THE ROLE OF A SOCCER-BASED PROGRAM IN THE ACCULTURATION OF REFUGEE YOUTH: A RETROSPECTIVE EXAMINATION

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ABSTRACT

THE ROLE OF A SOCCER-BASED PROGRAM IN THE ACCULTURATION OF REFUGEE YOUTH: A RETROSPECTIVE EXAMINATION.

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Sports have been said to be a powerful platform to help refugee youth overcome traumas from migration (Oliff, 2007) and to facilitate their adjustment in their country of settlement (Rich, Misener, & Debeau, 2015). Sport participation among refugee youth has also linked to greater agency (McDonald, Spaaij, & Dudik, 2018) and prosocial behavior (Nathan et al., 2013) among other benefits. Studies investigating sport-based programs for the social inclusion of refugees have used different methodologies like participatory action research and quasi-experimental mixed method designs in order to understand the effects that these programs had on their participants. However, very few of these studies investigated the refugee youth in-depth. To remedy this state of affairs a hermeneutical phenomenological research design was used in this study to directly assess participant experiences in exploring the role of a soccer-based program in the acculturation of refugee youth. The soccer-based program in the acculturation of refugee youth was a yearly program that involved two practices and one game per week along with mandatory tutoring sessions. Data was collected from in-depth interviews conducted with 8 former participants of a soccer-based program for refugees in a mid-Michigan city in the USA. The content of their interviews was transcribed and analyzed using initial coding and theory-based coding. The latter compared the participants' acculturation experiences in the society of settlement with Berry's (1997) framework for acculturation research. Results showed that participation in the program contributed to the refugees' English acquisition, academic performance, and social and personal development. Participants said they learned multiple

functional skills like “respect” and “making right choices” from interacting with the program’s experienced staff and coach. Finally, participation led to the participants’ integration among other refugees but was also found to contribute to their marginalization among their American peers.

RESUMO

O PAPEL DE UM PROGRAM DE FUTEBOL NA ACULTURAÇÃO DE JOVENS REFUGIADOS: UM EXAME RETROSPECTIVO.

Por

Lucas Silvestre Capalbo

O esporte tem sido considerado uma poderosa plataforma para ajudar refugiados a superar traumas relacionados à imigração (Oliff, 2007) e para facilitar seu ajuste ao país de assentamento (Rich, Misener, & Debeau, 2015). Participação esportiva entre jovens refugiados também foi relacionada à mais autonomia (McDonald, Spaaij, & Dudik, 2018) e comportamentos pró-sociais (Nathan et al., 2013) entre outros benefícios. Estudos que investigaram programas esportivos para a inclusão social de refugiados têm utilizado diferentes metodologias como a pesquisa-ação e o método misto quase-experimental para entender os efeitos que esses programas têm em seus participantes. Entretanto, pouquíssimos estudos investigaram os refugiados diretamente. Sendo assim, um método fenomenológico hermenêutico foi usado neste estudo para explorar diretamente o papel de um programa de futebol para a aculturação de jovens refugiados. O programa esportivo para a aculturação de refugiados é anual inclui dois treinos e um jogo por semana juntamente às classes de reforço acadêmico obrigatórias. Dados foram coletados através de entrevistas conduzidas com 8 antigos participantes de um programa de futebol para refugiados em uma cidade localizada na parte central de Michigan nos EUA. O conteúdo dessas entrevistas foi transcrito e analisado utilizando codificação inicial e codificação baseada em teoria. A última comparou as experiências de aculturação dos participantes na sociedade de assentamento à estrutura de pesquisa sobre aculturação de Berry (1997). Resultados demonstraram que a participação no programa contribuiu para a aquisição da língua inglesa, o desempenho acadêmico e o desenvolvimento

pessoal e social dos refugiados. Participantes relataram que aprenderam diversas habilidades funcionais como “respeito” e “tomada de decisões” ao interagir com os experientes profissionais e o treinador. Finalmente, participação levou a integração dos participantes entre os demais refugiados, mas também contribuiu para sua marginalização entre seus colegas americanos da mesma idade.

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Thanks to all my family, friends, and colleagues for helping me reach my goals. In special to my parents Walter and Susana for helping me become the man I am today. *Obrigado!* Thank you, Dr. Dan Gould for guiding me through my doctoral studies and thank you, Dr. Andy Driska, Dr. Karl Erickson, and Dr. Francisco Villarruel for assisting me with this dissertation and with other professional matters too. Lastly, I want to thank Dr. Al Smith on behalf of all Kinesiology faculty and staff who work hard to help us grow as students and professionals.

This dissertation work is dedicated to all men and women who devote their lives to helping refugees and asylum seekers search for better days. I commend you on your hard work. Bravo!

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KEY TO ABBREVIATION

SBP Soccer-Based Program

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A number of current refugee crises around the world have spurred major discussions about immigration worldwide. Nations that often welcome refugees are now dealing with internal conflicts on how much public funds should be allocated to this matter, how many refugees should be welcomed every year, and how they should support refugees who have been accepted. Even though providing protection to asylum seekers can be considered a humanitarian duty, part of the population in many host countries are against an open-door policy. Those opposed to such policy claim that "welcoming everyone" increases the risk of losing their national identity, puts a strain on government economic resources, and allows individuals who may be enemies of the state to enter. For instance, the current US government has strengthened their refugee screening in order to "protect the nation from foreign terrorist (USCIS, 2017)." At the same time, others in the US like the former President John F. Kennedy have argued that America is a country made up of immigrants and should be open to newcomers. Despite the varied political views on this matter, it is clear that the refugee process will not subside and that countries will need to be prepared to deal with refugees.

It should also be noted that the experience of being a refugee can be traumatic, causing considerable stress, anguish, and a host of mental health issues (Weinstein, Khabbaz, & Legate, 2016; Thomas, 2016). Qualitative research has shown that refugees across the globe report symptoms of stress, depression, and posttraumatic stress disorder due to social isolation, feeling vulnerable and powerless, impaired self-efficacy, and lack of access to information (Weinstein et al., 2016). The consequence of such negative experiences may lead to unsuccessful acculturation.

Therefore, initiatives should be created in order to support those seeking asylum and those who have already been resettled in a new society.

One popular setting for initiatives aimed at helping refugees adjust to their new circumstances is through sports participation, particularly soccer the most widely played sport in the world. It is assumed by the organizers of these programs that by participating in them refugee youth will be more smoothly and quickly acculturated into the new society and avoid some of the stress and anguish associated with being a refugee in a new land. However, few of these soccer-based acculturation programs have been empirically examined or evaluated. Hence, the focus of this dissertation is to understand the process that young refugee men went through after being accepted in the US and how participating in a soccer-based support program helped them adjust to its society.

The Refugee Process

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR; 2018a) estimated that 68.5 million people have been forcibly displaced from home worldwide. Among them are 40 million internally displaced people, 25.4 million refugees, and 3.1 million asylum seekers, over half of whom are under the age of 18. An internally displaced person is defined as someone who has been forced to leave his or her home because of internal conflicts or natural disasters but is not protected by international laws since one does not cross any international boarder (UNHCR, 2018b). On the other hand, "a refugee is someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group (UNHCR, 2018b)." To be recognized as a refugee one has to be granted legal protection and assistance from a foreign country. An individual who still seeks legal protection from another country is called an asylum seeker (UNHCR, 2018b).

The United States has resettled over three million refugees since 1975 (UNHCR, 2018c). During the 2017 fiscal year, 53.716 refugees resettled in 49 states including the District of Columbia (UNHCR, 2018c). The state of Michigan, in the same fiscal year, ranked sixth in the nation's top states for resettlement as it received 2121 new refugees (Migration Policy Institute, 2017). It should be noted, however, that the number of incoming refugees for the 2018 fiscal year may be drastically affected after the implementation of the Executive Order 12780 passed by the current federal government in 2017. This Executive Order authorizes USCIS to strengthen the refugee screening process by implementing new security measures and procedures (Homeland Security, 2017). Such measures may represent an additional stressor that asylum seekers face in order to find refuge.

Asylum seekers must go through a complex and lengthy process in order to receive legal protection from the United States. First, an asylum seeker can only apply if one has received a UNHCR resettlement referral based on vulnerability and eligibility. Once a claim is open, the applicant goes through a prescreening interview and biographic checks. The biographic information is reviewed by the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) while the applicant files the Registration for Classification as Refugee (form I-590) and waits for security check approval. Successful applicants receive a travel and medical loan from domestic resettlement agencies to cover their expenses with flights and medical exams. All the refugee's travel information is collected and prescreened prior to boarding. Lastly, the United States Customs and Boarder Protection determines whether the applicant is admissible in the country. If admissible, the applicant will enter the United States as a refugee (USCIS, 2018). A refugee is only eligible to apply for permanent residency (Green Card) one year after arrival.

Newly arrived refugees are assisted with time-limited cash, medical assistance, English as second language, job readiness, and employment services by the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR, 2016). The ORR's main objective, established by the Refugee Act of 1980, is "to provide for the effective resettlement of refugees and to assist them to achieve economic self-sufficiency as quickly as possible after arrival in the United States (ORR, 2012)."

The Nature of the Problem: Migration, Trauma, and Transition

Refugees often face several traumatic experiences throughout their lives (Pieloch, McCullough, & Marks, 2016). For example, persecution, violence, and discrimination. According to Pieloch et al. (2016), the refugee experience can be divided into three periods: pre-migration, migration, and post-migration/resettlement. Each stage may present different challenges to young refugees. The pre-migration stage is the period when individuals experience negative events that eventually force them to flee their home country. These individuals often face separation or loss of relatives (Thomas, 2016; Lepore, 2015; Oliff, 2007), loss of belongings (Oliff, 2007), violence, lack of food and water (Thomas, 2016; Lepore, 2015), discrimination (Earnest, Mansi, Bayati, Earnest, & Thompson, 2015), sexual assault (Hodes, Jagdev, Chandra, & Cunniff, 2008), and forced labor (Lepore, 2015). The migration stage is represented by the period when individuals begin to flee their home country to seek asylum abroad. The experiences lived during this process may include disruption of school, living in refugee camps for long periods (Thomas, 2016), insecurity of not having a place to live (Lepore, 2015; Lerner, 2012), and denial of rights during refugee process (MacMillan, Ohan, Cherian, & Mutch, 2015). The last stage is the post-migration/resettlement period when individuals arrive in the host country as refugees. Lepore (2015) stresses that even though there is relief upon arriving in the host country, challenging experiences are not immediately resolved. During this period young

refugees may experience discrimination often due to the inability to understand the language or culture (Alemi & Stempel, 2018; Pieloch et al., 2016; Earnest et al., 2015), educational and learning difficulties (Thomas, 2016; MacMillan et al., 2015; Lerner, 2012), bullying (Thomas, 2016), posttraumatic stress disorder, anxiety, stress, and depression (Weinstein et al., 2016; Thomas, 2016; MacMillan et al., 2015; Lepore, 2015; Lerner, 2012). These stressors and challenges may persist or increase if refugees are not successfully acculturated. On the other hand, if successful, they are more likely to have a more productive life and contribute more to their new society.

Numerous programs have been developed to help refugee youth transition into their new culture. Because of the universal appeal of sport, particularly soccer, for young people a number of soccer-based youth acculturation programs have been developed. The majority of these programs and the experiences of the refugee youth participating in them have not been scientifically studied and evaluated. Are these programs effective? What are the experiences of the youth who participate in them? Does participation help participants better cope with the challenges and stresses associated with the transition into a new culture? These are some of the important questions that need to be scientifically studied.

Significance of the Study: Researcher's Personal Interest

The investigator's motivation for this study began after he coached a team composed of first- and second-generation refugees in Sweden. Being exposed to their stories and struggles to engage in the mainstream Swedish society encouraged him to think about ways to use the game of soccer to support them. For him soccer seemed to work as one of the few "bridges" that could connect his players from different cultures, not only to each other but to the dominant society. Therefore, the focus of his program shifted from solely teaching players about the game to using

the game to support players in their life journeys in the "new" country. Several years later the investigator had the opportunity to engage with young refugee men through soccer in the US. This time he could work closer with their families and assist them with their academic studies which provided a better understanding of the types of support soccer can give them.

Because of these experiences, in addition to his coaching interests, the investigator decided to pursue his doctoral degree in Kinesiology focusing on the psychosocial aspects of sports. He was particularly interested in learning more about the role sport could play in fostering life skills like goal setting, teamwork, and the ability to cope with stress. Linking the life skill development through sport research literature to refugee youth participating in soccer was a natural progression given the investigators interest in coaching.

There is some literature on the effects sport participation has on refugee youth. This literature appears under various terms: *development and peace, acculturation,* and *social inclusion.* Recent interest in this area has increased in the last decade. Since the late 2000's studies investigating the impact of sport-based programs (SBP) and the social inclusion of refugees have yielded important findings for the field. For example, the need for specific preparation of program mentors working with refugees (Buelens et al., 2015) and the importance of assisting young refugees into joining mainstream sport teams (Block & Gibbs, 2017). However, most articles published assessed SBP using the organizers and volunteers' perspectives (e.g., Block & Gibbs, 2018; Ross & McGrath, 2016) whereas fewer studies investigated them from the participant perspective (e.g., Nathan et al., 2013). Hence, few of these programs have specifically examined their effects on the youth involved or have used clear rationale (Block & Gibbs, 2017) like the acculturation theories. Investigating SBP for refugees in the light of acculturation theories can help researchers identify areas of study accounting for cultural factors,

social diversity, sex, and local processes of inclusion and exclusion (Blocks & Gibbs, 2017) and can better inform program designers and volunteer managers in their tasks (Rich et al., 2015). For instance, program designers can develop adequate initiatives based on individual- and group-level variables and program volunteers can recognize stressors and help participants develop adequate coping strategies. Therefore, additional studies are needed to explore the experiences of young refugees and investigate the impact of such initiatives in their cultural adjustment among a broader array of refugee inclusion services (Block & Gibbs, 2017; Oliff, 2007).

Research Purposes

1. Explore the role of a soccer-based program in the acculturation of refugee youth.
    a. Identify what (if any) program features and coaching factors influenced their acculturation.
    b. Investigate how and why participation in a soccer-based program for refugees may have affected their acculturation.
    c. Elaborate a composite description that captures the essence of the soccer-based program participation experience.
    d. Inform the field of social inclusion through sports with practical recommendations to help advance programs and future research.

It is expected that participation in the SBP played an important role in the acculturation of the refugee youth studied. It is also anticipated that participation lead to increased health, well-being, social inclusion (Oliff, 2007), greater agency (McDonald, Spaaij, & Dudik, 2018), and prosocial behavior (Nathan et al., 2013). It is also predicted that these benefits were yielded by participation alone (e.g., regular soccer practices led to health and being on a team led to socialization) and not by specific coaching strategies as it has been found in Jeanes, O'Connor,

and Alfrey (2015). According to the authors, coaches in similar contexts are usually ill-equipped to work with this population and their specific needs. It is also predicted that the SBP will have failed to connect young refugees with the mainstream non-refugee youth due to participation being limited to refugees. This is based on the idea that the optimal format for inclusion are programs that insert young refugees into well-established clubs in the region (Blocks & Gibbs, 2017; Hancock, Cooper, & Bahn, 2009). However, a refugee-only SBP can still be diverse and provide enough support for refugee youth (McDonald et al., 2018). With that being said, it is hypothesized that even though participation will have yielded positive outcomes to refugee youth, the SBP's structure, activities, and coaching contributed to social marginalization instead of inclusion. SBP help refugee youth feel socially included (Rich, Misener, & Debeau, 2015; Nathan et al., 2013) because they become part of a social group (i.e., "refugees") in the resettlement country, but that does not mean that they have been included to the mainstream society.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This study is designed to investigate how participation in a SBP for refugees helped them acculturate and to identify stressors and challenges that young refugees in Michigan faced and possible coping mechanisms used in the acculturation process. To inform it several areas of related literature must be reviewed and understood. First, acculturation theory will be reviewed. This will be followed by a summary of the research conducted on the negative effects of resettlement, particularly stress levels and challenges faced by these individuals. Finally, studies on non-sport and sport-based programs to facilitate the acculturation of refugees will be presented.

Acculturation Theory

Acculturation focuses on "how individuals who have developed in one cultural context manage to adapt to new contexts that result from migration (Berry, 1997; p. 6)." Acculturation is manifested when two groups involved interact. Acculturation psychology studies the effects of this intergroup or culture interaction on the group and individual levels where psychological, sociocultural, and economic adaptations may occur (Berry, 1997). The process of acculturation happens in various domains which can affect attitudes and behaviors such as the preference for certain cultural elements, use of language, food preference, peer group interaction, and media consumption (Ozer, 2017). Acculturation psychology was initially characterized as a unidimensional phenomenon where all individuals involved participated and adapted to the same extent (Ozer, 2017). For those theorists, individuals either chose to follow their home culture and separate themselves from the new culture or chose to assimilate to the new culture by embracing the new culture and denying their home culture (Ozer, 2017). However, later studies recognized

that acculturation was not a mutually exclusive phenomenon as theorists began to support the idea of a bidimensional approach where individuals going through acculturation also could adopt both cultures or end up marginalized (Ozer, 2017; Berry, 1997).

Berry (1992) proposed four acculturation strategies: assimilation, integration, marginalization, and separation. *Assimilation* happens when individuals do not intend to keep their cultural identity and seek to adopt other cultures, whereas *integration* happens when individuals have an interest in keeping their heritage culture while adapting to the new culture during daily interactions within it. *Marginalization* occurs when individuals have little interest or possibility to pursue other cultures and *separation* happens when individuals hold on to their heritage culture while avoiding interactions with others (Berry, 1997). The type of strategy used by each individual from the migrant society (non-dominant) is dependent on the degrees of acceptance and diversity of the society of settlement (dominant; Berry, 1992), cultural values such as individualism and collectivism (Schwartz et al., 2013), physical characteristics that may set individuals apart from the dominant society, and different religions than the ones commonly practiced in the dominant society (Berry, 1997). For instance, Alemi & Stemple (2018) identified the Muslim faith as being a cause of discrimination in the US mostly after 9/11 and current events in the Middle East.

Berry's (1997) framework for acculturation research is divided into two main groupings of variables (See Figure 1). On the left are the group- or cultural-level events (e.g., political context, economic scenario) that are for the most part *situational* whereas on the right are the individual- or psychological-level events which are predominantly *person* variables (e.g., age, gender, expectations, cultural distance). The top left box of the model accounts for the factors existing before acculturation while the bottom left are the factors present in the society of

settlement. The middle left box represents the acculturation initiated by the joint influence of the two societies (Berry, 1992). The small boxes through the middle of the framework represent the process in which an individual is likely to experience during acculturation. This experience begins by life events that may occur in one's life while entering the society of settlement. One may identify initial stressors that should encourage him or her to develop coping strategies. The immediate effects resulting from these experiences can be seen as negative or positive stress depending on how one appraises it. Long-term outcomes may lead one to adapt well to the new society or maladapt to the society of settlement (Berry, 1992). The degree and direction to which an individual will be adapted to the society depends on the moderating factors prior and during acculturation (Berry, 1992). These are represented in the frameworks' top and bottom right boxes.

For example, Abdul is a fifteen-year-old boy who enters the US from Somalia where he was forced to flee with his family because of the constant attacks carried by Islamic militants. Somalia is a poor Islamic nation located in the horn of Africa and its official language is Somali. Having more than half of their population in need of humanitarian assistance, Somalia is frequently affected by famine and drought. However, the society of settlement where Abdul entered is different from his society origin. The US is a developed nation located in North America and its official language is English. Even though the US is considered to be a diverse country, around three quarters of its population is White and Christian. The US society is individualistic whereas Abdul's society of origin is collectivistic. Hence, the region in the US where Abdul was resettled reaches temperatures below freezing which is new to him. Abdul had an idea about the US before being resettled there. Based on movies and what other people told him, his expectations about the US were positive and he thought that his family could live a safer

and richer life there. As Abdul begins to attend school, he finds it difficult to understand what teachers are saying in class. Not understanding the teachers' instructions caused Abdul to not turn in his school work which affected his grades. Students in Somalian schools do not normally ask questions to teachers as they are afraid to be disrespectful to their authority. Because of that, Abdul begins to feel stressed by this situation until he meets another refugee student in his school through a soccer program who says that it is okay to ask teachers for clarification in the US. In this case, doing what his new friend suggested helped Abdul clarify his questions in class. If it was not for the soccer program that connected Abdul to another refugee student, he could have not found a solution to his problem before it was too late. An alternative outcome for this scenario could have led Abdul to fail classes and possibly drop out of school.

