiin mitat ja käsitin, että saisin seuran verkkarit. Olin intoa täynnä palattuamme Visulahdelle. Otin palloni ja menin heti harjoittelemaan lisää. Sitten odotin vain, että Marjukka veisi mut taas harjoituksiin. Kului muutama päivä, sitten viikko. Lopulta Marjukka tuli luokseni ja laski kätensä olkapäälleni. Hän kertoi hankkivansa mulle uuden seuran.*"

(Wikström 2017, p.19)

"*The first practices went well, even though I could not understand what was said to me. They measured me up and I thought I would get the club training kit. I was full of enthusiasm as we got back to Visulahti. I took my ball and went immediately to practice more. Then I just waited that Marjukka would take me to practice again. A few days passed, then a week. Eventually, Marjukka came up to me and put her hand on my shoulder. She told me that she would find me a new club.*"

"*Parin viikon päästä Marjukka tuli luokseni iloisesti hymyillen: oli löytynyt toinen seura. Sen nimi oli Mikkelin Kissat. Sen edustusjoukkue ei pelannut pääsarjassa vaan*"

kolmosdivisioonassa, mutta siitä viis, nekin osasivat pelata ja harjoitella." (Wikström 2017, p.20)

"*After a couple of weeks, Marjukka came up to me smiling: she had found another club. The club was Mikkelin Kissat. The first team did not play in the first division instead they played in the third, but it did not matter to me, they could play and train as well. That was enough*"

The asylum worker had multiple roles in crossing initial barriers for physical activity. She worked as an introducer, network builder, but also offered support when Shefki Kuqi was facing prejudice.

This research has previously played down the schools role as an inclusive role. However, the role of PE teacher cannot be underestimated. Mo Farrah's had a close to mentorship kind of a relationship to his first PE teacher in England:

"*At the time I joined Feltham, coach Alan and the head of PE for the school, Graham Porter were in the process of creating something special. The school was building a reputation as one of the best in the area for athletics and had won several borough athletic championships. A lot of that came down to the hard work put in by Alan and Graham. I was fortunate to be at a school where the PE department was continually on the lookout for young athletic talent, and where the teachers wanted to nurture that talent. For me, it was definitely a case of right time, right place.*" (Farrah 2012, p.46)

"*Athletics became my whole life. Before Florida I was restless. Now I channeled all my energy into athletics, I wanted to make it as an athlete and nothing was going to stop me. I had Allan to thank for getting me on that plane, for opening up my horizons and showing me what was waiting out there if I was willing to reach out and seize it. And as a thank you, I brought him back a gift-a mug with 'WORLDS BEST TEACHER' written on the side.*" (Farrah 2012, p.94)

This is a prime example of how schools and clubs could co-operate in finding talent and nurturing it. It is also an example of how certain individuals are willing to go for the extra mile and put an extra effort for an athlete. As for an underprivileged immigrant athlete, this kind of support might evolve into mentorship, which for its own part can be a significant motivating factor for the athlete, because it can create a special feeling of gratitude.

Previously the importance of a sense of identity, locality and social belonging for the multicultural athlete has been highlighted. At best this sense of belonging creates an element of excessive support inside the community. The community takes care of the underprivileged ones. Many times this kind of support creates a culture of altruism and a positive circle of doing good. The individuals, who have previously received support, often are willing to pay back that support towards the community. Community educator Yannick Mendy describes how the circle of support functioned in his neighborhood:

"I've gone through some pretty rough patches in my life. I didn't have the things I have now. To be part of a club, our parents had to pay. In my family, we were 5 boys. Being part of a club was expensive, our parents couldn't afford the shoes, the studs… So you end up being frustrated. I didn't earn enough to afford a club at 14 or 15 years old. So, me and my friends thought we maybe could help those kids, who need a bit of money. 'You are not in a club? 'Can't pay for it.' So I call a couple of friends because I went through that too. We get together, we each give a little bit and the kids are happy to have studs. Today, we have a little brother who pays back for what we did: Gianelli Imbula. He plays at a high level. There's also Mario Lemina, who won the title last year (Serie A 2015). Those guys play with their club, but they help us if we need. I mean for kids here they are big stars. But they remember and give us a hand." (Mendy 2018, k Concrete Football)

The support for immigrant athletes appears to arrive from various different sources. Most commonly this support comes directly from the inner circle, family, relatives, friends, and peers. Especially, the family support establishes the foundation different capitals which are fundamental to the individual. However, the multiple barriers immigrants are facing during their integration process, special attention and support is often required. According to this study, various institutions, such as asylum organizations, schools, and sports clubs, for example, are able to offer this kind of assistance. Having said that, the assistance seems to be rarely organized and planned, instead, there seems to be a sense of informality and personal element involved. This element appears to lead into a deep sense of gratitude from the recipients. As a result, the sense of gratitude functions as a source of extra motivation for the athlete, as there is a will to pay back the support with performance and dedication.

5 Discussion

The discussion section is divided into two parts. In the first part the factors concerning the reasons, how immigrant athletes are differentiated from their host-society peers is explained by various themes visible both within the literature, as well as, the data gathered on this study. With this method, the phenomena is examined on the light, how the selected themes are connected with athletes stance on the integrative, or the separate (distinguish) part during the process of becoming an athlete. The four themes selected are the autonomy of space, integration and social mobility, social networks, support and culture-traits. These themes were selected, because according to this research, the sources of differentiation of immigrant based athletes is illustrated in the best way.

In the second part these themes are utilized as athlete cases through an *athlete's life course-timeline,* which is divided into three sections; childhood period, selection period and elite-sports period. The data gathered for this part of the discussion is from the autobiographies of the selected multicultural athletes (Makwan Amirkhani, Shefki Kuqi, Zlatan Ibrahimovic, Mo Farrah, and Thierry Henry) for this study. Within the athlete's life course, the aim is to display the distinguish features these athletes face as immigrants, and in which manner these features have affected their career progress as athletes during these selected periods of time.

