

Jumpers for Goalposts:
A Study of Refugee Integration in the UK
Through Sport



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Abstract

“Sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire. It has the power to unite people in a way that little else does.” Nelson Mandela

The European migration crisis has created the need to develop effective refugee integration strategies in the UK. Local councils and governments would appear to place more emphasis on health, education and economic support at the cost of social aspects of integration. This empirical study argues that the universal and cross-cultural commonality of sport provides a vital platform for aiding the refugee integration process and recommends an increased focus should be placed on the role of sport in general, and football in particular.

Over a three month period, I conducted participant observation and interviews with refugees and locals who play a weekly football session in Lancaster, to evaluate the impact this had on refugee integration. Four domains from Ager and Strangs (2008) Indicators of Integration framework are used as guidelines for measuring integration. These are ‘Social Bridges’, ‘Social Bonds’, ‘Language and Cultural Knowledge’ and ‘Safety and Stability’.

This dissertation underlines the importance of effective leadership in ensuring the full integrative potential of sporting groups, and supports previous refugee integration research by highlighting the significance of stable, familiar activity in the often chaotic lives of refugees. Finally this dissertation expands on sports impact on refugee’s English language skills and outlines the benefits of the informal learning space provided by football, as a place where refugees can practice colloquial English with local participants.

Key Words: Integration Refugees Sport Football

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Introduction

“Although we are very different and come from a lot of different places you would’ve never thought that is the case when we play football. We are all human.” (Karim, 30/11/2016)

Karim is a Syrian refugee who has been playing football in Lancaster for 6 months. As Karim’s quote demonstrates, the cross-cultural commonality of football provides the perfect activity for participants to interact and to forget their individual differences. This research took place over three months and consisted of participant observation and a series of interviews with a group of male refugees and locals aged between 18-35 who play a weekly football session in Lancaster. The group was established to offer refugees the option of playing sport and this research is concerned with the impact this has had on refugee integration.

As a measure of integration, this dissertation uses Ager and Strangs (2008) Indicators of Integration framework, focusing on the domains of ‘Social Bridges’, ‘Social Bonds’, ‘Language and Cultural Knowledge’ and ‘Safety and Stability’. These four domains are outlined in the literature review.

It is estimated that there were 1.3 million asylum applications within the 28 European Union countries during the migration crisis of 2015 and 2016 (Eurostat, 2017). Whilst poor immigration data means a lack of reliable information about exact numbers, it is understood that there are currently 117,234 known refugees living in the UK and 38,878 asylum applications were made at the height of the crisis in 2015 (Red Cross, 2017). In the UK, tensions surrounding immigration and integration have been rising, with Brexit highly linked to recent debates on immigration policy and the topics of migration and refugees rarely out of the public eye (Phillimore, 2017). Many refugees

and British citizens live parallel lives with a lack of shared experiences and little scope for the emergence of shared values (Cantle, 2008). Given the current climate, now is an extremely important time to be focusing on integration.

Refugee and migration issues are important at European and global levels but also matter at local community level, and it is this level that is playing an increasingly important role in the refugee integration process (Ray, 2003). There is a commonly researched link between positive mental, physical and social wellbeing and playing sport (Penedo and Dahn, 2005; Taylor et al, 2004). This dissertation proposes that these benefits provided by sport can act as a solution to the poor mental, physical and social wellbeing of refugees (Ringold et al, 2005; Burnett and Peel, 2001) and looks at the impact of sport on integration at the local community level, within the four aforementioned domains of Ager and Strangs (2008) integration framework.

The concept of sport and refugees is not entirely new. In recent years we have seen the refugee Olympic team competing at Rio 2016 (Donnelly and Saunders, 2017), 1,000 children enrolling in a football programme in Jordan's Za'taari refugee camp (Ott, 2015) as well as the 2001 establishment of the 'United Nations Office on Sport for Development and Peace' (Chawansky and Holmes, 2015). I chose Lancaster as my research site for a number of reasons. After weeks of searching, I discovered that there was a lack of mixed refugee and local sports clubs in Manchester. This was confirmed in an interview with Sally, an employee at the Manchester based refugee charity 'Boaz Trust', who stated "*I know there's not much sport going on in Manchester, not with locals and refugees*" (Sally, 08/11/2016). In 2016, 29 male refugees from Syria, Sudan, Kuwait, Iran and Iraq were housed in Lancaster through the government Gateway Protection Programme (Rouncivell, 2016). Jack, an acquaintance of mine, had recently helped to set up a small informal weekly football session for male refugees and locals in Lancaster and invited me along to work with the group. Over a period of three months I was able to develop relationships with participants, formulate a strong narrative and explore my research through their eyes.

Within the football group I chose to refer to non-local participants as refugees. The reality is that within this group there is a mixture of asylum seekers and refugees. I am

not interested in a distinction between refugees and asylum seekers for this research and I have chosen to reject the politically contentious division of groups (Squire, 2011). Furthermore, politically it is important to recognise that the label asylum seeker has a set of connotations that the term refugee does not and so in order to deal with that problematic language I have decided to use the term refugee for the collective group (Zetter, 2007).

The structure of this dissertation is as follows:

Chapter 2 is a literature review. This section discusses the academic context of literature surrounding the topic of refugee integration and sport as an integrative method. Ager and Strang's (2008) integration framework is discussed and five research questions are presented in this section.

Chapter 3 provides an explanation of the qualitative research methods used, concluding with a reflection on my positionality and a note on the ethics of conducting research with refugees.

Chapter 4 contains my analysis of the research, presenting three key findings. A focus will be maintained on the four chosen domains of Ager and Strang's (2008) integration framework.

Chapter 5 concludes with a summary of my key findings, thoughts about the contribution of this research to the wider academic area and future questions for consideration.

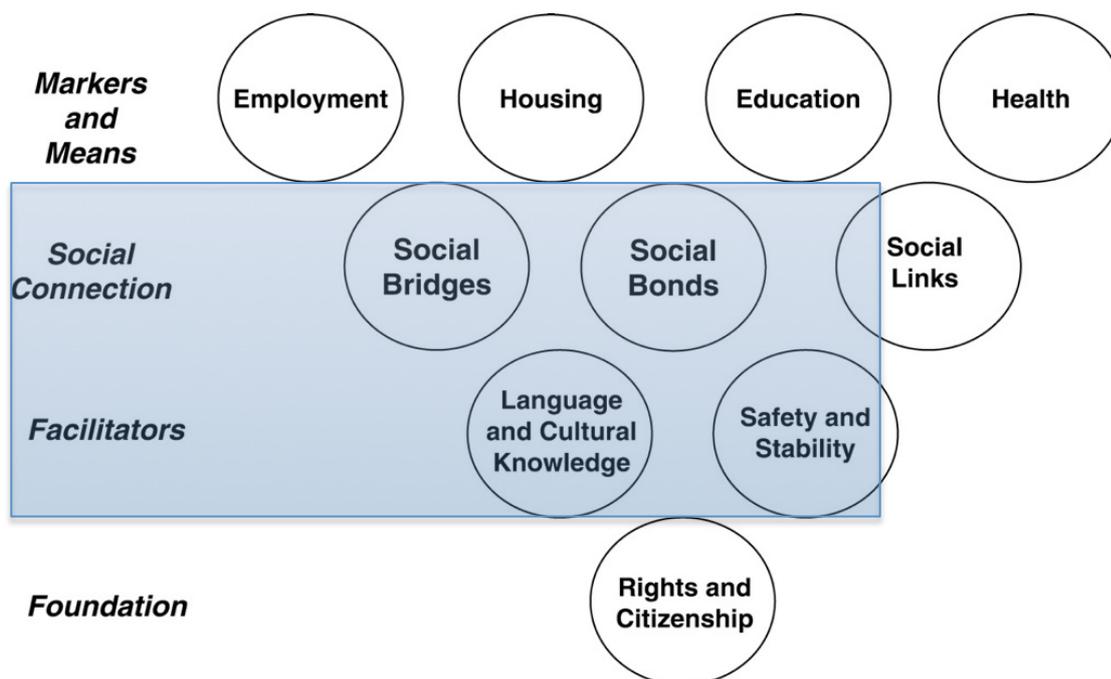
Literature Review

This section provides a summary of the reading undertaken prior to the research beginning. Key papers, theories and academics reviewed here are used and referenced throughout this dissertation. This review starts with a focus on refugee integration, before looking at integration with specific reference to sport and the benefits or difficulties associated with this. This dissertation uses four domains of Ager and Strang (2008) Indicators of Integration framework as guidelines when looking at the impacts of football in Lancaster on refugee integration (Figure 1).