Figure 1. A Framework for Acculturation Research

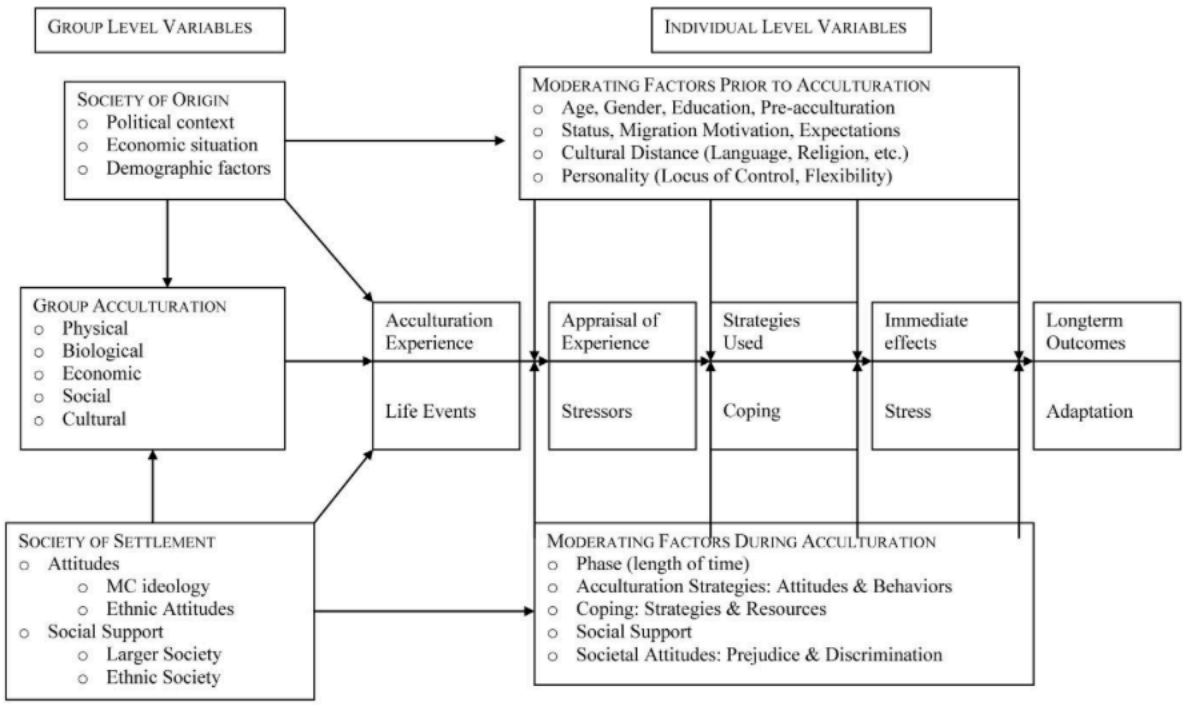


Figure 1. Process in which individuals are likely to go through during acculturation. Adapted from "Immigration, Acculturation, and Adaptation," by J. W. Berry, 1997, Applied Psychology: An International Review, 46, p. 15. Copyright 1997 by John Wiley and Sons. Reprinted with permission.

Even though Berry's acculturation theory has been used in multiple studies worldwide, this model has received critiques for being over-simplistic and static (Ozer, 2017). Critics of this framework defend a relativist theoretical position where acculturation is a dynamic and complex phenomenon that varies according to specific cultural and socio-historical contexts (Ozer, 2017; Schwartz et al., 2013). Their idea is that the degrees of challenge one faces when acculturating would depend on a combination of factors, such as the proximity of the cultures and current political context. Ozer (2017) suggests that acculturation is not a linear process but an everchanging process where one may change strategies throughout their post-resettlement life. Contrarily, Berry (2009) understands that his critics classify his theory as absolutist where individuals are the same regardless the cultural aspects involved. However, he defends the idea that his model is based on a universalism theoretical position where all human societies exhibit commonalities and that individuals present basic psychological processes. This perspective supports the idea that humans display a pattern of behavior that can be influenced by the culture one is inserted.

Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga, and Szapocznik (2010) disagreed with Berry's acculturation theory in two points. First, they defend the idea that "acculturation is likely not a singular process that occurs at a single pace (p. 249)." The authors defend that acculturation occurs at different pace based on the person's circumstances. Second, Schwartz and colleagues advocate that "to say that a person is, or is not, "acculturated" is likely an oversimplification of a complex phenomenon (p. 249)." Acculturation is therefore proposed to be simultaneously a larger and high order process consisting in a set of related but somewhat independent dimensions (Schwartz et al., 2010). In other words, acculturation may occur in specific areas of a person's life. Hence, change in one area may not necessarily affect another. For instance, an Asian

refugee to the US can learn to speak English but that alone may not encourage them to adhere to American values. With that in mind, Schwartz et al. (2010) propose a multidimensional model that accounts for six contextual factors including cultural practices, values, and identifications of both the origin and the receiving cultures. They suggest that this model takes into consideration the multidimensionality of acculturation and enables researchers to investigate the extent in which contextual factors are associated with psychosocial and health outcomes.

Leong (2014) proposes a model of acculturation that assumes "that cultural retention and host engagement are orthogonal, and each exerts comparable influence on intercultural relations (p. 121)." For the author, social-political context and other culture-specific values often have influence over the outcome of intercultural interaction. Leong proposes that acculturation theories should focus on (1) how acculturation is conceptualized and operationalized instead of assessing individual's orientation to heritage maintenance and intergroup interaction; and (2) "what" are the shared attributes of a society rather than focusing on which acculturation strategy is ideal. Taken together, Leong suggest that acculturation research should consider ideologies (e.g., realistic threats, symbolic threats, social dominance orientation), situational factors (socio-political climate), and multicultural hypothesis (national pride, economic optimism, and family ties).

Research examining various acculturation theories show that both universalist and relativist approaches have strengths and weaknesses (Ozer, 2017). Universalist theories provide a clearer and concrete understanding of the acculturation process and outcome but are criticized by its "simplicity" and "generalizability". Relativist theories, on the contrary, account the complexity of acculturation but lack empirical utility and generalizability (Ozer, 2017). It is suggested that "including as many perspectives and as much knowledge as possible will increase

the understanding of the phenomena, balancing the particularity and complexity with the wholeness of the phenomena (Ozer, 2017, p. 13)." For the purposes of this dissertation the Berry framework will be adopted because it provides a clearer understanding of the acculturation process while it still accounts for group- and individual-level variables that play an important role in the outcome. The researcher recognizes the critiques made to this framework; however, he agrees that there are universal patterns in the human experiences during acculturation despite how complex it is. Every individual is entitled of their own life experiences, but human activities display commonalities that do not fall out of what is normal or expected for the species. Hence, this dissertation will interview young refugees from different countries of origins, ages, and amounts of time living in the US. Adopting a more relativist approach with this cohort will make data extremely complex to assess and to generate inferences that are beyond the scope of this study.

Studies on the Negative Effects of Resettlement

Investigators from a number of fields have been interested in examining the effects of resettlement on refugees. For example, Correa-Velez et al. (2017) investigated the predictors of secondary school completion among refugee youth eight to nine years of age after resettlement in Australia. Their longitudinal study recruited 120 young refugees who had arrived in Australia within six months. Participants were interviewed and later followed up annually for four years and again eight to nine years after their initial interview. Data was collected and categorized into three major classes: socio-demographic factors (e.g., sex, region of origin), individual factors (e.g., perceived English language proficiency, self-esteem), and community/structural factors (e.g., supportive environment, social identity). Educational outcome was also collected. A Mann-Whitney statistical analysis was used to estimate differences in the three major classes. Firth

logistic regression was also used to test the association of the educational outcome variable with the range of factors identified in the model. The results revealed that females presented significantly lower levels of previous schooling ($p = 0.044$) and were less likely to rate their English proficiency level as good ($p = 0.050$) three years after the first data collection point than their counterparts. Twenty-nine participants reported to have graduated from secondary school since arriving in the host country and 18 reported to not have graduated secondary school. No significant difference was found between males and females in this matter. It was found that the age of arrival and experiences of discrimination in the host country were significant predictors of school completion after controlling for participants' sex. Therefore, the younger the refugee arrived in the host country, more likely they are to complete secondary school 0.205 [95 % CI (0.043, 0.991); $p = 0.049$]. Also, those who did not experience discrimination in the host country were more likely to have completed secondary school 0.494 [95 % CI (0.291, 0.841); $p = 0.009$]. The other variables did not significantly predict participants' educational outcomes. These results suggest that the age of arrival can play a significant role in how much young refugees acculturate. The older they arrive, the harder it may be to learn the language and the cultural norms.

Alemi and Stempel (2018) investigated the effect of perceived discrimination on the mental health of Afghan refugees. Participants were 259 Afghan adults who have moved to the US as refugees. Data was collected using a series of surveys including the Talbieh Brief Distress Inventory (TBDI). Data was controlled for age, gender, English language ability, education, year of arrival in the US, and employment status. Results showed that perceived discrimination was associated with higher distress after resettlement, negative mental health effects of discrimination are greater on individuals who are more civically engaged, and that individuals with stronger

intra-ethnic identity are more susceptible to discrimination and distress. In sum, the authors found that intra-ethnic identity, integration, civic engagement, and social support did not mitigate the effects of discrimination on mental health.

Hodes et al. (2008) investigated the posttraumatic stress and depressive symptoms amongst unaccompanied young asylum seekers in England. Seventy-eight unaccompanied asylum-seeking adolescents were compared to 35 accompanied asylum seekers and refugees. Sociodemographic data was collected in the form of interviews. Post-trauma events were assessed using the Harvard Trauma Questionnaire (HTQ) in which covers 17 types of maltreatment and war events rated on the proximity to the event (experienced, witnessed, heard about, and no involvement). Posttraumatic symptoms were assessed using the shortened Impact of Event Scale (IES) and depression was assessed using the Birleson Depression Self-Rating Scale (BDSR). Data was analyzed by comparing the differences between groups using independent sample t-tests for independent samples and non-parametric tests for skewed samples. Results showed that unaccompanied youth experienced significantly higher levels of traumatic events than a control group (M = 6.83, SD 3.87, p = .000). Unaccompanied youth had significantly higher risk for posttraumatic stress disorders compared to accompanied youth (males: Chi square 8.059, p = .005. Females: Chi square 4.577, p = .032). It was also found that gender (15.6%), region of origin (4.3%), and living arrangements (3.8%) account for depressive symptoms.

Taken together, these studies suggest that individual factors like age and environmental factors such as region of origin have the potential to affect someone's acculturation experiences. The degree on which individual and environmental factors affect acculturation will depend on the proximity between the culture of origin and of settlement, and on how welcoming the society

of settlement is to certain newcomers. Post-resettlement factors such as civic engagement can also play a role in someone's acculturation. This is alarming because it can be presumed that the more refugees engage in the community of settlement, more they may experience discrimination and distress. In this case, someone's attempts to integrate to the society of settlement can be discouraged by how they perceive to be treated by others. With that being said, these studies encourage future researchers to investigate what is an ideal strategy to seamlessly integrate refugees into the receiving society taken into consideration universalist and relativist aspects of acculturation.

Studies on Programs Helping the Acculturation of Refugees

There are multiple programs worldwide aimed at helping refugees resettle in a new society. These initiatives may act as the only support refugees may have in the new country or, in some cases, they can be complementary to the support offered by the local government. Programs usually act in specific areas of need and may utilize a diverse range of strategies to engage refugees and enable them to operate in the new environment. Successful resettlement relies on programs that allow refugees to find a place in the society (Duke, Sales, & Gregory, 1999). Studies have explored programs and initiatives focusing on many core domains of integration as characterized by Ager and Strang (2008), such as employment (Bond et al., 2007; Morland et al., 2005), housing (Socha, Mullooly, & Jackson, 2016), education (Thomas, 2016; Lepore, 2015; Lerner, 2012), health (Rosso & McGrath, 2016; Kelaher et al., 2012; Whitley & Gould, 2011), social connection (Rosso & McGrath, 2016; Nathan et al., 2010; Hancock et al., 2009), language and cultural competence, safety and stability (Socha et al., 2016), and rights and citizenship (Morland et al., 2005).

Non-sport programs. A number of authors have written about the types of non-sport programs that need to be offered to refugees or the characteristics of such programs. Socha et al. (2016), for instance, conducted a study interviewing staff members of unaccompanied refugee minors foster care centers across the US. Their primary purpose was to better inform refugee foster cares' stakeholders and service providers on the integration of Eritrean youth using such services. The authors defend the idea that individuals working with refugees must understand their needs and strengths to provide a better support. Results from their study yielded a series of recommendations to be used pre- and post-resettlement. According to their analysis, young refugees should be informed about the social norms, expectations, and cultural aspects of the US prior to departure. Many young refugees become disappointed after their arrival because they expected the "American culture" portraited in the pop culture. Once in the US, unaccompanied refugee minors may struggle to follow rules, respect authorities, and to understand cultural standards. The interviewees also informed that young refugees are highly interested in education, soccer, recreation, arts, and religion. Soccer for instance, served as a tool to create a bond between young refugees. Socha et al. (2016) concluded by stating that the services needed in this area include mental health stability, standard physical concerns, sufficient support for their education and future, the need to be more involved with other youth from similar origins as well as with role-model adults in the community.

Mhaidat and Al Harbi (2016) conduct a program involving 220 female refugee students (grades 7 through 10) from public schools in Jordan. The study aimed at assessing the levels of depression and sense of insecurity of these females and evaluate the impact of an indicative program for reducing these two psychological disorders (Mhaidat & Al Harbi, 2016). Twenty participants were randomly selected from the larger group and were distributed into an

intervention and a control group. Depression was assessed using a depression scale and sense of insecurity (0.937) was assessed using the scale of feeling insecure (0.959). The program consisted of 12 sessions of 45 minutes each twice a week. Sessions one through three encouraged participants to get to know each and to understand the process of asylum. The remaining sessions included the use of different psychological techniques, specifically mental filtering (7th session), magnification and minimization (9th session), and labeling and personalization (11th session). Real life examples and homework were given in each session. Data was analyzed using ANCOVA to examine the difference in pre and post-performance between both groups. Results showed that participants had in average a medium-level depression (73.97%) and sense of insecurity (69.46%). After participating in the program, their levels of depression ($\alpha = 0.001$) and sense of insecurity ($\alpha = 0.006$) decreased significantly compared to the control group. Mhaidat and Al Harbi (2016) conclude by advocating that remedial programs can largely modify the individuals' negative feelings and behaviors towards being seeking asylum.

In the realm of refugees transitioning in school and community, Lepore (2015) wrote about the importance of collaborations between schools and other agencies in order to support young refugees and their families. Collaborations can include recruiting interpreters and translators, assigning individuals to advocate for the young refugees needs in school (e.g., academic plan), and organizing community meetings, homework support groups, recreational activities, and seasonal celebrations. Lepore (2015) identified two areas of intervention in the school setting. The first area includes the organization of orientations for young refugees and families to help them to know the school facilities and services as well as key-personnel that they can resource for different needs. The second area is the proactive work to enhance the school staff's cultural understanding. Understanding cultures, traditions, and customs may increase the

rapport between staff and refugee students and their families and consequently facilitate their adaptation process. Lastly, Lepore (2015) explored the area of consultation and communication in schools. The author suggests that the school staff should be ready to explain cultural differences to avoid anxiety and confusion among the refugee students. For instance, schools may provide explanation of the ingredients in the meals offered in order to inform those with cultural-based dietary restrictions. Other suggestions include creating alternate means of communication with parents and educating the community about refugees. Bringing the community closer to refugees can mitigate misconceptions they may have of refugees (Lepore, 2015).

A qualitative research study conducted with Burmese refugees resettled in the Midwest aimed at exploring the educational experiences of newcomer refugee families with elementary education (Isik-Ercan, 2012). This phenomenological study interviewed 28 Burmese parents and its major findings included the parents' perceptions of education, challenges, and suggested solutions to copy with them. The interviewed parents perceived schools in the host country to be safer than the ones in Burma. Many parents exhibited interest in being connected with their children's education, but they felt that language was a barrier. Another challenge they face is the lack of advocacy for diversity between students from different Burmese minorities and the ones from the mainstream Burmese society. Isik-Ercan (2012) advocates for the need of support to these families which include early childhood education opportunities, after-school programs, and parent and community engagement efforts. When it comes to integration between Burmese and American students, parents described that their children feel "half Burmese, half American" or "more like American" and that they are friends with people from different cultures, including Americans. Parents only showed certain concern when it came to their children not following

their religion or not respecting authorities as it is done in their country. It seems that parents want their children to integrate, but not to assimilate the host culture completely.

Bond et al. (2007) described the assessment of the services provided by a social program for young refugees in Australia. The methods used in this study included interviews and reflections with staff members, document analysis (e.g., enrollment data, achievement monitoring), and program audits to identify strengths and weaknesses of their services across five semesters. Results showed that their language assistance helped increase participants' literacy levels but many of them were still below the basic vocational proficiency. It is presumed that the participants' spoken literacy was associated with the lack of opportunities for them to socialize with other English speakers. The strengths of their services included the flexibility of the curriculum delivery, networks, and partnerships with other agencies, while the weaknesses included the continued reliance on the innovation and caring traits of the staff and coordinating multiple services that participants needed. A solution found for the lack of connectedness among participants was to increase the number of teacher-contact hours and create flexible teaching times to facilitate recreation. Bond and colleagues concluded that programs aiming at supporting young refugees should go beyond addressing participants' language needs to also provide assistance with basic living skills and developmental needs common to all young people.

Taken together, these studies have shown that non-sport programs have the capacity to help refugees by offering academic and vocational support, language assistance, family engagement opportunities, and psychological aid. Service providers often fulfill parental gaps in the lives of young refugees by guiding them through the acculturation and growth processes. There are multiple reasons why parental gaps exist in a person's life regardless if one is a refugee or not. Refugee parents cannot always nurture their children in certain areas because they are

also going through acculturation, and in many cases, parents take longer to learn the local language and costumes than their children (Lepore, 2015). The less parents are able to nurture their children during acculturation, the more external support is required from such programs. Therefore, the inclusion of parents and close relatives in the programs is crucial to support the development of young refugees. Research in this area of study is overwhelmingly descriptive. More studies including data collection and analysis should be conducted to assess the efficacy of these programs in acculturating refugees.

Sport-specific programs. Sports and physical activities have also been used as means of acculturation of refugees. For example, Whitley and Gould (2011) described a Michigan-based sports program for young refugees. The program involved youth from ages eight to 18 once a week over ten weeks. Participants had arrived in the US as early as a few months to three years earlier. The program focused on the development of physical, psychological, and socio-emotional capacities and it used an adapted version of the five developmental levels of the Personal-Social Responsibility Model (Level 1. respect, Level 2. teamwork, Level 3. self-direction, Level 4. leadership, and Level 5. transfer) as its framework. The aspect of "fun" was the central focus of the program (Whitley & Gould, 2011). Sessions were structured to begin with a *counseling time* where mentors connected with participants, then participants would be divided into small groups to reflect about a topic during the *awareness talk*. A *physical activity* session was conducted where participants took part in mostly soccer activities but were also exposed to sports that they were not familiar with (e.g., basketball, volleyball). During the last ten minutes of the session participants gathered for a *group meeting* similar to the awareness talk. Lastly, participants would be encouraged to have some *reflection time*. The authors observed the importance of the program mentors when working with this population as mentors should care

about the participants as people, not simply athletes (Whitley & Gould, 2011). Moreover, the authors found that the 3/10 mentor-to-participant ratio was ideal to conduct sessions successfully. Communication was seen as an obstacle as many participants are not fluent in English. While this program was explained in some depth, it was not formally evaluated and how it was perceived by the participants was not examined.

Researchers have, however, begun to conduct studies on sport-based programs aimed at facilitating the acculturation of refugees. Table 1 summarizes these studies. For instance, Block and Gibbs (2017) identified that there are three sport participation models offered by refugee programs: short-term, continuing, and integration into mainstream clubs. Short-term programs involve week- or weekend-long events to engage refugees in sports. Continuing programs include recurrent meetings during a season or an academic year. Both short-term and continuing programs tend to be offered free of charge. Finally, programs that integrate refugees into mainstream clubs assist refugees to join conventional sport clubs in the region.

In their qualitative exploratory study, Block and Gibbs (2017) interviewed 10 staff members from programs working directly with refugees in Australia. These programs were organized by non-governmental and governmental organizations, schools, and sports clubs. The goal of their study was to identify the capacity in which these programs have to promote the inclusion of refugees as well as to observe barriers and facilitators to the success and sustainability of these programs. Interviewees stated that sport programs of either model are fun for participants and have the potential to increase mental health and wellbeing, promote values, interpersonal skills, and education. However, the model of integration to the mainstream clubs was seen to be the ideal program to introduce refugees into the local culture and people because they have the additional ability to promote inclusion through connecting young refugees with

members of the mainstream society. A major barrier to this model is its feasibility. Participation fees, communication, and transportation may get in the way. The authors identified that successful programs using that model counted with subsidies and liaisons associated with the sport clubs who helped refugees and their families. Other obstacles faced by all three models were understanding the refugees' sociocultural norms and families' priorities and obtaining funding for sustainability.

