

# The Acculturation of Youth Refugees through Community Sport

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## Project Relevance

Canada resettled the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest numbers of refugees worldwide in 2018 (UNHRC, 2019)

42% of resettled refugees were under the age of 18 (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2018)

From 2016 – 2018 there was an annual increase of 32 038 individuals who crossed Canada's border seeking asylum (IRB, 2019)

26% of asylum seekers were youth under the age of 14 (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2018)

Sport can provide a context for newcomers to learn:

- Cultural jargon and slang
- How to handle conflict
- Acceptable cultural behaviours and gestures

**95% of newcomers felt sport was an important part of Canadian culture** (ICC, 2014)

## Project Aims

- 1) Gain a rich understanding of the acculturation experiences of youth community sport participants who are refugee newcomers to Canada and settled in Northeast Ontario
- 2) Acquire a focused understanding of the opportunities offered by, and challenges encountered in, community youth sport by refugee youth from various countries
- 3) Develop practical interventions and build a community of practice for youth, coaches, administrators, and sporting agencies.

## Methodology

### Interpretivist Paradigm

- Underpinned by ontological relativism and epistemological social constructionism (Papathomas, 2016; Smith, 2016)

### Community Based Participatory Action Research

- Prioritization of local knowledge (Elden & Levin, 1991)
- Identification of local community issues and interests (Israel, Schulz, Parker, & Becker, 1998)
- Development of practical solutions (Schinke, Smith, & McGannon, 2013)
- Conducted in tandem with community (Kral, 2014)

### Narrative Inquiry

- Stories are co-constructed between participants and researchers

## Current Progress

- Arts-based conversational interviews (ranging from 15:34 to 82:18, average length: 38 minutes) were conducted with 33 forced immigrant youth
- Following the arts-based interviews, an inductive thematic analysis was performed, whereby transcripts were read multiple times, coded interpretively in the page margins, developed into initial themes, refined into 2<sup>nd</sup> order themes, and pieced together to form a coherent thematic structure (Braun & Clarke, 2014)
- Two 1<sup>st</sup> order themes and five 2<sup>nd</sup> order themes were created and are currently being constructed into composite moving stories to provide contextualized accounts of participants stories

## Preliminary Results from Phase 1:

### The Unique Journey Faced by Forced Immigrants

*Home Country Enculturation:* Forced immigrant youth felt it was important to speak about their special connection to their home country; despite having to flee it would always be viewed in a special light. Socialization in their home country was often family oriented, informal, and youth-led. Gender roles were culturally defined by adults.

*Journey to Canada:* Canada is the second (or third) country of refuge for many youth. The asylum seeking and/or resettlement process were times of tension for youth and their families due to the uncertainty of being accepted.

*Immersion into Their Host Community:* During their first year in their host community, sponsor and/or community groups play a vital role in facilitating or limiting sport and physical activity opportunities. Those who do become involved in sport in their host community see it as largely beneficial.

### Developing a Sense of Belonging through Sport

*Learning of Cultural Aspects of and through Sport:* Local geography/context and the structured nature of sport are factors that youth may have to adapt to to engage in sport and physical activity. Coaches/leaders in the sport context are key to fostering or hindering inclusion.

*Developing of Shared Goals and Interests:* Positive experiences, shared goals, social media, youth interaction, and skill level are all factors that may influence integration for forced immigrant youth.

## Possible Takeaways:

### The Unique Journey Faced by Forced Immigrants

- 1) Allow youth to open up about their journey in their own time and be cognizant of the questions you ask them about how they came to Canada.
- 2) Sport can be helpful for immersion into local communities; however, be open to different forced immigrant stories and suggestions. Some may transition smoothly while others may not and sponsor/community groups may facilitate or impede this transition.

### Developing a Sense of Belonging through Sport

- 1) Understand that shared sport goals can help forced immigrant youth learn cultural norms and facilitate group integration
- 2) Encourage youth community interaction to aid forced immigrants in community acculturation

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