Defining Integration

Focus on refugee integration is a longstanding and constantly changing field of work. Castles et al (2001, p. 12) state, "*there is no single, generally accepted definition, theory or model of immigrant and refugee integration. The concept continues to be controversial and hotly debated*". Integration is a multidimensional concept and Ager and Strang (2008) present a conceptual framework for understanding integration, and identify what constitutes successful integration. Ager and Strang (2008) establish four sections made up of ten domains, and the highlighted domains are those with which this research is concerned.

Figure 1: A Conceptual Framework Defining Core Domains of Integration



Source (edited): Ager and Strang (2008 p3)

When researching refugee integration, focusing on the sections of ‘Social Bridges’, ‘Social Bonds’, ‘Language and Cultural Knowledge’ and ‘Safety and Stability’ is paramount (Putnam, 2000; Woolcock, 1998) and each of these domains has the potential to be impacted by playing sport in the community (Olliff, 2008). The two-way process of integration emphasised by Ager and Strang (2008) highlights the importance of focusing on refugees in the host community, as well as on the locals, with regards to the mutual feelings, connection and views between the two groups (Ager and Strang, 2008). Rutter et al (2007, p. 117) also stress the importance of this two way process in their research report on refugee integration in the UK, stating, “*Communities receiving migrants have responsibility for the integration of new arrivals – everyone needs to be a good neighbour.*” ‘Social Bridges’ refers to the two way broadening of cultural horizons for refugees as well as locals from the host community. For examples of bridging, Ager and Strang (2008) give specific mention to participation in sports clubs, undertaking voluntary community work and everyday mixing with those of different ethnic backgrounds. ‘Social Bonds’ refers to the sense of belonging felt by refugees in their host community as well as engagement with refugee community groups and events (Ager and Strang, 2008). Examples of this include regular interaction with those of similar

ethnicity or religious and cultural backgrounds (Ager and Strang, 2008). This dissertation will also focus on facilitators, which consist of 'Language and Cultural Knowledge' and 'Safety and Stability'. Language and cultural knowledge is a reciprocal domain in that it is important for refugees to understand the local language and develop broader cultural knowledge of the wider community to enable their participation, however it is also important for the locals to be observant and understanding of the "*circumstances and culture of refugees*" (Ager and Strang, 2008, p. 4). Safety and stability refers to continuity and permanence in the lives of refugees and the influence of this on establishing relationships within their communities (Ager and Strang, 2008).

The term 'social integration' is disputed and interpreted in varying ways by different groups with the current United Nations working definition being "*a dynamic and principled process where all members participate in dialogue to achieve and maintain peaceful social relations*" (United Nations, 2005). Sport can play an important role in this dynamic and principled process and its emergence as an integrative technique is discussed in the following section.

Emergence of Sport

The global importance of sport, economically, socially, culturally and politically is one that cannot be underestimated (Gratton, 1998; Crawford, 2004). Worldwide, sport has played a key role as far back as ancient civilisation (Mechikoff, 2006) and grown into a modern phenomenon, one that has divided nations as well as bringing nations together. In recent times, there has been a rise in the focus of sport on development thinking (Darnell, 2007) and following Europe's ongoing migrant crisis that began in 2015 (Geddes and Scholten, 2016) sport looks to be playing an increasingly important role in the lives of those affected. New partnerships such as that of World Vision and the Premier League, which aims to bring football training camps to refugees in Jordan, have helped to bring sport into the limelight in times of crisis (World Vision, 2015). The initiation of the Refugee Olympic team competing at Rio 2016 (Donnelly and Saunders, 2017), and the rise of charities and governments using sport, most notably the United Nations Office on Sport for Development and Peace, goes to show the growing support for sport and its ability to make a positive difference (Chawansky and Holmes, 2015).

When looking at sport as a potential catalyst to integration, it is vital to focus on the social aspects due to participation in sport being an inherently social activity (Long and Sanderson, 2001; Wankel and Berger, 1990). Active involvement with sport has proven wide-ranging benefits of improved mental and physical wellbeing, psychological healing and educational benefits such as language development (Darnell, 2007; Olliff, 2008; RCOA, 2010).

Sports Platform for Contact and Encounter in Intergroup Relations

Sport as an integrative method is not a new phenomenon and Krouwel et al (2006) highlighted that migrant and local citizens agree that sport can be useful for social bridging, bonding and bringing groups closer together. Putnam's (2000) social capital work also indicates that sport can be vital for promoting interaction between different groups in society. Playing sport is a close contact social activity and Amir (1969) provides an outline of his contact hypothesis in intergroup relations based on Allport's (1954) theory. The theory argues that contact is a remedy and effective way of overcoming differences and decreasing discrimination between two or more groups. Amir (1969) notes that improved intergroup relations are likely to occur when there is participation in mutual activities, more so than when groups merely spectate one another from a distance. Amir (1969) also distinguishes between competitive and cooperative activities, with competitive tending to have a negative effect on intergroup relations and cooperative having positive effects. Amir (1969) links his research with Cook's (1962) acquaintance potential, defined as "*the opportunity provided by a situation for participants to get to know and understand each other*" (Cook, 1962, p. 75). Amir (1969) identified that there were vast quantities of research on ethnic and racial relations and intergroup contact, but very little has been converted into action-oriented programs.

One leading academic who focused more recently on the field of contact and encounter work is Gill Valentine. Valentine (2008) has written on the impact of everyday proximity with individuals of different backgrounds and challenges the common view that individuals merely coming into contact with each other leads to beneficial social transformation and respect for difference. Valentine (2008) believes contact does not

always lead to a progressive ideal and this can be due to the fact that not everybody entering into the points of contact has equal relationships. The distinction between refugees and locals on an individual level is important given that the power and rights each individual possesses may vary hugely in areas such as right to work, confidence and language. The contact hypothesis is positive in theory but in practice there are different standpoints that individuals are approaching the contact situation from. Sport has the power and ability to break down boundaries and overcome differences on a level playing field, alongside preventing groups from living parallel lives (Cantle, 2008). It is important to look at sports groups that contain a mixture of refugees and locals and to consider if the difference in power relations comes into play and shapes relationships or not.

Parallel Lives and the Power of Sport

Following the 2001 UK race riots and the subsequent Cantle Report the term 'parallel lives' was coined, it referred particularly to white and Asian communities living side by side yet not mixing socially or culturally, in employment, education and day to day life (Cantle, 2008). The report contained direct reference to refugees. It revealed that negative press treatment of the refugees favourable housing situations led to increased tensions in the UK (Cantle, 2008). This term parallel lives can be transferrable to the current lives of refugees living alongside locals, in which refugees struggle to fully immerse themselves in society. Sport is seen as one of a number of ways in which citizens can get involved in society, meet new people and feel part of a community, however refugees often face difficulties with participating in sport (Spicer, 2008; Amara et al, 2005; RCOA, 2010).

There are a number of barriers to entry preventing the full involvement of refugees in society and sport, notably lack of money, cultural differences, inability to access transport, language barriers and the view that sport is a luxury for locals only (Amara et al, 2005; RCOA, 2010). Sport can be a social tool that provides an opportunity for people of different ethnic and social backgrounds to mix, given its low threshold, uniform character and international standardised rule (Knoppers et al, 2001).

Spaaij (2012) conducted a 3-year ethnographic study looking at Somali refugee involvement in football in Australia and its impacts on integration. The study draws on Ager and Strangs (2008) integration framework and highlights the importance of overcoming "*the scenario of parallel societies*" (Spaaij, 2012, p. 1521). Spaaij (2012) highlighted the social significance of playing sport, which is often more important than the sports activity itself and concludes by noting that playing sport created opportunities for the Somalis to participate fully in the local community. Aspinall and Watters (2010) work on the lived experiences of refugees in the UK notes the important influence of the built environment and soft infrastructure on successful integration. These areas include parks, recreational space and importantly sports facilities.