5.1.1 Autonomy of space

The aim of discussion here is to display the differences and distinguishing features among immigrants/multicultural individuals and their host country peers, in relation to spaces and autonomy within engaging physical activities. One of the hypotheses of this study is the correlation and balance between the sense of freedom-autonomy and structure-organization. This hypothesis not solely includes the level of organization in participation in sports, but also emphasizing the sense of autonomy in spaces, where especially adolescents are able to practice with freedom and without restrictions. Whether the autonomous places are becoming a 'privilege' of the underprivileged is debatable, but the information gathered from the previous literature, supported with the data gathered on this study, seems to enforce the idea that for instance immigrant and multicultural based individuals and groups have access and also are excessively utilizing the free-autonomous spaces more than their host-country counterparts.

Practicing and spending their free leisure time in such places might differentiate and distinguishes them, and therefore possibly gives them a degree of competitive advantage. According to the information gathered in this study, the strongest sources of differentiation comes from the sense of freedom, which allows these individuals to practice their skills in a creative manner where their imagination is their only restriction.

Another significant aspect is linked with a sense of locality and social belonging. These spaces are not solely functioning as venues for practicing and playing, but also operate as important gathering and meeting places for these multicultural youngsters. The social aspect linked with these spaces increases their sense of identity and they feel comfortable in spending their free leisure time in a place where they are able simultaneously to compete with their peers, but also receive collective trust and support. Sources of differentiation in relation to aspects of autonomy of space is displayed in figure 3.

Distinguish

sense of freedom

the neighborhood

location and locality

my imagination was the only limitation

spaces are open for creativity

autonomy and control of spaces

meeting places for free-time

Figure 3. Sources of differentiation related to autonomy of space

5.1.2 Integration and social mobility

The aim of discussion in this section is to demonstrate, how the immigrant/multicultural athlete is differentiated from host country peers during the integration process and in their quest towards social mobility. The idea is to show the reasons, why the athletes would be willing to integrate, how sports is able to function as a tool and the ways, how this combination distinguishes these individuals from their main population competitors.

The integration process and gaining social mobility through sports normally/ ideally pushes immigrants towards the institutions, norms, and values of the host country. Sports role is seen as a bridge builder between these social groups, as well as a source of various social capitals and networks. However, mainly because of the barriers and prejudice faced by the immigrants, a separative integration process may occur. In this scenario, the ethnically diverse individual, or group, rather enforces the original culture, than assimilates towards the main population culture. Even though the separative process may be problematic, this study demonstrates evidence, that during this process, the individual is often actually willing to integrate and is seeking acceptance from the host-society, but also resisting it at the same time and seeking support from the original group. Therefore, the individual is both trying to work hard on achieving acknowledgment and at the same time is maintaining original cultural traits which might differentiate the athlete in terms of personality and attitude in comparison to the athlete's host-country competitors. This study argues, that this balance between integration and separation produces a nature of heterogenization and differentiation, which could result as a competitive advantage.

If we agree that sport may deliver an equal platform for participation and equal opportunities for social mobility, the immigrant athlete might be extra motivated to do well in sports for various reasons; firstly, through informal adjustment, the individual might gain social capital and networks which could be difficult to achieve through formal institutions. Secondly, the individual could be willing to work extra hard in order to fit in and receive attention. Oppositely, the individual may resist the integration process through willingly distinguishing oneself from the main group and be determined to 'prove others wrong'. During the mental process of facing this turmoil of acculturative stress might also strengthen the athlete's mentality. Sources of differentiation in relation to integration and social mobility displayed in figure 4.
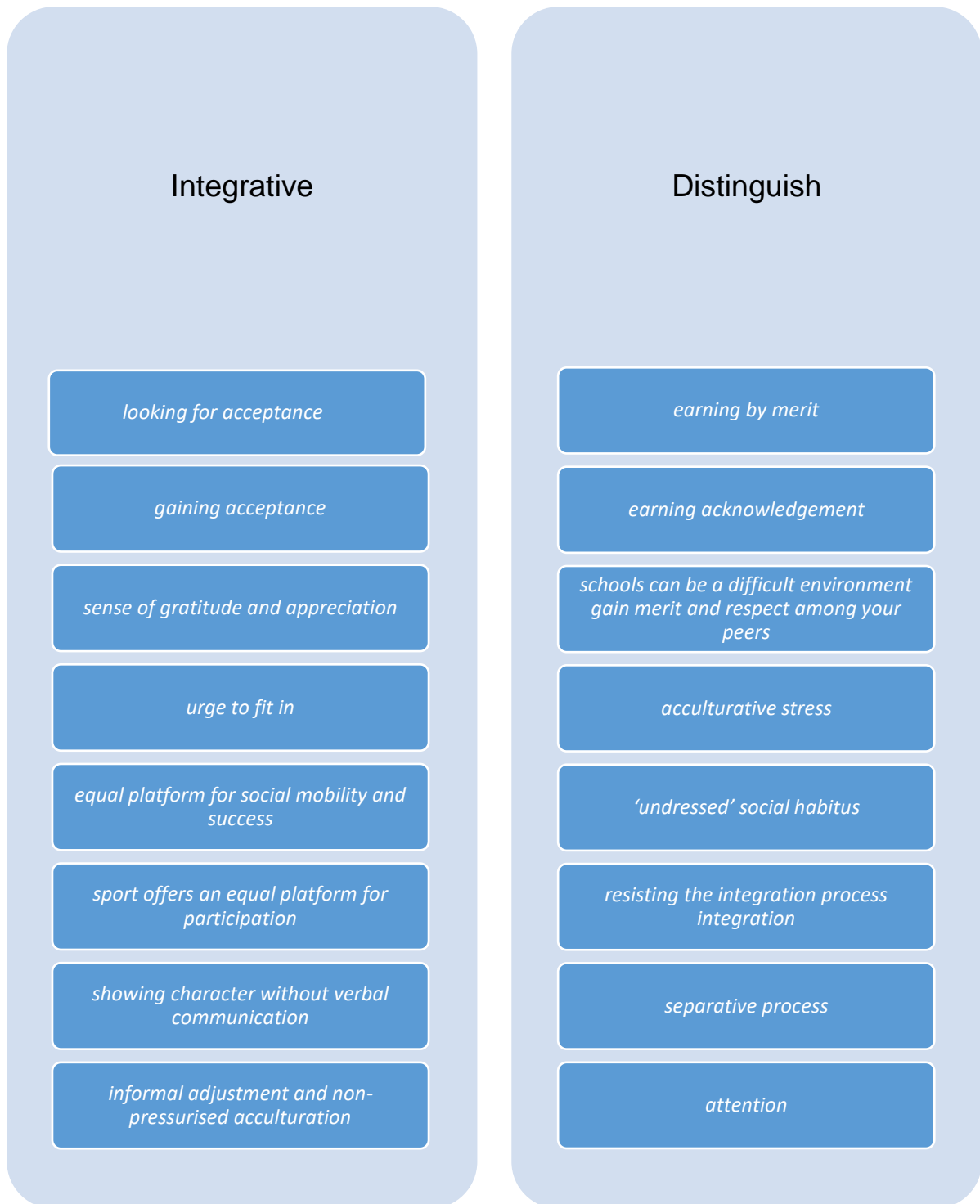
Figure 4. Sources of differentiation related to integration and social mobilty

