

**Understanding the acculturation experiences of immigrant athletes within the  
Canadian sport system**

by

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## **Abstract**

Societies are in constant evolution and have become more culturally and ethnically diverse. One of the contributors to this diversity is the movement of people between/within countries. Although the reason for relocating to an unfamiliar country or context varies for these individuals relocating (Berry, 1997; Berry, Poortinga, Segal, & Dasen, 2002), they all face the task of navigating between their home culture and a new culture (i.e., that of the receiving community). Acculturation refers to a process of psychological and socio-cultural change and adjustment to unfamiliar cultural practices, such as in eating patterns, dress, and language, which an immigrant undergoes to align with the dominant societal group (Schinke, McGannon, Battocchio, & Wells, 2013). The acculturation process of immigrants has been considered from various disciplines (e.g., psychology, sociology, and sport psychology) and various theoretical approaches (e.g., positivist, interpretivist, and social constructionist) have been used to examine this concept. Within this dissertation, acculturation was examined through a critical socio-cultural and interdisciplinary position to better excavate into the stories of sport participants in multicultural societies. This project was designed to advance acculturation research area by examining the stories told by immigrant athletes about their acculturation challenges within their sport and non-sport contexts from a critical epistemological position (Chirkov, 2009a; Schinke & McGannon, 2014), the impact of such challenges, and multi-level strategies they utilized to overcome such challenges. Data was collected using the following four methods: (a) arts-based approaches focused on representation of the athletes' daily routine, (b) conversational interviews, (c) guided journey, and (d) field-notes. Moving stories were the culmination of the four data sources and were used to

tease out and bring to light the athletes' stories and voices, allowing readers to vicariously learn from their acculturation journeys. The data analysis was done using an interpretive thematic analysis (ITA), followed by the development of composite moving stories. Two overarching themes were driven by my engagement with the data and methods; (a) role of family (sub-themes; family support, athlete-family settlement conflicts, times and mutual understanding) (b) role of community-sport community (sub-themes; immersion through communication and creating relationships, exchange of goals and values, skill level, openness creates ease of communication, preserving home, and culture and accepting the new). The moving stories within theme one allows for the highlighting of the complicated web of relationships (i.e., struggles between competing cultural narratives of expectations) and the role that each member of the family played in helping the athletes achieve success. The stories within the second overarching theme allow for the highlighting of vacillations (i.e., integrating within the receiving community while preserving cultural practices of home culture) as the immigrant athletes engaged in and experienced the receiving community. The findings contributed towards the acculturation scholarship in sport psychology by providing highly contextualized insights into how athletes navigated their transition between cultures as they progressed through their day. The use of moving stories as a form of representation extended this research area by offering the reader an opportunity to think along with the athletes and learn through an embodied response to the complex relocation stories encountered by elite immigrant athletes.

*Keywords: cultural transitions, cultural sport psychology, newcomers, adaptation.*

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## Chapter 1

### 1.1 Introduction

Many western societies are becoming multicultural; whereby cultural diversity is valued, supported and enhanced in order to collectively build a successful society. Multiculturalism is an ideology that ensures all citizens can keep their identities, take pride in their ancestry and have a sense of belonging in their new culture or society (Donnelly & Coakley, 2002; Government of Canada, 2012). The goal of such multicultural ideologies relates to building inclusive and welcoming communities where every person feels valued and has a sense of belonging. An important contributor to cultural diversity is immigration/migration. Immigration/migration has become a prominent and permanent feature of many western countries and this trend is presumed to continue to rise in the future (Global Institute, 2016; Statistics Canada, 2017; UN DESA, 2016; U.S Census Bureau, 2010; PEW, 2013). For example, Canada has a foreign-born population of about 6.7 million people, which represents 20.6% of the total population, the highest proportion among the G8 countries (Statistics Canada, 2016; Statistics Canada, 2017). From these figures, we might discern that Canada is a multicultural society with high levels of ethno-cultural diversity. This diversity reflects how Canadians view themselves as a nation and the characteristics of the political community to which they belong (Falge, Ruzza, & Schmidtke, 2012; Papillon, 2002). Canada's population is culturally diverse and comprises of immigrants from almost every part of the world, creating the cultural mosaic that is Canada (Statistics Canada, 2017; Vollman, Anderson, & McFarlane, 2012).

The terms immigration, migration, and emigration are sometimes used interchangeably and contested, and have been influential in describing the movement of people between countries/boarders with the intentions of settling permanently or temporarily in an unfamiliar location to them (Papillon, 2002; Pujolar. 2009). These terms generally refer to a change in residence to an unfamiliar location place seen as “away” from home. Within the literature, migration is the term used to describe the waves of movement of people between countries. Migration refers to both people leaving as well as arriving in another or an unfamiliar country. Emigration is the act of leaving one’s homeland/country to resettle in another country indefinitely, while, immigration refers to the act of coming to and settling in an unfamiliar country on a permanent basis (Papillon, 2002; Pujolar. 2009; Statistics Canada, 2017). The individuals relocating are referred to as immigrants, migrants and emigrants. Within this dissertation, we focused specifically on immigrant athletes based on their intended length of stay and considering these athletes’ plans on resettling long-term. The current dissertation focused on immigrant athletes because they intensely experience the phenomena of relocation and intend on staying permanently. Although, the athletes included within this study did not necessarily relocate for sport purposes, they pursued sport in a more opportune society in their eyes. Research on this topic reveals that immigration/migration is influenced by a combination of economic and social factors either at the individual’s origin country or in the country of destination (see Bansal, Taylor, & St. James, 2005; Statistics Canada, 2012). While, others relocating have been forced from their home countries due to political turmoil, persecution, or war, and have left their countries to relocate or seek asylum elsewhere.

A few researchers have divided the many reasons people leave their countries for an unfamiliar one into push and pull factors (see Bochner, 2006; Sam & Berry, 2006; Van Oudenhoven, 2006). Push factors encourage people/individuals to leave their country of origin and settle elsewhere, while pull factors attract individuals/people to unfamiliar areas (UN DESA, 2016). For example, unemployment, famine, persecution, and war are push factors, while employment, peace, democracy, and freedom are effective pull factors. Essentially, push and pull factors work together to make societies more diverse and multicultural. The term “multicultural” is used to define a society that is particularly diverse as a result of immigration/migration. Those with multicultural viewpoints recognizes the need to achieve better integration for immigrants or migrants into our society, thereby ensuring social equality, which is the essential feature of multiculturalism (Dewing & Leman, 2006; Donnelly & Coakley, 2002). Viewing the cultural and ethnic diversity of immigrants and migrants as a societal feature worthy of preservation and protection is an integral aspect of multiculturalism (Falge et al., 2012; Papillon, 2002). Under the current multiculturalism viewpoints, societies are increasingly recognizing the importance of effectively integrating newcomers, or immigrants. The term multiculturalism is often applied to distinct cultures of immigrant groups in developed countries (i.e., Canada, Australia, most of the European Union states), highlighting the best way to seek harmony and peaceful coexistence among diverse populations and cultural groups. Multiculturalism assists in the integration of immigrants and newcomers by removing barriers to encourage their participation in society and allowing them to feel more welcomed in their new society, leading to a stronger sense of belonging and pride in their adopted country (Clyne & Jupp, 2011; Mashuri, Burhan, & Van Leeuwen, 2013).

For newcomers, integration into a new society could occur in different form such as labor market, political or civic, social, sport, and membership in more formal organizations (Hyman, Meinhard, & Shields, 2011; Papillon, 2002). Therefore, multiculturalism policies and ideologies are useful for integrating immigrants into a new society or environment.

While immigration and migration are driven by many complex factors, integrating these individuals relocating into their new host society would involve transitioning these newcomers into full citizens with equal opportunities and accepted as part of the society. Some scholars have argued that the integration of immigrants is becoming an increasingly contentious issue in most developed countries because the movement of individuals/people across and within borders shows no sign of slowing down (e.g., Donnelly & Coakley, 2002; Papillon, 2002; Thompson, 2014). The rapid increase in the number of immigrants may have negative effects on the receiving community such as crime, discrimination and social unrest in the receiving society. Though, multicultural ideologies do encourage immigrants to preserve their cultural practices, at the same time these immigrants often have to adjust their lifestyle to fit into the existing societal structure (Dewing & Leman, 2006; Donnelly & Coakley, 2002; Joseph, Darnell, & Nakamura, 2012). Some academicians have argued that multiculturalism's emphasis on "cultural differences" or "group distinctions" undermines social cohesion and can ultimately lead to a clash of cultures within a multicultural society (Donnelly & Coakley, 2002; Stodolska & Alexandris, 2004). For example, although multiculturalism perspectives do permit immigrants to retain their own cultural traits and practices, some immigrants might choose to live in "isolation" or as a separate community by not making

any attempts to merge or integrate with the mainstream or dominant culture (Papillon, 2002; Toppelberg & Collins, 2010). As such, the claims made by multicultural ideologies/policies and the reality of ethnic enclaves in most western cities contributes to a fragmentation of multicultural approaches and makes social cohesion/integration difficult, if not impossible (Donnelly & Coakley, 2002; Joseph et al., 2012). Some scholars have argued that through multiculturalism, certain social groups are kept in a dependent position through the accentuation of differences, thus entrenching their second-class status and reducing the challenge they pose to the dominant group (Bannerji, 2000; Henry & Tator, 2006; Hyman et al., 2011). Consequently, it is important for us to understand the complexities surrounding immigration/migration if we want to develop successful policies and programs for newcomers during their acculturation journey. This understanding could help break down barriers or dispel negative sentiments about new immigrants, which could improve their sense of belonging and adaptation within the receiving community and also how individuals in the host country adapt to newcomers. Due to the waves of immigrants/migrants moving across borders, the challenge for multicultural societies is not only to recognize and celebrate diversity but also to make sure that the society/environment they are relocating to be inclusive. This integration can only be achieved by recognizing the true value of immigrants and embracing diversity can encourage newcomers to participate more in the receiving community and engage in meaningful encounters with the new society.

Though the reason(s) for relocating varies for these individuals, relocation to an unfamiliar country is a fact of life. All newcomers face the same task of moving between the cultural practices of both their home culture and mainstream culture. One of the

consequences of immigrating/relocating to an unfamiliar country is the process of acculturation. Research on this topic indicates that individuals who relocate/immigrate begin their acculturation immediately upon arriving in their unfamiliar country/environment (Berry, 1997, 2005). Although contested in meanings, most researchers accept that acculturation refers to a process of psychological and socio-cultural change and adjustment to unfamiliar cultural practices, such as changes in eating patterns, dress, and language, that an immigrant undergoes in order to align with the dominant societal group (Berry, Poortinga, Segal, & Dasen, 2002; Berry, 2016; Chirkov, 2009; Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga, & Szapocznik, 2011). Within acculturation research, the most widely accepted theory used to conceptualize this experience is that of Berry and colleagues (see Berry, 1997, 2005; Berry et al., 2002). Berry and colleagues' model offers an account of human behavior in which individuals engage in a process of adaptation to cognitive, interpersonal, and social conditions. According to this model, immigrants encounter two issues while adapting to an unfamiliar culture/environment; maintenance of their heritage culture, and maintenance of relationships with the host society (Berry, 1997, 2005). The individual's orientation towards the host and heritage cultures are seen as independent dimensions, which results in four possible acculturation outcomes – assimilation (adopting to the host culture, rejecting the home culture), integration (orienting towards both cultures), separation (retaining only the home or host culture), and marginalization (rejecting both cultures). Evidence suggests that the integration outcome is most often associated with successful personal adjustment or acculturation to a new society, more so than the three remaining alternatives (Berry 1997). The integration strategy is best for successful adaptation because it allows for blending of the culture of

origin and the host culture identities. However, research on this topic has allowed researchers to show that people do not always have the freedom to choose their own acculturation outcome/strategies due to the attitude of some countries towards cultural diversity (Berry, 2005; Crick, 2004). Hence, one might argue that Berry's strategy of integration is a fundamental aspect of multicultural societies as it encourages the preservation of cultural identities and cross-cultural exchanges, thereby promoting cross-cultural understanding. Although Berry's definition facilitated the categorization of individuals' acculturation experiences, it is limited in that acculturation is presented as a linear process with fixed outcomes. For example, the key point here is that the four strategies proposed are too simplistic and views the receiving society as one of homogeneity or that the acculturation process involves only two cultures. However, acculturation experiences are complex because they are difficult to measure and extremely variable. With this in mind, such positivist framing about acculturation misaligns with the current thesis.

The terms associated with acculturation, all of which are central to the argument outlined in this dissertation, have been a subject of debate. At one end are the "modernist perspectives" suggesting that the constructs associated with acculturation are fixed and seen as universal entities that can be similarly described/affect all individuals (Berry, 2005; Berry et al., 2002; Poortinga, 2010). At the other end, those advocating for "postmodernist perspectives" or critical perspectives, have proposed that all human experience is variable, malleable and in particular difficult to define in any general terms as it is in constant flux and uncertainty (Bhatia, 2002; Chirkov, 2009a; Rudmin, 2009). One of the shortcomings of previous research on this topic was that conventional

approaches used to capture the acculturation experiences of immigrants failed to reveal the dynamic/fluid nature of this process (Ward, 2008). Additionally, the aforementioned studies provided important theoretical foundations for understanding the acculturation experiences of immigrants during their adaptation to an unfamiliar society/environment. Previous and current scholarship advocating for interpretivist perspectives (i.e., multiple truths) have proposed a need to rethink the approaches we utilize when examining acculturation (Bhatia & Ram, 2009; Chirkov, 2009a; Cresswell, 2009; Schwartz & Unger, 2017). They have urged for researchers to use critical cultural epistemological positions along with research designs that centralize the complexities of acculturation, as they are presented. The perspective adopted by these scholars reveals, or opens up acculturation as a process and not as a product of relocation/immigration. Rather, acculturation is a process that spirals and evolves with an emphasis on multiplicity, conflict and contradictions (Bhatia & Ram, 2001). The interest with such research lies in unravelling the process through which individuals negotiate and continuously re-create their sense of identity based on their stories in diverse and multiple socio-cultural contexts. These writings reveal the importance of contextualizing the research surrounding acculturation processes, which could lead to the enrichment of descriptions of this process and better understandings of how and why individuals story their adaptations to an unfamiliar culture in unique ways. The foregoing writings have paved the way in terms of making the case and advancing our understanding of the acculturation experiences of immigrants, however only few of these studies have considered this topic from critical socio-cultural perspectives (Bhatia & Ram, 2009; Chirkov, 2009a; Schwartz et al., 2011).

More importantly, acculturation is relevant to sport performance in that sports occur in the context of culture, society, and politics. A common thread between acculturation research and sport research is that this concept is increasingly used to provide insights into how individuals adjust and adapt to an unfamiliar sport context or environment. Researchers examining the acculturation experiences of immigrants from socio-cultural lens/perspectives have the potential to facilitate more inclusive sport context that embraces the cultural identities of diverse participants (Schinke & McGannon, 2014). Such research is able to highlight the nuances surrounding acculturation and can serve to reinforce the sense of belonging for these new immigrants thereby generating empathy between them and with other individuals they engage with in the receiving community. Additionally, these writings from socio-cultural vantage points have enabled us to better understand how cultural identities are fluid, mobile, more susceptible to change, and open to variation as oppose to fixed and linear. Understanding the acculturation stories of immigrant athletes from this vantage point not only enables us to understand acculturation as a fluid process, but also allows us to consider the distinct and unique stories of immigrant athletes.

Subsequently, due to the rapid and increasing number of immigrants relocating to Western societies, there has been considerable debate about how to potentially make their integration and acculturation experiences easier and healthier. Previous research on this topic area suggests that sport involvement can potentially ease the integration of immigrants and enable them to participate in their new community (Hatzigeorgiadis, Morela, Elbe, Kouli, & Sanchez, 2013; Tirone, Livingston, Miller & Smith, 2010). Sport can be seen as an ideal way of bridging the gap between people of different ethnic

backgrounds, which might result in the breaking down of social and cultural barriers, such as language, social and cultural rules, and homesickness.

Researchers have shown that sport is an arena where different cultures meet because it brings people together and enables them to transcend their cultural differences, leading to augmented mutual understanding (Tirone et al., 2010). Sport participation is uniquely positioned to provide immigrants with experiences that could potentially enhance their sense of belonging and contributions to the receiving society. For example, Schinke and McGannon (2014) found that almost 18% of Canadian Olympians since 1992 have been immigrant athletes. Many great athletes have come from other countries to live in and represent Canada on the world stage. Additionally, Canada ranks at the top with nine foreign-born athletes who competed in last two winter Olympics (Schinke et al., 2013). Despite this growing segment of the Canadian population, researchers have shown that Aboriginal youth and new immigrants have lower levels of economic and social integration because they tend to gravitate towards sports they already know and play, which varies from the traditional choices of the mainstream Canadian society (Statistics Canada, 2011; Statistics Canada, 2012). Foreign-born athletes are now competing alongside native-born athletes at various national/ provincial level, amateur level and professional level, leading to enriched opportunity to exchange cultural views and build social connections through sport (Agergaard & Ryba, 2014; Campbell & Sonn, 2009; Schinke et al., 2013; Weedon, 2011). Schinke and colleagues (2013) examined the stories of athletes who relocate across borders to pursue sport and the accompanying psychological and performance implications. The efforts of these foregoing authors has advanced our understanding of how immigrant athletes navigate sports context as they

acculturate, opening them up to unfamiliar social and cultural practices. Sport participation can potentially be a socializing agent that facilitates the integration of people from different cultural backgrounds into the communities where they live or into the existing system (Bochner, 2006; Hatzigeorgiadis, et al, 2013; Joseph et al., 2012). On the other hand, sport participation might be seen as the assimilation of a minority group into the dominant culture, suggesting that fitting in often evokes/leads to tensions and conflicts with families and oneself leading to enculturation and alienation (Donnelly & Coakely, 2002; Schinke, Hanrahan, & Catina, 2009). Consequently, the experiences associated with relocation and acculturation can sometimes turn into overwhelming barriers, with consequences that affect immigrants and athletes well beyond their sport contexts. Given the growing numbers of immigrants relocating within/across borders to live/pursue sport and the complex nature of acculturation (Kontos, 2009; Schinke et al., 2013), it was imperative that I expanded on this issue within the current dissertation. Hence, there is a need to continually draw attention to these issues involved through research with different cultural groups.

Within the current dissertation I aimed to fill a gap in the literature in relation to the acculturation process by considering how sport can be a means or vehicle to promote integration among individuals and groups with differing cultural backgrounds through moving stories. The current dissertation was designed to draw inspirations from a number of disciplines and perspectives (i.e., sport sociology, sport psychology, cultural sport psychology, critical acculturation in psychology), all of which have generated some overlapping research themes and findings on the importance of socio-cultural, psychology and individual factors on acculturation processes in relation to sport participants.

Combining the knowledge generated from these disciplines on this research area, I was able to extend this area of research and creatively explore and highlight the dynamic interconnectivity between the psychological and sociocultural aspects of immigrant athletes' stories of cultural transitions and acculturation. A number of scholars have advocated for acculturation to be approached from this psycho-sociocultural vantage and as a culturally constituted process that is complex and dynamic, impacted by surrounding political and historical discourses/narratives (e.g., Ronkainen et al., 2017; Schinke et al., 2013). I sought to expand on storytelling approaches grounded in narrative inquiry to advance our understanding of how athletes navigate their acculturation processes in their daily lives, focusing on the dynamic role their family and community were said to play during these navigations. I approached the current work with a belief that while each athlete's story would be unique, personal stories would draw upon broader socio-cultural narratives available to them within their sport contexts (Douglas & Carless, 2009; Smith & Sparkes, 2009). Understanding this topic from an interdisciplinary vantage point offered understanding on how these immigrants storied their acculturation and the social contexts in which they immersed themselves in order to adjust to their new country and sport contexts. Additionally, the findings from this project are intended to offer an opportunity for those outside of sport to learn from sport contexts in terms of how to go about providing effective social integration for immigrants or newcomers across contexts.

## **1.2 Purpose of Research**

Sport participation is uniquely positioned as an arena where a diversity of cultures meets; as such it can be recognized and used as a place for integrating immigrants or minority populations into the mainstream or dominant society (Bochner, 2006;

Hatzigeorgiadis et al, 2013; Morela, Hatzigeorgiadis, Sanchez, Papaioannou, & Elbe, 2017). Additionally, it is also a way of integrating the host society in the worlds of newcomers from diverse cultural backgrounds. This involvement has the potential to facilitate immigrants' sense of inclusion and belonging in their new community or country and for long-term residents to learn the cultural practices of immigrants or minority populations, which may differ from those of the dominant or mainstream group (Donnelly & Coakely, 2002; Hatzigeorgiadis et al, 2013). A growing number of sport researchers have examined the acculturation experiences and adaptation challenges encountered by immigrant athletes in relation to their relocation to pursue sport (Elbe, Hatzigeorgiadis, Morela, Ries, Kouli, & Sanchez, 2016; Khomutova, 2015; Morela et al., 2017; Schinke et al., 2013). The insights from these scholars have been instrumental in highlighting some of the effective and ineffective acculturation strategies/resolutions employed by immigrant athletes in their sport and daily lives. Investigating immigrant athletes' stories of their transition and relocation to Canada in relation to their acculturation is of particular relevance because acculturation is a never-ending process and involves constant moving back and forth between multiple cultural positions. Therefore, describing how immigrant athletes story their acculturation journey can have far-reaching implications for teammates, coaches, and other individuals in the receiving community the athletes come in contact with.

The current study is part of a larger funded SSHRC project of which Drs. Schinke, McGannon, and Coholic were a part of focused on understanding the adaptation challenges encountered by immigrated athletes within their sport context. In the first phase of the project, the researchers utilized qualitative research methods (i.e., mandala

drawings, composite vignettes) aimed at accessing rich, in-depth participant narratives about their acculturation journey. The authors employed methodologies grounded in narrative inquiry and localized understanding, where richness could give light to such aspects as fluidity, tensions, and negotiations surrounding acculturation processes. The findings from phase one will be highlighted in chapter two of this dissertation. Within the current dissertation, phase one of the project served as the foundation upon which this study evolved from and for further inquiry. In the current study, I sought out to extend the findings from phase one and this research area by utilizing a mobile method (i.e., moving stories) approach aimed at eliciting stories about participants while situated within their own social and cultural settings. Since the participants were recruited from participant pool that had been interviewed in phase one of the study, I was able to immerse myself into the athlete's daily lives, which provided a unique vantage into their routines, allowing the athletes to tell their stories in the contexts that their routines occur in. The findings from this study offered a glimpse into how immigrant athletes navigated their transition between cultures as they progress through their day, revealing the multifaceted nature of acculturation. Mobile method was employed to garner athlete's stories that may not have been produced in sedentary, static interviews. The current project was designed to extend the bodying of research by furthering our ability to understand how immigrant athletes construct their stories and the context in which these stories are constructed in terms of functioning in the receiving community.

Additionally, in light of the abovementioned challenges immigrant athletes might encounter during their relocation or migration to a foreign country, more research is needed to explore these athletes' stories, relating to their acculturation within their sport

context and new culture. Literature in sport that has explored stories has shown the importance of recognizing the impact of the socio-cultural context, and other narrative resources available at the time of storytelling in terms of how stories are told and transmitted (Douglas & Carless, 2015; Sparkes & Smith 2007). But such work also has gaps which includes the fact the stories are linguistically subjective in nature (i.e., personally meaningful). The knowledge gained from stories can offer the reader a deeper understanding of how the athletes navigated through their acculturation challenges and provide extra insight to apply the stories to their own context. Within the current research, I examined immigrant athlete's acculturation through a critical socio-cultural and interdisciplinary lens. The research was designed to contribute to the existing body of scholarship that positions acculturation processes as fluid and ongoing with immigrants moving and navigating between the cultural practices of their home and host culture. It expands such work beyond what has been done by Schinke and colleagues highlighted above and the in subsequent chapters below. The critical approach to acculturation seeks to contextualize understanding of people's experiences and stories by analyzing the social, cultural, and historical contexts in which they occur. The current dissertation was built on the suggestions outlined by critical acculturation scholars (Chirkov, 2009a; Schinke & McGannon, 2014; Schinke, Blodgett, McGannon, & Ge, 2016), with regards to understanding the fluidities surrounding acculturation processes. Within the current project, I sought out to extend this area of research by examining the acculturation challenges of immigrant athletes within their sport context, the impact of such challenge on immigrant athletes and the resources these athletes might need or utilize to overcome such acculturation challenges utilizing mobility methods (i.e., guided journey).

Understanding these challenges enabled me to provide practical recommendations to help ease and alleviate the acculturation challenges immigrant athletes might encounter during their relocation and establishment. The relocation stories of immigrant athletes (i.e., how and why they have relocated) were just one of the many factors influencing their involvement in sport. More specifically, the current study was designed to explore this phenomenon using qualitative approach to research to better understand stories about the athletes' acculturation journey and to also inform resources and support to assist immigrant athletes or newcomers during their transition and establishment. An emerging qualitative method (mobile method-moving stories) was most suited to provide an in-depth, contextualized, and rich understanding of immigrant athletes' stories of adapting or adjusting to a new sport and socio-cultural context. The current research included first-hand accounts/stories from the vantage of the athletes' and myself about the athletes' acculturation, challenges experienced, and the multilevel coping strategies they utilized to overcome any challenges encountered. The current project was aimed at advancing our understanding of acculturation processes in relation to immigrant athletes, leading to the development of more effective and equitable strategies and interventions for working and interacting with culturally diverse sport participants.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

The following research questions guide this study and include:

- 1) How do male and female elite national level athletes who immigrated to Canada during their adolescence story their acculturation challenges, and how were such challenges storied as impacting their lives?

- 2) What multi-level acculturation strategies did the athletes experience within their stories in relation to the role of their family and community?
- 3) How do the acculturation strategies relate to encouraging the adjustment, acceptance, and retention of immigrants in Canadian sport contexts?

## 1.4 Contextual Definition

**Acculturation.** Acculturation is the dual process of socio-cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members (Berry, 2005). Acculturation involves four strategies/outcomes: assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization. The definition of acculturation presented here was used to frame and situate our study and the athletes' acculturation journey was explored in relation to larger processes of acculturation.

**Authenticity.** An important issue for qualitative research is that of the authenticity. To evaluate the methodological rigor of this study, I adapted the suggestions of Sparkes and Smith (2009) on possible considerations to judge authenticity in qualitative research. The aspects that was considered in relation to this study included: aesthetics of the project, whether the moving stories brought the topic of acculturation more richness or depth, and whether the moving stories served to provoke thought in the reader.

**Creative-non-Fiction.** Creative non-fiction is a form of creative analytic practices (CAP) focused on unique, incidental, and emergent occurrences of lived experiences, and the significance of everyday life to create meaning (Smith, McGannon, & Williams, 2016; Smith, 2013; Schinke et al., 2016). This approach encourages plurality of voices and narratives, supporting nonlinear and multimodal expression of data or knowledge. Creative non-fiction tells a story using facts, but uses many of the techniques of fiction (i.e., contextualized, vernacular language, metaphors, tone shift) to communicate findings

in compelling and emotionally vibrant ways (Smith et al., 2016). Within the current dissertation, CAP was used in the crafting of our moving stories and snap short vignettes.

**Critical acculturation.** Critical approaches represent a shift from previous linear and post-positivist conceptions of acculturation to viewing this process as culturally constituted that are complex, multifaceted, and dynamically produced within matrices of social power (see Ryba, 2017). The current study was framed from the vantage of critical epistemological position on acculturation. These writings critique the previous theoretical, epistemological and methodological approaches used to frame this topic by advocating for the best way (alternative approach) to study the complex and fluid phenomenon of acculturation (Bhatia & Ram, 2001; Bhatia, 2002; Chirkov, 2009b).

**Culture.** Culture is defined as customary beliefs, material traits, and social forms of a particular group. It includes common features of everyday existence shared by people in a place or time such as norms, values, beliefs, behaviours, acculturation space, time, gender and much more (Ryba et al., 2012; Ryba & Wright, 2005). Culture was a key component of the current dissertation as the focused was on the stories told by the athletes about their experience relocating and adjustment to an unfamiliar culture.

**Cultural diversity.** Cultural diversity is the term used to describe the variation of culture within a particular society or across the world. Cultural diversity is commonly interpreted in relation to ethnicity (Bansal, Taylor, & St. James, 2005; Statistics Canada, 2012). However, the term should be understood within a broader context where it recognizes the unique attributes of all persons. Since the participants from this study were from various countries, it was important what we considered factors surrounding cultural diversity in terms of race, gender, and ethnicity.

**Cultural sport psychology (CSP).** CSP is a well-established area of research and practice that focuses on understanding cultural diversity within sport contexts by centralizing issues related to culture. CSP emphasize a constitutive rather than a casual role of cultural and social historicity for athletes' lives and identities. By advocating for the opening of privileged intellectual space for marginalized topics and ethics of difference, and to facilitate a cultural praxis work of addressing pressing local issues by engaging contemporary theories and research in culturally reflexive ways (Blodgett, Schinke, McGannon, & Fisher, 2014; Ryba, 2017; Ryba, Schinke, & Tenenbaum, 2010; Schinke et al., 2009). CSP researchers challenge the ethnocentric tenets of traditional sport psychology research, which have long excluded the identities of diverse sport participants. The current study was informed by CSP in the conceptualization of this project.

**Epistemology.** Epistemology is a way of understanding and explaining how we know what we know. Epistemology is also concerned with providing a philosophical grounding for deciding what kinds of knowledge are possible and how we can ensure that they are both adequate and legitimate (Crotty, 1998). Within this current study, the epistemology of social constructionism was used to frame the project and also informed the philosophical underpinning.

**Immigrants.** Immigrants refer to a person who comes to settle in Canada as a permanent resident (Papillon, 2002; Pujolar, 2009). Typically, the word immigrant is used to indicate those looking to reside permanently in the country to which they have migrated or relocated to. Within this current study, immigrant athletes were the focus of this project because they intend on staying in Canada permanently.

**Immigration.** Immigration is defined as the international movement of non-native people into in new/foreign country of which they are not natives or where they do not possess citizenship in order to settle or reside there, especially as permanent residents or naturalized citizens, or to take up employment as a migrant worker or temporarily as a foreign worker (Papillon, 2002; Pujolar, 2009). Within this study, immigration was considered in terms of the number of people relocating to Canada, motives for relocation, and countries they are relocating from.

**Integration.** Integration refers to the adjustment process for newcomers or the evolution they undergo as they adapt to their new society. It is the process by which immigrants become fully accepted into society, in terms of several cultures coming together to form a new, multi-cultural society. Integration is not one-sided, it always was two; in that the newcomer has to adapt to the practices of the receiving culture, and individuals in the receiving culture have to adapt to the newcomers. Within the current study, integration was considered in terms of some the challenges they experienced as a result of their integration and how they attempted to fit into the receiving community.

**Inclusion.** Inclusion at its simplest is the ‘state of being included’. Inclusion is understood as a process by which efforts are made to ensure equal opportunities for all, regardless of each individual’s cultural background, so that they can achieve their full potential in life. It is about valuing all individuals, giving equal access and opportunity to all and removing discrimination and other barriers to involvement in sport and non-sport contexts. The current study was informed about the idea of inclusion and inclusive sport contexts in terms the athletes’ sense of belonging within their sport environment and in the receiving community.

**Mobile methods.** Mobility methods is based on the premise that social life is produced through various intersecting mobility systems and experiences; corporeal travel, the physical movement of objects, imaginative travel, virtual travel, and communicative travel (Urry, 2007). The suggested methods encompass a range of qualitative supported means of data collection, enabling the researcher to be, see, or move with participants and more effectively understand those practices and subjects on moving systems. Within the current study, mobile method in the form of a ‘guided journey’ was utilized in the data collection phase of the project.

**Multiculturalism.** Multiculturalism refers to the ideologies/philosophy that appreciates ethnic diversity within a society (Dewing & Leman, 2006; Donnelly & Coakley, 2002). It is a practice of giving equal attention to many different backgrounds in the receiving community. Multiculturalism celebrates diversity by willingly promoting the legal, political and social recognition of cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious differences, and whereby the distinctive identities of the cultural groups within such society are maintained or support. Within the current study, multiculturalism was considered in terms of how the receiving community welcomed and viewed newcomers or immigrants.

**Ontology.** Ontology is defined as the study of being. It is concerned with “what kind of world we are investigating, with the nature of existence, with the structure of reality (Crotty, 1998; Guba & Lincoln). Simply put, ontology describes how we perceive the nature of existence and the form of reality as such, thus answering the question of “what is real”. Within this study, a relativist ontological stance (there are multiple

constructed realities/truths) was used to frame my research topic, methodology and findings.

**Push-pull factors.** Push-pull factors are those factors that either forcefully push people into migration or attract them (i.e., conditions to drive people to leave their homes such as few opportunities, political/religious persecution, security). Pull factors relate to the country in which a person is migrates (i.e., conditions that attract people to a new country/area, jobs, more opportunities, freedom, see; Bochner, 2006; Sam & Berry, 2006; Van Oudenhoven, 2006). Within the current study, we considered what factors pulled or attracted the athletes to Canada.

**Reflexivity.** Reflexivity represents what the researcher knows about him or herself and the participants, continuously recorded as way simply stating any preconceived notions about the research which might interfere/influence with the data analysis, participants, and interpretation (Carless & Douglas, 2011; Smith & McGannon, 2018; Sparkes & Smith, 2014). Through this process, researchers come to understand that they are explicitly linked with the participants and no matter how hard they try, they will always influence the method and any claim that follows from using it will be infused with their subjectivities (Smith & McGannon, 2018). Within the current study, reflexivity was employed to situate myself and highlight how my bias or preconceived notions have influenced how I viewed the athletes, the data collected, and overall findings.

**Social justice.** Social justice is philosophical concept that all members of society deserve an equal footing in terms of opportunities, political rights, access to health, wellbeing and distribution of wealth in order to live fulfilling lives and realize their potential in society. Social justice promotes a just society by challenging injustice and

valuing diversity within society (Blodgett et al., 2014; Ryba et al., 2013). Within this current project, we draw inspiration from the tenets of social justice in terms of empowering the athletes and centralizing the participants as well.

**Social constructionism.** A social constructionist approach adopts a relativist ontological stance (there are multiple constructed realities), a subjective epistemological stance (knowledge is socially constructed, see Crotty, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Sparkes & Smith, 2014). Within a social constructionist epistemology, the individual is at the centre of the meaning making experience. The central tenets of social constructionism is that reality and meaning making are socially constructed and it holds that people make their own sense of social realities, which is influenced by the environment that surrounds the individual. Within the current study, social constructionism was the theoretical approach I utilize to frame and inform the conceptualization, data collection, analysis and the creation of the moving story.

**Transnationalism.** Adopts approaches from cultural psychology and cultural studies transcending the conventional conception of a geographically rooted culture and uprooted immigration. The transnational framework deals with experiences of athletes who travel extensively internationally and almost constantly experience cultural transitions, adapting and re-adapting to new sites and conditions (Ryba et al., 2012). The transnational lifestyle of elite athletes has an inevitable impact on their career development but also their identity formation, sense of home and belonging, values, beliefs, and attitudes. Within the current study, we include work from a transnational framework within the review of literature as these scholars considered the acculturation journey of athletes relocating on a short-term basis.

**Vignettes.** There are a few detailed accounts about the use of vignettes in both quantitative and qualitative research. More specific, within qualitative research it has been used as a complementary method with other data collection techniques (see Blodgett & Schinke, 2015; Schinke et al., 2016). Nevertheless, the literature is clear about what constitutes vignettes. Vignettes are typically short stories about fictional character or fictional scenario appropriate to a particular study. The story places the behavior of the character in a concrete context and allows the researcher to explore participants' views on the issues arising from the situation. Within the current dissertation, vignettes were used in the representation of the data.

## Chapter 2

### 2.1 Review of the Literature

Due to the cultural diversity of immigrants and the complex nature of acculturation, this area of research is diverse in several ways. I sought out to explore the acculturation challenges immigrants might encounter and their acculturation strategies within their sport contexts. This area of research is of increasing interest to scholars and researchers in a wide variety of disciplines, and it has policy relevance to various stakeholders such as governmental ministries and departments focused on citizenship and immigration, multiculturalism, or community participation, coaches, athletes, sport psychologists and national sport organizations. Consequently, the research surrounding this topic is diverse and overlaps across multiple disciplines. Hence an interdisciplinary approach was needed for inquiry into the various facets of acculturation as experienced by immigrant athletes. The forthcoming review of literature is comprised of findings from previous research on acculturation, how they have been articulated in elite and professional sport, with an emphasis on immigrant athletes, since it is more pertinent to the current dissertation. This section of the dissertation highlights the general landscape of the research surrounding acculturation processes by integrating and incorporating works from a wide range of research areas.

This review is comprised of three general sections (a) foundational work, (b) emergence of more diverse approaches to acculturation, and (c) critical acculturation research (see Figure 1). Lastly, gaps in terms of uncharted areas or contentious issues in the literature are highlighted leading to the study's research questions.

