

THE PRESERVATION OF CULTURAL IDENTITY THROUGH
THE GAELIC ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION IN FINLAND

A Case Study of Helsinki Harps GAA

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Master's Thesis
Spring 2018

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ABSTRACT

Master's Thesis, pages 60

Spring 2018

There has always been a huge number of Irish emigrating and recently there has been a number of Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) clubs founded throughout the world. This is not a new phenomenon, however the organisation's growth in Eastern and mainland Europe is. This paper deals with the GAA in Finland and in particular Helsinki, due to the little research on this subject. The aim of this research is to determine if the Gaelic games can be used as a tool for preserving cultural identity for Irish immigrants. Also, what is the significance of the GAA abroad, and what is the connection between Irish national identity and the GAA. This research is valuable for GAA clubs in Ireland and abroad, sociologists, and emigrants abroad looking to preserve their cultural identity

The research is guided by the qualitative case study research design. The data was collected by conducting five semi-structured interviews with people with deep and significant insights in Gaelic football in Helsinki, Finland. The interviewees were males aged 29 to 42 years old who are currently living in Helsinki, have done so for at least four years and are current members of the Helsinki Harps GAA club.

The outcome highlighted how the GAA is a strong cultural identity link for Irish emigrants in Finland. The individuals can be seen to integrate bi-culturally into Finnish society, while maintaining their Irish culture. The chosen features from the theories used in the study supported the understanding of the individual's experiences. All participants observed the significance of the GAA abroad for Irish citizens and the recognisable link between Ireland and the GAA. However, there are concerns with the future of the club and how well the club is integrating into Finnish society.

The current research provides empirical weight to the participation of GAA outside of Ireland. The study recommends more funding for GAA clubs abroad, especially in development in children's GAA and GAA events for all age groups. In addition, Helsinki Harps should introduce Finnish language and culture classes to the non-Finnish speaking members.

Keywords

Cultural identity, Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA), Ireland, Emigrant, Sport

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GAA – Gaelic Athletic Association

CSO – Central Statistics Office

DFA – Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

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1 INTRODUCTION

The Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) was founded in 1884 and is a truly unique sporting body. Gaelic games which are played under the auspices of the GAA include men's and ladies Gaelic football, hurling, camogie (ladies hurling); Gaelic handball and rounders. These indigenous games of Ireland have a tradition and culture not seen in many sports. There have always been connections to the GAA and cultural identity and a sense of inherent Irishness (Cronin, 1999; De Búrca, 1999; Mandle, 1987). The Irish diaspora has transported aspects of its language, religion, politics and culture wherever it has settled. The GAA has been one expression of this distinctiveness. In Finland, the GAA has been a small and relatively new organization. Using historical reflection and contemporary insight can help perceive how Gaelic sport in Finland assists understanding numerous aspects of Irish identity, culture and sport beyond the island of Ireland.

Since the crash of the economic boom and the so called 'Celtic tiger' of the early 2000's, Ireland has seen nearly half a million from almost five million of its population emigrate from 2008 to 2014 (CSO, 2017). Emigrating around the globe one tradition they have kept is the GAA, with a huge number of clubs being founded around the world in the new millennium. Why these Irish emigrants play these Gaelic games abroad is what this study analyses.

The link between culture, sport and identity can be seen to exist from studies by (J. Joseph, 2010; & Allen, Drane, Byon, & Mohn, 2010). The issues of cultural identity and the GAA, Irish identity, sport and emigrants are examined and analysed. The research reviews theories which have been previously used while studying this subject. The importance of family and the social connection is also observed and its pivotal role in culture.

Although there have been studies on GAA clubs outside of Ireland in historically and traditionally popular destinations like America, Scotland and England (Darby, 2006; Bradley, 2007; McAnallen, Mossey, & Moore, 2007), there has been little on other areas. This study has invaluable merit as it would be the first study on Nordic and Finnish GAA, an area not known for Gaelic games. The increasing number of members from other countries outside of Ireland show the significance of this study, an example of this have been shown in the Helsinki Harps GAA club membership archives. Whereas much of other clubs abroad are played predominately by Irish ex-patriots, several clubs like Helsinki Harps have international players on the team. This emergence of GAA clubs with many international players is a new phenomenon.

1.1 Personal interest

This topic interests me greatly as I have played Gaelic football all my life and I love the sport. I have played Gaelic football from a young age for my home club St. Farnan's in Sligo, Ireland. I have made and developed lifelong friendships from the sport and it has helped me settle in new places and counties. When I was 18 and moved to college in Letterkenny, County Donegal, Ireland, I instantly joined the college team and I felt integrated and at home being part of a team away from my homestead. I went to Australia in 2012 and one of the first actions I did was to look up local GAA teams to play with. This helped me network, socialise and ultimately quell my homesickness while being half a world away from Ireland. In Australia, I played with a club in Sydney called Clan Na Gael and in Adelaide called Onkaparinga GAA.

So, in late 2013 when I was planning to move to Helsinki, Finland, I was delighted to find out there was a GAA club in Helsinki called Helsinki Harps, which I found via the internet on Facebook and YouTube. The club at the time had just recently been involved in a documentary by filmmaker Ronan Browne called 'The Northernmost Point' and had received a lot of media interest in Ireland for playing in the most northern game of Gaelic football ever played. I spent three years there and performed different roles for the club including player, captain, coach, and committee member. Through this period, I have seen the club develop and add new aspects like hosting Nordic Gaelic football tournaments, a yearly family day for all members and their children to attend, and the addition of club sponsors Woolshed bar and grill in Helsinki, which has become the somewhat clubhouse and the hub of Helsinki Harps.

In 2016, I moved to the middle of Finland to Jyväskylä and there again I joined their GAA club Jyväskylä where I have coached and still play today. My travelling of the world has been enhanced by the awareness that the majority of larger cities in the world will probably have a GAA club, and the knowledge that these clubs provide me with an outlet for socialising and network with people with similar backgrounds. My experience with the club in Helsinki and knowledge of Finnish and Nordic GAA lead me to explore the possibility of researching the GAA with Helsinki Harps and the link with cultural identity, the significance of the GAA abroad and in Finland, and the connection between the GAA and the national Irish identity.

I wish to find if the GAA in Finland can be used as a vehicle for preserving cultural identity and what are the positive and negative outcomes of this. I wish to learn why have clubs abroad been founded and what attracts members to these clubs, especially Irish players abroad. Do

Irish ex-patriots living in Finland, join GAA clubs for not only the physical activity and health benefits but also for a connection to their Irish roots? This is one of the modern phenomena of the new millennium with Irish GAA clubs forming around the globe. Furthermore, can the GAA in Finland reach to non-native Irish (Figure 1), providing an open organisation, free from any political, religious or ideology influence and continue to grow across the world?



Figure 1. Helsinki Harps Team Photo. (Source: Helsinki Harps Facebook Page)

1.2 Outline of the thesis

The research explores the history of the GAA and Irish emigrants; and drawing from social studies, the research provides a background on cultural identity. There is a combination of an historical overview of the GAA together with an analyzing and finding what cultural identity is and how it's a part of the sport.

In the first part of this paper, chapter two includes the introduction of the history of the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA), its founding, purpose, its relationship with Irish politics and some tragedy involved in the organization. Then moves further into its connection with Irish national identity and how the association, Ireland and its relationship with Great Britain were greatly intertwined.

The third chapter will observe Irish emigration and the history of emigration from the country. Using segmented assimilation theory, it observes emigrate behavior. Additionally, it analyzes the growth of the GAA abroad and the importance of family and societal factors on the sport. Finally, it identifies the globalization of sport and the uniqueness of the GAA being an indigenous sport in the modern era.

The fourth chapter will provide a comprehensive study into cultural identity and sport, and its involvement in the GAA and between emigrants and sport. Due to the complicated nature of cultural identity, two theories were used, symbolic interactionism and the theory of solidarity, to help understand the issue.

The fifth chapter consists of the the methodology, the implementation procedure of the study. The unique role of the researcher, data collection and analysis, and the selection of participants are all addressed.

In the sixth chapter the results are presented and is divided into the main themes and topics of the study. These are cultural identity, family and societal, national identity, the significance of the GAA abroad and then other observations made.

The seventh and final chapter includes the discussion and conclusion. It includes the discussion on the results, the limitations of the study, and the possibility of future and further research in the subject and concludes with recommendations and considerations.

2 THE HISTORY OF THE GAELIC ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION (GAA)

The GAA was founded in 1884 to codify the games of hurling, Gaelic football, handball and rounder's, the latter being a bat and ball game similar to baseball. But these games had been played for hundreds of years before this, especially the ancient sport of hurling. The objective of the association was to promote these games of Irish heritage. Ireland at the time was under British rule and the GAA sought to maintain Irish culture through these games. It could be said that it was a way for people to hold onto their Irish identity, especially at the time of its formation.

2.1 The Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) and its relationship with Irish politics

Although the association tried somewhat to remain unpolitical, it was seen by many as a Nationalist organization. The GAA has possessed an undeniably political persona, among the principal aims of its founding patrons was organized opposition to British cultural hegemony in Ireland. Their ultimate objective being to contribute to Irish political independence and sovereignty (Hassan, 2003). Many GAA members had strong ties with some of the Nationalist organisations (e.g. Irish volunteers, Irish freedom fighters), and could often be seen marching with hurley sticks used in the Gaelic game of hurley instead of guns in the late 1800s and early 1900s. The GAA did however decline to allow these Nationalist organisations to march on Gaelic grounds and Croke Park (the GAA headquarters, and its biggest and main stadium). Although being viewed Nationalistic, the GAA tried to distance itself to any particular faction and never involved itself in the Irish Civil War of 1922-1923, with the GAA itself being used as a recognition tool afterwards (De Búrca, 1999).

There are many symbols that could be seen of nationalist views in the GAA, for instance, Hill 16, a spectator stand in Croke Park is made from the rubble from Dublin city caused during the 1916 Rising against the Britain occupation. In 2016, the GAA hosted a commemorative event honouring the 1916 Rising. What must also be remembered is Croke Park was the scene of 'Bloody Sunday' where on the 21st of November 1920, during the Irish War of Independence, the British army opened fire on a crowd at a Gaelic football match, killing fourteen people and

wounding three (Ó Tuathaigh, 2015). This was in retaliation for IRA (Irish Republican Army) killing thirteen British soldiers that very morning.

The GAA's official guide is the rulebook for the organization, it has included a number of rules in the past which has triggered much debate. Famously for example in 1938, Dr. Douglas Hyde the President of Ireland was removed as a patron of the GAA as he attended in an official capacity an Ireland v Poland soccer match. The reasoning for this came from Rule 27, which was enacted in 1905, that forbade any member of the GAA from either participating in or even watching 'foreign' games (De Búrca, 1999).

It wasn't until the 1970's at a time when tensions in Northern Ireland were high with conflict between Nationalists and Unionists, that the narrative aligning Gaelic games with Irish identity became, to an extent, less pronounced (Connolly & Dolan, 2012). This can be seen by the lifting of the ban of GAA players playing and watching other 'foreign' sports in 1971, although many attempts had been made to lift this ban before this. The GAA also refused to give support to the Irish Republican hunger strikers in Northern Ireland in 1981, despite public pressure which was explored by Reynolds (2017).

The turn in the new millennium has seen a change in the GAA stance, and a number of changes to the GAA rulebook. In 2001, Rule 21 barring members of the British army or the RUC (Royal Ulster Constabulary) was eventually abolished. Rule 42 was relaxed in 2005, which gave temporary permission for soccer and rugby to be playing in Gaelic grounds across Ireland and most notably in Croke Park. This brought the symbolic occasion of the English rugby team playing Ireland in Croke Park in 2007, a sign that the GAA wished to move forward and embrace ties with England. Nowadays, there are still rules which show the GAA nationalist roots, for example, the team players sheet should be in Irish, a rule that is enforced around the world. Also, all GAA playing jerseys must be manufactured in Ireland, also a rule implemented in GAA clubs around the world. But there's definitely evidence the GAA is forward thinking and progressive as seen in its growth abroad.