5.1.3 Social networks and support

The aim of this section of the discussion is to explain the differences in existing social networks, in creating new ones and how this process is supported by the immigrant/multicultural athletes own community and in the same time by the host society. The lack of social networks could be seen as one of the main sources of acculturative stress for immigrants. Participation in sports can be a way of attacking this stress. Immigrants might also encounter various everyday problems. Inadequate social networks and everyday problems call for additional support. This support could come through host-country institutions, or informally through leisure activities. Having said this, often immigrants might have a strong sense belonging and mutual support inside from their original ethnic group. The communities often take care of the underprivileged ones and a culture of collective altruism might occur.

Generally speaking the lack of networks and various social capitals could be clearly considered as a disadvantage. However, in the process of facing these barriers, the apparent disadvantages could turn into advantages. This transformation could be a result of extra-additional support followed by a deep sense of gratitude which possibly could end up displayed as increased motivation.

The differentiation and distinguishing part here would be the different sources and amount of the support between the host country athletes and the multicultural ones. As the host country athletes generally speaking are considered having more than adequate social networks and social capital, this could end up being a cause for complacency and weaker motivation to do well in a highly competitive environment like elite sports. Also, the kind of support provided by the institutes could be less personal in nature. Optimally, the immigrant athlete could experience and benefit from a mentorship type of support through the club activities, where for instance the athlete/coach relationship could become excessively mutually beneficial, but also gain mental strength from the collective-local neighborhood support. Sources of differentiation in relation to social networks and support displayed in figure 5.
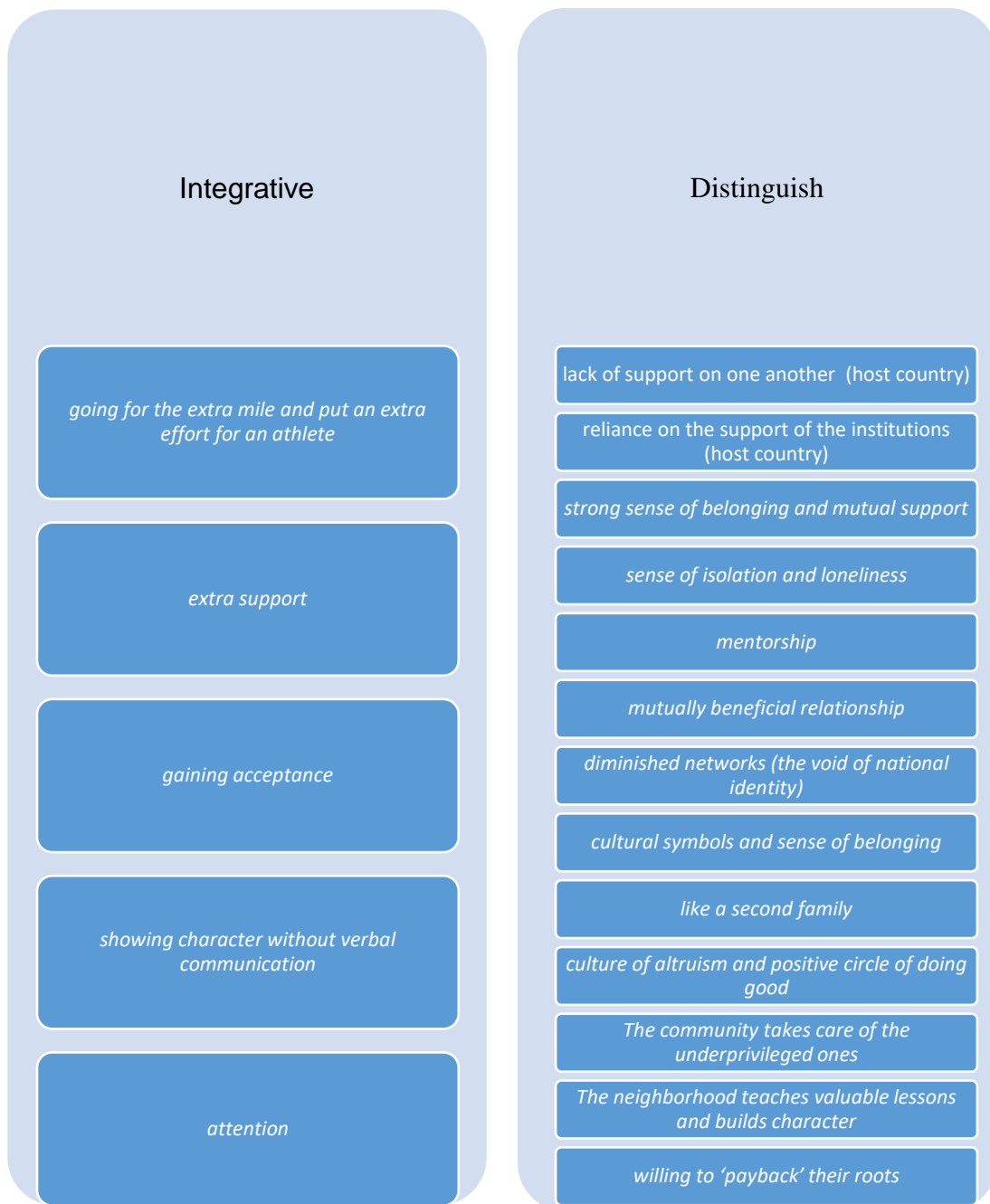
Integrative	Distinguish
going for the extra mile and put an extra effort for an athlete	lack of support on one another (host country)
	reliance on the support of the institutions (host country)
extra support	*strong sense of belonging and mutual support*
	sense of isolation and loneliness
	mentorship
gaining acceptance	*mutually beneficial relationship*
	diminished networks (the void of national identity)
	cultural symbols and sense of belonging
showing character without verbal communication	*like a second family*
	culture of altruism and positive circle of doing good
	The community takes care of the underprivileged ones
attention	*The neighborhood teaches valuable lessons and builds character*
	willing to 'payback' their roots