Rosso and McGrath (2016) assessed a sport-based community development program aiming at promoting healthy habits to individuals from different cultural backgrounds and refugees in South Australia. The authors used the participation action research to assess 117 participants using a satisfaction questionnaire and interview 9 collaborators (e.g., coaches, stakeholders). Football United program (FUn) runs soccer practices once a week plus special events (e.g., barbecues) across four months. The program also offers 20-minute workshops on healthy practices every other week. After assessing participants, the authors identified a strong sense of satisfaction with the program. From the interviews, the authors learned that increasing the number of volunteers may allow participants to be divided into groups of different skill levels and ages and consequently increase the participants' engagement in practice. Girls-only activities were needed in order to engage those from specific cultures and religions. Lastly, great communication between coaches and school staff was seen to be key to the program as volunteers could receive important information about the day's activities. In the end, the Rosso and McGrath (2016) concluded that different communities may have different needs. Therefore, these needs should prevail over of the needs of sport organizations or funding bodies when designing sport-based programs.

Looking across all these studies a number of conclusions can be made. SBP are usually organized by governmental and non-governmental organizations, schools, and clubs (Block & Gibbs, 2017). These programs can be short-term, continuing, or integration with mainstream clubs (Block & Gibbs, 2017). Short-term and continuing programs are complex and require constant adjustment to effectively fulfill the participants' needs (Hancock et al., 2009). One of the major obstacles when organizing such programs is balancing the power between stakeholders (Rosso & McGrath, 2016). Organizing committees may encounter difficulties in finding solutions to problems when different stakeholders have different perspectives and priorities. Rosso and McGrath (2016) suggest that effective communication is needed in order to get everyone on the same page. Another major obstacle to running SBP is the lack of funding to pay for facilities, staff, equipment, and others (Spaaij, 2012). It is highly suggested that SBP seek funding through partnerships with other organizations. The third major obstacle is the lack of trained staff (Jeanes et al., 2015). As seen in the SBP and non-sport program's literature, it is crucial that the staff working with refugees are properly trained to fulfill their obligations. Buelens et al. (2016) described the process in which volunteers received training to work in SBP. Their systematic approach to teaching volunteers working in soccer clubs attending refugees helped them develop general competencies (e.g. communication skills, collaborative behavior) and specific technical coaching skills (e.g. drill design). The literature also suggests the inclusion of refugees into organizational roles (Rich et al., 2015). Having them working in the SBP can be extremely beneficial because they bring their experiential (as refugees) and cultural knowledge that can aggregate to the technical knowledge that other volunteers may have. The refugee involvement can create opportunities to integrate, learn leadership skills, and mitigate the people sustainability issue also observed in the literature (Dudik et al., 2017).

Participation in SBP was associated with fostering support agency (McDonald et al., 2018), health and wellbeing (Oliff, 2007), social inclusion (Dudik et al., 2017; Oliff, 2007), resilience (Dudik et al., 2017), connection, and pro-social behavior, and decreasing of peer problems (Nathan et al., 2013). However, few of these studies examined the causation of such benefits systematically or assessed participants directly. Instead, they collected data from different stakeholders like collaborators and coaches. These two factors are a limitation to this literature because it cannot be said for sure whether SBP fosters these benefits.

The third type of SBP suggested by Block and Gibbs (2017) happens through the integration of refugees into the mainstream sport clubs. Research has shown that this is the most ideal strategy of integration because refugees are able to interact with members of the host society and exchange cultural lessons with them (Block & Gibbs, 2017; Hancock et al., 2019). The main obstacles preventing refugees to engage with local clubs is availability and accessibility. There are not many clubs that offer such opportunities for the refugee participation. Hence, when such opportunities exist, young refugees may not have the means of transportation to attend practices far from where they live, or they cannot afford the club fees (Block & Gibbs, 2017; Spaaij, 2012; Oliff, 2007). Other obstacles encountered are the resistance of some clubs to diversity and the coaches' lack of specific preparation when dealing with this population (Jeanes et al., 2015). Alternatively, teams comprised by mostly refugees and asylum seekers are still beneficial as members they can also provide adjustment support for each other (McDonald et al., 2018).

The literature on SBP for refugees has strengths and weaknesses. The strengths include a variety of qualitative methodological designs used, specifically, exploratory research, participation action research, ethnographic, and case study. With the data gathered from these

studies, it is possible to have a clear idea of how SBP are and what services they provide. On the other hand, the weaknesses include not describing to the detail the actual interventions that were used to help acculturate participating refugees. Without that information, it is hard for other programs to replicate what is being done effectively. On that note, the low number of assessments done directly with the participants does not allow for convincing results that participation in SBP actually helps refugees acculturate. There is also need for more longitudinal research where participants are followed from their first contact to the SBP until their adult life post-participation. Research should be also look at how much participation in SBP alone help their acculturation process. Lastly, quantitative research is also recommended to evaluate the benefits of participation (e.g. wellbeing, inclusion, psychological issues) in SBP among larger groups.

Table 1. Studies on Sport-Based Programs for the Social Inclusion of Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Authors (year)	Methodology	Methods	Participants	Key results
McDonald et al. (2018)	Ethnographic research	Field notes and semi-structured interviews	Participants (n = 9)	Opportunity to play soccer allows greater agency to participants; a team comprised of asylum seekers can still be diverse and provide support to members in the adjustment process.
Block & Gibbs (2017)	Qualitative exploratory research	Semi-structured interviews	Program collaborators (n = 10)	Three types of participation models have perceived benefits for young refugees, but integration to mainstream clubs is the ideal format. Transportation to activities and funding were seen as major challenges.
Dudik et al. (2017)	Ethnographic research	Ethnographic fieldwork, life histories, and policy analysis	Researcher (n =1)	Programs suffer with the people sustainability; sport teams for asylum seekers provide a positive environment to foster resilience and social inclusion.
Rosso & McGrath (2016)	Participation action research	Level of enjoyment questionnaire and semi-structured interviews	Program participants (n = 117) and program collaborators (n = 9)	After-school programs engaged more participants than in-school programs; 90% of participants expressed satisfaction with the program; balance of power among stakeholders and keeping effective communication between school staff and volunteers were considered major challenges.
Buelens et al. (2015)	Qualitative research design	Semi-structured interviews	Youth volunteer coaches (n = 11) and program organizers (n = 3)	Systematic approach to volunteer training helped youth volunteers develop general competences besides specific technical coaching skills.
Jeanes et al. (2015)	Qualitative exploratory research	Semi-structured interviews	Program collaborators (n = 12)	Sport clubs are resistant to diversity; volunteer coaches are ill equipped; sport associations provide limited opportunities for identity formation and resettlement support.
Rich et al. (2015)	Case study	Participant observation, document analysis, focus group, and semi-structured interviews	Organizers (n = 2) volunteers (n = 3), coach (n = 1), and participants (n = 5)	Sport and social inclusion events need to be organized to facilitate their goals, not just playing the game; events should find opportunities to engage newcomers in organizational roles.
Nathan et al. (2013)	Quasi-experimental mixed method design	Survey and interviews	Program participants (n = 63) and control (n = 79)	Participation in this SBP showed significant positive attitude towards prosocial behavior for boys compared to the control; participants who attended activities regularly showed less peer problems; there were no significant different in resilience between groups.
Spaaij (2012)	Ethnographic research	Ethnographic fieldwork	Researcher (n =1)	Young Somali refugees reported lack of parental support, financial constraints, and gender expectations as major barriers; social interaction and connection to a sense of belonging was seen as important.
Hancock et al. (2009)	Action learning research	Questionnaire, document analysis, and interview	Clubs (n = 27)	Sports program implementation for social inclusion is complex and require constant adjustment; it is recommended to use established clubs to integrate refugees.
Oliff (2007)	Qualitative exploratory design	Consultation and survey	Program participants (n = 25)	Sports programs have the potential to promote health, wellbeing, and social inclusion; inclusiveness and accessibility play an important role in supporting young refugees.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN

This chapter outlines the methodological approach proposed for this research study. A hermeneutical phenomenological research approach was used to understand the role of the SBP in the acculturation of refugee youth in the US. First, the paradigmatic assumptions of this study will be described. Second, the research strategy will be explained and justified for its suitability with the research purpose. Third, the researcher's role and positionality will be presented. Fourth, the sample justification and access, research procedures, and data analysis will be detailed. Lastly, this chapter will be concluded with a discussion of the planned methodological rigor procedures proposed to be used in this study.

Paradigmatic Assumptions

The investigator embraces the ontological assumption that there are essences within multiple realities. This universalist (non-absolutist) perspective assumes that human societies exhibit commonalities even though they may be manifested differently. For example, Society A is more welcoming to foreigners than Society B; however, both societies function around some type of social norm. This perspective also assumes that humans possess common psychological processes that may be manifested differently depending on the context. For example, some individuals feel happy living in Society A whereas some others feel sad. In this case, even though each individual responded differently to the same context, all possessed some kind of emotion. Creswell (2013) stated that qualitative researchers are interested in reporting these multiple realities when studying individuals. The evidence of multiple realities is based on the words of individuals and their presentation of different perspectives (Creswell, 2013).

This investigator also took a social constructivist approach where he assumed that "individuals seek understanding the world in which they live and work (Creswell, 2013, p. 24)." Constructivism assumes that people should construct or make knowledge (Schwandt, 2000). In this specific study, knowledge about the young refugees' post-resettlement experiences was created. Researchers using this epistemology rely on the participants' views of the situation in order to develop subjective meanings about certain objects (Creswell, 2013) and this was adopted in the present study. Hence, constructivist inquiry is characterized by broad questions that allow participants to construct the meaning of a situation and by focusing on the process experienced by the individual, including understanding the context where they live. When it comes to the analysis, constructivists recognize their own experiences with the object and make an interpretation of what they find (Creswell, 2013).

Research Strategy

A hermeneutical phenomenology research design was used in this study. This design involves interviewing individuals who shared a phenomenon and later reflecting on essential themes that constitute the nature of this phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). Hermeneutical phenomenology was chosen because it enables the researcher to achieve the purpose of exploring the post-resettlement experiences lived by the participants and recognizing essential factors from the SBP that may have played a role in their acculturation. According to Creswell (2013), phenomenology "describes the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon (p. 76)." In other words, phenomenology attempts to describe what individuals have in common based on a shared experience. Acculturation in the US and participation in the SBP are considered to be this shared experience. Phenomenology aims at developing a composite description of the essence of this experience (Creswell, 2013).

That being the case, the data collected is reduced to significant statements made by the individual participants and later combined into themes so textural and structural description of the phenomenon can be developed to convey its overall essence (Creswell, 2013). According to Creswell (2013), textural description is what participants experienced and structural description is how they experienced. It is recommended that phenomenologist should be more descriptive than interpretative of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

Phenomenology has two major assumptions. First, it assumes that the reality of an object (i.e., phenomenon) is related to one's consciousness of it (Creswell, 2013). This philosophical perspective is called "intentionality of consciousness" and is defined as "a relation that all, or at least certain, acts bear to an object (Kersten, 2009, p. 139)." In other words, the reality of the experience lived by a person is based on how they think of it. Second, it assumes that researchers *epoch* their personal experiences in order to understand the phenomenon with as little judgement as possible (Moustakas, 1994). *Epoch* allows for empathy and connection towards the participant, but it does not eliminate perceived researcher bias (Bednall, 2006).

This research approach cannot be confused with phenomenography. The major difference between these two approaches is how data is interpreted. According to Larsson & Holmström (2007), phenomenography seeks to understand people's perspectives of the phenomenon, whereas phenomenology seeks to understand how a group of people view the phenomenon. Phenomenography does not construct a common meaning of the experience as phenomenology does when developing the essence. The researcher decided that phenomenology research design better fits this study because of the adoption of a universalist stance for acculturation. Universalism will be explicit with the creation of an overall essence of the participation in the

SBP. Both approaches have been used in other studies exploring the influence of a sport-based programs in youth development (e.g., Buelens et al., 2015; Pierce, 2015).

Researcher's Role and Positionality

This research study provided the investigator with the opportunity to further investigate the use of soccer during the acculturation process of young refugees. His involvement in this area began five years ago when he coached a team composed of first- and second-generation refugees in Sweden. While coaching them he realized that training sessions and interactions on and off the field needed to contain skills that could also apply to the players' lives outside of soccer. Additionally, the major obstacle for the players was dealing with and adopting to specific acceptable behaviors of their new Swedish society while being true to their culture of origin. Many of the players and their peers failed at adjusting and as a consequence, felt marginalized. This experience taught him the importance of planning his intervention and engaging players to reflect and discuss about their acculturation experiences.

The investigator's involvement with the Michigan SBP started in 2015 as a volunteer in their academic tutoring sessions. He volunteered with them for a semester and his task was to help participants complete their homework. After a few tutoring sessions the investigator began to engage more with participants and learned that they shared a common interest in soccer. Talking to them revealed how much this sport meant to them and how it connected each participant even though they were from different places and distinct cultures. Soccer was their "common culture". The investigators participation in the program was limited to the academic activities and attending a few of their weekend games. He deliberately did not participate in the soccer training sessions because he did not want to interfere in the coach's dynamics. A year later the investigator developed a similar program for high school aged refugee boys. Most of his

recruiting strategies came from knowing SBP participants who had connected with him via older brothers, cousins, and friends from their community. This program used similar strategies as the SBP. Lastly, an exploratory study with the SBP participants was conducted and served as a pilot for the current investigation. That study focused on identifying what type of activities the refugee youth participated in during the program and how they interacted with coaches and peers. Interviewing them also helped the investigator prepare for potential obstacles that might be faced in this data collection, such as their inability to recall details and difficulty in expressing themselves in English. These lessons should help the investigator prepare more effective questions and conduct interviews where valuable information can be collected.

Being a foreigner in different cultures and having to learn languages and norms to adjust to new societies gave the investigator experience to sympathize with what refugees go through during their adjustment process. However, all his experiences living in a new country were intended and not forced. He tries to understand the refugee pre-immigration experiences as much as possible, but the investigator is aware that he will not fully comprehend those if he has never been in their shoes. Also, the investigator's acculturation process could have been easier than most of the refugees who participated in this study because he went as an adult from a country that is not commonly associated with negative aspects (e.g., terrorism), he was already fluent in English, he had support from the university, he followed the mainstream religion, and he did not look much different than the people from the society of settlement.

The investigator agrees that sports can be used to help refugees acculturate in a new society (Oliff, 2007). However, he believes that deliberate efforts from programs and coaches should be implemented in order to better support refugees in different areas (Gould & Carson, 2008). Sport participation can help them engage with new people and make new friends, but that

alone is not enough to successfully enable an individual to operate in a new society. The investigator understands that refugees need psychological, academic, and vocational support beyond soccer practices. Coaches working with this population must be aware of their main goal (cultural adjustment) and must be willing to facilitate lessons that are beyond technical and tactical. These coaches must also be well understood of how to work with cultures in order to adjust their interventions to refugees understand the local culture from their perspective (Lepore, 2015). Sports should be used for the integration of refugees, not assimilation. The investigator is not against the assimilation strategy, but he believes that the decision to assimilate should come from the individual and not imposed by the program. Lastly, even though the investigator believes that sport programs dedicated exclusively for refugees make great contributions to them, he supports the idea that refugees should also be encouraged and financially supported to participate in local teams where they can interact with members of the local society more often (Block & Gibbs, 2017). Sport programs exclusive for refugees can yield "separation", as defined by Berry (1992), since refugees may perceive in games and tournaments that it is "us vs. them".

Sample Justification and Access Plan

This study included 8 young men between the ages of 15 and 18 who have migrated with at least one biological parent/legal guardian to the US on a refugee status. All interviewed subjects participated in the SBP for at least two full academic years and have not been away from it for more than two calendar years. Two years of participation was estimated to be enough time for the SBP to have considerable impact in the participant. As for the two years out of the program, it was estimated that former participants are likely to still be facing similar life experiences (e.g., school) to when they participated in the SBP, and therefore, they can judge with more clarity how successful they are at possibly applying what they may have learned in the

program. The number of participants was determined by data saturation. According to Suri (2011), data reaches saturation when further collection of data provides the researcher with little new themes and insights. That is, interviews will continue to be conducted until no new themes arise from them. Dukes (1984) suggested studying 3 to 10 participants. The investigator accessed this sample using the snowball sampling strategy in which seeks cases of interest from individuals who know other information-rich cases (Creswell, 2012). In this case, the researcher interviewed the former SBP participants he knew and later asked them to be connected with other individuals who fit the criterion.

Research Procedures

Interviews were conducted with one participant at a time. Each interview lasted around 45 minutes and took place in a local public library. An interview guide was employed, and the questions were around three themes: (1) the participant's experiences right after immigrating, (2) the participant's current experiences, and (3) the influence of the SBP in their cultural adjustment (see Appendix C for the interview guide). Responses were transcribed verbatim and analyzed for themes using open-coding and later theory-based coding.

The Context of the Soccer-Based Program for Refugees

The local refugee center introduced the SBP in 2012 to provide academic enrichment, cultural adjustment support, and soccer training for middle-school refugee boys in Mid-Michigan. The SBP has served approximately 100 participants since its introduction. This free year-round program offers the opportunity for young refugee boys to participate in two 90-minute academic tutoring sessions, two 90-minute soccer practices, and one game per week. Tutoring sessions serve to help participants with their homework and English proficiency. On average every three participants are accompanied by an undergraduate student volunteer who

guides them through the activities. When it comes to soccer practices, a coach and an assistant conduct a standard training session with participants including warm-up, technical-tactical drills, and scrimmage. All participants must be enrolled in a specific local middle school and attend the academic tutoring sessions regularly in order to participate in the program's soccer-related activities. All activities take place in the middle school's facilities. Participants are offered free food before each activity day and free transportation home after the activity is over. Participants may participate in the program during all their middle school years. A participant is no longer eligible for the program once he advances to high school. According to City-Data (2019), the middle school where the SBP takes place enrolled 850 students in 2007 in which 47.4.% where Black, 30.1% White, 17.9% Hispanic, 4.2% Asian, and 0.3% American Indian students.

The SBP coach was a Caucasian American male in his late twenties with an academic background in African studies. The coach was an employee at the local refugee center and worked with the program for three years. Participants did not know if the coach had any previous experience in soccer.

Data Sources

Data was collected from individual semi-structured interviews with former SBP participants based on what was previously described in this dissertation's sample justification and access plan.

Participant interviews. Individual semi-structured interviews were used to generate data. The content of the interview was tape recorded and transcribed (Creswell, 2013). Interviews are suggested for phenomenological studies because it allows researchers to obtain the meaning of the phenomenon for those who have experienced it (Creswell, 2013). The interviews explored the relation between the participants and the phenomenon of acculturation in

the US, as a means of obtaining further understanding of the impact of a SBP in their acculturation, and develop a collective essence of this phenomenon. The interviews were guided by predetermined entry questions or grand tour questions in order to assist the participant to reflect on the phenomenon based on his perspective (Barnard et al., 1999).

The interview protocol was divided into three main blocks (see Appendix A). The first block was dedicated to briefly learn about the participants' pre-resettlement process (e.g. country of origin, age of immigration). The second block focused on their resettlement process. A grand tour question on what surprised them about living in the US guided this section. This grand tour question aims at exploring possible cultural differences noticed by the participants. Follow up questions like "why was this a surprise?" and "how did you cope with it?" were asked depending on their answers. This block also included questions about their English proficiency, social life (e.g., making friends), and education in the US. Questions such as "who are your close friends?" and "how's your academic performance?" were included in order to explore areas found in the literature to be potentially challenging for the refugee youth. Lastly, the third block focused on the SBP participation. The grand tour question in this block was "tell me about what you did in the SBP you participated." This block aimed at exploring what lessons they learned, as well as why and how they learned such lessons from participating in the SBP. Questions were focused on program and coaching factors. The order of the questions was changed at times depending on the participants' responses. Follow-up questions, such "could you explain this further?" or "could you give me an example?" were necessary and useful to clarify unclear responses (Barnard et al., 1999). Additional questions were added when participants talked about subjects not foreseen in the interview guide.

Data Analysis

All interviews were transcribed verbatim. Data analysis occurred in two phases, specifically, (1) using initial coding to understand individual experiences of acculturation and then to analyze experiences across participants and (2) using a theory-base coding to relate emerging concepts from the interview to the existing acculturation theory.