In Ireland, the local GAA club is seen as somewhat the centre of a community and nowadays offer different services to its members. In the past it was only seen as an organisation for sport and some arts and drama, but it has tried to modernise its approach and be all inclusive to all members of society.

2.2 National identity and the GAA

The Irish public and their association with national identity and sport has always had a special place in their hearts. When discussing national identity, it is important to understand the terms, nationality, national identity and nationalism as stressed by Bairner (2001). Nationality usually suggests the nation-state to which we are citizens of. However, national identity can entail of a sense of belonging to a nation-state of which one is not a citizen or to a nation that is not a state. Nationalism, on the other hand, is where one engages in the active promotion of the interests of a nation. What should be noted is the complexity of politics in the island of Ireland and the two nation states of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Citizens born in the Republic receive Irish passports whereas Northern Irish citizens have the option to have a British or Irish passport or both. Also, nationalism in Ireland could be said to have a negative connotation, due to terrorism acts by far-right nationalist groups like the IRA (Irish Republican Army). But the true meaning of nationalism is what is being used in this study.

Bairner (1996) insisted that nationalism and sport were without doubt connected. Irish national identity and sport has been argued to have a political and social impact and reflect a more heterogeneous and pluralist representation of Ireland, concluded by Holmes's (1994) study on the Irish soccer team and their success since 1988.

It could be said there is a very strong connection between national Irish identity and the GAA. Indeed, in another study by Bairner (2003) he pointed out how most studies involving sport and Irish national identity have more than the most part included the GAA in their writings. Although several sports have links to colonialism and played a role in European expansion and colonial missions (Guttmann, 1994), Gaelic Games are an indigenous sport forming from ancient Irish culture. McGuire and Hassan (2012) emphasized how the GAA, through its Gaelic games developed the promotion of a particularly cultural form of Irish nationalism. They suggest it is a way for the public to express an Irish identity in a way which stayed clear of politics and violence.

Cronin (1997), however, presented the idea that the GAA caused exclusivity and failed to be ideology free, stating that Gaelic games are only appealing to one tradition in Northern Ireland, i.e. nationalists who embraces a 32-county Ireland with no connection with Britain, and are rejected by Unionists who wish Northern Ireland to remain part of Great Britain, also called

loyalists. Conversely, Cronin (1994) in an earlier paper did admit that the founding of the GAA was the most essential development of sporting Irishness, stressing that despite internal arguments it always remained at heart a national sporting body.

Supporters of the GAA felt that it was a positive way of displaying Irish identity

“The GAA practiced a form of cultural nationalism that differentiated it from the more politically-based nationalist movements of the time. One could make a statement in support of an Irish identity through hurling or football without explicitly adopting a position for or against Home Rule, Fenianism or any other political pronouncement.” (McGuire & Hassan 2012, p. 920.)

The GAA has used various symbols to reiterate their ethnic Irish roots, the playing of the national anthem before major GAA games, the GAA crest along with the team crest on every GAA jersey to name a few. This can be observed also in the naming of the various stadium stands and pitches like the old Nally stand (which was in Croke Park) that was named after Pat Nally, who was a leading Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) leader and founder of the land league in Ireland. Markiewicz Park in Sligo is named after revolutionary nationalist Countess Markiewicz, who also fought in the 1916 Rising. There are many GAA club names with nationalist roots also, Clan na Gael GAA in Lurgan, county Armagh is named after the Irish republican organization in America in the late 19th and 20th century, Wolfe Tones GAA in Navan, county Meath is named after the nationalist rebellion leader of the same name.

Many feel the need for the GAA to distance itself further from these Nationalistic symbols to become more inclusive. Future scenarios may include, the abolishment of the Irish national anthem before games, and greater emphasis on the global GAA scene.

3 IRISH EMIGRATION AND THE GAA ABROAD

Ireland has always had a history of its people emigrating. Although Irish emigration is usually dominated to English speaking countries, since the end of the 20th century huge numbers have emigrated to other countries around the globe. The crash of the ‘Celtic Tiger’ (referring to the rise of the Irish economy from the mid 1990s to the mid 2000s) in 2008, has seen a huge number of Irish emigrating to further shores (CSO, 2016) (Figure 2). As a result, there has been an increase of GAA clubs abroad and the number of GAA player abroad. Emigration has slowed, and Ireland is officially out of recession since 2013 and has seen a steady rise in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) since 2012 (Central Statistics Office, 2017).

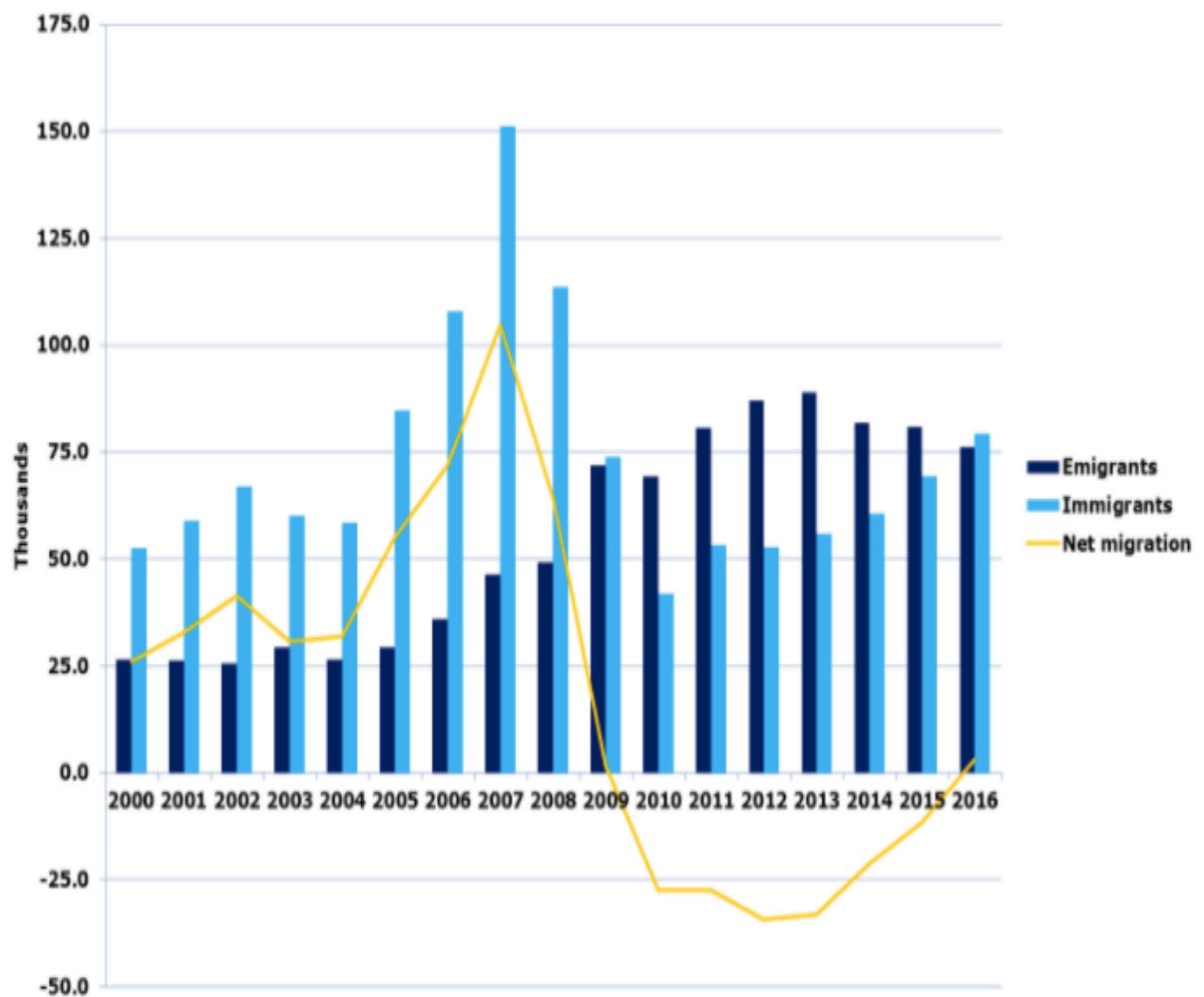


Figure 2. Immigration, Emigration and Net Migration in Ireland, 2000 - 2016. (CSO, 2017).

In this chapter the growth of the GAA abroad is observed, while putting forward the theory of segmented assimilation, a macro view of emigrants and how they integrate into a new society in different ways. The importance in the role of family and social relationship in sport and the ever-growing globalisation of sport are highlighted.

3.1 Growth of the GAA abroad

There have been several papers on the GAA (Hassan, 2003; McGuire & Hassan, 2012; Keeler & Wright, 2013) and on Irish emigrants and sport (Holmes, 2010; Lainer-Vos, 2017), however research on the GAA abroad is still somewhat limited, and of that few examine GAA clubs with other multi-cultural members. Darby and Hassan (2007) recognised the lack of research on Irish emigrants and the significance of sport in their lives.

There are over 400 GAA clubs around the world as seen from the (DFA) Department of foreign affairs and trade (2017), with the GAA being well established in the United States, Australia, Britain, mainland Europe, Canada and Asia along with others. These clubs are led, by the most part, by the Irish diaspora abroad, who continue to help the games grow worldwide. Emigration was one of the main contributors to the growth of the GAA abroad. Irish people who emigrated brought their hurls, footballs and boots as far back as the late 1800s (Moore & Darby, 2011). As many as half a million Irish people emigrated in the 1950s with the majority going to America and Britain. There is a sense that the emigration creates opportunity for the GAA to establish a very strong and durable existence in the USA and Britain, with many Irish emigrants finding it a great comfort to recreate the home environment on foreign soil. In 2015, the GAA held the first GAA World Games in Abu Dhabi, and in Dublin in 2016. Teams from as far away as Australia, South Africa, and Argentina were present, as well as teams from China, Canada, the Middle East, the US, Europe, and Britain. This itself is a sign of the growth and interest of GAA across the globe. Many global GAA clubs are dominated almost completely by Irish ex-patriots, and while that is the case with the majority of clubs, there are a number of clubs with an increasing number of internationals playing on them.

The European county board was formed in 2001, whereas the three Finnish clubs in existence have been formed very recently, Helsinki Harps in 2011, Oulu Elks in 2013 and Jyväskylä GAA in 2014. These Finnish GAA clubs play in an internal Finnish league and the Nordic

championship annually. Although a number of members of the clubs are Irish, it can be said that there has been an increasing number of international players participating. From the Helsinki Harps archives the number show in 2017 there was 42 member, an increase from 37 members in 2016. It should be noted that Helsinki is the capital of Finland and can be seen as a multicultural city.

The ethos of the GAA in Europe is one of inclusiveness and has a policy of Gaelic games for all (Hassan, 2010). Up until recently, the GAA has had limitations in attracting and reaching non-Irish members in foreign countries, Finnish GAA, nevertheless, has been successful in attracting members from Finland and around the world (Gaelic Games Europe, 2018). The GAA club has put large efforts into attracting new members to the game (Figure 3). As there are only over 600 Irish citizens living in Finland (Statistics Finland, 2017), international and Finnish members are paramount as otherwise there would be a shortage of players.