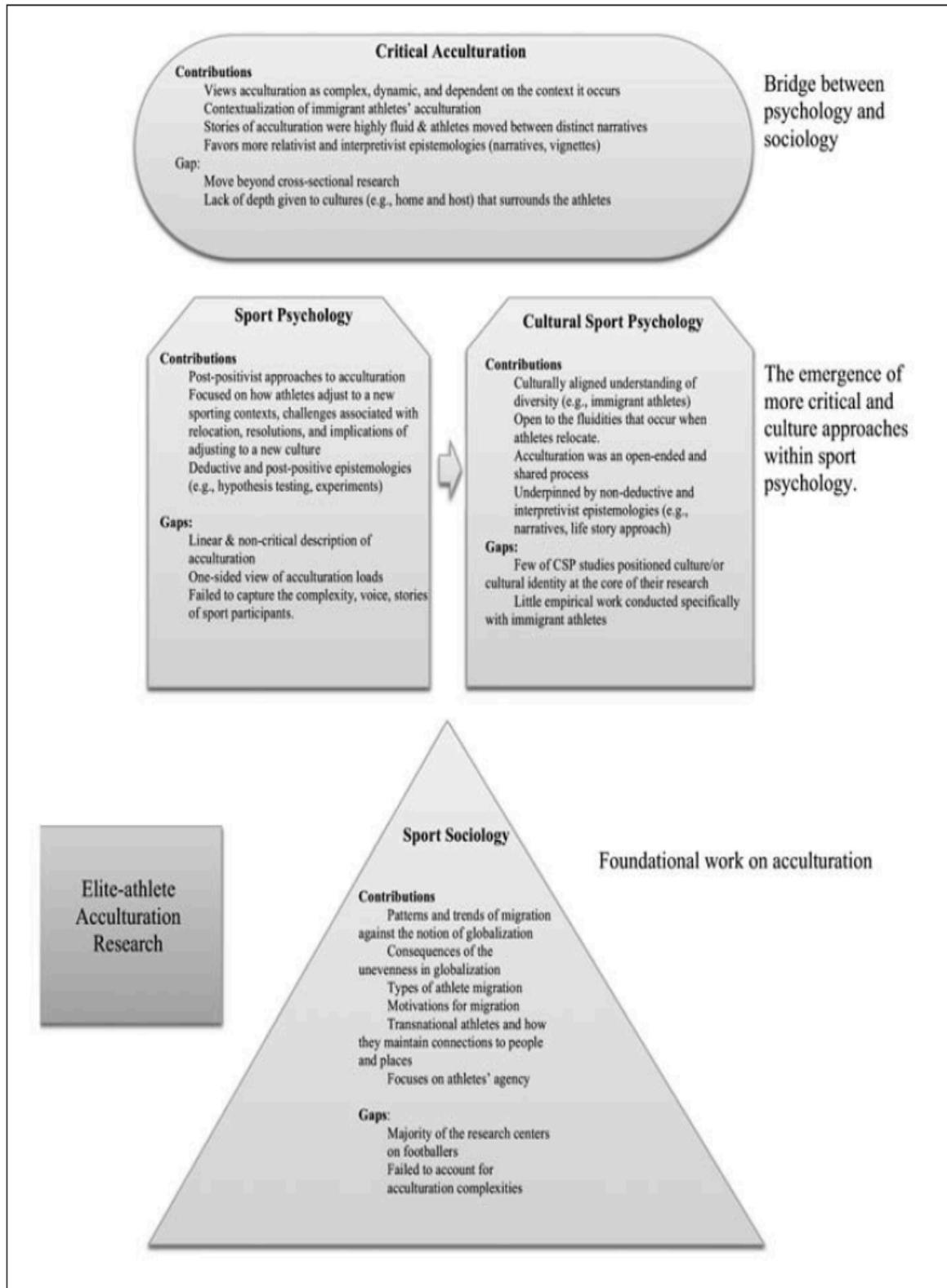


Fig. 1. - Taxonomy of acculturation research.

Figure 1 represents a taxonomy tree showing the evolution of research on athletes' migration and acculturation (see Oghene, Schinke, Middleton, & Ryba, 2017). The taxonomy was designed to illustrate the evolution and various aspects of acculturation research surrounding immigrant athletes, and provided the following three foci: (a) foundational work, (b) emergence of more diverse approaches, and (c) critical acculturation research. Each level, or branch, of the taxonomy tree is organized according to the focal point within each discipline on athletes' acculturation and the overarching contributions that connects the different foci. The base of the taxonomy tree is the foundational branch of acculturation research with migrant athletes from sport sociology research on sport labor migration. The second level of the taxonomy represents the emergence of sport psychology and cultural sport psychology approaches to understanding the acculturation process. The final branch of the taxonomy tree represents research on acculturation framed from critical epistemological positions to explore the dynamics of acculturation. Presenting the literature through a taxonomy tree allows us to classify the different themes emerging from the research surrounding athletes' acculturation, providing a comprehensive and holistic picture of this thematic area. The following sections present a more in-depth inspection of each branch of acculturation research.

## **2.2 Sport Sociology and Athlete Migration**

Upon reviewing the literature in this section, I highlighted previous research around acculturation in relation to migrant athletes from a sport sociology lens. The findings from these studies have been instrumental in providing a general understanding of the international mobility of sport talents and the processes of globalization within

sport contexts. This section covers the following topics; macro approaches on sport migration, micro approaches on sport migration, and transnational perspectives on athlete migration. Researchers within sport sociology conducted much of the foundational work regarding the international mobility of elite-athletes (Klein, 1994; Maguire, 1993, 1999). Viewed through the dominant vantage of globalization (Maguire, 1993, 1999; Maguire & Stead, 1996), these authors focused on the movement of professional athletes within and between countries. The migration of elite athletes has been explored in various sporting contexts, such as football (e.g., Lanfranchi & Taylor, 2001; Magee & Sugden, 2002), cricket (Maguire & Stead, 1996; Perry, 2014), basketball (Butler & Dzikus, 2014; Falcous & Maguire, 2005), golf (Fry & Bloyce, 2015), snowboarding (Thorpe, 2017), baseball (Evans, 2014; Takahashi & Horne, 2006), and ice hockey (e.g., Elliott & Maguire, 2008) and has highlighted the migratory flow of athletes, consequences of the unevenness of globalization, and the implications of sport labor migration. These studies can be grouped into macro, micro approaches, and transnational perspectives. The findings from sport sociology on acculturation are of relevance to this project because they represent foundational work on the movement and motivations of athletes to relocate within national/ international borders to pursue sport.

**Macro approaches on sport migration.** The acculturation writings in relation to immigrant athlete's traces to the sociology of sport literature (see Klein, 1991; Maguire & Stead, 1998; Maguire, 1993, 1999). These writings were in relation to sports labor migration (i.e., the migration and relocation of sporting talent and labor) and it was viewed against the backdrop of globalization. Globalization has been the dominant vantage through which researchers from this genre have used to view the international

mobility of athletes since as early as the 1990s (see Maguire, 1993; Maguire & Bale, 1994; Maguire & Stead, 1996). One of the pioneers of studies in sport labor migration is Maguire (1993, 1999), who noted that the migration of sports labor was occurring over a widespread geographical area and within a greater number of sports disciplines. Sport sociologists have explored the migration of athletes in a number of sporting contexts, ranging from football (Lanfranchi & Taylor, 2001; Magee & Suden, 2002; Stead & Maguire, 2000), ice hockey (Elliott & Maguire, 2008; Genest, 1994), cricket (Maguire and Stead, 1996, Stead & Maguire, 1998), baseball (Klein, 1994), and basketball (Falcous & Maguire, 2005). These authors highlight the migratory flow of athletes and the implications of sport labor migration from various sport contexts.

Much of the foregoing scholarship positioned the migration of athletic labor/talent as a process that both contributes to and is a consequence of globalization within sport contexts and beyond the boundaries of sport. These previous studies from sport sociology on sport labor migration can be grouped into two general categories, the macro (i.e., world system approach) and micro (i.e., rational choice approach). The macro (world system) approach has its roots in the Marxist perspective, bringing a global vantage point to understanding how the local and global intersect in the migration processes (e.g., Bale & Maguire, 1994; Maguire, 1999; Maguire & Stead, 1996). From this perspective, the power relationships between nations are politically and economically uneven and divided into (core countries, semi-periphery countries and periphery countries), with the core nations dominating and controlling the exploitation of resources and production (Maguire, 1999; Wallerstein, 1974). This approach highlights that the dominant countries/nations

historically exploit the less powerful nations in their search for new markets to sell sport services, leisure products, equipment and cultural merchandise.

The consequences of these uneven power relationships with regards to immigrant athletes are that talented athletes are lured to the dominant nations/countries (Maguire, 1999). Doing so undermines and weakens less powerful nations in terms of pilfering these valuable athletic resources. Some of the issues here are the deskilling of the sport system in the home country and the so-called brawn drain of athletic talent from underdeveloped countries to more economically developed countries, depriving the home audience of their best players. However, it is important to note that the identification of the flow of migrants has implicitly informed research in sport sociology and sport psychology with researchers in both fields having largely examined the acculturation processes of migrants moving from peripheral countries towards core countries (Agergaard, Botelho, & Tiesler, 2014; Elliott & Maguire, 2008; Lanfranchi & Taylor, 2001; Ryba et al., 2016; Schinke et al., 2013). The findings from these studies are of relevance to the current study in that it enabled me to better understand how, and the extent to which rational ideas, resources, and structural constraints may affect the actions of individuals and decision makers in sport and elsewhere in society. The findings also reveal the powerlessness of these athletes even post relocation. Macro approaches have been criticized for their deterministic/fixed approach and for failing to explain why some individuals in a certain country/region choose to migrate or relocate to pursue sport and why others do not (Araujo, Davids, & Hristovski, 2006; Nixon, 2015).

**Micro approaches on sport migration.** The majority of studies conducted within sport sociology on the movement of athletic workers/talents have been confined to elite-

level athletes and sports in western societies. The work conducted thus far has scratched the surface, but has been influential in enabling us to understand the processes involved with sport labor migration. Recent developments within the scholarship reveal a lot of emphasis is placed on understanding what motivates athletes to relocate. Maguire (1999) developed a preliminary typology for describing athletes' motives for relocating. This preliminary typology identified five categories of migrants; pioneers motivated by an evangelical zeal for the expansion of their sport, settlers interested in staying in the host country, mercenaries motivated by short-term gains, nomadic cosmopolitans wanting to experience other culture and cities, and returnees who aim to return home. The findings from this initial work revealed that athletes exhibit different relocation patterns and motives. In a similar vein, Lanfranchi and Taylor (2001) developed a three-part typology to understand the motivations of footballers. The authors identified three categories of athletes: itinerant who travel over vast distances to sell skills for short periods, mercenaries who change countries for a better offer, and settlers who move to a foreign country and make it home.

Furthermore, Magee and Sugden (2002) attempted to further develop the motivation typology proposed by Maguire by applying a world system approach. Magee and Sugden (2002) identified/added three new types of migration into English Premier League football: the exiled (due to political reasons), the expelled (due to a combination of behavioral problems and media exposure), and the ambitionist (moves to fulfill dreams about professional career). Lanfranchi and Taylor (2001) used different theoretical approaches to create typologies for understanding the global migration/relocation of athletes, while focusing on the structural and institutional factors influencing athlete

migration and relocation. The aforementioned typologies identified by the authors (i.e., economic crises and national financial weakness, offer of only semi-professional opportunities, and unrivalled lucrative contracts) have recently been criticized for failing to fully capture the complexities of athlete mobility and for concluding that immigration/relocation occurs as the result of any single causal factor.

There has been a wealth of research (Elliott & Maguire, 2008; Magee & Sugden, 2002; Weedon, 2011) that further examines the motives for migration/relocation. The findings from these studies suggest that the motives for athletes to relocate revolve around their need to seek professional sporting experiences and the desire to test their abilities at the highest levels available. These studies highlighted that the motivations of sport participants and their decision to immigrate/relocate should not simply be reduced to a series of intrinsic and largely personal influences (Carter, 2011; Elliot, 2013). These static typologies failed to account entirely for the fluid changing and contested landscape of what motivates athletes to relocate or migrate such as the environment of the host nation/country, as well as the personal characteristics (aspirations and desires) of the athlete, and family dynamics. Importantly, these categories generalized the different motives of sport migrants and further revealed the complexity of the acculturation process. Early sport sociology researchers were instrumental in revealing that the motivations and experiences of migrant athletes vary greatly and that motives for relocating did not include solely economic incentives but reasons such as career ambitions, and love and infatuation for the game. By understanding the different motives for sport migration, we see that various reasons play a role in the migratory process for athletes, in turn revealing the complex and open nature of relocation as interactive, two-

way processes between sport migrants and the receiving society in terms of what it offers these athletes. To better understand the motives of athletes to relocate, the various structural conditions/pull factors (i.e., better opportunities, stability) should be taken into consideration, along with the athletes' decisions to relocate. The contributions from the aforementioned scholarships (Elliott & Maguire, 2008; Lanfranchi & Taylor, 2001; Magee & Sugden, 2002; Weedon, 2011) offered researchers with an enriched understanding of cultural diversity, motives, and identities via a cross-disciplinary approach that utilized perspectives and knowledge rooted in sport sociology with regards to acculturation of immigrant and migrant athletes. However, these pull and push considerations do not really fully capture the various political turmoil and the varied non-sport reason for athletes relocating or migrating. Exploring other reasons why athletes relocate (i.e., environmental push factors, social push factors) is important in order to better understand their motivations and transitions they undergo during their relocation.

**Transnational perspectives on athletes' migration.** Recently efforts have been directed to the recruitment mechanisms and networks of these sport participants (Elliott & Maguire, 2008). The majority of recent studies explored within this research area utilized transnational perspectives, focusing on how athletes maintain attachments to people, organizations, and institutions outside the boundaries of the countries to which they moved from/to (Agergaard, 2008; Agergaard et al., 2014; Elliot, 2013; Haugaa Engh & Agergaard, 2013). Transnational perspectives reject previous fixed and one-directional descriptions and explanations that are not open to the fluidities and nuances that occur when athletes relocate or migrate for sport. The approach taken by researchers within sport sociology in examining the athletes' migration and relocation journey were not

focused on capturing the dynamic and complex nature of moving and acculturating in a foreign country (Carter, 2011; Haugaa Engh & Agergaard, 2013). The findings from earlier sport sociology research were not able to yield a fuller understanding of complex acculturation processes such as the impact of attitudes actions and policies of the receiving society on how acculturation proceeds, and the incorporation of contextual, social, political, and historical dimensions when viewing the acculturation process. Transnational perspectives are positioned around the cross-border activities/experiences of individuals, as well as the athletes' local embeddedness (i.e., how athletes settle into a new locale while maintaining various social relationships that extend into other nation states, see Haugaa, Engh, & Agergaard, 2013). These writings frame sport migration as a social process whereby people forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that transverse geographic, political and cultural borders.

Other scholars have considered how individuals' move / manoeuvre within and around structural constrains. For example, Agergaard and colleagues (2014) examined the general migration/relocation patterns of women footballers and the ways in which they maintained and developed a transnational embeddedness (i.e., the extent to which an athlete is connected to the receiving community) in various communities and countries simultaneously. The findings from this study highlighted that athletes were not just objects/commodities moved by global and economical forces but were individuals who took an active part in developing their mobility and migratory processes. The above findings pushed researchers to examine multiple viewpoints (e.g., individuals from the receiving culture interacting with migrant athletes) when attempting to understand the acculturation process. The examination of this process as one that is shared between all

involved allowed for contextualized and fuller understandings of the everyday lives of transnational athletes in terms of how their daily lives were simultaneously lived within and across national borders. By utilizing a transnational approach, researchers are able to better understand athletes cross-border activities, the various socio-cultural and structural factors/issues involved in the acculturation process and how athletes manage to sustain ties to their home country and the ties they have created as a result of their relocation, while maintaining their athletic careers. The findings from these studies offer researchers with rich and alternate vantages (i.e., sociocultural, contextual, historical, economical, and political) of the transnational and relocation experiences of athletes in their everyday practices and environments. The sport sociology scholarship reviewed within this section contributed to the conceptualization/theorization of acculturation within the current study, thereby adding a uniquely different viewpoint that was different from the dominant and mainstream perspectives on the international mobility of sport participants. Additionally, it is important to note some of the major contributions of sport sociology scholarship was on highlighting the general trends of patterns of sport labor migration, the effects of globalization on labor migration, and the motivation of athletes to relocate. These contributions have influenced sport psychology writings and thinking in a number of ways, particularly in relation to providing effective interventions to enhance the performance, interactions with athletes, and adaptation of immigrant athletes within sport context.

**Gaps in sport sociology research.** Despite the significant amount of research conducted from sport sociology, there are still some visible gaps within this literature to date. The current sociology of sport literature does not adequately address issues related

to the acculturation experiences of immigrant athletes' relocation for sport pursuits. The majority of research reviewed within this genre centers on football, baseball, ice hockey, cricket, basketball, and athletes relocating from Western European countries for a short-term basis (Magee & Sugden, 2002; Maguire, 1999). Though there is a significant surge of athletes relocating towards mostly Western European and North American countries to pursue sport, the relocation of these athletes does not reflect the general global trends and patterns of athletes relocating/immigrating to pursue sport. The movement of athletes across and within borders is much more than a product of the current economic and political relations of the above-mentioned sport disciplines. Sport labor migration has impacted most sports, just as globalization has influenced the various nations' economies, societies, and culture.

The current dissertation was designed to extend this research area by moving beyond the economic determinants of sport labor migration to focusing on more holistic vantages on athlete's motivation for relocating and migrating for sport pursuits, such as the context in which they are relocating to, the sport environment, and the role of families in the relocation experience. By incorporating more holistic vantages offering on athlete's motivation to relocate or migrate, we are able to better understand and examine the relocation/migration patterns of athletes, power dynamics, and motives for relocation, allowing researchers to more fully capture a rich understanding of the acculturation process as presented. Furthermore, some of the most recent notable contributions within this area of research include works from (Agergaard & Botelho, 2010; Agergaard, 2008; Agergaard & Tiesler, 2014; Carter, 2007; Haugaa, Engh & Agergaard, 2013; Thorpe, 2012) who employed a transnational framework as the theoretical conceptualization for

athletic migration/relocation within the sport sociology literature. These authors revealed the multiple ways in which athletes maintain and develop a transnational embeddedness in the various communities and countries they live and train in. These writings also pointed to the idiosyncratic nature of acculturation processes. Each of these contributions has enhanced our understanding of diverse sport participants relocations, their motives for relocating, and their network building and communication, via providing a more complete picture of these athletes as having multiple cultural identities. The findings from sport sociology scholarship have enhanced my understanding of sport labor migration and how economic and social status was particularly influential in producing migration.

Within the current dissertation, the relocation/migration experiences of sport participants and all its complexity were considered, ranging from traditional cross-border movements to new forms of transnational mobility and exchanges. Doing so enabled me to account for the complexly dynamic nature of relocating to pursue sport and also provided insights into the ways in which immigrant athletes cross socio-cultural boundaries, achieve membership, and define/describe their position in multiple societies. The current dissertation was designed to extend this research area by connecting immigrant athletes' involvement in sport to other spheres of their social life and the socio-cultural contexts under which acculturation occurs. Hence, the social constructionist nature of this study offers an opportunity to learn from the stories of the athletes about the complexities associated with relocation and the acculturation challenges they encountered and the coping strategies they developed in response.

### **2.3 Sport Psychology Research on Athlete's Acculturation**

Within this section, I reviewed writings around the acculturation experiences of immigrant athletes from the lens of sport psychology. The following section centers on two distinctive approaches on the acculturation of elite-athletes situated within sport psychology research. Researchers have explored the psychological and sociocultural challenges faced by athletes, within and outside of sport contexts through two approaches (e.g., post-positivist and the emergence of more cultural approaches) differing in perspective, epistemological stance, and conceptualization of the topic. Findings from these studies have resulted in the development of a new line of inquiry, cultural sport psychology (CSP; Schinke et al., 2009), and advanced our understanding of the complexities surrounding the idiosyncratic nature of the acculturation process experienced by elite athletes. CSP represents a shift from traditional sport psychology paradigms to facilitating contextualized understanding of marginalized topics and cultural considerations within sport psychology research/practice (Ryba & Wright, 2010). This shift emphasizes the importance of generating richer and more contextualized understanding of sport participants experiences than what has been offered by mainstream sport psychology practitioners in the past. Finally, research has gone beyond the one-directional perspective of migration by examining stories and narratives of Aboriginal athletes during their acculturation to the dominant culture within their own country, as well as dual career athletes moving from one core country to another (Blodgett & Schinke, 2015; Campbell & Sonn, 2009).

**Post-positive approaches on acculturation.** Sport psychology researchers have developed and expanded considerably the breadth of their scholarship on acculturation/adaptation over the last two decades. Previous research on acculturation

focused on examining the challenges and adaptation strategies associated with the transition/relocation of athletes into different countries and sport contexts (see Battochio, Schinke, Eys, Battochio, & Halliwell, 2009; Hatzigeorgiadis et al., 2013; Kontos, 2009; Schinke, Gauthier, Dubuc, & Crowder, 2007; Yukelson, 2010). Much of this early scholarship faced important challenges in that acculturation was framed as a linear and fixed transition process with fixed acculturation pathways (e.g., assimilation, segregation) in keeping with Berry's earlier work. These contributions were framed around post-positivist methodologies and from the vantage of researchers and practitioners offering one understanding of acculturation, therefore making them pre- (i.e., previous to) cultural sport psychology. The theoretical and methodological approaches utilized within these previous writings neglected the layering of cultural aspects (i.e., race, gender, ethnicity) that are crucial in shaping athlete's identity and experiences within sport context.

Previous sport psychology scholarship on this topic highlighted the difficulties associated with relocation and migration to pursue sport including adjustment to new coaches and teammates (Battochio et al., 2009; Hatzigeorgiadis et al., 2013; Kontos, 2009), unfamiliar geographical location (Schinke & McGannon, 2014; Stambulova, Stephen, & Japharg, 2007), cultural differences and language differences (Schinke et al., 2007; Yukelson, 2010). Sport participants experience acculturation before and upon relocation, whereby they sought to understand the cultural norms of the host country while attempting to reconcile with the cultural norms from their home culture. Within sport psychology, research on immigrant athletes has primarily focused on the issues immigrant athletes and coaches faced upon relocating to a new/foreign country, their coping during this transition and identified barriers, strategies, and implications of

adapting to a new sport environment and new country (Battocchio, Schinke, McGannon, Tenenbaum, Yukelson, & Crowder, 2013; Schinke et al., 2007; Schinke et al., 2010). Much of this scholarship is positioned around the concept of adaptation and transitions. Although initially positioned around elite-athlete retirement, adaptation is a broad term associated with monumental changes in an athlete's life. Within much of the literature, adaptation was framed as a process beginning with appraisal, continuing with effective actions and reactions, and ending with an adaptive response (Battocchio et al., 2009; Meisterjahn & Wrisberg, 2013; Schinke et al., 2012). The processes towards adaptation required deliberate pathways, or means through which the end outcome could be achieved.

Within sport contexts, researchers have mainly focused on adaptation/transitions in relation to cultural adaptations and the challenges faced by immigrant athletes (Battocchio et al., 2013; Schinke et al., 2012). The writings highlight the challenges faced by sport participants in their everyday practices, which were also informed by cultural resources. The resources identified acted as an aid or barrier in order for cultural adaptation and adjustment to take place. The aforementioned studies revealed that athletes attempted to adjust to their new environment/context by seeking cross-cultural understanding, peer acceptance and culturally relevant social support. The studies above revealed a cross-cultural approach to understanding culture-specific aspects of adaptation and transitions, facilitating our understanding of acculturation from a local level. These previous writings did not align with social constructionist underpinnings and focused on outcomes and providing recommendations, often representing the interpretations and viewpoints of researchers given the epistemological assumptions that framed those earlier

studies. In doing so, these projects were framed from the vantage of researchers and practitioners, offering a unique understanding of acculturation.

Other researchers have considered the challenges associated with relocating/migrating to pursue sport (Battochio et al., 2013; Kontos, 2009; Meisterjahn & Wrisberg, 2013; Schinke, Yukelson, Bartolacci, Battocchio, & Johnstone, 2011; Schinke et al., 2007). The challenges identified can be divided into two major categories, challenges in a new community/culture outside of sports (i.e., separation, loneliness, communication, and social engagement; see Morela, Hatzigeorgiadis, Sanchez, Papaioannou, & Elbe, 2017; Schinke et al., 2013; Schinke & McGannon, 2014; Yukelson, 2010), and challenges specific to the sporting context (i.e., adjustment to a new training routine and roles; see Battocchio et al., 2013; Kontos, 2009; Meisterjahn & Wrisberg, 2013; Schinke et al., 2007). The challenges identified in relation to the relocation of immigrant athletes within their sport contexts were also connected to the broader acculturation process. These challenges can in turn become stressful and demanding, affecting the immigrant athletes and others they engage with on a daily basis (i.e., teammates and coaches). The abovementioned scholarship revealed that acculturation processes could be adaptive or dysfunctional to athlete's wellbeing and performance depending on whether the responsibility of adjusting to a new culture and sport is placed solely on the immigrant athlete. The above-mentioned writings have contributed towards applied practice and the current project in terms of highlighting the general challenges faced by immigrant athletes in their everyday practices and the resources that aided or hindered their cultural adaptation. Within much of the literature reviewed, the acculturation experiences of athletes were framed as "one-sided acculturation", in that, athletes were on their own

when dealing with challenges associated with relocating (Kontos, 2009; Schinke et al., 2007; Yukelson, 2010). The “one size fits all” approach to examining acculturation does not take into account the motivation of athletes to relocate or the unique qualities of the local communities being chosen for settlement. Additionally, “the one size fits all” automatically forced all “immigrant or migrant athletes” to fit into the acculturation outcome/pathways outlined by Berry (1997), with less focus on aspects such as the characteristics of the athletes’ cultures of origin. Generalizing the acculturation process into categories led to the development of an initial base of understanding and provided future researchers with an opportunity to dive deeper into the voices/stories of athletes, and understanding of the idiosyncratic nature of acculturation.

**Emergence of culture within sport psychology.** Researchers are currently answering the calls made by scholars within sport psychology for increased contextual and cultural sensitivity in research and practices surrounding diverse or marginalized sport participants (Blodgett, Schinke, McGannon, & Fisher, 2015; McGannon & Johnson, 2009; Ryba, 2017; Schinke et al., 2009). Cultural sport psychology’s (CSP) evolution is reflected in a wide array of research focused on cultural awareness and understanding of marginalized topics within sport contexts in order to improve exchanges with individuals from different cultures, genders, and races (see McGannon & Smith, 2015; Ryba & Wright, 2005, 2010; Schinke et al., 2012). For instance, the article published in the *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology* highlighted calls for scholars to reposition/rethink their research and practice through a more culturally reflexive lens (Ryba, Stambulova, Si, & Schinke, 2013). These authors proposed that culturally reflexive research and practice are needed due to the multicultural landscape of most

contemporary sport contexts; such approaches are able to account for and capture hidden ethnocentric philosophical assumptions. Cultural sport psychology (CSP) offers emerging area of research that focuses on understanding cultural diversity within sport contexts by centralizing issues related to culture, thereby generating culturally aligned understandings of diverse immigrant and marginalized sport participants (Blodgett et al., 2014; Ryba, 2017, Ryba, Schinke, & Tenenbaum, 2010; Schinke et al., 2009).

The origins of cultural sport psychology can be traced to the efforts of feminist sport psychologist (see Fisher, Butryn, & Roper, 2003; Schinke, McGannon, & Smith, 2016) where researchers argued that feminism and race were only gingerly embraced as a necessary and important variable within sport psychology. Thereby creating dialogue among researchers and practitioners in terms of opening new and additional understandings with regards to marginalized topics such as; class, gender, race, power, and cultural diversity are key to extending research on sport participants. Scholarship framed in CSP represents a shift from linear and traditional sport psychology paradigms, advocating for the inclusion of culture and diverse sport participants (i.e., minority and marginalized groups) within sport psychology research/practice (Ryba, Stambulova, Si, & Schinke, 2013; Ryba & Wright, 2005; Schinke et al., 2006; Schinke et al., 2009). A few review papers about CSP research and practice has already been undertaken (see Blodgett et al., 2014; Ryba, 2017; Stambulova & Ryba, 2013). The aforementioned writings focused on describing the current landscape of CSP research and also contextualized the goals and tenets of this way of thinking. Blodgett and colleagues (2014) framed CSP research and practice around the tenets of cultural praxis and issues of power and privilege. Thus, the focus of such work was on how to move knowledge produced by

sport psychologists towards social justice agendas. The emphasis was on how to connect knowledge produced via research and practice more critically to the lives of sport participants (i.e., minorities or immigrant) in order to engage in an agenda of change or a just society. Through such work, researchers are able to challenge social inequalities through knowledge production processes that attempt to empower and engage marginalized sport participants by facilitating contextualized understanding of marginalized topics, voices, and cultural identities (Blodgett et al., 2014; Schinke et al., 2009). These efforts have contributed towards understanding the various culturally specific aspects of sport, methodological and epistemological implications, and how findings from such studies and modes of inquiry can inform applied research/practice. Understanding the acculturation stories of immigrant athletes through CSP perspectives has pushed researchers to explore the fluidities surrounding cultural transitions processes, advancing our understanding of acculturation, and resulting in alternative conceptualizations. This broadening perspective allowed the focus to be placed not only on the experiences of the athletes, but also on those with whom they interact with in and out of sport context.

Schinke, Michel, Gauthier et al., (2006) were among the first to consider the adaptation and cultural transitions of elite athletes and those with whom they interacted with (e.g., coaches, athletes) during their relocation. Schinke et al., (2006) and more recently Khomutova (2015), found that the impact of acculturation experiences on athletes' performance and wellbeing are dependent on whether these connections are one-sided (i.e., athlete expected to adjust to the receiving culture alone) or shared (i.e., athlete

and host community adjust to each other). Precisely, shared acculturation seemed to reduce the loneliness felt by the newcomer within a receiving community.

A second factor that has been investigated is the intended length of stay of a migrant athlete within a host country, as either temporary (transnational athletes) or permanent (immigrant athletes). The main distinction between these athletes is that transnational athlete's movements are based primarily on sport opportunities and development within a sporting context, whereas immigrant athlete's movements are motivated by sporting and non-sporting factors (e.g., Ronkainen, Harrison, & Ryba, 2014; Schinke et al., 2013). Several CSP authors have examined the impact of cultural transition experiences on transnational athlete's career developments (e.g., Ryba, Stambulova, Ronkainen, Bundgaard, & Selanne, 2015). These researchers have rejected previous fixed descriptions of acculturation that were not open to fluidities during relocation, such as athlete's reasons for relocating, cultural norms of the country of destination, and support available. This perspective has also allowed for the framing of the acculturation process as an open-ended negotiation between maintaining a subjective sense of wellbeing and participating in everyday acculturative practices (Agergaard & Ryba, 2014; Ryba et al., 2012). With this shift in perspective the complex interconnection between the psychological and socio-cultural aspects of acculturation has been brought to light, highlighting the reciprocity between the psyche and culture that constitutes athletes functioning in various contexts (Ryba, et al., 2012; Stambulova & Ryba, 2014). An important consideration here is the extent to which culture influences the way athletes learn and perceive their world revealing how sociocultural context and psyche intertwine

with each other. These writings also reveal how social structures and individual agency influence athlete's motives for relocation and sense of belonging in a receiving culture.

Researchers framing acculturation through a CSP lens have also focused on athletes relocating from Aboriginal reserves (e.g., Blodgett, Schinke, Coholic, Enosse, Peltier, & Pheasant, 2014). These studies revealed that even during temporary relocation, acculturation is a dynamic psychological and sociocultural process that requires shifting in and between different cultural positions. Accentuated in this research is the exposing of acculturation as a process of shared effort, whereby athletes and individuals in the host culture must navigate through their differences and move between known (to them) and less-known cultural practices (e.g., Blodgett, Schinke, Coholic et al., 2014). This positioning was made possible through an interpretivist epistemological approach, open and flexible in providing contextual accounts of elite-athletes acculturations, as well as the utilization of co-participatory qualitative methodologies that have the potential to empower a person when the researcher provides a space for the participants to voice their own subjective experiences (Schinke et al., 2009). Understanding acculturation from this vantage has enabled sport psychology researchers to contextualize research processes through a localized understanding of the diverse population of elite-athletes resulting in the development of emancipatory and transformative research projects (e.g., Blodgett, Schinke, Coholic et al., 2014).

Within this line of research, a separate focus has been on the dual-career pathways of Aboriginal (e.g., Blodgett & Schinke, 2015) and transnational athletes (e.g., Ryba et al, 2015). Blodgett and Schinke (2015) examined the cultural transitions of relocated Aboriginal student-athletes and their dual career pathways. The authors highlighted the

issues encountered by Aboriginal student-athletes such as dealing with a loss of belonging in the Aboriginal community, breaking down negative stereotypes and attitudes about Aboriginal people, and the desire to prove themselves and give back to the Aboriginal community. The findings from these studies on dual career athletes offer sport psychologists with a rich representation of the sociocultural factors associated with relocation and migration, which shapes playing style, training routine, social relationships, sense-of belonging, and coach athlete interactions within sport context (Ryba et al., 2012; Stambulova & Ryba, 2013). These authors positioned the acculturation experiences of these athletes as complex and fluid psychological processes that involved rational movements in and between different cultural practices. The authors were operating from a vantage offering understanding of acculturation from holistic and person-centered vantage focusing on the role of a socio-cultural context with regards to acculturation processes. Similarly, Ryba and colleagues (2015) drew on a typology of athletic migrants similar to those used in sport sociology research on transnational athletes (e.g., Magee & Sugden, 2002) to classify three patterns of dual-career pathways based on the direction of geographic mobility during and athlete's transition. The pathways identified included; (a) within EU mobility (the sport exile-motivated by better conditions in host country but education is second priority), (b) mobility to the U.S.A (the sport mercenary- motivated by athletic scholarship), and (c) mobility to the U.S.A (the nomadic cosmopolitan- motivated by desire to explore the world and seek new opportunities). The pathways identified represented several normative forms of transitional experiences including, athletic, academic / vocational, psychological, social and cultural. These pathways represent different levels of commitments and motivations to continuing a dual

career, with some athletes choosing to temporarily end or reduce their engagement in either their sport or schooling/vocation. The identification of these pathways allowed for an understanding of how athletes adjust to the demands they encounter and the coping strategies and resources they use (Ryba et al., 2015). Additionally, understanding the temporal and contextual fluidity associated with cultural transitions has been achieved through the utilization of narrative approaches, including life stories (Ryba et al., 2015) and vignettes (Blodgett & Schinke, 2015). Such story-based approaches capture the fluidity of the acculturation process by revealing elite athletes' multiple, shifting realities. Research conducted from CSP perspectives has helped to reveal why developing a richer and deeper understanding of the acculturation process requires methodologies that centralize the multiple accounts/truths of athlete's acculturations.

The emergence of CSP scholarship has challenged researchers to consider the constitutive role of culture and history in the lives and identities of athletes in all aspects of sport, as well as promoting the local contextualization of research projects. Research on athlete acculturation conducted from CSP perspectives encourage practitioners to seek a localized understanding of the diverse cultural backgrounds of the athletes they work with and to use this knowledge to provide better support to all athletes by addressing their psychosocial and sociocultural needs. Some of the benefits that might be gained from the utilization of CSP approaches within acculturation research includes; better understanding of power and sociocultural difference in sport context, multicultural competency skill, greater appreciation for the whole person, reflexivity, and inclusive and spaces where participants feel safe to share their stories.

**Gaps in the literature.** CSP was developed in response to the need for greater

diversity in the production of sport psychology knowledge; this understanding did not align with the fluid concept of experiences, focusing less on the cultural aspect of (and in) sport. A number of theoretical and conceptual papers framed in CSP have been used to examine the stories of diverse sport participants within research and practice (Blodgett, Schinke, Coholic et al., 2014; Blodgett & Schinke, 2015; Schinke & McGannon, 2014; Stamulova & Ryba, 2013). Although these researchers have focused their attention on the cultural aspects of sport and marginalized sport participants (i.e., immigrant, Aboriginal and transnational athletes), there remain some gaps in the literature pertaining to acculturation of immigrant athletes. The majority of CSP scholarship reviewed within this section did not position and centralize culture/cultural identity at the core of their research endeavors with the exception of Blodgett and Schinke (2015) and Blodgett, Schinke, Coholic et al., (2014). Through centralizing culture and cultural identity, contextual issues related to cultural diversity and subcultural values can be considered. Although, most CSP studies examined within current dissertation included culture in their research, very few (see Blodgett et al., 2014; Blodgett & Schinke, 2015) utilized methodologies that aligned with localized ways of knowing and doing with regards to diverse/marginalized sport participants. As such, this project was designed to build on acculturation work outside of sport psychology that centralized cultural identities in various contexts with the hopes of then building on and extending those work into the acculturation work in sport psychology.

The intention with the current research was designed to move away from previous post-positivist methodologies and engage in more interpretivist mode of inquiry (i.e., multiple understanding) that focuses on the socio-culturally constructed nature of

meaning and knowledge. Such work follows recent social constructionist work within sport psychology that has explored marginalized cultural identities in various sport contexts. For example, McGannon and Smith (2015) and Ryba (2009) have highlighted the importance of considering the cultural identities of others as well as that of the researcher, which, in turn, can facilitate a more contextualized understanding of marginalized identities. In doing so, the current research was built on previous scholarships framed in CSP by Blodgett and Schinke (2015), in terms of employing a methodological approach that moved beyond static to much more dynamic understanding of acculturation processes (i.e., tensions and uncertainties), which in turn shined light on how acculturation is being navigated in the athletes' daily lives, sport contexts, and environments. By aligning with social constructionist underpinnings, researchers are better equipped to work with athletes based on their diverse cultural identities and also develop culturally sensitive/inclusive projects addressing the needs of marginalized athletes, including the current focus of immigrant athletes and those individuals they interact with in the receiving community. Researchers considering the cultural identities of both newcomers and those they interact with in the host culture are in a better position to understand and account for the multifaceted challenges athletes might encounter during their acculturation to a new context. By conceptualizing the current project utilizing the tenets of CSP, I was able to elicit and represent the stories of the acculturation journey of immigrant athletes using (i.e., moving stories, guided journey, mandala drawing) that may centralize the expression of their experiences and identities rather than marginalizing their voices and experiences.

#### **2.4 Critical View of Acculturation as a Continuous Process**

This section reviews previous research on acculturation from a critical epistemological position. This approach represents a shift from previous linear and post-positivist conceptions of acculturation to viewing this process as culturally constituted that are complex, multifaceted and dynamically produced within matrices of social power (see Ryba, 2017). This section is divided into the following topics; critical approaches to acculturation, emergence of critical acculturation within sport, and gaps within the literature.

**Critical approaches to acculturation.** Due to increasing globalizing and the extensive movement of people, the concept of acculturation has become progressively important to study and understand. Critical acculturation scholars have argued that previous research excluded subtleties such as the fluidities and dynamicity of acculturation in terms of how it is experienced as a continuous process, as immigrants move and mix between cultural practices (Bhatia, 2002; Chirkov, 2009a; Rudmin, 2009). These negotiations and fluidities described have not been adequately acknowledged within much of the previous models in cross-cultural psychology. Critical approaches to acculturation are positioned as a different strand of research as opposed to previous uni-dimensional/static approaches used to examine and understand this process. These writings critique the previous theoretical, epistemological and methodological approaches used to frame this topic by advocating that there is no one best way forward to study the complex phenomenon of acculturation (Bhatia & Ram, 2001; Bhatia, 2002; Chirkov, 2009b).