Figure 5. Sources of differentiation related to social networks and support

5.1.4 Culture and traits

The purpose of this section of the discussion is to highlight the importance of heterogeneity, different cultural/personal traits and experiences. The importance of differentiation of multicultural athletes has been discussed and is one of the main themes of this study. Previously this differentiation and distinguishing features have been linked with the integration process, opportunities and a sense of freedom and belonging. It has been discussed, that these features commonly are linked with the interconnection of both, the host country and the country of origin of the immigrant. This study has been discussing the lack- or on the contrary, the excess of opportunities and networks, and how the individual is reacting into the ruling society's efforts to even up the playground. The aim has been trying to demonstrate, how the immigrant individual might have a strong will for acculturation, or on the other hand, is trying to resist the norms and values of the host society. It could be argued, that in both of these cases the immigrant is experiencing some level of differentiation, whether it is beneficial or not.

The idea of a cultural melting pot with a richness of various different cultures and traits has been determined as an advantage considering success in sports. This calls for a certain degree of maintaining some of the personal traits the immigrant possesses, which are perhaps deeply rooted within the culture of the country of origin. It is worth to understand that sometimes these traits could be in contrast with the norms and values of host-society, for instance like in the case of Zlatan Ibrahimovic, where his arrogance and defiant attitude was in the end considered as a strength and source of differentiation in comparison to his Swedish peers. In other cases, these traits could become a source of rejuvenation, like it was perceived with French football, where the Afro-Caribian sense of relaxed traits combined with different sort of athleticism for its part brought France football to the very top on a global level.

Overall, the idea of this claim is that the distinguishing traits of the immigrants would be able to fill certain voids or offer something new, or special features, which might be lacking in the host society. For instance, in some cases, the host-society could suffer from a sense of complacency due to the long lasting stable and wellbeing environment. Another example would be, where the host-society is so concentrated on the collective good that it fails to recognize the needs and the value of the individual. Within these scenarios, this study is trying to argue that either breaking or mixing the existing norms could prove to be successful in sports. Sources of differentiation in relation to culture and traits displayed in figure 6.
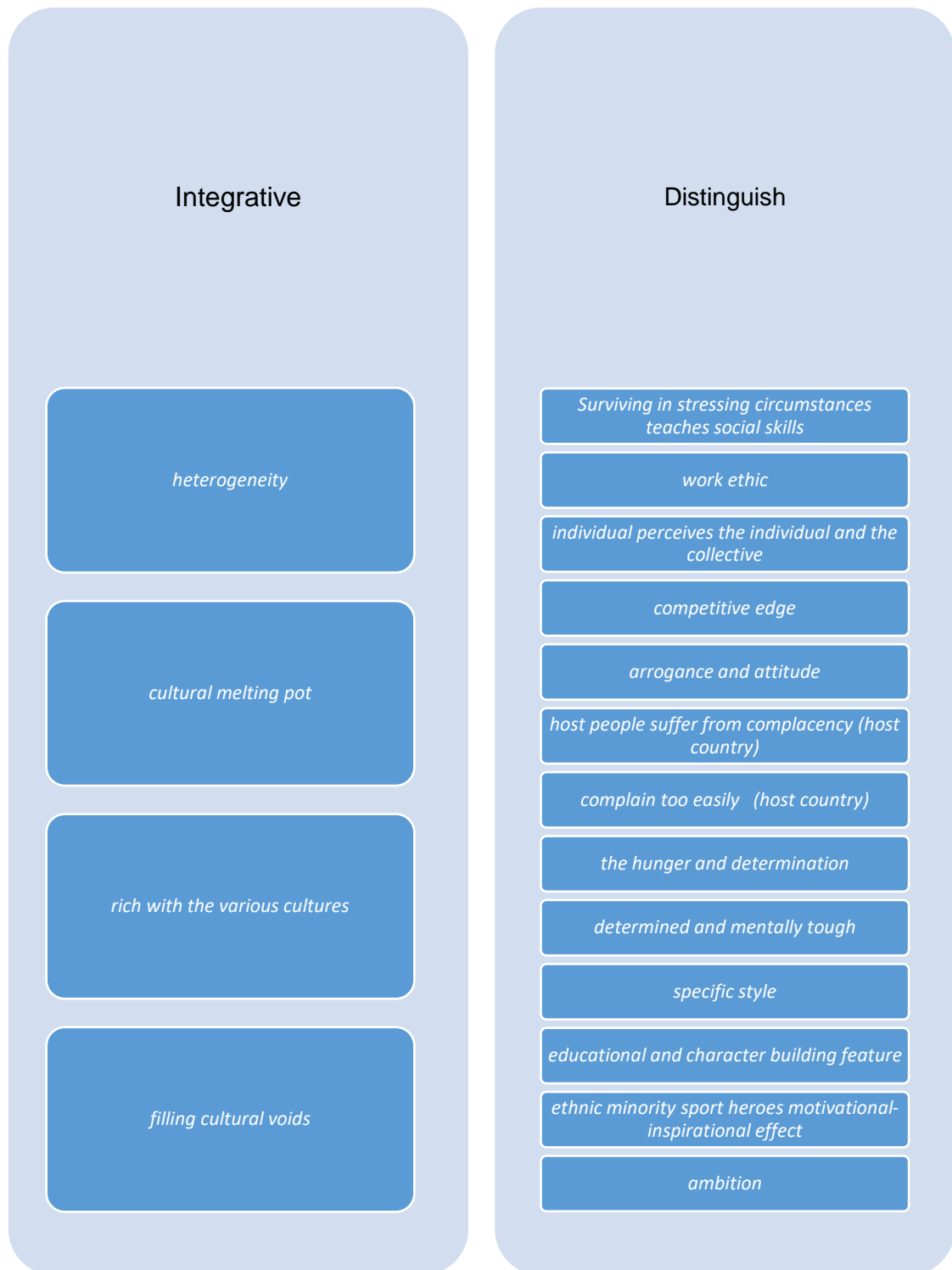
Integrative	Distinguish
heterogeneity	*Surviving in stressing circumstances teaches social skills*
	work ethic
	individual perceives the individual and the collective
cultural melting pot	*competitive edge*
	arrogance and attitude
	host people suffer from complacency (host country)
rich with the various cultures	*complain too easily (host country)*
	the hunger and determination
	determined and mentally tough
	specific style
filling cultural voids	*educational and character building feature*
	ethnic minority sport heroes motivational-inspirational effect
	ambition