COME PLAY WITH US

TRY GAELIC FOOTBALL FOR FREE WITH HELSINKI HARPS

Sundays
21st + 28th
January
18:30 - 20:00

Talin
Jalkapallohalli
Purotie 8
00380 Helsinki

HELSENKI HARPS GAA
est. 2011

f HelsinkiHarpsGAA **@helsinkiharps** **@HelsinkiHarps**
helsinkiharpsclub@gmail.com

BEGINNERS COURSE

Figure 3. Helsinki Harps Recruitment Poster. (Source: Helsinki Harps Facebook Page)

There are a number of challenges involved in founding and maintaining a GAA club abroad, especially in countries with a low Irish emigrant rate as recognised by O'Connor (2011) in his recollection of the founding and maintenance of the Swedish GAA club Stockholm Gaels. Due to the lack of knowledge outside of Ireland to the sport, introductory classes are a must along with education of the rules of the sport and the learning of the fundamentals. Regular trainings are not always feasible due to the small pool of players available and the costs of pitches and training facilities. Helsinki Harps while training throughout the year, train indoor during the winter months in paid facilities, but train outside in a public park during the summer. Playing competitive games are obvious seen as paramount but this are not always accessible due to a low number of GAA clubs to play. In Finland due to its large land mass, the distances between clubs can be up on 600km, like the distance from Helsinki to Oulu, with Jyväskylä slotted somewhat in the middle. Also, the Nordic competition, which consists of three one day blitz competitions spread throughout the summer are held throughout the Nordic cities, and often have high costs in terms of flights, accommodation and registration imposed on the playing members.

3.2 Segmented assimilation theory

Segmented assimilation theory, is a theory developed under Portes (1995), with help from a number of other researchers, acknowledges the many different layers of integration for immigrants. It suggests different immigrant's groups integrate into different segments of society. This method is largely based on second generation immigrants and seeks to explain and understand immigrant experiences, although this thesis is based on first generation Irish emigrants, the theory can be acknowledged to be relevant. Furthermore, while this theory has been researched in America, Safi (2008) recognised the strength of this theory in her study on the immigrant integration process in France.

The theory is a modern take on assimilation theory, which was developed at the early twentieth century. Burgess (1923) was one of the first to coin the phrase assimilation in his essay "The Growth of the City", based on Chicago and the social dynamics of its citizens. Assimilation theory presents the idea that over time immigrants assimilated into their new country's culture and finally completely integrated into that society. It recognised that ethnic groups assimilating

gave up their home culture and that once assimilation was underway it was irreversibly. This is often referred to classic theory and proposed that immigrants simply adjust to their new surroundings and assimilate into middle class. It has been often criticised, with Alba (1985) arguing it was ahistorical, individualistic and incrementalistic and didn't link integration to macrostructural dynamics. He pointed out that while immigrants are moving out of their home country, they enter a new country's society that remains unaffected by the presence of them. Due to the theory being almost a century old, and society and the world moving forward, a more modernised approach is needed.

Portes (1995) used assimilation theory and updated it by added two other possible directions for immigrants in his three-part model (Figure 4).

The first direction is that the immigrant integrates into middle class and have **upward mobility** in their country.

The second path is **downward mobility**, where the immigrant or ethnic groups join poorer groups of society. This involves lack of opportunities, lower social class and poverty, and the characteristics are clearly negative. There are major holes between the individual ethnic's socio-economic situation and that of the host country.

The third course is **preserving immigrant cultural values and traditions while integrating into the mainstream culture**. This is the category Gaelic games abroad falls into, a way of preserving Irish culture while joining into the middle class and giving back to the new society while holding on to their culture. While the immigrant maintains their cultural characteristics, it does not contradict their new homes central culture and do not have any negative effects on the individual's integration into society. It has been referred to "Cultural Pluralism", where minority groups contribute fully in the main society, but retain their cultural differences. It identifies that immigrants can hold a diversity of beliefs and cultures and it is appropriate to do so. Cultural pluralism is more than cultural diversity, as it encompasses the insight into understanding across difference. Gaelic games abroad can be seen to practice this as an Irish cultural group which are totally integrated in Finland and also has an international item with international members.

Segmented assimilation theory identifies the numbers of directions immigrants take when in their host country. Safi (2008) emphasised how it also takes into account the immigrants individual and contextual types. Individual factors like education, aspirations, age, place of birth

etc. and contextual factors like the individual's family's social and ethnic status and their socio-economic features of the community they belong to. The theory emphasises on instances where these factors are not correlated and not all consistent.

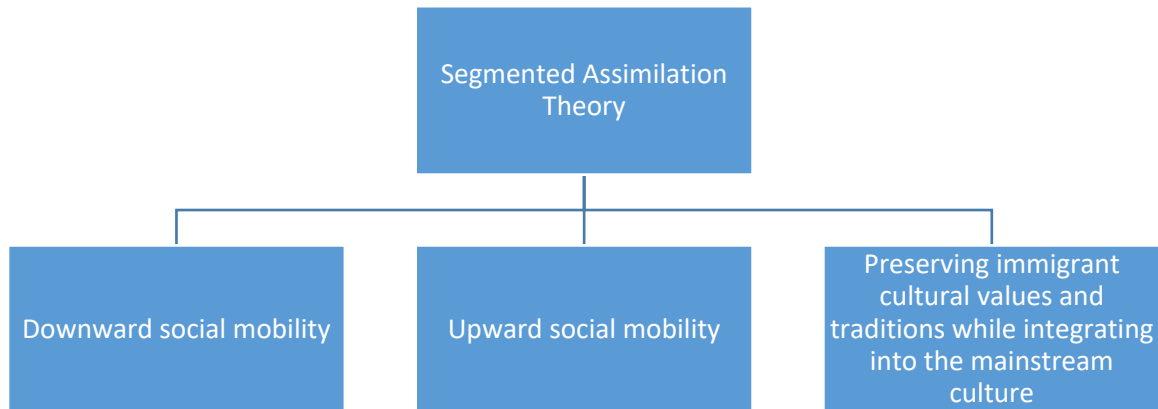


Figure 4. Three Part Model of Segmented Assimilation (Portes, 1995).

3.3 Family and social connection

Family and society is seen as a critical link to sport, familial and societal reasons was the top reason for youth involvement in sports in an Israeli study (Simri, Tenenbaum & Bar Eli, 1996). Although Israel may differ in culture to that of Ireland, it's important to note the relevance of family and society in the choice of sports we play. Wold and Anderssen (1992) agreed that when parents, siblings and peers of an individual were actively participating in sport that individual was more likely to be involved in sport. Similarly, Côté (1999) noted how families can be vital socialisation agents for children's sports participation, along with being vastly instrumental in the development process. Lubans, Morgan, and McCormack (2011) pointed out how students felt enjoyment and being involved with their friends were the most important reasons for selecting sport activities in school. Also, friends, fitness and enjoyment are seen as top motivators for getting involved in a new sport (Hardie Murphy, Rowe & Woods, 2017). Our family and friends greatly influence the choices we make and in particular what sport we

play. The communities we belong to impact the decisions we make and the ultimately the sport we play. In the GAA, one of the key values is community identity (Lane et al. 2017). This community feel can be observed as a strong link to the family and social connection.

3.4 Globalisation of sport

Globalisation can be seen in some respects as the domination of the Western world and its influence on the world and in this instance sport. Gupta (2009) believed that the big Western powers had roots in a majority of international sporting associations and concluded that they dictated these organisations and ultimately controlled the major decisions of these sports.

As explained national identities can be difficult to define:

“National identities are not as united as they are sometimes represented, and they appear to be in a state of flux, they have tended to win out over more ‘particularistic’ sources of cultural identity. Nevertheless, national identities also appear to be undergoing a process of dislocation. This dislocation is arguably connected to globalization processes” (Maguire 2011, p. 986).

This dislocation process is relative to the GAA, as it too needs to constantly change and modernize while still holding onto its identity and culture.

With the rise of globalisation arises an increase in sports like soccer, tennis, golf, etc. and a loss of original indigenous sport. Indeed Beacom (1998) expressed how the GAA’s emergence as a code of football in the late 19th Century in Ireland was the product - at least in part - of the desire to preserve and develop an identity threatened by British colonialism. This is reflected in debates surrounding the so-called ‘ban’ on participation by members of the GAA, in ‘foreign games’ such as soccer.

Gaelic Games is one of the few original indigenous sports played that has been relatively successful despite the influence of globalisation. The popularity of this sport in Ireland is in competition with the bigger and more world-renowned sports like soccer, golf and rugby. Indeed, Bradley (2007) felt the GAA in Scotland maintains a distinct Irish identity amidst a growing emphasis on ‘global sports’. Nevertheless, the GAA at home and abroad must look at promoting its games outside of Ireland and to the non-Irish public, for the continuing growth and prosperity of its games.

4 CULTURAL IDENTITY AND SPORT

Cultural identity can be seen as the feeling of belonging to a group or community. Sport is widely accepted in community and culture around the world to bring people together (Thorpe, Anders and Rowley, 2014). There are many papers on the positive health effects of sport, but some partake in sports to feel intrinsically connected to their identity and self-concept (Weiss, 2001).

In Stuart Hall's essay 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora', Hall (1990) explicates two definitions of 'cultural identity.' The first is an essentialist identity, which emphasizes the similarities amongst a group of people. Hall argues that this definition can and does inspire feminist, anti-colonial and anti-racist art and activism, but cannot help to comprehend the trauma of colonialism. The second definition emphasizes the similarities and the differences amongst an imagined cultural group. Hall asserts that this definition is useful for understanding the trauma of colonialism because it emphasizes the historical and social contingency of identity. These are relative to Gaelic Games as they inspire these ideals and Ireland had been under colonialism at the time of the GAA's founding in 1884. Although similar in ways, the distinction between cultural identity and national identity which was defined in the previous chapter should be noted.

It should be mentioned that sport could be seen to isolate a certain group, create exclusion and promote elitism. People who play these culturally dominant sports gain 'cultural capital' which allows them to have more opportunities for socialization and access to social capital and power (Light & Kirk 2001). In their study, it was observed how some who were educated at elite education and played sport seemed to acquire positions more easily than their counterparts. They determined that embodied cultural capital is gained through sport and is then used for social mobility.

There are numerous occasions where former sport players especially in rugby, American football and golf rise to positions of power in the corporate world. Indeed, there has been links to the GAA and Irish Nationalist politics (Moore & Darby, 2011).

But it must be argued that the positives of sport far outweigh the negatives, overall and on this topic of cultural identity. For example, in Allen, Drane, Byon, and Mohn (2010) research on sport as a vehicle for socialisation and maintenance of cultural identity in American universities

on international students. They determined that both socialisation and maintenance were valid reasons for participation in sport, with males scoring significantly higher on the cultural maintenance through sport factor than females.

In Joseph's (2012) study on the diasporic black culture in Canada in the form of the sport capoeira, it found that many partake in the sport to maintain heritage and perform black cultural practises to engage with Canadian nationalism. Likewise, Cronin (1994) also acknowledged how sport is significant to identity and a sense of belonging on his study on sport on a sense of Irish identity.

Cultural identity is a complex subject and in recognising this the use of two theories has been used, symbolic interactionism and solidarity theory. The two theories take alternative views on society, symbolic interactionism observing the micro and solidarity examining the macro. The chapter then narrows in and concentrates on the unique bond between the GAA and cultural identity. Finally, the relationship between cultural identity, sport and emigrants is researched, to give an international perspective on the topic.

4.1 Symbolic interactionism theory

Symbolic interactionism theory takes a small-scale perspective on society and focuses the micro interactions between individuals. It comes from Identity theory, which was developed by George Herbert Mead in the 1920s and is credited with the beginning of symbolic interactionism. Mead felt that the conception a person holds of themselves in their mind emerges from social interaction with others. For example, participants in sport people can display their dexterity, strength, knowledge, intelligence, courage or self-control; qualities that are expected in their social environment (Weiss 2001). Herbert Blumer later in 1969 coined the term symbolic interactionism and evolved the theory.

Symbolic interactionism theory aims to understand the relationship between humans or self and society. The individual still has an inner core or essence that is real, but this is formed through dialogue with the cultural worlds 'outside' and the identities which they offer.

Blumer (1969, p. 2) sets out three basic premises of the perspective:

- *“Humans act towards things on the basis of the meaning they ascribe to those things.”*

- *“The meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one’s fellows (others and the society).”*
- *“These meanings are handled in, and modified through, and interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things he/she encounters.”*

Simply, how an individual gives meaning to something is based on action, on their social interaction with others due to the fact that different people have different meanings for things, and the knowledge that the meaning can change.