Initial coding. Initial coding or "open coding" separates the qualitative data into small parts to be closely examined and later analyzed for similarities and differences (Saldaña, 2016). This coding method allows the researcher to learn the data before exploration begins. Saldaña (2016) suggests that researchers using initial coding should begin with a reflection about the data before coding it. For him, codes at this level are provisional and may change as analysis evolves. This phase was composed of a four-step process. First, the researcher became familiarized with the data. Second, the researcher explored the participants' discourses to understand the overall acculturation experiences. Third, emergent codes were categorized to describe what participants experienced during acculturation and how they experienced it. Fourth and last, the researcher developed the essence of the acculturation experience lived by the participants representing the categories emerged from the data.

Theory-based coding. The second cycle of coding used a theory-based coding method to understand the framework for acculturation. This approach took into consideration all group- and individual-level variables described in the framework of acculturation, as well as all phases of the acculturation process. The theory-based coding method is appropriated for this research study in order to account the current understanding of acculturation after the initial coding was completed. This cycle of coding will follow a three-step process as done by Pierce (2016) in a similar study. First, the researcher became re-familiarized with the data. Second, the researcher

listed all existing variable in the framework of acculturation. These variables included group-level variables (society of origin and societal of settlement), individual-variables (moderating factors prior to and during acculturation), and the acculturation process (experience, appraisal of experience, strategies used, immediate effects, and long-term outcomes). Third and last, the researcher compared and contrasted the participants' discourse to the variables presented in the framework for acculturation. Theory-based coding was then used as a checklist to understand possible connections existing between the participant data and the literature whereas initial coding provided a detailed explanation of the acculturation process (Pierce, 2016).

Methodological Rigor

The researcher took critical steps during each analysis date to ensure methodological rigor. Qualitative research should be judged on its trustworthiness and credibility (Mayan, 2009; Lincoln & Guba, 2000). These aspects replace internal validity and assess whether the findings make sense and are true to the data (Mayan, 2009). Three steps were taken to enhance trustworthiness and credibility, specifically investigator training, prolonged engagement, and peer debriefing.

Investigator training. The researcher has taken graduate-level courses in qualitative research and has conducted research using different qualitative research methods. These experiences gave the research experience to ensure methodological rigor. Hence, the phenomenology research approach has been extensively studied prior to this research study to ensure methodological coherence (Mayan, 2009).

Prolonged engagement. This strategy is recommended to establish the credibility of the data. This involves spending considerable time with participants in order to establish trust and to understand the program and participants (Pandey & Patnaik, 2014; Mayan, 2009). The researcher

has spent one academic semester volunteering at the SBP where he was able to interact with participants and other volunteers. These experiences helped him have an overall understanding of the participants' routines in the program.

Peer debriefing. The researcher engaged another research colleague in an extensive discussion about the interpretation of data (Mayan, 2009). The purposes of debriefing are to provide a thorough analytical probing, help the researcher uncover possible biases, and give alternative perspectives on the researcher's data analysis (Pandey & Patnaik, 2014).

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

After data from the interviews was transcribed and analyzed using initial coding and theory-based coding as previously described in the methods section. The results were separated into three sections. Section 1 presents the participants' demographical information and key immigration information. This information includes but is not limited to the participants' country of origin, age when they migrated to the US, and migrating companions. Section 2 presents the cultural differences voiced by the participants. This section includes the differences noted by the participants about people's behavior, culinary habits, landscape preferences, and traditional sports experiences. Moreover, section 2 presents the challenges encountered by the participants in the areas of English proficiency, academic performance, and social development, as well as the different types of non-SBP support that helped them improve in these areas. This section finishes with the presentation of the participants' relationship with their American peers and the reasons why participants were not close friends with them. Section 3 introduces the effects of SBP participation in the refugees' lives. First, this section presents information on how participants joined the program, the requirements for participation, and the disciplinary measures used to mitigate participants' misbehavior. Second, the lessons participants learned with the help of the program which included the areas of English proficiency, academic performance, social relationships, and personal development are discussed. Lastly, the participants' responses about the coach's influence in their lives, including data on their relationship with the coach and their perceptions about the coach's cultural understanding is presented.

Section I – Participants' Background

This section will present the participants' demographics and key information about their migration. When contrasting this data with Berry's (1997) framework for acculturation research, the information gathered in this section helped the investigator to better understand the participants' society of origin and possible moderating factors prior to acculturation process like age, education, and migration motivation. Both group level and individual level variables can affect one's acculturation process according to Berry (1997).

Participants' Demographics and Key Migration Information

Demographical facts about the participants and key information about their migration to the US can be seen in Table 2. Pseudonyms were used to protect the participants' identities with pseudonyms chosen based on the most common names in the participants' country of birth. Their profiles were presented in the order that data was collected.

An inspection of Table 2 showed that eight male participants were interviewed. Their ages ranged from 15 to 18 with a mean age of 16.25. They represented 5 different countries with three migrating from Nepal. Their reasons for migrating varied but included poverty, limited employment, and armed conflicts. Shelia, perhaps, has the most peculiar life story from all interviewed participants. He disclosed to the interviewer that the reason why he and his family had to leave Somalia was because their home was hit by a mortar. This incident killed his father and severely wound his mother's eye. Shelia and his siblings were also at home at that moment of the attack, but they were not physically wounded. He did not say whether the mortar struck their home accidentally or not. After the incident, Shelia's family moved to Kenya to seek medical care for his mother. Nine months later, they moved again, now to Uganda for the same reasons. They lived in regular houses in Uganda for three years, but they could not find the right

treatment for their mother's eye. This led them to migrate to the US as refugees where their mother received the right medical treatment.

Table 2. Participants' Demographics and Key Migration Information

Pseudonym	Age during interview	Country of birth	Age when migrated	Migrating companions	Other countries lived before migrating to the US (approx. length)	People they knew in Michigan before migration
Bishal	17	Nepal	9	Father, mother, sister, and brother	None	Relatives
Mohammed	15	Jordan	10	Father, mother, three sisters, and brother	None	None
Shelia	16	Somalia	13	Mother, two sisters, and brother	Kenya (9 months) and Uganda (3 years)	None
Kiran	17	Nepal	9	Father, mother, sister, and brother	None	Neighbor from Nepal
Aldrin	15	Zimbabwe	9	Mother	Egypt (5 years)	None
Milan	16	Nepal	9	Father, mother, and two brothers	None	None
Revo	16	Burma	9	Father, mother, sister, and brother	None	None
Eric	18	D. R. Congo	11	Grandmother, mother, and two sisters	Rwanda (11 years)[1]	None

[1] Lived in a refugee camp with his family.

Section II – Resettlement in the US

Section 2 will present the cultural differences noted by the refugee youth, as well as the major challenges they faced in the society of settlement which included English proficiency, academic performance, and social development. With that in mind, the data presented in this section helped the investigator to better understand the participants' perceptions about attitudes and social supports they experienced in the society of settlement. This results also helped to contrast the group acculturation factors such as social and cultural based on the participants' responses, to identify the cultural distance between each participants and the society of settlement, as well as to identify acculturation experiences, appraisal of experiences, and non-SBP strategies used by the participants in their acculturation process as suggested in Berry's (1997) framework for acculturation research.

Cultural Differences

The cultural differences mentioned by the participants were related to people's behaviors, landscape preferences, culinary habits, and traditional sports experiences. A more detailed presentation of these results within each of these areas follows.

Behavioral differences. How people generally behave in the US was among the many cultural differences observed by the participants when they migrated to the society of settlement. Some participants pointed out peculiarities they noticed among adults in the US. Revo said, "Americans are more open minded. They're more welcoming to new things" (Revo). He was comparing them to the adults from his country of origin, Burma, where, in his opinion, adults are "closed off". Revo wished that it would help if adults in Burma were more open minded. Another participant corroborated to Revo's sentiments. In this case, Eric believed that adults in the US are "better" than those in Rwanda because they were more polite to him. He said,

> Here they more respect *[sic]*. More respect because if they see you get angry, they gonna *[sic]* calm [you] down and see if you're okay. But in Rwanda, they, as teachers, they just gonna *[sic]* come, get [a] stick and beat you up. (Eric)

On the other hand, Milan mentioned that he does not know how Americans will respond to certain situations. He stated that in Nepal he was able to tell how people were going to respond. This "behavioral unpredictability" also affected Eric right when he migrated to the US. He recalled being scared when he was near his White American peers because he did not know how they would react to him. He thought at that moment, "they're going to be like 'these kids are like animals' or they would call me names 'Africans', because I [do] not speak English" (Eric). Later in the interview, Eric said that he was actually positively surprised with the response he received from his White American peers compared to what he received from their Black counterparts.

> … I used to think about those people as my skin [African American peers] could be more nice *[sic]* than me, but those kids [White American peers] I was afraid of they [were] the nicest to me than those kids as my skin… Those of my skin, they know more language to show off and then, then they could help, they go through each other, fight, but [do] not help. But I was at [the middle school] and one White kid came to me and she showed me my class and I was like surprised because I thought that kids as my skin could come up and show me my class… (Eric)

Besides this racial-related theme, another cultural difference noted by an interviewee was related to gender roles; "… they [women] used to stay home and stuff. Here, like, it's not like that. It's all different" (Milan).

Milan and other participants also picked up on differences in the general lifestyle lived in the US compared to their countries of origin like how people dress. Milan noticed how students in his American school do not need to wear a uniform and Aldrin stated that learning how to dress like his American peers help foreigners fit in.

> I dress like them, but I would never want to behave like them. I have my own personality… you shouldn't have to change your personality in order to make people like you. That's not how it works. You should always make people come to you because of your own personality, you know? Because if you change yourself, right, that makes it worse for you. Basically, you're acting a movie. When you stop acting, no one is there for you because they don't see you acting the way you seem to be fitting in. (Aldrin)

The participant went on to say that he did not want to act like his American peers. In his opinion, they acted like "ghetto", do drugs, party, and are sexually active at a young age. Eric has a similar opinion and he made a remark that many refugee youth "try to be gangster. They wanna *[sic]* act like this African-Americans right here" (Eric). Eric was referring to the same behavior brought up by Aldrin. Eric then recalled that what surprised him the most was when he saw his American peers doing drugs in the middle school's restroom.

> Ah. Specially those kids. The drugs… because when I went to [the middle school], like, I saw a kid at my age and when I went to the bathroom, they were smoking. So, I just get out and I was like 'what happened? What just happened? What did I see?' I just went back to my class and I was scared to see that kids were smoking. (Eric)

The interviewer followed up by asking if Eric had a different perspective about his African American peers now and he replied, "Nah. Still not good" (Eric). More information

about the participants' relationship with their American peers will be presented later in this chapter.

Landscape preferences. When the participants were asked about cultural differences they encountered after migrating to the US, many of them mentioned differences related to the Mid-Michigan's landscape. Nine meaning units were found within this topic. The first difference participants mentioned was about how they expected buildings to be. Eric expected big houses like the ones he was shown in pictures before he moved to the US. Eric seemed disappointed as he answered and pointed at the houses outside where the interview took place. He later on said that he was able to see the big houses and buildings that he was expecting once he visited downtown for the first time. Revo also had high expectations about the place he was going to move to. He said, "well, yes. A little bit [disappointed]. I was expecting something more like New York City" (Revo). Milan, on the other hand, was surprised with how big and different the houses looked.

Some of the cultural differences experienced by the participants were seen as an "upgrade" for them; "the atmosphere around here, like the atmosphere felt so weird and different. It felt like an upgrade" (Aldrin). He went on to explain why his place of resettlement felt different, "… compared to the things that happened in Egypt, a little bit of poverty in there. You know. I'm not used to seeing nice trashcan *[sic]* be outside. I used to see a lot of garbage outside" (Aldrin). The cleanliness also surprised Revo compared to his place of origin; "the thing that surprised me the most, I'd say, like how the street was really clean compared to what I was used to" (Revo). Still in the topic of cultural differences related to the landscape, Milan was surprised with the high number of trees in Mid-Michigan compared to what he was used to before and Kiran was surprised with the availability of street and house lights.

> Back in Nepal, we didn't have lights. Nothing like that. Stars in the sky was *[sic]* our lights and then match lighter, matchbox? We used to fire them up and yeah. So, like the cooking oven, the heater, and everything is new to us. (Kiran)

The cultural difference that surprised Mohammed the most was that not a lot of people were out in the streets in the neighborhood he moved to in the US. Surprisingly, only one participant, Bishal, mentioned being surprised with how cold the weather is in Mid-Michigan.

Culinary habits. Differences in the food was another topic discussed by the interviewees. Milan said, "I mean like first time like I wanted to eat meat, right? Like, my parents used to say like it tastes different. It don't *[sic]* taste, it don't *[sic]* taste good as in Nepal. I don't know why they like it" (Milan). The participant went on to also say that his society of origin had different food compared to where he resettled. Rice was used as an example; "Asians like rice" (Milan). Eric brought up an interesting anecdote that helped explain his relationship with his home food and the differences he found after migrating to the US.

> … the food was kinda *[sic]* different than African [food] because Africa, the place the people get rice on Christmas. That's it. Christmas is when they look for money to get rice. Then, when I got here was normal potatoes, you know? And then when I got here, like after two weeks when I saw my mom start cooking and I was… surprise *[sic]*. That was the big, big surprise. (Eric)

The interviewer was interested to learn whether participants were able to cope with the culinary differences. Mohammed said, "no, my mom still makes like Middle Eastern food. Yeah. That's what I eat" (Mohammed). According to him, the food available in the area he moved to lacked seasoning.

Traditional sports experiences. The last cultural difference presented by the participants was related to the different sports practiced in the society of settlement. Before jumping into the participants' responses, it is important to point out that basketball and football were the most popular sports in the city where the SBP took place. Perhaps this is also influenced by the strong presence of winning college programs in both sports. Moreover, the high school where most SBP participants attended was also the alma matter to a former NBA superstar who is often placed by the media in the top-10 best basketball players of all times.

Participants were asked if they had ever tried sports other than soccer after they moved to the US. One said, "it was a new thing to me. Yeah. I just wanted to try it. I never saw basketball at home, like, Nepal" (Milan). It seemed that basketball and football were not popular in the countries where participants came from. Other ones stated that they gave other sports a try, but they believed that it was not a sport for them;

> I intended to do [try a different sport than soccer]. I did intended *[sic]* but [it was] not really made for me… I'm not really good at other sport… I tried basketball, I mean, volleyball. Well, [I] was not really good at it. I just play [it] for fun. (Revo)

Aldrin said that the reason he did not play basketball was because he was not into it and football was because he did not want to be frequently injured. For Mohammed, basketball was a new sport because people in his country of origin do not play it, "I wasn't sure what basketball is. I came to [the] USA… I was like 'that's weird, I never seen basketball" (Mohammed). The interviewer then asked why participants did not give new sports a try and they were categorically straight with their answers. They said they just prefer soccer over any other sport; "I feel to me *[sic]* it [soccer] is a lot more fun and I'm better at soccer than most sports" (Revo). "I would really like to play soccer in middle school. So, of course, I played soccer. I knew a little more

[about soccer than then sports] and it got fun. It was really fun" (Aldrin). Their responses showed that they preferred soccer because they played it back in their countries of origin; "I was really interested [in soccer] because I always had an interest in soccer since I was back in my country" (Bishal).

Aldrin was the only participant who was regularly practicing a sport different than soccer at the time of the interview. He said, "I decided to do track since last year because track, I said 'Okay. I want to be prepared for soccer season, I want to become lean, I want to become fit…" (Aldrin). Aldrin said he was doing well at his high school track team, but he made it clear that soccer was his main sport. The soccer and track season in Michigan take place during different times of the year.

Participants' English Proficiency

Proficiency in the English language seemed to be one of the first major challenges faced by the participants right after they migrated to the US. From all the eight participants, only Aldrin spoke fluent English before migrating. "Yes. I knew English… In Zimbabwe, the first language is Shona and the second language is English" (Aldrin). The other participants provided the interviewer with details to show how much they did not know any English language. Bishal, for instance, said sarcastically, "Yeah. Actually, I knew 'English'. That's it. That's the English word I knew" (Bishal). Kiran said, "Yeah. No English… I mean, there was like certain words we know back in Nepal but like, I didn't know how to put in a sentence. I knew, we say like, stuff like 'chair', 'table'" (Kiran). He also mentioned that most participants in the SBP spoke little to no English; "We didn't know that much English, so it was really kinda *[sic]* hard for us to communicate with other players" (Kiran).

Not being able to speak English impacted the participants' academic performances as all classes were conducted in English. Mohammed expressed how difficult it was for him to follow the class during his first days in an American school.

> At the beginning, it was tough for me because like, the teacher would talk, and I wouldn't know nothing. At [elementary school] was like a big problem because all I do is *[sic]* just sit there and stare and not know anything. (Mohammed)

A similar experience was described by Revo in which he said, "I didn't know what they [teachers] were saying at all" (Revo). Mohammed complemented by saying that his grades were directly affected by not knowing English. He claimed that his grades got better as he improved his English language skills. Other participants corroborated to this idea that as their English proficiency improved, their academic performance increased.

The researcher followed up by asking about whether participants suffered any type of bullying or teasing because of their accents or lack of English proficiency. Most participants replied "no" right away. However, to probe further and make sure the participants were being fully truthful (not embarrassed about English language issues) the researcher shared with them personal examples where he was teased because of a mispronounced sentence or word. English is also a second language to the researcher, and he reminded participants of this fact so they could establish a better rapport. After sharing his example, the researcher asked if something similar had happened to them. Some participants still said that they were not teased because of their English skill whereas others said that the only teasing happened among their friends; "maybe there was a little bit of a joke, but I don't think it was a serious problem" (Revo). Bishal said, "yeah. We [are] just like friends who fun around, but nothing serious… we just tease

around, just have fun" (Bishal). Milan said something similar, "I mean, we all make fun of our accents" (Milan).

Non-SBP language support. As seen in the previous paragraphs, the lack of English proficiency was a major obstacle for the interviewees after they migrated to the US. With that in mind, the interviewer wanted to know how they began to learn the language, more specifically, what agents other than the SBP helped them in this process (see Table 3).

Table 3. Non-SBP Sources of Help with Acquiring English as a Second Language

Source of help	Participant	Quote
Teachers	Kiran	"Well, back in elementary I had a teacher named Ms. Carmen. She really helped me out. We learn word by word and next thing I know, I'm pretty well with English"
	Mohammed	"Yeah. She [teacher] helped me a lot. Read *[sic]* books made write some words down"
	Eric	"So, what they [teachers] did is like they gave me a book full of like letters and like smart words"
	Milan	"There was a teacher, Nepali, who used to like translate for us"
	Eric	"She [teacher] is the one who helped me a lot"
ESL programs	Kiran	"Yeah. They [refugee center] had ESL classes, which helped me a lot"
	Kiran	"Well, there's an ESL program and stuff"
	Mohammed	"They will help you with your English, they have like [the refugee center] English classes for new people"
American peers	Bishal	"They'd be just fixing like you have kind of no clue. But if you just follow their like you know, they will do for you sometimes, like they just correct you"
	Mohammed	"So, like they would say words and show me like flashcards or like when we [were] outside, they would they me [how] things are, yeah, in English. I would like learn"
	Mohammed	"I had to make American friends to start learning English"
	Bishal	"If you make friends with the Americans because they… know everything here"
	Aldrin	"I talked to some American sometimes, so that also helped a little bit too"
Foreign peers	Bishal	"The teacher had it… like a translator for me, who are *[sic]* like same age as me"
	Mohammed	"So, I had a new school… To me, it was kind of better because like more people that spoke my language were there and they helped more. And there was not a teacher, but like a helper in the school that spoke the same language as me"
	Kiran	"Like the guy right there, when I first came here, he was in my class. Fourth grade together. And then like he sometimes helped me out He knew better English than me. He helped me out through fourth grade and then we've been friends ever since"
	Kiran	"I usually hand out with my friends what are Nepali. A couple of Africans that they came here to like around like 2016… they speak fluent English. Hanging around with them kind of help develop my accent"
	Kiran	"there were lots of Nepali kids who used to live here… so, they kind of helped me out… they would translate it for me and then I'd try to pronounce it"
	Milan	"my friends, I mean, they *[sic]* smart so like they used to help me a lot"
TV	Kiran	"and then *PBS kids* kind of help me too"
	Aldrin	"I watched a lot of movies, American movies"

School teachers seemed to be important agents in helping interviewees learn English. Eric had an interesting testimony that clearly illustrated his relationship with a specific middle school teacher.

> It was crazy. The first day I got confused. Went to the wrong class. The teacher, remember Ms. Cameron [pseudonym]? She was my first mom. My first mom and teacher at [the school]. She saw me and she noticed I was African because she [is] used to teach the ESL English *[sic]*. So, she came, and she was like 'are you looking for this class?' and I was like 'yeah'. And then they gave me another class and she had to go and switch for me. I had to have her three years until I go to high school. So, it was, I can say that she's the one who helped me the most. (Eric).