However, one might be able to utilize the following approaches to get to the heart of the issue; decolonizing methodology, interpretive thematic analysis, life story, narrative

inquiry, or discourse approach to understand the acculturation process. Critical acculturation scholars seem to favor relativist and social constructionist approaches with regards to how a specific culture shapes and is shaped by the individual or newcomer. This approach is more flexible, in that it attempts to account for the complexity surrounding the acculturation process, by asserting that this topic cannot be studied as a universal phenomenon (Bhatia & Ram, 2001; Chirkov, 2009a, 2009b; Schinke & McGannon, 2014). The flexibility of this theoretical approach is elucidated through the inclusion of the idiosyncratically important “I” positions providing more insights into the stories of immigrants/newcomers and the dynamic aspects of acculturation. Previously, Bhatia (2002) discussed the presumptive assumptions made in a concept such as “acculturation strategies” that all immigrants can possibly achieve a happy balance, or blend, of two or more cultures. He proposed that each individual constitutes identity through a number of different “I” positions that are shaped by issues such as race, context, and power. From these perspectives, the process of acculturation is viewed as a construct that is complex, dynamic, and dependent on the contexts where it occurs. This complexity includes oppositions and contradictions that creates tensions between inner cultural positions, such as adopting to the cultural practices of the receiving community while attempting to retain the cultural practices from country of origin. This tension requires negotiation through a dialogical process.

Chirkov (2009b) asserted in his critique that the complex nature of the acculturation process requires diverse thinking in relation to the participants, utilizing various epistemological and methodological approaches, inter and multi-disciplinarily, and the willingness to critically analyze achieved results and obtained knowledge in

acculturation research. Acculturation is positioned as a deliberate, reflective, open-ended and continuous process that includes progress, relapses, and turns which makes it impossible to predict and control (Blodgett & Schinke, 2015; Chirkov, 2009a; Schwartz et al., 2011). According to this notion, acculturation is highly variable among immigrants because numerous factors influence this process, hence acculturation processes are difficult to capture and define. This perspective is dynamic and views acculturation as an ongoing process, not as a fixed process with fixed pathways/outcomes (Chirkov, 2009a; Rudmin, 2009). Consequently, this means several acculturation strategies can be activated simultaneously, making it difficult to predict and regulate. Rudmin (2009) proposed that the definition of acculturation should be altered to culture acquisition, with a focus on cultural learning processes (i.e., perceiving and imitating new practices and behaviors), which he argued well suit the understanding of acculturation. Through these efforts, we are able to better understand the meanings associated with acculturation and how they are experienced in various life domains, all of which have been neglected in much of the previous sport psychology literature (Bhatia, 2002; Chirkov, 2009a; Rudmin, 2009). By understanding how immigrant athletes adjust to their new sport contexts and environments, sport psychologists can inductively discover patterns of their acculturation that could inform a more critical and culturally grounded analysis of this process in its entirety. Consequently, it is important to better understand how immigrants navigate two or more cultural realities in relation to the various aspects of their lives including their involvement in sport, family roles, and their relationships with others. This approach to acculturation reflects an expansion of our understandings from the outside in (i.e., more

holistic), as opposed to inside in, and towards research and practice that is more sensitive to each socio-cultural context and the fluidities surrounding the acculturation process.

**Critical approaches that situate acculturation in sport psychology.** According to critical perspectives on acculturation processes, acculturation is a fluid process with no end and it is something most immigrant athletes experience in one instance and not necessarily in another. Researchers are starting to answer the calls made by scholars within and outside of sport psychology for richer and more complex understanding of this process (Chirkov, 2009a; Schinke & McGannon, 2014; Schinke et al., 2013). The majority of studies reviewed were aligned with the conceptions suggested by Chirkov (2009b) with regards to utilizing various epistemological and methodological approaches and centralizing the experiences of participants. Researchers have employed various qualitative inquiry methods including life story interviews (Ryba, Stambulova, & Ronkainen, 2016) and arts-based drawing methods followed by unstructured open-ended interviews (e.g., Schinke, Blodgett, McGannon, Ge, Oghene, & Seanor, 2016a; Schinke Blodgett, McGannon, Ge, Oghene, & Seanor, 2016b). The result has been the telling of newcomer athletes' stories, revealing the different voices and cultural positions operating in concert with a great multiplicity of other "I" positions in the internal and external domain (Bhatia, 2002). Furthermore, the addition of critical approaches has allowed researchers to contextualize findings to reflect the open-ended understandings of acculturation. Recently, Schinke, Blodgett, McGannon, and Ge (2016) provided an example of a multi-layered methodological approach (i.e., composite vignettes and conversational interviews) that was flexible, inductive, centralizing of the participants, and producing of more inclusive and in-depth understandings of athletes' acculturation

journeys compared to previous static quantitative approaches. Furthermore, the utilization of vignettes in the presentation of findings allowed the authors to fully capture the richness of the idiosyncratic nature of athlete's stories in terms of how they navigated between satisfactions, dissatisfactions, hope, apathy, and desperation during their entry into a national sport context. The current dissertation is the continuation of the abovementioned project (Schinke et al., 2016; Schinke et al., 2016a, 2016b) examining the fluidities of immigrant athletes' acculturation journey. The current study was designed to expand the findings from phase one of this study via utilizing mobile methods (i.e., moving stories) to provide brief glimpses into the way immigrant athletes navigate their transition between cultures as they progress through their day, conveying the fluid and multifaceted nature and nuances of the athletes' everyday life. Building on the findings from phase one of the study, the current study was also designed to generate deep insights into the athletes' everyday lives and to contextualize immigrant athletes' acculturation stories in the social and cultural context in which they occur.

Furthermore, it is also acknowledged that there is a social aspect to acculturation with regards to how immigrant athletes negotiate their identities in everyday interactional settings and with whom they encounter based on their stories (Schinke et al., 2016a; Schinke et al., 2016b). The forgoing authors brought to life the fluidity and struggles/challenges associated with social exchanges and how these exchanges push and pull athletes towards and away from integration within their sport context and environment. The abovementioned scholarships utilized vignettes to story and capture the challenges, struggles and the momentary turns in the athletes' stories with regards to navigating between cultural practices. The importance of understanding the fluidities of

acculturation and the uniqueness of each athlete's story and identity was highlighted within the above studies. The findings from these studies was used to show that the immigrant athletes acculturation journey/stories were continuous and uncertain, leaving the athletes', their coaches, and sport practitioners to continue to work on healthy shared acculturation processes. Therefore, understandings of acculturations that aligns with social constructionist underpinnings, is needed to help contextualize the turns in immigrant athletes' stories "in situ" or locally are needed to better understand the tensions and uncertainties that acculturation presents. The abovementioned authors (Schinke et al., 2016; Schinke et al., 2016a, 2016b) proposed that stories about the acculturation process were highly fluid, revealing how the athletes' navigated between satisfaction, dissatisfaction, hope, apathy and desperation during their relocation. The findings from the aforementioned studies were similar to previous critical acculturation scholarships, in that they employed vignettes or life story approaches to highlight and help contextualize the fluidities surrounding acculturation processes.

Other scholars have also utilized alternative methodologies to reveal the fluidity in sport participants stories as they enter into and begin to navigate acculturation via transnational perspectives (Ryba, Stambuloba, & Ronkainen, 2016). Ryba et al. utilized transnational framework perspectives via life stories to highlight the sociocultural adaptive practices constituted within transnational mobility and career development of 15 professional and semi-professional athletes. The findings from this study revealed the underlying pathways of the transition process, which included, social repositioning, negotiation of cultural practices, and meaning reconstruction. The authors proposed a temporal model of cultural transitions, grounded in the athletes' narratives that

encompassed various temporal and spatial vantage points. The use of a life-story narrative approach allowed for the presentation of the athletes' stories in powerful and evocative ways. Within their study, Ryba and colleagues revealed that cultural transition is animated by the following adaptive pathways; (a) repositioning and calibration of social relations and networks, (b) negotiation of cultural practices, and (c) decoding and reconstruction of meanings that regulate individual function in a specific environment (see Ryba, 2017). Research positioned as critical acculturation can contribute significantly towards advancing this research area via providing insights into the highly social, messy, and rich aspects of this process. These critical studies begin to tease at post-modernist epistemological stances in that they utilized multiple qualitative methodologies that are able to capture the richness and fluidities (i.e., tensions, relapses, turn in athletes' stories, multiple truths and uncertainties) surrounding the acculturation stories of immigrant athletes.

Postmodernism perspectives allow for questioning the notion that one particular method, theory, discourse, or worldview is the right way to know about people and their lived experiences (McGannon & Johnson, 2009; Schinke & McGannon, 2009). The methodological approach used within these critical scholarships has included; narrative research (Ryba et al., 2016; Schinke et al., 2013; Schinke & McGannon, 2014), composite vignettes (Schinke et al., 2016a, 2016b), and community based participatory research (Blodgett & Schinke, 2015; Blodgett et al., 2014). These qualitative approaches were utilized within their study as a way to empower the participants, centralize the voices of marginalized athletes, aligned with social justice agenda and a novel approach to story. Additionally, the interviewing techniques (i.e., conversational interviews, semi-structure)

used within these aforementioned scholarships were from a vantage of researchers and practitioners, offering insights different from previous static interviewing approaches used to understand acculturation processes. Through these efforts, sport psychologists are able to better understand this process via critical epistemological position and also open spaces for people in sport contexts, particularly newcomers and marginalized groups to enter into this navigation and share in its richness (Blodgett & Schinke, 2015; Ryba, 2017; Schinke et al., 2016a, 2016b). Consequently, it is important to better understand acculturation processes as it relate to immigrant athletes, if we intend to extend this research area, and provide more inclusive sport environments for newcomers. Understanding the acculturation stories of immigrant athletes from this outside in vantage and critical epistemological stand is important as it broadens the conceptualization of acculturation to include and account for issues related to culture, ethnicity, gender and social context, while capturing the complex/fluid facets of this process. This is achieved through emerging qualitative methodological approaches where acculturation is storied as non-linear and ever changing. Broadening the conceptualization of acculturation is important because it opens up the dialogue with newcomers and others in the receiving community in a reciprocal manner.

**Gaps within the literature.** Critical acculturation scholars have begun to answer the call for more holistic research projects that produces rich and in-depth descriptions of immigrants' acculturation experiences via exploring the dynamics of navigating between multiple cultural identities/practices (Chirkov, 2009a; Rudmin, 2009; Schinke et al., 2013). This section highlights some of the developments within this line of scholarship, though there have been a significant amount of studies undertaken by sport researchers

via critical acculturation lenses, there are still some gaps within the literature. One notable gap is the depth given to the study of the cultures of both home and host countries in which migrants find themselves. Should we accept that ‘culture’ is an incorporation of the shared norms, rules, and meanings of a society from this vantage as opposed to cross-cultural projects (Chirkov, 2009).

Additionally, there is a need for centralizing the individual, both newcomers and individuals in receiving communities, within acculturation. Researchers should look to continue to move towards epistemological and methodological pluralism in the search for emerging methodologies that may capture the foregoing. In the current research, I sought to follow a critical approach to acculturation by examining the settlement challenges of immigrant athletes within their sport contexts, the impact of such challenges, and the resources these athletes needed and utilized to overcome such challenges in their everyday lives and environment. The acculturation stories of immigrant athletes were explored within this dissertation via critical socio-cultural lens by positioning this process as fluid and on-going with immigrants moving and negotiating between the cultural practices of their home and host societies. To fully capture and better understand the fluidities surrounding this process, in the current research I employed one methodology with various methods (i.e., mandala drawings, conversational interviews and moving stories) that were sensitive to the stories of diverse sport participants and were also able to encourage and invite the participant athletes to reveal and discuss how they constructed/storied their acculturation journeys and movements between cultural practices, culminating with the moving stories created to highlight the athletes’ stories with insights into their everyday context and elements that prompted particular storylines.

The present study also builds on the findings of phase one of the larger project by Schinke and colleagues (2016a, 2016b) who focused on providing richer contextualization of acculturation from the stories of immigrant athletes. The current study extends this research area by revealing the fluidities associated with acculturation through moving stories. Furthermore, another gap within the critical acculturation literature relates to the power differences that exist between the researchers and the participant athletes. The majority of studies reviewed within this section from critical acculturation lenses did not take into account, or minimized the power differences/relations within their projects in terms of the participants and researcher. Within the abovementioned studies there is shift in power, in that the participant athletes serve as the “host” or expert in the context or environment, the stories provided are chosen by the athletes, and the stories are contextualized by the athletes, with the researcher acting as a tourist in that context or environment. Filling this gap would necessitate scholars becoming more sensitive towards the various power differentials within research and practice, such as type of data collected, co-construction of knowledge, and where the data is collected. This would in turn allow for an open and shared information exchange (mutually beneficial) between the research and participants.

## **2.5 Chapter Summary with Key Points**

Within the review of the literature surrounding the acculturation and adaptation processes of elite athletes relocating or migrating to pursue sport, there were three key points that support the need for the present dissertation project. In the aforementioned scholarship, the landscape of acculturation and adaptation research with immigrant, migrant, Aboriginal, and transnational athletes was described within the review of

literature through a series of strands, or foci; (a) foundational works on acculturation, (b) the emergence of more diverse approaches, and (c) critical acculturation research. Each strand was from the vantage of researchers and practitioners, offering one understanding of the acculturation journeys of sport participants and brought with it a new and different set of methodologies, epistemologies, and disciplinary approaches in understanding this topic. With the literature, each strand emerged in the different disciplines in response to critical evaluation of the tenets and methods utilized in research from other disciplines.

The first strand revolved around the foundational work on the acculturation experiences of athletes who relocated to pursue sport, which could be traced back to sport sociology literature (Elliot, 2013; Falcous & Maguire, 2005; Haugaa Engh & Agergaard, 2013; Lanfranchi & Taylor, 2001; Magee & Sugden, 2002; Maguire, 1999;). The relocation and migratory experiences of athletes were viewed against the backdrop of globalization, focusing on the migratory flow of athletes, athlete's motives for relocating or migrating, and the relocation experiences of transnational athletes. Scholarship from sport sociology were limited in that the majority of these studies focused on footballers and athletes relocating to Western European countries temporarily before returning to their country of origin. A further shortcoming in the sport sociology literature is theoretical in nature. The conceptual frameworks used to examine this phenomenon were not able to fully explore the complexity of relocation/migration. The majority of the writings examined within sport sociology on acculturation mainly focused on migrant athletes and on athletes who were short-term visitors (i.e., sojourners) as opposed to immigrant athletes (i.e., athletes who relocate permanently).

The second strand revolved around writings/scholarship surrounding the acculturation and adaptation experiences of athletes from sport psychology, adopting a realist ontological approach (e.g., Battochio et al., 2013; Elbe et al., 2016; Kontos, 2009; Meisterjahn & Wrisberg, 2013; Morela et al., 2017; Schinke et al., 2007; Schinke et al., 2011; Yukelson, 2010). The foregoing scholarship on acculturation was framed around two key tenets, where acculturation/adaptation was presented as a transitional process of change with fixed outcomes. Most of these studies were underpinned by post-positivism. Acculturation processes are complex and non-linear as they are extremely unique to each individual, encompass many turns and tensions in the process, and they also encompassed many people within the host communities and the sporting contexts. Finally, the often-held assumption was that acculturation is a linear process, and this has led sport psychologist away from capturing unique and specific cultural aspects of acculturation, as storied.

Cultural sport psychology (CSP) was shown and discussed within the second strand. Research originating from this genre were focused on centralizing issues of culture within sport contexts by generating culturally aligned understandings of diverse (i.e., immigrant) and marginalized sport participants (Blodgett, Schinke, McGannon, & Fisher, 2014; Ryba, 2017; Ryba, Schinke, & Tenenbaum, 2010; Schinke & Hanrahan, 2009). CSP research and practice was framed as an emerging line of study/inquiry focused on understanding the various culturally nuanced aspects of sport, methodological and ethical implications for athletes and researchers, and how findings from such studies can inform applied research and practice. Scholarship surrounding the acculturation stories of diverse sport participants were classified and differentiated by the athletes' intended length of

stay in the host country; that is either temporary (i.e., Aboriginal athletes, dual-career athletes, and transnational athletes) or permanent (i.e., immigrant athletes). More recently much of the research conducted from CSP lens are now becoming more critical, culturally inclusive, and employ qualitative methodologies in their conceptualization of acculturation. However, this line of inquiry is relatively new and growing, and studies that have positioned culture and/or cultural identities as part of the relocation process at the core of their research endeavors remain few. Researchers considering the cultural identities of both newcomers and those they interact with in the host culture are in a better position to understand and account for the multifaceted challenges athletes might encounter during their acculturation to a new context. Building in such considerations contribute to other work in sport psychology that has considered the social and cultural construction of marginalized identities and/or experiences.

The final strand of research on acculturation represents a shift from previous linear and positivist conception of acculturation to understanding this process as fluid and ongoing via an interpretivist lens (i.e., multiple truths). Researchers operating from this more critical view of acculturation have critiqued the previous theoretical, epistemological, and methodological approaches by advocating for an alternative approach to studying acculturation (Bhatia, 2002; Chirkov, 2009a, 2009b; Schinke & McGannon, 2014; Schinke et al., 2016). This approach is more flexible in that it attempts to account for the complexity surrounding acculturation, by asserting that acculturation cannot be studied as a universal phenomenon, but rather, it is localized. The majority of these critical studies examined focused on the acculturation stories of athletes who relocated on a permanent basis (immigrant athletes), revealing that these athletes

described/storied this complex and fluid acculturation which was continuous and without end. Most of the scholarship reviewed within this section aligned with the tenets of post-modernist approaches in that they are focused on narrative methodologies that are interpretivist (i.e., multiple truths) in nature and flexible in accounting for the fluidities and multiple truths surrounding acculturation.

Through the review of literature, I was able to move beyond the disciplinarily boundaries and considered the writings from parallel fields of study on acculturation (i.e., sport sociology, sport psychology, and critical acculturation research). Overall, the current dissertation was designed to extend this area of research by examining stories of immigrant athletes' acculturation challenges within their sport and non-sport context, the impact of such challenges on the athletes and the resources these athletes might need or utilize to overcome such acculturation challenges utilizing mobility methods (i.e., moving stories). The current project was aimed at advancing our understanding of acculturation processes of immigrant athletes, leading to the development of more effective and equitable strategies and interventions for working and interacting with culturally diverse sport participants.

## **2.6 Research Questions**

The following research questions guide this study:

- 1) How do male and female elite national level athletes who immigrated to Canada during their adolescence story their acculturation challenges, and how were such challenges storied as impacting their lives?
- 2) What multi-level acculturation strategies did the athletes experience within their stories in relation to the role of their family and community?

- 3) How do the acculturation strategies relate to encouraging the adjustment, acceptance, and retention of immigrants in Canadian sport contexts?

## Chapter 3

### 3.1 Methodology

The methodology section is comprised of seven sections: (a) situating the project, (b) narrative inquiry approach and mobile methods (c) researcher's reflexivity (d) participants, (e) data collection, (f) data analysis, and (g) authenticity. I chose narrative inquiry as the qualitative research methodology to detail the acculturation journey of immigrant athletes. Qualitative research is an umbrella term for an array of attitudes and strategies towards conducting inquiry that are aimed at understanding social phenomena and the ways in which people make sense and extract meaning from their stories. The basis of qualitative research lies in its interpretive approach to social reality and in the descriptions of the experiences or stories of human beings, that is, how people make sense of their world/reality and the experiences that they have in that world (Creswell, 2003; Patton, 2002; Sparkes & Smith, 2014). For most qualitative researchers, multifaceted, constructed realities exist and the process of inquiry is a matter of interpreting the words and stories of others. Within the current project, narrative inquiry was chosen because I was interested in understanding the athletes' stories of their acculturation journeys and the stories told by the athletes while situated within their own cultural and sport settings. Additionally, narrative inquiry was suitable and appropriate in terms of answering the research questions and objectives of the study. This approach also aligned with the social constructionism framing of the project in that people use stories to make sense of their experiences and who they are through the stories provided by the sociocultural realms they inhabit (Crotty, 1998; McGannon & Spance, 2010; Smith & Sparkes, 2008). The current study was designed to better understand how immigrant athletes derived meanings

from their surroundings and how these stories allows for the highlighting of unique aspects of their acculturation and participation in sports.

### **3.2 Situating the Project**

Within this project, I adopted a social constructionist approach to understand the complexity surrounding the acculturation stories of immigrant athletes. The approach chosen reflects my philosophical stance or my beliefs about the nature of the social world (ontology) and the nature of knowledge and how it can be acquired (epistemology). Epistemology is defined as theories about the nature of knowledge that presupposes the relationship between the knower and the known (Crotty, 1998; Smith & Sparkes, 2016; Sparkes & Smith, 2014). Epistemology relates to how knowledge can be created, developed, and communicated, in other words, it means to know and involves asking what is the nature of the relationship between the inquirer and the known. Ontology is the study of being (Crotty, 1998, p.10) and it is concerned with what constitutes reality, in other words, what the real world is, and what can be known about it (Creswell, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Sparkes & Smith, 2014). A social constructionist approach informed the philosophical basis of the current study and also impacted how the research questions were formulated, how the project was positioned/conceptualized, and carried out. Both epistemology and ontology are related as they build upon and inform each other. In other words, the nature of reality is informed by and simultaneously informs assumptions and values about knowledge. A social constructionist approach adopts a relativist ontological stance (there are multiple constructed realities/truths), a subjective epistemological stance (knowledge is socially constructed, see Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Sparkes & Smith, 2014). Within social constructionism, the individual is at the centre of

the meaning making experience. The central tenets of social constructionism are that reality and meaning making are socially constructed and it holds that people make their own sense of social realities, which are influenced by the environment that surrounds the individual (Creswell, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Patton, 2002). As such all knowledge and meaningful realities are contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context (Crotty, 2003).

Thus, reconceptualising that meanings are not discovered but are rather constructed (i.e., stories about athletes' acculturation). Furthermore, this approach assumes that the social world is constantly being constructed through group interactions and the key process by which ideas are given meaning is through narratives (i.e., the stories we tell to make meanings). These stories are not viewed as simply the product of individuals' minds but are seen as being created in the shared space between the narrator and the audience (Crotty, 1998; Gergen & Gergen, 2012; Sparkes & Smith, 2014). In essence, my understanding of the athletes' acculturation journeys/stories is co-constructed with them through mutual interactions and negotiations within the research setting or through the data collection phase.

The current study is presented from a social constructionist lens; a philosophical grounding in which knowledge is assumed to be independently constructed by individuals as they give meaning to their experiences through their stories, which is influenced by social, historical, and cultural narratives (Crotty, 1998). My gathering of the athletes' stories is therefore conducted with an understanding that the stories the athletes tell of their acculturation journeys and my interpretation of these stories will vary depending on

changes in time and cultural context (Gergen, Josselson, & Freeman, 2015). To understand the acculturation stories and challenges of immigrant athletes within their sport contexts, a social constructionist approach enabled me to better understand the ways in which these athletes participated in the creation/description of their perceived social reality via the stories they shared. Within the current project, the social constructionist approach provided a broader and deeper understanding of context specific processes and fluidities of acculturation. By adopting a social constructionist approach, I was able to utilize a wide range of data collection methods that matched with co-construction, including guided journeys, conversational style interviews where stories around acculturation were shared, moving stories, and arts-based approaches, leading to a richer understanding of the participants' words/stories and how they constructed their acculturation experiences.

Within this project, the acculturation stories of immigrant athletes were examined through critical socio-cultural lens (see Chirkov, 2009a; Schinke et al., 2013; Schinke et al., 2016), positioning this process as fluid and on-going, with immigrants moving and navigating between the cultural practices of their home and host cultures. The social constructionist approach aligned with the objectives of this project because it allowed me to share in the co-construction of the acculturation stories with the help of a mobility method (i.e., moving stories) to identify factors that otherwise could not have been easily exposed or described through previous static and linear descriptions of this process. To understand the complexities associated with the acculturation process, I drew upon data gathering methods that allowed for rich and in-depth descriptions of the athletes' acculturation stories, in turn, encouraging participants to share their relocation/journeys

and the pursuit of sport. Such an approach helped to reveal the meanings embedded in the athletes' narratives within their sport and non-sport context, leading to deeper insights into the context under study. The constructionist approach emphasizes the ability to create realities through stories, in its varied forms of presentation, stimulating a process of continuous creation (Gergen et al., 2015). Also, the social constructionist approach aligned with the suggestions from critical acculturation scholarship (Chirkov, 2009a, 2009b) on utilizing a variety of methods, in order to excavate into the fluidity surrounding this process and the importance of contextual factors, such as narratives, life stories, ethnography, and mobility methods. The purpose of utilizing a social constructionist approach within this project was to understand a particular phenomenon (acculturation) in its unique context, and not to generalize to the entire population of immigrant athletes. Additionally, social constructionism also aligns to the tenets of critical acculturation in terms of how it is always fluid and dynamic (e.g., shared with others in the receiving community and a social process).

### **3.3 Narrative Inquiry Approach and Mobile Method**

The current study was informed by a narrative inquiry approach, which is a subtype of qualitative research (see Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Patton, 2002; Sparkes & Smith, 2014). Narrative inquiry is based on the premise that, as human beings, we come to understand and give meaning to our lives through co-construction of stories. The narrative approach allowed for rich description of the acculturation stories of immigrant athletes and an exploration of the meanings that these athletes derived and shared about their relocation experiences. Narrative inquiry amplifies the voices of participants that may have otherwise remained silent or marginalized within

research processes. By utilizing narrative inquiry approaches within the present study, I was able to elicit rich stories that provided more in-depth understandings of the athletes' stories of their acculturation journeys and challenges the immigrant athletes encountered in relation to their relocation and immersions within their sport contexts, and the strategies they utilized to overcome the settlement challenges they encountered. The knowledge generated from this approach can offer the readers and researchers a deeper understanding of the participants' stories about their acculturation and it is also useful in uncovering the nuances and details of the athletes' previous experiences such as their relocation to Canada and subsequent acculturation. Narrative inquiry was well suited in representing social phenomena like acculturation in its full richness and complexity, and also provided insights into the meaning the athletes constituted in their everyday lives.

The current research was designed to combine narrative inquiry and mobile methods (i.e., guided journeys) in the data collection phase. Recognizing the impact of settings, contexts, and other narrative resources available at the time of storytelling (Douglas & Carless, 2015), we utilized a mobile method approach that allowed the athletes to tell their stories while situated within their own cultural setting. Immersion into the athletes' daily lives provided a unique vantage into their daily routines, allowing the athletes to tell their stories while immersed in the contexts that their routines occur in, and for the researcher to experience the implicit web of social relationships that the athletes were engaged in (Kusenbach, 2003). Although contested in definition, mobile methods are defined as participation in patterns of movement/behavior while conducting research (Buscher et al., 2011; Jiron, 2011; Ross, Renold, Holland, & Hillman, 2009; Sparkes & Smith, 2014). Mobile methods focus on understanding people's lives as they move across

and between social spaces to generate rich understandings of people's everyday lives. Such an approach offered unique and powerful insights into the athletes' routine movements, their personal biographies, as well as the socio-cultural context in which there were immersed (i.e., sport and non-sport context) in. Mobile methods are tools for describing and understanding, rather than for explaining and predicting, patterns of human travel. Within the literature, mobile methods are defined as research techniques displaying the following five characteristics; person centered, interactive, data set driven, metaphoric, and place based (Pink, 2009; Sheller & Urry, 2006, Spitulnik, 2002; Urry, 2003).

Mobile methods researchers interact with those being researched and such interactions best occur face to face, in real time, and place, in what Sheller and Urry (2006) term co-present immersion. One way to ascertain this is through the observation of people's movement, bodies strolling, driving, leaning, running, climbing and so forth. In the current dissertation, guided journeys with the help of visual representations (i.e., videos, photographs, and mandala drawings) was used to generate in-depth insights into the immigrant athletes' everyday lives in terms of how they navigated between cultural practices and acculturation processes. The participants were encouraged to story any insights associated with relocating to pursue sport and their associated acculturation challenges they encountered. Within the data collection phase, I moved alongside the athletes during the data collection both physically and through contextually meaningful and significant spaces in their day-to-day lives. Shadowing techniques in the form of a 'guided journey' was chosen as the most appropriate approach/ mode of inquiry to describe and capture the athletes' mobility and relocation journey/stories. The movement

in and out of spaces provides multi-sensorial meanings by those involved as part of the process of shared travel that is context specific. Buscher and Urry (2009) suggested that traveling or shadowing participants, and participating in the various patterns of movement and experiences that emerge, is a powerful means to explore the sensory and constitutive nature of mobility.

This multi-modal qualitative approach was suitable and appropriate for the current project because I was interested in engaging with participants by collecting real-time data and stories of their acculturation experiences, while they moved between and within spaces and in their daily routines. Understanding the cultural stories of immigrant athletes within their sport context allowed me to gain access in a novel way in terms of how some cultural settings can be positive or problematic in certain circumstances (i.e., inclusive vs. non-inclusive settings). Furthermore, the methodological approach chosen provided embodied and multisensory data, revealing some of the mundane, everyday spaces that shaped the interactions and connections between the athletes and others in the receiving community. By utilizing such an approach, this project extends beyond previous static cross-cultural interviewing and understandings of acculturation within much of the literature by bringing to light aspects of the sociocultural context in which a story is told and further insight into how athletes' story is constructed. This mode of inquiry and interviewing also aligns with the suggestion presented by critical acculturation scholars (Chirkov, 2009; Schinke et al., 2013). Mobile methods provided me with closer access to athletes' stories and these then parlay into recommendations, not only for the acculturating athletes, but also those inhabiting the sport contexts with.

### **3.4 Researcher Reflexivity**

The idea of reflexivity emerged out of the critical and interpretivist approaches of feminism (McGannon & Johnson, 2009; Schinke et al., 2012), advocating that research processes are a mutual journey taken by the researcher and the participants, whereby both parties are influenced and are changed by the research process through their interactions. According to the aforementioned authors, reflexivity involves turning the lens onto one's self in terms of excavating into both the researchers' and participants' roles in relation to the situated nature of the research project. Reflexivity requires critical self-reflection, or examination of the ways in which the researcher's social background, assumptions, positioning and behaviors impact on the research process (Schinke et al., 2012; Sparkes & Smith, 2014). A researcher's background or social position might affect what she/he chooses to examine/explore, one's epistemological stance, the methodologies utilized and the framing and representations of the findings/conclusions. This critical self-reflection or critical examination have further implications for how the participants' marginalized cultures or identities are researched, portrayed and ultimately written about the athletes within research processes. Researchers are participants in the research process and cannot be distance or separated from this process and from the findings they present. Therefore, it was important that I began by acknowledging some of my assumptions/ bias and how my involvement and connection to the research topic could have influenced the findings and research project. Additionally, reflexivity is an ongoing process with the researchers charting/recording the process via keeping a reflexive research journal or diary to help focus on internal responses, enabling oneself to capture and better understand changes and developments in relation to understanding of the method, the research progress, and content (Carless & Douglas, 2008; Schinke, McGannon, Parham, & Lane, 2012; Sparkes

& Smith, 2014). Through this process, researchers come to understand that they are explicitly linked with the participants and no matter how hard they try, they will always influence the method and any claim that follows from using it will be infused with their subjectivities (Smith & McGannon, 2018). In other words, it is impossible to fully remove my influence from the overall research process.

Given the critical and social constructionist underpinnings of this current dissertation, it is important that I identified and discussed how my own cultural subjectivities/background influenced and shaped the overall research process and project. A self-reflexive process (i.e., journal writing and field notes) was used to illustrate and describe how I was actively involved and connected in the research with immigrant athletes and how this connection shaped the knowledge generated in terms of how I interpreted/understood the stories these athletes conveyed about their acculturation. Journal writing enabled me to interrogate my own values and assumptions more critically by writing down how my research questions were shifting, how my views were changing, and how these changes influence concordant shifts in my research question. In the spirit of acknowledging my connections to the current project and identifying the position/epistemological stance, which aligns this current project, I now begin my reflexive journey with a personal introduction as a ‘cultural insider’. It was important that I acknowledge my role in the generation of the stories, as narratives are co-constructed, and derive meaning, within relationships (Sparkes & Smith, 2007).

My name is Odirin Patrick Oghene; I come from an African-Canadian, working-class family, where my position is the middle child with two other siblings (an older and younger). I was born and raised in Nigeria and I migrated to Canada with my family

during my early teenage years. I strongly believe that my experiences in relation to my relocation/migration to Canada (both positive and negative) brought and led me to my current area of interest, which revolves around understanding the acculturation experiences and challenges of immigrant athletes. My interest in the immigrant scholarship resulted from my first-hand experiences as an immigrant to Canada and my previous graduate project on elite-level masters athletes. I strongly believe that my interest in immigrant athletes is the direct result from my previous graduate project on masters aged elite-level athletes and my personal ties to this topic. Through my work with masters aged athletes, I came to the realization that sports and athletics can significantly influence the acculturation process, in that sports brings people together by providing a way around the social, cultural and linguistic obstacles faced by immigrant athletes relocating to pursue sport in Canada. Through my various readings, sport has been depicted to foster healthy acculturation/adaptation and integration of immigrant athletes into a new society/environment. I believe that I bring an interesting and unique perspective to the immigrant athletes' scholarship, given that I immigrated to Canada from Nigeria during my early adolescent years. I strongly believe that my experiences as an immigrant makes me highly attuned and sensitive to the adaptation challenges these athletes might experience. Although, initially it took me some time to adjust to the culture shock I experienced when I first relocated to Ontario, my acculturation/adaptation into the Canadian customs and culture was fairly easy and quick. I was able to absorb the language, weather, people and culture with little effort or struggles. Some of the difficulties I experienced I would say the hardest for me was not having any extended family close by.

My extended family (i.e., uncles, cousins, aunts, and family friends) have always a crucial role in my life growing up, but because we relocated to Canada those ties were sort of broken. Those ties and connections were definitely important in terms of how I perceived myself, and my sense of belonging to Canada. Life for me was definitely difficult initially but gradually I began to adjust to life without my extended family close by. With time, I was able to forge new relationships, friendships and connections with individuals in the receiving community who I now consider my extended family or at least filling that role of an extended family. Looking back at my acculturation journey, I feel blessed and honored to be where I am today. Although I experienced some challenges along the way, I feel that those experiences are part of my path/journey. Moving to a new country, where nothing resembles what you left back in your native country is always challenging but the most difficult obstacle for me was transitioning to my new environment. Not that my parents were entirely naïve, but between wanting to believe that they could build a better life for our family, and with people's assurances that they would be emotionally, physically, and financially better off, perhaps we expected more than was reasonable.

My first few years in Canada were challenging, other than missing my extended family, I also struggled to find my place within my community. Starting at a new school, making new friends, adjusting to a new bus route, adjusting to a new school system, my daily routines, were just examples of some of the challenges I had to overcome upon arriving to Canada. At times, I felt as though that "life back home" was going on without me and I was missing out on important family milestones, leading to me feeling down, frustration, and feeling very homesick. When feeling homesick, I felt not connected to the

receiving community as though I was an outside looking in with no connection to Canada. I went to periods of frustration and confusion in terms of the difficulties I was experiencing within my new community. As time went on, I began to understand how things worked, I gradually learned many new things about my community such as how to engage with people in the community, joined a sport team, started attending school, the different subtle cultural norms and values while by Canadians. This social adjustment challenges I experienced as a newcomer is also tied to the challenges a lot of newcomers experience as well upon relocation. As a newcomer and starting a new life in a different country, it is important to learn about the receiving community and how to navigate through any challenges encountered along the way. Moving to a different country represent a new country, a new life, and new challenges. Just giving myself time to become more comfortable with the change and transition was key, the only way for me to succeed in my new community was to focus on what I had here and the connections/relationships I have made along the way, rather than thinking about the past.

My research journey in terms of understanding the acculturation stories of immigrant athletes has made me consciously aware of my own personal adjustment and relocation experiences to Canada. As an immigrant, I also experienced the challenges of living in a foreign country in terms of navigating between multiple cultural practices. During the initial stage of the research process, I had unresolved questions and uncertainties about each part of the research process (i.e., data collection and data analysis) due to the moving story approach chosen to frame to the study. I felt I was not knowledgeable enough about this approach to data collection, I had my reservations but thought, “hey I will learn as I go”, boy was I wrong. It seemed as if I was travelling

around a big city that I have never been to without any maps or signpost to give me direction, simply because I was immersed in the context with the athletes. The feeling of reservations I had was related to my lack of knowledge about mobile methods (i.e., guided journey), which felt similarly to my acculturation/relocation journey and feeling uncertain about the receiving community a few years back. It felt like a parallel process for me in terms of taking me back to some of the relocation challenges I experienced upon relocating to Canada. However, conducting this research has enabled me to explore my multiple cultural identities as a Nigerian-Canadian male, and my student identity, and as a new parent. Throughout the research process, it became more evident that I was deeply affected and connected to the different parts of my cultural identities. It was not only my ethnic identity that influenced the way I interacted and engaged with the athletes, but I feel my interest and strong connections to this topic played a significant role in helping to build rapport with the athletes.

While working on this project, it became evident that whether I would like to admit it or not, I bring my Nigerian immigrant identity to the research. I find it to be both rewarding and challenging at times. Working on this project allowed me to step back and take a critical look from a culturally open-minded perspective in terms of discovering other aspect of myself, which resulted in improved cultural sensitivity towards the athletes I interacted with in the current study. I feel like the most important lesson I learned from this experience was an increased awareness about my perception/conception of immigrant athletes and myself. I now see and understand myself as someone who is immersed and connected to multiple cultural practices or ‘cultural being’, not only ethnically diverse but also individually and aesthetically diverse. Additionally, working on this project and

interacting with the athletes during the guided tours my ethnic identity resurfaced in terms of feeling at home among other immigrants because I felt like I belonged and we shared a connection. Throughout the data collection phase of the project, my memory of my initial relocation experience to Canada keep resurfacing when I was talking to the athletes, arriving at a location I have not been to or traveling to conduct the guided journeys. Aspects of my ethnic identity were resurfaced when discussing my experience relocating to Canada with the athletes about my connection to the topic, which brought the athletes and myself closer.