United Glasgow and the Two Way Impacts of Sport

One paper of particular significance is the study of the United Glasgow football team by Booth et al (2014), which draws on Putnam's (2000) social capital framework. Putnam (2000, p. 19) identifies social capital as "*connections among individuals - social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them.*" Social capital and reciprocity are important themes in this dissertation given the reciprocal benefits of playing sport for refugees and locals (Morrice, 2007). Booth et al's (2014) study is on a football team in Glasgow that helps men in the asylum system to integrate. The team plays in the anti-racist football league in Glasgow with a focus on integration and social inclusion as a two way process, involving refugees as well as members of the host community (Da Lomba, 2010; Mulvey, 2010; Morrice, 2007). The United Glasgow paper provides a suitable comparison with my own research as the team here was set up with the specific focus of being anti-racist and fostering integration whereas in Lancaster there is no significant aim; it is merely to give participants the opportunity to play sport. Sports teams that have predetermined aims links with Amir's (1969) contact hypothesis which states that when superordinate goals are present, prejudice is likely to be reduced, therefore a team like United Glasgow, set up with the specific aim of being anti-racist, could provide different outcomes to a local community group with no specific aim, much like the one in Lancaster.

Potential Conflict

Booth et al's (2014) paper raises interesting points surrounding the negative outcomes that arise when sport is used as a social tool. Conflict and aggression often occurs in sport and this is largely explained by sports physical and competitive elements (Krouwel et al, 2006; Booth et al, 2014). Conflict can spill over into everyday life with players bringing aggression from their daily lives onto the football pitch. In Australia, Spaaij (2012) noted that conflict related to the football teams in which Somalian refugees played, resulted in magnified inter-group differences and reinforcement of group boundaries. Spaaij (2012) provides one example, in which a team containing Somalian refugee players came into conflict with a Polish based team and the local media picked up on the story, resulting in a number of players being suspended in the following weeks. Booth et al's (2014) study in the UK notes that there has only been one negative experience in the form of racism towards a member of the team from an opposition player and this helped to unify the team in the following weeks and was used as a motivational tool going forward (Booth et al, 2014).

Krouwel et al (2006) focuses on the political aspect of sport and integration and notes that governments should be doing more to provide basic sporting infrastructure for minority groups, given that some participation in sport is better than no participation. Krouwel et al (2006) advocate the view that groups set up specifically with the aim of facilitating integration in which ethnic minorities and locals mix together are necessary. However Booth et al (2014) with regards to United Glasgow believe that mono-ethnic sports clubs should not be seen as working against social integration and ethnic minorities should not be forced to play with locals for the purpose of integration. Furthermore Booth et al (2014) state that whilst on paper, recreational sport might seem suitable for socially bridging groups together, in practice it is much less likely and can often be seen as an activity that reinforces differences between groups, if ethnic conflicts off the pitch are replicated during games.

Theeboom et al (2012) also examined the different outcomes between mixed ethnicity and single ethnicity sports teams, finding that the common belief that mixed teams offer more social integrative potential is in fact not true. Theeboom et al (2012) tying in with Putnam's (2000) theory on social capital, argues that both types of teams result in

significant bridging and bonding capital, just in different forms. Whilst ethnic minority mixed teams members identified that they learnt more about other ethnicities and became self confident, the single ethnicity teams members found that relationships formed through sport tended to spill over into everyday life, outside of the sporting context (Theeboom et al, 2012). Krouwel et al (2006, p. 175) writes that in the Netherlands, conflict surrounding mixed ethnicity teams has arisen to such an extent that numerous amateur sports teams have set limits on the number of ethnicities allowed into the team, due to fear of inter-ethnic tensions and with the aim of maintaining “*a strong identity and a certain club atmosphere*”. These limits and single ethnicity teams run into direct conflict with Amir’s (1969) contact hypothesis.

One recurring theme in a number of papers was the escapism associated with playing sport (Spaaij, 2012; Booth et al, 2014; RCOA, 2010). Many papers referenced the problems commonly faced by refugees such as mental health, posttraumatic stress and physical wellbeing, all of which can contribute to feeling distanced and removed from ones host community (Booth et al, 2014; Amara et al, 2005). Sport has been seen to significantly improve these aspects of ones life and Amara et al (2005) found that the distraction sport provides from everyday worries was beneficial to refugees suffering from mental health problems.

Barriers to Entry

Barriers to entry were a common theme that arose in academia surrounding refugee integration and also with direct reference to sport. These include language barriers, practical and financial constraints, racism, lack of culturally appropriate facilities, gender, mental health and also high demands of the asylum system (RCOA, 2010; Ager and Strang, 2008; Olliff, 2008; Amara et al, 2005; Goodkind and Foster-Fishman, 2002). Refugee’s perceptions of sport also created a significant barrier to involvement as refugees often view sport as a luxury or activity that is available only to local citizens (Amara et al, 2005). In the first year of a refugee’s arrival in the UK the government places most emphasis on matters such as health and education, with sports and social provision not seen as so important (Amara et al, 2005). Language as a barrier to entry was highlighted by the Refugee Council of Australia as an obstacle that can prevent

refugees from getting involved in sport due, to lack of information about such activities in their first language. However Olliff (2008) and Darnell (2007) focused on this from the opposite angle and looked at how sport can be used to break down this language barrier by providing refugees with the chance to learn a new language in an informal setting, therefore aiding integration.

Barriers to participation were addressed in the Refugee Council of Australia's (RCOA, 2010) paper which much like Krouwel et al's (2006) study, looks at what local councils should be doing, to get refugees involved in sport in order to promote an inclusive society. The Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA, 2010) focused on a number of refugee sporting schemes in place in Australia and created a list of advice for implementing successful programmes, so that new initiatives could follow their instruction. One key point of advice was the need for strong role models and a leader to be in charge of the activities. This idea was present in the United Glasgow paper (Booth et al, 2014), where it was found that the refugee players in the team relied heavily on the manager for help with any questions, or advice. They did not turn to other teammates, but rather preferred the stability of one key individual, a person whom they felt comfortable talking too. This can be linked to Amir's (1969) contact hypothesis and power relations between participants, given that the reliance on the manager stemmed from the refugees perceived authority of him.

The Future

Booth et al's (2014, p. 12) United Glasgow study concludes by stating "*Of particular interest would be an investigation of whether a team without a specifically anti-racist objective could demonstrate the same value as UGFC*". This statement helps to identify a key gap in the literature. Many of the studies presented have commented on the influence of sport that is set up with the aim of positively influencing integration (Krouwel et al, 2006; RCOA, 2010; Knoppers et al, 2001; Spaaij, 2012; Amara et al, 2005). This dissertation focuses on a community group that is not set up with a specific aim of refugee integration, but a group that is provided with the aim of giving an optional activity to refugees. It is the impacts of football on Ager and Strangs (2008) 'Social Bridges', 'Social Bonds', 'Language and Cultural Knowledge' and 'Safety and

Stability' that are to be studied. Following on from the literature, ideas, debates and gaps in research highlighted in this section, I will ask the following research questions.

Research Questions

1. How has playing football helped to shape refugees sense of belonging in Lancaster?
2. How do footballs impacts differ between the refugees and the locals?
3. What has been the impact of playing football on refugee's English language skills?
4. Is Ager and Strangs (2008) integration framework still relevant in 2017?
5. Looking forward should charities, local councils and the government place an emphasis on the role of sport in refugee integration in the UK?

Methodology

In this section I will discuss the qualitative methods of participant observation and interviews that were used for the purpose of this research. Due to the qualitative nature of this research I also discuss my positionality as a young white British male, as well as focusing on the ethics of conducting research with refugees, a vulnerable group (Hugman et al, 2011). My active involvement in the football sessions helped me to get a sense of the social rhythms of the group, the styles of interaction and interrelationships. Participant observation was used and out of this active involvement with the people I met, a number of participants stated they would like to talk to me and tell me more about their experiences with sport in Lancaster. As a result, interviews were arranged with the help of the organiser Jack as an intermediary. Interviews were important as it meant research was not only from my personal perspective. I could delve deeper into participants understanding of the social processes of integration and sports impact on their lives. Table 1 provides a diary of all activities undertaken over the three month period throughout the dissertation.