Figure 6. Sources of differentiation related to culture and traits

5.2.1 Athlete Case- Makwan Amirkhani

The athletic life course Makwan Amirkhani went through, begun with the feeling of isolation as a child. Because of this isolation, he was trying hard to seek acceptance from his peers in school, but eventually gained this acceptance through his merit as a wrestler.

A quote describing Makwan Amirkhanis period of childhood:

"At the school cafeteria, I always sat alone. My seat was at a rounded table next to the aquarium. Nobody wanted to play with me" (Sainio 2017, p. 13)

A quote describing Makwan Amirkhanis period of athletic selection:

"Because we were not accepted fully in the wrestling circles, it drove us into a situation where we had to succeed in the competitions. We were all very temperament. When we treated unfairly during competitions, we stood up to defend ourselves." (Sainio 2017, p.70)

Later on, during the elite-sport period of his career, Amirkhani felt that the complacency of his host-country competitors worked for his advance. Also, he acknowledged the support of the family orientated lifestyle of his original culture, but also the 'special' support of the club coaches. Overall it could be argued that Amirkhani's quest for acceptance and his distinguish cultural traits had an effect for his success as an athlete. The athletic life course of Makwan Amirkhani displayed in figure 7.

Quotes describing Makwan Amirkhanis period of elite sports:

"Sometimes I think of people, that "what a shame", that you live in Finland, and you are not using all the opportunities which exist here. You grow up here, and you don't demand anything from yourself, even if you have all the possibilities. (Sainio 2017, p. 66)

"I could have become anything in my life. I could have become a junkie or turn into doing something really bad. If someone has been jumping down from the cliff, it wasn't me. I have turned everything into positive. One thing I know, if there is a place where opportunities exist, it is this country." (Sainio 2017, p. 73)
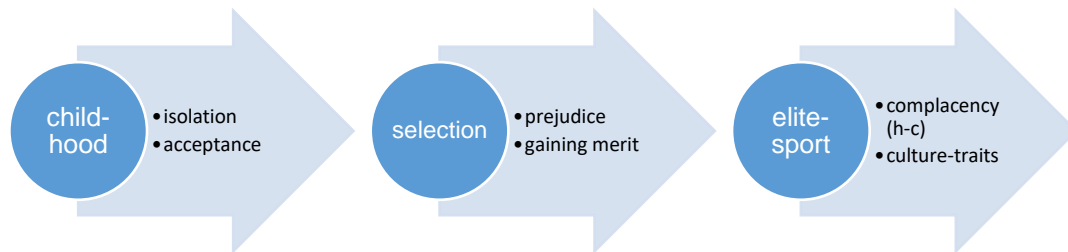
Figure 7. The Athletes Life Course of Makwan Amirkhani

5.2.2 Athlete Case- Shefki Kuqi

As a child, Shefki Kuqi experienced various barriers for participation. These barriers were mainly caused by prejudice conducted by the local football clubs and by his host-country peers. Overcoming these barriers and prejudice increased his determination and willpower.

Quotes describing Shefki Kuqis period of childhood:

"I had just turned thirteen, and even though I barely knew a few words of Finnish, I believed I could get along with the locals. Football is the same for everybody, it united people disregarded of color, age or size."

"I wondered out loud, why I had to change a club. Then I understood: they don't want me. Tears were pouring from my eyes. I took my ball and told them where to get off. I swore, that they would regret that decision." (Wikström 2017, p. 19)

During his selection period, the local athletic field enabled Shefki to practice autonomously which improved his skills generally as an athlete. On this field, he was able to be informally adjusted to the locals and learn the important language and social skills through his host-country peers while practicing and spending his leisure time at the Kangasniemi field.

A quote describing Shefki Kuqis period of athletic selection:

"Kangasniemi was a nice little municipality, especially for this kind of a sports fanatic. There was a well-maintained football field, which was surrounded by a full-length track and field track. On the end of the field were places for high jump and pole vault, and in the other end, there was a rink for shot put and hammer throw as well as a space for long jumping. I spend all of my free time there- I threw the javelin, long jumped, ran and went occasionally for a swim. With others, I played football, volleyball, basketball, and tennis. My imagination was the only limitation, and all that activity certainly had an effect on my career as a footballer."
(Wikström 2017, p.23)

Eventually, like Makwan Amirkhani, Shefki used sports as a way to gain merit and acceptance. This merit was gained by setting an example of hard work and dedication. The athlete life course of Shefki Kuqi displayed in figure 8.