I believe that throughout the data collection process I was aware of my feelings and reactions during the course of the shadowing, which helped me become more sensitive when interpreting and compelling the stories of the athletes. Using reflexivity was very beneficial for me during this process, as it enabled me to interrogate my own acculturation journey in terms of the challenges I experienced along the way, which in turn I feel gave me increased self-awareness of my own understandings and perceptions as a researcher. Reflexivity was used during the course of the data collection (i.e., field notes), data analysis (i.e., second code and experts to consult with) and data presentation. I was able to improve my understanding of the possible implications of my role as a researcher, and my own acculturation experiences on each part of the research process. For example, I noticed that myself and the other researcher who analyzed the data were always using our personal experiences and assumptions about our acculturation to Canada as a tool to search for meanings from the data during the data analysis and interpretation phase. Such as, what was it like for me when I started school in Canada, who were the first people I interacted with in Canada, how long did it take for me to feel like I adjusted

to my community and is it feeling ever going to end. The use of reflexivity during the research process and shadowing also contributed to my increased awareness of my own and the athletes' multiple cultural identities. Through field notes I was able to monitor and record some of the potential implications of my personal experience and assumptions on the data analysis and interpretation of the data.

While working on this project I found I struggled at times to connect with a few of the athletes, while at times it was easier to connect. I believe it was easier for some athletes to connect with me because there were no expectations attached to our meeting. However, my need to be liked and accepted by the athletes and the importance of feeling connected with each of the athletes was on the forefront because if I did not connect with the athletes it will be evident in the data collected. I feel this need stems from my belief in the importance of relationships for enhancing communication, honesty, openness, commitment, and growth. I also feel I desired to be seen in a positive light, as trustworthy, understanding, and compassionate. While I wondered how some of the athletes viewed me just because it was a little bit challenging to connect with them, others voluntarily told me directly what they thought of me, resulting in some of the athletes inviting me to meet their friends, meet their family, and coaches. However, through my various interactions and immersion in the athletes' context I felt accepted by some of the athletes which led to the formation of meaningful relationships and a deeper understanding of their acculturation and life experiences.

### **3.5 Participants**

The participants in this study consisted of nine ( $n=6$  male,  $n=3$  female) elite level athletes (i.e., national and international level athletes) who had immigrated or relocated to

Canada permanently to pursue sport. The participants all competed at the international level and were drawn from six different sport disciplines: swimming ( $n=2$ ), soccer ( $n=1$ ), badminton ( $n=1$ ), boxing ( $n=3$ ), basketball ( $n=1$ ), and bobsleigh ( $n=1$ ). All of the athletes spoke English and had relocated to Canada between the ages of seven and 21 years, and at the time of this study ranged in age from 18 – 28 years. They had immigrated to Canada from nine different countries from South America ( $n=1$ ), Africa ( $n=1$ ), Australia ( $n=1$ ), Asia ( $n=3$ ), and Europe ( $n=3$ ). The participants were recruited via connections established by my supervisor at various national sport associations and national sport centers. The participants within this study were also part of a much larger funded study and previous study focused on examining the acculturation stories in relation to the challenges of immigrant athletes within sport contexts and non-sport contexts. A convenience sampling approach was taken to recruit these participants from the various elite level sporting organizations and communities affiliated with the Canadian sports centers. The athletes who expressed an interest in sharing their everyday lives and their acculturation stories through a prolonged engagement (i.e., over the course of a day) with the researcher were contacted/invited to participate. The participants were selected and included in the study because they represented “information-rich cases” to study in-depth, in that we can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the research topic and questions. Once consent was received, I coordinated a schedule that was most convenient for the athlete to ensure that they were comfortable with the entire process and the shadowing.

### **3.6 Data Collection.**

Upon receiving approval from the researcher’s institutional research ethics board, elite level immigrant athletes were contacted to participate in the study. During this day

data was collected using the following four methods: (a) arts-based activity focused the representation of the athletes' daily routine, (b) conversational interviews, (c) guided journey, and (d) field-notes. Aligning with the social constructionist framing of this study that the social context that surrounds the individual impacts their stories and the meaning(s) attached to these to how they view the world, I asked the athletes to lead me through a day in their lives (see Jiron, 2011). The data generated are thus comprised of multiple, overlapping, and intertwined strands, offering their own insights to the fuller project. Within the current project, mobile method was used to garner athlete's stories that may not have been produced in sedentary or static interviews, moving the current study beyond previous acculturation research with immigrant athletes.

The first step of the data collection process was the art-based activity (visual representation of their daily activity). For six ( $n=6$ ) out of the 9 athletes, the start of the day began with the art-based activity and a brief introduction. While for the other ( $n=3$ ) athletes the drawings were performed half way through the guided journey (i.e., after their practice or class). The second step involved discussions about what was going to go down in the day to come via conversational interview. Then in the third step, the athletes led me through a guided journey and I lived the process with the athletes for the day. The fourth step was the creation of field notes, which captured aspects of the athletes' context and also provided contextual information that aided in the crafting of the vignettes (i.e., moving stories). Each shadowing encounter was recorded and field-notes were recorded before, during, and after each encounter. The abovementioned steps were chosen because they seem logical and allowed the athletes to lead the research process, which enhanced the possibility of authentic stories being shared in a more spontaneous manner. What

follows is the chronological description of this holistic approach to excavating into the athletes' stories.

**Step one: Art-based method approaches.** The nine athletes foreshadowed their daily routine by representing it in the form of a circle (otherwise known as mandala), a tree, a flowing river, or any other image they chose to draw that was meaning for them (i.e., a zigzag timeline). These drawings were used to elicit and convey the athletes' acculturation stories, challenges, and adaptation strategies within their sport context and non-sport context. A number of researchers have utilized art-based approaches in eliciting information from participants and as a form of self-reflection within research and practice (see Blodgett et al., 2013; Blodgett et al., 2014; Potash, Yun Chen, & Yan Tsang, 2015; Schinke et al., 2013; Stuckey & Nobel, 2010). These authors suggested that art-based approaches are useful and are basic tools for self-awareness, self-expression, conflict resolution and healing.

Within this project, I integrated the arts-based activity as a novel way of engaging with the immigrant athletes, and as a method of generating data beyond the scope of most static qualitative interview-based methods. This approach was used to facilitate self-expression and in this vein, the participants in this study were asked to draw a circle, tree or river, and within that form, create an image that was reflective of their typical daily activities. I then asked the athletes to select a form that resonated and captured their relocation experiences. This activity enabled the athletes to settle into a reflective space, immersing themselves in thinking about their acculturation journeys and challenges. Common aspects incorporated into athletes' drawing included life before training, how they moved about the city, important landmarks they encountered daily, their training

context, ending with their return home and their family life. The arts-based activity allowed for the highlighting of some the complexities and nuances associated with the athletes' days and acculturation journeys by creating a safe space to creatively describe and draw out their daily routines, which brought forward stories about their acculturation. For example, some of the athletes discussed how they found this art-work storying beneficial because they have never taken the time to put down on paper the various components on their day and what it took (i.e., time and resources) to get through a typical day in their lives. This arts-based method was used as an introductory exercise as the self-reflective nature of the activity supported athletes in outlining the story they wanted to tell (Blodgett et al., 2013; Sinding Warren, & Patton, 2012)

One of the major contributions of the art-based method to this study was in relation to balancing the power differences between the athletes and myself. Utilizing an art-based approach during the guided journey enable the athletes to feel in control of their day as opposed to feeling overwhelmed with the researcher following them along for the day. The art-based method also provided the athletes with an opportunity to give structure or coherence to their daily routines. Furthermore, by creating my own art-work alongside the athletes and revealing some aspects of my identity and acculturation journey, the data collection felt like a more reciprocal and shared experience rather than a one-sided or static experience. The use of art-based method within this study encouraged disclosure and authenticity between the athletes and I, leading back the social constructionist approach assumptions of co-construction that frames this study.

**Step two: Conversational interviews.** Through the discussion created and emerging from the arts-based activity, the athletes led a conversational interview

introducing the different aspect of their drawings. The data collection phase then shifted into what was going to go down in the day to come. Conversational style interviews are the most open-ended and flexible approach in relation to interviewing (Creswell, 2003; Patton, 2002; Sparkes & Smith, 2014). This interview approach offers maximum flexibility to pursue information in whatever direction that appears to be appropriate, depending on what emerges from a particular setting (i.e., arts-based activity) to talking with one or more individuals in that setting. The unstructured interview began with a broad, open-ended question with a topic area such as ‘tell me about your mandala’ or ‘what is your view on a certain issue (Sparkes & Smith, 2014) and in relation to themes brought up by the participants via the mandala they created. This unstructured type of interview involved giving the participants more control over the interactions, thereby eliciting and inviting participants’ stories, and the meanings they give to events in detailed ways.

Conversational interviewing aligned with the objectives of the current project in terms of inviting the participants to share and convey in-depth stories or accounts about their acculturation journey, thereby revealing the multiple intersecting layers of their acculturation and their lives (Schinke & McGannon, 2014; Schinke et al., 2016). This interview approach was chosen due to its open-ended and flexible nature, allowing for the pursuit of information in whatever direction the athletes felt made most sense. This flexibility surrounding conversational interviews relates to the issue of power noted above. For example, I formulated specific questions often spontaneously related to the athletes’ experiences moving to Canada, and how that felt for them initially. The questions included; “tell about what you miss the most about your home country or what

sort of challenges did you experience when you first relocated?” Utilizing this unstructured approach, I was able to invite the participants to share stories that convey the complexity and depth of their story telling (Blodgett et al., 2014; Sparkes and Smith, 2014), and also the fluidity in their acculturation stories.

After describing their drawings, the athletes continued onto their daily routines such as attending practice, free time before class, quiet time after practice, moving around the city to the next activity, and meeting with family and friends. Utilizing this approach, I was able to obtain in-depth and rich stories about the immigrant athletes acculturation journey and challenges they encountered along the way. Additionally, conversational style interviewing was appropriate and suitable in understanding the research topic as it aligned with the tenets of a social constructionist approach, which tends to rely on participants’ stories and meanings about the situations under investigation (Chirkov, 2009a; Creswell, 2003). Examples of some of my dialog with the athletes are presented in chapter 4, where I was discussing the story of their artworks and aspects of the family was brought to life. Due to the open-ended and flexible nature of conversational interview, meaningful dialogue with the athletes occurred and stories about the role family and community played in helping them achieve success were unearthed.

Within the analysis I made a decision to only focus on the dialogue or audio track of each shadowing I performed with the athletes. The video recorded data collected was not rich enough and mostly focused on the mandala drawings and conversational interviews. This was due to my inexperience with qualitative data collection. However, the video data collected was used to clarify what was missed in the data analysis process, data context, and to tease out some of the nuances in the athletes’ descriptions and stories.

For example, the video data provided me with information about the athletes' training context and what activities they performed while at the various training facilities. One of the main contributions of the conversational interview to this study was that it enabled the athletes to construct and convey their mandala stories and what was going down in the day to come in their own ways and pace, with minimal hold on their responses by me. The conversational interviews took place within the athletes' contexts, such as training facility, university campus, the athlete's home, restaurants, sub-ways and buses, while forming ongoing relationships thereby both the athletes and myself were on the move, adding openness and movement in the location to the data collection as opposed to static data collection approaches.

**Step three: Guided journeys.** Guided journey involves following selected people in their everyday occupation and moving with them both physically and in interaction (see Czarniawska, 2007; Gilliant-Ray, 2011; McDonald, 2005; Spitulnik, 2002; Urry, 2003; Vukic, & Keddy, 2002). After the athletes finished storying their daily routines, I asked them to lead me through a 'guided journey' that would continue the process of allowing the athletes to lead the research process. This change from the usual research power dynamic allowed athletes to determine how information was shared and what storylines were focused on (Jiron, 2011). During the guided journey, I asked the athletes to walk/guide me through their typical daily activities including life before training, how they move about their city, their training context and ending with their return home. This 'guided journey' involved me accompanying the athletes and immersing myself into their daily routines (i.e., being there) in order to understand what they did and how they navigated through their everyday lives by capturing any dialogue and interactions that

occurred. In essence, through the guided tour I was able to step into the athletes' contexts (i.e., sport and non-sport) and lived the process with the athletes for a day. Journeying through locales of significance with research participants has been used to help co-generate meaningful representations of their everyday lives (Ross et al., 2009; Spitulnik, 2002). Typical locations along athletes' tours included; subway stations, university campuses, gyms, restaurants, coffee shops, building lobbies, and their homes. Meals were shared in school in school cafeterias, restaurants, and athlete's home, and hot drinks were shared in various types of cafes and coffee shops. Athletes' tours also included times of casual conversation that further developed my relationship with the athletes, as well as allowing me to co-construct and exchange stories and develop an understanding of the athletes' social contexts, training routine, and their interaction and connection with other individuals (i.e., friends, training partners, coaches and family members) encountered during the tour. For example, through the guided journey I was able to meet some of the people the athletes drew on their artwork as influential in their lives and acculturation. One case in particular involved one of the athletes who mentioned the role of her family in her arts-based activity/storying and along the day she ended up inviting me over for dinner, so I could meet the family she kept talking about. Through the guided journey, the information I collected (i.e., artworks and conversational interview) provided a rich, detailed, first hand and multidimensional picture of the acculturation process via the athletes' stories and stories from our various exchanges over the course of the day. The data collected generated rich insights into the athletes' everyday lives, my stories of living the process with them for a day, and the way in which people or immigrant athletes enact stories, give meaning to their mobility's, and construct them on a daily basis.

Immersing myself in the athletes' contexts aligned with the tenets of social constructionism, as it enabled me to understand how these individuals conveyed their experiences via the stories and information they provided about their acculturation. One of the main contributions of guided journey to this study was it allowed me to collect/gather stories about the athlete's acculturation as we moved through a day in their lives via my observations and conversational interviews. The guided journey also allowed me to immerse myself and live in the process with the athletes for a day, revealing what a typical day looks like for the athletes and a glimpse of the nuances surrounding their day. One advantage and contribution of the guided journey was that it provided a glimpse into the sociocultural context in which the athletes told their stories and how athletes construct their stories in different context (i.e., sport and non-sport). Through living the process with the athletes, I was able to collect data/stories in the athletes' everyday locales, thereby interweaving the stories of the mundane ordinariness of the everyday with the intimate details of their acculturation journey.

**Step four: Field notes.** The final source of data was field-notes. Field notes are widely recommended in qualitative research as a means of documenting needed contextual information (see Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2017). During the data collection, I maintained field notes to complement the taped interviews. Field notes were kept in a reflexive diary, which included stories shared by athletes, significant locations for the athletes, and the relationships engaged in during the guided journey. Field notes allowed me to maintain and comment upon impressions, thoughts, the athletes' roles in the setting, environmental contexts, behaviors, mistakes/misunderstanding, unanswered questions, my impact on the interactions, and non-verbal cues during the course of the guided

journey. The field-notes were handwritten in a small notebook during the course of the data collection process and were typed at the end of the data collection phase. The field-notes included details of the physical environment (i.e., training facility, lobby, restaurant, entrance of the subway station); our interactions/discussion (i.e., how I was feeling or being treated); captured participant non-verbal behavior (i.e., while a practice-conversation with teammates, and coaches); or anything that would not be revealed through transcription. The following excerpt is an example of the field notes I collected during the guided journey and at opportune times:

“The shadowing for Alex took place at his local training facility. We agreed to meet around 9:00am at a local training facility, since I did not really know the city too well; the athlete chose a location that was close to the hotel I was staying.

**9:00am to 11:00am** The day started at about 9:00am, I arrived at the sport complex a little earlier and waiting for the athlete to arrive. While I was waiting, I received a text message from the athlete asking me to meet him at the track and field section of the complex instead. I walked around the building and found the athlete waiting for me in the bleachers. We began with introductions, I provided the athlete with a little bit of information about the study and my role shadowing him that day. The athlete then proceeded to inform me that he planned on doing a light workout/conditioning that morning and in the afternoon and a teammate would be accompanying us for the day. Since we were still waiting for his teammate to arrive I took this opportunity to initiate the mandala drawing activity. Sitting on the bleachers we both created mandalas to reflect a typical day in our lives; I went over mine first followed by the athlete. Our conversation lasted for

about 50 minutes and the line of discussion revolved around the different components of his day, the challenges experienced as an immigrant athlete, his sport not receiving any recognition compared to winter sport, the politics involved in his sport, the role his parents plays in his life and some of the conflicts he encountered with his parents in terms of his sport involvement. Our conversation was cut short with the arrival of his teammate because they had to start their training for the day. After the athlete introduced me to his teammate and what I was there for they proceeded to their training. From the bleachers, I was able to observe their training, which consisted of some sprints, laps around the track, some stretching and cooling down exercises. Although I was not able to capture any meaningful data I was able to observe some of the typical daily training routines“

As demonstrated above, the field notes collected provided me with rich and in-depth contextual information to the interpretation of the data collected by helping to remind me of situational and contextual factors that was of importance during the guided journey and analysis. The field notes were collected at opportune times; before, during, and after each shadowing session and when the athletes were training or otherwise engaged, then expanded upon the notes after the guided journey was completed (Kusenbach, 2003). The notes collected also added in constructing rich descriptions of encounters (i.e., meeting of coaches, family members, teammates, friends on the team), highlighting the valuable contextual information and resources related to the athletes' sport and non-sport contexts. My field notes were approximately 58 pages double spaced that I took while conducting this study and it provided context on what was happening

during the course of the guided journey with the athletes. The following is an excerpt from field notes from my observations of how the athletes typically spent a day and what was happening in their sporting context:

**“3:00pm to 5:00pm** – The next 2 hours was spent at practice with other athletes both from U of T varsity club and the Toronto swim club. The athletes varied in age from high school athletes to varsity athletes. During this time, I was only able to observe and record parts of the practice from the gallery area. I was able to observe some of the interaction between the coaches and athletes and the level of competition between the athletes. All the athletes seem committed and were giving it everything they’ve got. The afternoon practice was held at the same location as the morning practice. I wish I could get a little closer to the pool, so I can observe some of the dialog between the athletes and also get the coach’s feedback on the athlete and the dynamic between the athlete and others on the team”

As a result of utilizing my field-notes, I was able to better understand some of the intricacies and complexities of the athletes’ daily life and it helped me uncover elements of the athletes’ daily life that I was not previously aware of.

The four data sources were combined and pieced together in the creation of the moving stories in Chapter Four to provide a holistic and contextual understanding of the acculturation stories of immigrant athletes. In essence, the moving stories were the culmination of the four data sources. These supplementary strategies enabled a more holistic understanding of the athletes’ acculturation to be shared, accounting for the richness, and interconnected dimensions of their lives as they chose to present these,

reflecting the mobile methods approach chosen to frame this study. The main contributions of field notes to this study were that it helped me recall and reconstruct the athletes' words and the journeys taken with each day of the study, enriching the acculturation stories. Another contribution of the field notes was that it allowed the athletes to feel at ease allowing the guided journeys to occur as naturally as possible given my accompaniment as oppose to following them around with a video camera. The field notes also captured the different locales or context the athletes spent most of their time in, prompting deeper reflection on topics discussed in the conversational interviews. Within the current study, field-notes predominately served as aid in constructing thick, rich descriptions of the study context, encounters with the athletes and others in their life, and to document valuable contextual data. For example, the field-notes collected were weaved together to create snapshot vignettes, which provided insights into the athletes' daily routines, the individuals they came in contact with, my observation, my reflective account and the different setting in which the guided journeys occurred. Additionally, the field notes collected helped to provide movement/visibility that contextualized each moving story and snap shot vignette in chapter four by connecting the stories told by the athletes with spaces within the athletes.'

### **3.7 Data Analysis and Representation**

The analysis phase began with a verbatim transcription of the audio from the conversational interview and then analyzed using an interpretative thematic analysis. The final product of the analysis was the snap shot vignettes (i.e., a moment in time – my experience shadowing the participants) and composite vignettes in the form of moving stories. I merged the four data sources abovementioned as follows to create the moving

stories; stories that emerged from the artwork storying and the conversational interviews were layered in with the field notes which were used to prompt reflective writing echoed in the snapshot vignettes. The field notes collected also helped to provide movement and visibility that contextualized each composite vignette in terms of connecting the stories with our exchanges and spaces within the athletes' environment both sport and non-sport. Finally, the main content of each moving story was comprised of quotations and extracts from the conversational interviews. The merging of the various data collection approaches allowed me to construct a holistic picture of the athletes' acculturation stories.

Particularly, since the current study was framed in a social constructionist lens, which assumes that social reality is constructed in different ways and in different contexts. The four data collection approaches were able to capture different aspects of the athletes' acculturation stories and our exchanges. The following section outlines how each data set was integrated in the development of a snapshot vignette and the composite vignettes that formed the basis of the moving stories presented in Chapter Four.

**Interpretive thematic analysis.** The transcripts from the shadowing were then subjected to an inductive thematic analysis (ITA). Inductive thematic analysis is a method that minimally organizes and describes the data collected in rich detail by identifying, analyzing, interpreting and reporting patterns (i.e., themes) within the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Clarke & Braun, 2013). One of the advantages of utilizing this approach to analyze the data/stories collected from the athletes is that it is theoretically flexible because the search for, and examination of, patterning across language does not require adherence to any particular theory of language, or explanatory meaning framework for human beings, experiences or practices (Clarke & Braun, 2013). The intent of the analysis

is to identify common patterns of meanings (i.e., themes) within the participants stories about their acculturation journey and challenges. This type of analysis allowed me to examine the athletes core patterns in their stories. The six steps involved in conducting an inductive thematic analysis included; familiarizing myself with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Clarke & Braun, 2013). The first step of the data analysis involved me transcribing each conversation about the art-based activity, conversational interview, field notes from the guided journey, and getting familiar with the data through immersion. This immersion involved me reading and re-reading each transcript in an active way and noting down initial ideas and what was of interest in the data set. After familiarizing myself with the data, the next step involved generating initial codes.

The second step involved inductive coding where I identified key features across the entire data set by coding in the margin of each individual data set (all four pieces of collected data). For example, during the stage of the data analysis, important features of the data were identified (e.g., family involvement, initial involvement in sport, and difficulties experienced adjusting to the customs). The third and fourth step was conducted jointly and it involved searching for themes and reviewing themes. Within this step, driven by my engagement with the data the role of family and integration within sport community were significant story lines across the athletes' stories. In step three, I worked with another Ph.D. student in collating the provisional themes into higher and lower order themes. Within step four, I checked each provisional theme to determine whether the themes and sub-themes worked in relation to the coded extracts and the entire

data set, which resulted in the creation of a thematic ‘map’ of the analysis. For example, while trying to figure out how the themes aligned with the extracts, I noticed that the athletes’ stories about their acculturation experiences seemed to revolve around the notion of acculturation within the home and acculturation out of the home. During this step, I made a conscious decision to present the results section in different two chapters, since the focus was on two separate aspects of acculturation. The fifth step involved defining and naming the overarching themes (i.e., role of family, immersion within sport community and integration within non-sport community). Within this step, I also defined each of the sub-themes identified starting with the sub-themes focused on acculturation within the home (i.e., early family support, athlete-family conflicts, family as a sanctuary) and acculturation out of the home (i.e., immersion through communication, immersion through shared goals, willingness to communicate, and ease of community). In this phase of the analysis, I refined each theme and sub-theme and also determined what aspect of the data each theme captured. The fifth stage was an ongoing process in terms of refining the specifics of each theme generated and the overall story of the analysis as depicted. Also, clear definitions and names for each themes and sub-themes were established at the end of this step. The purpose of this initial thematic analysis was to create a skeleton for the development of narratives (i.e., vignettes) that accounted for and accurately described the fluidity in the stories surrounding acculturation processes. I also used the narrative skeleton to amalgamate and re-construct the athletes’ stories into creative non-fiction; a type of analytic approach when researchers use fictional strategies to represent the research findings in a storied manner (Caulley, 2008; Smith, 2013).

**Creative non-fiction.** Creative non-fiction is a form of creative analytic practices (CAP) focused on unique, incidental, and emergent occurrences of lived experiences, and the significance of everyday life to create meaning (Smith, McGannon, & Williams, 2016; Smith, 2013; Schinke et al., 2016). This approach encourages plurality of voices and narratives, supporting nonlinear and multimodal expression of data or knowledge. Creative non-fiction tells a story using facts, but uses many of the techniques of fiction (i.e., contextualized, vernacular language, metaphors, tone shift) to communicate findings in compelling and emotionally vibrant ways (Smith et al., 2016). More recently, researchers have begun to utilize this approach to represent and share participants experiences more holistically, with all of their complexity and nuances of everyday life (Blodgett et al., 2014; Schinke et al, 2016; Smith et al., 2016), to the general population as well as to researchers and practitioners. Creative non-fiction ensures a space for the voice of each storyteller and retains the integrity of each story as it unfolds. Within the current study creative non-fiction was chosen to story/present the data because it provided a medium and method to reveal the acculturation process in all its complexities and at the same time provide a means to push the boundaries on research on acculturation with immigrant athletes. My aim was to push the vicarious learning that takes place through stories to a deeper level through providing readers with an opportunity to connect athletes' stories with insights into what prompted particular storylines surrounding aspects of the athletes' acculturation.

**Composite vignettes (moving stories).** The athletes' accounts were developed into composite vignettes. Composite vignettes refer to a mix of multiple experiences and voices amalgamated into a single synthesized narrative (Blodgett & Schinke, 2015;

Blodgett et al., 2011; Schinke et al., 2016a, 2016b; Spalding & Phillips, 2007). These authors suggested that composite vignettes are a means of conveying shared accounts and demonstrating patterns and trends of many people simultaneously. Composite vignettes in the form of moving stories were chosen to portray the content within the themes and subthemes, revealing the fluidity in the stories told by the athletes about their acculturation journey. I created vignettes that combined the stories of the athletes to creatively tell a more compelling and comprehensive story that cuts across the individual interviews and illustrates key points and themes within the data set. As result, I was able to provide a brief glimpse into the way in which the athletes navigated their transitions between cultures as they progressed through their day. To construct the moving stories, the themes generated from the ITA were presented as a narrative skeleton that provided a general overview of the order and structure for the composite content. I then reviewed the data under each of the themes and subthemes, extracting key words, quotes, and stories that best represented each theme. The vignettes were developed from the participants' words and stories, with feedback provided by Dr. Schinke, who is well versed in this style of research (Schinke et al., 2016a, 2016b). The feedback provided during the data crafting of the moving stories was in relation adding movement/visibility to moving stories and how the stories should be framed. Using the participants' stories, and themes from the narrative skeleton, the composite vignettes were written to convey a full and flowing representation of each participant's story around the overarching themes of (a) role of family, (b) immersion within local sport community and integration within non-sport community. The extracts were merged through a creative writing process that involved re-organizing and fitting together fragments of experiences, thereby establishing links and

movement between themes and subthemes, creating a compelling and evocative storyline (Smith et al., 2016; Smith, 2002). Such as in the case of the storyline of the complex nature of familial relationships with some of the athletes in terms of times of conflict and times of coming together. Additionally, presenting the overarching themes and sub-themes as moving stories are in-line with the underlying assumptions of critical acculturation and suggestions of Chirkov (2009a) and Schinke and colleagues (2016a, 2016b), in terms of contextualizing understanding of athletes' stories by analyzing the social, cultural, and historical context in which they occur.

Within the moving stories compelling examples/quotes were included along with my field notes and arts-based activity to highlight/preserve the participant's voices and stories within the vignettes. Such an approach is non-traditional and can be seen as a way of representing qualitative findings, by presenting/making the results more readable and accessible to the readers (Blodgett et al., 2011; Schinke et al., 2016). Furthermore, to maintain confidentiality and protect the athlete's identities, all identifying information (i.e., names, sport, gender) was removed from the stories and pseudonyms were used to replace the names and personal information of all parties involved in this project. Considering the research area of acculturation is complex and dynamic, moving stories moved beyond conventional and static approach, as it was able to provide a comprehensive account of each athlete's acculturation story and as a complementary technique alongside other data collection methods. I used the various data collected or fragmented pieces of data as one (i.e., the creation of moving stories) representation for understanding and exploring the multiple ways to merge and represent the findings of our data analysis. The moving stories crafted were the culmination of the four data sources,

which in turn furthers our ability to understand how athletes construct their function in an unfamiliar country or sport context.

### **3.8 Authenticity**

More recently, the need to rigorously demonstrate the authenticity of qualitative inquiry has been challenged. The current study was informed by a relativist ontological stance (see Schinke et al., 2016a; Smith & McGannon, 2018; Sparkes & Smith, 2009; Sparkes & Douglas, 2007). The ontological position adopted shifts away from criteriology and towards softer suggestions or consideration to judge the authenticity of qualitative research. Qualitative researchers have suggested that the criteria used to judge qualitative research should be flexible, and related to the specific piece of research, at the specific time, and in the specific context. Taking on the role of creative non-fiction storyteller, the moving stories were judged using a non-foundational approach, where authenticity was considered in relation to the context and purpose of the study (Smith & McGannon, 2018). When conducting qualitative research, what is important is that the author outlines the approaches used (criteria) against the quality of the research process and outcome should be considered (see Sparkes & Smith, 2009). The first step in this process involved aligning my storytelling to the ontological and epistemological positioning of relativism and social constructionism. By positioning myself as a cultural insider and within the story acknowledged my awareness in terms the role I played in the construction of the stories told here and how inseparable I am from the data collection and analysis (Smith, 2016; Smith & McGannon, 2018).

Another aspect I considered within the current project was in relation to the aesthetics of the moving stories, and whether the moving stories brought the topic of

acculturation more richness or depth in terms of aligning with the calls from critical scholars to understanding this topic. The moving stories within this research revealed the fluidities found in the acculturation stories in terms of the momentary turns within the stories or moments of tension/conflicts, thereby highlighting the complex and fluid nature of acculturation. Within the moving stories, quality was assessed based on the coherence of the emerging story lines or themes generated from our analysis, the insights generated, and how we addressed the narrative tensions that was driven by my engagement with the data. An example of a narrative tension involved discussion around the highs and lows of acculturation as the athletes navigated times of conflict with family members and within their sport contexts. Particularly, the stories of tension/conflicts and resolutions are highlighted within the moving stories as potential moments of intersection of perspectives. Second, following Sparkes and Smith's (2009) suggestions, the next consideration was in relation to whether the moving stories permitted multiple understanding of the acculturation process? Within the moving stories, any turns in the acculturation stories can be interpreted as both positive and negative depending on how it is examined. Through the moving stories, I attempted to portray or reflect a balance between the general narrative of the participants' acculturation experience and specific points of contentions. For instance, in the first overarching theme of role of family during the acculturation process, my findings reveal the complicated web of relationships in which each member of the family plays an integral role in helping the athlete achieve success. I identified and highlighted issues, or contentions, within the stories that served as moments of intersection, tensions, uncertainties, multiple truths, and turns in stories for the readers and therefore also as key elements upon which to build a dialogue.

Some of the most noticeable moments of intersection or tension highlighted within the composite vignette below were in relation to conflicts with family about future career paths and how the athletes navigated between adapting to the cultural practices of the receiving community while attempting to retain the cultural practices of their home country. Additionally, I partook in critical and reflexive conversations at various stages of the analysis and storytelling process via member reflections (i.e., three full professors and two PhD students at varying stages of their PhD programs). During these discussions, we did not seek to achieve consensus in these meanings, but rather challenged each other to think deeper about our interpretations (see Smith & McGannon, 2018). The insights provided by each of the members during our critical conversations brought forward my interpretations of the novel findings within the athletes' depictions of their families' and community (both sport and non-sport) roles on a daily basis. The reflections offered by these critical friends of the project help create a meticulous, robust and enriched understanding through generating additional insights and dialogue.

The final consideration Sparkes and Smith proposed was about how the research approach served to provoke the thought in the reader regarding the complexities of acculturation. By drawing upon the moving stories, as opposed to a thematic or content analyses, I opened up the discussion on acculturation and provide insight into the contextual and ideographic nature of acculturation. Further, the moving stories were chosen to convey that the acculturation was storied, not only by the athletes but also within broader social context (i.e., sport community and non-sport community). The question of whether this approach will resonate with the reader is up for discussion. I do believe that moving stories is a move away from static data presentation and into the

excavation of athletes' stories, the various contexts that influences their acculturation, thereby revealing the fluid and multifaceted nature of athletes' everyday life. Through the use of creative non-fiction, the analysis of this story is not finished until it is read, and how the stories presented resonate is left up to the reader, taken out of the hands of the authors (Langer, 2016). Ideally, this story might resonate more with immigrant athletes because of their unique connection to the topic.

## Chapter 4

### 4.1 Results: The Role of Family During the Acculturation Process

The ensuing results and discussion within the present dissertation is comprised of the following sections: (a) setting the scene, (b) description of theme and sub-theme, (c) moving story (i.e., sub-theme), (d) commentary, and finally (e) a discussion section. Two overarching themes emerged from the analysis and they have been separated into two distinct chapters. The two themes identified were (a) the role of family during the acculturation process (Chapter Four), and (b) integration within the community (both sport and non-sport) (Chapter Five). Within this chapter, the first of the two-overarching themes is presented along with a discussion section connecting the findings to existing acculturation research. Providing a first-hand account of the guided journey, from my perspective, sets the context of the moving stories. The themes and sub-themes are presented in the form of composite vignettes to retain authenticity in the moving stories by using the athletes' words and stories, which was also supplemented by their mandala drawings and insights from the field notes collected during the guided journey.

The acculturation stories of nine elite athletes were amalgamated into two overarching themes (Chapter four & five). The story is told from my vantage point, as I accompanied the athletes and as we moved together through what they identified as contextually meaningful and significant spaces in their lives. Within each snapshot vignette, I am cast as male, which was done solely because I am male and to allow for the story to flow without being encumbered. Pseudonyms are used to identify the participants, places, and in the mandala drawings in order to maintain anonymity. Importantly, reflecting our participants' pool, both male and female athletes are featured within the

moving stories. Within the first entire overarching theme (Chapter Four), the athletes are cast as female and within the second overarching theme (Chapter Five) the athletes are cast as male. The reason the athletes were cast as female in the moving stories was to balance out both genders considering the participant pool consisted of both male and female. Similar approaches have been employed in previous acculturation research to balance out both genders in terms of the presentation of athletes' stories (see Schinke et al., 2016a, 2016b).

Additionally, the athletes' drawings are presented within the sub-themes to illustrate how the arts-based process was used to facilitate the guided journey and to connect the art to how the participants understood their stories of acculturation, and sharing of a story in relation to their art work. The moving stories were written as a hypothetical or fictional account of an athlete navigating through a typical day in their life with my observations and accounts of the contexts and interactions that took place during that day to show mobility and movements. The moving stories were crafted to illustrate moments of tensions and uncertainty in the athletes' stories about their acculturation that can generate a resonating experience, leading back to the methodology section where I discussed my composite vignette style. I tried to create rich accounts that brought to life the athletes' words and stories about the role of their family, their communities, and situations as best as I could with the hopes that the moving stories seem authentic for the readers and resonate with their own experiences. The uniqueness of each athlete's story comes from the family itself and from the uniqueness of the individual involved. Within the moving stories, I included artwork from other athletes that was related to the storyline being discussed to help bring to life these stories.

Within the moving stories I draw together insightful elements from all nine athletes' stories and wove them into a more powerful, all-encompassing shared account. The outcome was a unifying voice to representing the athletes' voices about their acculturation journeys. Therefore, the moving stories should not be read as series of quotes or stories from different participants but as a singular account from a composite character in relation to stories of athletes' acculturation and cultural transitions. Other acculturation scholars have also employed a similar approach to unify the voices of athletes in their data representation (see Blodgett & Schinke, 2015; Schinke et al., 2016a; 2016b). These authors also highlighted the limitations to this unifying voice, such as the omission of nuances and idiosyncratic aspects of acculturation. As such, I tried to avoid these limitations and wove together the aforementioned nuances in a coherent way, and took creative license to develop the moving stories whilst trying to retain the uniqueness and tensions in the processes that are found within the broader stories of acculturation. Within the moving stories, I chose to unify the athletes' voices because it enabled me to provide and create compelling and evocative storyline that was grounded in the account of each of the athletes.

## **4.2 Setting the Scene**

I (Patrick) arrived early today at the athlete's chosen meeting spot, and I'm happy I did because he was also early. There was a clear difference between us, me with my water bottle, camera, and camera tripod in hand, dressed in casual smart clothing, while he was walking empty handed decked out in athletic gear. The athlete gave me an odd look, to me that look meant I was sort of out of place in terms of the way I was dressed. However, I did not let that get to me. I also felt nervous, with a smattering of game-day

butterflies in my stomach, while he strode confidently through the bustling hordes of people coming and going to class and/or practice. “Hi Ava, I’m Patrick, nice to meet you,” I said as I put down my water bottle and shook her hand, “Where do you think we could find a place to sit down and introduce ourselves?” She led me to a nearby coffee shop and while I ordered two coffees, she found us a table in quiet corner. After sitting down, we introduced ourselves briefly and then she asked me to tell her a little bit about my background. I then asked her if she would mind laying out the general structure of the rest of the day for me and how the day would unfold. For most of the athletes six out of the nine athletes the moving story began by a brief introduction followed by the creation of a mandala. While for three out of the nine athletes, the moving story began by a brief introduction followed by my observation of their practice and what was going to go down in the day to come.

In order for the athlete to lay out the rest of their day, I asked Ava to create a drawing for me that highlighted a typical day in her life. I initiated the conversation by asking; “I would like to begin by getting you to draw a Mandala, which is a circle, or other art-based methods such as a river or tree, or any other shape or figure, that you think would best portray your everyday life routines. Following that, I would like to talk about your drawing and then you are the guide for the rest of the day.” After handing Ava a piece of paper and box of markers I watched as she frowned while contemplating about what to draw. She nodded and then looked up and asked, “Can I write words also?” I replied, you could include anything you wanted within your circle, drawings, and words, in whatever color or shade you wanted. Feeling more at ease, she picked up a marker and began the outline of her circle. As we both finished up our drawings, I took the lead and

told Ava about what I had included in my mandala. The process of creating a mandala with Ava was to ease her into the moving story process and to establish rapport with the athletes (see figure 2).



Figure 2. Mandala created by Ava to illustrate how she spends a typical day in her life, important people in her life, and some of the key components of her day.