<u>Activity (number)</u>	<u>Parties</u>	<u>Date</u> <u>(dd/mm/yyyy)</u>	<u>Location</u>
Interview (1)	Jack	14/10/2016	Cafe in Manchester
Participant observation	Lancaster group	19/10/2016	Ripley School, Lancaster
Participant observation	Lancaster group	26/10/2016	Ripley School, Lancaster
Participant observation	Lancaster group	02/11/2016	Ripley School, Lancaster
Interview (1)	Sally - Boaz Trust	08/11/2016	Boaz HQ, Manchester
Participant observation	Lancaster group	09/11/2016	Ripley School, Lancaster
Participant observation	Lancaster group	16/11/2016	Ripley School, Lancaster
Participant observation	Lancaster group	23/11/2016	Ripley School, Lancaster
Participant observation	Lancaster group	30/11/2016	Ripley School, Lancaster
Refugee Interviews (4)	Lancaster group	30/11/2016	House in Lancaster
Participant observation	Lancaster group	07/12/2016	Ripley School, Lancaster
Local Interviews (3)	Lancaster group	07/12/2016	Cafe in Lancaster
Participant observation	Lancaster Group	14/12/2016	Ripley School, Lancaster

Table 1 – Diary of Activities Completed

At my first football session on 19/10/2016 all participants were informed of my reasons for being there and the research that was to be undertaken. However, as the weeks progressed and new refugees and locals were coming and going, it was not appropriate to keep reminding participants of the set up, due to the changing environment. Darling's (2014) work on the fluidity of roles when working in the field with refugees supports the view that if I remind participants on a weekly basis of my role as a researcher, it may seem intrusive and damaging to the friendly environment of the group.

Participant Observation

Participant observation (Whyte, 1979) using an ethnographic approach was used for this research. I watched and participated in nine football sessions with the community group in Lancaster. These were located on the floodlit astro-turf pitches of Ripley St Thomas School. Direct involvement in the community group's sporting activity was important for two reasons. Firstly, active participation helped me to understand the group from the inside (Flowerdew and Martin, 2005). Secondly, this was required in

order to develop a feeling of trust with participants, which led to them feeling relaxed around me and not coerced into participation (Darling, 2014). My active involvement eventually led to interviews being undertaken, as participants revealed they would be interested in telling me more about their opinions on the research topic.

Emerson et al (2011) note that when a fieldworker is conducting ethnographic participation they must not attempt to be a fly on the wall. By joining in with the group in Lancaster, I gained first hand experience of the social aspects of the group. Close attention was paid to the ways in which the locals and refugees interacted with each other and the language used during and after match play. It was important to conduct this naturalistic observation somewhere the participants felt comfortable, where they would not be influenced by any abnormalities in the surroundings (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2011). This worked well as the group had been playing at Ripley St Thomas School prior to my arrival. However, I acknowledge that I could not be a completely neutral, detached observer and by interacting with the group I could have influenced their behaviours (Emerson et al, 2011). Pitch rental is £32 per session, Jack charges £3 for the locals and it is free for the refugees.

An ethnographic field diary was kept in order to create a written record of observations and experiences during my time in Lancaster (Emerson et al, 2011). The diary provided an important dialogue along the timeline of the nine sessions and was written on the journey home from each session. Notes from each of the sessions were compared to see if a change in the integrative aspects of the group were noticed over time (Newbury, 2001). An excerpt of the diary is available as Appendix 2.

Interviews

A preliminary interview was conducted with Jack in October 2016, who had set up and run a mixed local and refugee football group in Lancaster since June 2015. The interview was semi-structured and conversational, a key benefit being that it allowed Jack to introduce the discussion of themes I had not previously thought of (Silverman, 2011). The interview ended with Jack inviting me to play football with the group on Wednesday evenings, in order to conduct participant observation. After the first few

sessions participants began actively approaching me to talk about their opinions on the importance, impact and outcomes of the football sessions. Following this it was deemed suitable to organise a number of interviews with the help of Jack. The purpose of such interviews, which Burgess (1984, p. 102) has described as “*conversations with purpose*”, was to engage in dialogue with those who had active involvement in the football sessions.

Interviews were conducted with four refugees and three locals from the group in Lancaster. One interview was also organised with Sally, an employee at the Boaz Trust in Manchester, a charity with the aim of “*ending destitution amongst refugees and asylum seekers, by providing accommodation and holistic support*” (Sally, 08/11/2016). Speaking with Sally was valuable in order to gain a perspective from someone who works with refugees on a daily basis but is not directly involved with sport.

Interviews were tailored to the individual, with a slightly different set of questions being asked for Jack, the refugees and locals. The semi-structured interviews took on a conversational fluid form and varied according to the interests, experiences or views of the individual (Flowerdew and Martin, 2005). This responsive interviewing technique allowed me to react and respond to points that participants raised without being wholly dependent on a set of predetermined questions (Rubin and Rubin, 2011).

Interviews with the refugees were conducted on a Wednesday afternoon before football, at a house in which four of them were living. Participants spoke varying degrees of English and I acknowledge that those who spoke better English were more outspoken and provided clearer responses. Jack was present at the time of interviewing as he has known most of the group for over a year and has developed strong friendships with them. I am aware that Jack being present in the room could have influenced some of the responses, but his presence helped the refugees to feel relaxed. The interviews took place in their lounge and I was made to feel extremely welcome. I was offered a range of snacks and teas from individual’s home countries, which was indicative of their comfortable and relaxed nature in the setting. It was important that participants felt comfortable in order to allow them to relax, and think freely when responding to

questions, therefore their home setting was deemed the most suitable (Clifford et al, 2010; Darling, 2014).

Semi structured interviews with the locals were conducted at a café in Lancaster. All interviews were recorded electronically before being transcribed and coded with key themes. An example is available as Appendix 1. Using an electric voice recorder allowed my full engagement with the interviewee's as I was not preoccupied with taking notes or missing key information (Clifford et al, 2010).

Reflection on Positionality

As a researcher, my positionality and combination of race, gender, age and sex will have had an impact on my relationship with participants as well as the ways in which I understood the data shared with me (Mullings, 1999). There were very few obstacles to me joining the sessions in Lancaster, given that I already had the skillset to play, the funds for transport and pitch hire and I was the same age and sex as all participants. With reference to Mullings (1999) 'insider vs. outsider' debate on positionality and power in the collection of data, when interviewing participants in Lancaster it is important to take note of my positionality. I was regarded as an 'insider' when interviewing the locals as this was a group to which I belonged, however I was regarded as an 'outsider' when interviewing the refugees. My position as an 'outsider' with the refugees was beneficial as it gave me the chance to view the situation from a perspective I would otherwise have been unable to. Furthermore Collins (1986) highlights the tendency for people to confide in a 'stranger' in ways that they would not with an 'insider', indicating that the refugees may have found it easier to be open with me.

Ethics

When working with refugees, it is important to take into account ethical considerations in order to protect participants (Pernice, 1994; Hopkins, 2007; Bailey, 2001; Valentine, 2005; Hugman et al, 2001). This is vital when 'first world' researchers are investigating

'third world' subjects (Valentine, 2005, p. 112). Bailey (2001) and Doody and Noonan (2013) agree that one disadvantage of using interviews is their intrusive nature and as a result "*qualitative geographers strive for ethical professionalism in their research practice*" (Bailey, 2001, p. 108). I made sure to avoid invasive questions, specifically when conducting interviews with refugees, as they are regarded as a vulnerable group (Hugman et al, 2011). As refugees in the UK have been subject to rigorous interviews by the Home Office, some of which may have brought up distressing memories or unwanted images I made sure to give a duty of respect to participants during interviews. I ensured participants remained comfortable throughout, with the knowledge that interviews could be stopped at any time. Hugman et al (2011, p. 1275) emphasise "*the protection of privacy, dignity, anonymity and confidentiality*" of refugees and all participants completed a consent form, which was presented to them before interviewing. The names of all participants have been made anonymous for the purpose of this research. Where the names of refugees have been used, culturally appropriate names have been chosen.

Analysis

Throughout this dissertation I have explored the complex role of sport in enabling integration and community engagement with and between, refugees and locals. In understanding this topic, I could choose a number of findings that have arisen, however I am going to focus in depth on three areas that are most significant and that help to understand the workings of the football sessions. In doing so I will be addressing my research questions.

Football as a Microcosm for Refugee Life – Constant vs. Instability

The lives of refugees tend to be strongly associated with disruption, waiting and instability (Conlon, 2011). Given the varied journeys that the individuals have made to reach their present destination, whether it is legally, illegally, by land or sea, this is a group that has seldom seen regularity and constants in their recent day-to-day life. Once refugees are housed, in this case in Lancaster, the daily instability and irregularity that one would assume abates often continues, with on-going judicial hearings, potential resettlement and Home Office appointments (Griffiths, 2014). As I spent more time with the group, I began to notice that something as simple as a weekly session of football often encountered obstacles and difficulties that had a range of impacts on the refugees and locals. As Mo highlighted, the life of a refugee is one in which there are constant surprises and challenges:

“A lot of us will be here one week and not the next. Nothing is regular, that’s because lots of us have many different appointments like a doctors appointment, or something related to our case or a solicitor” (Mo, 30/11/2016)

Sally, an employee at the Boaz trust also touched on the chaotic lives led by refugees, that can impact their ability to get involved with sporting activities.