A quote describing Shefki Kuqis period of elite sports:

"If you are fighting and putting yourself down in the line, you have an automatic response to do the same. This guy really means it and wants to help us to win the game. One, two-three times he does it, it creates a feeling, that I like you, we want the same and we want to be together, football is a team sport anyways. If he does it, I can do the same. This is an example of the differences to sitting on a bench at school." (Kuqi 2015)
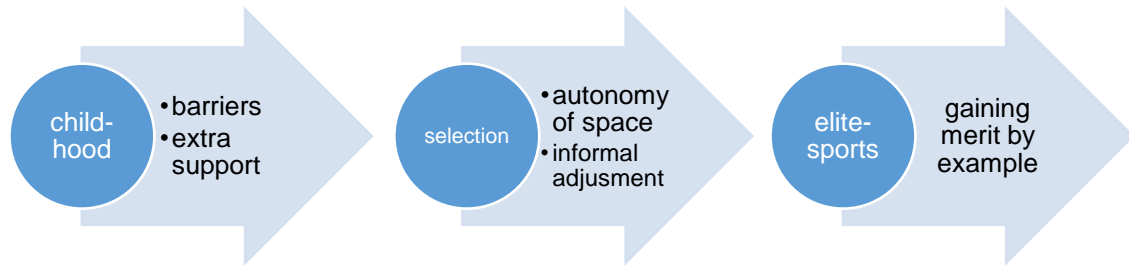
Figure 8. The Athletes Life Course of Shefki Kuqi

5.2.3 Athlete Case- Zlatan Ibrahimovic

With Zlatan Ibrahimovic, during his whole athletic life course, he has had a strong need to be different, to be singled out and to be noticed. At the early stages of his childhood, Zlatan was seeking attention in various ways and needed to be free to express himself. The autonomous nature of the block yard games was a suitable way of practicing his skills freely, but also gain merit among his multicultural peers.

Quotes describing Zlatan Ibrahimovices period of childhood:

"*I hated being left outside of the games. I also hated losing. Even though winning in those games was not important. The most important things were the tricks and dribbles. There had to be the 'wau' effect. We did tricks and asked others to watch. We had to impress our mates with tricks and dribbles, which I practiced as long as nobody else could do the trick as well as me."* (Lagercrantz 2011, p. 92)

"*We continued playing relentlessly. We played with very small fields and therefore we had to have quick feet and fast thinking. Especially, the likes of small and lanky, which were most of the time pushed aside with tough tackling. I learned remarkable skills all the time, I had to, otherwise, I got no attention."* (Lagercrantz 2011, p. 96)

In many ways, Zlatan Ibrahimovic ways trying to 'find his way' and identity, as being in between of two different cultures. During this time he faced prejudice among local football clubs and partly for that reason, resisted the acculturation process. For Zlatan, this resistance was a source of mental strength and differentiation.

A quote describing Zlatan Ibrahimovices period of athletic selection:

" I felt I was from Mars. Not only because my father did not own a house and never stood by the field cheering. I talked differently. I dribbled. I was a ticking time bomb and I sometimes might have fought in the field." (Lagercrantz 2011, p.101)

Since he was approaching the elite-status as a footballer, he used his different, arrogant mentality to gain attention. He was something acknowledged as outside of the Swedish norm, which eventually worked as his advantage. The athlete life course of Zlatan Ibrahimovic displayed in figure 9.

Quotes describing Zlatan Ibrahimovic's elite sports period:

"One thing I learned during that year. I guy like me only gets respect after he is five times better than Leffe Person, or whatever they are called. A guy like me had to train ten times harder. Otherwise, there was no chance." (Lagercrantz 2011, p. 102)

"Normally a junior is more humble. I thought differently, I had nothing to lose. I gave everything. I was going full steam and I noticed how they were starting to talk about me: 'Who does he think he is, and stuff like that. I mumbled back something like 'go to hell' and continued playing." (Lagercrantz 2011, p.117)
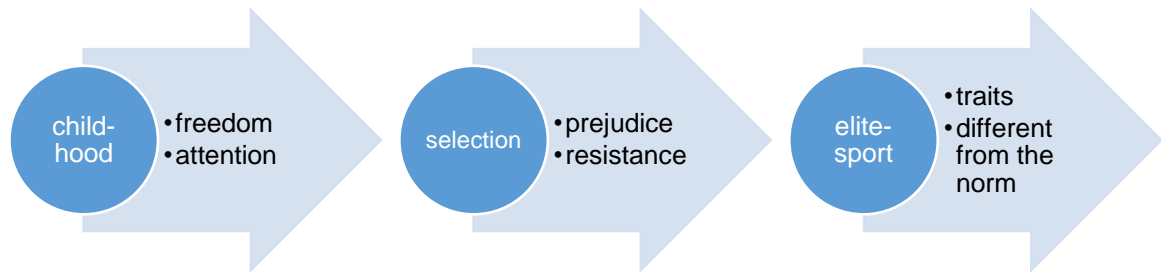
Figure 9. The Athletes Life Course of Zlatan Ibrahimovic

5.2.4 Athlete Case -Mo Farrah

Mo Farrah's childhood in the rough environment of Djibouti clearly had an effect on his high work ethic and values. Because of his background, Mo was from an early age mentally strong, which partly helped him to integrate towards the host society.

A quote describing Mo Farrah's period of childhood:

"*Perhaps we didn't have some of the things that children in other countries take for granted, but for us, this was never a big deal. In some ways, it was an advantage. In Djibouti, everybody had to work hard for what they had. No one got given anything on a plate, but you wouldn't find people sitting around feeling sorry for themselves. Everyone rolled up their sleeves and got on with it. We learned to appreciate what we had. We learned that you didn't anywhere in life without putting in the work. In that sense, Djibouti made me tough.*" (Farrah 2013, p. 25-26)

During his selection period in England, Mo Farrah also received extensive support from the host society institutions, and even more so, individual assistance and support from his teacher and coaches. Mo Farrah is a prime example of the combination of special cultural features,

gaining acceptance through sport and the appropriate support of the host country institutions and individuals.

A quote describing Mo Farrah's period of athletic selection:

"*At the time I joined Feltham, Alan and the head of PE for the school, Graham Porter were in the process of creating something special. The school was building a reputation as one of the best in the area for athletics and had won several borough athletic championships. A lot of that came down to the hard work put in by Alan and Graham. I was fortunate to be at a school where the PE department was continually on the lookout for young athletic talent, and where the teachers wanted to nurture that talent. For me, it was definitely a case of right time, right place.*" (Farrah 2013, p. 46)

With Mo Farrah, the mixture of special cultural traits and the assistance of the host country institutions (school and sport clubs), along with his personal ambition, arguably had a positive effect on his success as an athlete. The athletes life course of Mo Farrah displayed in figure 10.