Later in the results, it will be possible to see how school teachers were also extremely helpful with helping the interviewees socialize with other foreigners. The foreigner peers, which included compatriots and kids from different countries of origin, were also critical to their English acquisition. Based on their discourses, it was possible to note that those who migrated to the US earlier helped newcomers learn the language, mostly through translation and correction. Some interviewees were matched with compatriot peers by their teachers with the specific purpose of translation during classes and school work. When it comes to American peers, the interviewees showed a clear understanding that being around them would help them improve their English skills. American peers helped the interviewees by correcting their pronunciation.

Other agents that participants claimed to have had learned English from were ESL programs and TV shows. Three meaning units were found in the data where participants mentioned attending ESL classes to help improve their English. Both participants who mentioned these classes also said that they were administered by the same refugee center that

managed the SBP. However, these classes were not associated with the SBP. Lastly, Kiran mentioned learning English by watching cartoons on TV whereas Aldrin claim to have improved his already known English skills by watching American movies amongst other things.

The investigator ended this section of the interview by asking participants if they currently felt confident with their English skills. Eric's summed it up what other participants also said; "I think, right now I can go anywhere and get through with my English. Speaking, they can let me go through" (Eric). Him and Mohammed said that it took them around two years to reach fluency in English.

Participants' Academic Performance

It can be said that one of the greatest obstacles on the way of participants performing well in school was related to mastering the English language. As previously said, not knowing English prevented them from understanding teachers and follow their school work. Mohammed summarized the initial experiences of most participants interviewed when he said, "at the beginning it was tough for me. Like, the teacher would talk, I wouldn't know anything… I'd sit there, stare and not know anything" (Mohammed). Some participants claimed that their performance improved as they began to master the English language; "When I first came my grades weren't good at all because of the fact that I can't *[sic]* speak English. Like, I learned it and then my grades became good" (Mohammed). Bishal corroborated with his peer by agreeing that his academic performance "was much easier, definitely" after he learned the language.

The English language was not always a barrier in school. Some participants stated that their Math performance was good regardless their inability to speak English. Mohammed said, "It was easy because like Math you don't really need English back then" (Mohammed). Revo also said, "Well, at first it [school] was hard. Well, English was hard, but Math was easy. Pretty

easy" (Revo). Other participants mentioned having difficulties with English as a subject and American History. On the other hand, four meaning units were found where participants compared American schools with those of their countries of origin. Their claims were surprising to the interviewer and they said that schooling in the US was easier. Mohammed said, "over here, it's like easier [than] back there [Jordan]" (Mohammed). Bishal corroborated by saying "comparing to out there [Nepal], it [schooling in the US] is much easier" (Bishal). Several participants also said that the Math curriculum in their countries of origin was more advanced and they had already covered some of their fifth-grade content in previous grades back in their countries of origin.

Non-SBP academic support. The subsequent section of the interview was used to explore the non-SBP agents that helped participants improve their academic performance in the US. Fourteen meaning units were found in the data encompassing agents including teachers, school staff, afterschool programs, foreigner peers, relatives, and online resources (see Table 4).

Table 4. Non-SBP Sources of Help with the Participants' Academic Performance

Source of help	Participant	Quote
Teachers	Kiran	"I really appreciate everything that my previous teacher did for me"
	Mohammed	"I can say she [teacher] is the one who helped me a lot"
	Bishal	"They were like I needed help and the teacher would bring them to me"
School staff	Revo	"Someone from school"
Afterschool programs	Bishal	"There's like other people that who is new as me like they also wanted to learn and get help [from an afterschool help group]"
	Milan	"After tutoring there was a group and then you go there. We just talked they helped us with homework and stuff"
Foreigner peers	Bishal	"There were a lot of them, and I have at least three in class, so they help me a lot"
	Bishal	"They're taking the class but like they [have] been there before and they know stuff"
	Bishal	"They were like I needed help and the teacher would bring them to me"
	Revo	"My classmate helped me too"
	Kiran	"Like the guy [compatriot] right there, when I first came here, he was in my class. Fourth grade together. And then like he sometimes helped me out. He knew better English than me. He helped me out through fourth grade and then we've been friends since then"
	Revo	"He [compatriot] helped me out a little bit"
	Shelia	"[being with my foreigner peers] also helped me in high school"
Family	Bishal	"My sister knew a little"
Online resource	Kiran	"There's this website called Khan Academy"

The participants' foreigner peers were identified as the most prevalent source of academic support sought by them. In Bishal's case, he was introduced by his teacher to a compatriot peer who could help him with work. The dynamics of the academic support received by the interviewees were similar to what was seen in their language acquisition support. Basically, other refugees who migrated to the US before them had more experience navigating the American educational system and consequently, helped newcomers adjust to it. No participant mentioned receiving academic help from American students.

Teachers also contributed to helping the interviewees improve their academic performance in the US. Kiran and Mohammed expressed that the teachers who helped them did a lot for them. It is also important to mention that these teachers like the one mentioned by Bishal, understood the fact that they were foreigners and new to the English language and the American school system. This was clear when Eric stated, "she [teacher] saw me and she noticed that I was African because she used to teach the ESL" (Eric). Perhaps, since it was common for these schools to host refugees, some teachers had previous experience working with this population and therefore; were able to recognize specific needs they had in order to adjust. The school Revo attended seemed to also be ready to support newcomers since it had a member of the staff designated to help him. Similarly, Bishal reported to have participated in an afterschool tutoring group for newcomers like him.

Participants' Social Development

Non-SBP social support. Getting to know other people in a new location usually happens naturally and can be dependent on the places one attends frequently. This was seen with the participants as they disclosed that most people they know were related to their school or community. Bishal said that he met many of his friends through his teacher who connected them

to him so he could be helped with school work; “Started with the school. There were like I needed help and the teacher would bring them to me and we started to talk and get closer” (Bishal). School also connected Kiran and Revo to his friends; “I’d say my closest friends are those who I see at school” (Revo). After school tutoring groups also served to connect Revo to his peers. Revo also met people at the church he goes to and around his neighborhood.

The Nepali participants had an advantaged over those from other nationalities because their place of resettlement already had an established Nepali community. Bishal confirmed that the presence on other Nepalis in the region was abundant; “there was a ton of Nepali people here” (Bishal) and therefore; helpful for adjusting; “there are a bunch of Nepalis already. They also help” (Bishal). Kiran corroborated by saying, “there were lots of Nepali kids who used to live here” (Kiran). Milan went further to say that the Nepali community was organized to the point which they had a leader who helped newcomers.

> [The] guy who like controls like the Nepali community. He took me to the school and then like introduced me to friends and teachers, and then the teacher linked me to the Nepali friends and then started connecting from there. (Milan)

The last way of obtaining social support came through meeting new people through their friends.

Meeting and engaging with American peers. As participants talked about how they met people, specifically their closer friends, the researcher noticed that they were mostly talking about their foreigner peers. With that in mind, the researcher was interested to know where and how participants may have met their American peers. Most participants said they met their American peers at school. Mohammed went on to say that he started engaging with American peers while being in the same classes with them. The only two answers that were different than

"meeting at school" came from Bishal who met some American peers at the apartment complex he used to live in and through playing in a regular soccer club in the area.

Reasons for not being close friends with their American peers. The researcher also noticed during the interview that the participants were showing different reactions when they talked about their foreigner friends compared to when they talked about their American counterparts. When they talked about the first group, participants most often smiled and showed warmth whereas when they talked about their American peers, they seemed very apathetic and brief. As the researcher picked up on these cues, he began to ask participants about the reasons why they were not as close to their American peers. Bishal's response is a good example for this, "I have [American friends]. I do. I talk with them but like I don't really talk much in school. I just do my own [thing]" (Bishal). It is important to highlight the different conjunctions used by the participants as they usually said the word "but" after they mentioned having American friends and the word "and" when they talked about their foreigner friends. For instance, "I'm friends with other foreigners… and we play soccer together, go to the movies" (Bishal).

Kiran's justification was about not knowing what his American peers were thinking or feeling. He perhaps insinuated that his American peers did not communicate well with him. He said, "I consider [American peers] my friends. I don't know what they think. But I don't have much *[sic]* friends that are American…" (Kiran). Later on, he complemented by saying, "I have my own friends and they [American peers] are like, they have their own business going on" (Kiran). The same was observed in Aldrin's discourse.

> I have, I've some like you know not friends but like some social friends, you know I mean? You don't have to hang out with them you can just talk to them. I mean socially. Like you come to class, and you guys want to talk of course, social friends. (Aldrin)

It seemed that the participants always kept “an arm’s length” from their American peers. Revo replied something similar, “I wouldn’t say we’re really close… we don’t really meet up, only see them at school” (Revo). The researcher then questioned the reason why this was the case, but most participants were not able to verbalize why. Aldrin did and revealed.

> I mean maybe if I knew the Americans earlier, I would be friends with them, you know I mean? But right now, we're chill, cool. I'm not really close to them because in reality like, they do the things, they can also peer pressure, you know what I mean? Yeah. Because, you know, they're all about that life, you know I mean? They're all about that life. They grew up in it, you know what I mean? (Aldrin)

The researcher was curious to hear what “life” Aldrin was referring to and he complemented by saying that “I do not want to act like them, kind of ghetto, smoke weed. I’ll be honest. Smoke weed, have sex at a young age” (Aldrin).

Section III – Effects of SBP Participation

A major purpose of this study was to identify program characteristics and coaching factors that influenced participants' language acquisition, academic performance, and social development, as well as to diagnose how these factors affected the participants' acculturation. This section will discuss these results. Specifically, the participants' perception of the effects of the SBP in their acculturation in the US will be presented. Information on how the participants found the program and engaged with the SBP is presented first. Then, data on what they learned from participating in the SBP is presented second. Lastly, data is presented on the participants' perceptions of the coach's role in the SBP and in their acculturation.

How Participants Learned About the SBP

The most common way that participants learned about the SBP was through other refugees who were already participating. Bishal illustrated how he found out about the SBP by saying "my friends told me, those who actually play soccer within the same [apartment] complex. They were like 'you should play with us' and stuff and I was like 'yeah. I should go talk to the coach'" (Bishal). Kiran went through a similar experience where a friend, who was already participating in the SBP, invited him to join the SBP.

> He [friend] was in it, we wasn't *[sic]* really close or nothing like that, but he was like really good friends. And then like, we still is *[sic]*. He said: 'if you want to join' and I say: 'Yeah. I want to join'. He said: "talk to the coach". I did. (Kiran)

Based on their comments, it was also clear that the coach served as a reference point for the boys to join the program. Both Bishal and Kiran were referred to the coach by their friends. This phenomenon was also seen in Eric and Aldrin's comments when they stated that they had to

ask the coach to join the SBP. In some instances, the coach also served as a recruiter for the SBP by actively visiting apartment complexes where most refugees lived. This was how Eric learned about the SBP.

> [The coach] came at *[sic]* the [apartment] complex, at the office and talked about the [SBP]. So, we went outside, and we saw and 'hey coach, we're going to seventh grade next year. Can we play soccer?' and he was like 'yeah. Yeah. sure. I'll see you guys at [school]'. (Eric)

The coach in this case also visited Eric's house to talk to his mother about the SBP; "he came to my house, my mom had to sign something first and then, yeah, that's how I got it" (Eric).

Another common way that participants found the about the SBP was through former participants. For example, Eric's best friend's older brother and Mohammed's older friends were former participants of the SBP. Revo, on the other hand, found out about the program because his teacher recommended it to him.

> I found out through my fifth-grade teacher; she was saying something about the [refugee] soccer team, and that she could recommend me to join. And that's when I found out about it but unfortunately, I didn't get picked at the time. (Revo)

Not all refugee boys had the opportunity to join the SBP right after they advanced to middle school. As seen in Revo's remarks, the SBP had a limited number of spots per year, perhaps based on the funding for food and transportation. Revo had to wait for a year before he could join the SBP. It is important to highlight that the SBP does not have any sort of tryouts or

specific selection process beyond being a refugee and studying at the specific middle school where the SBP took place.

Requirements for participation in the SBP. The participants were asked about possible requirements for participation. Initially, most participants said that there were no requirements to participate in the SBP. The interviewer then helped the participants remember some of the requirements by asking them specific questions like "can a student in high school join the program?" and participants would reply something like "no, because you must be in middle school to participate". The following were the requirements for participation recalled by them: First, all participants confirmed that potential participants had to be enrolled in middle school to participate. They said that age alone was not a criterion for participation. This was clear after the interviewer asked Revo if boys over the age 17 were allowed to participate and he answered that participation was not based on age but instead it was based on school grade. Second, they confirmed that participation only included those enrolled at their specific middle school. Third, Bishal and Milan ensured to tell the interviewer that participation in the SBP was also free of costs. Fourth, Bishal and Mohammed also mentioned certain expectations that held participants were held accountable. Bishal specifically indicated that participants were expected to show good manners if they wanted to stay in the SBP, whereas Mohammed mentioned that participation in the SBP's tutoring sessions was also expected. Lastly, the interviewer asked the participants if only foreigners were allowed in the program. Revo said: "you have to be a foreigner because it [the program] is from the [refugee center]. To help out foreigners" (Revo).

This last point led the interviewer to ask a follow-up question that was not in the interview protocol but led to interesting findings. The interviewer asked, "what would it be like if American boys participated in the SBP?". Participants had divided opinions about Americans

participating in the SBP, but most answers showed negative reactions towards this possibility. For instance, Eric said that a combined program "wasn't going to be how it was. It wasn't going to be great because it could be some bullies and misunderstanding each other *[sic]* because of the language. It could be hard if it was [combined]" (Eric). Revo corroborated to Eric's opinion when he stated that "they [American boys] wouldn't understand our culture, doing some stuff that is like unusual to them… and their reaction is usually in a bad way or it's just surprising" (Revo). Aldrin also went on to say:

> Because we acting *[sic]* like us in front of them, know what I mean? Like, saying things they [American boys] don't understand, you know? Definitely, they might probably feel offended or they're thinking that we're talking about them or they might feel weird being around us and stuff. They're used to being... see, people don't understand what they don't… people fear what they don't know, you understand? People don't like what they don't know about it, you know what I mean?... (Aldrin)

Three participants believed that American kids would not want to join the SBP because they were not interested in soccer. Milan said, "because they don't really play soccer, I think. They play basketball" (Milan). Kiran went on to say that "it [SBP] was basically foreigners. I mean, I wouldn't say a group of foreigners, but how do I say, like, people… I'm not trying to sound racist or nothing like that, but other people were not interested in playing soccer" (Kiran). And Shelia said, "I've never seen people that I from here [in the SBP]. Probably because they don't like soccer. I assume" (Shelia). Later on, Kiran also stated that "it was basically foreigners that was *[sic]* interested" (Kiran). The interviewer followed up by asking, "but what if they [American boys] wanted like, there's one kid who wanted. Do you think he would be able to play?" (interviewer). Kiran replied "I think he was able to play. Nobody was interested" (Kiran).

On the other hand, some participants were positive with the idea of combining refugees and American boys. Revo believed that a combined SBP would allow American boys to see and experience new things and to learn about different cultures. For him and Milan, a combined program would not make much of a difference. However, Milan gave an interesting answer to this question by saying, "I think it would be the same because everybody was from a different place. It was going to be different too there. He [an American boy] would be different too" (Milan). Lastly, Aldrin was able to see pros and cons from a combined SBP. He said that it was going to be different and "more awkward" than how he experienced it but that would help foreigners learn more English.

SBP disciplinary measures. The interviewer wanted to know if the SBP had any disciplinary measures that participants had to follow in order to stay in the SBP. Participants were asked if they recalled any discipline-related issues and if so, what were the usual consequences to those. Four participants mentioned that they constantly argued with each other and occasionally fought. This could be seen in Milan's comments when he stated that "there was a fight and then we'd go back next day it's like normal life. We're friends again" (Milan). Kiran corroborated with Milan when he said, "I mean, we sometimes argue, and then like, we would like, try to cuss at each other out" (Kiran). Kiran came on to say that it was clear that the coach did not like when those situations happened. Two other participants reported similar situations where the coach showed a negative reaction to such examples of misbehavior from participants. "[the coach] used to get mad. He used to be like 'it's not good!'. He used to tell us all the time" (Eric). Two participants mentioned that the coach would first talk to the participants involved in the altercation and then, depending on the case, he would punish them. Eight meaning units in the data stated that the punishment for misbehaving was usually running laps or doing other type

of conditioning exercises like push-ups. Milan described his peculiar reaction when the coach punished him with running laps.

> I mean he, one time like, he made me run a lot, because first time, first time he made me run, right. I was like just lazy then he made me run again and he said to do it again and over and over again and I was tired and I just… I got angry and then like hit the water and then just walked away. (Milan)

The other common disciplinary situation that happened in the SBP was participants missing practices or tutoring. Seven meaning units were found in the data where participants said that the consequences for missing a SBP activity was usually having playing time reduced or being suspended from games depending on the case. "You will not play for like half of the time" (Milan) for missing a single practice and "you don't play a game at all" (Milan) for missing an entire week of activities. Eric supported this idea when he recalled that "it could make you not play, run. Make you run for the whole practice and not play the game" (Eric). Mohammed said that having the playing time reduced or not playing a game was a hurtful consequence because, in his words, "game suspension was a big thing… because everyone wanted to play the game" (Mohammed). Two participants recalled that the staff from the SBP would call the participant's parents if he was being excessively absent.

The interviewer concluded this set of questions by asking participants if there was anything that someone could do that would lead him to be expelled from the SBP. Most participants believed that someone could be expelled from the SBP for misbehavior. Mohammed, for instance, believed that the SBP staff would try everything possible to not expel a participant from the SBP because "they'll [SBP staff] always be there to help you in life. Get you in *[sic]* the right path" (Mohammed). However, he also believed that continuous

misbehaving could lead to expelling. Kiran corroborated with Mohammed's idea that the SBP would rather help a participant other than letting him go. He recalled a scenario where a participant left the SBP after arguing with the coach, but the coach, the SBP staff, and other participants were able to converse with the boy and convince him to return.

> This one time, my friend, he was a good player, and then he got into an argument with the coach because he did not like what the coach was trying to teach him. And then he said, 'I'm leaving the team', and then he left that day. And then [the coach], the next day, the staff and everybody tried to talk him into it, and like, they brought him back and he apologized to the coach. He knew he was wrong. Like, we wouldn't actually kick them out. Like, if they were going the wrong way, we would like to try to correct the way they're heading toward. They would try to help us. (Kiran)

Eric, on the other hand, reported that one of his SBP teammates was almost expelled from the SBP for wasting the food that was given to them for free.

> It happened in the cafeteria when we used to get free food. And then once I got new free food, you can't just mess with it just because it's free food. There's *[sic]* people outside that need it and then you can't just get food and throw it. (Eric)

It should be noted that while not part of the study per se, by being involved with the refugee center the interviewer witnessed a few occurrences when not only this specific participant, but other ones used to throw untouched food in the garbage can while saying that did not like that type of food.

Revo reported cases where a few participants were expelled because they kept skipping practice and not studying; and Milan reported that a participant was once expelled from the team, but he did not know why that happened.

> I mean there was this guy who got kicked out. I don't really know why he got kicked out, but I think it was because he used to talk back at, like talk back at [the coach]. Yeah. That's why I think it was. (Milan)

In sum, participants seemed to be aware of the consequences for not fulfilling the basic requirements to participate in the SBP as, according to them, participants were constantly disciplined for misbehavior.

Lessons Learned in the SBP

The participants were asked about the lessons the learned from participating in SBP. The described lessons in the areas of language acquisition, academic performance, and social and personal development. Each of these is discussed below.

Language support. Participants perceived that participating in the SBP helped them improve their English skills. Mohammed, for example, said that the tutoring activities were "very helpful" for his English skills. The interviewer asked the participants to recall what type of activities they did in the SBP that helped them improve English. Mohammed recalled that the SBP staff used different posters and flashcards and asked participants questions about the displayed content. He said that lessons were about English words and how to pronounce them. These lessons covered basic English content according to one of the participants. Eric recalled receiving lists with English words in which the SBP staff and his peers helped him pronounce them,

> They would bring the list with all the name *[sic]* like 'this is the names *[sic]*. This is how you say it.'… until I got to know. And like other kids would come and I was like 'this is how you say it?' and I get the experience to help them as I get it from the other boys. (Eric)

Eric referred in the previous paragraph that he was also able to help other peers once he learned the words. The help new participants received from more experienced ones was also mentioned by Bishal. In his words, "people… who actually been there [in the SBP], they know more" (Bishal). More experienced participants helped by correcting mistakes in their lessons and in their spoken English.