Symbolic interactionism theory has been used on the topic of cultural identity and sport in previous studies (Allen et al., 2010; Weiss, 2001). It gives a different perspective to sociology and is essential for learning a society, it is capable of explaining how aspects of society can be created and recreated by social interactions. It examines society on a small scale, which is why it is used on this case study on Helsinki Harps GAA. It gives the individual the same importance as the society of a whole and is a necessary view when studying a sports club. The individual aspect is the core of this theory which reaffirm the importance of individual interviews for the study. This theory is relative to the GAA abroad due to the many symbols and symbolic items in the GAA, as discussed, the GAA has been built as a symbol of Ireland and at the time Irish independent, but of course now it has a much different meaning. Additionally, the aspect of the GAA abroad will be examined to see if it has a different meaning abroad than in Ireland. Receiving an insight into the meanings of the GAA by the interviewees can help us explain and understand this phenomenon.

4.2 Theory of solidarity

The theory of solidarity was introduced by Emile Durkheim in his book ‘The Division of Labour’ (1893). Solidarity was defined as a cohesion in society, it’s the feeling the individual has that they are part of the whole. This theory takes a broader view on society in the macro form. He proposed that there was a two-way system that solidarity could work: mechanical solidarity and organic solidarity. In mechanical solidarity, its cohesion and integration come from the homogeneity of individuals, they feel connected through shared sentiments, responsibilities and lifestyles. In contrast, organic solidarity is more secular and individualistic due to the specialization of tasks and furthermore is more complex with higher division of

labour. Social cohesion is formed here by the dependence on each other since if an individual does not perform their task, the whole group is impacted.

For the purpose of this study, the general solidarity viewpoint would be observed on Helsinki Harps. It could be said that organic solidarity is in play here due to the multicultural and individualistic nature of Helsinki Harps, however mechanical solidarity cannot be ruled out as there is collective consciousness and all share a common goal. Both Mizruchi (1985) and Allen et. al (2010) have recognised the relevance of this theory for sports research purposes. The theory can be used to prove how individual ethnics; in this case Irish; can internalize feelings of belonging, stability, and solidarity through participating in Gaelic football in Helsinki and with people that share their cultural background. As a club, its members are all different; however, they are inter-dependent on each other in order to maintain the GAA club. The goal is to show how Gaelic games participation is viewed as providing a point of attachment for cultural groups.

4.3 Cultural identity and the GAA

The GAA and cultural identity are inherently linked, the Gaelic Athletic Association was purposely set up to help promote Irish culture through sport and games in Ireland. Evidently, the GAA in Ireland retains Irish cultural identity (Mandle, 1987; Cronin, 1999; & De Búrca, 1999). But what of the Irish who have left its shores? Darby (2006), a scholar in the field of GAA, demonstrated how Irish abroad in Chicago are participating in their native and national sport of Gaelic Games to engage in sporting and social activities resonant of 'home', to express a sense of Irish identity, and to retain a link with Ireland. Darby (2003) also investigated the formation of the GAA in Boston and the part it played in the promotion and preservation of Irish identity. According to Black (1998), who conducted a study on Irish-born emigrants playing both Gaelic football and soccer in San Francisco, recognised the participants national identities were modified, and they forged new identities without simply assimilating and losing their "Irish" identities completely.

McCarthy (2007) investigating the enacting of Irish identity in Western Australia, concluded that the Gaelic football club St. Finbarr's helped emphasize Irish cultural identity. Bradley (2007) expressed a similar view while observing Scottish GAA, he concluded it endorsed Irish

ethnic and national consciousness to be retained and expressed. McAnallen, Mossey and Moore (2007) examined how Irish students in Britain are joining GAA teams for their universities abroad, and in doing so the GAA has become a channel for an expression of Irish cultural identity. All these cases emphasise the strength of Gaelic games to be used as a vehicle for maintaining the culture of Irish abroad.

There can be no question Gaelic games can help preserve cultural identity in English speaking countries with a high number of Irish born emigrants like America, Britain and Australia. However, this study observes Finnish GAA where unlike the aforementioned countries, has a relatively small number of Irish emigrants and the GAA clubs are formed with a host of different nationalities. There is scarce research on the topic of the Irish diaspora maintaining their cultural identity through Gaelic football in a GAA club with lower number of Irish citizens involved.

4.4 Cultural identity, sport and emigrants

There is a recognised role of sport in preserving the culture of an emigrant's ancestral group. Previously there has been research on exploring the role and importance of sport in the lives of emigrants (Harrolle & Trail, 2007; Pons et al., 2001; Stodolska & Alexandris, 2004). In particular, Stodolska and Alexandris (2004) examined how sport can be used as a tool of preserving one's cultural identity on their study on first generation emigrants in America.

Many have concluded that sports can be used for the integration of emigrant and other minorities into dominant society as remarked by Kennett (2005). Critics of integration through sport like Krouwel et al. (2006) proposed that soccer competitions in the Netherlands mainly reinforce ethnic divisions and homogeneity. Similarly, Shor and Yonay's (2011) paper outline the limitations to this theory, believing sport can add to the cultural divide. Zacheus (2010) while acknowledging these negatives, identified that sport could relieve the struggles immigrants experience while entering into a new society. Additionally, it should be highlighted that the GAA in Finland is a multicultural organization with many Finnish and other nationalities taking part as seen in their club archives.

5 RESEARCH TASK AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter will provide a detailed analysis of how the study data was collected and interpreted. The purpose of this study is to explore the significance of Gaelic games in maintaining cultural identity for Irish emigrants in Helsinki, Finland. It uses the experiences of the current members of the Gaelic football club Helsinki Harps, to understand why they play Gaelic games abroad and how it differs to playing in Ireland. The relationship between the GAA and Irish national identity is also explored.

The main research question is:

How is the GAA used as a link for preserving cultural identity?

Followed by two sub questions:

What is the significance or the meaning of the GAA abroad and in Finland for Irish citizens?

What is the connection between the GAA and the national Irish identity?

Currently, there has been limited research on GAA clubs outside of Ireland and sparse study on European GAA. Furthermore, there is limited study on cultural identity on Gaelic games abroad and in particular Gaelic games where there is a huge international aspect and involvement. This is the first study on Nordic GAA and will widen the scope of information on GAA in further fields. Therefore, the present study is essential if we are to begin to understand the relationship between cultural identity and Gaelic games abroad. This study is of great value to the over 600 Irish citizens living in Finland (Statistics Finland, 2017). Exploring and understanding the experiences of Irish emigrant Helsinki Harps GAA club members through their expressions assist in the future development of the GAA abroad for Irish emigrants and aid Irish emigrants who wish to maintain their Irish culture while away from Ireland.

5.1 Research implementation and procedure

Data was gathered via five semi-structured interviews with current experienced Irish members of the club. Through the interviews, we explore what the cultural identity means to the individuals, the importance of the sport and the subjects that matter to them concerning the

sport and the club. The goal is to provide a detailed and comprehensive description of the Helsinki Harps club, the GAA abroad and prove how cultural identity and the GAA are connected and is vital part of the sport for Irish emigrants.

For the study a qualitative research design was used in the form of a case study. This is a unique and interesting case study for a number of reasons, the authors history with the club and with GAA abroad and because of a GAA club thriving in a Nordic city which is not the norm. Qualitative research was needed as the subject of cultural identity needed to be explored and understood. The reason quantitative methods were not used is because its research is confirmatory rather than exploratory. This research method relies less on interviews, observations, small numbers of questionnaires, focus groups, subjective reports and case studies but is much more focused on the collection and analysis of numerical data and statistics. The methodology focused on creating thematic distinctions from the qualitative data. The procedure then extracted facts from the qualitative data to support stated thematic distinctions. Robson (2002) stated limitations in utilising this methodology, pointing out that respondents won't necessarily report their beliefs, attitudes, etc., accurately (e.g. There is likely to be a social desirability response bias – people responding in a way that shows them in a good light).

A case study observes an individual, place, event, phenomenon, or other type of topic of analysis in order to conclude to key themes and results. The results should look to benefit future trends, highlight hidden issues, and/or provide a means for understanding an important research issue. This study focuses on the latter. This case study research focuses on a football club (Helsinki Harps) and provides insight into the issue of cultural identity in the sport. As Creswell et al. (2007) states; using the case study approach is popular with social scientists and the field of psychology, hence why this approach is appropriate here. Case studies are grounded in 'lived reality' and can assist in expressing the lived experiences of individuals, small groups or organizations, while also assisting in the exploration of the unexpected and unusual as acknowledged by Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2001).

In qualitative methods there is no real numerical unit of measurement, however the focus is on the exploration regarding the reasons why people do or believe something. This is much more reliant upon, interviews and case studies and deals generally with much smaller numbers. Van Maanen (1983) described it as an array of interpretative techniques which seek to describe, decode, translate and otherwise come to terms with the meaning, not the frequency, of certain

more or less naturally occurring phenomena in the social world. Interviews are excellent at getting a comprehensive insight into a person's experiences. Opposite to quantitative you really get a sense of the interviewees behaviours, opinions, values background, and overall feelings.

In this research, qualitative data was used and was collected in the form of semi structured interviews. Through the interviews the interviewer can explore in more detail any answers that need more information or clarification. Furthermore, interviews are also good for collecting in-depth qualitative information. Due to the author having a personal relationship with participants, the rapport has already been built. This helped the interviewee open up, share ideas and not hesitate to talk. Semi-structured interviews are helpful here as if any important issues arise they can be pursued while still following an interview guide. Also knowing the participants personally will help the author convey their thoughts true to them. This approach can be seen an interactive-relational, which produces a clearer, deeper representation of the person interviewed as argued by Chirban (1996).

Helsinki Harps is chosen as it is the longest GAA club in formation in Finland, founded in 2011. It is possibly the best established of the clubs, having hosted two Nordic championships in 2014 and 2016, also it has a biggest membership base compared to the other two clubs, Jyväskylä GAA and Oulu Elks respectively. Gaelic football was chosen instead of the other Gaelic games of hurling, camogie, handball and rounders due to the simple fact these is none of these sports played or have clubs in Finland at the current time. Furthermore, Gaelic football could be argued to be the most popular of these Gaelic games and the others are not as well represented across the world. Hurling could be said to be as popular, however, hurling involves special equipment, every player requires at least one hurley stick, and a helmet. Include jerseys and sliotars; the tennis sized ball used in the sport and this can cause logistical problems. Also, it could be said the hurling to be a more dangerous sport due to the use of the hurley sticks and the speed at which the sliotar can travel. Logistics, safety concerns these are some of the reasons there is not as many hurling clubs as Gaelic football clubs outside of Ireland (DFA, 2017).

5.2 Role of the researcher

One of the benefits of these interviews is that the researcher is an insider and knew the interviewees personally, having played on the same team as all of them before. The author has

been a member of Helsinki Harps from 2013 to 2016 and has captained the team on a number of occasions. The researcher held the role of Health and Well-being officer on the Helsinki Harps committee in 2015, and currently a member of Jyväskylä GAA, another Gaelic football club in Finland. During this time, the researcher has gained personal relationships with the interviewees through these years and will prove invaluable in order to gain an insight into the opinions of these people. This is a huge advantage as the relationships have been formed and the trust has been built. According to Ergun and Erdemir (2010) study on insider and outsider research in a foreign land and one's own land, an insider researcher who has a shared citizenship, ethnic, linguistic, religious, gender, and cultural identities receive more information and the participants tend to reveal more. It must be noted an insider must report what they see in the data and report it in an academic and non-biased way. As Griffith (1998) concluded when an insider conducts research in their environment, their knowledge and conclusions will provide a different insight than an outsider.