A quote describing Mo Farrah's elite sports period:

"*I had this compulsive desire to improve-this determination to win. There are some extremely talented people who fall into a trap of believing that because they have talent, they don't have to work hard. I was never fooled by that. I took the toughness and the work ethic that I'd learned as a child in Gebilay and Djibouti and carried it with me into competitive running."* (Farrah 2013, p. 61)
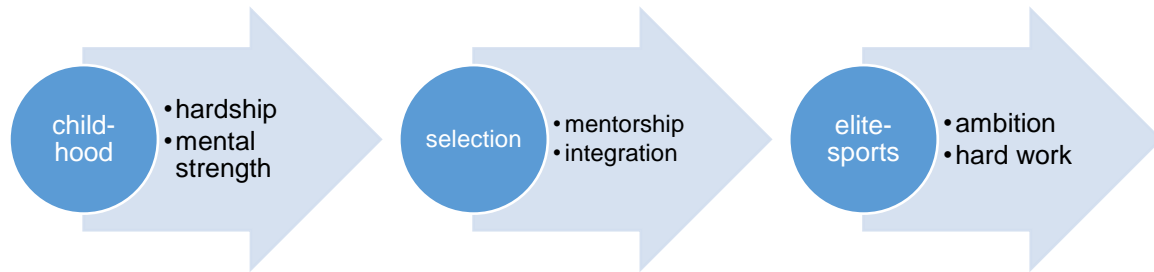
Figure 10. The Athletes Life Course of Mo Farrah

5.2.5 Athlete Case-Thierry Henry

Throughout Thierry Henry's childhood and selection period, the importance of local identity and autonomy has been evident in his athletic progress. In his local neighborhood sport played a significant role as a way of spending the free, leisure time by Thierry himself, as well as many of his peers in the neighborhood.

A quote describing Thierry Henry's period of childhood:

Thierry Henry often reminded journalists that, contrary to legend, he 'had the chance to have a good education, good parents and some good facilities around me, somewhere where you could play football and basketball. Thierry and his friends played not on one of the council's fields, but on whichever improvised surface could pass as a pitch" (Auclair 2012, p. 17)

There appeared to be a deep sense of pride connected to the various spaces and venues. Thierry absorbed vital social skills and learned how to compete in rough challenging surroundings. This mentality, which arguably was a mixture of cultural traits and the effect of the surrounding environment, distinguished Thierry, and many other athletes from the ones inside the host country society. In this sense, there were similarities of the process with Zlatan

Ibrahimović, however, in Thierry Henry's case, it could be argued, that rather than seeking to be separated from the ruling norms of the society, Thierry was more connected to, and received support from his local community and environment.

A quote describing Thierry Henry's period of athletic selection:

"Thierry was clever. He was quite shy to start with so that people would accept him. 'Once they had done so, Thierry could move on, to other aims, to other people. This 'respect', to use the lingo of the banlieue, is not the most attractive of characteristics, but one should not forget it is a tool for survival first, for domination second." (Auclair 2012, p. 53)

As Thierry Henry was turning into professional football, similarly, like Mo Farrah, his distinguishing attributes and traits were nurtured by the host society organized institutions, such as the Clairefontaine football academy. It is well worth to notice that Thierry Henry was not by far the only one benefitting of this cultural melting pot associated with the institutes. This combination had a wider impact to French professional as a whole. The athletes life course of Thierry Henry displayed in figure 11.

A quote describing Thierry Henry's elite sports period:

"Gerard Houllier, who had been mindlessly pilloried in the press for the 1994 debacle, felt fortunate to rekindle his love for football in the company of this group of youngsters, who were quite unlike any who had preceded them at this level. To start with, a number of them were sons of first-generation 'immigrants' of Afro-Caribbean origin who had been raised in the high-rise estates now encircling most of Frances biggest cities. In that respect, Thierry was just one of many. What they brought with them was a certain insouciance, a love of fun, but also the mental toughness that is required to be your own man in the harsh environment of the banlieau- or the football academy, like the Clairefontaine." (Auclair 2012, p. 65)
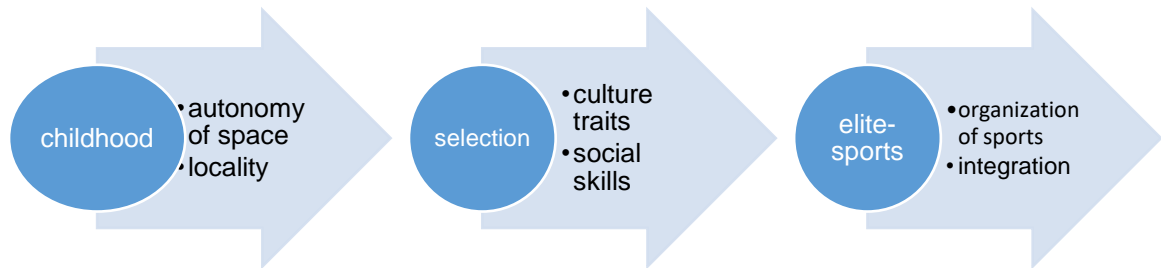
childhood
• autonomy of space
• locality

selection
• culture traits
• social skills

elite-sports
• organization of sports
• integration

Figure 11. The Athletes Life Course of Thierry Henry

5.3 Summary of discussion

All of the cases, stories and the relations towards the host society were different in nature. Their integration process, as well as, their source of differentiation was different. For example as Makwan Amirkhani and Shefki Kuqi had a strong will to adapt and be accepted by the host-society, their Swedish counterpart Zlatan Ibrahimovic was eager to distinguish and separate himself away from the values of the Swedish society. Zlatan Ibrahimovic utilized this separative process for his advantage- he wanted to show that he is different. In Mo Farrah's case, the differentiation came from the culture and hard environment of his country of origin. Mo Farrah imported the hard working ethic values from Djibouti and displayed the sort of mental strength, which was perhaps lacking from the more 'complacent' environment in England. Finally, with Thierry Henry, it could be argued, that it was a mixture of distinguish cultural traits, 'street wisdom' and appropriate public sport planning. It is also worth to mention that no doubt, France as a country is in a different stage with issues in immigration than for instance Finland is. For instance, Thierry Henry is a second generation immigrant and had no difficulties with the language, which in most cases is the biggest barrier the immigrants may face.