“You can’t guarantee people will turn up, for all different reasons and that’s the challenge, you’re working with people who are quite vulnerable, many of them may have had really chaotic lives for months or years...I know from experience it’s not quite as straight forward as getting money putting on a football event and having people turn up.” (Sally, 08/11/2016)

The vulnerable nature and chaotic lives of refugees, is also highlighted by Mackenzie et al (2007), with Gündoğdu (2015) touching on the importance of regularity and familiarity in the lives of refugees, through repetitive activities. One of the important aspects of a weekly session of football is that it has the ability to become a constant in the lives of the refugee participants, and there is comfort in the regularity of the sessions. The safety and stability section of Ager and Strangs (2008) integration framework highlights the importance of *“continuity and a sense of permanence”* (Ager and Strang, 2008, p. 4). The significance of the weekly sessions were highlighted in an interview with Elias:

“For us we spend a lot of time in the house and we don’t really do anything. Studying and English time is limited and we don’t work, so it gives us a chance to get out the house, do a bit of exercise and to meet new people. Having this regularly every week for me is important and I look forward to it” (Elias, 30/11/2016)

The fact that refugees spend a lot of time in the house links in with Spaaij (2012 and Booth et al’s (2014) work on the escapism associated with playing sport. One recurring theme in the refugee interviews was the boredom and lack of opportunities for work, study and play in their day-to-day lives. Therefore one of the key benefits of the weekly

football sessions mentioned by Karim is that they provide an outlet and activity to focus on for the refugees, who despite having chaotic lives, often have a lot of free time.

“Lots of us have a lot to think about, and the cases are very complicated, sport is a healthy way to manage life or to take your mind off thinking about a lot of stuff, I always do sport just to get out of a bad mood” (Karim, 30/11/2016)

As the interviews continued I began to notice that the football sessions in Lancaster did not carry the same amount of importance for the locals as they did for the refugees. This is most likely down to the vastly different life positions that the refugees and locals were entering the football sessions from. All the local participants have full time jobs, families and other priorities consuming their time and are likely to come from a life of stability, comfort and safety. The refugees on the other hand were coming into the group from a much more vulnerable position (Valentine, 2008; Mackenzie et al, 2007). As a result of these distinctions between individuals, participants are likely to have varying reasons for attending and the sessions are likely to have different impacts for each member of the group.

“I think a lot of the locals that play see it as after work exercise, you know you turn up and play and have a chat but then go home” (Jack, 14/10/2016)

Furthermore it is when the football sessions do not go ahead as planned due to unforeseen obstacles that the stark contrast between the impacts of this on the refugees and on the locals is clearly visible. A number of obstacles arose over the three month period I was present and I had expected to encounter these given the academic focus on barriers to entry within refugee sport (RCOA, 2010, Krouwel et al, 2006; Amara et al, 2005). These included bad weather preventing play, an increase in numbers affecting game time, religious and school holidays meaning the pitches were closed and participants not having suitable shoes. An extract from my ethnographic field diary presents some of the struggles faced at a single session:

“Today I didn’t feel nervous anymore as I had met the group once before. I was excited to play and meet new participants but unfortunately it was extremely cold and drizzling.

When I arrived everyone was standing outside the pitch waiting for the school netball session to finish, they ran a couple of minutes over into our time slot so everyone was itching to get on. Jack was rummaging around the boot of his car to find some shoes and tracksuits that had been donated so that some of the newest arrivals didn't have to play in their smart shoes and jeans"

(Field diary, 26/10/2016)

A number of participants, refugees and locals alike highlighted the obstacle that is presented when more and more people turn up to play. Jack revealed that whilst there was *"currently only 36 people living in Lancaster claiming asylum, this number could rise to 300 in 2017"* (Jack, 14/10/2016). As far as problems go, rising participation levels is a positive one to have, as it shows the enthusiasm of those wanting to play and that the word is spreading. However given the groups grassroots organisational level and lack of funding, growing numbers can present itself as a significant problem (RCOA, 2010). I noted frustration growing amongst participants when more and more people were turning up to play, making it harder to organise and get maximum game time out of the 1 hour allotted time slot.

"We almost need another pitch, we're at capacity at the moment, playing 10 or 11 a side every week. Sometimes we have to split into 2 smaller games and its not really what everyone wants, you want maximum game time" (Sam, 07/12/2016)

Furthermore, Elias reflected on the worst-case scenario of when the football sessions are cancelled:

"I remember that when the University started we couldn't rent a pitch for 2 or 3 weeks and there was no place to play, a lot of the guys were depressed about it and sad there was nothing to do. They constantly asked me to speak to Jack about the football and when we could play again." (Elias, 30/11/2016)

As the sessions continued I began to acknowledge and understand that something seemingly as simple as a weekly session of football, that has the power to be a constant

in the lives of refugees, faces difficulties in doing so. These difficulties and obstacles previously mentioned are multiplied, escalated and manifest themselves in an emotional sense, with the refugees being impacted to a larger extent than the locals. The small-scale football group can be seen as a microcosm for the refugees lives in terms of the obstacles, challenges and uncertainty faced. One of the key roles of the football identified by participants is the ability of sessions to provide a constant and stable activity in the otherwise chaotic and vulnerable lives of refugees (Mackenzie et al, 2007). Within the safety and stability domain of Ager and Strangs (2008) integration framework, they highlight continuity and a sense of permanence as vital factors towards helping to develop relationships and aid wider integration. As a result, I believe that when such sporting groups are set up, they require strong organisation to fulfill their potential in impacting the lives of refugees and locals, by ensuring sessions can go ahead as planned on a weekly basis. This topic of organisation is discussed in the following point.

Organisation, Leadership and Hierarchies Within the Group

Organisation and leadership was briefly touched on in the previous section and I believe the roles inhabited by varying members of the group and the subsequent impact of this on the formation of relationships requires a section of its own. Booth et al's (2014) study on the United Glasgow team touched on the importance of having defined roles within refugee sports teams and the need for strong leadership. This was an area that I instantly became aware of with the group in Lancaster. In Lancaster the grassroots and informal nature of the group means no official roles are set out other than that of Jack who organises the sessions and keeps participants informed through the groups social media page. With regards to both the locals and refugees there is a range of personalities, with some natural leaders, whilst others are a lot quieter and lacking in confidence. Due to the fluid nature of the group and the varying personalities it means that the relationships formed between participants take on a variety of structures. As my time with the group progressed, I began to notice hierarchies emerging within the local context. As a result, the social bridges and social bonds domains of Ager and Strangs (2008) integration framework are influenced in different ways for each individual.

Given Darling's (2014) work on undertaking fieldwork with refugees, I was not surprised when my role within the group took on a range of forms throughout my involvement, including as a researcher, player, friend and volunteer. Due to my approachable and friendly personality, I found it easy to strike up conversation with a number of participants throughout, and despite a lack of English for some, we bonded over our passion of football, for example by recalling names of our favourite teams or recreating famous football celebrations. An extract from my field diary displays an example of some of the friendly behaviour that went on within a session:

"The mood was jovial from the start as Jack had given us a little game to play before we kicked off, we had to go round in a circle and say our favourite football team and player. It was simple yet effective and throughout the game we were jokingly calling players the name of their favourite footballer. Today there were 3 teams so we had to sit and watch whilst our team wasn't playing. I got talking to Elias on the sideline and he was really interested in the research I was doing. Having studied international relations in Iran he recommended me a book to read on the topic of integration and asked for my email so he could send me the link. Elias' English was great and he went on to tell me stories of caves he used to visit on holiday as a child in Iran"

(Field diary, 02/11/2016)

Successful social bridging involves the broadening of cultural horizons for both refugees and locals (Ager and Strang, 2008). Ager and Strang (2008) reference participation in sports clubs as an example of bridging and therefore the growing level of refugee involvement within this group is a good indicator of the social bridging capacity a single community group can hold. My conversation with Elias was small and informal, however it stuck with me as it highlighted how similar Elias was to my friends and I. Friendly conversations with refugee participants helped me to learn more about their home experiences and the sort of backgrounds they were from. Myself and other local participants learnt about the food they eat and the music they like, all through conversations that football had provided a platform for (Putnam, 2000). Elias also mentioned how he had bumped into one of the locals from football in Lancaster town centre within the first month of his arrival:

“I was just passing by on the street and one of the players who lives in town waved at me and said ‘hello’, its nice to feel like I know people in Lancaster” (Elias, 30/11/2016)

This may seem like a relatively normal encounter, however for refugees who have just moved to a new country and do not know many people, simple pleasantries can have a significant impact on their sense of safety and stability (Ager and Strang, 2008; Threadgold and Court, 2005). Spicer’s (2008) work on refugee experiences in UK neighbourhoods distinguishes between ‘excluding’ and ‘including’ neighbourhoods. The latter being a community in which inhabitants feel safe, and have access to inclusive local resources that enables them to make social bonds. In Elias’ case, as a result of the football sessions, he has met new people, some of whom he has had friendly encounters with in town, which helps to provide a sense of familiarity and safety (Spicer, 2008). Pete also touched on the importance of mixing with a new group of people, which football has provided him the platform for:

“Its beneficial for the locals as well to get involved and to broaden your horizons. I grew up with quite a sheltered life in Lancaster and I’ve not experienced that sort of aspect of life that much, so its good to get involved with it and open your mind” (Pete, 07/12/2016)

During interviews it became clear that individual participants were getting very different outcomes from the sessions, and it was highly dependent on the individuals personality as to what they were gaining from them. The above field diary extract (02/11/2016) mentions a small communication game that Jack initiated at the start of the session. I strongly believe that something as quick and simple as this was a great way to break the ice and following the activity I felt like I knew each teammate on a more personal level as it gave me something to talk to them about in the future. This type of cooperative encounter is what Amir (1969) alluded to in his contact hypothesis as having the most positive impact. However, as Valentine (2008) highlights, the impact of contact is highly dependent on the individual and the position from which they approach the situation in terms of power and relationships. This theme of individual personalities was prevalent throughout my involvement and in an interview with one of the locals Will, he touched on his character and the impact this had on his relationship with the refugees:

“I’m not massively social anyway, so I’m not going to stand at the side of the pitch and chat to people for half an hour before and after” (Will, 07/12/2016)

Whereas for Sam, another local participant the football was seen as an inherently social activity:

“It’s nice to be there, be part of that integration and to make them feel welcome. I do feel like I’ve got to know people whom I wouldn’t have otherwise had the chance to talk with” (Sam, 07/12/2016)

I also noticed that individual’s perceptions of their role within the group were often vastly different from how others viewed that individual’s role. One of the locals was quoted as saying, *“I don’t feel like I do much, for them I’m just one of the many guys who turns up and plays football” (Will, 07/12/2016)*. However in contrast to this, interviews with Abid and Elias showed that the refugees saw each local individual as playing an important part in the football sessions and integration effort.

“We appreciate everyone who comes to play because we know you are busy and we like to meet the English guys. The guys in Lancaster are very nice” (Mo, 30/11/2016)

“Jack and the guys make it so easy for us, anything that makes it difficult to play football like not having the right shoes or top, Jack will always solve it” (Elias, 30/11/2016)

Elias’ specific mentioning of Jack highlighted a recurring theme I noticed throughout the interviews and observation of the group. I began to realise the significance of Jack’s role as the organiser and the real sense of gratitude from all participants towards Jack for the hard work he puts in, enabling the group to continue playing.

“Without Jack I don’t think we would be able to do this stuff, even though there is a lot of people that are willing to play with us and come to the games, if there is no one like Jack to organise it there will be no games at all” (Karim, 30/11/ 2016)

“I would say the threat to continuity is Jack and what he decides to do with it. The work he puts in is great, I don’t know how he does it, he just never stops.” (Pete 07/12/2016)

The Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA, 2010) paper and Booth et al’s (2014) United Glasgow study, both note the importance of strong leadership in the formation of successful mixed refugee and local participant sports clubs. With United Glasgow, the manager of the team took on a role similar to that of Jack’s, in terms of organisation. Both the United Glasgow manager and Jack are responsible for sorting pitches, providing information to players and organising equipment every week (Booth et al, 2014). Within the United Glasgow study it was found that because one individual took on a main role, refugee participants felt more comfortable talking to him than they did to other local participants. For answers to any queries or advice, refugee participants preferred having just one person to go to and due to the manager taking on a role at the top of the hierarchy this meant the refugees relied less on other local participants and developed a stronger relationship with the manager. I found a similar situation occurring in Lancaster, with the refugee participants highlighting that they tend to go to Jack rather than other local participants for advice:

“I know a few people from football but I just ask Jack all the time” (Abid, 30/11/2016)

“I go to Jack if I need something, he gives me good help, like if I want to visit another city, I call Jack about it and he helps me” (Karim, 30/11/2016)

When asked if refugees had approached him for advice, Pete reflected on his role within the group:

“I don’t really feel like I know them and I imagine they feel the same about me, you’ve got to have a certain bond with somebody to start asking for help with questions and advice” (Pete, 07/12/2016)

Furthermore, because of this reliance on Jack, this meant that on the rare occasion that Jack could not make it, the sessions take longer to get organised, as there is no second in

command to take the lead. At some sessions refugee numbers dwarfed that of the locals and Pete recalls one week where he was the only non-refugee participant.

“There was one week where it was me and 15 refugees. I was like woahh, it was a bit overwhelming and I felt the pressure” (Pete, 07/12/2016)

An extract from my field diary reveals how the behaviour of the group changes when Jack is not present and no one assumes the leadership role.

“Today we were slow getting started and because Jack wasn’t there to put us into teams I did it myself. The communication around the group when we started playing seemed a little less than normal, there wasn’t the usual camaraderie and when there were fouls no one was stopping for them. At one point the ball got kicked over the fence and normally Jack would either send someone to get it or we would take a new one from behind the goal but for about 60 seconds no-one knew what to do and everyone looked around and waited to be told – eventually Pete sent someone to get the ball and in the meantime we used one from behind the goal”

(Field diary, 30/11/2016)

When Jack leads the sessions and is pro-active in getting the group to engage with one another, for example by getting participants together to recall their favourite team and player, then social bonding and social bridging is positively impacted as this helps to create a mutual understanding and connection between the locals and refugees (Ager and Strang, 2008). Furthermore a social bond also includes identification and connections with similar ethnic and religious groups and these activities aimed at getting the group to mix are vital, not just for refugee to local friendships, but refugee to refugee as well. Just like Elias’ friendly exchange in town, small and seemingly minor interactions before the game can significantly impact the refugees’ sense of belonging (Threadgold and Court, 2005). Mo touched on the importance of these relationships:

“Before the game when I speak with you guys its great because I get to learn a bit about your life, and the other guys in the asylum system too who I don’t know. I know more people each week.” (Mo 30/11/2016)

When there is no one to inhabit the leadership role the sessions still go ahead, however communication and interaction levels drop and therefore the group does not fulfill its potential in terms of social bonding and social bridging (Ager and Strang, 2008). As a result it is necessary for such sports groups to place an emphasis on strong leadership alongside communication and icebreaker type activities as part of the sessions. The leader who takes charge of the group should also be responsible for facilitating and enabling intergroup mingling so that refugee participants have the chance to get to know all members equally. As highlighted in this section not all participants have the confidence levels to introduce themselves and be open with other teammates, therefore a strong charismatic leader has an important role to play in fostering conversation between participants. Furthermore, any activity that fosters conversation between non-English speaking participants and English speaking ones is likely to have a positive impact on their language skills (Olliff, 2008; Darnell, 2007). The following point discusses this in detail.

Sports Impact on Language

This third and final point focuses on the role of the football sessions in impacting the refugee participant's English language skills. As the sessions progressed there were a number of refugees who were coming to play football within their first few months of arriving in England. Some arrived already speaking an advanced level of English, having previously studied English at school or University, however others had never spoken English before arriving in the UK. Alongside weekly English lessons provided by a local charity, the football provided an informal setting in which refugees could practice their colloquial speaking skills with locals.

The language barrier was a difficulty that I expected to encounter, given the academia that touches on it surrounding refugee and local sports clubs (RCOA, 2010; Olliff, 2007; Spaaij, 2012). The Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA, 2010, p. 14) stated "*language barriers are likely to have a substantial impact on refugees' ability to participate in sport*". Nevertheless, with regards to the group in Lancaster, the language barrier was not a problem I encountered. It was clear that some participants were turning up with no

prior knowledge of the English language and this was not putting them off joining in, nor getting in the way of their involvement. I feel this is partly down to the group's informal grassroots nature, which means that no official sign up is required, as it is just a turn up and play policy.