Due to the similar backgrounds with the participants with emigrating to another country and having partners from Finland, the author can relate to the participants. The researcher communicates in the same language and understands the socio-cultural environment of the interviewees being also Irish and played Gaelic football in Ireland and abroad. This also helped as the author could add his observations and interpretations over his time with the club. These observations would help in deciding interview questions and would also be added in the results. The researcher is aware of the participants body language, gesticulations and their usual behaviour, this helped as if any of the participants were uptight or on edge; the researcher was able to lighten the mood and make some friendly chatter, this was seldom the case though. The researcher was keen to ask inquisitive questions and then listen and let the interviewees response and express themselves, some issues were raised again to offer clarity and some issues were followed up with further questions due to their importance to the study.

5.3 Data collection and selection of research participants

The aim and purpose of these interviews was to engage with the participant what the GAA in Finland means to them, is there a link between Irish cultural identity and the GAA while here in Finland. All interviewees are Irish citizens who have emigrated abroad to Finland and lived

there for a minimum four years. All interviewees were male for a number of reasons, the male club team had been founded the longest and the most well established. Also, the number of Irish ladies on the team was low and at the time of writing there was no Irish citizens on the team. Interview questions were written to explore the experience of the individual while concentrating and linking to cultural identity, the GAA abroad and national identity. At this stage I also contacted Helsinki members to gain permission to use photos, posters and other media for the research. I conducted two trail interviews with Irish males with Gaelic football experience were conducted via skype to test the interview questions. After some feedback from the trail interviewees and from conducting the interview some adjustments were made (Appendix 3). Due to my knowledge and assess to the club's members I was able to select who I felt were most experienced in terms of years with the club, positions held with the club and years playing Gaelic games. I also wanted to give a blend of participants and purposely chose individuals with different backgrounds and knowledge in the sport to receive different opinions and a more varied view.

Five semi structured face to face interviews were conducted between September and November 2017. The interviews lasted between 21 to 43 minutes. They were recorded using both an iPhone and MacBook Air laptop while also taking some notes. The five interviews occurred in various different locations, cafes, bars, sports halls and one in the participants home. Some small talk was done before the interviews, then the information sheet was produced for the participants followed by the consent form.

The five interviewees selected were

Aidan Fitzgerald - 37, born in Clonmel, County Tipperary and his home GAA club is Fethard. He has played both Gaelic football and hurling since he was six years old. He has the rare attribute of playing the top level (intercounty level) in both hurling and Gaelic football, representing Tipperary from Minor (under 18s) to Senior (adult) level in football and intermediate intercounty level in hurling. He has played Gaelic football and hurling abroad, hurling with Robert Emmet's GAA club and Gaelic football with Parnell's in London, England, and both sports with Sinn Fein GAA club in Melbourne, Australia. He also represented London in senior intercounty in hurling and Gaelic football after moving to England. He's lived in Helsinki for six years and played with Helsinki Harps since 2015. He is a player with the club and occasionally helps out with coaching.

Phil Murray - 42, from Whitehall, County Dublin and his home GAA club is Whitehall Colmcille. Phil played Gaelic football with his club until Minor level and also played with his local school. Although soccer was his main sport growing up he also enjoyed playing Gaelic football. Phil's story is a regular one as many Irish youth play or partake in Gaelic games at school but do not continue playing after. At the time of the interview Phil was the chairman of the club and due to injuries hadn't played much recently. He had been one of the first members of the club when it started back in 2011 and was present at their first ever training session. Phil has lived in Helsinki for 12 years; going on 13 years the month of the interview. He also is the only participant who has only lived in Ireland and Finland.

Tony McDonald - 41, is from Newtownhamilton, County Armagh and his home club is St. Michael's. Tony was involved in Gaelic football with his club from childhood and played actively until Minor, and then a few games at under 21 level and senior (adult) level. He played with his school until U-14 level and unfortunately didn't make it to the McCrory Cup which is the under 18s school competition which is a high level and renowned in schools GAA. He took a break from GAA for four or five years before getting involved with Bangor University Gaelic football team in Wales while he was studying there. Tony moved to Helsinki in 2001 and has lived in Helsinki the longest of all the participants. Tony is a founding member of the club and one of key members in setting up the club. He has been heavily involved in the club since the beginning, being a committee member mostly holding the role of PRO (public representation officer). He played for the club from 2011 to 2014 and captained the team on a number of occasions. He has also played the role of the men's team manager, ladies team manager, along with coaching which he currently does.

Declan McManus - 29, Armagh town, County Armagh and his home GAA club is Pearse Ogs. He played senior (adult) level Gaelic football with his club and played intercounty (top level) for Armagh at underage level at Minor (under 18) and under 21s. Declan has played and been involved in GAA all his life and at a high level. He also has extensive experience playing GAA abroad, having played in San Francisco, America with club called the Ulster club in 2008. In 2011 when he moved to London, England he played with Neasden Gaels. He moved to Helsinki in 2013 and played with Helsinki Harps since arrival. He did have a brief period in 2014 living in Switzerland where he played with Zurich GAA. He is only participant who only plays with the club and cannot commit to any other role due to time constraints.

Barry Brady - 40, Tallaght, County Dublin, home club is St. Marks GAA. Barry has played Gaelic football with his club right up to senior (adult) level. He also played university level with Carlow I.T. (Institute of Technology) in Ireland. Barry has over twelve years' experience playing Gaelic football both home and abroad, having played with St. Colmcille's GAA club in Boston, America for a summer in 1999. He has lived in Helsinki for six years and became a member of Helsinki Harps in 2014. Though he originally just played, throughout the years has seen him play a bigger role with the club as a player, coach and senior member of the club.

The respondents were five Irish emigrant males who have lived in Finland for over a minimum of four years and are members or past members of Helsinki Harps GAA club. The interviewees all had grown up in Ireland and had some knowledge and experience of the sport of Gaelic football in Ireland. The participants have different backgrounds in playing the sport of Gaelic football in Ireland and abroad, also some have experience playing hurling. Four of the five participants have played Gaelic games with a club abroad other than in Finland. They also have had diverse roles with Helsinki Harps, from founding members, chairman to having just a playing role. Also, it's important to note is that they are all from the four corners of Ireland, two from Armagh in Northern Ireland, two from the Irish capital Dublin and one from Tipperary in the southern area of the country. All five of the interviewees are in long term relationships or married and have a child or children. The participants ages range from 29 to 42 and have all been a member of Helsinki Harps for at least two years. All interviewees consented to the use of their personal identity for this research.

5.4 Data analysis

The verbatim transcribing of the interviews was carried out in November and December 2017. A software application called express scribe was used in the transcription. After transcribing all interviews, there was 53 pages in total. These were added by written memos composed during the interviews. After organizing the files, reading and reflection the researcher divided the transcriptions into major themes which continuously surfaced. The themes were identified by observational and manipulative techniques such as finding repeated words and finding similarities (Ryan and Bernard, 2003). These themes were then also linked to the literature reviewed and the theoretical frameworks by (Portes, 1995; Blumer, 1969; & Durkheim, 1893).

A colour coding system was used in order to group the major themes of the study. The major themes from the interviews were:

- Cultural identity (which was identified in code in red)
- Family and societal (which was identified code in yellow)
- National identity (which was identified in code in blue)
- Enjoyment (which was identified in code in green)
- Emigration and Integration (which was identified in code in orange)
- Other observations (which was identified in code in purple)

These themes were narrowed down, and the relative information entered by using direct interpretation and presented in detailed picture theme by theme (Creswell, 2007). The end goal is to give the reader a comprehensive study of the case of Helsinki Harps.

6 RESULTS

The main research results show that Gaelic football in Finland can aid to preserve cultural identity in Irish emigrants abroad, according to the different experiences and recollections of the participants. This would be similar to findings by Black (1998); Darby (2003); and McCarthy (2007) on previous research from It highlights the importance of the GAA abroad and in particular in Helsinki, Finland. Also, the link between the GAA and Irish national identity can be seen. This chapter overviews the results by categorized them by theme, ending with general observations.

6.1 Cultural identity

When asked if they play Gaelic football as a link to your cultural identity four of the five interviewees agreed.

“Yes I do [play Gaelic games as a link to his cultural identity], because I get asked a lot from Finnish people and Finnish friends ”why do I play that Irish game here?” [inquisitive tone] and I said the simple reason is I want to have that link to Ireland still...I could go away and play other sports but I think we're very lucky that we have the club there [Helsinki Harps]. I have that link there from Ireland; from home, that I can still operate and play my game that I love and that I grew up playing that's why.” (Aidan)

Phil also shared the uniqueness of the sport, its appeal abroad and wanting to support Irish abroad.

“Yeah, I do, and I remember before it started; the Aussie Rules team were going and there was an Irish guy who was going around asking to play and I would have been interesting in playing but I had no background in that and I had no feel for it [Aussie Rules or AFL]. So, when the opportunity came to play Gaelic football I was in straight from the start because it's an Irish thing and I want support anything Irish going in the country [Finland], also because I enjoy it. But that's definitely a reason behind it yeah.” (Phil)

Tony gave an interesting perspective about how he displays his cultural identity. It was clear to see his enthusiasm for the GAA, Gaelic games and all things Irish.

“Yeah, definitely, I think any time I arrive here, anytime I come back from annual holidays in Ireland, the first thing I do is pack my Gaelic football jersey. I think many people, many Irish people do the same, that are traveling and has holidays throughout the world. You go to the airport and you spot 30, 31, 32 Gaelic football jerseys. I think everybody is really passionate about the county that they're from, the province that they're from and also Gaelic football. Whenever I studied in Manchester in 1998 on the year placement, I was 22 then, every other day I was telling my students who are 16, 17-year olds; that this is Gaelic football this, this is Gaelic football that and trying to get them to learn it and to try and teach them the rules. They probably thought that it's a bit crazy because Gaelic football in England was such a low-key thing then, it's just really taken off in England the last four or five years with likes of sky [Sky Sports satellite TV company which show the Gaelic games in Ireland and Britain] and so on.”
(Tony)

Declan outlined the positive outcomes and acknowledged the preservation of his culture through Gaelic games while abroad.

“Yes, definitely I think it's good to still have the roots and it's important to still keep the culture going so it has to be done. You might move from Ireland, but you still want to maintain some Irish culture inside.” (Declan)

One interviewee, Barry Brady, however, did not agree, stating physical activity and the social feature as the main reasons.

“I wouldn't say that's the reason why I do it no, I just do it because – it just gives me a fitness level and the social aspect. I don't really need it for cultural identity as such.” (Barry)

Conversely, he did portray signs of agreeing with the statement. He made some statements which seemed to indicate otherwise, including:

“It's very significant [The GAA away from Ireland] and it makes that leap away from Ireland a little bit easier, because of the culture of it, it's not a professional sport and I know that if I go to any city in the world I can go to the GAA club, get involved and I'll be welcome there, and it's a great way to get your foot in the door of a new city.” (Barry)

When asked a follow up question of defining cultural identity, the theme of a sense of Irish identity recurred many times.

“I think it's basically what I originated from and what I was instilled by my parents and my family growing up at a young age playing and cultural identity is what I can take from that when I travel abroad or when I move abroad that I can take that with me and express it so whether that's through football or any other cultural ways then I will do it you know.” (Aidan)

Phil gave acknowledged its strong relationship with national identity while understanding the how similar experiences and background contribute to culture.

“I suppose what your country is all about, that if you speak to somebody from say Ireland that you don't have to explain yourself that they know you've been through the same experiences; the same cultural experiences growing up. Whether that be joining your local GAA club or making your Holy Communion or anything; just things you seen on TV, music that you know all this stuff. You don't have to explain yourself, your immediately in and you feel a bit closer to home. Somebody understands you and you understand them.” (Phil)

Tony, from Northern Ireland, felt passionately about how although from the UK he sees himself as Irish in nationality and culturally.