The SBP tutoring sessions also served as an extra opportunity for participants to engage with native speakers who were part of the SBP staff and volunteers from a nearby university. Eric recalled that these opportunities to speak helped him slowly develop his English skills. "So, we had to speak 'hi' every day. 'hi', 'hi', 'hi', 'hi', the next day, 'how are you?' like that until we get to say, 'how's your family?', 'how was your weekend'. Then came slow, slow" (Eric). In his discourse, Eric exemplified the evolution of his skills through repetition and memorization that went from simple sentences to more complex ones. Bishal also mentioned how the SBP staff was able to be patient with their learning pace, especially when specific participants needed more help than others. All these examples referred to the SBP's tutoring sessions. When it comes to SBP's soccer practices, Kiran was the only participant who mentioned improving English during these moments; "He [the coach] used to tell us to not speak our language, like our culture [native] language. We try to communicate with each other using English. It would help us. Yeah. He used to tell us to do that" (Kiran). Lastly, one of the participants mentioned that the refugee

center that administered the SBP also provided ESL classes for the participants' parents at a different location.

Academic support. The SBP tutoring sessions also assisted participants with their academic performance. A large part of these sessions was dedicated to helping participants complete their homework. Since the SBP operated in the middle school, the SBP staff was informed by the teachers when the participants had homework to complete. This way participants would not be able to lie about not having homework. "Almost all of us had the same teachers… [we] would be working on the same thing" (Mohammed). With that in mind, participants declared that the SBP tutoring sessions helped them learn how to do their homework. Bishal said, "we don't know anything about the work and stuff. They [SBP staff] just showed you how to do and find stuff… where things are at and how you do it" (Bishal). Eric recalled that he used to bring his homework to a volunteer and they would sit together and go over it point-by-point, "they used to just sit down, come like 'we have to do like this' because [I spoke] no English so she has to show me and point this and this, write it down" (Eric). Other participants remembered how specific volunteers helped them learn the school material. Mohammed said that a volunteer helped him with his History homework. In his opinion, he learned more about the subject from the volunteer than he learned from his History teacher.

Just like Eric, other participants struggled with their homework mostly because of their deficiency in the English language. Aldrin stated that "refugees definitely have trouble with homework in the beginning" (Aldrin). He then came to recommend refugees to join such SBPs if they wanted to improve their grades. In the case of Kiran, he joined the SBP without knowing about the tutoring sessions. Kiran also only knew about the soccer activities, but later he came to

appreciate the tutoring as it helped him do his homework which consequently impacted his grades positively.

> I didn't know about the program or nothing like that. I just wanted to join the soccer team… I didn't know about nothing. No tutoring, no afterschool programs like that, but then I found out it was kinda *[sic]* helpful. It helped me get better grades. And then I try to focus. I started to focus on doing homework. (Kiran)

Aldrin, like Kiran, stated that attending the SBP tutoring sessions helped him develop a work ethic in middle school that he later applied to his work. He claimed to have learned to consistently attend classes, do his work, be quiet, and listen to his teachers because he understood that not doing those things would contribute to students failing classes, especially those classes he judged to be more difficult.

Social support. Perhaps the greatest contribution the SBP gave to the participants was the opportunity for them to make new friends, especially other foreigners who may be going through similar life experiences as seen in Mohammed and Bishal's responses; "It was like people from different places. So, it was like people like me who are not from the US" (Mohammed) and "there was already a bunch of other newcomers… same cultures who already there" (Bishal). This could be observed based on not only the interviewees' responses but on their enthusiasm and warmth as they talked about the friends made in the SBP. A total of 14 meaning units were found in the data related to making close friends in the SBP. The interviewer asked the participants who their closest friends were and how they met. Mohammed replied by saying that his closest friends were his peers from the SBP. Bishal answered in similar fashion as he said that his closest friends mostly came from the SBP. Aldrin named a few of his closest friends who also happened to be former participants from the SBP. Their close friendship with

those who did not move to another region remained in high school. Eric, for example, did not go to the same high school as most of this SBP peers. Therefore, he was not mentioned by any of the other interviewees as being their close friend. However, Eric mentioned that his best friend was another former SBP participant who happened to have moved to the same high school. He said, "he [former SBP participant] is my, I can say my brother since we got here" (Eric). Similar to Eric's discourse, there were other instances where participants used the words "family" and "siblings" when they referred to their peers from the SBP. For instance, "I made a lot of friends [in the SBP] and then the program showed us like, if we're a team, we're all a family so we got to protect each other" (Kiran); "I had a family at [the middle school] and that family was [the SBP]" (Eric); "we were treated like a family" (Kiran); and "sometimes we would argue… it happens sometimes. Siblings argue" (Kiran). Aldrin gave a very elaborated explanation about the relationship among the SBP peers.

> I know them [SBP peers] for six years and we've been friends for six years. We hang out for six years. We do everything for six years. We tell each other secrets for six years. We tell each other our darkest moments. We just, we have that bond, you know what I mean?... I want to see how you guys [SBP peers] are going to live when [they are] 30 years old, 20 years old. It's going to be really cool. All that. We knew each other since the beginning. (Aldrin)

Some participants attributed this close relationship to seeing each other every day at school, tutoring, soccer practices, and games. They said, "[I] see their faces every day" (Mohammed) and "[we see each other] every day" (Bishal). Bishal even said that he sees his friends on the weekends when they go together to the movies or to a local field to play soccer.

Being part of the SBP also helped several participants cope with being shy. See Mohammed, for example; indicated: “what I learned is like to be more open. Like don’t be scared. Don’t be shy. Just speak up. Say whatever you want” (Mohammed). The interviewer then asked how exactly the SBP helped him overcome being timid and he replied, “You just like went with the flow. They [SBP staff] call on students to answer questions. You had like questions. And then at the beginning I didn’t use to speak a whole lot” (Mohammed). He also said that the SBP staff never told him directly to not be shy. Milan and Kiran also commented on being shy.

> Yes, yes, yes, it [SBP] definitely helps me build up my confidence and try new stuff… Well at first, I was very timid shy. I’m not very good at socializing. And after joining the [SBP] I got better and if I had some people that could help me if I needed help. (Milan)

> I was kind of a quiet kid. I was king of shy throughout my middle school and my freshman year [in high school]. And then I don’t know what happened to me. I don’t feel shy no more. (Kiran)

Milan’s response confused the interviewer because he said, “I’m not very good socializing”, which implied that at the moment of the interview he was still dealing with that problem, but he went on to say that he got better at it after being in the SBP. This misunderstanding could have been due to Milan’s shortcomings in the English language. From all participants interviewed, Milan had the most difficulty communicating, different than Aldrin who was already fluent in English before migrating to the US. Aldrin was able to better elaborate his responses from everyone else interviewed.

Personal support. According to the interviewees, participating in the SBP helped them learn life skills that helped them in their personal life and contributed to their adjustment in the US. Forty-one meaning units were found regarding this topic. Table 5 displays which life skills

participants claimed to have learned in the SBP as well as the respective quotes where they talked about learning these skills.

"Respect" and "making right choices" were the most common life skills fostered in the SBP according to the participants. Each had 11 and 10 meaning units respectfully. "Respect" was often related to respecting other cultures and behaviors, whereas "making right choices" was primarily discussed in the context of healthy eating. "Dedication", "confidence", and "communication" appeared next with three meaning units each. "Dedication" was related to doing school work, "confidence" was related to communication with other people, and "communication" included cultural customs in conversations. "Focus", "offer help", and "self-control" appeared next with two meaning units each. "Focus" was mentioned in the academic context, "offer help" related to helping other participants overcome acculturation obstacles, and "self-control" was mentioned in the context of controlling one's reaction when things do not go as expected. "Maturity", "appreciation", "humility", and "leadership" accounted for one meaning unit each.

The participants were then asked about how they learned these life skills. Most of them pointed out that "respect" was learned by observing the adults in the SBP. That included the coach, the volunteers, and the SBP staff who carried out all the activities during tutoring sessions and soccer practices. Mohammed mentioned that he learned by observing how the adults in the SBP treated program participants. Aldrin told the interviewer about his admiration for their coach as a role-model. He said, "he was just like a good person" (Milan). The same followed for "help others" as Mohammed stated that he learned to help others because the SBP staff helped each of them.

Table 5. Participants' Quotes Describing Which Life Skills They Learned in the SBP

Life Skill	Participant	Quote
Respect	Bishal	"I learned to be respectful"
	Kiran	"… show manners to others because the teachers would talk to us with *[sic]* polite manner"
	Revo	"How to show respect"
	Revo	"I learned about their [other participants] culture, what they think, and I learned that every person is different, and they have different point of view… We should understand people before we judge"
	Revo	"We should try to understand people before we judge"
	Revo	"I learned about their culture, what they think, and I learned that every person are *[sic]* different and they have different point of view *[sic]"*
	Milan	"I learned to be kind… to people"
	Aldrin	"[the SBP taught me] to be more respectful. Really"
	Eric	"when you get here to this people, you have to act, speak like this because how you can come to these friends… they're talking too much and that's kinda *[sic]* respectfully and calmly, and then once you get here, you don't need to interrupt them, you just go calm and respect, talk to them, listen"
	Eric	"I learned a lot. Respect. I learned respect"
	Aldrin	"… everyone was just still respectful, and we got that idea from them and you had to do it right"
Confidence	Bishal	"… never be afraid to ask them the questions"
	Mohammed	"… different things like don't be scared"
	Revo	"It definitely helps me build my confidence to try new stuff"
Leadership	Bishal	"He [the coach] always expected me… I mean expected big for me and be a leader"
Focus	Bishal	"Always pay attention, I would say, always pay attention"
	Aldrin	"… always pay attention because, me, it's kinda *[sic]* hard for me to pay attention when it comes to sports. If you listen and stuff like that. Pay, focus, it's kinda *[sic]* hard for me so. I would say focus and pay attention in class"
Dedication	Kiran	"[The SBP taught] to focus on getting what you love"
	Bishal	"He [the coach] always said 'do good at school and… just improve your life"
	Bishal	"… give our best…"
Time management	Revo	"I would say I learned not to be late"
Humility	Aldrin	"The [SBP] taught me to be more humble *[sic]*"
Communication	Eric	"…you don't need to interrupt them, you just go calm and respect, talk to them, listen"
	Shelia	"They [the SBP staff] teach us how to communicate"
	Kiran	"How to properly, how to greet people…"
Making right choices	Kiran	"[The SBP taught] how to stay safe"
	Revo	"I would say I learned… [to] do the right thing'
	Aldrin	"He [the coach] teach me about this eating stuff… you just got to work hard and eat good"
	Milan	"there was like food and then you had a plate, right? And it has everything on a plate. Like drink something… and it was like unhealthy food"
	Bishal	"In school, in your life. They don't want, they'll tell you to do, not to do that, just right thing"
	Bishal	"Things you should do or not to"
	Bishal	"Like the healths *[sic]*"
	Aldrin	"I learned, how you call it? That, you know, eating, yes, eating habits"
	Shelia	"They talked about avoiding food calories and everything"
	Shelia	"They taught us how to choose careers"
Appreciation	Kiran	"He [the coach] used to tell us to be, he used to tell us to appreciate everything we had"
Offer help	Kiran	"And then the program showed us like, if we're a team we are all a family, so we got to protect each other"
	Mohammed	"Help others"
Self-control	Revo	"… not to overreact and be in control of yourself"
	Revo	"And then showing us that and this how should we react. Like, it's not good to overreact or assume, like get into a situation"
Maturity	Aldrin	"I would say not to be childish. Yes. Not to be childish in practice"

"Confidence" was said to be taught through the encouragement given by the coach, especially when they were not contributing to the activities or not being involved in conversations with other participants. As seen previously, Mohammed recalled the coach encouraging him to speak up and to not be scared. Eric mentioned that the coach would move him between different groups if he noticed that Eric had a hard time engaging. Eric said,

> We used to have groups. It used to happen a lot. Ones are talking and others are not talking, and he used to try me all the time. Because I cry, cry all the time and he used to be like 'go to this group' and I used to go and sit down while they're talking… (Eric)

He also remembered an episode when the coach wanted him to be the team captain for a game even though Eric did not want to play that role. That day the coach said to him, "you have to just come and go, shake the hand, say your name. Represent your team" (Eric). Eric also mentioned that these words of encouragement helped him feel more comfortable around his teammates.

Another strategy used in the SBP to foster life skills according to the interviewees was "showing and telling". According to Kiran, the SBP staff had presentations that taught them good behavior. However, he had a hard time remembering what exactly these presentations were about. Shelia, on the other hand, mentioned that these presentations were about healthy eating habits like making right choices when it comes to eating, calorie intake, and the importance of resting. These were the same lessons that the researcher witnessed when he worked with at the SBP.

Informal conversations between the coach and participants also contributed to learning life skills in their opinion. Aldrin, for instance, remembered several moments when the coach gave him advice about good habits. Kiran and Eric also pointed out that what they learned came

from dialoguing with the coach; “he [the coach] always used to tell us about how we’re like, lucky to be here… he used to tell us to appreciate everything we had” (Kiran) and “He [the coach] used to be like ‘it’s not good’. He used to tell us all the time” (Eric). Eric was referring to the coach’s response when a participant did something wrong. In this case, disciplining, as explained earlier, was also used as a strategy to foster certain life skills. Disciplining helped participants pay more attention to instructions, respect authorities according to interviewees.

Coach’s Influence in the Participants’ Lives

The coach was reported to have a strong influence in the participant’s lives. This was primarily the results of the relationships he was able to have with the participants and his cultural understanding that allowed him to establish rapport with them.

Coach-participant relationship. Participants reported having a good relationship with their coach. He was often defined by them as “funny”, a “buddy”, and “friendly”. For instance, Aldrin described their relationship with the coach in the following manner.

> It was funny. [The coach] was like, he liked me. I was so funny; I was so funny with him. He always, I always made [him] laugh a lot. We made him laugh a lot… to have this little close relation to the coach, you know what I mean. It was funny. I like it. (Aldrin)

Bishal went on the say, “we always talked about the school and the soccer *[sic]* and the games behind. Yeah. We always make fun of each other… We just mess around with the squad and that was the best” (Bishal). He also mentioned that his relationship was very close and that the coach expected big things from him like being a leader. Kiran defined the coach as very helpful and said that they were very close. His strongest memories of the coach included how the coach would give him rides to and from home on game days and the times when the coach took

participants for hamburgers at a famous fast food chain. To conclude this point, it is important to highlight the positive reactions showed by the interviewees when they were asked about the coach. All participants showed enthusiasm and warmth as they talked about the coach. Moreover, one of them even made comments such as “I love him” and “I miss him so much”.

Coach’s multicultural understanding. A set of questions focused on how much the participants perceived that the coach understood their cultures of origin and was empathetic with them being refugees. The coach was a White American male in his late twenties. These questions were included in the interview protocol based on the findings by Lepore (2015) in which he identified that cultural understanding helped program staff members establish a better rapport with participants. With that in mind, six meaning units were identified supporting the idea that participants perceived that the coach understood their cultures of origin. The interviewer then followed up these answers with questions that encouraged participants to explain how they came to this conclusion. Aldrin said that the coach knew his culture of origin after the told the coach about it; “Yeah. He know *[sic]* my culture. I told him about my culture. Christian, we speak Shona, English. Yeah. He knew my culture. He knew I was from Zimbabwe. He knew” (Aldrin). Others like Mohammed said that the reason why the coach knew about his culture of origin was “because [the coach] was already working at [the refugee center] for so long and then he knew many different cultures” (Mohammed). Some participants were able to recall specific moments when they noticed that the coach was aware of other cultures besides the American culture.

> He [the coach] always used to tell us about how we were like lucky to be here. People, a lot of people, are dying out there, you know? Like Syria and other stuff like that… and [the coach] understood that. He used to tell us… to appreciate everything we had. (Kiran)

When it comes to being empathetic with the fact that the coach was dealing with refugees, Bishal said, “I mean, he [the coach] knew that English wasn’t our first language” (Bishal) and Aldrin complemented it by saying, “they [SBP staff] taught us everything… at our level. They don’t tell us things that are out of our level. They taught us what we knew so far. And they knew” (Aldrin). The latter interviewee was referring to the staff understanding that the participants were gradually adjusting to the society of settlement. More importantly, Aldrin stated that the coach taught participants everything to help them understand him, and that the he perceived that the coach did not treat participants differently because they were foreigners. According to Aldrin, “he [the coach] treated us as regular human beings… he didn’t treat us as ‘oh they’re lower grade, down grade people from other overseas countries’… He respected us and we really appreciate that” (Aldrin).

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The primary purpose of this study was to explore the role of a soccer-based youth development program in the acculturation of refugee youth. This purpose was achieved using a hermeneutical phenomenological research design. Secondary purposes were also established in order to help the researcher better understand the phenomenon. These included identifying what program features and coaching factors influenced participants' acculturation, as well as investigating how and why participation in a soccer-based program for refugees may have affected their acculturation. With that in mind, the researcher approached this design through universalist (non-absolutist) lenses in which he assumed that people exhibit commonalities. Consequently, he aimed at elaborating a composite description that captured the essence of the soccer-based program participation experience. Lastly, this study's results were used to inform the field of social inclusion through sports with practical recommendations to help advance similar SBP and research. In sum, the approach used in this study enabled the researcher to gain more insight of the refugee youth experience in the SBP. The content of the interviews with the former SBP participants raised nuances that went beyond the researcher's prior knowledge about young refugees and the SBP. Even though the researcher had experience in these two areas, the hypotheses established for this study were based on the social inclusion through sports literature and similar areas. Therefore, based on previous research, it was expected that participation in the SBP for refugee youth would lead to positive outcomes like increased social inclusion (Oliff, 2007) and greater agency (McDonald et al., 2018).

Before discussing the results of this study relative to the specific purposes and hypotheses forwarded the overall findings of the study will be summarized in a section called "The essence

of participation in the SBP for refugee youth". This will be followed by a discussion of the hypothesized outcomes of the program. Findings relative to coaching factors involved in the SBP will also be discussed. Lastly, practical implications for other SBP for refugee youth, as well as study limitations and future directions will be presented.

The Essence of Participation in the SBP for Refugee Youth

To provide a holistic context for understanding and discussing the specific findings of this investigation this section labeled the essence of participation in the SBP for refugee youth in Mid-Michigan follows. It summarizes key findings as well provides an overall description of the programs effectiveness.

Young refugee men typically learn about the SBP through former participants, school teachers, and/or from the program's coach. Once a potential participant decides to join the SBP, he contacts the coach to see if spots in the program are available. If so, the refugee boy is welcomed in. If not, he has to wait until the next academic year. The main factor that attracted these refugee boys to join the SBP was the opportunity to play soccer in a team. Soccer is their favorite sport and they have played it in their countries of origin. The refugees are not fond of typical American sports because they are not good at them and/or do not have previous knowledge about such sports. Having no participation fees and receiving free food and free transportation to and from practices helped them remain in the program. Most participants arrive in the US with no knowledge of English which becomes a barrier in school and socially with those who do not speak the languages they know.

Participants must attend the SBP tutoring sessions if they want to be part of the team and play weekend games against other teams in the region. The tutoring sessions are extremely valuable for them because they can engage with other people who speak English (including

native English speakers) which help them improve their proficiency in the language. English proficiency directly affects their academic performances since they become able to comprehend their teachers. However, the refugees may still struggle with certain subjects. Math is usually not one of them because it does not require as much knowledge of the language. The boys can bring their homework to the tutoring sessions where they usually sit with two other peers and receive guidance from a college student volunteer.

The tutoring sessions are supervised by the local refugee center staff and the coach. These adults are able to establish a good rapport with the boys because they have experience working with the refugee population and have prior knowledge of the boys' cultures. The staff demonstrates their experience with refugees by teaching them things at their level of understanding. Refugees learn valuable skills that help them become better members of the society. These lessons include how to be respectful and how to make right choices in life, and are taught through presentations, informal conversations with the coaches and the staff, or by observation of others role-modeling the skill. Both the adults and other participants role-model key skills as well.

The participants' relationship with the coach goes through ups (e.g., funny conversations) and downs (e.g., punishment), but it is overall positive. Participants are usually punished in practice if they talk back to the coach or misbehave in any other way. Punishments usually include running laps or losing playing time according to the degree of the misbehavior. Loss of playing time is also used as a punitive measure if a participant misses any of the SBP's other activities such as the tutoring sessions. Participants understand that the SBP staff would do everything they can to help those participants who misbehave or miss activities stay involved instead of simply cutting them from the program when such behavior occur.

All eligible participants take part in a tournament where they face teams from the region. These teams are mostly composed of Caucasian American players. Even though they play members of the society of settlement, they do not interact much with them because of their limited English skills or because they would never see those players again. Some refugees hear their opponents making fun of them for being foreigners, but others do not know what the opponents say because they did not understand the language at the time. When such negative situations happen, the coach and some of the refugees' teammates tell each other to not care about what is being said. The refugees' performance in soccer was good in which led them to win that tournament with an 8-1-0 winning record. Participating in the SBP created an opportunity for the refugee youth to engage with each other every day. Many of them became good friends, some even became best friends, even though they came from different countries. The fact that they went through similar experiences help them feel connected. Most participants were acquainted with their American peers, who were most often African Americans, but they keep a certain distance from them because they behave differently than what they expect. Overall, participation in the SBP contributes to the young refugees' personal development, social inclusion among other refugees, academic performance, and language acquisition, but fails to integrate them with their American peers, but instead, participation contributed to their marginalization.