Following this conversation, Ava began to describe the different aspects of her mandala to me; she had included drawings and words that were related to the way she moved around the city she lived in, several different components that were related to her training including an alarm clock, the different people she interacted with daily, and why

she had chosen the colors that she had. When talking about the people she had included within her mandala, family members were given importance over other aspects of life and so I asked her to tell me more about the role her family members played in her life and why they were so important. She thought about it for a little bit, and then having decided what she wanted to tell me, dove into telling me the story of her family and how they were important because they had they had been present in her life throughout her move to Canada and journey to becoming an elite athlete.

While slow at first, Ava began to tell her story, which developed into a conversation about the challenges she experienced initially upon arriving in Canada. I also shared some stories about some of the challenges I experienced upon arriving in Canada, which mainly revolved around not having my extended family members around. We both commented on the importance of having family around how it can help to shape one's cultural identity. The story reached a climax and then quickly began to wind down and I realized it was time to take a break from storytelling, so we finished our coffees and I asked her to lead the way as we began our day of walking together. After a couple of stops, Ava needed to head to practice and so we made our way to the training facility. When we arrived, she introduced me to her teammates and coaches, and then directed me to an observation area, while she went to get ready for practice. While watching the practice, I developed an appreciation for the focus and determination that Ava brought to her training. As practice wrapped up, the athlete asked me if I would like to join her for lunch in the cafeteria located in their practice facility. As we sat down for lunch it quickly became apparent that Ava was well known around the facility as numerous people stopped to say hello and catch up with her. During our lunch, the conversation turned to

how Ava had become an elite athlete and the direction she felt her career was heading in. While Ava told me her story I asked her about the role others, including their family members, had in shaping her story and what role she felt the important people in her life would continue to play. Ava paused to think about think about it, I commented on how I appreciated everything my parents have done and succeeded in and how I hope to give back to them one day. While Ava told her story, I often communicated my understanding through nodding my head and/or intermittently confirming my understanding through an “uh-huh” or “ok”. When I felt a little lost in the story Ava was good at reading my facial expression of slight confusion and worked to clarify what she was trying to say.

Following this discussion, it was time for Ava to return to practice. Having already witnessed one practice I made my own way to the observation area and greeted those I had met previously. Watching this practice, I noticed that Ava, while remaining extremely focused, was fatigued, perhaps from having slightly altered her daily routine to accommodate me. When practice had finished, I met Ava outside the change room and asked her if we could finish off our day of shadowing with a debriefing session. I handed the Ava her mandala, and while she sipped on her protein shake, I asked her if there were any stories left that she felt comfortable sharing with me. Following on our conversation at lunch, Ava said that it was important that she highlighted how important the support that she had received was to her success as an athlete. Perhaps feeling more comfortable due to our prolonged engagement, she opened up about some of the bumps such as adjusting to a new culture, family conflicts/ differences, financial challenges, and sense of belonging within her sport context, her experience on this road to becoming an elite athlete and her realization that she could not attempt to navigate this journey alone.

Finishing on this note, the athlete scanned over her mandala and smiled and said, “that was good, I think that basically covers it.”

### **4.3 Theme One: The Ever-changing Role Played by the Family**

The first overarching theme focuses on the role family played, which included immediate family and friends during early stages of the acculturation journey. The moving stories within this theme underlined by the storyline of how athletes constructed their role as both elite athletes and members of a family unit as they navigate the complex process of acculturation. The sub-themes within this theme are; (a) early settlement family support (i.e., support needed from family), (b) athlete-family settlement conflicts and times of mutual understanding (i.e., highs and lows of acculturation), and (c) sporting success becomes family endeavor (i.e., family becoming a team), using direct narrative quotations (see Figure 3). Each of the sub-themes or storylines is interwoven into the story told by the athlete of their acculturation journey. The first storyline allows for the highlighting of how the athletes relied on the support of family members (i.e., help with navigating the sport system and emotional support) during the early stages of their acculturation journey. Within the second storyline, I described the highs and lows of an immigrant athlete’s acculturation journey as they navigated times of conflict with family members and work to reach mutual understanding. The third storyline allows for the highlighting of how the athlete’s family came together as a team, as the athletes’ sporting success becomes a family endeavor and all family members relish their success. The three storylines showcase an acculturation journey that is ever changing; characterized by complexity as the athletes navigated between different expectations of their family and their changing family values and priorities (i.e., tensions, uncertainty, acceptance).

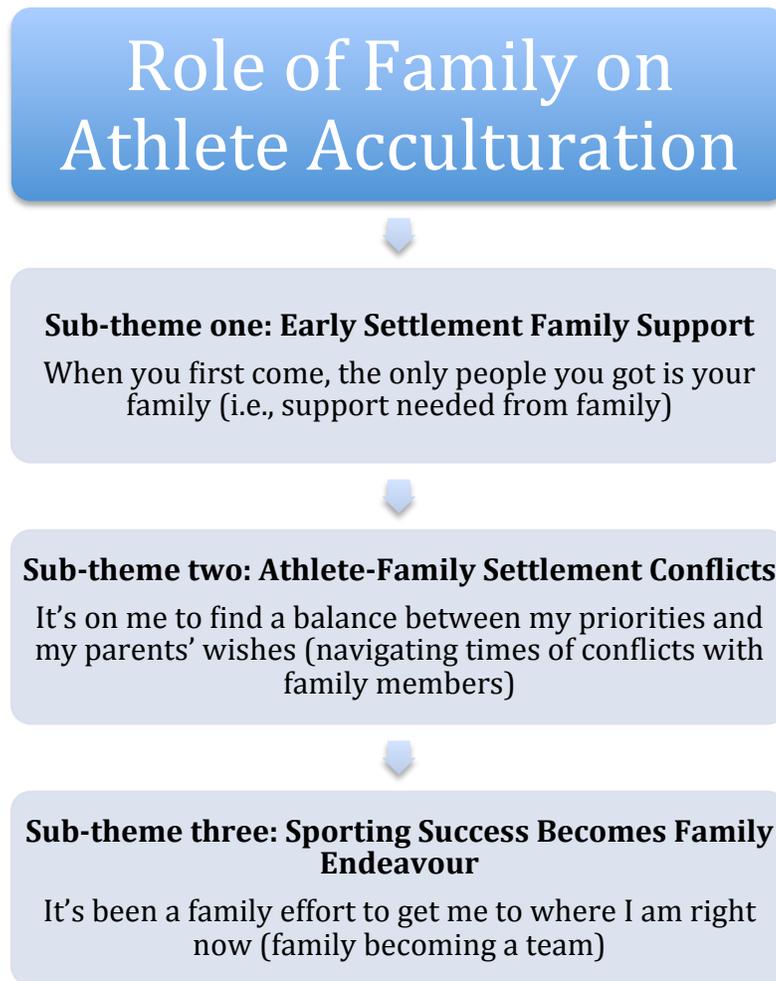


Figure 3: Represent a thematic skeleton of the overarching theme and sub-theme that emerged from our analysis on the role of family in the acculturation process.

#### 4.4 Sub-theme one: Early settlement family support

This sub-theme center on the types of support the athletes received from their family during their initial relocation and entry into their sporting context. Within this sub-theme parents and at times siblings were portrayed as playing the role of gatekeepers to sporting opportunities in terms of their willingness and ability to pay sport fees, provide transportation to/from practices and competitions, as well as belief in the amount of time

they should be concentrating on sport. Additionally, the athletes' stories within this sub-theme highlight the role of siblings upon relocation, which included aiding the athletes in making connections in sport and serving as mentors. All of the athletes discussed the vast changes that relocation and acculturation within a new country brought into their lives and how family was their base of support, which they relied upon during the 'good' and 'bad' times. The athletes' stories revealed that family connections during the early stages of moving to Canada enabled them to develop further connections within the receiving community and their sport. The moving story below highlights my conversation with Ava about the role her family played in her life upon their relocation to Canada:

***“When you first come, the only people you got is your family”***

“My friend Adam just messaged and asked if he could join us for our quick drive over to my landlord's house to pay my rent, is that alright with you?” asked Ava as we are finished off our lunch in the school cafeteria. Without a second thought I quickly replied, “Sure! That sounds great.” After putting our trays away and paying for our lunches we headed for the exit towards Ava's car. I was excited to meet her friend because I knew it would provide me with an opportunity to see Ava from a different perspective and also to meet some of the influential people in her life as mentioned in her mandala drawings. This drive enabled me to better understand Ava and through our discussion, stories about the comfort of a close bond to family and the importance of having supportive friendships were unearthed. Although, the drive was fairly short but through your exchanges, Ava commented that; Adam has been a friend to her for over 12 years now; she explained that they met the second day she moved to Canada and that was it; “we have been best friends since I moved here”. Ava considered Adam as one of her family member because they

have been through life's ups and downs together both in their sport career. Adam was included in this moving story because of his close relationship with Ava and he was a part of what was going to go down in the day to come. As we arrived at the parking lot Ava's friend arrived and she quickly introduced him, "This is Adam, he's one of the very first friends I made here in Canada, we actually met playing soccer on the street when we were younger. I have a small group of very close friends, but it wasn't always like that. When we first moved I was lonely because I didn't have any friends, I mean I didn't speak English or French so I couldn't talk with anyone. The only people I had to speak with were my family, and I was lucky! I had a couple of siblings that I could play with which helped, but it wasn't the same as having a group of friends."

As we step out of the car, Ava continued to recount her story of settling into Canada and how it was a lonely time because, "you don't have any friends, you don't know any of the language, and you can't speak with anyone". The only people that you have around are your family. After a short walk through the parking lot, we stopped beside some parking meters, she paused and asked Adam; "how long are we training for". Ava then continued, "I mean, if you have siblings then you can always play with them and that helped a little but it's not the same as having a group of friends". Through our short walk, our line of conversation took her back to a reflective place, unearthing stories about her initial relocation to Canada and challenges she experienced (i.e., not having friends, language barrier). Ava goes on to explain that; upon arriving, I had my brother and we would always play outside and then other kids would come up and want to play with us. Having my brother with me was very important, he is the one that convinced me to get involved in my sport. He's older than me and he had tried every sport you can

name, and he just knew what was best for me, he had made mistakes so he didn't want me to make those same mistakes.

After a brief pause, I then asked Ava to tell me a little bit about what sport she ended up going with. I knew I had to keep this line of conversation going because it invariably led to Ava sharing aspects of her parent's involvement in her sport growing. Giving Ava the opportunity and time to reflect and encouraging her to talk freely about her siblings led to further discussions about the role of her parents. As Ava continued, "my parents, obviously, also played a big role in getting me started in sport, I think they saw it as a way for me to integrate more into my new home and make friends quicker". They are very hard-working and dedicated to being successful at whatever they do, and moving our family here was in part to ensure that my brother, my sister, and I were well off and able to have the same success in life that they have attained. As we entered the training facility, Ava turned around to pointed to a door on the right and said; "you can watch practice from there today", pointing at the viewing gallery. As we stood outside the gym door, clutching our bags, Ava's face remained perfectly immobile for a few moments. I asked Ava, what was going through her mind? she replied, "practice". The new understanding that resulted from our journey to pick up Adam and back to the training facility was in relation to the integral role her family played in helping her achieve success in her sport. Some of the challenges Ava's experienced upon relocating to Canada and feeling of gratitude towards how far she has come were unearth during our conversation out in the hallway.

Ava continued to recount the challenges she experienced earlier on, "when I was younger they would do everything for me, especially for sport, because I was not old

enough to attend practice alone, and sometimes practices and games would be far away so it was a lot of driving for them, but I think it also helped them become a part of a team, a parent team. For instance, if they could not drive me, they would ask another parent to come and pick me up and bring me to practice, and of course, my parents would return the favor and pick up my friends, so in a way the parents also worked as a team. As we walked into the practice area Adam looks at Ava and commented, "I remember when we used to drive in my parents' van together to go to practice." Laughing at her friend, Ava takes off her gym bag from her shoulders and she continues to recount her story of having support from other teammates' parents when they were unable to make it to practice. Ava continued "this process enabled me to make friends and connect with others in the community, resulting in shared experiences with others including parents and friends". I don't think it was always easy for them though, I know that when we moved here we didn't really have that much money and sometimes they were concerned that we couldn't make it and would be forced to go back home, but somehow my parents always figured it out. After a brief pause to check her watch, Ava continued; "somehow, they always managed to support me with everything; they always gave me everything I needed for my sporting career and everything else". I'm so lucky that they have worked so hard to give me this opportunity, I mean imagine if my parents gave up and we had gone back home and what I would be doing right now, because I definitely would not be involved in sport, we wouldn't have been able to afford it. Also, I was definitely going in a downward spiral in my home country before we moved here and I was only a teenager so I probably would be up to no good now. I'm just glad that I was given the opportunity to step out of it before I even stepped further into it. From our discussion in the hallway, the idea that it

was difficult at times for immigrant parents to support their children both financially and emotionally were unearthed and resonated with me.

*Commentary.* Within this sub-theme, stories surrounding the athletes' relocation and sport involvement in Canada focused on the types of support the athletes' received from their family during their initial relocation and entry into their sporting context. Parents were portrayed as playing the role of commissioner to sporting opportunities in terms of their willingness and ability to pay sport fees, provide transportation to/from practices and competitions, as well as belief in the amount of time they should be concentrating on sport. Furthermore, it seems the influence that parents have on the children's sport involvement includes investing time, emotional support, and financial resources. The athletes' involvement in sport upon arriving in Canada enabled them to make friends and connect with others in the community, resulting in shared experiences with others including parents and friends. Parents and siblings were influential in their child's or siblings sport participation; parents were seen as providers and in some case as interpreters. Overall, the role the family takes included taking the time to encourage and be involved with the child's sport, even if it is just watching from the sidelines and driving them to and from practice or tournaments.

#### **4.5 Sub-theme two: Athlete-family settlement conflicts and times of mutual understanding**

The stories within this sub-theme centered on how the athletes' and parents' acculturation journey differed in terms of values and beliefs associated with sports. Stories in this sub-theme highlight the conflicts and tensions with parents that occurred along the way, as the athletes became further immersed in their sport. A common conflict

discussed was over the amount of time spent at school and the value of education as opposed to involvement in sport. Additionally, siblings at times tried to impose their ideas on the athletes to help them avoid making similar mistakes, leading to conflict of following their own path or sticking to the path given to them by siblings. The moving stories below highlighted the chaos that they perceived around them as the idea for their path to success in the new culture/country shifted and moved, leading to some disagreement with family members thereby resulting in feeling immobilized at times in their host and sport contexts. Within the moving story below, Ava shared the following account of how she was able to navigate times of conflict with family members during her acculturation journey and times of uncertainty in her life.

***“It’s on me to find a balance between my priorities and my parents’ wishes”***

As I sat observing the first practice session of the day with two other individuals, whom I assumed were friends of teammates. It was mid-day and a muggy day. There was a lot of on-court chatting going on between the athlete’s and coach about upcoming events and laying out their training schedule for the week. While practice was taking place in the background, I took a few minutes to reward my mind’s highlight reel to jog my memory in terms of my conversation with Ava about her mandala drawing (see Figure 3). I recalled that, while drawing in her mandala, Ava drew a notebook with her school’s name on it and then a pen beside it, in the middle was training, and family on the opposite side of the page. Having drawn this, I recalled she looked up at me, pointing to the textbook and pen and said, “family, training, and education are very important to me and sometimes I struggle to balance all of them.” Ava visually centralized the importance of family connectedness and support in her mandala drawing by highlighting important

family members and friends using the color red and it was also in words as oppose to rest which were illustrations. Family seems to be important to all of the athletes', in (Figure 4) a similar insight was depicted by another athlete in this study named Grace in her mandala drawing. In Grace's mandala drawing she used black color with words and illustration to highlight the points brought up by Ava in terms of the importance of family, training, and education. Within her mandala, she mentioned that her family was very instrumental to her success because they provided well-needed social support, which was important for facilitating her athletic journey and her identity development (see figure 4)

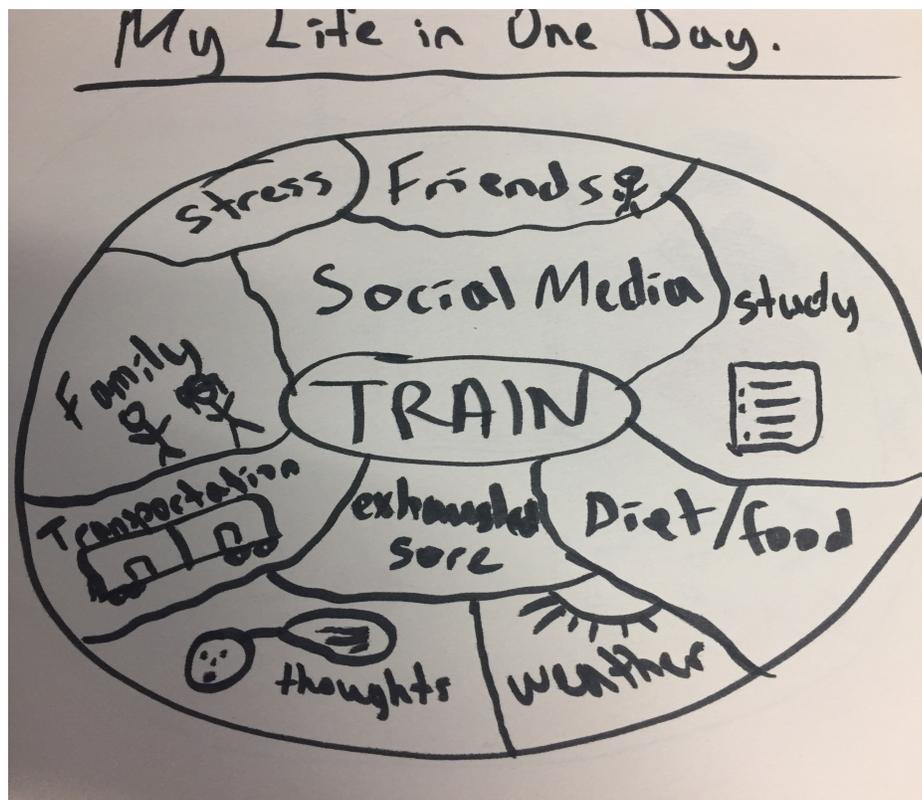


Figure 4. Mandala created by Grace illustrating the role of her family and 'family' was highlighted in black color and scribbles around the central image in her mandala

At this point, I recalled that Ava paused and I remained silent allowing her to gather her thoughts. After a minute, she continued to tell the story behind the three points she highlighted in her mandala. She began by sharing a little bit about some of the challenges her parents experienced earlier on during their relocation to Canada such as difficulties with the language and not having the opportunity to socialize within the receiving community. It seems as though her parents struggled initially to find their place in Canada but gradual things improved as time went by. What emerged from our conversation, was the idea that parents found their roles and relationships with the children changed upon relocating to Canada. Ava recounted that “my family moved to Canada when I was quite young, which I think helped me because I was able to adapt quite quickly and within a year or two was speaking English, so that wasn’t a problem for me”. Being able to learn the language quickly was very important because I think communication is the key to breaking the barrier and I’m good at communicating with people so for me it wasn’t much of a problem. After practice, I caught up with her and Adam in the sunlight casted hallway and chatted about what his days usually entailed. Ava’s days seem to be never ending because a strength coach was waiting for her to work out, a trainer was waiting to tape her. While in the midst of putting on her jacket to go off with the strength coach, I asked Ava about how it was for her parents when they relocated. She took a bite of her energy bar and chewed on the question and replied “I think my parents found it harder to learn the language, and I think, maybe, this made it harder for them to fit in as quick as I could. I was also lucky because my parents worked hard to make sure that I had opportunities to socialize with others while they had to work very hard to make sure we could make it in our new home”. This meant that children of

immigrants had more time to focus on developing social ties as compared to their parents. Midway through our conversation, Ava suggested that we should continue chatting while we walked to the weight room, where the coach had some activities and exercises planned for her. The stories that emerged from our conversation to the weight room were in relation to how her parents left their place of birth for an unknown country, with little information about what to expect but were determined to make things work despite challenges and roadblocks.

As we arrived at the entrance of the weight room, Ava stopped and turned towards the wall, which was a hanging trophy cabinet lined with pictures of previous athletes, trophies, and award. After a brief paused and turned towards my direction and expressed gratitude towards her parents and family support over the years in terms of getting ahead in life, especially with the financial support and time dedication from her parents. Ava went on to discuss what she felt was the biggest challenge for immigrant athletes in a new country, “the number one problem for immigrants is money, because personally when I was growing up, when I was younger and my dad would have to pay let’s say \$400 for a season, after a while he had to be honest with me and he explained, you know I can’t do this. I can’t afford to pay for your sport anymore.” That was a tough time, because I understood why my dad couldn’t afford to pay my sport fees, but it didn’t change the fact that I thought it was unfair I couldn’t continue if we didn’t have the money for my fees. When sharing stories about the challenges her family experience in terms of finance, Ava looked defeated and things seemed to get deadly silent around us. No one was saying anything, it seemed as if Ava reflected briefly on how far she has come and some of the difficulties she experienced. She then continued, “luckily, going into the next season my

dad was able to help me talk to my coach about fees and the club decided to waive my fees for that season, partly due to the fact that I was one of their best athletes, but I would say there's a lot of talented athletes out there and some of them just can't afford to play, so that's how immigrant talent gets wasted. Now that I'm older fees aren't as big of a deal, I get some support from my sport federation, not as much as I would like, but it's enough. There were some notable takeaways from our conversation, which lasted just ten minutes before she went in with the strength coach. Some of the takeaways that were unearthed included; the importance of family support (i.e., financial and emotional), the sacrifices made by parents, and gratitude.

Before Ava went into the weight room, I decided to ask her one more question on “what are her parents expectations of her in terms of sport pursuits” just to close the loop on things before her last training session for the day. That line of question was important because immigrant parents are more likely to focus on their children's education and have high expectations for their future career path. The stories that emerged from this line of question included the expectation of excelling in school and taking on a career that would provide stability for the athlete and her family in the future. These expectations had a strong impact on Ava's career path and sport aspirations. Ava stated that, “now though, the pressure to have an education so that I can support myself – and my family – in the future is mounting”. Last year I graduated from university and my parents would like me to take a focus on building my career. They would really like me to work as a financial analyst whether it's for the bank or one of those big oil firms downtown. I am qualified for it so when my parents who support me more than anyone telling me this it makes it difficult. It's a tough situation because I understand why they want me to focus on my

education and career. When discussing the role her family played in her future career path, it seems as though Ava was choosing to resist “traditional” career paths, her stories seemed to revolve around feeling guilty that she was walking down a road that her parents did not approve, thereby disappointing her parents. As Ava stow away her gym bag, she expressed how difficult it could be at times for immigrant parents to understand the career paths of their children. During our conversation Ava revealed that, “I don’t think my parents understand what I do but they’re slowly starting to. I mean usually coming from my country our parents usually tell us to go to university, college, and finish and get a degree so the fact that they still support my sport is admirable, because that has had to be a big change for them. I think the hardest times during this journey for them have been when I’ve gone through challenging times in sport, because they’re quicker than I am to think that it would just be easier for me to give up. I think it’s because no parent wants to see their child struggle and go through all of this stress and just not being happy with what they have. My mum, during a particularly rough patch, wanted me to give up and was pushing me to change my focus to getting a career rather than relying on sport. I think she was scared that I would get stuck in this sport and not really go after my career goals outside of sport, but I wasn’t ready to give up on my sport goals yet. The stories that emerged from our conversation revealed that the path towards establishing a future career for Ava other than sport looked so unfamiliar to her parents in that, it created this instinct of fear in her parents who sacrificed so much to provide her with better opportunities in Canada. Ava, expressed that, in order for her to live her dream, she had to take baby steps to get her parents acclimated to her choices and what she wanted to do with her life even though it was different than her parents expectations of her. The takeaway from this

exchange centered around how a lot of emphasis was placed on the sacrifices made by Ava's parents to provide her with a better future and the pressures associated with knowing that. Ava recounted how she found balance in terms of her priority and her parents' wishes, she explained that, "this dual focus of finding a balance between sport and my career has been my biggest challenge, because my goals do include going back for a master's degree. To this end, I've already had to give up one sport to focus exclusively on the sport that I think will make me money. That was a tough decision because most of my friends played the sport that I gave up, I mean my first word was goal, not mum or dad, but goal! I'd been playing on that sport team for seven years, and was captain for four years, so quitting last year was tough. I was one of the best players but I had to decide what was best for me because it was too much work to keep up with both sports so I chose what was best for me in the future.

*Commentary.* This sub-theme centered on how the athletes and parents' acculturation journey often differed in terms of values and beliefs associated with sports and future career path, which occurred at an idiographic level. Stories within this sub-theme highlighted the conflicts with parents as the athletes became further immersed in their sport. The athletes' stories revealed that youths or children of immigrant parents tend to acculturate at a faster rate than their parent's due to their involvement in sport, their integration into the receiving community, and the environmental contexts (i.e., multicultural) in which they settle in. Although newcomers' families experienced daily stresses (i.e., employment, finding a footing in the Canadian system, different cultural practices), which meant children of immigrants had more time to focus on developing social ties as compared to their parents. But the social process of acculturation and

relocation also added additional sources of stress to the family system. Additionally, a common conflict discussed within the moving story above was in relation to the amount of time spent at school and the value of education as opposed to involvement in sport. It seems that differences in opinions with regards to the importance of sport as compared to education, family involvement, and a multitude of other factors were a common theme within families as parent-child acculturation occurred at a different rate upon relocation.

#### **4.6 Sub-theme three: Sporting success becomes family endeavor**

Within this sub-theme, the athletes described how their family members also acculturated as a unit. Through their accounts, the athletes' stories revealed how they see themselves as belonging or as a part of a 'unit' and at times referring to actions taken as a group rather than as an individual. The use of 'we' rather than 'I' occurs frequently throughout this moving story, referring to the shared connection of experiencing the acculturation process as a family; a connection they have with no one else. Stories within this sub-theme also centered on how the athletes felt connected to their home culture when around their family members and felt that this allowed them to have a space where they did not feel different to others. The athletes storied their desire to for support received from family and parents in their description of time set aside for family time, such as dinner with siblings and weekend time at their parents' home which they felt provided a space to be back in their home culture. This sub-theme theme relates back to the overarching theme in terms of highlighting an alternate role for family members. Within the moving story below, Ava shared the following account of how her family came together during challenging times and as time progressed.

### *“A family endeavor”*

As Ava exits the change room after her training session with her strength coach, it was time to head to her house for dinner, the last event of my day of the guided journey. Earlier on that day Ava invited Adam and myself to join her dinner with her family. Ava suggested that we go over to her parents’ place for dinner because she would love them to introduce me to her family. There is something special about being invited into someone’s home to share a meal because it provides an opportunity for me to interact in more casual and natural ways with Ava and her family members. Walking through the hallway on our way out, Ava spots a poster on the wall and begins to laugh. Looking at her with a questioning glance I proceed to ask Ava to tell what she finds so funny about the poster, “I’m just laughing, because it’s a little ironic that that poster is right here. See, I live with my sister and that’s the TV show that we watch together every night together after dinner, but we’re going to miss it tonight because of our family dinner. That’s not a problem though, I mean I love my family dinners; they give me a chance to spend some valuable time with my family”. I was honoured to have been invited and to actually see and meet these individuals who were considered as part of Ava’s inner circle. I also took this as an opportunity to put a face to and meet some of people Ava was talking about during the guided walk and to also better understand her family dynamics. I was a little nervous meeting Ava’s family but yet excited because I get to see Ava in a different light and her family. Ava went on to explain that, “my family and I have been through a lot, but through it all they have always been supportive of my athletic dreams; from when I was too young to be able to drive myself to practices to now”. I think a big problem that many

immigrant families face is that every member of the family is trying to get their lives together and they all have their own problems.

Upon arriving at Ava's family home, I was greeted by Ava's mom, her older brother and sister. The atmosphere at the dinner table was very relaxed, warm, and there was pleasant sharing going on among all family members including Adam. Sitting around the dinner table, with plates of food and refreshments, our conversation revolved around our families, educations, migration experience, and some of our hobbies. The conversation around the table turned to what it is like at first relocating to a new country and starting from scratch. Ava used this time to highlight some of the challenges her parents' experiences initially upon relocating to Canada, "My parents went through some tough times, my mum had to go back to school here in Canada, just so that she could get the same job she had back in our home country! Of course, for me being young, my biggest problem was that my parents just didn't have the time to fully commit to getting me to practice and games, so sometimes I had to miss out on them". I think these early struggles led to me going through a phase where I just said to myself 'no, I'm not taking help from anybody, I don't need anyone, I can do this by myself,' and eventually I just crashed and that was really a turning point when I matured and had to say to myself, 'yeah, okay, I kind of may need help a little bit, I can't do this alone, I need to be working with people, I need to swallow my pride.' The stories that emerged from this line of conversation was that immigrant families face many challenges in making a living, making a home and helping their children achieve success in the receiving community. In a way, through her stories at the dinner table it seems the challenges Ava's parents experienced earlier on led to Ava's hesitation in asking for help from others in the

receiving community (i.e., teammates or coaches), she thought she could do it all herself. However, she eventually she expressed that things got too difficult and sought out support.

Ava continued to recount that, “after this turning point, I sat down with my parents and family and told them that my passion was sport and they just said ‘we know! We understand that you are passionate, we understand that you work hard and okay we will give you a chance to try and fulfill your dreams’”. From that point on my family has been there for me whenever I’ve needed them, when I do something wrong they tell me to fix it up, go back and keep doing what I’m doing and leave the distractions and bad stuff out; I always listen to their advice. I’ve also made it a priority to set aside time that is just for family, just like this dinner, but mostly it’s usually on the weekends when I don’t have as much practice and I have the time to go visit them. From setting around the dinner table and observing how Ava and her family got along, it was obviously by how they were conversing that there was a strong attachment and solidarity each family member had for each other. Aspects about the importance of the family and family relationships were unearthed within this moving and also how relationships can change in the process of acculturation. Another athlete in this study named Sofia in her mandala drawing brought a similar insight to life. For Sofia, it seems that her family relationships were strengthened during the process of acculturation, as a result of some of the challenges they experienced as a family. This connectedness was also articulated by (Sofia in Figure 5) in her river mandala. There were different branches in her river drawing, revealing different aspects of her day such as life before and after training. At the bottom of her river drawing, was an inscription titled “spend time with family and friends”.

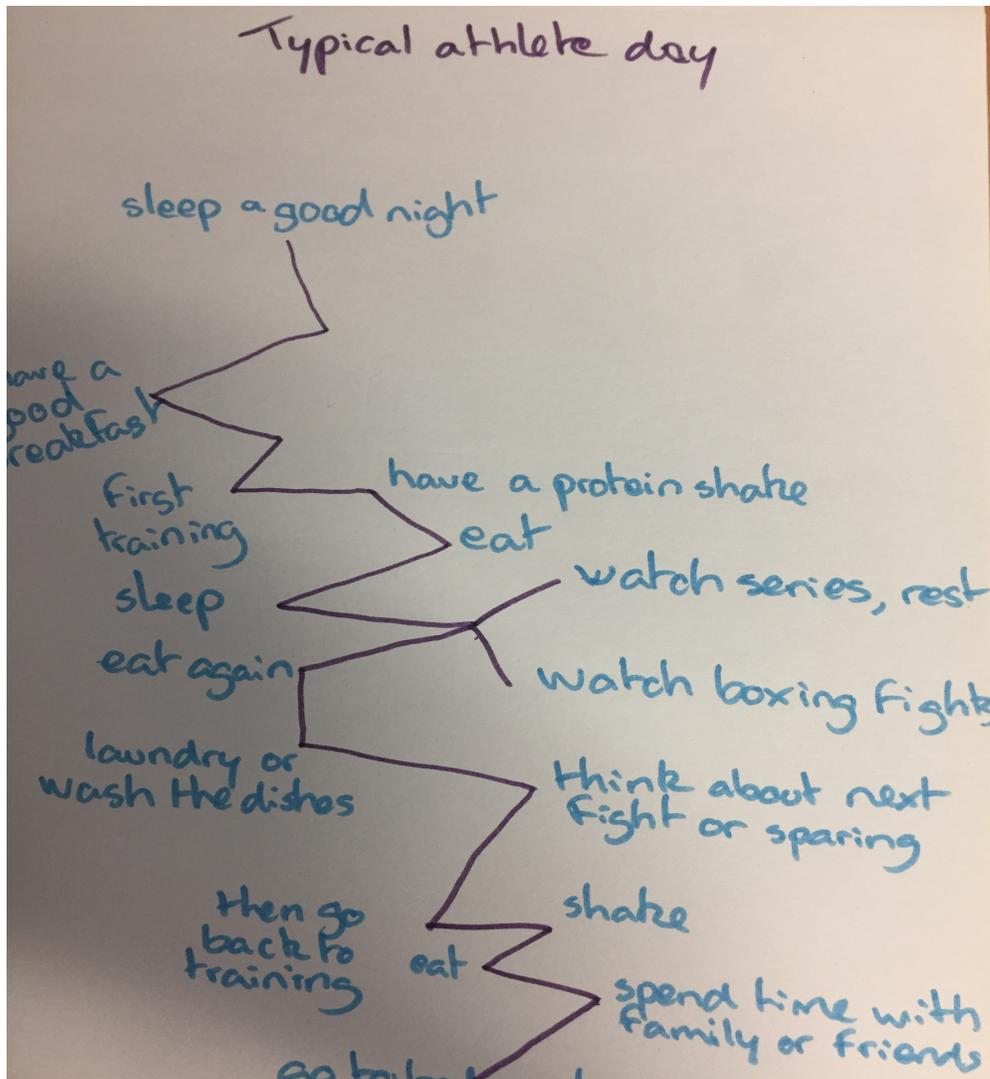


Figure 5. Art-based activity in the form of a river created by Sofia illustrating the role of her family and ‘family’ was highlighted in her river drawing titled a typical athlete day.

Sofia used this bottom portion of her mandala to visualize her connection to her family and friends in her day to day life, suggesting the one’s greatest resources lies in the family and friend relationships and connections with her sport community. The athlete’s mandala connects back to the overarching theme in terms of centralizing the importance of family

connectedness but it also provided a deeper understanding of how the athletes navigated between the different cultural expectations of their family and their changing values and priorities. One of the main takeaways for me from Ava's story was the importance of family cohesiveness and how spending quality time with family can be a great source of joy and contentment. By having dinner with Ava and her family, I was able to witness the closeness between her family she described in her mandala and various conversations we had about her family. This closeness resulted from their commitment to setting aside time for them to meet up and share meals and conversations together. In Ava's case, she explained her connectedness to her family, "I really enjoy going back to my parent's house because it's a place where I feel more at home, like back in my home country, because they have their habits, customs, and beliefs which are more traditional (...) it's small things but it makes a difference, because it makes me feel like I don't have to be different or worry that I'm doing something that is strange to others". I also find that being with my family re-energizes me, so whenever I feel a lack of motivation I make sure to spend extra time with them.

After we finished eating dinner, we all help with clearing the table and putting the dishes in the dishwasher. While cleaning the kitchen, Ava explained that she and her sister always do the kitchen chores after dinner just to help her mom out and because the dishes were not going to wash and wipe itself, nor will the floor magically receive a good scrubbing. Right after the kitchen chores, everyone slowly drifted off to their own personal activities, leaving Ava and myself to finish off the guided walk. While, standing in the kitchen, the conversation turned to how Ava does not get to spend a lot of time with her parents because she lives with her sister. Ava went on to describe the relationship she

has with her sister and the type of support she provided her, she cherished the moments they share together. Ava explained that, “my sister is the family member I’m the closest with, probably because I live with her now”. After practice, every evening is my time with her, so I’m always hesitant to go out with friends during this time, because we’re both busy during the day, so in the evening it’s our time together and we always eat dinner and watch this TV show together, no matter how late it is. My coach doesn’t really like this, because nutrition and recovery wise for sport it’s not actually that good if you don’t eat right after your workout but I’m just like “no, I can’t do it, I have to do dinner at that time because it’s our time.” But my family time is important to me, I think knowing that you have people that support and love you makes it easier to get up in the mornings and go to the gym every day and just dedicate yourself to your sport. It also helps that I know that my family has taken on my goals and wants me to succeed, they are behind me, and they want to see me compete at the Olympics!

After this brief discussion, I thanked both Ava and her family for their hospitality and for sharing stories about Ava and their acculturation journey. I sincerely thanked them for their kindness and inviting me over for dinner, it was a delight to witness their commitment to family time, how her family interacted and enjoyed each other’s company. The guided journey showed me how family can be close in spite of the challenges living in a foreign country and everyday pressures. The stories that emerged from the moving story revealed that Ava looked to her parents and family for a level of support and comfort, but there were some cases where she considers family to be also friends like Adam. Ava expressed sincere gratitude when speaking about these people who made up her inner circle. The guided journey provided me with a first-hand understanding of what

Ava's typical day was like, the nuances of surrounding her day and her interaction with her family. Spending the day with Ava allowed me to glean information about Ava and other immigrant athletes in a range of situations, from social settings to her interactions with teammates and coaches, and her interactions with her family. The guided journey allowed me to get at such individuals' (i.e., immigrant athletes) understandings of their worlds and to examine sites of interactions either hidden from or largely misunderstood by the larger society.

*Commentary.* Within this sub-theme, stories about the athletes' acculturation journey was positioned around being a part of a 'unit' at times referring to actions taken as a group rather than as an individual. The use of 'we' rather than 'I' occurs frequently throughout this sub-theme, referring to shared connection of experiencing the acculturation process as a family; a connection they have with no one else. Within the moving story, the family unit represented a successful strategy for facilitating immigrants' integration as well as for absorbing and mitigating the hardest and most painful effects brought on by acculturation or the experiences of relocating. Additionally, the athletes' stories focused on how they felt connected to their home culture when around their family members and felt that this allowed them to have a space where they did not feel different to others. This space served as a source of comfort in a process where often they did venture out and feel different.

#### **4.7 Discussion**

The moving stories by the athletes of their family's involvement in their life allowed for the exploration and identification of a complicated web of relationships in which each member of the family played an integral role in helping the athletes achieve

success. While this may not sound different to current literature that has aimed to describe the influence of families in developing talented athletes (e.g., Taylor & Collins, 2015), the complex nature of acculturation made the process more complicated and messy. The beginning of such resettlement was seen as a time during which support from her family was key to helping the athletes become immersed in a positive sport context provides further anecdotal evidence to previous research conducted both in Canada (e.g., Schinke et al., 2016) and Australia (e.g., Li, Sotiriadou, & Auld, 2015). The findings were also in line with the writings of (Campbell et al., 2009; Ryba, 2009) who highlighted that athletes who moved with their families seemed to have a stronger support system because of continuity in terms of identity and a sense of belonging. Similarly, other researchers (e.g., Ronkainen, Khomutova & Ryba, 2017; Schinke et al., 2016) have indicated that individuals with reliable support from family or significant others respond better to challenges associated with transitions or acculturation and are more capable of managing their insecurities, especially when adapting to a new sport environment or culture (Campbell & Sonn, 2009; Schulthesis, 2007).