“I'm from the north of Ireland so geographically it's in the United Kingdom, I one hundred percent see myself as Irish. I have an Irish passport, culturally the things that I do, and people living where I live are also Irish. We play Gaelic football, we follow Irish music, we follow Irish sports stars. I think even when I lived in Helsinki maybe, people from the north of Ireland, Northern Ireland, they have this thing where they want to show that we're as Irish as somebody in Cork, or we're as Irish as Dublin. So, yeah, it was really you know a strong reason for me to show my culture. To show how Irish I am and to be also proud of this unique Irish sport, to tell Finns about it you know, that this is the sport we have...Cultural identity, so to be really part of your country and the best things it can show the world.” (Tony)

Declan was quite concise with his first answer.

“Just the way the Irish people have fun and how they communicate and just how friendly that they are, that's the main reason.” (Declan)

When pushed to elaborate his answer he continued how culture goes much deeper than stereotypes and clichés.

“What many would say that the Irish cultural identity would be Guinness, drinking beer [chuckles]. But whenever they actually know about Irish and the history about Ireland they'll

realize that's the GAA is one of the main points about Ireland, it's been going on for 135 years now so it's a big part of our history and it's one of the main cultural points about it.” (Declan)

Barry identified cultural identity primarily with his nationality at the start. This theme was common among all the participants. However, through deliberation he acknowledged it as the deeper meaning of similarities within a group that are different to another.

“Irishness, it’s hard to define your Irishness, because people ask you where you're from and when you tell them you're Irish they have some notion of what that's about and they ask you about that. But cultural identity defined is probably the things that you do which you have in common with other people of your own nationality which makes you different to other nationalities if that makes sense...Culturally the things that, let's say one nationality, have in common with each other, which makes them different to other nationalities. That's my definition of cultural identity.” (Barry)

The theme of Irish culture and the GAA was evident in all the interviews and there was a basic understanding that the two were inherently linked. It must be noted that the preservation of Irish is not the sole reason for the individual’s participation in Gaelic football and there are many other factors in play, the social aspect, love of the sport, healthy living, and general enjoyment were some of the reasons for participation in the club. Another key observation was their use of the word ‘home’, to describe Ireland their birthplace, it was obvious to see that although Finland is now home for them, Ireland will always be home as well. Participants felt that sense of home away from home while in Finland, Ireland their original ‘home’, history, heritage and belonging to a group were perceived to be the central themes of cultural identity (Figure 5).

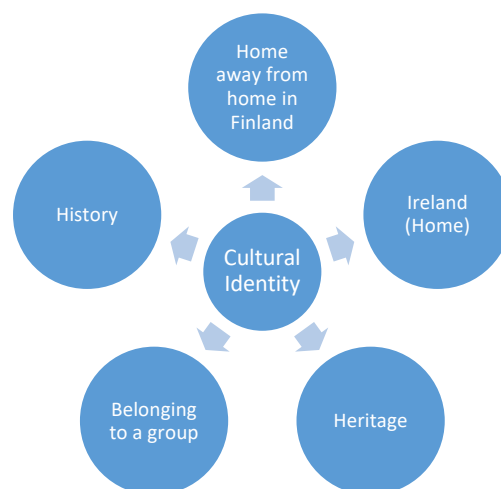


Figure 5. Main Results on Cultural Identity

6.2 Family and societal

All have a family connection to the GAA, some of the participants have had family members involved in the GAA which has led them to get involved as well.

“I originally started because my older brother started before me, I went to see him play, that's when I got hooked on it. Our family had a tradition of playing as well, so I used to go to all the games being from Tipperary, hurling was also a big thing of course.” (Aidan)

Also noted is the interest these members have on their children becoming involved in Gaelic games. As all the participants have children, it could see the club have more second-generation Irish in the future.

“I think we'd all like our kids to be playing and have some sort of Irish cultural identity as well. It would be great if they were able to hit a sliotar [ball used in the game of hurling] or kick a ball when they went back home to visit their cousins [in Ireland], they could play with them. It would be a big challenge obviously to keep them involved and keep them interested if there's no teams to play against but again that can all be arranged. Some have got involved in Gaelic games from friends.” (Phil)

The social aspect and meeting new people and making friends was also a prominent feature in the reasons why individuals participated in the GAA, especially abroad. This is evident from Aidan who discussed about his experience of playing Gaelic games in London.

“It was a good outlet to meet a few Irish guys as well who were in the same situation, that were just moved away for work which is why I originally moved and yeah it was fantastic, it was really good and like I said made a lot of friends from that club who I'm still in contact with actually to this day.” (Aidan)

While all could be said to have social mobility due to their participation in GAA, some individuals more than others. Three of the participants who have played abroad ended up receiving jobs and other expenses for their participation in Gaelic football. It should be noted that this is the norm for bigger GAA clubs from America, England and in some instances Australia.

Gaelic football being a team sport depends on social interaction and the importance of family, friends and social cannot be underestimated. Teammates fall under the category of friends and

social and have a major impact on the individual (Figure 6). The researcher observed through his time with the club that the social aspect was of huge importance to the members, meeting at training was a chance to catch up with the fellow players along with practicing their sport. Furthermore, social outings like going to a bar after a match or to watch Gaelic games or soccer games were frequent.

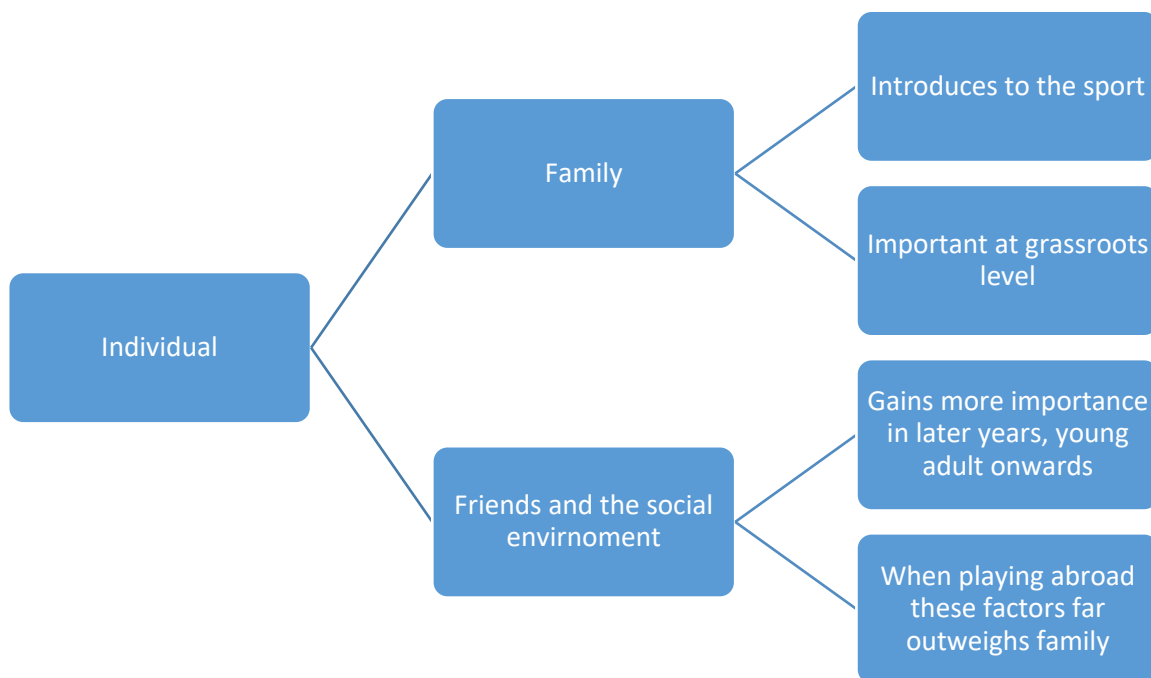


Figure 6. Main Findings on the Effect of Family, Friends and Social Environment on Gaelic Games Participation

6.3 National identity

All acknowledged how the GAA and Gaelic football are the national sports of Ireland and how they are interlinked with national identity. Some of the main reasons the GAA was identified with Irish identity was it being an amateur sport, the uniqueness of the game and with it being synonymous with Ireland. Also, the participation and community feel to the sport. As noted below, the GAA club can be observed as the hub of the community, as something the whole population can get behind and participate in.

“I suppose the participation, that the whole community gets involved; that it's a GAA club; it's the hub of a community. Everybody supports the clubs; comes and helps whichever way they can. It's all amateur of course, I don't know whether professionalism would harm it...the club structure. But everyone, mother's, whole families get involved whether making few sandwiches or just coming down supporting the team the whole community, the whole parish is eager to know how the team gets on and wishing them the best. I think it brings the community together which is a very Irish thing, I think people like to socialize, to help each other out.” (Phil)

The topic of the amateur status of the GAA was recurrent in the interviews, however the possibility of the professionalisation of the GAA was not discussed. Two of the interviewees were from Northern Ireland, acknowledged the link between Ireland and the GAA.

“I'm from the north of Ireland and pretty much that's the sport you play in school, it's almost like our national sports, ...there's always a Gaelic football team in every parish, so you played Gaelic football with them and then when I went to secondary school, it was all about Gaelic football, or athletics, that was the only two sports offered to you, if I had a belong to a different religion and I went to a different school I would have ended up playing rugby union or hockey, so I think it was because of the choice of school I went to and something that all my friends did. Yeah, just something I grew up with.” (Tony)

The political situation in Northern Ireland is a complex one and should be noted that Northern Irish can claim to be both British and/or Irish. Although there is a somewhat negative connotation involved with Irish nationalism due to the troubles in Northern Ireland, the GAA has looked to distance itself from this extreme nationalism and is seen as a peaceful way of showing your Irish identity (McGuire and Hassan, 2012).

The iconic symbol of the Irish flag is placed on the back of the collar on the Helsinki Harps jersey, all participants were asked how they felt about it being there. All participant acknowledged it as a positive and representing the origins of the sport.

“I think, it's a nice touch because there's people that have never played this sport and they might think, that's it's only played in Finland or they mightn't know much about it, but then they see the different flag and it intrigues them and it looks nice.” (Declan)

To conclude, the strong link between national identity and the GAA can be assumed based on the results (Figure 7). National identity, although different from cultural identity, are connected and an important link in this research.

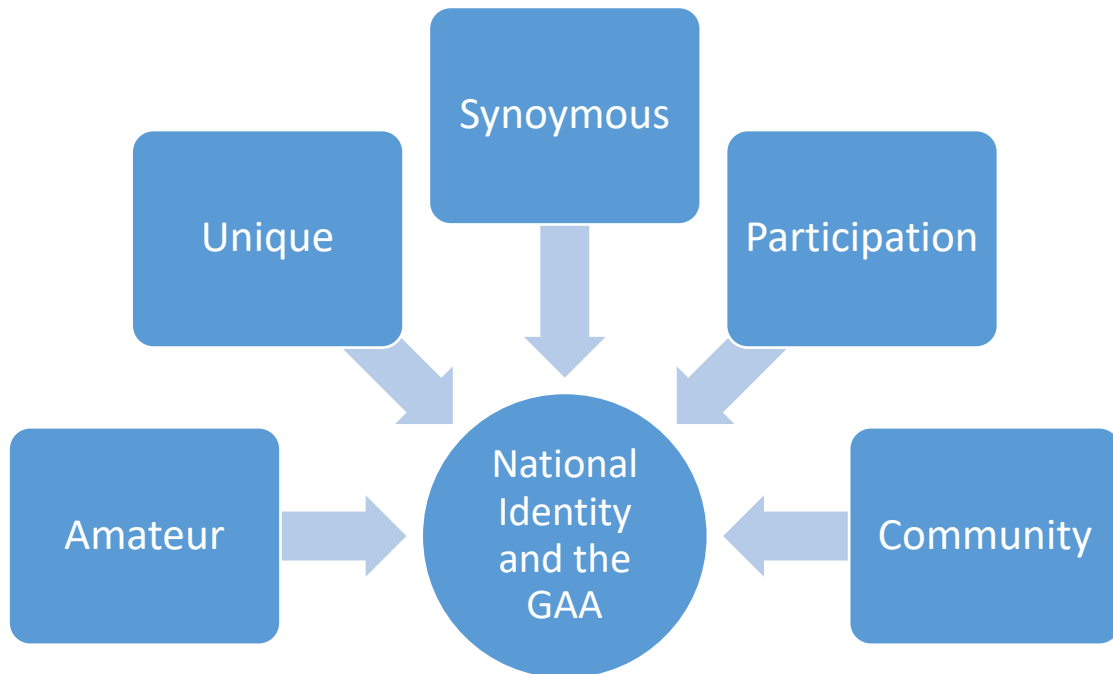


Figure 7. Themes linked with National Identity and the GAA

6.4 The significance of the GAA abroad and in Helsinki

The importance of the GAA abroad and in Helsinki is highlighted by all interviewees (Figure 8). They recognise its importance for new Irish people abroad, how it aids networking and with the integration process.