For some refugees, the football sessions provided their only informal opportunity to speak to and mix with locals and other refugees. Karim and Abid reflect on how playing football has helped some participants to learn English:

"The football has forced people to speak English to each other, there was some Kurdish refugees and I've seen them many times in English classes but we never spoke because it's a classroom and we speak a different language anyway. I speak Arabic they speak Sorani, but in football we speak to each other, and the only solution was to speak English" (Karim, 30/11/2016).

"I like football because I use my English. I don't speak good English but people understand what I mean. Every week I have more English ideas, what this means what that means, and I practice with you guys" (Abid, 30/11/2016)

Olliff (2008) and Darnell (2007) both support the view that sporting activities provide a suitable platform for refugees to learn a new language. Olliff's (2008) research revealed that refugee participants listed learning English as amongst the three most important reasons why they were keen to get involved in sport. Abid does not explicitly say he comes to football to learn English but he clearly indicates that it is one of the reasons he likes to play. Darnell (2007, p. 570) highlights that sport transcends *"communicative challenges produced by the language barrier"* and Karim and Abid's interviews go to show that as well as sport transcending these barriers, it has also facilitated the breaking down of these barriers given the progression in English language skills that has occurred over the months of playing. Furthermore, football's uniform character and international standardised rule, means that players are not concerned about coming from a different country and not understanding the rules. This helps to enable non-English speaking participants to get involved and subsequently develop their English language skills (Knoppers et al, 2001).

Having experienced the relaxed grassroots nature of the Lancaster group and interviewed participants with varying degrees of English, I believe that informal sports clubs hold significant benefits in terms of language acquisition for non-English speaking participants. Karim noted his enjoyment of learning English at football in comparison to the organised weekly English lessons.

“In the English lessons you can’t speak, its like school so we don’t have a chance, but in the football game we always talk a lot, how are you, what’s going on, how is your case going?”
(Karim, 30/11/2016)

Morrice (2007), McGivney (1999) and Coffield (2000) all highlight the benefits of learning in an informal social setting, particularly one that arises from the interests of the individual, which in this case is football. Morrice (2007) advocates an informal and social approach to refugees’ language development in the UK as opposed to the current government focus on education centered provision that is based on funding and allocation models as opposed to need. Morrice (2007) states that the current approach to refugee integration through language and citizenship classes fails to address the barriers facing refugees in the UK. The informal social based learning provided by football is also a *“potent catalyst for change and personal development”* in the lives of refugees (Morrice, 2007, p. 168).

One difficulty I noticed surrounding language that was also raised in Jack’s interview was that local participants do not always make it easy for the non-English speakers:

“It never ceases to amaze me how often locals are shouting really complicated instructions, to non-English speakers” (Jack, 14/10/2016)

The Australian Centre For Multicultural Youth state that when helping refugees to integrate through sport, locals should *“be aware of the type of language [they] are using and keep it as simple as possible”* (Olliff, 2008, p. 34). Therefore in Lancaster when the locals use loud and complicated instructions it can be seen as reiterating the language barrier and could put non-English speaking refugees off returning for future sessions. However, within the same paper there is advice *“not to dumb down your language”* for

example by speaking in broken English (Olliff, 2008, p. 34). Therefore it is about finding the right balance between involving the non-English speakers in natural English conversation, but also in a way that is clear and understandable. Throughout my active involvement with the group I observed the speed of conversation and the type of language used at sessions. Whilst being exposed to colloquial English in this informal setting can be beneficial, I believe there is a need for small verbal exchanges and organised conversation to work alongside the use of sport. An example of this was mentioned in the second analysis point, when Jack made all players state their favourite football team and player before we started playing. This not only helps with learning English but is also a great way to break the ice and boost confidence levels amongst participants (Archer et al, 2005).

By linking language to the previous analysis point of individual personalities, each refugee gains different outcomes from the football, partly due to the differences in English language skills. Elias spoke the best English out of all the refugee participants and revealed that this has its ups and downs. Elias notes the ease at which he can communicate with locals but the annoyance of having to translate for others.

"I always spoke English so for me its easy to chat with everyone, however for the other guys I can definitely see how the football has helped them...its annoying for me because they will say they didn't understand and can I please translate for them but its not necessary, most of the time they will know what was said but they just want to double check with me, it's a lack of confidence" (Elias, 30/11/2016)

"Sometimes when we don't get it we use Elias because he speaks the best and he helps us" (Karim, 30/11/2016)

On a weekly basis there were between 4 and 8 different nationalities present at football. Despite their range of languages, the majority of refugee participants had a basic grasp of Arabic. Elias' fluency in Arabic and English meant that he was often the go-between when Jack wanted to convey something to the group and vice versa. Elias noted that for the refugees its not always because they do not understand, it's linked to a lack of confidence, which some academics have highlighted in refugees (Archer et al, 2005;

Bloch, 2007; Phillimore and Goodson, 2006). Elias' enjoyment of the football sessions is impacted and due to the reliance on Elias as a translator this is also a potential barrier to refugee's improving their level of English. As time progresses it is likely that refugee participants' English will improve and there will be less of a reliance on Elias, however in the meantime his informal role as a translator is likely to continue.

Throughout my time in Lancaster I noticed a clear progression in refugee participant's knowledge and confidence of the English language, however I cannot explicitly say that this progression was solely down to football, as living in Lancaster and participating in English lessons will have also contributed. Refugee participants highlighted their growing confidence in speaking English was heavily influenced by their time playing football. As a result I believe sporting activities for mixed refugee and local groups should be promoted not just for their social bonding, bridging and safety and stability benefits, but also for their language development benefits.

Conclusion

In this conclusion I summarise key findings, evaluate the limitations of the research and present three key points for the future. This dissertation has explored the role of playing sport in facilitating integration for refugees. I focused my research within four areas of Ager and Strangs (2008) Indicators of Integration framework. These were 'Social Bridges', 'Social Bonds', 'Language and Cultural Knowledge' and 'Safety and Stability'. Given the policy focus upon refugees and the political pressures that are associated with refugee mobility at the present time, integration is an extremely important issue.

Findings

Firstly, a key benefit of the football sessions in Lancaster is that through offering a regular weekly activity, they provide stability and familiarity in the often chaotic lives of refugees (Conlon, 2011). When sessions run to plan they have a positive impact on the safety and stability domain of Ager and Strangs (2008) integration framework. However when the sessions encounter obstacles such as increased turnout or school holidays, then there are disproportionate impacts on the refugee participants. This is in comparison to the locals, for whom football is less important, as they often lead busy lives with full time employment and a strong network of family and friends.

Secondly, the football sessions must be well organised for their full integrative potential to be fulfilled. When small activities that spark communication and conversation between locals and refugees are encouraged alongside the sport then there will be an

increasingly positive impact on social bridges and social bonds. Jack is fundamental to the success of the group, through organising sessions, raising funds and encouraging participants to engage with one another. Therefore, future mixed refugee and local sports groups must ensure they have strong charismatic leadership. Due to the range of personalities within the group, the personal outcomes and friendships formed through sessions are highly dependent on the individual. Whilst all participants look to Jack for advice, due to his leadership role, a number of the local participants stated that they do not feel they play an important part in refugee integration. Nevertheless refugee interviews revealed they were extremely grateful for the time locals take out of their week to meet, chat and play football with them.

Thirdly, despite the focus of academic literature on language barriers preventing refugees getting involved with sport, a lack of spoken English was not a barrier to participation in Lancaster. A clear progression in a number of refugee participants English was evident. All refugee interviewees highlighted the significance of the informal setting provided by football as a space in which they could practice their English amongst peers in a social situation. Providing informal learning situations alongside classroom based education for refugees is vital in helping them to progress their spoken English.

Evaluation

This research is a micro-study of one group and I am aware that this is by no means representative of all mixed refugee and local sports groups. Therefore I cannot make the claim that given this groups success, all similar groups would be successful. Given the timescale of my research and the group I worked with, I was only able to focus on one sport, in this case football. Therefore I cannot extrapolate on the integrative potential of other team sports, individual sports or other informal social activities such as games evenings. Furthermore, due to Lancaster's 2016 refugee intake policy of males only, my research takes a gender specific approach. In the future it would be interesting and important to look at how female and child integration can be impacted through playing sport.