During the early phase of acculturation, one's family generally played a key role in offering support, rather than the receiving team or host society. However, in the current study it was also revealed that the need for athletes to rely on families could create times of internal conflict as athletes struggled with differences between their ambitions and their parent's ambitions for them. Differences in values may be a problem for immigrant athletes as they and their family members are acculturated in an idiographic manner, leading to differences in priorities. Lawton and Gerdes (2014) found that differences in the way family members acculturated to their new society directly impacted family

processes and impacted both family and individual development resulting in possible negative mental health outcomes. Additionally, Ronkainen and colleagues (2017) found that family expectations and relationships profoundly shaped athletes' transitions and acculturation experiences and the meanings they assign to their sport life. The moving stories showcased here revealed how the relationships between immigrant family members can be tumultuous; highlighted by positive times of the whole family coming together in striving to help the athlete reach the pinnacle of success by qualifying for the Olympics, and times of dysfunction when the athlete's parents, much to the athlete's dismay, encouraged her to shift her focus from sport to education and/or a professional career.

A unique contribution of this study revolves around my methodological choice and the utilization of mobility methods to present a rich, contextualized story of the daily acculturation journey navigated by elite immigrant athletes. I was able to better understand how each member of a family can experience the acculturation process differently and how the athletes' stories about their relationship with their family changed depending on the context we were in. Stories within the first composite vignette helps to show the central role that families played in the lives of immigrant athletes in terms of helping them to organize, understand, and make sense of daily experiences in the receiving culture. The family as a unit can be affected, and individual members experience varying levels of difficulty in adapting and adjusting to the receiving culture. In general, the younger the athletes were, the less difficulty he or she will experience along the way (Bayer, Brisbane, & Ramirez, 1998). Through their involvement in sports,

schools, children often have more involvement with the receiving culture and thus learn new languages and mannerisms quickly.

Differences in opinions of the importance of sport as compared to education, family involvement, and a multitude of other factors are common within families as parent-child acculturation occurs at a different rate (Lawton & Gerdes, 2014; Tardiff-Williams & Fisher, 2009). Moving stories told within this chapter revealed the double-edged sword faced by immigrant parents wishing to do what is best for their child. Competitive sports in North America have become a proving ground for youth and involvement is seen as critical to future success for youth; however, involvement is not limited to the athlete, with parental commitment and family resources a required facet of this involvement (Coakley, 2012). The parents in this moving story faced this situation early on as they view sport as a context, which allowed their child to integrate easier into their new society, but struggled with the level of commitment this requires of them as they struggled to make their own way. Stories that emerged from the guided journey brought to light some of the ways in which the children or athletes were engaging in the creation of new identities in third spaces.

The stories within this moving story helps to show that the athletes were hybridizing and negotiating new identities and sporting aspirations that have very much to do with who they were, who their families were, and who they were hoping to become. Additionally, as their children became more immersed in their sporting venture, they begin to prioritize their ambitions in sport ahead of educational goals and family time, important values that families may bring with them from their home cultures (e.g., Lawton & Gerdes, 2014; Santisteban & Mitrani, 2003; Schwartz & Zambianka, 2008).

The current story presents a twist in this struggle between family members as the athletes internalized this conflict and stories their thinking process as they try to reconcile their values with their parents' values. Due to the fact that immigrant parents straddle two cultures, tension and conflict in the family arise for some of the athletes between parents, who wished to inculcate the cultural practices of their home culture to their offspring, and athletes who wished to adopt and cultural practices of the host culture. The relationship between the parents and immigrant athletes was portrayed as challenging as they engaged with the receiving culture and attempted to retain affiliation with their culture of origin often at different rates. As a result, acculturation gaps can be potentially problematic for parent-child relationships (Birman, 2006; Bornstein & Cote, 2006; Sam, 2006; Tingvoid, Middlethorpe, Allen, & Hauff, 2012), impacting the health, well being of family members, and overall contribution to the receiving culture. In a similar vein, Bhatia (2002) described this internal conflict or acculturation gap as a “dialogical process that moves back and forth between incompatible cultural positions” (p. 57), while Berry (2005) would say that the athlete had reached a state of integration as they worked to incorporate both the host culture social norms and maintain their home culture heritage. The current athlete's story showcased how this internal conflict was constantly changing; a constant navigation by the athlete in terms of working to find compromises between the two cultural positions.

The dynamic nature of this process along with the involvement of those within the social context provides further evidence that it is a process whose meaning is socially constructed in an idiographic manner and is not simply a strategy that is chosen or enacted upon (Chirkov, 2009b). The moving stories depicted the athletes as exposed to cultural

values associated with the receiving community via their association and connections to the host community (i.e., attending school, involvement in sport and the community). They also obtained fluency in a language new to them and socialized with others from the receiving country. While on the other hand, parents were mostly depicted as lagging behind their children in striving to obtain cultural competence, language proficiency, and sense of belonging within the receiving country. My findings aligned with previous acculturation writings in that, parents are described as clinging to cultural values belonging to their country of origin and developing cross-cultural competencies at a slower pace than their children (see Birman, 2006; Costigan & Dokis, 2006; Tingvoid et al., 2012). Using moving stories, I was able to better understand how the athletes resolved the conflicts associated with reconciling their values with their parents' values. Consequently, the main motivation or driving force for the athletes was their desire to do this for their families and themselves. In accordance with Chirkov (2009), this finding suggests that the immigrants or newcomers are more likely to work harder, persist in the receiving community are more proactive, and will attain better results in their adjustment, thus, their self-determined motivation suggests success in their acculturation.

Answering the second research question was a difficult proposition considering the previously proposed suggestion to view acculturation as an idiographic process, implying that recommending 'universal' strategies would be improper. As such, readers are encouraged to critically examine the knowledge they garner from being shown this story before using it to inform their work with elite immigrant athletes in their local context (Erikson, Backhouse, & Carless, 2016). The story related to readers here presents several supportive roles that the athlete felt were imperative for her family to fill. One

such role is common to many athletes in North America, and is the need for their parents to be sources of financial support (Taylor & Collins, 2015). This need primarily falls within the athlete's early years of involvement in sport, which for immigrant families comes closely following their move to their new society and therefore at a time when financial resources may be hard to come by. The athlete storied this obstacle as one that she believed many immigrant athletes faced, and while she eluded to the fact that her talent helped her overcome this barrier, there is a further layer that underlies this moving story, that of her parent aiding her in her approach to the coach to have the fees waived. This storyline accentuated the complex nature of familial relationships for immigrant athletes; the athlete feeling frustrated with her father for not being able to pay for her sport involvement, but being appreciative of her father's role in securing her opportunity to remain involved in sport. An alternate role for family members is that of providing a connection back to the home culture for an athlete. Integration, generally thought to be the 'best' acculturative path (Berry, 2005), emphasized that immigrants needed to maintain their home culture.

The athlete stories her desire for this support in her description of time set aside for family time, such as dinner with her sibling and weekend time at her parents' home which she feels provides a space for her to be back in her home culture. Some scholars argue that immigrant go through a process of acculturation where they maintained strong ties or elements of their country of origin while they acquire the values, behaviours, and way of life of the receiving community (Guo, 2013). Within the moving stories, the athletes discussed feeling like they were apart of a 'unit' at times referring to actions taken as a group rather as individuals. The use of 'we' rather than 'I' occurs frequently

throughout this moving story, referring to shared connection of experiencing the acculturation process as a family; a connection they have with no one else. Through their accounts in the moving stories, the athletes revealed how they felt in terms of being connected to their home culture when around their family members and how this allowed them to have a space where they did not feel different to others. Our findings are consistent with previous writings, wherein family relations were identified as an adaptive response to the adversities and stresses faced by immigrants upon relocation to a new country (Haskett, Perlman, & Cowan, 2013; Mood, Jonsson, & Laftman, 2016; Patterson, 2002). Family relations served as an important resource during the acculturation journey in terms of providing emotional support from ethnic familiars who have experienced the same transition, gather information about how to navigate the new environment, and a place to share comforting foods from their home culture. The athletes' connections to their family and cultural practices from their home culture served to reinforce values related to family and sense of belonging, but also provides spaces for support in the event of crisis or celebration.

Researchers have emphasized that keeping a continuing connection and attachment to the original country and culture was found to be an emotional relief for the newcomer (Henry et al., 2009; Kim, 2012; Turi-Markovic, 2010). Overall, through utilizing mobile methods we were able to highlight how crucial it is for immigrant athletes to be connected to families and friends during important cultural transitions. The athletes account within the moving story allowed for the highlighting of the importance of having family close by during personal low points upon relocating. Athletes who relocated without their family also emphasized a need for them when they were struggling

with their performance and times of conflicts. My finding confirmed previous work by (Campbell et al., 2009; Ronkainen et al., 2017; Ryba, 2009; Safdar, Lay, & Struthers, 2003) that immigrant athletes' families play a central role in the athletes' acculturation success. The moving story approach enabled us to gain a nuanced and contextual understanding of the athletes' acculturation and relocation of stories and how their stories about cultural transition reflected their broader life themes and narratives within which they design their lives. The theoretical lens of critical acculturation (see Blodgett & Schinke, 2015; Chirokov, 2009; Schinke et al., 2016) directed me to look for relational and especially family and sport community influences, but it should be recognized that also various unique ideographic events, beliefs, values, and other actors in athletes' lives (coaches, friends, teammates, sport providers, role models) had a profound influence on their personal development and decisions to pursue sport upon their relocation to Canada.

## Chapter 5

### 5.1 Results: Integration within the Sport and Non-Sport Community

The ensuing results and discussion within the present dissertation is comprised of the following sections: (a) setting the scene, (b) description of theme and sub-theme, (c) moving story, (d) commentary, and finally (e) a discussion section. This chapter focuses on the second overarching theme that emerged from our analysis. The second overarching theme identified within the current dissertation was; integration within community (both sport and non-sport). Within this theme, two lower order themes emerged: (a) immersion within sport community, and (b) integration within non-sport community. The second overarching theme are presented in this chapter through moving stories along with a discussion section connecting our findings to existing acculturation research. In comparison to the first overarching theme in chapter four, which focused on stories of acculturation within the home (i.e., parents, family members, siblings), the second overarching theme focuses on aspects/stories of acculturation within the larger community and sport context and outside the home (i.e., coaches, teammates, sport service providers, friends, others in the receiving community).

Stories about acculturation were amalgamated into a unifying story that is presented from a first-person vantage and cast in a male point of view (see Chapter four). Within the previous chapter, I discussed how the moving stories were crafted, and how it should be read. In order to convey each of the athletes' voices and stories with authenticity, the moving stories incorporated direct quotations from the athletes from various data sources (i.e., field notes, discussion from the mandala drawings and conversational interviews) within each of the lower-order themes and sub-themes, thereby

adding contextual information reflecting the moving story or mobility approach employed.

## **5.2 Setting the Scene**

I (Patrick) woke up that morning excited to embark on the day's adventure. The time slot for the guided journey meant that I had all morning to be anxious about this first visit with Samuel. I arrived at the chosen meeting spot; I was directed by one of the sport providers to go to the waiting lounge on the first floor where the Samuel was waiting. Before meeting with Samuel, I was still unsure about the day's activity or how Samuel spent a typical day. But I felt ready to meet with Samuel, I walked into the lounge and I introduced myself, "Hi, I'm Patrick, nice to meet you," I said but since he was already sitting down, I pull up a chair and sat across from him. After he introduced himself, "I told him a little more about my background as an immigrant and my previous athletic experience. The discussion between Samuel and I turned to the research project, where I explained to him how I imagined the first half of the day would unfold. I stated, "I would like to begin by getting you to draw a Mandala, which is a circle, or a river or tree, or any other shape or figure, that you think would best portray your everyday life routines (see figure 6).

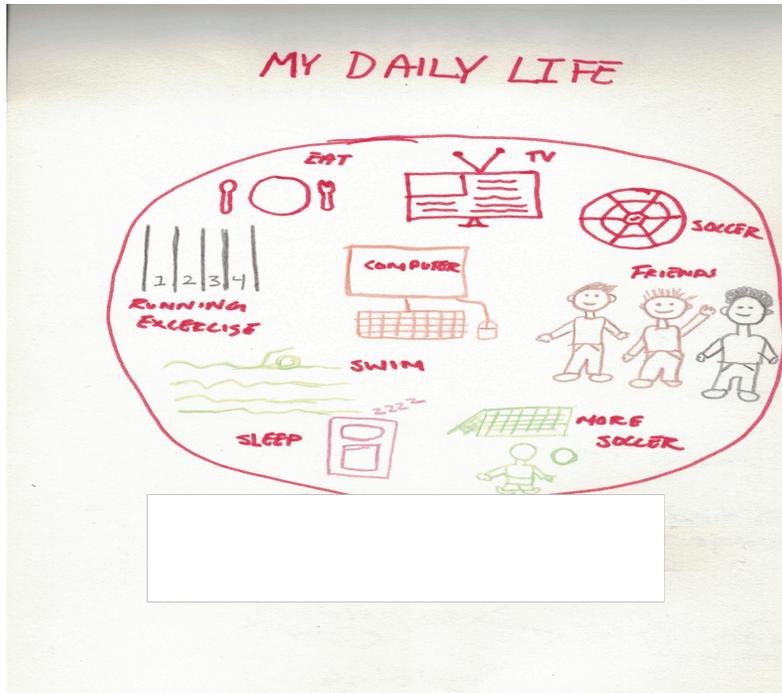


Figure 6. Mandala created by Samuel titled my daily life, reflecting specific elements of his sport and non-sport community.

Following that, I expressed to Samuel that, “I would like to talk about his drawing and then you are the guide for the rest of the day.” The atmosphere and our conversation was very relaxed and welcoming and we quickly began to discuss his typical daily activities, interests, teammates, sport providers, and about his acculturation journey. Through our conversation, Samuel began to describe the different aspects of his mandala; he had included drawings and words that were related to how he moved around the city he lived in, several different aspects were related to his training, the different people he interacted with daily within his sport context/community, and why he had chosen the colors that he had (see figure 6). When talking about the people he had included within his mandala, representing individuals in his community both sport and non-sport. It see some of these individuals were given more importance over others, so I asked him to expand more about the role his community played in his life and why he felt it was important to his

development. The discussion about the role of his community evoked laughter. I'm not sure why, but it prompts Samuel to comment, "I have actually never thought about that." He thought about it for a little bit, and then having decided what he wanted to tell me, Samuel, laughingly dove right into telling me his relocation experience to Canada and the role teammates played in his life, how he gained entry into this community, the role of sport providers, challenges associated with being a part of this community, and individuals in the larger society played in his life. Our discussion lasted for about an hour, we had to cut the conversation short because the athlete needed to head to practice for that day.

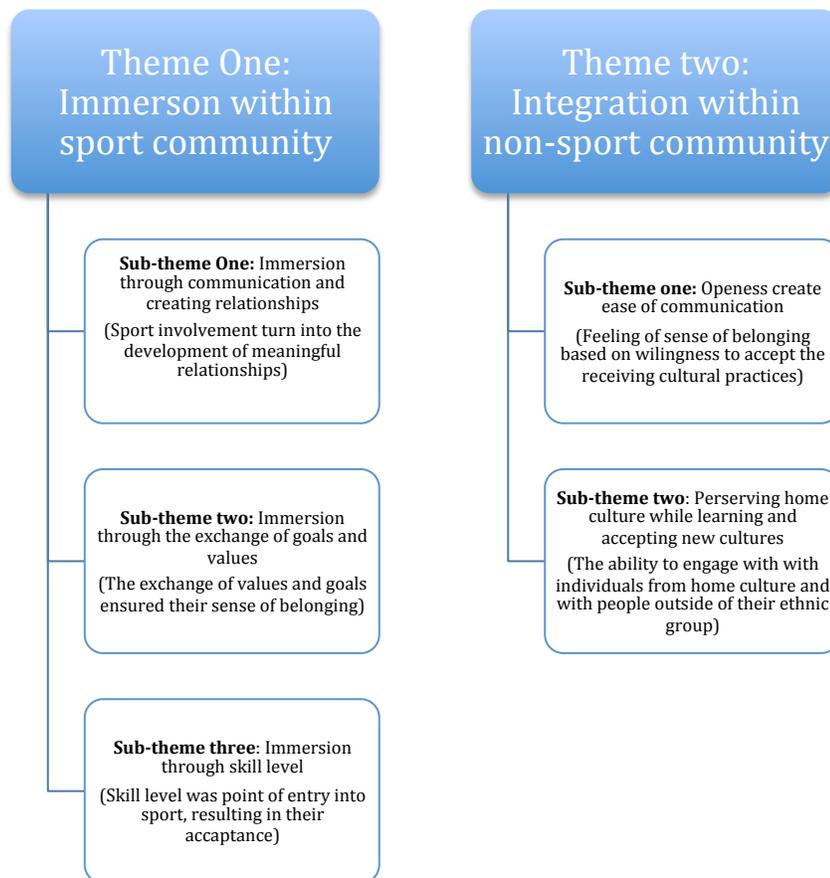
Samuel approached me on the way to the training room and asked if we had some free time. I explained to him to him I would love to. On our way upstairs, Samuel informed me that I was going to meet some important people in his life who were also a part of his sport community (i.e., his coaches and teammates). We took the elevator to the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of the building where Samuel introduced me to his teammates and coaches. As I walked into the room, I noticed it was an informal, laid-back atmosphere. The individuals in the room were diverse in age and interest, but their membership to this community formed a relationship that was comfortable and caring. There did not seem to be any hidden agendas in our conversation about Samuel and my role there for that day. I notice there was a feeling of genuine caring between the individuals I was introduced to. After the introductions were made, I was directed to an observation area, while Samuel took some time to go get ready for practice. While he practiced I was able to interact with his coaches and sport providers a little bit, our conversations revolved around how he met the athlete, how the athlete fit with the team and sport community, length of time coaching

the athlete and his philosophy on coaching. Samuels elaborated on his philosophy on coaching, which translated into everyone feeling welcome and like they belonged. He explained, “In order to be as good as you can be, a team has to buy into what the coach is doing, and they have to feel like they are a part of something”. As practice wrapped up, Samuel asked if I would like to join him for a meal with his coach. During lunch, the conversation revolved around the sport environment, how the athlete communicated with teammates, their shared interests, and how they bonded as a team. While the athletes told their stories, I often asked probing questions to gain more understanding and to again further response so as to achieve a more detailed understanding of the athletes’ knowledge or action they were describing. After lunch, we made our way back to the training facility, where the athlete gave me a tour of their training facility before heading to a team meeting. During the tour of the facility, our discussion centered around the role the various communities (both sport and non-sport) played in shaping his story about his acculturation journey, development as an athlete, and the role it should continue to play. Following 45-minute tour of the facility, the athletes returned to his teammates and coaches where they were discussing an upcoming tournament they were attending. I returned to the observational area to wait until the meeting was over. We finished off the day by going over the athletes’ mandala and I asked if the mandala accurately reflects a typical day in his life. He replied, “Yes I think it pretty much covers it.” I could hardly believe how quickly the time has passed. I left the house feeling what a rewarding experience it had been. I hope to have the opportunity of repeating it in years to come.

### **5.3 Theme Two: Integration within the Community**

Within this section, acculturation stories centered on the nine elite athletes and their integration within the community (i.e., sport and non-sport) and the role those communities played during their acculturation journeys. This overarching theme focused on the bonds and connections shared between the athletes and others in the receiving community and this included; individuals within their sport contexts or individuals in the larger society (i.e., teammates, coaches, and sport providers, friends, strangers, influential people along their journey). The element that linked these individuals together was at the core, and was the essence of being a part of this community. Integration within the community was about sharing experiences with others in that context and learning about the receiving society, thereby fostering a shift in and an adoption of the values and beliefs of the receiving community. Within the second theme, two lower-order themes emerged from our analysis; (a) immersion within sport community (sub-themes; immersion through communication and creating relationships, immersion through exchange of goals and values, and immersion through skill level), and (b) integration within non-sport community (sub-themes; openness creates ease of communication, and preserving home culture while learning and accepting new cultures; see figure 7). The moving stories within this overarching theme reveals a story that is highlighted by five sub-plots related to the role the community played both sport and non-sport during the athletes' acculturation journey. The first storyline encompasses the idea that interacting with others in the receiving community leads to meaningful relationships in turn easing entry into the sport context. The second storyline centers on the importance of ensuring immigrant athletes have support individuals in their corners and working towards similar goals. The

third story line highlights how the athletes' high skill level enabled them to find success within their sport context. The fourth storyline focuses on the athletes' willingness to accept the receiving community's practices and interaction with members of the receiving community. The final storyline centers on the positioning of acculturation as a two-way shared commitment and how athletes navigated between multiple cultural practices depending on the situation.



*Figure 7. Represent a thematic skeleton of the two lower-order themes emerged from our analysis on the athletes' integration within sport and non-sport community.*

#### **5.4 Lower-order Theme One: Immersion within Sport Community**

The first lower-order theme of immersion within sport community focused on the bonds and connections (emotional connection—a link or tie to team or sport community) shared between team members (i.e., teammates, coaches, and sport providers) within their sport context. The elements that linked these individuals together was at the core, and was the essence of being a part of this community. Immersion within the sport community was a shared process of comparing and sharing experiences with other individuals and learning about the sports sub-culture and the receiving society, thereby fostering a shift in and an adoption of the values and beliefs of that sport community. For these athletes' relocating to a new country, they needed to feel a sense of belonging within the new or receiving country, and that sense of belonging was what connected them to their sporting context and the many relationships they developed as result of their immersion. The sub-themes that emerged were; (a) immersion through communication and creating relationships, (b) immersion through the exchange of goals and values, and (c) immersion through skill level. Stories about immersion into the sport community tended to create and propagate a collective identity between the athletes, teammates and sport providers, which was built on similarity and common interests. The athletes' stories about their acculturation journey revolved around feeling a sense of support, community, camaraderie, and cohesion within their sport community was key to their integration within their sport contexts.

#### **5.5. Sub-theme one: Immersion through communication and creating relationships**

This sub-theme centered on how the athletes gained entry and became completely involved within their sport community, which was initiated by their involvement in sport

and then that turned into the development of meaningful relationships. Within this sub-theme, stories about the athletes' immersion into the sport community centered on the challenges that accompanied their relocation to Canada and their immersion into their contexts. Those they interacted within this community included their teammates, everyday coaches, and sport providers. These individuals the athletes came in contact with in the receiving sport community helped to determine whether the athletes felt accepted into the sport community or pushed away from the sport community. Through their accounts, the athletes revealed that their involvement within their sport community allowed for more opportunities to interact with teammates and others in the receiving country, resulting in the creation of conversations that happen organically and the development of deep, meaningful relationships. This sub-theme feeds back to the overarching theme and highlights the idea that relationship building promotes and can facilitate positive acculturation outcomes. The moving story below exemplified how Samuel immersed himself into his sport community upon relocating to Canada.

***“Sport was a different way of communicating”***

It was 9:00am on a very sunny Thursday morning, I arrived about at a quarter to nine, fifteen minutes early, just to impress though, I'm not sure Samuel ever knew. Sitting and waiting on a park bench wearing dress pants with collared button-down shirt, I must have looked oddly out of place. Joggers would eye me curiously, wondering what I was doing there. At the precise appointed time, Samuel emerged from the opposite side of the park, all ready to begin his training. Following our perfunctory “good morning”, we moved right into the mandala drawing activity. During our conversation, Samuel brought up some of the important people in his life who were also a part of his sport community

and the reasons why he surrounds himself around those individuals. Samuel recounted that, “When we first arrived in Canada it was really difficult for me to adjust to our new surroundings because it was a different culture and just different people all around you”. The way people in Canada think and act was very foreign to me, it felt like coming to a whole new world. When we relocated to Canada when I was younger; when we arrived initially I could not speak the language. I was enrolled in elementary school but because we were new to the country, I had no friends and I could not play sport or communicate with anyone other than my family members. From my conversation with Samuel, I gather that not being able to communicate effectively in a country can not only be frustrating, but sometimes it can be even be a bit scary. The stories that were unearth from this line of conversation was in relation to not letting a fear of not speaking the language keep you from venturing out of your comfort zone. Samuel continued to explain how things gradually fell into place for him, he explained that “although, I could not understand the language here, my involvement in sport was a way to fit into the society and a way to interact with the other kids around”. For example, I don’t need to understand the language to know how to pass a ball or kick the ball around with other kids. For me, sport was a different way of communicating. Sports was very beneficial for me because If I did not play sport after school I would go home and sit there and I would not be speaking and interacting with anyone. I would not be hearing the language being spoken, sport was the reason why I picked up the language fairly easily.

As we wrapped up the discussion surrounding Samuel’s mandala drawing, one of his teammates walked up to the table we were sitting in. Samuel indicated that they had training together at 9:30 that morning for their regular morning conditioning session. I

picked up my sketchbook and bag pack and we proceeded to the training center, which was located around the corner. During our walk to the training center our conversation turned to how Samuel got involved with sport when he relocated to Canada. Samuel recounted that, “through his involvement in sports and I started making friends because they played sports together and I was liked because of my athletic abilities, which led to developing friends and creating bonds”. The down side to having no friends is feeling like you do not belong, you feel like an outsider. So, the main thing for me was I needed to make new friends because it provided me with the opportunity to interact and communicate with others on the team and in the community. During our walk to the training center, various conversations took place but one in particular stood out to me. This line of conversation involved the approach Samuel employed to help ease the communication barrier he experienced upon relocating. Samuel indicated that, “having someone from your home country goes a long way” upon relocating to Canada. Samuel expressed that, “because Canada is a multicultural country and there are people in Canada from all over the world, there might be someone else on the team that knows how to speak your native language and they could help you shoulder the stress of moving to a new country, that is how I was helped out when we arrived in Canada. I could not speak the language (English or French) but there was someone else on the team who spoke my native language, so that multicultural aspect makes it easy for people to come into the society and feel as a part of sport community. Additionally, there might be members of the team who are also immigrants, in my case I felt more comfortable communicating with those athletes more instead because we are similar and went through similar experiences. The takeaway message from the stories that emerged during our initial

discussion about Samuel's mandala was the notion of not letting fear of not speaking the language hold you back and just viewing the experience as another part of the journey.

As our discussion about the difficulties of adjusting to an unfamiliar country continued outside in the lobby of the training center, other athletes started to trickle in. Samuel looked at his watch and indicated that; we had 10 minutes before training starts. He suggested that we move to the way side of the hallway, that way we were not impeding the other others going into the training center. As we stood there chatting, our conversation turned to how everything seemed different from his home country, and after the burst of initial excitement, those differences started to get to him but after he began to accept that things were simply not the same in Canada, the initial difficulties began to subside. Samuel expressed that, "I would say adjusting to the new culture was only difficult initially. But I was able to learn the language and overcome any language challenges I experienced along the way. Having a similar sense of humor with teammates helped to create bonds because I was not closed off, which led to me feeling less like an outsider". Through my involvement in my sport I was able to develop some meaningful relationships, which allowed me to feel like I belong to something. Some of the people I met upon arriving to Canada are still my friends and they play a big role in my life. The connections/bonds you make from sport played a big role in one's future because the people you meet and interact with makes you who you are. Stories about how Samuel went about developing meaningful relationships with teammates was brought to forefront during my brief discussion in terms of how he learned to play as part of a team, which subsequently taught him how to interact with others around him and in the receiving

community. As a result, it seemed Samuel was able to develop the necessary skills for building friendships and connections later on in life.

Samuel also expressed gratitude in terms of having the right people to guide him during along the way, explained that, “I was lucky enough to have been able to develop relationships with people who were not scared to teach me. For example, how to do stuff, the different subtle cultural nuances like how to say words properly”. Most people are afraid to say, “oh no that’s not how you say it”, and this is how you say it, because they think people will get offended. I don’t think I ever really felt offended, did I feel a little embarrassed that I got that totally wrong? Yes but never at one point did I ever feel offended that they corrected me like “oh what did I say, I’m so sorry kind of thing instead”. Some people might find that a little harsh, but I thought it was nice to develop relationships with people who were not afraid to teach you how things work in the new country. The takeaway from Samuel’s story about his relocation to Canada was that it was important to surround yourself with people who are not afraid to show you a thing or two or to challenge you because it was central to progress. Stories about how it helped to have those around you who do not always agree with you, because these new perspectives will either challenge you to back up what you are saying or you will begin to learn new things were unearthed within our conversation. Samuel also went on to highlight some of the challenges he experienced earlier on, he stated that, “it is also important to highlight some of the challenges I encountered along the way in terms of communicating with my teammates and feeling like I did not belong with the team. These challenges I experienced led me to feeling like I was not a part of the community and team at times”. For example, when we usually go away with the national team, it is often divided with the Anglophones

on one side and Francophone on the other side. What a lot of people don't understand is that most new immigrants have accents because it is just who they are and where they come from. But some people might make fun of them due to their accents. It is sometimes difficult for new immigrants because they are coming to a new world, a new country and they don't know anything about it, so it is difficult to adjust to a team or community without any assistance from others. In the end, I feel that the bad experiences and good experience helped me because you cannot have the good without the bad. Learning from the good and bad experiences enables us to learn something new about ourselves, which would either push you away or allow you to feel like you belong. After our brief conversation, it was now time for conditioning that morning; Samuel indicated I could observe their training that morning but there was no waiting area. I found a good vantage area in the corner, where I could observe that days training.

As I stood on the side observing practice that day and reminiscing about my experience shadowing Samuel that day, a line of conversation we had that morning stood out to me. Our conversation earlier on that morning about the role of his coaches and sport providers, I recalled Samuel mentioning that his coaches were very influential in his life and acculturation journey. Samuel mentioned that, "my coaches and sport providers also played a very important role in my life and my acculturation journey. Most of the sport providers I came in contact with acted as line of communication between me and my teammates and other members of the sport community. I would describe my coaches and sport providers as facilitators but they are still professional in terms of wanting to achieve extremely high standards with their team, ensuring that everyone feels like they belong, and contributed to the team. After working with this particular coach for a little I

realized he was not providing that help and support that I needed by showing and guiding new guys on the team. I felt I was on an island by myself and did not feel like I belong and was part of the team. So, I had to go outside to get that advice like okay what do I have to do because I feel like I am on an island here and it was pushing me away from the team and teammates. That experience taught me that my needs were not being fulfilled, I went through this period of figuring out things for myself. During this period, I was so frustrated and angry, I went through this phase where I just said to myself “you know what, no I’m not taking any help from anybody, I don’t need anyone, I can do this by myself.” I will spend less time with the team, I will train alone, and maybe then they will see how important I am to the team. But after a while of trying to do everything myself and without any assistance, I found it almost impossible to do it by myself without their support. I woke up one day and I felt it was time to say, “yeah okay I might need your help a little bit”. That was when I reached out to my coaches and told them “yes I cannot do this alone, he continued, yes I need to be working with people, and yes I need to swallow my pride and get this thing done so.” I think that was one of the turning points when me and my coach both said, okay “lets do this and we did it so I think that’s why my coach is someone I really admire because I wouldn’t have done it without his support. The support provided was only possible because of my involvement in sport and the sport community, resulting from the relationships I developed along the way.

By closely following this athlete over the course of a day, I was able to better understand and see and be present in Samuel’s sport community/environment as what it could be, at ‘its best’. The moving stories above encompasses the idea of interacting with others leads to the creation of meaningful relationship, easing entry and sense of

belonging within sport contexts. The moving stories above provided rich accounts on the acculturation experiences of the selected athletes composed through what was said and done, and how the athletes and individuals in their sport community are connected which is situated in localized context.

*Commentary.* Stories within this moving story highlighted the importance of involvement in sport as a gateway or entry into a given sport community. The athletes' accounts surrounding their involvement and immersion in their sport contexts centered on how sport provided an authentic opportunity for them to interact with teammates and sport providers, leading to the discovery of what they were passionate about. For some of the athletes, they could not speak the language initially upon arrival but were able to connect with teammates and other children in the receiving community through gestures and emotions in what could be viewed as a shared human experience. Through the moving story, we come to understand that when you interact and engage with people in terms of hearing their stories and sharing your journey and experiences, you are opening yourself up to meaningful connections and friends that may last a lifetime. Overall, this sub-theme focused on the interactions, both imitate and public and the evolution of shared habits and perspectives as a result of the athletes' immersion in their sporting contexts. Sport was the ingredient needed by the athletes to venture into their sport community, allowing these athletes' to interact and create relationships with others in the receiving society resulting in feeling of sense of belonging within their sport community.

#### **5.6 Sub-theme two: Immersion through the exchange of goals and values.**

This sub-theme revolves around the athletes' immersion within their sport context and the expression of their sport context's values, attitudes, and goals about sport,

competition, relationships, and newcomers on the team. Within this sub-theme, stories about the athletes' acculturation journey were depicted as an exchange of cultural values and shared goals that result when newcomers with different cultural background come into continuous contact with individuals from the receiving culture. This exchange of goals and values serves the purpose of ensuring social cohesion or inclusivity, which ensures that individuals from different cultural groups are bound to certain social conventions that would benefit social interaction within sport contexts and the larger society. The athletes' stories surrounding this sub-theme align with the notion that you are the product of the people you surround yourself with. Teammates and sport providers were key in motivating, encouraging, and supporting each other towards their shared goal, feeding back into the overarching theme in terms of the athletes' immersion and feeling like belonged within their sport community. The following moving story below highlights the idea of surrounding yourself with like-minded people.

***“Teammates are like your shield that protects you and lift you up when you are down”***

“Sitting in the lobby and waiting for Samuel to return from his team meeting. I notice a well-dressed man who was sitting opposite of me with a white wind-breaker. He walked directly to me and introduced himself to me; I replied, “nice to meet”. He inquired if I was waiting for someone in particular, I told him I am waiting for Samuel and the reason why I was there today. Without any hesitation, he replied “oh Samuel told me about you, I completely slipped my mind but nice to meet you”. As our discussion about continued outside in the lobby reminiscing about how the two met, three teenage girls walked by talking loudly. Samuel's coach suggested that we go to his office to talk further, our conversation mostly centered on the types of drills he was performing that day

at trying and why they were chosen, then conversation turned back into how they two individuals met. His coach revealed that “it took a while until Samuel actually felt at home with the team when he first met him”. Because he kept showing up to practice and the coach explained that, “when you see the same people at practice each day and doing the same thing day in and day out, the community feeling comes alive once you have familiar faces during practice and competition”. As we continued our conversation, Samuel walked in the coach’s office with his friend Jason; he looked at me and said, “So I see you have met my coach”.

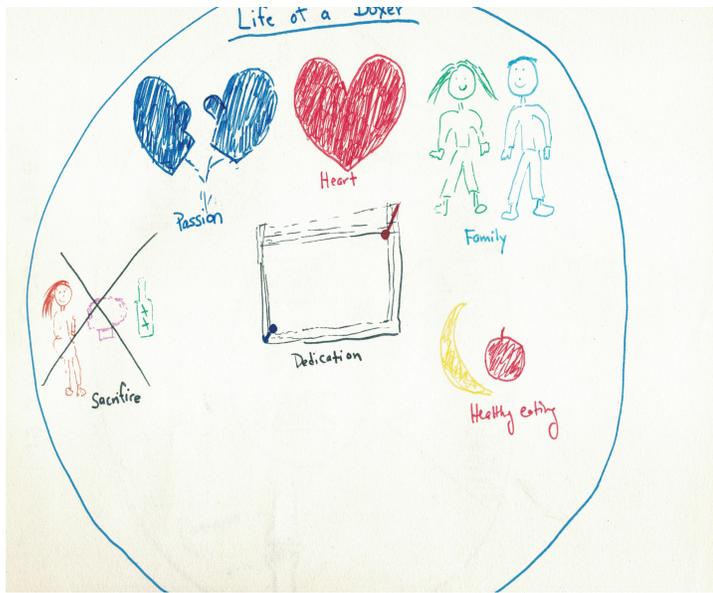
As we wrapped up the discussion with his coach, I recalled Samuel mentioned in our conversation earlier on about his mandala drawing that his “Jason” would be joining him this morning for their regular morning because they race in the same distance. From the discussion that ensued from the mandala drawing, it seems Samuel and Jason were for a very long time and they both they were the only two athletes who competed in medley swimming events on the team, resulting in a unique connection between them. During the course of the day various conversations took place but one in particular stood out to me. This line of conversation involved the approach Samuel took to “fit in with his teammates”. Samuel expressed that, “once you arrive, it is important that you surround yourself with people who care about your progress and share similar goals and values as you. I find it easier to get along with my teammates because we are all on the same road, which in turn motivates you to stay on course. In order to succeed you need people on the same page and with the same passion. For me being around the team environment was important because I spend more time with my teammates than with my actual friends and

family. Samuel indicated that, “having supportive friends made a huge difference” upon relocating to Canada.

The time was now 12:00pm; Samuel suggested we take a little break and go grab a bite to eat first before their next practice at 3:00pm. We walked into a café just around the block, and Samuel grabs a table by the window, and gets a burger for himself and Jason, and I got myself a coffee and a muffin. This line of conversation around the table involved the importance of having teammates and being involved with team sport”. He explained that, “being on a team really helped when I first arrived because like now, “I’ve got teammates, I will be with these guys for the rest of the season”. This means I get to bond/connect with these guys and establish some sort of relationship. I feel more connected with my teammates because we have so much shared experiences together. Through being on a team and interacting with teammates I got to establish something whereas, “if I wasn’t on the team I would have to establish something on my own and without support”. I really feel like being a part of a team culture/environment is what really matters, “its like being a part of an identity”. When I was a part of a team with culture and identity, it made me feel like I belong to something bigger, which transcend over country of origin. I feel like when my team comes together we add something extra because it’s not just us guys competing. It’s like one team with really good friends competing against each other. It is like a collective “we” in that you don’t feel alone in navigating and adjusting to a new country and team, your teammates are “like your shield that protects you and lift you up when you are down”. The notion of harmony is diversity was unearthed during our conversation at the café, in that, being a part of a team and feeling supported by teammates was key in terms of working towards a shared goal. What

really stood out to me in our conversation about the importance of teammates, was the idea you needed people in your life to be a constant stream of encouragement and support, which led to Samuel feeling accepted within his sport context.