“Well I think it's a place for people to come if you're new to the country and you're looking to make contacts or just to make some connections in the country I think it can be a great way of doing it. You can look it up on the internet now, with social media it's much easier to get in contact with a local GAA club... You know there's going to be Irish guys there and they're going to help you... not just to help integrate but to find work, find a place to live, sort you out with anything around the area that you're unsure of, to help you out all the time. It's more than just a sports club, especially Irish people would know that coming here or going to any country. It would be the first port of call you would look for, the local GAA club if there is one.” (Phil)

Additionally, the fact that Helsinki does not have a huge number of Irish in the city and depends on international players re-established the need for the GAA in the city. The interviewees felt it was important to show that there is an Irish presence in the city and an Irish cultural outlet for people new to Helsinki. However, all realised the different meaning it has abroad, its popularity is not the same as it is in Ireland and is generally unknown on a global scale. Also, the acknowledgment that the competition level is obviously not as high as back in Ireland.

“I mean it's only a drop in the ocean over here compared to back home of course” (Aidan)

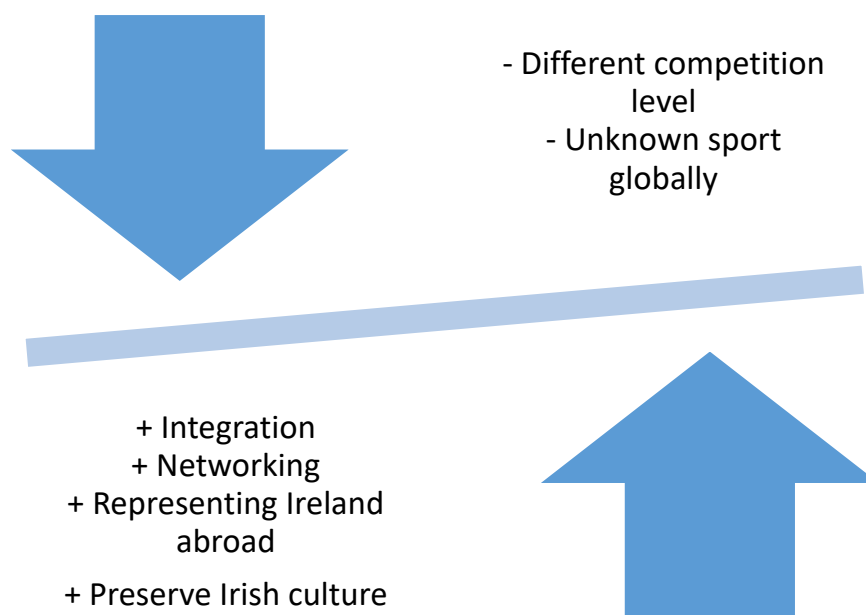


Figure 8. Findings in Terms of Positives and Negatives of the GAA abroad and its significance

6.5 Other observations

In the role of the researcher some things were observed in the interviews and through my time with the team in 2014, 2015 and 2016. As noted the club is much more than a sports club and acts also as a social club. There are so many facets to the club it's hard to address all of them, the following subchapters tackle issues the participants and researcher have observed.

6.5.1 Enjoyment

The general enjoyment of the sport although an obvious one must be mentioned as it surpasses the football pitch. The camaraderie involved in the sport was often vocalized along with the team mentality and number of friends within the club.

“The main reason is because I love the game and I loved it. I enjoyed playing, I really enjoy playing and that's why I want to continue to play, so that is the main reason why I source the football team here [Helsinki] as well.” (Aidan)

Enjoying a sport is vital for a person to be involved in it, all participants emphasized their enjoyment and even love for the sport of Gaelic football. This, along with the enjoyment of the environment and social scene could be said to enhance the success of the club. While taken part in competitions, there is an enjoyable side to the club, the trainings could be said to be not as intense as Gaelic football trainings in Ireland. The age demographic of the club would possibly be much higher than in GAA clubs in Ireland. There could also be said to be a friendlier relationship with ‘rival’ or competing clubs, with teams often frequenting a local bar or restaurant together after a match for food and drinks, something that would not be common in Ireland. This added element of a friendly rivalry with opposite clubs adds to the mystic and romanticism of Nordic Gaelic football and brings added enjoyment.

6.5.2 International aspect

As mentioned the GAA going global is a modern phenomenon and the introduction of live global streaming of games via GAAGO and on satellite tv with the company Sky in Britain is one where the participants seen Gaelic Games increase around the globe.

“Often the best thing that the island of Ireland can show to the world are its musicians and its sports stars, it always used to be boxers, jockeys from horse racing, sometimes soccer players, football players, more recently MMA [Mixed Martial Arts] stars but now I think Gaelic football. Gaelic footballers who are being shown around the world, pretty much in every country, you can actually get to watch Gaelic football through sky [satellite tv] and then to tell that these people are amateurs that they do this, and they don't get paid for it...To tell that, 'oh you see

that guy that scored that goal, I know him' you know, or 'that lad there he's managing the team you know it used to be, you know, in my brother's class' you know he's just a normal guy, he's just a normal guy who works in a bar or a farmer or a teacher. So, I think to be part of the sports and the people who play the sports." (Tony)

Due to the small size and population of Ireland it can be a regular occurrence knowing someone from the same village, town, city, school, university or workplace as you. This somewhat community feel is one of the reasons for Gaelic games popularity. What also become apparent here is the amateur ethos of the sport and the fact that all players at intercounty, college or club are not receiving payment for their services

6.5.3 Playing Gaelic games in other foreign countries

Of the five participants, four have played GAA abroad in another country other than Ireland and Finland. The participants had played in a range of countries from Wales, England, America and Australia. This can be seen to further strengthen the argument that Gaelic games maintain the individuals culture abroad. Playing these Irish traditional sports abroad requires more effort and desire on the part of the individual. In Ireland it can be seen as assumed that you join your local GAA club and play, and it is quite easy to join one. Yet when abroad, the family and social circles are gone and its demands genuine energy to join a club and commit to training and playing.

Often when playing in these GAA strongholds players are often given a payment in the form of flights, a job, accommodation or even cash.

"I lived in Boston for four months and yes I played football there that was the main reason I went there was to play with a football team St.Colmcille's. But yeah I played one summer there...I was a student and I was 20 years old and I had no plans for the summer so I said I'd go over and experience that and the Gaelic football club [in Boston] promised to pay my flights and accommodation if I was good enough to play for their team and luckily I was so they took care of that and set me up with a job for the four months and I played with them and trained with them regularly and we won the cup competition that year when I played in 1999." (Barry)

Although the GAA is an amateur organisation the illegal payment of players abroad is rife, and in Ireland GAA players often receive social mobility through job offers, travel money etc.

6.5.4 Other

Some had an ulterior motive for getting involved in the sport originally. Most schools in Ireland have a GAA team or teams and frequently have games during school days and hours.

“I suppose it was in school mainly when I started playing, they saw you in PE [Physical Education] playing and if you were good enough you were asked to join the school team and that was it and it's great to get off of school as well, so I played on...I was playing on two teams at one stage, I missed a lot of school playing, that was the main reason I think [to miss school]. And I enjoy the game I love playing so I played for the local club then as well.” (Phil)

All participants acknowledged the physical activity side of the sport as a huge positive, and its effect on both physical and mental health. Gaelic football is an intense; high octane sport and require a high level of cardiovascular fitness.

“health benefits, physical health and mental health and having other people kind of understand your humour and your accent and just being able to fit into a group so quickly, more quicker and more comfortably than I would for any other culture.” (Barry)

After conducting the interviews, all research questions were answered, and it help give a deeper insight and understanding into the thoughts of the Irish members of the GAA club.

7 DISCUSSION

This final chapter will include an in-depth discussion while pairing the research findings with the previous studies. It observes the limitations of the study and being the first of its kind what future research could be conducted. Lastly, the chapter will conclude with the conclusion section.

7.1 Discussion

I believe this paper helps establish the link between the Irish club members preserving their cultural identity through Gaelic football. Due to there never being a study on Nordic GAA, I feel this is significant in raising the issue of GAA clubs abroad being a preserver of cultural identity. This equates to a 'home from home' feel for the participant, their original 'home' being their birthplace of Ireland. As stated when asked "*Do you play Gaelic football as a link to your cultural identity?*" four of the five participants acknowledged that they did. While one interviewee, Barry, did not agree with the statement, I would argue he showed signs in the interview of preserving his cultural identity. Similar to Allen, Drane, Byon, & Mohn's (2010) study, the majority agreed that sport, in this case Gaelic football can be used for maintenance of cultural identity.

As seen in the segmented assimilation theory by Portes (1995), these Irish participants are deliberately maintaining their immigrant community values and solidarity. While integrating economically and socially as pointed out by Safi (2008). Although the theory was based on second generation immigrants, it is relative for this study on first generation Irish emigrants due to the fact that all participants have Finnish partners, and all have children born in Finland. This can be seen as an ideal case of cultural pluralism as all participants have fully integrated in Finnish society, and Helsinki Harps has a truly international feel, with various multicultural members. It should be noted that not all interviewees speak fluent Finnish, and all training, meeting and communication related to the club and Gaelic football is in English. This brings up the matter of the GAA club not fully integrating into Finnish society. However, all participants have held working positions, have numerous Finnish and international friends and are in no way closed off from the dominant society. Furthermore, there are only about 600 Irish

living in Finland, which cannot be stated as a big number in comparison to the 250,000 foreign nationals in total living in Finland (Statistics Finland, 2017). They have adapted to Finland and integrated bi-culturally, taking in Finnish culture while preserving their own Irish culture and heritage. What should be noted here is that Gaelic football plays a small yet important role in the participants life in Finland, also there are a number of international and in particular Finnish members of the club. Helsinki Harps GAA club is orientated to respect difference and value diversity so that social cohesion is enhanced.

“Well, in our sport in Gaelic and probably with others as well and it's open for anybody, age, sex, there's no barriers to joining our club and taking part...But there's no barriers - people can join and feel welcome, there's no there's no barriers in that sense.” (Phil)

From Blumer's (1969) symbolic interactionism viewpoint, the participants overall give Gaelic football in Helsinki the same meaning – an Irish indigenous sport abroad (in comparison to other sports like football, rugby and cricket) which helps them identify with home while enjoying, competing and participating in the club. While there are different meanings from each individual, some see the team as a social club, others more competitive, all viewed Helsinki Harps as a healthy representation of Irish abroad while opening its doors to everyone. That theme was central in every interview. When observing the family and societal connection to the individual and the sport, it highlighted how they are connected.

Solidarity theory by Durkheim (1972) observes how the club Helsinki are brought together through the sport Gaelic football.

"birds of the same feather, flock together" (Tony)

We can observe how each member of the club has role in order to make the club a successful organisation. While there is a committee in place it is very much a team effort with a division of labour throughout the team. All participants had played on the team and all except one had numerous positions with the club, as Chairman, committee member, coach etc. This collective effort helps build a sort of community spirit about the club which Irish members recognise from their home GAA club. This collective consciousness in terms of success for the club adds to the cultural value of the organisation.