The Future

By focusing my research within the scope of Ager and Strangs (2008) integration framework I found that the four highlighted domains of 'Social Bridges', 'Social Bonds', 'Safety and Stability' and 'Language and Cultural Knowledge' are still highly relevant and suited to the UK's current integration situation. However I do believe there is a need to separate 'Language and Cultural Knowledge' into two distinct categories. There should be a policy focus on informal learning spaces and activities that help refugees to learn English. By giving language its own domain this will help increase pressure on local councils and governments to implement such policies.

This research has highlighted the positive potential for sport in aiding refugee integration and the subsequent need for greater investment in grassroots sporting activities for mixed refugee and local groups. Such groups require strong organisation and a hands-on approach. I strongly believe that charities, local councils and the national government should be doing more to adequately support sporting initiatives with the aim of integration. The benefit to locals and refugees is clearly noticeable and despite requiring funding it is not a significant cost. Jack budgets £20 for each newcomer to cover the cost of shoes, kit, equipment and pitch hire. If this was done on a larger scale and the government used public parks alongside creating networks with sports coaches and businesses, there is the potential to make a difference in the lives of thousands of refugees at a low cost.

Finally, given the ongoing migration crisis currently occurring throughout Europe and much of the Middle East, integration is an issue that is going to increase in importance. The migration implications of world events such as Brexit, the election of Donald Trump and the rise of the European far-right remain unknown, in this time of uncertainty a focus on integration is of paramount importance for refugees and local communities. This will increase our ability to deal with difference, mobility and integration at a micro level.

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Appendix 1: Coded Interview transcript

- Notes of interest
- Impact on Refugees
- Impact on locals

Local interview

J: Is this something you'd heard of before, sport with refugees?

more advertising?
↓
budget?

Local: No not at all, but to be fair I've lived quite a sheltered life, so I'm only sort of peripherally aware of the sort of activities that go on with asylum seekers anyway. I don't just play for exercise, it organically developed from something I had been doing for a few years anyway but then it is quite nice to meet some different people, people that you don't know. Its not a massively social thing is it, playing football, its not like you get to know people or hear their stories

own opinion
↓
Personality

J: I know its roughly £3 for each local to play, how much do you think players would be willing to pay?

already pays more
Price →
maximum

Local: I think the price people would be willing to pay depends on who you'd ask, I normally pay more than the £3 because covering our costs is coming out of my pocket and he's always done that. I usually give about £5 but I'm quite happy to pay because £5 a week for an hour of football is not a problem at all. Much more than that it starts to become slightly like a charitable donation rather than just paying to play football, which I guess, is a different question

doesn't seem like charity like moment

J: have you met new people locals + refugees?

Contact hypothesis?

Local: Yes absolutely, I took my son to the library on Saturday and as we were coming out the library two of the guys who I played football with walked in, it was only a sort of pleasantries sort of hi how are you doing kind of conversation but its those little things that for them might make a big difference. I think that's something Lancaster's got going really well anyway, regardless of whether you're an asylum seeker or not, it's a very close-knit place. I moved to Lancaster when I came to Uni here a long time ago and that was one of the things that made me love the town and stay. You can't go to the supermarket, the corner shop, the cinemas without bumping into somebody you know. It takes you about an hour to do a supermarket shop because you bump into so many people you know. Just being able to give a bit of that back, particularly to people who are in the situation asylum seekers are, it's quite important I think

Small things go a long way
Surge

doing a good thing

J: have you been to any other social events with the group?

Spread the word

could know them better

Local: No I haven't gone to them but that's because I haven't heard about them, I was going to talk to him about this because there's a few of the lads who I've played football with for quite a while and got to know them a bit but not very well, I know their names but most of them I don't know what country they come from, I certainly don't know their stories or background which I'd love to know more about so id be really interested in going to some of the extra events. The football is a good first step; first activity to break down those boundaries and then the friendships will flow from that, especially if I go to the extra activities

More than just football

get to know people other things?

J: Have any of the refugees ever approached you for help or advice?

Booth et al - All go to 1 person / Leader

Assembling

X: No one has ever approached me for help or advice for anything football related. Like I say I don't really feel like I know them and I imagine they feel the same about me, you've got to have a certain bond with somebody to start asking for help with questions and advice. Whereas I imagine for them I'm just one of the guys who turns up and plays football

link to Shy Personality

Social media

J: have you spread the word about these sessions?

Local: Yes very much, a friend called tom I used to work with him and invited him down, I share [redacted] FB posts and mention it to people in passing. I do mention that its with asylum seekers and I don't really go into whether its for us or them because I guess that's up to the individual, I certainly make people aware of what its about and its more than just a kick about.

do both sides see this?

J: Do you get a sense of appreciation from the refugees at the end of a session?

different reactions from different personalities

Local: I don't get any direct appreciation but from a few of them, generally the more outgoing ones, you do get the impression that they're genuinely grateful for that activity, and obviously more so for [redacted], it would happen without me but it wouldn't happen without him, they're grateful that people are joining in and taking part, they make that quite apparent. They're very warm with their "hi how are you, see you next week etc" its really nice, I've seen how much more confident some of them have got especially with their English. There was one week where it was me and 15 refugees, I was like woahh, it was a bit overwhelming and I felt the pressure

Pleasures

Impact on language

Assures that of leaders automatically

J: Do you ever notice any hostility or aggression?

Cultural digressions

Local: There's the odd sort of heated exchange when somebody shoots when they should be passing, but its to a lesser extent than if you were playing with a group of Brits. There is a bit of frustration I feel from my interpretation, and some of that frustration comes from communication barriers, there's probably 15 different languages spoken between the groups, and there's not a huge amount of communication and certainly not the amount you'd get with 11 English people. But it's all done in the right way, and very well natured. There's never any threat of violence or any lunging challenges. → No major problems...

language leading to frustration

could be more

word games?

J: do you think more should be done to promote sport as a method of integration?

Very much so, I imagine it's beneficial for the asylum seekers themselves, its beneficial for the locals as well to get involved and to broaden your horizons, I grew up quite a sheltered life in Lancaster and I've not experienced that sort of aspect of life that much, so its good to get involved with it and open your mind

2 way cultural impacts

easy way to interact

big impact + field diary entry

One great thing was when at the start of a session we all went around and said our names and our favourite football teams, but we've only done that once. There's new people joining every week so it's something we should do every week, its easy to do but at the same time they just want to play football, as soon

more arrivals ∴ need get ice breaker every week

maximum game time

reason to get on pitch

lots of overtime

as the pitch is free and right until the last second when they have to get off because lots or most of them can't work they just really want to have activities to keep them busy

need to spread word more

I imagine the reason more people don't come is because they don't know about it, I don't believe there less than 10 people in Lancaster who want to have a kick about on a Wednesday evening, its just because [redacted] doesn't have a marketing budget or anything to get the word out there it just has to be word of mouth and that takes time even in a small place like Lancaster

stay and get more books on

should someone take over?

Is there a threat?

- I would say the threat to continuity is [redacted] and what he decides to do with it. The work he puts in is great, I don't know how he does it, he just never stops

charismatic

J: Do you notice any major differences between personalities in the group?

leadership is key

Personalities impact on integration

Local: I think there are a couple of natural leaders in the group, a few who are more likely to take the lead of their team on the pitch, and they are the ones who have been their longer, but I think that's a coincidence, I think they were natural leaders when they got here anyway. I haven't seen personally any of the guys who have been here longer being more welcoming to the new guys helping them to settle in, I'm not saying this doesn't happen, it may well do off the football pitch.

needs leadership to ensure people mix

less mixing?

People from some countries staying together

It seems to be on a Wednesday night people have their distinct groups and know who they know and stick to their groups, that's how it looks from my POV. Its often the ones who have the better English who were naturally a lot better at conversing with us or more open

Like I say id quite like to get a bit more involved in the social stuff, I just need to talk to [redacted] about that and see what's going on

do football + other activities

Impact of language on interactions

- Little activities go a long way
- Lots of bridging "opening eyes"

Appendix 2: Field Diary - 23/11/2016

NOTES

23/11/16

- Raining again which is annoying as I didn't bring my raincoat! But we still had a good turnout with 7 refugees and 7 locals which meant we could just do one big game. There were 2 new guys I hadn't met before and their English was limited so they seemed quite shy. The quality of football they played was unbelievable and luckily they were both on my team. Because the pitch was wet a lot of people were slipping over and the 2 new guys didn't have the right shoes which made it a little harder for them. Towards the end of the match I put in a perfect cross and one refugee participant headed it in so we won 4-1. There was lots of high giving and despite being beaten everyone was in good spirits.