The lunch rush was dying down and there was plenty of seating left, it felt more intimate with just the three of us. Samuel went on to discuss how he sustains those bonds and connections with teammates in and off the field. He stated that “we also like to build new experiences by spending time away from training like we try to do things like whether we are just having dinner together or BBQ, spending time together just to get that relationship or bond. This is why I am generally very excited to go to practice, “it’s exciting to see my teammates, it’s exciting to see my coaches, and it’s exciting to work hard and push your body and teammates to certain limits”. The stories that were unearthed via our conversation at the cafe leads back to the importance of surrounding yourself with like-minded, and high achieving peers, who are willing to push and encourage immigrant athletes towards their shared goal of immersion and feeling like belong within their sport community. This point was also evident in another athlete named Alex’s mandala (see figure 8) where he shared an account of how he struggled with teammates because they did not have the same passion, value and commitment in terms of their involvement in sport.



*Figure 8. Mandala drawing created by Alex, titled life of a boxer, in which he highlighted the passion and dedication for his sport.*

Alex used multiple colors (i.e., red and blue) to represent the passion and commitment he has towards his sport. Within his mandala drawing he drew a broken heart representing the challenges he experienced fitting in with the previous team, which ultimately led to him quitting the team. From our conversation about his mandala drawing, he expressed that, “the passion and commitment he had towards his sport and team helped him to endure some of the setbacks he has experienced in his career, resulting in why he chooses to surround himself with people who have similar goals and values”. The images and words within Alex’s mandala relates back to this sub-theme in terms of highlight the importance of surrounding yourself with people who want to achieve the same things as you significantly added to the athletes’ success within their sport community and with the acculturation process. Some of the points highlighted in Alex’s mandala drawing echoes back to Samuel’s stories of how teammate or acted as a shield or wall of protection.

After finishing their lunch, Samuel and Jason put their trays away; Jason asked to be excused so he could go make a phone call. Samuel looked at his watch, and replied grimly, “we still have some time before practice, and do you mind just hanging out here for a bit”. I replied; of course, while, sitting at the café, the conversation then turned to how important his coaches and sport providers were in his life when you first arrived in Canada. Samuel recounts on his experience working with his coach, expressed that “it is also important to have sport providers, like coaches to help newcomers or new athletes adjust to the team and culture”. One of the biggest challenges I experienced earlier on was adjusting to new people, new staff and personnel. It is a toss-up sometimes because you could get great coaches or you could get people that are lackadaisical and subpar. It was frustrating because you relocate to a new country and the coaches don’t care, they are just doing their jobs, as opposed to coaches that take it to the next level; they want to see you develop because they understand that you come from a different country. In my case, I had coaches who cared about my development. I became even better than I expected because people cared about my development and focused on me as a person because I came from a long way and was new to Canada. I am grateful because my coaches were always available to help me along the way. My takeaway from this line of conversation was that for new immigrant it was important that coaches and sport providers work on building positive relationships with newcomers on the team because it can act as the glue that cements the players to welcoming new athletes and bringing them together as a team. The stories that emerged from this line of conversation were about how important it was for coaches to have genuinely interest in their athletes, especially for immigrant athletes.

As the conversation continued Jason walked back in and sat beside Samuel and giggled; “what did I miss”. Samuel replied; we were just talking about some of the coaches I have had over time. Jason looked shocked, then burst into laughter, he replied; “oh boy let me tell you”. Samuel then revealed that throughout his life he has had his fair share of good and bad coaches and how sometimes immigrant athletes struggle without the proper support from coaches and sport providers. Samuel shared with Jason and myself that; “the other side of being a part of the sport community is that immigrant athletes struggle when they feel like their sporting community doesn’t hold the same value about sport as them”. I think we all can definitely relate to what I mean in a lot of ways because it’s a struggle to feel a part of the sporting community sometimes, especially coming to this country let’s face it we are all privileged, there are lots of opportunities. You know it’s not like third world countries, “if you want something it is not available and you are stuck whereas here if you want something if you work hard you will get it”. But it’s the struggle, right? It’s just like you are fighting for what you want and competing in sports kind of represents that, the whole idea, the symbolism and just the day-to-day struggle. While listening to Samuel share his experience struggling when people do not hold the same values as you and fighting for what you want, the notion of giving it your best and you will experience satisfaction and the joy of accomplishment comes to mind. From our conversation in the café, what stood out to me was the notion that the road to success and integration for immigrant athletes within their sport context comes through hard work and with the right support from key individuals from the sport community. Samuel looked at his watch again and turned to Jason and myself and said; we can leave now”.

We exited the café and began to walk back to the training facility for their afternoon training. It was a beautiful day and I couldn't imagine why any person would want to stay confined indoors on such a day as like this, Samuel expressed. We walked in silence for a few minutes and I didn't question the silence and finally Samuel spoke, "working hard is sometimes not that fun to do on a daily basis", we all laughed and continued walking. Samuel then goes on to share with us one of the biggest challenges he experienced in terms of not feeling apart of his sport community, stating that; "even though I am considered a professional athlete now, I feel like I still don't get enough support. For example, before I became a citizen, there is a lot of opportunities to travel with the team and bond with my teammates that I missed due to issues with my citizenship. I just had to wait patiently until I got my citizenship. I was constantly missing out on major opportunities, such as tournaments and international events, I could attend or opportunities to get shouted by major teams". Not having a Canadian citizenship holds people back and that's one way some athletes feel left out and like they do not belong within the team or sport community. But having supportive teammates who share the same goals and values as you is key because it motivates you to work harder to keep up, and whether you realize it or not, your presence with the sport community has the same effect on your teammates as well. The stories that emerged as a result of our walk from the café to training facility points to the importance of immersing one's self within their sport context because it helped Samuel to create unbreakable bonds with teammates and coaches, it was bond he needed to make it through tough times in his life. By being there and sharing lunch with Samuel and Jason, I was able to better understand the role

teammates especially, Jason played in Samuel's life in terms of support, trust, and life outside of sports, which led to Samuel feeling accepted and part of his sport community.

*Commentary.* This moving story epitomizes the concept of surrounding yourself with people with shared interests and goals. Moving stories about the athletes' immersion in their sport community highlighted the importance of ensuring you have a close group of friends, teammates, and sport providers who are working with the athletes towards similar goals. The athletes' wanted to surround themselves with like-minded, and high achieving peers, who were willing to push and encourage them towards their shared goal of immersion and feeling like belong within their sport community. The athletes' stories revealed that their involvement in sport helped them feel included in Canadian life and in their sport context. The down side of not feeling immersed within the sport community is that if athletes' felt like they did not belong, the chances of retaining these athletes in sport or having them as productive members of society decreases. Overall the message that emerged from this moving story was that having supportive teammates and sport providers who share the same goals and values was key to their immersion into the sport community.

### **5.7 Sub-theme three: Immersion through skill level**

Within this sub-theme stories of the athletes' immersion within their sport contexts centered on the factors that allowed for their integration into an unfamiliar sport community. The athletes revealed that their skill level created opportunities for engagement with and interactions with others in their sport contexts, as a result of their extensive involvement within their sport community, teammates, and sport providers. Stories about the athletes' acculturation journey depicted skill level as the first and best

port of entry into their sport community and new community. And at the same it provided a taste of what involvement in sport was like in Canada for these newcomers. The athletes' account below exemplified the notion of skill level as way of entry into the receiving community and sport community.

***“Having a high skill level made it easier to connect with other athletes”***

“While walking back to the training facility, we decided to check out the recreation center adjunct to the park to cool off and get hydrated. Samuel shared a story about his relocation experiences and how easy it was for him to get involved in sport. While walking through the narrow alleyway to get to the recreation center which was located around a busy street with coffee shops, a book store, our conversation turned to making friends when you know absolutely no one in a new country and how challenging that could be. Samuel acknowledged that, he learnt that the effort to connect with others in the receiving community had to come from both sides. From our discussions, Samuel recounted how sports helped to ease some of the challenges he experienced initially he revealed that; “due to the fact that I was involved in sport when we arrived in Canada I felt it opened a lot of doors for me. I think the reason I was able to adjust easily was because of my high skill level; it made it easy for me to meet people and even try out for teams”. I think if you played sport in your home country, it is a good idea to keep going because in Canada you can find the resources to keep you going even though it is harder to find. But if you are really passionate about it and have the skill level then you should keep going because there is a lot of potential to be on the world stage and even represent Canada at major competitions such as the Commonwealth games, Pan Am games and Olympics games. So pretty much just showing that interest, having the skill, and just

going at it and not giving up was key. The conversation that occurred during our walk back to the training facility flowed easily and I felt no sense of anxiety or awkwardness. I steered the conversation towards some of the key skills required to complete at the high level.

As we continued walking down the street, and our shadows began to lengthen as the sun was shining at its brightest, we noticed that the street seemed to become more populated and active. The conversation deepened as well, Samuel expressed that growing up he was very athletic and in shape, upon relocating to Canada he was able to pick up the skills he learnt back in his home country quickly and resumed playing sport. The takeaway from this account points to the importance of attaining a high enough skill level to play sport as it allowed Samuel to fine tune his abilities and continual improvement occurred as a result. The mood shifted as Samuel opened up about what made him different from other immigrant athletes, he explained that “it was rough times when I first got involved in sport, but I just kept showing up every day and because I was persistent I got noticed and got the opportunity that I deserved. I know people that are in the same boat as me who are also immigrants but the way we do our thing is different and the way we set up our goal is different. What differentiates us is that “I am willing to put in the work, I am willing to wake up early and sacrifice my sleep in order to train, get better and get somewhere”. It was hard to adjust and fit into a new country but sports was the main reason why I made a lot of friends because we used to play sport together and I was really good at my sport so whenever we will played together they would be. “like oh I want him on my team because of my skill level”.

As our conversation unfolded with Jason coming in and out of the conversation, but what stood out to me from our chat was the importance of skill level for newcomers in terms of how it helped Samuel find success in his sport community, resulting in him feeling valued, connected, and accepted by teammates and sport providers. The open flow of the talk and lack of direct or probing questioning from Jason and me allowed these details about skill level and athletic ability to emerge. The ensuing accounts in the moving stories depicted how Samuel immersed himself as a result of his skill level in his sport context. He explained, “having a high skill level made it easier to connect with other athletes. Because of my skill level I was able to join a team and when you are on a team, you get to meet people on the team, then you maybe get to meet your teammates’ parents and then even adults around the sport community”. It is also easy just to say, “hey I play sport, I play for this team or I play for a high school” or whatever so that made it easier for me to interact and connect with people. Your involvement in sport gives you an edge over other new immigrants, whereas “if I was not playing sport the conversation would end there”. Some people might not be interested in getting to know you, but because you are playing sports for their school or like country they are more invested in the conversation. They are more interested in getting to know you because you represent something that is part of them. Through our conversation, Samuel revealed that the fundamental element of gaining entry into any sporting context is skill, being able to perform the skill (i.e., swim) consistently well at speed and under pressure conditions in competition environment made it easy for him to feel accepted among teammates. What stood out to me during our conversation was that Samuel skill level made it easier to immerse himself within the team, which resulted in pride and stronger connection to

receiving community in terms of supporting the same team or cause and sharing a common experience.

Playing sport enabled Samuel to create friendships and connections he otherwise might not have upon relocating to Canada. Samuel continued to explain that, “his high skill level definitely made it easier because now I have teammates, which meant; “I have a base of people that I know”, people that can show me around and things of that nature, making me feel like I belonged and accepted within my sport community”. Sometimes new immigrants are not able to put their kids in sports because of the fees associated. I would say there is a lot of talented athletes out there but, “some of them don’t have the financial capability of playing sport because either their family cannot afford it”, that is how talent gets wasted in my opinion. The number one problem for immigrant athletes would be the financial aspect. When we moved to Canada, my dad would paid about \$400 a season but then after a while he said, “you know I cant do this, I cant afford to pay for your sport anymore”. So, my dad and I had a talk with the coach and the coach knew that I was one of their best players on the team. The coach knew my parents were not able to pay the fees, which meant I would not be able to commit so he offered me free membership for the entire time I was with the team. All the coach told me was just show up to trainings and games and don’t worry about the payment. Through our discussion, Samuel revealed that special considerations were made to him due to his athletic ability or potential and the cost of sport activities and extracurricular activities was deterring immigrant families from enrolling their children. It was evident from our conversation and from Samuel demeanor changing from calm and cool to outspoken when he described

the unique skills and talents he possessed helped him to overcome the financial barrier (i.e., fees, cost of equipment, travel) he experienced earlier on.

After that Samuel paused, and conversed a few moments with Jason before he departed and we resumed our conversation and I was gratified to find that he had changed the line on conversation to how his talent and skill level helped him feel a part of the team, he stated that, “my skills and talents helped me get through that financial barrier and helped me feel connected and accepted with the team because I ended up staying”. Also, because of my skill level I can say there is absolutely no way anyone could say that it was handed to me in anyway. I think that is what I’m proud of because I feel my skill level got me to where I am today. I had to pave my road a little bit and there’s no way anyone could say that it was any way easy or handed to me and I think that’s what I’m most proud of that, you can’t question it. “I’ve done it on my own; I’ve done it on a hard way too”. The walk back from the café was very refreshing and ebb and flow in our conversations, the stories that were unearthed centered on the most significant barrier Samuel expressed, which was cost related to sport. The stories that emerged revealed that Samuel’s high skill level and previous experience with sport helped him to gain entrance into the inner sanctum of his sport community. As he got better and moved on from one level of development to the next, the cost of equipment, fees and travel were too expensive for his parents to afford, he was fortunate enough to have supportive coaches who waived/forgive the cost, thereby facilitating his ability to develop and attain the experience he needed at that higher level.

*Commentary.* Within this sub-theme, the stories surrounding the athletes’ immersion into their sport community revolved around the notion of skill level. For most of the

athletes' it seems that their skill level helped them find success in their sport community, resulting in feeling valued, connected, and accepted by teammates and sport providers. The athletes' stories revealed that their skill level presented an opportunity for them to immerse themselves in their sporting context and in an entirely new culture, resulting in the athletes emerging as world-class athletes. As a result of the athletes' skill level they were able to engage and interact with other individuals on the team and in the receiving community, which in and of itself fostered a sense of connectedness between athletes and sport providers. In addition, for some athletes their high skill level helped them overcome financial barriers as a result of their sport involvements. Overall this moving story highlights the role of skill level and how it influences acceptance into the sport community for immigrant athletes.

### **5.8 Theme Two: Integration within Non-Sport Community**

The moving stories within this theme focuses on the athletes' acculturation journey within the larger receiving community. Most of the athletes' stories about their relocation to Canada and integration within the larger society allows for the highlighting of how daunting it felt at first for newcomers to adequately adjust after relocation, in which sometimes the athletes shifted towards the host culture in an effort to integrate and persist within the receiving culture. And sometimes their stories revolved around trying to hold deeply the practices and customs of their home culture in order preserve their sense of self and resist the pressures of 'forgetting about where you come from'. The notion of navigating between multiple cultural viewpoints was unearthed within this storyline. The two sub-themes that was driven my engagement with the data and was considered to have played an influential role in their acculturation experiences were; (a) willingness to

communicate with others, and (b) preserving home culture while learning and accepting other cultures. The stories surrounding this theme allows for the highlighting of how the athletes were actively integrating into an unfamiliar community or the larger community through interacting with individuals in the receiving community and seeking to understand the way others live in the receiving community by being there and engaging in daily life activities, while also preserving the cultural practices of their home country/culture.

### **5.9 Sub-theme one: Openness creates ease of communication – (willingness to accept).**

Within this sub-theme, the athletes' stories of integration within the non-sport community centered on the athletes' feelings of belonging within the receiving community through their involvement in local activities, both sport and non-sport. This sub-theme also focused on the athletes' willingness to accept the receiving countries' values and cultural practices, while interactions with members of the receiving community. The moving stories surrounding the athletes' acculturation within the larger society depicted the challenges associated with relocation and interaction with others in the receiving society (i.e., feeling isolation and awkwardness, the different cultural groups) and the resolution of those challenges (i.e., openness to communicate with others and learning about the host culture and other cultural groups). Within this sub-theme, stories of integration within the larger society focused on the mutual interactions and harmonious relationships developed between newcomers and within the societies that receive them. The moving stories below feeds back to the overarching theme and allows for the highlighting of the practice of being willing to accept led to reduced feelings of

culture shock or feeling out of place, thereby helping new immigrants ease into their new environment and learn how to function in the receiving society.

***“I took it step by step and in strides, I took it as it came”***

“Samuel’s account below evolved out of our discussion about being able to communicate in the host country language (English or French) and with others in the receiving community. He jokingly stated that, “I think that is one of the main drivers of integrating to a new culture and engaging in everyday social interactions with others in the new culture”. Our conversation took place during one of our down times while waiting for practice to start around 4:00pm. Samuel and I were sitting by the poolside, just chatting away, and observing, watching the other athletes perform their pre-training routines. Most of the athletes went into the pool differently, some letting their body get adjust to the water before they went deeper, while some dangle their legs in before going into the water. As we watched the other athletes perform their routines, Samuel turned and looked at me and replied, “as you can see everyone has a different way of getting into the pool, but all that really matters is what you do with you time in the pool”. This line of conversation set the scene for the moving story below, which showcased the positive attitude, held by Samuel towards the receiving community through his attempts to integrate within it either via sports or connections established along the way. He remarked that, “meeting and interacting with other kids in the community made it less challenging to adjust to the experience of relocation. Although, the language was a problem, once you get into school it becomes normal because everyone speaks English or French and there are people from all over the world. But at first, I just felt awkward especially because I was in a new country and around people who were born here, “it makes you feel awkward

but I adjusted fairly easily gradually”. After a while I felt very comfortable around the people I met along the way. For example, the neighborhood I grew up in had many different cultural groups living together; there was more Middle Eastern people right? But when I went to played my sport, the environment that I played in were mostly kids with European background so it was like mixture. So, I met people from different nationalities. However, at first it was awkward for me, but the more you talk to people and get to know them you become more comfortable around other people from the receiving community. As Samuel sat on the pool deck with his feet in the water, our conversation flowed easily and around how he trained in his sport for a good chunk of the day and then moved to other activities. The stories that were unearthed from this line of conversation were around elation and frustration that came with relocating to a new country. Samuel expressed that initially it felt awkward and uncomfortable learning about his new surroundings and speaking the language. From other discussion, it seems that experiencing those feelings of elation and frustration helped him to understand more about how things operated in Canada, resulting in feelings of belonging and acceptance.

The conversation deepened to his initial experience in which Samuel revealed how he overcame the frustration was to figure out a way to integrate him within his new surrounding. He recounted that, “I also felt left out because everybody spoke better English or French than me. I felt left out because of the language for one and then two because I was a new immigrant I felt people might treat me differently but that wasn’t the case because Canadians are friendly. But the main thing was that I was interested and willing to learn about the Canadian culture, which made things easy for me. Being open to learn the new culture and interacting with others led to me feeling comfortable around

people from other cultures other than my own. Communication was key to breaking down this barrier for me, “I took it step by step and in strides, I took it as it came”. For example, I found taking ESL classes was really hard because there was nobody from my home country in my class, so there was really no one I could talk to, which meant, “I was literally forced to use the English”. And to be honest by the end I spoke better English than others in my class because I had to use it. I found it was important that I was open to communicating and interacting with literally anybody in the community other than my family members, “I had to put in the effort in learning the language and about my new community”. The stories that emerged from our conversation were in relation to the notion of fostering an insatiable sense of adventure within the receiving community and being willing to plunge in and explore the receiving culture with enthusiasm. Through our conversation, Samuel revealed that accepting and being open to different values and cultural practices did not mean that he had to take them as his own, however he needed to learn to respect those values held by others in the receiving or larger community.

The conversation then moved to how Samuel overcame some of those challenges he experienced earlier on in terms of language and interacting with others to finding a place for himself in the receiving community. Samuel expressed that, “although, it took a lot of patience and questions to get the right answers that I wanted, but I wouldn’t say it was too challenging because there were great people in my community helping me along the way, “they definitely made it easier”. Initially, I didn’t know what it meant to feel like you fit into the new community. It took me a while, but I realize now that it means blending in, knowing everything about the culture, the language, and just feeling at home pretty much. It is so hard to really find your place in a new world and I think these little things like

having those people in your life and being able to interact with others puts you in a spot like, “oh I actually belong here and these people do care and I’m one of them”. It is really important to engage with other people in the larger community because it brings people together, closer, and help you feel like you belong and accepted. You just have to step out of your comfort zone because, “you learn better from other people and you learn faster”. For example, sometimes you see newcomers only interact with people from their home county, “but you can’t do that you need to diversify yourself and your friends”. You have to interact with all types of people that way you can learn about different things, that way you get to learn about the different cultures and diversity around you. That is what made it easier for me, just going out to people that I would not usually talk to and being open to learn. That is when and how you learn the most even if it is a bad experience. What stood out to me during our conversation was the idea that newcomers should expose themselves as much as possible within the receiving community and avoid depending entirely on people with similar ethnic backgrounds as them or other immigrants. The takeaway message from our conversation about engaging with different cultural groups within the receiving community was that individuals in the receiving community needed to act as gracious host, while newcomers needed to act as willing to learn guest.

The coach arrived at the pool and it was time for practice, the athletes started their warm-ups, which may seem needless at the time, particularly when you have 5 minutes to go before practice. But I guess it was valuable in getting familiar with the pool and starting blocks. The coach approached me and asked me to go wait and watch in the bleachers up stairs, while the athletes met with their coach for a pre-practice pep talk. I was now sitting on the bleachers and watching the athletes swim up and down the

swimming pool, I suppress a smile remembering a conversation we had while going over his mandala drawing earlier on about the connections that other immigrants together. I recalled Samuel mentioned that, “although, when I arrived it is easier to establish relationships/friendships with other immigrants because we were in the same position, think similarly, and are both in a new world”. So, it was easier for me to be friends with other immigrants. And then eventually once I felt I adjusted enough, “I could then be friends and interact with anyone in the new community”. But it is important to note that almost all of my friends are immigrants; these are friends I had when I first arrived. And we are still friends and the fact that we are all immigrant I feel is what connected us. We are still close because we know how it felt like; we feel empathy towards each other because they have been in my shoes so, “they know how it felt when they first moved here”. They support me any way they can because they were once in my shoes. Having that support from other immigrants who have experienced what you are experiencing makes it easier to integrate into the community and also feel like you are apart of something. The insights that were unearth from my reflection about some of the conversations that took place between myself and Samuel was the idea that immigrants were all connected through a shared identity or solidarity around a sense of “us” or “we” and support as a member of this group. Through our conversation, the importance of surrounding yourself with people who understand what you are experiencing and who can support you through these changes kept playing back in my mind.

*Commentary.* This sub-theme relates to the athletes’ willingness to accept the receiving countries’ cultural practices and interactions with members of the receiving community. The stories surrounding the athletes’ acculturation centered on the

challenges they experienced as a result of their relocation and the athletes' interaction with others in the receiving society. Within the moving stories, the athletes' willingness to learn about the receiving culture and local language was influential in feeling accepted and like they belonged. Their adjustment and integration within the larger community resulted from communicating with individuals from the receiving culture and from the gradual acculturation that then occurred. Within this moving story, the ability to accept the unique viewpoints of people from other cultural groups was key to making better decisions or learns something new about the receiving society or yourself. It is also important to note that individuals in the receiving culture were also willing to accept the acculturation individuals, thereby aligning with the shared and fluid conception of acculturation.

#### **5.10 Sub-theme two: Preserving home culture while learning and accepting new cultures.**

This sub-theme centered around how the athletes' learned, accepted, and adapted to the cultural values of the larger society, resulting in better understanding and acceptance of the other cultures groups in the receiving country. Stories of the athletes' acculturation journey was depicted as a two-way process of shared commitment, in which immigrants must learn about the receiving community and become involved in the community and individuals in the receiving community must share the basic values, ideology and traditions of the country with the new immigrants. Additionally, this sub-theme also centered on the athletes' ability to shift their cultural identity and engage with others from their home country and with others outside of their ethnic groups, highlighting how immigrant athletes successfully navigated between both their home and host culture. Within this sub-theme, interacting and engaging with others in the receiving country

prevented against isolation, prepared the athletes for the future, and facilitated their involvement and contribution to the receiving community. The moving story below exemplified how the athletes' learned and adapted to the receiving culture while also simultaneously preserving and promoting aspects of their home culture.

***“Sometimes it gets tough but it’s a balancing act”***

Once practice finished, the coach spent about 20 minutes with the rest of the team debriefing or post practice talk. Where the coach reviewed with each athlete what went well, and what they may need to work on, after talking to the athletes they went their separate ways. The ensuing moving story reflected part of a conversation between Samuel and myself where he revealed some of the challenges he experienced upon relocating to Canada and how he sometimes alternated or moved between two cultures depending on the situation of whom he is interacting with. This line of conversation took place at the training facility; it was the end of practice that day. While observing Samuel and his teammates train, I notice that teammates do special things for one another because they wear the same uniform. I brought this point to Samuel as I accompanied and assisted Samuel while he completed some of his typical activities after training which included emptying waters bottles, putting equipment and mats away, emptying the ice chests. While Samuel cleaned and put away coolers our conversation turned to where he viewed and considered ‘home’ to him, he stated that, “it was a place where he felt people are tied together through relationships formed by shared interest and beliefs”. Samuel turned to me and replied, “coming into a new country it is important that you understand the values and the customs there if not you will have a difficult time adjusting to your new surroundings, which could lead to you feeling less a part of the community”. I think it is

important to establish and maintain relationship with people from different cultural backgrounds. It is also important that, you are open-minded with everybody. Socializing with people was hard, so being part of the community felt challenging because, “I didn’t know where I fitted in”. But the people that I met made it easier for me. Well because Canada is a multicultural setting, it just feels more comfortable, right? When you are not comfortable it feels intimidating, it feels like you are an outsider. That in turn makes you self-conscious for example, “people are looking at you differently which makes you notice things leading to you feel like you do not belong”. Therefore, a multicultural setting definitely works because it is inclusive of the views of everyone and the different cultures and beliefs add color to the community.

From our conversation around the pool, it was evident from Samuel’s facial express and tone of voice that establishing relationships (i.e., interacting/ engaging) with others in the receiving community help to provide him with a sense of stability and belonging in his new community. Reflecting back on this line of conversation, it seemed that in order for Samuel to feel like he was a part of the community he need interact, both intimate and public with others in the receiving community which led to the evolution of shared habits and perspectives. The conversation then turned to the importance of getting out of one’s comfort zone, Samuel remarked on how he went about learning how to understand how social interactions worked in Canada. He explained, “for me it was important to integrate myself not just into the community but to my sport as well, “that was my main focus”. But through interacting and getting out of my comfort zone I came to understand and accept the values and custom of the other cultures around me. With time, I began to better understand the various social cues fully. In order to feel part of the community, I had

learned the expressions here and then spent time knowing people who were different from me. It used to bother me when people point out my accent for example, it just reminds me that “yeah I am different and I am from somewhere else” and I am proud of it. Having this knowledge helped me feel less left out or alone because I am more aware of the differences and similarity between my home country and here in Canada. I feel I am an equal now, “I feel just like any Canadian just because I am from another country doesn’t mean I don’t bring something to the table”. As a matter of fact, I do bring something to the table, plus I have been living in Canada for years now and I am part of the community now. But sometimes you forget that people who are new to this country come from different countries and they think differently so they have to adjust otherwise they can stand out, which leads to feelings of, “oh why is this person different from us and he is in our country”. The notion of feeling comfortable and relaxed in the receiving community was unearthed, in terms of Samuel being able to accommodate to his new lifestyle, interacting with others, establishing relations, and sharing more about himself with others. What stood out to me during our conversation was that Samuel actively made an effort to interact with others in the receiving community, learned the language, and culture, which led to him feeling accepted and being treated with respect.

Through Samuel story, it seems that he encountered periods of adjustment continuously as he moved from one situation to another. Then he went on to provide some advice to other athletes that might be in the same position; revealing that “my recommendation for newcomers coming to Canada or where ever they may go, is that “you have to engage and interact with people from various backgrounds, you have to make connections to prevent against you feeling like an outsider”. But I would have to

say; everything I went through adjusting has been worth it. Basically, everything that has happened to me in my life and career has happened because I came to Canada. Moving to Canada and going through all those challenges I experienced prepared me for the future in terms of visiting a different country. For instance, when I was in France for training camp, it felt like me relocating to Canada all over again but I was in a different country. I already knew the steps and what it took to adjust to the people and culture because I already went through a similar experience once before. So, I just said to myself okay, “it’s the same drill but in different country” so I just had to adjust to their way but it wasn’t a problem again. In a way, it did help me because it made me ready for the future, I had no idea I would end up in France for training camp one day but when I did, “I was prepared and I knew how it was”. I knew how it was going to be at first and I knew I was going to get through it because of my past experiences. Going through all those experiences when we first moved here kind of prepared me for what to come in the future or what to expect the next time around.

The stories that emerged from our conversation revealed how Samuel went about interacting with others in the receiving community, which helped reduce feeling like an outsider looking in and in that sense, he was not alone. Samuel expressed gratitude in terms his acculturation journey and how he has grown tremendously as a person and gained priceless life lessons that have shaped him into defining his life’s purpose as a result of his relocation to Canada and acculturation experience. As I listened to Samuel share his story about having to experience the acculturation process again when he visited France for training camp. Samuel expressed that he experienced many of the same events and circumstances that created stress when adapting to a foreign culture, taking him back

to his initial relocation experience in Canada. Standing and talking in the middle of the hallway in the minds of putting away kickboards, pool buoys, training fins, towels, and water bottles, what kept going through my mind was that patience and perseverance and a resolute mindset permitted Samuel to keep going at times when he thought of giving up or in a different country.

As we finished putting the away training equipment, the coach approach us and asked; "Why are you guys still here?" Samuel replied we are leaving soon. I took this opportunity to thank the coach for allowing me to spend the day with them and for the insights he provided me about Samuel. When we walked out it was late afternoon then, I suggested we find somewhere to seat and revisit the drawing created earlier on. I asked Samuel, if the mandala he created earlier on reflected a typical day in his life or what could he do to make it different. He stared at the drawing for about two minutes and finally replied, "No I think I reflects a typical day and I wouldn't change anything. You know, you were there with me all day". We both had a laugh, I then steered the conversation on to how he finds balance between his cultural practices of his home country and that of Canada. It seems that line of question caught Samuel off guard, he looked at me and replied that's a tough question, but then explained, "when you move to a new country it is also important to preserve the links with your home culture and for me, "it involved interacting with people from my home culture". Sometimes it gets tough but it's a balancing act. It depends on who is around me, if I am around someone who is from my home country or an immigrant I will be more cultured to show that I am different just as them than I would be when I am around more Canadians. So, move between both cultures (my Canadian and my home culture). It switches once in a while but it just

depends on the situation, “it depends on whom you hang around, right?” I mean if you are hanging out and interacting with someone from your own culture you are not going to act like you are from another culture, you have to be respectful because the way they are thinking and the way you are thinking is similar. Therefore, the cultural perspective or the way you guys think and interact has to be the same. It has to be mutual, for example if I’m interacting with someone born in Canada I will act Canadian but if I am speaking to someone from my culture wise I will speak in a different way. I think to preserve the traditions and customs of my home culture I behave differently around people from my culture or with other immigrants to show them that I am still connected to my culture.

As we sat on a small bench outside the training center letting the late afternoon sun warm our bones, the stories that were unearthed during our conversation there revolved around how maintaining your culture and cultural practices can be difficult when moving to another country, especially when you are trying to immerse yourself in the receiving community. Through our conversation, Samuel was very candid discussing how important it was for him to realize that just because he was adapting to the way of life in Canada did mean he needed to let of the old. What resonated with me from that line of conversation was that balancing both worlds were important for Samuel in maintaining his identity and connections to who he was and where he came from. Samuel then went on to explain that; “I think culture plays a big role in immigrant’s lives because, “it is who they are and the way they were taught and raised”. That is something you cannot take away from them. Because it is the foundation for everything and it makes people who they are. I feel you can have two or three cultures but when you are speaking to someone from your original culture you have to act the same way in order to show respect and it is

a link between you and your culture. For example, if I'm speaking to someone from my home culture in a different way, they will look at me the wrong way and say, "hey look at this guy he forgot about his own culture and behaving and acting in a different way". They might look at you in a negative light making you feel less connected to your home country. But I have to say I believe my connections with my home culture helped me to better understand the cultural differences and similarities and how everybody is different. Going through this process you become more curious about the fact that there are different people around in the community, we are different people so by being more open-minded and curious and more interested maybe I will learn more. But sometimes I feel conflicted because being around people from my home culture makes me wonder, "if I want to keep the customs and practices from my home culture going or do I want to be integrated and how do I balance these different cultural views". I think I have balanced it out pretty good because I always wanted to meet new people and make more connections but some people are not like that.

Through our conversation about how he maintains connections with his home culture, it was revealed by Samuel that when communication or interacting with people from his home culture he tends to act or behave in ways that align with his home culture. What stood out to me was that at times it seems Samuel was navigating the cultural practices of his home culture and that of the receiving culture in terms of how he interacted, enabling him to feel connected to both worlds. Our conversation then turned to the down side of interacting with only individuals from your home culture, Samuel remarked that, "some people are very comfortable just sticking to their group in order to strengthen their connections with their home country and preserve their cultural identity".

I would urge newcomers to get out of their comfort zone and talk to different people like find a balance you can still be with your people but also integrate yourself with other ethnic groups in the community. Because of the approach I took, I think sometimes I gave up something that connected me back to my home country, which was my accent. When you hear me spoke when I first arrived you will say, “okay this person is from another country” so that was something that I gave up to becoming part of the Canadian society. But sometimes I feel I move back and forth between my home country and my Canadian identity. But it depends on the situation and whom I am interacting with at that time. The stories that emerged from this line of discussion was in relation to Samuel recognizing through our dialogue that he was able to integrate and learn about the receiving culture’s values and behaviors without have to give up aspects of his home culture.

During the course of the day various conversation took place but this one in particular stood out to me. This line of conversation involved how Samuel depicted the connection he had within the receiving community. I recalled he was telling me a story about how the community came together to support him, not just teammates but people who he has never met. He went on to further explain “as a team we share each other’s emotions, when one of them is hurt or struggling, they all hurt”. He attributed these feeling to the shared interest and connection to the receiving community and people because of the time invested in adapting and learning about Canada. This notion of connection to the receiving community was also encompassed in (Figure 9 by Samuel) in the mandala titled (Is this real life).



Figure 9: Mandala created by Samuel illustrating the various connections and relationships he established as a result of his integration within sport and non-sport contexts.

To articulate some of the connections established as a result of his relocation to Canada, Samuel reflected on the image he created illustrating the ways in which he is involved in the larger community and the connections established with others in the receiving community (i.e., friends, network, partner, being out in nature). During our conversation, he expressed gratitude again in terms of how fortunate he was to be where he is and have the connections he has. Samuel explained that; “my experience adjusting to a new country made me want to be a productive member of the community, it is my way of give back to Canada after everything it has provided me. Well one thing about me is that I like to help and give up because of my connections to the community; from the knowledge, I have from my involvement in sport I want to help kids in the future too. Because I know there

are kids out there in the same situation as me and be being through the situation of moving to a new country when I was young I can help them through sport so they can adjust a little easier. Also, my dreams are to help out as much as I could around the world, not only sport wise but also anything. Let's say if I had money, I would love to help the people that are less fortunate that don't have enough. For instance, in Palestine the difficulties the kids are going through is very heartbreaking and like one of my goals is to like make it to somewhere in life and help all of these people that are in need. It is thanks to Canada that I can enjoy this wonderful and positive experiences and I started my career here so, "I feel it is my duty to give back and help other newcomers to adjust to Canada". Throughout the various conversations we have had today, I noticed that Samuel expressed concern for people less fortunate than him or no immigrants coming to Canada. The story that emerged centered on how Samuel wanted to give back for the generosity he received from individuals in the receiving, he highlighted that adjusting to a new country made me want to be a productive member of the community. As we both stood up to say our good byes, Samuel stops with a huge smile on his face; he revealed that life has been good for him in Canada, I felt he must give back to the community and less fortunate. Our guided tour had come to an end; I thanked Samuel for a wonderful experience, and making the journey easier. I also appreciated him introducing to some important people in his life and I enjoyed his jovial nature, which provided a relaxed feeling to our guided tour.

*Commentary.* Within this sub-theme, the athletes' acculturation stories were positioned as a two-way process of shared commitment (both immigrants and individuals in the receiving), in which immigrants must learn about the receiving community and become involved in the community and individuals in the receiving community must

share the basic values, ideology and traditions of the country with the new immigrants. The moving stories highlighted how learning to manage multiple cultural identities often involved negotiating conflicting allegiances (i.e., home and host culture) and managing the different relationships established within the receiving society. Stories within this sub-theme also focused on how the athletes were able to shift their cultural identity in order to engage with other immigrants from their home country and with people outside of their ethnic group, revealing how they navigated between both their home and host cultures. For some of the athletes' there was a tension between desires to develop a sense of belonging in the receiving culture (i.e., master the language, make friends, interact with others in the receiving culture), while trying to maintain links to the home culture (i.e., language, traditions, values, practices).

## **5.11 Discussion**

This study contributes to the advancement of acculturation research in sport by exploring the acculturation stories of immigrant athletes through moving stories with five interrelated storylines. The moving stories revealed how the athletes had to navigate their sport and non-sport community context within the receiving county through shifting and overlapping cultural practices. Within the first moving story, *immersion through communication and creating relationships*, there is a presentation of some the challenges the athletes experienced upon relocation. The athletes described some of the linguistic challenges encountered, resulting in athletes finding it difficult to participate in sport initially upon arriving in Canada. The finding aligns previous acculturation research which has highlighted the importance of understanding and language acquisition (Battochio et al., 2013; Schinke et al., 2016), while also revealing the isolation associated

with relocation (Blodgett & Schinke, 2015; Chirkov, 2009). These scholarships revealed that the process of acculturation often led to a second language acquisition. In the case of the athletes this occurred through their immersion within the receiving community and their sport context. From the moving stories, it seems that the more the athletes engaged and immersed themselves within the receiving culture, the faster they learned the language and ‘fit in’ with others in the receiving community. Similarly, Battocchio et al. (2013) found that in professional sports such as the MLB and NHL, foreign or newcomer athletes learned English through exchanges with teammates in the locker room and in their sport context, thereby place the onus on the athletes. Our findings are in accordance with the abovementioned scholarship, in that this behavior or approach taken by the newcomers seemed to promote the athletes’ adjustment within their sporting context and receiving community. Within this moving story, it seems language proficiency was a significant predictor not only for low acculturative stress, but also for general adaptation to the new culture, particularly for increased interactions with members of the host culture and ultimately for the athletes’ sociocultural adjustment within their sport contexts. Upon relocating, it appeared that not being able to communicate can not only be frustrating, but could led to one feeling like an outsider.