The significance of the GAA abroad and in Finland, depends on the individual, and whether they are Irish or not. However, this study observing the significance for Irish emigrants abroad,

would determine it to be for Irish ex-patriots both sporting and social environment in which individuals can preserve their culture, socialise with some of their ancestral group and other like-minded people. For non-native Irish, it could be seen as a new sport to play, a club that is has a community feel and an excellent social aspect. The sport is open to everyone, no matter what nationality, religion or gender. As Hassan (2010) found in his study on the GAA in Europe, many Irish members of European GAA clubs had little or no involvement in GAA back in Ireland. Although the majority of participants had strong GAA backgrounds, we can see from Phil's and Tony's case that having a strong background in GAA is not essential in participating with Helsinki Harps. Indubitably, experience is not a key requirement to join the club.

When talking about the significance of the GAA abroad it admittedly has a different meaning abroad than in Ireland. It also has a large proportion of non-native Irish playing these games, for enjoyment, social and other reasons. As mentioned previously Helsinki Harps had 42 members in 2017 and as noted by some participants, members come from all different countries.

"Finns have become involved, not just Finns, but other players from other countries, America, Vietnam, Turkey, so on." (Tony)

The GAA club abroad can be seen as a community, and it prides itself on its community identity (Lane et al. 2017). The community spirit could be the significance of the GAA abroad and can be witnessed by all members Irish and non-Irish.

However, there are some concerns for the future of the club, foreseeing when the core members get older, who will drive on the club? There is no underage structure in place and while recruiting of new players has increased it simply needs more youth and more cooperation between all members to continue to exist. Considering all participants have children, could these children possibly maintain the club? Although the majority of participants would like them to know and be involved in Gaelic games, will their children have the same interest in the sport to continue with the club. The participants acknowledge that members who are living and staying in Helsinki are needed to maintain the club, and the future will depend on some youth development and a bigger drive for members.

The study emphasizes the connection between the GAA and the national Irish identity. The GAA is seen as a somewhat nationalist organisation in that most members would not categorize themselves as British (McGuire & Hassan, 2012; Cronin, 1997). This can be seen by the two interviews with the members of Northern Ireland who would associate themselves as Irish. It

was clear to see that all identified the GAA with Irish national identity. Helsinki Harps is a multi-cultural club with members from all over the globe as noted by Gaelic Games Europe (2018) and any feelings that the club is an Irish nationalistic club should be refuted. As mentioned at the time of writing the ladies team had no Irish members and recruitment is constantly taking place to encourage and attract new members, especially Finnish members who are from and live in Helsinki.

All participants advocate the relationship between the GAA and Irish identity. Expressing the amateur status of the sport, its uniqueness and the community participation were central themes in linking the two. Evidently, politics and or beliefs were not at any point part of the discussion. The study would seem to express a similar view to that of McGuire and Hassan (2012) and emphasize how the GAA abroad is used as a vehicle to express an Irish identity free of politics and violence. The club can be seen as an icon of Irish cultural identity and proof for Irish abroad they are not alone in a new country.

To conclude, Gaelic football in Helsinki can be assumed to preserve Irish cultural identity in Irish born emigrants. Helsinki Harps is clearly an all-inclusive multicultural club, putting an international quality on an Irish indigenous sport. The GAA has a different meaning in Finland than in Ireland due to its truly international feel. While the GAA is undoubtedly Irish, in Finland it's somewhat altered, it's an Irish indigenous sport with a Finnish/international twist. However, there concerns about the future of the club due to the aging demographic and the issue of the club not fully emerging into Finnish society based on trainings conducted in English and a number of the participants only speaking basic Finnish.

7.2 Limitations

The main aim of the study has been to explore the experiences of Irish emigrants who have maintained Irish cultural identity through Gaelic games. When we review the limitations the main aim of the research should be considered. This study had a moderately small group of participants, and the results must be deliberated with care when making generalizations outside of the population. While it is based on one of only three GAA clubs in Finland it does not represent the GAA in Finland as a whole. Furthermore, the GAA cannot be seen to be entirely represented as Helsinki Harps only compete in men's and ladies Gaelic football, and do not

have teams in hurling, camogie or handball, the other Gaelic sports in the GAA. As mentioned previously, only the men's team were interviewed for this study and the uneven gender distribution should be taken into account.

As identified by Hodkinson, P., & Hodkinson, H. (2001), case studies are strongest when the researcher expertise and intuition are maximised, however, this raises concerns about their "objectivity". The researchers inside relationship with the club and the individuals should be noted here, and it cannot be underestimated how the researcher has shared experiences with the participants and has a similar background both cultural and socio-economically. In the interviews there was a number of occasions where the participants said 'you know', acknowledging the researcher knew the situation or circumstance. While the researcher may have interpreted what the individuals meant, it was not always obvious to the reader. This may have led to occasions where the participants didn't fully explain something or assumed knowledge for granted due to the insider researcher. It is never possible to be completely objective, nor is it possible to make transparent all the judgements the researcher has made. However, all the adequate evidence was presented in this study to maintain a trustworthy objective approach.

Finally, there had never been a study on Nordic GAA before and hence there was no academic content to work with on this topic. Furthermore, there was very little literature on European GAA and the GAA abroad, this undoubtedly affected the quality of the research as there was little to justify or strengthen arguments.

7.3 Future research

There are huge possibilities to extend the research in the future, primarily due to this being the first study on Nordic GAA. Irish ladies that play GAA in Finland could help to engage their view of the GAA abroad and the preservations of their culture. Widening the research to the other two GAA clubs in Finland of Jyväskylä GAA and Oulu GAA, would provide a more expansive and detailed outlook on the issue of preservation of cultural identity.

Future research could be branched out to the ever-growing number of internationals who play Gaelic games in Finland. The research could focus on cultural identity and if internationals

understand the culture and history behind the sport. Additionally, it could investigate why internationals play Gaelic games and explore and understand the reasons they participate in the sport. This would be hugely beneficial for the Gaelic Athletic Association if they wish to expand the sport globally and to an international audience.

Due to the ever-growing number of GAA clubs in the world, research should be conducted in areas around the world not known for their GAA culture. This topic of the GAA abroad is not well researched and could benefit from more research. Due to this modern phenomenon, academics must investigate how these clubs were founded, how they function and their future plans to grow. The GAA has strong roots in America, Britain and Australia but it's the increase in GAA clubs in countries where English is not the native language or that the majority of members are not Irish where the new aspect is. Furthermore, GAA clubs with this unusual aspect must be researched and would be helpful in providing research for the GAA if they wish to expand the number of clubs overseas.

7.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, a defined link between cultural identity and the GAA in Finland has been founded. Additionally, it highlighted the positive effect of a community sense of feeling the GAA can have and proved that sport can be used as a tool for preserving cultural identity. It emphasizes the significance of the GAA abroad and in Helsinki, Finland. This research helps assert the strong connection between the GAA and Irish national identity.

I would recommend more funding from the GAA, due to the majority of finances coming from fund raising initiatives, Helsinki Harps has received funding from the GAA, but it has been sporadic in nature. The funding can help grow and build the club but should focus attention on youth development and introduction to Gaelic football classes for different age groups and as previously mentioned, there is huge costs for playing members of the club. In addition, the introduction of Finnish language and culture classes for non-Finnish speaking Helsinki Harps members, this will help with the difficulties of the integration process.

This research was necessary as there is a growing number of GAA clubs outside of Ireland and there has been little research on this phenomenon. This research is valuable for GAA clubs in

Ireland and abroad, as GAA expands globally due to an increase of Irish emigrating after the recession. This study delivers empirical weight to the under researched topic of participation of GAA outside of Ireland.

Having conducted this research, I have learned a great deal about myself as a person and a researcher. I now think of Gaelic games abroad differently and appreciate how it's a useful vehicle for maintaining Irish culture abroad, while enjoying and participating in the sport. Nonetheless, I am now aware of the possibilities of not fully integrating into a society if I only socialize and participate in only the social grouping of the GAA abroad. I would encourage all Irish born citizens abroad to participate in GAA clubs abroad, but to also engage in activities of their new country's culture, exploring and understanding the new environment in which they live.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: The Preservation of Cultural Identity Through the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) in Finland. A Case Study on Helsinki Harps.

Name of Researchers: Brian Jordan

Please tick the boxes

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated
for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask
questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time
without giving any reason, without my legal rights being affected.
3. I understand access to the interview transcript will be limited to Brian Jordan and
academic colleagues with whom he might collaborate as part of the research process.
4. I consent to the audio taping of the interview
5. I consent to the use of my personal identity through participation in this research.
6. I agree to take part in the above study.

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

Name of Person
taking consent.

Date

Signature

Appendix 2. Information Sheet

INFORMATION SHEET

Introduction

I am a researcher from the University of Jyväskylä, who as part of my International Masters studies, is required to conduct a research paper.

What is the purpose of the study?

This study seeks to explore the story of Irish male Gaelic football players in the Helsinki region, and what led to their decision to play Gaelic football abroad, and what how it differs to Gaelic football in Ireland.

How will the study be conducted?

The research will be conducted in face-to-face interview by the researchers. Interviews will take approximately 30 minutes and will be audio-recorded.

What are the possible disadvantages or risks of taking part?

There are no known risks or disadvantages of taking part. You have your right to remain anonymous if you choose so. If you wish I will send you the transcript of the interview before the analysis to allow you to ensure that you have not been misrepresented.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

In taking part, you will be able to reflect on the benefits of playing Gaelic football abroad and the consideration and decision process that needs to be given if you choose to play abroad. It will also help to recognise the motivating factors involved.

What happens when the research study stops?

I will publish the results for the purpose of the Masters thesis

Do I have to take part in this research?

You are under no obligation to take part in this research. You can withdraw at any time without giving a reason and there will be no adverse consequences if you do so.

What if there is a problem?

Any complaint or concern about any aspect of the way you have been dealt with during the course of the study will be addressed; please contact:

Contact details of the researcher

Researcher
Brian Jordan
University of Jyväskylä
email: brjordan@student.jyu.fi
Phone: 0401973199

Who is organising the research?

I, the researcher has organised the research in according to the prescribed outline for the Master thesis guideline.

Thank you for taking the time to read this Information Sheet.

Appendix 3. Interview Question Framework

Interview projected time 20-30 minutes

- What is your name, and age?
- What is your place of birth, home Gaelic club?
- What level of Gaelic football or hurling have you played? Intercounty, college, club?
- How long have you lived in Helsinki?
- Have you lived in other countries? And if so have you played GAA (football or hurling) there?
- What brought you to Helsinki?
- How many years have you played GAA?
- Why did you start playing GAA?
- Why do you play GAA in Helsinki?
- How long have you played with Helsinki Harps?
- What is your position with the club? Player, coach, committee member etc.?
- How does/Do you play Gaelic football as a link to your cultural identity (a sense of Irishness)?
- What is your definition of cultural identity? Elaborate your answer
- What makes you feel part of the Helsinki Harps team?
- What are the positive effects of playing GAA abroad?
- Do you think the GAA has a different meaning/identity here in Finland than in Ireland?
- What are the negative effects of playing GAA abroad?
- How can sport be used as a tool for integration?
- What is the significance of the GAA away from Ireland?
- Is it important for your kids to be involved in the GAA? (if applicable)
- What is your feelings on internationals or Finnish playing GAA football?
- Which things could make Gaelic football more popular in Finland and abroad, and why do you think so?
- Do you feel GAA in Helsinki integrates or isolates Irish from Finnish society, explain why?
- What do you see are the future plans for the club (Helsinki Harps)?
- If you had to explain GAA to a stranger, what do you say makes the GAA inherently Irish? In other what makes the GAA Irish
- What symbols makes you think of the GAA?
- What about the Ireland flag on the Helsinki Harps GAA jersey?
- Anything you would like to add?