Hypothesized Program Outcomes

Health and Well-Being

It was hypothesized that participation in the SBP would have contributed to refugees' health and well-being. This hypothesis was based on Oliff's (2007) claim that sport for inclusion programs can help improve the health of refugees. It is important to mention that previous

research identified that young refugees usually present unhealthy states, especially when it comes to their mental health. Common negative effects of resettlement related to mental health can include post-traumatic stress disorder and depression (Hodes et al., 2008). Since this study was not aimed at directly assessing the participants' health conditions and did not involve the necessary means to diagnose such outcomes, the researcher could not make any inferences about the direct effect of participation in the refugees' health. However, the participants did not mention any negative health outcomes from resettlement which can be interpreted as a positive sign that they were healthy.

The evidence indicated that the program was able to promote health in three ways. First, health was promoted through the provision of an opportunity for participants to play a sport at least three times a week. This opportunity to be physically active in an every increasingly inactive society alone could have a positive effect in the participants' health compared to not being physically active at all. Second, health was promoted through deliberate lessons about healthy habits given by the SBP staff in the tutoring sessions. This was done using planned lessons, posters, and other teaching tools. For example, a poster showing how much sugar is in popular drinks was displayed. The last way health was promoted was through informal conversations between the coach and some of the players. This became evident when Aldrin mentioned having conversations about weight, fitness, and dieting with the coach. More importantly, Aldrin was able to transfer these lessons he learned from participating in the SBP to his life in high school. During his interview he told the researcher some strategies he followed to stay healthy and fit. His interest in this area seemed to have been sparked by his conversations with the coach. Since he was no longer in the program, Aldrin used other resources, such as online videos to learn more about healthy practices. In the end, the participants' comments

supported the idea that the program enhanced health and well-being – not only via participation but through off the field lessons and via conversation with the coach.

Social Inclusion

It was hypothesized that participation in the SBP would help young refugees feel included. Social inclusion was defined by Oliff (2007) as "making sure that all children and adults are able to participate as valued, respected, and contributing members of the society (p. 10)." Based on the participants' responses, it was concluded that the SBP helped them feel included among other refugees. Participants voiced happiness and gratitude for being part of the SBP, or as some said, part of the "family". As Rich et al., (2015) and Nathan et al., (2013) stated, participants of a SBP for refugees feel included because they become part of a social group. However, it is important to note that participation seemed to have not helped them integrate with their peers from the mainstream society. This was made clear when participants referred to the members of the mainstream society as "them" or "the Americans" whereas they often referred to other refugees as "us". The "us vs. them" terminology was consistently voiced throughout the interviews.

Larson (2000) said that structured activities like the SBP help youth develop their identity. Different than regular school classes where students of different identities are mixed together, extracurricular activities allow students to select groups that better resemble their identity and also play a unique role in shaping those identities. Eccles and Barber (1999) studied the most common types of youth subcultures in Western schools and found that individuals connect with specific extracurricular activities based on their self-beliefs. For instance, those students who identified themselves as "Jocks" were mostly found to take part in sports like basketball and football, whereas those who identified themselves as "Brain" were

overrepresented in math and science clubs and in the band. The "Jocks" were also associated with higher rates of drinking alcohol, among other negative and positive outcomes, than the average students. These findings can help clarify some of the reasons why the SBP participants felt more comfortable among themselves than among their American peers. First, the participants said that they did not like their American peers' life style which included drinking and smoking; and second, because they only mentioned engaging with their American counterparts during class periods. The SBP participants preferred to spend time with other refugees outside school. Since the SBP participants were not able to identify themselves with their American peers, they ended up developing a new subgroup – "Foreigners" – which allowed them to engage with other peers who shared similar *attainment values* such as thinking that being a foreigner is who they are and that soccer was the sport they were meant to play (Barber, Stone, Hunt, & Eccles, 2005).

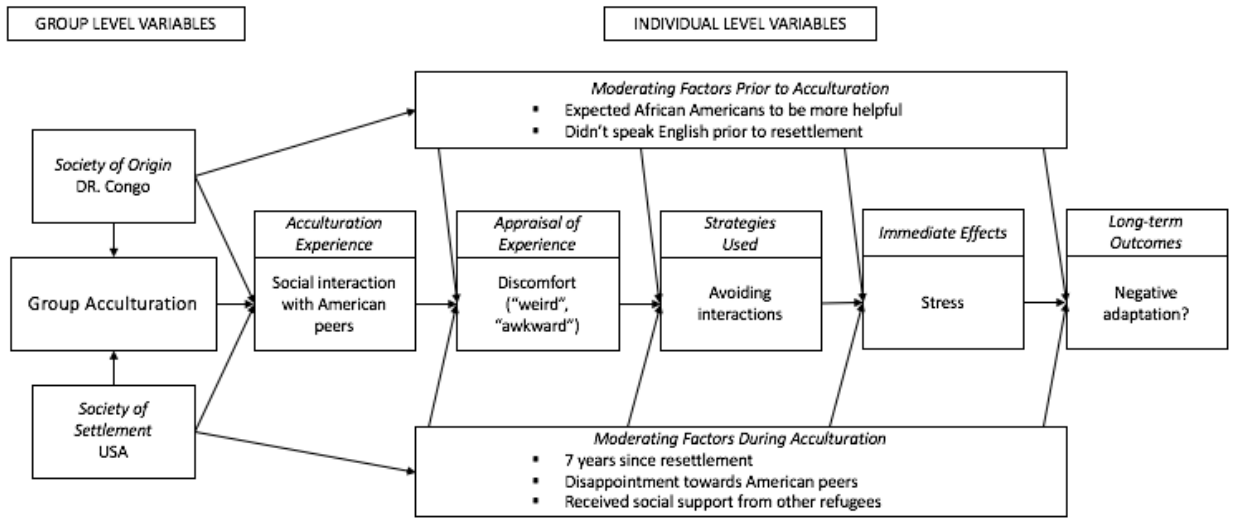
It is possible to know that the "Foreigners" subgroup was comprised of boys from different nationalities because the participants mentioned that they spent time with refugees from different countries of origin. Subgroups based on nationalities could have been formed if there were more members of the participants' countries of origin in the area. That was not the case for Nepalis. The Nepali refugees had a larger community in the area and that gave them a larger network of compatriots. The Nepali participants mentioned that they were usually connected to other Nepalis because their peers helped each other translate school work and community leaders helped their families settle in the area. Having multiple participants from the same nationality allowed them to often speak their native language in public which could have been detrimental for their English proficiency and integration with other non-Nepali participants. The coach noticed these risks and asked the Nepalis to only use English during the soccer practices. This measure encouraged them to practice English and allowed them to integrate with non-Nepali

speakers who could perhaps engage in conversations if they wanted. Even though the Nepalis had a larger ethnical community in the area compared to the other nations represented in this sample, the Nepali participants mentioned being close friends with other SBP participants from different countries of origin, as well as the non-Nepali SBP boys mentioned the names of their Nepali peers as their close friends.

The researcher contrasted Berry's (2007) framework for acculturation research to the data in order to understand the steps that may have led participants to cultural adaptation. It is important to disclose that this step was not intended to test his framework as that was beyond the scope of this study. With that in mind, the sequence of acculturation events experienced by the participants seemed to fit Berry's framework (see Figure 2). For instance, when it came to the inclusion of participants among their peers from the mainstream society, it was possible to notice that the *acculturation experiences* lived by the refugee youth included interactions with their American peers. Most of these interactions occurred in the school setting. The refugee youth's *appraisal of experience* seemed to have been negative as a consequence for not being able to understand and engage with their American counterparts as they did with other refugees. Evidence that corroborated with this inference included Kiran indicating he was not able to understand what his American peers were thinking and Milan not knowing how his American peers would react in certain situations. Some participants also went on to say that their interactions with their American counterparts were "weird" and "awkward". This reinforced the idea that their appraisal of these experiences seemed negative. In this case, evidence from the interviews suggested that the refugees seemed to have coped with these negative interactions by simply avoiding their American peers. This was made clear, for instance, when Kiran said that he had his own friends while his American peers had "their own business going on" (Kiran). In the

end, it can be said that refugees did not achieve the ideal adaptation strategy which was *integration*. They seemed to have chosen (deliberately or not) to adapt using the *marginalization* strategy instead. As mentioned on Chapter 2, *marginalization* is characterized by having little interest to pursue other cultures (Berry, 1997), in this case, their American peers' culture.

Figure 2. Eric's Pathway to Social Adaptation Through the Framework for Acculturation Research.



It is important to note that the terms "mainstream society", "mainstream culture", and "American peers" when used in this document mostly referred to African Americans as they were overrepresented in the schools where the SBP participants studied. The African American culture is not considered the mainstream culture in the US; instead, it is a marginalized subculture. However, based on the results of this study, the power dynamics were flipped where the norms and values shared among African Americans were considered as the mainstream culture in that area which made the "Foreigners" a marginalized subculture. The dominant African-American subculture of the school the boys attended was not one they felt comfortable pursuing membership in.

This is an important finding as subcultures are seen as the way of life and share values that allow certain social relationships to exist (Lieske, 1993). Cultural preferences are dependent on the learning process that occur in subcultures as a young person takes part in social relationships during their formative years that have important influences on them (Lieske, 1993). Cultures can be shaped by knowing who one is, how one should behave, and what is legitimate (Lieske, 1993). In this case, the SBP participants were already accultured in a different context and therefore did not assimilate or integrate to the culture in the society of settlement so easily.

Aldrin was the only participant who seemed to have integrated with his American peers. Evidence from his interview suggested that he was able to cope with the stressors of his acculturation experiences with the American youth (see Figure 3). Aldrin even went on to say that some of his close friends were Americans. The first evidence that may have contributed to his integration was the cultural distance between his country of origin and the US. Aldrin was the only participant who spoke English before resettling in the country. All the other seven participants had different accents than their American peers. The second evidence that may have contributed with his integration was the fact the Aldrin began to wear similar clothes as his American peers. Based on his interview, he seemed to have learned this coping strategy on his own. The third point of evidence was related to Aldrin also joining the track team which was popular among his American peers. Perhaps being part of activities that a refugee is mostly surrounded by members of the resettlement society can increase the chances that he would interact with and learn from them. This corroborated with Block and Gibbs' (2018) ideal program format where refugees are integrated to established clubs in the resettling community in order to interact with their members. All this evidence may lead the conclusion that Aldrin assimilated to the mainstream culture. However, one of his statements during the interview

denied this assumption as he mentioned that he was able to speak and dress like his American peers, but he refused to behave like them. Thus, he made it clear that his best friends were those from the SBP and that soccer was still his favorite sport to play which was not the case among his American friends. Therefore, evidence suggested that Aldrin coped with certain stressors from acculturating and reached adaptation. His strategy of acculturation appeared to be *integration* since he was able to adapt to the resettling culture while maintaining his own (Berry, 1997). Therefore, the evidence from the interviews corroborated to the hypothesis that a refugee-only SBP led to social inclusion among refugees but did not necessarily integrate them to the mainstream society.

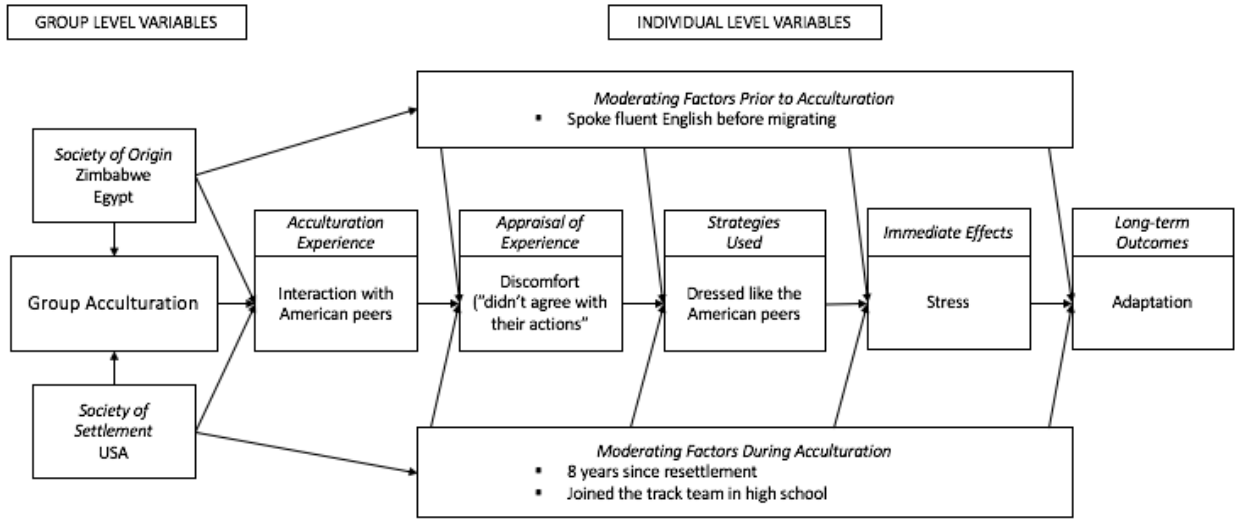
Aldrin was able to code-switch culturally from being with his foreigner peers to being with his American peers. The term "cross-cultural code-switching" is defined as "the act of purposefully modifying one's behavior, in a specific interaction in a foreign setting, to accommodate different cultural norms for appropriate behavior (Molinsky, 2007, p. 623). This term was borrowed from social linguistics where individuals are able to code switch between a first and a second language. Molinsky (2007) stated that individuals are only able to code-switch when their audience judges their behavior as appropriate and after individuals analyze whether their adopted behaviors are in conflict with their identity. These two points corroborated to the data presented about Aldrin as his ability to speak English fluently and to dress similarly to his American peers allowed them to judge his actions as appropriate. As for the second point, Aldrin was able to deliberately choose what adopted behaviors he was able to mimic without going against his personal identity. For example, he mentioned being able to dress like his American peers, but he did not want to behave like them.

Teaching cross-cultural code-switching is not an easy task. Mentors may know what is culturally accepted in a particular area, but they are not able to easily know the learners' personal identities. Code-switch educational efforts should also not be presented as forced assimilation like "you need to do this way in order to be accepted". If such approach is taken, it can go against the learners' principles and personal choices on whether to assimilate or not. A proposed solution to this paradox (the need to foster code-switching without forcing it) is to passively present acceptable behaviors in the culture of settlement in the form of discussions and role-play activities in order to make learners aware of the differences. After that, learners can decide on their own whether they want and are able to mimic such behaviors. Mentors should also understand that some learners may take longer to acquire new behaviors. The pace of adjustment will depend on multiple factors prior to acculturation (e.g., language proficiency, distance between both cultures) and after acculturation (e.g., area of settlement). Age at resettlement can also be a moderating variable in this case as younger refugees are often able to adjust more easily than older ones. For instance, Correa-Velez et al. (2017) found that the age of resettlement helped predict school completion and Lepore (2015) found that refugee parents did not learn the foreign language as fast as their children.

What sports refugee youth are encouraged to play also influences social inclusion. Aldrin's participation in the track team and the distance found between the refugee youth and their American peers raised an important dilemma for SBP in certain areas of the US: which sport(s) should SBP for refugees offer in the US? This question corroborated with Block and Gibbs (2018) and Hancock et al. (2018) recommendation that the ideal program format for the integration of refugees was settling them in well-established clubs in the region. However, the execution of this program model can be more difficult in the US than in other countries because

of the clubs' high fees (~$2.000/season) and limited public transportation. For instance, the nearest soccer club to where most participants lived was not in any bus route, the roads did not have bike lanes, and the temperatures in the region can go as low as -4° F (-20° C) in the winter. This same club has offered scholarships for refugees in the past, but because of the transportation issues, these refugees ended up missing most practices.

Figure 3. Aldrin's Pathway to Social Adaptation Through the Framework for Acculturation Research.



Overcoming the financial and transportation issues alone would probably not solve the lack of integration observed in this study. This was because the American teenagers who attended soccer practices at well-established clubs did not live in the same region where the refugees did and were not always part of the same subculture as the refugees' American classmates. The refugees lived and studied in a predominantly African American of the city where the most common sports were basketball and American football. According to the participants, their American peers were not interested in playing soccer. The researcher then asked if they made friends with the American teams they played against and most of them said

that they barely talked to the opponents and would only see them once during the season. The researcher also asked the participants' opinion about including American youth in the SBP. Most of them were not fond of the idea although several envisioned possible benefits from it; yet, all of them said that their American peers were not interested in the sport of soccer.

The alternative to participating in the SBP was joining their high school teams as Aldrin did; however, the refugees did not feel competent or interested enough in any sport other than soccer. All participants knew soccer and felt competent enough to play in the SBP team. Some of them even mentioned that playing soccer helped them recall good memories from their countries of origin and also helped them forget their problems. Based on the data, soccer was the hook that attracted young refugees to the program. Using sports as a hook is a common strategy used in the area of social inclusion and personal development. Walker, Hills, and Heere (2015) identified that sports or specific organizations can serve as a driving force that attracts people's interest, especially those of diverse and marginalized populations, towards education-based programs. Kiran, for instance, mentioned that he only joined the program because of soccer. He did not know about the other activities included in the SBP. Because of soccer, Kiran was also exposed to the skills taught in the tutoring sessions that helped him become a more productive member of the society (Walker et al., 2015).

In sum, it seemed that refugees did not want to play popular American sports and their American peers did not want to play soccer. If so, which sport(s) should SBP for refugees offer in the US? The answer for this question can be found in an article by Whitley and Gould (2010) who described a similar SBP for refugees that used sports, mostly soccer, to foster psychosocial development and cultural adjustment. Their program occasionally included activities using basketball and volleyball to fulfill one of the program's goals which was to introduce refugees to

new sports. Participants in their program were also familiar with soccer and often unfamiliar with other sports. Applying this alternative would allow refugees to try new sports in a safe environment where they may not feel intimidated by more advanced players. Also, this could help refugees learn rules and techniques which in the long-term could increase their perceived competence in a new sport and consequently spark their interest to play with their American peers. In the end, the SBP can incorporate other sports but soccer should be kept as the flagship of the program as it served as a hook to attract refugees to the SBP.

Agency

It was hypothesized that participation in the SBP would increase the participants' agency as suggested by McDonald et al., (2018). The authors concluded in their study that participation in soccer activities for refugees helped them exercise greater agency during soccer-related activities. This hypothesis was corroborated in this current study as the interviewees showed that participation in the SBP helped the youth participants develop certain life skills that may have contributed with their agency on and off the field. First, participants claimed to have learned to make better choices in life, especially when it came to their eating habits and physical conditioning. Second, participants learned how to offer help to those in need through role-modelling. Participants mentioned that they ensured to help newcomers to the program as much as they were helped when they joined it for the first time. Third, participants were encouraged to take on leadership roles within the team and in life. Lastly, participants also claimed to have been encouraged to approach life situations in a more mature way. These life skills combined support the hypothesis that participants were encouraged to exercise greater agency in the SBP activities and in life. Greater agency in this case was perhaps improved due to the development of functional skills. Bailey (2005) stated that social inclusion/exclusion is composed of four

dimensions like spatial, relational, power, and functional. The latter dimension being composed of knowledge, skills, and understanding.

Academic competence. Besides fostering functional skills that corroborated with the participants' agency on the field and in their lives, the program also helped them develop skills that may have contributed directly to their academic performance. First, participants were taught to be confident. Second, they were taught to focus on their work and on the instructions given by the coach or the teacher. Third, participants learned to be dedicated to what they do. Lastly, they were taught to better manage their time. These four life skills combined may have contributed to the participants' work ethic which could have allowed them to intake more information from classes and be more patient when doing their homework.