As for all the differences, these athletes also experienced many similarities along their way of becoming professional athletes. They all had a will to gain merit and attention. They wanted to move forward in life- climb the social ladders of society. They were also receiving extra support, in most cases both from the host-society and the culture of origin. Throughout the data and the literature, certain sense of gratitude and willing to 'pay back' was evident. In addition to this, it could be said that all of these athletes overall benefitted from their bicultural status, as they were successfully able to combine the best traits from both sets of cultural traits. Finally, it has to be mentioned that every one of these athletes faced some sort of prejudice and/or barriers which they needed to overcome.

5.4 Main results

When immigration and success in sports is discussed, largely the discussion refers to diversity. The main issues are such as; diversity in culture, diversity of opportunities, social relations and how different individuals perceive space, time and sense of freedom. The diversity related to immigration is also about finding ones identity and social belonging. Among immigrant and multicultural athletes, all these factors mentioned are in relation to the existing norms and values of the host-society. Therefore, it could be argued that these individuals, or distinguish group of people are in a certain process of cultural and identical transformation. This study argues that the period of transformation and bicultural integration process is the main factor which has an effect to the possible success of the immigrant athlete.

According to results of the data gathered in this research, along with the previous literature existed on immigrant/multicultural athletes, it could be argued that the differences during the process of the athletic life course of immigrant based athletes could be one of the main factors behind the success of immigrant based athletes. The athletic life course is influenced by the integration and acculturation process, which evidently is lacking with their host country peers. There were differences on how the integration process is perceived among different individuals, as some were more willing to accept and adjust towards the host society, and others are resisting the process and had a will to separate and maintain their original cultural features.

This process could in many cases be a source of acculturative stress. It would not be logical to assume, that any sort of a stress would be beneficial to individuals in all cases. More so, in

most cases, and in general scale, this scenario would rather be a disadvantage for the athlete. However, overcoming stressing situations and obstacles could become a source of motivation and strength for some individuals. This chain of events is arguably the main source of differentiation, which could set these multicultural individuals apart from the norm of the host society. Therefore, this sort of differentiation could be seen as a competitive advantage comparing to the host society peers. In practice this competitive advantage is visible on how these individuals are connected in the structures and institutions of the host country. The structures and institutions in an athletic framework, consists for example as schools, sport clubs, federations and other social networks, which might in case of immigration 'dysfunction' or be inadequate for the individual. For instance, problems in language skills and cultural trait differences might have an effect to the effectiveness of the education system for the immigrant. In this case, sports can become a mediator or a tool for acquiring valuable cultural and social capital, and eventually sports could become a ladder towards social mobility. The different relationship towards the structures of the host society could also alter the perception of freedom and autonomy of immigrants. In a simplified manner, this could be explained by stating that less structure means more freedom, and increased freedom and autonomy in practice could improve the skill sets of these athletes and at the same time differentiate them from their host society athletic peers.

The differentiation, according to this research is not solely linked with the technical ability, but for the most part in the metal ability of the immigrant/multicultural athletes. This alleged mental strength could be based on the process of overcoming various barriers and prejudice faced by these individuals. In many cases, overcoming these obstacles is in extensive manner supported by coaches and other third sector operatives. The mixture of the opportunity for gaining acceptance and merit through sports and the appreciation towards the extensive support offered by certain host society individuals could function as a source of extra motivation. Also, in many cases this support provides informal adjustment to the norms and values of the ruling society. This sort of informal education could in many cases be more suitable and efficient than the formal ones supplied by the host country institutions. As a consequence, the proportion and positive role of sports in their lives might be elevated.

This research accomplishes, to a certain degree to demonstrate the factors behind successful immigrant based athletes. These factors are presented in a manner, which combines and takes into account the individual and it's relation to society and macro environment. The vindication behind the validity of these factors commences from a deep/rich knowledge

acquired from mixed sources autobiographies, interviews, newspapers, journals and documentaries combined with previous research and literature.

It is difficult to define whether immigrant/multicultural athletes have a bigger incentive to do well in sports, or to find completely combining features determining the reasons behind this success. According to this study, it could be argued that there are some distinguish benefactors which influence on the success of immigrant and multicultural athletes. These benefactors could work as an advantage or vice versa as a disadvantage for the athlete. The key is, how the individual is able to handle the process of the integration and acculturation process. Overall it could be argued that certain heterogeneity and a cultural mix would be beneficial in elite-sports. Having said that, as becoming a professional athlete is only a privilege of the few, it is important to acknowledge that drawing comprehensive, general conclusions of immigrant based population and their success in sports is challenging because as a social phenomenon, sports and immigration is so complex, influenced by so many variables and occurring in such different environments.

5.5 Limitations and further study

The results of this Master's thesis study are qualitative, narrative and descriptive in nature. The main data collection of this study was the selected five autobiographies of successful immigrant athletes. Even in a data this small, it was difficult find completely combining themes around their athletic success and their background as multicultural immigrants. This highlights the complexity of drawing a strong hypothesis on this subject.

There is some quantifiable data presented, but in order to increase validity, more should be presented. This study also fails to display the narratives and stories of the immigrant athletes who have not achieved the same success as the ones presented in this study. Because of the inadequate quantifiable data, as well as, the complete lack of female athlete presentation, wider conclusions are not achievable within this research. The exclusion of female athletes for this research was mainly because the thesis was so focused on the theme of social mobility, that it discards sport disciplines which are not necessarily considered as professional sports. In this case by professional sports is considered the disciplines which are not able to deliver adequate economical mobility. In addition to the apparent lack of finance in female sports, there is also various distinguish cultural aspects which might influence on the relationship of

sports and female immigrants. For the reasons mentioned above, also a wider range of different sport disciplines were not included.

There would plenty of room for future research. In order achieve more complete results and to draw stronger conclusions on the hypothesis, whether immigrant/multicultural athletes actually perform better in sports, a more demographically valid, mixed method research is recommended. A more demographically precise research should include the segregation between; different origins, backgrounds, cultural differences and gender of immigrant based athletes. This should be further validated with quantified data of actual proportions of immigrant athletes compared to the athletes from the host country. A further comparison between different disciplines would be recommended as well.

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