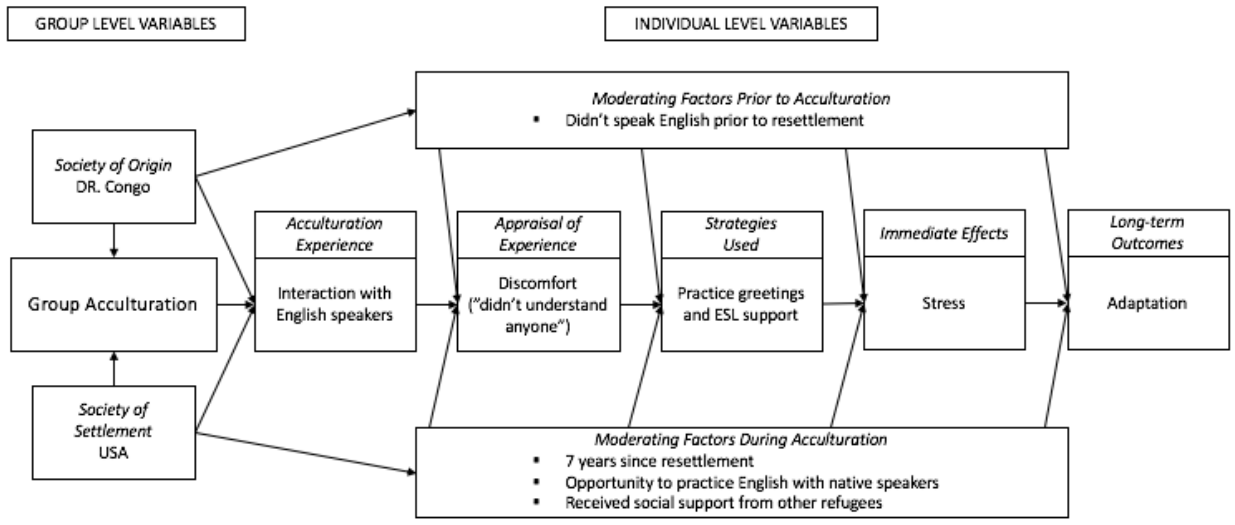
The academic tutoring sessions seemed to have exercised great influence in the participants' academic performance. Previous studies have stated that such afterschool programs were extremely needed to help refugees do their homework and keep up with the school content (Lepore, 2015; Isik-Ercan, 2012). The mentor-to-participant ratio of 1/3 in the SBP also matched what the literature considered to be ideal (Whitley & Gould, 2011). Mentors, or college student volunteers, had great influence in the participants' academic performance. This was observed when some participants mentioned how they began to better understand their school work after being mentored by certain volunteers in the program. With the help of the academic tutoring, the SBP was able to increase the number of teacher-contact hours as recommended in the literature (Bond et al., 2007). In the end, it is important to notice that all participants were still in school which can be a consequence of participating in the program. Yet, more data is needed from other participants and non-participants to confirm such conclusion.

Language and cultural competence. Other life skills fostered in the program may have contributed to the refugees' language and cultural competence. For instance, the participants mentioned that they learned how to respect others by displaying good manners and cordiality. Participants also learned how to greet others by saying "hi" and asking about the person's day. Such life skills contributed to Eric's language development as he mentioned that he begun to learn English by using simple greetings and then advancing to more complex sentences. Eric also mentioned learning not to interrupt others when they are speaking. In these cases, language learning was developed with certain pragmatics practiced in the society of settlement. Referring back to Bailey's (2005) dimensions of inclusion/exclusion, these life skills also helped the participants' functionality in the society of settlement and contributed to greater agency. Bandura (1971) wrote extensively about how individuals learn new patterns of behavior through direct experience. Individuals learn using the most rudimentary form of learning which is by rewarding and punishment (Bandura, 1971). In this case, individuals are repeatedly confronted by situations where they must respond in one way or another. Some responses are successful whereas some are not. Such trial-and-error strategy allowed participants to learn basic cultural competence in the US like Eric's example aforementioned. Eric would then register the behaviors that led to positive outcomes (e.g., waiting for his turn to talk) and discard those behaviors that were unsuccessful (e.g., interrupting someone).

Bandura (1971) also stated that relying on the trial-and-error strategy alone can be laborious and hazardous for an individual. Perhaps insisting in behaviors perceived as negative by the members of the mainstream society could result in marginalization. Therefore, individuals can and should also learn through modelling. With that being said, another feature in the SBP that contributed to the participants' language and cultural development was the interaction with

some members of the society of settlement. All program activities included American adults who constantly interacted with the refugee youth. It was interesting to notice that the refugees' opinion about American adults were substantially different than what they said about their American peers. Since the adults were usually there to help, participants had a much more positive perspective on them. Learning by observing the adults in the program was only possible because participants perceived the SBP staff, in the words of Aldrin, as "good people". According to Bandura (1971), observers only seek out individuals who possess positive qualities whereas they tend to ignore those who do not. Thus, the amount of interactions between refugees and members of the society of settlement was also deemed important. Bond and colleagues (2007) identified that refugees who did not have many opportunities to interact with other English speakers had poor basic vocational proficiency in the language.

Figure 4. Eric's Pathway to Language Aquisition Through the Framework for Acculturation Research.



Eric's language development was an interesting example of how the language acquisition process happens among refugees who do not speak English prior to migration. As it can be seen

in Figure 4, Eric's acculturation experiences included trying to interact with those who did not speak his language. He mentioned in his interview that sitting through classes was difficult for him because he did not understand what the teachers were saying. Eric then appraised this experience with discomfort because he wanted to understand others and be understood but he simply could not. The strategies he used included practicing greetings and other simple phrases in English until he felt comfortable to advance to more complex ones. Another strategy used by Eric was participating in the SBP tutoring where he was able to learn from and practiced English with other English speakers. The participant mentioned that it took a while for him to achieve fluency. Factors such as the opportunity to speak in English with others and the time that it took him to learn the language fit Berry's *moderating factors during acculturation* that may determine whether an individual will adapt or not. In Eric's case, he claimed to have adapted to the English language when he said that he was then able to "get through" using his language skills.

When comparing Figure 2 to Figure 4, it was possible to see that Eric may not have reached adaptation in all aspects that affected his acculturation to the US since Figure 2 showed that Eric was still having difficulty interacting with his American peers. It can be safe to say that the strategies he was using were leading to *marginalization* instead of *integration*. With that in mind, it could be possible that Eric did not achieve the long-term outcome of adaptation where he would be able to interact with members of the society of settlement. On the other hand, Eric perceived that he mastered enough English skills that allowed him to function in this society. Looking at Figure 4, it was safe to say that he reached adaptation. Figure 2 and Figure 4 showed how one individual can reach adaptation in one area and may not do so in another area. This corroborated to the critiques of Berry's acculturation theory when the authors defended the idea that acculturation may happen through multiple processes and at different paces (Schwartz et al.,

2010). The authors defended the idea that one person can be acculturated in specific areas but that may not affect other areas. With that in mind, it seemed that Berry's framework for acculturation research was helpful in this project as it supported the researcher's universalist understanding of acculturation. However, it was necessary to take into consideration the critiques made to Berry's framework. What was presented in this study incorporated both sides of the discussion by accepting that each person goes through multiple acculturation processes, each process may take a different length of time depending on the moderating factors, and "short-term" or "temporary" adaptations may occur during this process that can be later modified or solidified based on future events. However, the data corroborated with the universalist idea that refugees go through similar steps of acculturation even though they manifested differently in some cases.

Coaching Factors in the Acculturation of Refugees

Participation in the SBP seemed to have contributed to the acculturation of refugees in the US. Much of the benefits from participation could be attributed to the coach and the SBP staff who were directly responsible to foster all life skills according to the participants. This study hypothesized based on Jeanes and Colleagues (2015) that participation alone would foster such skills. The authors claimed that educational programs do not have well-trained educators who are able to work with the refugee population. This was not the case for the SBP as participants perceived that the coach and the SBP staff had experience working with refugees. This could be due to the SBP being organized by the local refugee center and managed by their employees and volunteers. Having experienced adults running the program appeared to have allowed them to understand the refugees' needs and cultures of origin. Such data corroborated to Lepore's (2015) suggestion that having a staff with a high cultural understanding may increase

rapport between them and the refugees, and lead to an easier adaptation process. The SBP staff cultural understanding became evident in the refugees' responses like when Bishal mentioned that they were taught according to their understanding.

The coach seemed to have a major effect on the participants as many of them said they loved the coach and had a friend-like relationship with him. Many, if not most, life skills mentioned in the interviews were learned through informal conversations between the coach and the participants. However, not many of these life skills appeared to have been explicitly fostered during soccer practices and games. Most of them were introduced in the tutoring sessions. Based on the participants' responses, the life skills learned during soccer practices were taught reactively after a bad event happened. For example, the coach would talk to the players about respect after these players behaved disrespectfully in practice. This suggested that these lessons may not have been deliberately planned by the coach. It is suggested that coaches should structure their sessions with the such skills in mind in order to help facilitate learning (Harwood, 2008) and deliberately help players to transfer those skills into other settings (Gould & Westfall, 2014). Perhaps, if the life skills were proactively planned and taught instead of reactively, the participants would have mentioned that they learned more life skills in the soccer practices. Applying this context to the strategy for transfer suggested by Gould and Carson (2008), the coach could have included explicit demonstrations of how the life skills learned in soccer could have helped them acculturate to the US.

Practical Recommendations for Other SBP for Refugees

Based on the findings from this study, and with the insight gained from previous studies, it is also important to inform the field of social inclusion through sports with practical

recommendations to help advance sport-based programs for refugees. Following the practical recommendations, a series of limitations and future research recommendations were listed.

1. Programs should include other sports but keep soccer as its flagship. This is crucial in most regions of the US and in other countries/areas where soccer is not as popular among the mainstream society.
2. Programs should consider recruiting a few members of the mainstream society to join their activities. This may contribute to the mutual exchange of knowledge about languages and cultures.
3. Programs should include tutoring sessions in order to help participants develop academic and vocational skills, as well as maximize their contact with mentors.
4. Programs should be supervised by mentors who have experience working with refugees as they can establish rapport with them and are capable of personalizing lessons according to the refugees' needs.
5. Coaches should deliberately plan life skill lessons and life skill transfer examples, and explicitly help refugees identify their importance in their acculturation process. Interventions should be proactive, for the most part, instead of solely reactive.
6. Coaches should establish good relationships with the refugees and role model the life skills they plan to foster among them.
7. Coaches should contact their opponents' coaches to organize simple social events after tournament games where players from both teams can mingle with each other. This can maximize the interaction time between refugees and members of the mainstream society and consequently contribute to mutual cultural understanding and language development.

Limitations and Future Research

A limitation of this study was the location where the interviews took place. As described in the methods section, the interviews were conducted in a public library located near where most participants lived. This provide a safe location for the youth to meet with the investigator. At the same time, it was a limitation because it is possible that participants may have been hesitant at times to talk about their impressions of the local culture and people while being surrounded by members of the society of settlement. While efforts were made to sit as far away from others as possible in the library, it was unfortunate that the library did not have a private room where the participants could guarantee that would not be heard by anyone else other than the investigator. The investigator also noticed that participants looked around the library more often when they were asked questions about their relationship with the members of the mainstream society. Thus, some seemed somewhat hesitant when talking about such topics. Therefore, it is recommended that similar interviews should be conducted in places where members of the society of settlement are not present, so participants are not worried about offending others with their opinion nor say what they do not believe in order to avoid repercussion.

While holding the interview in a public space might have been a limitation, a strength to the study was that the interviewer had met the participants on different occasions, and they all knew that he was also a foreigner in the US. This helped the investigator establish rapport. An interviewer from mainstream society might have not been able to establish the boy's trust.

Another limitation of this study was the participants' ability to express themselves in the English language. This was an expected limitation based on the scope of the study. It would be ideal to include investigators who spoke their native language or translators who could help the

investigator during the interviews. This was not financially feasible in the present study. In addition, having a translator might also present limitations like lack of rapport between the translator and the participants if they do not know each other (Nathan et al., 2013). Details could be lost in translation.

Future research should consider real-time longitudinal studies that follow the refugee youth from when they join the program to when graduate from it, and if possible, until when they reach adult life. The retrospective nature of the present study could be associated with memory loss and recall bias. However, it might have allowed the participants to experience post-program life and then reflect on their experiences might have influenced that.

Because no control or comparison group of refugee youth were interviewed in this study, it was not possible to learn if refugee youth who did not take part in such programs integrate well with members of the mainstream society and/or with other refugees. In this case, the investigator should recruit refugees with similar characteristics (e.g., countries of origin, age, cultural distance to the mainstream society) who were resettled in the same area but did not take part in a SBP program.

The age of settlement could also have been a limitation in this study as some of the participants migrated to the US when they were 9-years-old and others when they were 13. Perhaps, the participants who migrated earlier in life were more susceptible to the culture in the country of settlement than the ones who did so later. If it is true that the age of settlement can predict school completion (Correa-Velez et al., 2017). It can also be possible that the age of settlement may also predict how well a young refugee can integrate to the mainstream society. Therefore, future studies should control for the age of settlement in order to ensure all participants present a more similar baseline for analysis.

Lastly, assessing the experiences of young refugee girls in sport-based programs for cultural adjustment should also be investigated. Given cultural stereotypes about sport participation it would interesting to see if their experiences are similar.

Conclusion

Evidence suggests that sports are able to attract youngsters to sport-based programs and are used to foster skills that can contribute with their personal development (Walker et al., 2015). The same is said about the ability of programs to use sports in order to help refugees acculturate to their societies of resettlement (Oliff, 2007). However, few studies investigated the personal experiences of refugees who participated in such programs. This research study found that the SBP where the interviewees participated fostered functional skills that contributed to the participants overall adjustment in the US. The former participants mentioned having learned skills like "time management", "respect", and "making right choices" which positively affected their health, well-being, agency, and language and cultural understanding. These skills were mostly taught through the observation of the SBP staff and coach who role modelled them. The tutoring sessions were extremely important for the refugees' acculturation because it helped them develop their English and academic skills. Participating in the SBP allowed refugees to integrate with other refugees from different countries of origin but who experienced similar life events prior and during acculturation. Their groups of friends were diverse and helped them feel socially included (McDonald et al., 2018), but that did not mean that they appeared to be integrated among their American peers. Instead, it appeared that most of them felt marginalized in relation to their American counterparts. The pathways to acculturation learned in this study fit Berry's (2007) framework for acculturation research but relativist critiques to his framework were taken into consideration as refugees can be adapted in some areas of their life but not

necessarily in others (Schwartz et al., 2010). Thus, future events may affect the areas they seemed to be already adapted. Overall, the former participants enjoyed being part of the program and were grateful for the opportunity and for what the SBP staff and coach did for them.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A.

Research Participant Parental Permission Form

You are being asked to participate in a research study ("you" in this form means "you and/or your child"). Researchers are required to provide a consent form to inform you about the research study, to convey that your participation is voluntary, to explain risks and benefits of participation, and to empower you to make an informed decision. You should feel free to ask the researchers any questions you may have.

Study title: "The role of a soccer-based program in the acculturation of refugee youth: a retrospective examination."

1. PURPOSE OF RESEARCH

The purpose of this study is to explore your experiences when participating in a soccer-based program for cultural adjustments. You have been selected as a possible participant in this study because you participated at the "Newcomers Soccer program". From this study, the researchers hope to identify strategies that are effective to support the cultural adjustment of refugees into the United States using soccer as a platform.

2. WHAT YOU WILL DO

If you agree to be in this study, your participation will involve one interview. The interview may take approximately 50 minutes, will be done in-person and will include questions about your overall participation in the soccer-based program. A member of the research team will collect from the interview and only those on the research team will have access to them.

3. POTENTIAL BENEFITS

You may not benefit from being in this study. However, we hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study because other soccer-based programs will be able to conduct effective activities to support the cultural adjustment of other refugees.

4. POTENTIAL RISKS

There are no foreseeable risks from participating in this study.

5. PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Information about you will be kept confidential to the maximum extent allowable by law. The only people able to access the database will be the researchers involved in the study and the Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) at Michigan State University. Researchers will keep any database files on a password protected computer to ensure confidentiality. The results of this study may be published or presented at professional meetings, but the identities of all participants will remain anonymous. Data will be kept for at least three years after the project closes.

6. YOUR RIGHTS TO PARTICIPATE, SAY NO, OR WITHDRAW

You have the right to say no to participate in the research. You can stop at any time after it has started. There will be no consequences if you stop and you will not be criticized. You will not lose any benefits that you normally receive.

7. COSTS AND COMPENSATION FOR BEING IN THE STUDY

There is no cost to participate. You will receive a $30 gift-card as form of compensation for participating in this study.

8. CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have any concerns or questions about this study, such as scientific issues, how to do any part of it, or to report an injury, please contact the researcher Daniel Gould (308 W. Circle Dr., East Lansing, MI 48824, drgould@msu.edu, 517-353-4730).

If you have any questions or concerns about your role and rights as a research participant, would like to obtain information or offer input, or would like to register a complaint about this study, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Michigan State University's Human Research Protections Program at 517-355-2180, Fax 517-432-4503, or email irb@msu.edu or regular mail at 4000 Collins Rd, Suite 136, Lansing, MI 48910.

9. DOCUMENTATION OF INFORMED CONSENT

Your signature below means that you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

_____	_____
Parent signature	Date
_____	_____

Minor signature Date

You will be given a copy of this form to keep.

10. AUDIOTAPING*

You agree to allow audiotaping of the interview.

☐ Yes ☐ No Initials_____

*Audio files will be stored on a password protected computer and erased three years after the project closes.

APPENDIX B.

Information Letter

Hi *Name* - How are you?

Name, my academic advisor Dr. Daniel Gould (drgould@msu.edu) and I are conducting a research study with the purpose to explore your experiences when participating in the Newcomers soccer program. With this study we hope to identify what activities were effective to support your cultural adjustment into the United States.

The reason why we chose you is because you, as a refugee participated in the Newcomers Soccer Team for more than 2 academic years and haven't been away from it for more than 2 years. Let me know if any part of this information doesn't apply to you.

You may not benefit from being in this study and there are no foreseeable risks from participating in it either. Information about you will be kept confidential to the maximum extent allowable by law. As a consequence of your participation, other people might benefit from this study because other soccer-based programs will be able to conduct more effective activities to support other refugees.

There is no cost to participate and you will receive a $30 gift-card as form of compensation for participating in this study.

The interview should take around 50 minutes and will take place at Lansing's public library located downtown (401 S. Capitol Ave. Lansing, MI).

You can contact me here or by phone (517-488-1719) if you have further questions. You have the right to say no to participate in this study. So, no worries if you don't want to or can't participate ☺.

Thanks a lot!

Lucas.

APPENDIX C.

Former Program Participant Interview Guide

Demographic Questions

- What is the name of our home country?
- Was the US your first destination after you left your home country for good?
    i. If not, where else did you go before the US?
    ii. How long did you stay on each place?
- How old were you when you arrived in the US?
- Who came to the US with you?

Resettlement Questions

- Could you tell me about some of the things that surprised you about living in the US? **(Grand tour)**
    a. Why did it surprise you?
    b. Do you feel like you are used to it now? If so, how did you cope with it?
        i. If not, why do you think you're not used to it?
    c. Did anything or anybody help you in this process? If so, what/who?
    d. How did it/they help you?
        i. If not, why do you think you haven't coped with it yet?

English Proficiency

- Did you speak English before moving to the US? If so, how fluent were you?
    a. How did you learn English?
        i. If not, how long did it take you to learn?
        ii. How did you get by in school when you were learning English?
        iii. Do you feel like you know enough English now get by in school?

Academic Development

- Did you start going to school right after you arrived in the US?
    a. What grade were you placed?
- How was your academic performance during your first year in the US?
    a. How's your academic performance now?
    b. If good. Why do you think you improved?
        i. If bad. Why do you think you didn't improve?
        ii. What do you think was needed for you to improve?

Social Life

- Did you know anybody here [US] before you arrived?
    a. Who were the first friends you made?
    b. How did you meet them?
    c. Who are your close friends now?
    d. Where did you meet them?

e. Do you have any American friends?
f. If so, where did you meet them?
g. How close are you to them?
h. Did you get teased or bullied because you came from a different country?

SBP Participation Questions

- Could you tell me how you got involved in the SBP program?
  a. Was that a good thing?
- Could you tell me about what you did in the SBP you participated? **(Grand tour)**
  a. Did you learn anything from it? If so, what?
  b. How did you learn it?
  c. Did this lesson help you outside the program? If so, why?
  d. How was this helpful?
  e. Was there anything negative you experienced in the SBP? If so, which?
- Did you learn anything in this program that helped you live a better life or get better adjusted in the US?
  a. What was it?
  b. Why was it helpful?
  c. How did the program help you?
- Could you tell me what you remember about the coach?
  a. How was your relationship with coach?
  b. How was the coach's relationship with the others?
  c. Do you think the coach understood anything about your culture? If so how?
  d. Do you think the coach understood what it meant to be a refugee in the US? If so how?
  e. Do you think the coach helped you get adjusted to living in the US? If so, how?
     i. If not, why?
     ii. What about helping another participant?
     iii. What could have the coach done to help you or another participant to get adjusted to living in the US?
  f. What about the staff members/volunteers? What do you remember about them?

Wrap-Up

- Thank you for your participation. I am interested in understanding if participation in the SBP can help refugee youth like yourself become involved in US society. It may or may not help? What do you think?
- Is there anything that we didn't discuss about the SBP that you would like to mention?
- Feel free to contact me if you have any additional thoughts. Could I contact you again in case I have follow-up questions?

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