Researchers have emphasized that acculturation requires the newcomers to move socially and psychologically from being ‘outsiders’ in the receiving culture to being and ‘insider’ in terms of language proficiency (see Brown, 2007; Hall, 2017; Schinke et al., 2016). This may involve the athletes initially experiencing culture shock, that is, the feeling of social uncertainty or dissatisfaction when caught between their own culture and that of the receiving community, resulting in changes in the athletes’ attitudes and

motivation to master the language of the receiving community. However, the moving story here allowed for the highlighting of how fear of not speaking the language could not keep the athletes from participating in sport. The athletes' involvement in sport was seen as a "different way" of communicating, which also helped immerse athlete into sport community without relying entirely on language proficiency. The findings from this moving story are consistent with previous acculturation research with newcomers (ICC Insights, 2014; Lueck & Wilson, 2011), in which sport was positioned as an avenue that allowed newcomers and people from different cultures to communicate through non-verbal exchanges. These exchanges were seen as the social glue that brought people from diverse backgrounds together, leading to the breaking down of any preconceived barriers associated with relocation and acculturation. Similarly, Stodolska and Alexandris (2004) found that through sport activities participants had the chance to both communicate with members of the dominant culture and to socialize with members of their own community, thus facilitating their integration within their sporting contexts (Elba et al., 2016). The message taken from this finding is that this process appears to be gradual in terms of the athletes' moving from communicating and interacting within one's family to one's coach, and then wider to peers and teammates (Schinke et al., 2013, Schinke et al., 2016a). Our findings confirmed that participation in sport could provide opportunities for newcomers to come together to socialize and be entertained, and to develop contacts, friendships and networks (Donnelly & Coakley, 2002; Misener & Mason, 2006; Rich, Misener & Dubeau, 2015). The outcome of this involvement can be improved community spirit/pride, enhancement of cultural traditions, attitudes, beliefs and values, intercultural learning, and potentially enhanced social capital. Within the first moving story, the

athletes' accounts highlighted that sport can potentially have a positive influence on new immigrants adapting to a new country or sport context. Immersion within sporting community has the potential to be a very important milieu in which newcomers may gain a sense of belonging and social support in the receiving community, which in turn enrich the cultural fabric of the sport community.

The current project adds to the acculturation scholarship by providing new experiential insights using via moving stories into how the athletes immersed themselves within their sport community. Through moving stories, we are able to better understand how athletes moved along their acculturation journey from struggling to use the language, to expressing themselves in that language, and to mastering the culture and thus acquiring the integration skills need through their immersion within their sport community. Overall, the moving story here helped to bring forward that although most of the athletes' found the main barrier to feeling truly immersed initially within their sport community to be lack of language, which inhibited their ability to make friends, they all overcame this challenge differently (Elbe et al., 2016; Morela et al., 2017; Schinke et al., 2013). For the athletes' learning and feeling comfortable speaking the language was a way to communicate and fit into their sport community and the mainstream culture. The moving stories here helped to bring forward some of the nuances surrounding acculturation in terms of how the athletes gained footing within their sport community in relation to broadening and developing their social contacts and network outside of the family unit.

Within the sub-theme of *immersion through the exchange of goals and values*, moving stories of the athletes' acculturation were positioned as an exchange of cultural values about sport participation and shared goals that results when newcomers with

different cultural background come into continuous contact with individuals from the receiving culture and within their sport context. The plethora of stories around the amount of time spent with teammates and within their sport contexts exemplified a sport community characterized by shared underlying values, principles of supporting each other, and strong team cohesion. The findings from above moving story aligned with the writings of Kontos (2009) and Ryba and colleagues (2013), who identified the importance of establishing relationships within the receiving community and with teammates as it provided a 'safety net' of belonging that enabled newcomer athletes to develop while simultaneously providing pre-constituted experiences of social life outside of the sport community.

In a similar vein, Schinke et al (2012) found that the athlete's teammate can foster an important sense of belonging in a new environment. In this case, teammates and sport providers were key in motivating, encouraging, and supporting each other towards their shared goal, resulting in the athletes' immersion and feeling of acceptance within their sport community. This finding demonstrates the benefits of a shared identity with teammates and within the sport community, resulting in increased trust, greater support for teammates, increased motivation to work towards shared goal, and willingness to make personal sacrifices along the way (Brewer & Hewstone, 2004; Cremades & Tashman, 2016; Hogg, 2006; Postmes & Jetten, 2006; Robbins & Madrigal, 2016). According to Blodgett et al., (2014) findings, establishing relationships with teammates and sport providers played a significant role in athletes' acculturation and further supports Berry's (2005) and Schinke et al. (2016, 2016a) work that acculturation is a two-way process between immigrants and others in the receiving society. Our findings further

support the notion that acculturation is a shared/social process rather than an individual one, as it involved (re) negotiations within the athletes' sport context/community and in interactional settings with teammates. This point relates back to the notion of each group of immigrant contributes some of their own cultural traits to the new society or sport context, resulting in the exchange of goals and values.

My findings from this moving story are in-line with the supposition that acculturation occur as people with different cultural background meet, interact with each other, and exchange beliefs, values, and life ways (see Adams & Van de Vijver, 2017; Chirkov, 2009; Rudmin, 2009, Schinke et al., 2013). However, it is also important to note that although the athletes were becoming part of a homogenous pool of athletes in the receiving community, at times their values and goals could create moments of tension with teammates. According to Blodgett and Schinke (2015) and Schinke et al (2016) personal work ethic and athletes relentless approach to training can create moments of tension and widened distance that diminishes the likelihood that friendships with peers are ever fully formed. The current project contributes to the acculturation scholarship by helping to bring forward some of the exchanges that transpire through the continuous, direct interaction that occurs between immigrant athletes and others in their sport community/context. Through moving stories, I was able to better understand and witness how teammates and coaches supported the athletes within their sport context. From the athletes' accounts, it seemed teammates and sport providers supported by integrating them into the team, and by encouraging them to learn about the host culture and language, without demanding any sort of immediate change or adjustment. Most notably, the athletes' accounts within this moving story highlighted the importance of shared goals

and values as it was the ‘common interest’ that allowed them to connect to each other and with other individuals in the receiving community. This finding was similar to Hums and MacLean (2009), who argued that sport contexts brings people together through its collectivistic interest for success. However, on the contrary, cultural differences may take on a primary role when the athletes are overwhelmed with difficulties, and language difficulties in particular.

Previous acculturation research has shown that newcomer often deselected themselves from sport when they felt unable to integrate with teammates and coaches and not for financial reasons (Blodgett & Schinke, 2015; Campbell & Sonn, 2009; Schinke et al., 2016a). More importantly, stories about the athletes’ acculturation journey within this moving story revealed a sense of belonging and acceptance within sport community was forged through strong friendships, training partners, teammates and sport providers created a supportive environment that ultimately boost the athletes’ connectedness and success within their sport community. The findings are in line with previous research (see Cremades & Tashman, 2016; Nicholson, Hoye, & Houlihan, 2010) indicating that immersion in sport can be seen as a vehicle for the social capital and the associated benefits of social inclusion, social connectedness of newcomers and community strengthening. My findings connect to the research of Battocchio et al (2013) and Schinke and McGannon (2014) which identified processes of shared acculturation, whereby the sport team context becomes a welcoming environment for all athletes to reveal themselves and their various identities, resulting in better acceptance and communication among team members. Stories within this sub-theme revealed how the strong sense of unity indicated by the team or sport community may expand the likelihood of successful

acculturation since they are all immersed in this context and are around each other and spend more for time with them than with their families. The current project adds to these initial efforts by bringing forward athletes' stories of immersion into their sport community in terms of how it can be used to facilitate more inclusive sport spaces for newcomers. The athletes' accounts within this moving story points to the importance of sport as an appropriate context for promoting socially valued goals.

One notable insight drawn from the moving story of *immersion through skill level* was that the athletes' skill level was the first and best port of entry into their sport community and new community. The findings of this study coincided with Schinke et al (2012) research where the authors proposed that high-skills level provides athletes with the ability to interact and develop tight and lasting friendships with others who have common interests such as teammates or sport providers. This is a valuable experience of immersion in the sporting community as a result of the athletes' skill level and athletic abilities was described as leaving them with lasting life long memories. Additionally, the athletes' articulated in their stories that it seems their teammates and sport providers often emphasized and appreciated their athletic skills and talents rather than their nationality, ethnicity, or race, resulting in the athletes feeling accepted and a sense of belonging within their sport community. My findings within this moving story are in accordance with previous acculturation research which identifies some of the possible reasons why people are permitted entry into an unfamiliar country such as; work skills, and what they value these individuals might contribute in the receiving country (Schwartz et al., 2011). According to Steiner (2009) and Schinke et al (2016), people who are better able to make a sound contribution to their receiving culture are more apt to experience acculturation

positively. The stories surrounding the third moving story revealed the importance of skill level for newcomers in terms of how it helped the athletes' find success in sport community, resulting in the athletes' feeling valued, connected, and accepted by teammates and sport providers. However, regardless of talent level, immersion in sport created scenarios where athletes can learn about sacrifice, playing through physical pain, the disappointment of defeat, and the satisfaction of victory (Lambert & Cynthia, 2017).

The athletes' shared that as a result of their athletic skills and talent they felt they were contributing to their sport community success in some way, leading to feeling connected and part of the "web of life" within the receiving community. Overall, the moving story here helped to bring forward that connecting with a team or sport community can be difficult upon relocation but because the athletes were well rounded and had talents other than natural athletic ability. The athletes' articulated that their talent and athletic skills got their foot in the door, but it took a lot more for them to immerse themselves into their sport contexts. Stories about immersion through skill level helped to bring forward the notion that for some of the athletes their athleticism earned them several advantages such as; interactions with others in their sport contexts, captaincies, and fee waivers when time was tough. The current project adds to the acculturation scholarship through the utilization of moving stories in which I accompanied the participants, getting access to detailed and rich stories in their particular sport and non-sports contexts. Through moving stories, I was able to present and bring to the forefront acculturation stories in different settings, perhaps more 'everyday contexts' both sport and non-sport, encouraging a critical awareness of the socio-cultural, and contextual aspects of acculturation. My findings reflect and respond to the calls of previous scholars (see

Blodgett et al., 2015; Chirkov, 2009; Schinke et al., 2016a, 2016b) for methodology and data presentation that are flexible, inductive, centralizing of the participants, and encouraging of complexities, richness, and alternate understandings of the acculturation journey. The methodological approach utilized within the current project allowed me to present stories highlighting the complexities of acculturation as contextual, continuous, messy and rich at a more local level. Utilizing such an approach expands our understandings of acculturation as an idiographic and fluid process that is constituted and reconstituted as broader and personal narratives used to make sense of one's self and stories (Bhatia, 2002; Schinke et al., 2016). In doing so, I was able to present stories about acculturation that centralize the meanings of immigrants at a more local level (i.e., their various daily context) revealing uniqueness and richness in the athletes' acculturation journeys.

Within theme two of integration within non-sport community stories about their relocation to Canada and integration within the larger society showcases the ever changing and on-going nature of the acculturation process, in which sometimes the participants shifted towards the host culture in an effort to integrate and persist within the receiving culture. In the first sub-theme of *openness creates ease of communication*, the athletes' account within the moving stories focused on their willingness to accept the receiving countries' values and cultural practices as a result of their various interactions with members of the receiving community. Upon arriving to Canada, the athletes' found themselves in need of establishing and maintaining a relatively stable and harmonious relationship with individuals in the larger receiving community. The stories surrounding the athletes' acculturation within the larger society depicted the challenges associated

with relocation and interaction with others in the receiving society (i.e., feeling isolation and awkwardness, the different cultural groups) and the resolution of those challenges (i.e., openness to communicate with others and learning about the host culture and other cultural groups). In keeping with the work of (Blodgett et al., 2014; Ryba et al., 2012; Schinke et al., 2016), our findings helped to bring forward that upon relocation the athletes' acculturation experience involved struggles and negotiations of daily routines in order to adapt to the receiving context, which brought feeling of excitement for the newly open opportunities. In a similar vein, Berry (2009) and Ward et al (2005) attested to this point that open-mindedness, a tolerance for ambiguity, cultural empathy, and realistic expectations have been found to contribute to a smooth adjustment or acculturation experience. My findings are consistent with previous research on acculturation in sport psychology, whereby the process of forging new social ties with others in the receiving culture was gradual (see Schinke et al, 2013; Schinke et al., 2016a; Schinke et al., 2016b).

This process appears to be somewhat from moving from one's self and one's family, wider to one's coaches, and then wider again, to peers' athletes and then to others in the receiving community. Similarly, Townsend and Poh (2008) indicated that newcomers experienced acute loneliness when attempting to forge friendships with host nationals and encountering barriers such as language difficulties or different cultural norms. As illustrated through the moving stories and powerful images, the athletes' discussed how they gradually integrated within the larger society through their willingness to communicate in accordance to the norms and practices of the receiving community and their continuous and active engagement within the receiving community. In keeping with previous acculturation research by (Rudmin. 2009; Yeh & Inose, 2003),

my findings helped to bring forward that during the acculturation journey willingness to communicate and interact with others was a necessary vehicle and without which acculturation cannot take place. In order for the athletes to integrate themselves within the larger community they had to remain in communication with individuals in the receiving community and strive to establish and maintain a relatively stable, reciprocal, and functional relationships within a changing cultural environment or context. The findings from this moving story relate back to the notion of acculturation is played out, and it is non-linear with no fixed outcomes or end point (Chirkov, 2009; Rudmin, 2009; Schinke et al., 2013; Schinke, McGannon, Yukelson, Cummings, & Parro, 2015). In essence, the athletes' might experience acculturation each time they encounter a practice that is unfamiliar to them. Within the moving stories, it seems that there were moments where the athletes revisited their acculturation in terms of going back and forth between multiple 'homes' or cultural practices and norms, identities, and language appropriate to the receiving culture in a given situation.

The athletes' identity was continuously being (re) negotiated during this process. According to previous writings, the acculturation experience of immigrants is not a process that is moving inexorably towards a finite end that can be captured by fixed categories, but a process that is spiral, revolving, and interminable with an emphasis on multiplicity, conflict, and contradictions (Bhatia & Ram, 2002; Safran, Sahoo, & Lal, 2013; Schinke et al., 2013; Schinke et al., 2016). The current project adds to the acculturation scholarship by extending our understanding on the mutual interactions and harmonious relationships developed between newcomers and within the societies that receive them using moving stories. The findings herein affirmed the interactional and

two-way influence of integration within the larger community, highlighting the potential for such strategies to be used within sport contexts to enhance the experiences of new immigrants, as well as other athletes. Stories within this moving story helped to bring forward the idea that social support had a positive effect on the acculturation process as it provides the athletes with a sense of belonging and continuity, and functions as a buffer for acculturation stresses encountered along the way. According to (Yeh & Inose, 2003; Zaharna, 2009; Zhang & Goodson, 2011) being open/engaging and establishing strong relationships with residents of the receiving community or with foreigners who are committed to the host culture can influence the adjustment of the newcomers to the receiving culture. Since acculturating individuals who feel socially connected and who are content with their social support networks experienced lower acculturative stress (Yeh & Inose, 2003; Zaharna, 2009; Zhang & Goodson, 2011), willingness to be open to others and closeness to others in the receiving community can contribute to feelings of being comfortable in the new context. The findings from this moving story are in accordance with Deardirff (2009) and Rudmin (2009), which found that that the ultimate goal in the cultural learning process is to learn, share, and enter into dialogue in order to build meaningful relationships. By utilizing moving stories, we were able to present highly contextualized stories (i.e., accounts from both the participants and myself) that conveyed the complexity, fluidity, and idiographic aspects of the athletes' acculturation were sensitively aligned with their lives.

Within the final moving story of *preserving home culture while learning and accepting new cultures*, stories of the athletes' acculturation was positioned around the notion of malleability and vacillation in that the athletes had to learn and adapt to the

receiving community at the same while they preserved their home cultural practices and values. Stories about athletes' acculturation was depicted as a two-way process of shared commitment, in which the athletes learned about the receiving community and become involved in the community and individuals in the receiving community facilitated in sharing the basic values, ideology and traditions of the host country with the athletes. While at the same time, the immigrant athletes attempted to preserve their home cultural practices and values. My findings helped in highlighting that the athletes' developed interpersonal contacts within the receiving community with individuals outside of their ethnic group and embarked on a path of adopting the Canadian values and norms, while also allowing for the retention of elements of their home culture (Blodgett & Schinke, 2015; Schinke et al., 2016a, 2016b; Stodolska et al., 2004). Sport psychology literature has highlighted the challenges faced by immigrants as they seek out sport opportunities and the importance of having someone with a similar ethnic group or as association as a means of sustaining ties with their ethnic group and establishing friendships and social support networks (Kidd, 1996; Schinke et al., 2013; Schinke et al., 2016a; Stodolska & Jackson, 1998). In this sub-theme, the athletes' stories centered on their ability to shift their cultural identity and engage with immigrants from their home country and with people outside of their ethnic group, thereby highlighting how successfully they navigate within both their home and host culture. The shifting between cultural identities or positions illustrated the fluid nature of acculturation process in that, sometimes athletes shifted towards the host culture in an effort to integrate and persist within that context, and sometimes they clung more deeply to their home culture in order to preserve their sense of self and resist pressures to put on a fake mask (Blodgett & Schinke, 2015;

Schinke et al., 2013; Schinke et al., 2016a; Schinke et al., 2016b). From this moving story, it could be argued that the athletes' stories of their acculturation were rooted in history, culture, and, social interactions/connections that involved an ongoing contested, negotiation of voices from here and there, past and present, homeland and receiving culture, self and other. More importantly, the current research also supports the conception of acculturation that has been advocated by critical scholars such as Chirkov (2009), Rudmin (2009), Schinke and McGannon (2014) that acculturation is fluid and dynamic psychological and socio-cultural process involving movements in and between different cultural standpoints. The athletes' stories helped to bring forward the balanced interactions with both individuals in the receiving and with others from their home culture since effective acculturation involves both maintaining one's cultural heritage while engaging in the host culture (Blodgett & Schinke, 2014; Berry, 2005; Ryba et al., 2017; Schinke et al., 2013). By utilizing moving stories, I was able to understand how acculturation involved certain responsibilities and the most obvious one was to adapt one's behavior to the values, norms, and expectations of the host society. This was depicted as not to deny one's own culture but to respect that of others in terms of becoming aware of similarities and differences and to learn rather than to judge. Moving stories along with contextual information from my field notes and quotes from the multiple participants are shared under each theme and sub-theme in order to help to bring forward a multidimensional picture of the athletes' experiences and context in which acculturation occurred. The findings within this moving story highlighted the importance for immigrant athletes to feel connected to both their home and receiving cultural context during their acculturation journey. Athletes' stories revealed that through engaging with

the receiving culture and utilizing support for others, the athletes sought to connect more deeply with the people and spaces around them as they fluidly moved in and between cultural practices.

## Chapter 6

### 6.1 Conclusion Overview

This chapter provides an overview of our main findings and reveals practical implications for future researchers. The moving stories above revealed that athletes acculturated on two levels, micro level (i.e., family –within the home in the receiving society) and the macro level (i.e., sport community- outside of the home and within their athletic environment and larger society). Both levels were included in their social support system and instrumental in their acculturation journey and integration within the receiving community. The athletes' stories revealed that both the family and sport community (i.e., sports team and sport providers) played a decisive role in the acculturation process as it created an environment/atmosphere that was supportive thereby fostering a sense of community and belonging. Overall, the moving stories revealed that acculturation processes were multi-dimensional and complex and required careful study. Through moving stories, I was able to unpack some of the underlying socio-cultural dynamics at play and offer several compelling explanations as to the role of family, sport community, and non-sport community play during the acculturation process. Overall, the findings within the current study highlighted that acculturation is a shared and social experience that is facilitated by context or environment in which there are common practices, behaviors, and values to which individuals within the receiving community ascribe. This commonality or shared interactions served to ensure social cohesion/connections, which enables individuals from different cultural group to bond to certain social conventions that would benefit social interaction and contribution within the larger society. Understanding the acculturation stories of immigrant athletes' can translate into interventions not only to help ease immigrant athletes into the new society but also to help others in the host

culture to successfully acknowledge the contributions and diversity of new immigrants. The following sections below highlights the key findings from the current research, practical implications, and recommendations, intervention.

**Conclusion one: Early settlement family support.** Within the sub-theme of *family support*, moving stories revealed that each family member played an integral role in helping the athletes achieve success. Parents were portrayed as playing the role of facilitating and constraining access to sporting opportunities in terms of their willingness and ability to pay sport fees, provide transportation to/from practices and competitions, as well as belief in the amount of time they should be concentrating on sport. However, as revealed through the moving stories the complex nature of acculturation makes the process more complicated and messy (see chapter four). The moving stories in (chapter four) revealed how the relationships between immigrant family members can be tumultuous; highlighted by positive times of the whole family coming together in striving to help the athlete reach the pinnacle of success. Our main findings within the first moving story was around the central role that families played in the lives of immigrant athletes' in terms of helping them to organize, understand, and make sense of daily experiences in the receiving culture upon their relocation to Canada. These findings provide highly contextualized insights via moving stories into how athletes' who moved with their families seemed to have a stronger support system because of continuity in terms of identity and a sense of belonging.

**Implication one.** Family relationships can serve as an important source of support during the acculturation journey but can also impact family functioning over time. Good family relationship (especially perceived support) can reduce stress experienced as a

result of acculturation. However, the implications of positive family support during the acculturation process is that the family is the base from which family members participate in society and family relationships have significant consequences for individual well-being. One of the consequences of this relationship might be some athletes might rely too much on family support leading to parents feeling like they held too much responsibility and acculturative stress.

**Recommendation one.** Moving forward, I suggest that researchers should explore the acculturation stories of immigrant athletes from multiple perspectives such as those of parents, siblings, friends, and extended family. To understand the acculturation journey of immigrant athletes it is important that future researchers consider the complex mutual and reciprocal relationships that these athletes share with people they consider important in their lives. Acculturation researchers should include immigrant families from culturally and ethnically diverse backgrounds as well as consider the perspectives of other family members (i.e., extended family, sport family) through the use of multidimensional approaches to understanding this phenomenon. Future researchers are encouraged to consider the potential value of including the viewpoints of a broad range of informants, leading to a more balanced and detailed portrait of functioning as a family in an unfamiliar country upon relocation. To help inform professionals tasked with helping these athletes with their acculturation more evidence-based research is needed. As we move forward, approaches grounded in critical form of inquiry (i.e. participatory action research; decolonizing approaches) can be used to better understand the complex relationship between acculturation and family functioning needs upon relocating to an unfamiliar country. The approach chosen should be sensitive to working with newcomers

and their families as social actors and active participants in the creation of their own worlds of meaning.

**Intervention one.** Adjusting to a new life after relocating can be challenging for families and children. Types of interventions to improve family relationships might include encouraging practitioners working with immigrant athletes to stimulate communication with family members about their experiences with relocation and adjusting to an unfamiliar country. Sport psychology consultants could benefit from this insight by focusing more on family values in intervention with immigrant athletes' as potential sources of intercultural connections and sense of belonging. Practitioners are encouraged to get to know immigrant parents by asking them about their lives and cultures because when practitioners understand the experiences of families and their culture, they are better able to help the athletes with their development and learning. Families are an important source of information and insight about their children and the hopes or concern that they might hold for them. Practitioners can ask families what is important to them and invite them to participate in the intervention process.

**Conclusion two: Athlete-family settlement conflicts and times of mutual understanding.** The athletes' stories about their acculturation journey further highlighted knowledge around the conflicts that developed with parents as a result of being further immersed in the sport community and in the receiving community. Within the sub-theme of *athlete-family settlement conflicts*, the athletes' stories revealed that they acculturated at a faster rate compared to their parents' due to their involvement in sport and the environmental contexts in which they settle in (see Lawton & Gerdes, 2014; Tardiff-Williams & Fisher, 2009). As shown through our exchanges in the moving stories, parents

faced a double-edged sword in terms of wishing and wanting to do what is best for their child. The findings from the present study highlights the twist and turns in the acculturation journey, whereby immigrant parents view sport as a context which will allow their child to integrate easier into their new society, but struggle with the level of commitment this requires of themselves as they struggle to make their own way.

**Implication two.** For newcomers, the pressures to acculturate to the receiving community may set into motion a variety of stressors associated with changes in language, gender roles, and family traditions. As such, the relationship between the immigrant athlete and parents can be seen as challenging at times as they engaged a new culture and attempted to retain affiliation within their home culture at different rates. The implications of athlete-family conflict during acculturation might progress into adulthood and over the life-course, influencing the athletes' social and psychological adjustment. The implication for sport psychology consultants and professionals working with new immigrants is that it is important to be mindful of the fact that some family members may be undergoing considerable amounts of stress in their acculturation within the larger receiving community. Practitioners working with immigrant athletes' may benefit from assessing how athletes deal with conflicts that arise as a result of their relocation and sport pursuits.

**Recommendation two.** Future research is needed to understand how the family context influences the acculturation stories of immigrant athletes. The acculturating family, as a unit, is confronted with a number of challenges upon relocation as highlighted in chapter four, creating a variety of novel, and sometimes-problematic situations for the family unit. Consequently, a broader and more holistic understanding of processes of

acculturation and cultural transition is required by future researcher to capture the complex dynamics operating within acculturating families. Further research is needed to elucidate the acculturation journey of immigrant families and its links to parenting and child outcomes/relationships. In turn providing more insights into the changing role of family and its influence on the well-being of athletes as they transition towards different phase of their lives. I encourage future researchers to align their objectives with capturing participants' multiple realities embedded within the fluid nature of acculturation and family dynamics. I recommend that researchers employ creative and inviting qualitative approaches that enlist these multifaceted understandings. The moving story here highlighted that having social support during this time could alleviate some of the negative effects of stress related to expectations/ parents' priorities, but athletes reported that they felt a lack of support from their family. In particular, it will be beneficial for researchers to utilize photovoice or visual methods (i.e., mapping, photographs, art-work) to help understand how newcomers navigate the sometimes-confusing cultural maze and how they balance their own developmental needs with their parent's expectations.

**Intervention two.** Planning and implementing interventions in relation to the family should acknowledge the interactions and conflicts between the athletes and their family members. Examining what types of interventions could mitigate family acculturative stress and parent-child conflict (i.e., parent language courses or cultural brokering support for athletes' family as they navigate through the receiving culture and systems) may potentially alleviate not only family stress but also the athletes' quality of life and involvement in sport. The way forward is to provide athletes and their family members with opportunities for community-level interventions, with an emphasis on

making them aware/ educate them on acculturation stressors and the different acculturative strategies they can use as a family and aiding the family in the negotiation and integration of a new multicultural reality. Providing psycho-education for parents, particularly about issues of attachment, identity development, communication and discipline is encouraged by practitioners. More importantly, earning the trust of immigrant parents is fundamental to successfully working with immigrant athletes.

**Conclusion three: Sporting success becomes family endeavor.** Within the sub-theme of *athlete-family settlement conflicts and times of mutual understanding*, the athlete's stories were positioned around being a part of a 'unit' at times referring to actions taken as a group rather than as an individual (see chapter four). My findings confirmed the complex nature of familial relationships for immigrant athletes. Moving stories depicted the notion of "family unit" as a successful strategy for facilitating immigrants' integration as well as for absorbing and mitigating the hardest and most painful effects brought on by acculturation or the experiences of relocating. Within the moving stories, the athletes discussed feeling like they were apart of a 'unit' at times referring to actions taken as a group rather than as individuals. The use of 'we' rather than 'I' occurs frequently throughout this moving story, referring to shared connection of experiencing the acculturation process as a family; a connection they have with no one else. Additionally, an alternate role for family members is that of providing a connection back to the home culture for an athlete. Integration, generally thought to be the 'best' acculturative path (Berry, 2005), emphasizes that immigrants need to maintain connections to their home culture. Our findings are in line with previous writings, which suggest that when familial relationships are maintained during the acculturation process they function to promote

healthy family interactions and decrease susceptibility to acculturation stress and other negative influences (Haskett et al., 2013; Mood et al., 2016; Villarruel, 2009).

**Implication three.** The implications from the findings relates to the fact that for athletes relocating to a new country, the family structure and organization changes as a result of their exchange and immersion within the receiving community. Therefore, there will be a combination or mixture between with the cultural practices of the home and receiving cultures, which translate into a new type of family structure, organization, and definition of values. As such, it is important that each family member is given the opportunity to tell their story because it provides the avenue to create a sense of community in which families, particularly parents can support their children and reduce their sense of isolation. The study's finding can help raise awareness and educate researchers and practitioners about how family relationships can be strengthened as a result of acculturation, as it may provide a buffer to the challenges experienced as a result of relocation by social sharing and the collective development of solutions to problems arising from cultural transition.

**Recommendation three.** There is very little research focused on understanding family relationships influences (i.e., hinders or facilitates) on the acculturation experiences of immigrant athletes. The findings from this study revealed that migrating families brought a range of strengths to the athletes' acculturation experience in terms of the supportive function of the family unit. Future research into the acculturation experiences of families are encouraged to consider the experiences and stories of not just one member of the family, but of all members of the family. This moving story highlights the promotion of family cohesion and a deepening experience through the process of

participating in a purposive, unique, shared, interactive, self-sacrificing, and challenging experience of acculturation. The finding points to the need for ethnographic and mobile methodological (i.e., shadowing, guided tours,) approaches as they offer many potential benefits to understanding acculturation such as providing on-the ground or first-hand knowledge of the contexts that affect family functioning and processes.

**Intervention three.** Practitioners and sport psychology consultants' working with immigrant athletes are encouraged to understand the family structure of their athletes in terms of how they function as a discrete unit. This information could be useful in designing more culturally tailored intervention programs and family centered approach to help immigrant athletes and their parents learn about themselves and thrive in the new country. Practitioners are encouraged to be more responsive to the needs of immigrant athlete once they understand the impact and role of the family during acculturation and become more aware/knowledgeable about the complex nature of familial relationships. Practitioners are encouraged to ensure that they have a clear understanding of all family members perspective about their acculturation experience. It is also important that interventions programs are available in the community that offers services in culturally appropriate ways to the needs of immigrant from diverse cultural backgrounds and of all age experiencing family-related stress as a result of acculturation. When practitioners are aware of the cultural difference in parenting, family dynamics, sensitive to the issues faced by families, and conscious of power differences, they are able to support good relationships with families.

**Conclusion four: Immersion through communication and creating relationships.** Within the overarching theme of immersion within sport community, there

were five sub-themes (see chapter five). The athletes' stories within the first sub-theme of *communication and creating meaningful relationships* centered on the challenges that accompanied their relocation to Canada and their immersion into their contexts. The individuals the athletes came in contact with in the receiving sport community helped to determine whether the athletes felt accepted into the sport community or pushed away from the sport community (see chapter five). The athletes revealed that their involvement within their sport community allowed for more opportunities to interact with teammates and others in the receiving country, resulting in the creation of conversations that happened organically and the development of deep, meaningful relationships. The findings are consistent with previous research with newcomers (Lueck & Wilson, 2011), which sport is an avenue that allows newcomers and people from different cultures to communicate through non-verbal exchanges. These exchanges can be in the form of social glue that brings people together, leading to the breaking down of any preconceived barriers associated with relocation. The moving story above (see chapter five) revealed that the fear of not speaking the language in the receiving community could not keep the athletes' from participating in sport. The athletes' involvement in sport was seen as a "different way" of communicating, which also helped immerse athlete into sport community without relying entirely on language proficiency. Our findings relate to the importance of relational skills, both personal and professional.

**Implication four.** Every new immigrant is acculturated into the receiving community through communication. The acculturation process involves adapting to cultural practices, central rules, and patterns of community within the receiving community. The athletes' communication competence or proficiency can either facilitate

or constrain all other aspects of the athletes' acculturation or adjustment within the host community and sport context. The degree to which an athlete adapts to the receiving community's sport context is dependent on their personal and social communication processes. The findings from this moving story add to our understanding of recognizing the importance of early interventions and developing positive relationships that can help build a sense of belonging and inclusion. Based on the findings highlighted in this study, the implications for research can contribute to how immigrant athletes develop their language competence and attempt to motivate themselves to participate in the receiving community through their involvement in sport.

**Recommendation four.** The finding from this study highlighted how immigrant athletes participated in intercultural communication more actively upon their relocation to Canada and within their sport context, which enabled them to develop more realistic and refined knowledge of the receiving community and sport environment. Future research is needed to better understand how immigrant athletes participate in intercultural communication within their sport context, which can provide insights into the underlying processes of communication between immigrant athletes and among members of other ethnic groups and teammates within the receiving community. The finding from this story highlights how effective and appropriate communication was critical for the athletes' successful integration within their sport contexts. As such, future researchers are recommended to ground their projects in narrative inquiry to uncover nuances and details surrounding acculturation processes and how athletes immerse themselves in the receiving community. Future researcher would benefit from the understanding that acculturation and the process of immersion into sport contexts are dynamic processes

characterized by continuous interactions of human thoughts and behaviors that continuously bumps into personal, social, physical, and cultural aspects

**Intervention four.** When working with immigrant athletes' successful outcomes are dependent upon effective communication to ensure mutual understanding of the acculturation journey. For athletes' who have limited English proficiency, outcome might be dependent on the type of communication strategy chosen by the practitioner to overcome the language barrier. Practitioners can overcome this language barrier by taking the time needed to fully understand the athletes' and time to form successful interpersonal relationships. Overcoming the challenges that cultural diversity presents begins with willingness on the part of the practitioner to learn about cultural issues, to overcome language barriers, and to take the time necessary to understand what the athlete is trying to convey. Additionally, interventions to help immigrant athletes adjust to the changes associated with relocation and acculturation are needed. Practitioners can help athletes overcome challenges encountered as a result of acculturation by teaching adaptive skills that can enable athletes to adjust to the receiving culture, helping to prevent any psychological difficulties that may result. Dealing with challenges associated with relocation and immersion within sport and not community might not be easy for the responsibility to adjust is solely placed on the athletes. It might be more difficult for immigrant athletes to establish their identity and deal with the emotional and psychological navigation of two or multiple cultural practices as a result of relocation.

**Conclusion five: Immersion through exchange of goals and values.** Moving stories within this sub-theme revealed that the exchange of values and goals between teammates was important during the acculturation process because their buffering

function was essential for smooth transitions and belonging within the sport community. Within the second sub-theme of *exchange of goals and values*, the athletes align with the notion that you are the product of the people you surround yourself with (see chapter 5). As revealed through the moving stories, the amount of time spent with teammates and within their sport contexts exemplified a sport community characterized by shared underlying values, principles of supporting each other, and strong team cohesion. The findings from this study connects to the writings by Kontos (2009) and Ryba and colleagues (2013), who identified the importance of establishing relationships within the receiving community and with teammates as it provided a ‘safety net’ of belonging that enabled newcomer athletes to develop while simultaneously providing pre-constituted experiences of social life outside of the sport community. A shared connection of sport was another aspect that gave the athletes’ focus and helped them ‘fit into’ the sport community and eventually make friends. Our findings further supported the notion that acculturation is a shared/social process rather than an individual one, as it involved (re) negotiations within the athletes’ sport context/community and in interactional settings with teammates. However, it is also important to note that although the athletes are becoming part of a homogenous pool of athletes in the receiving community, at times their values and goals could create moments of tension with teammates.

**Implication five.** For some athletes, the process of transition into an unfamiliar sport context may unfold seamlessly. They quickly accustom themselves to the norms, values, culture, and role expectations associated with their immerse within their sport context. However, immersing yourself into a sport context, sticking together, and remaining united, does not always imply the need to keep all members involved and

working towards a team goal. For some athletes, this transition process might be challenging as they attempt to adjust to, or merely come to understand what is expected of them as a member of this sport context. The findings from this moving story may add to our understanding of the importance of immersion into sport context and team building to enhance feeling of acceptance and sense of belong. The level of social interaction and shared goals within members in the sport context (i.e., teammates, sport providers) that is promoted or inhibited could provide insights into the eventual level and type of relationships developed along the way for future researchers and practitioners.

**Recommendation five.** The commonality of the athletes' stories with regards to establishing connects with teammates and their immersion into the sport context revealed that teammates were of importance, as these peer partnerships developed into friendships as they found commonality through sport. The common shared interest between the athletes and teammates provided an opportunity to socialize and feel accepted within their sport context. Future research should consider how immigrant athletes seek acceptance within their sport context in terms of forging these social connections and their depth. The more information researchers gain on how immigrant athletes forge and sustained these social connections within their sport context, the more resources practitioners can provide to positively support the athlete. The finding from this moving story highlight that the athletes sense of belonging and acceptance within their sport context influenced how they interacted, communicated, performed tasks, achieve goals, and felt like they belonged. Moving forward, I recommend that future scholars employ more qualitative methods (i.e., ethnography, narrative, and phenomenological) aimed at eliciting stories about the dynamic process of sustaining and forging social relationships, which is full of twists and

turns, and navigated in an idiographic manner through the choosing of cultural narratives by which to tell one's story.

**Intervention five.** The importance of developing interventions or workshops for athletes' and sport providers was brought to the fore, focused on raising cultural awareness, acculturation, and with particular respect to shared values and feeling of sense of belonging for newcomers. Such training might enable athletes and sport providers to better understand the acculturation process, and be more aware of the time that is required for immigrant athletes to immerse themselves within the sport and non-sport community. Another intervention lies in the identified need to develop team-building interventions for cultural diverse sport contexts in order to improve team cohesion among heterogeneous and potentially divided groups of athletes (i.e., immigrant vs. non-immigrant athletes). Practitioners working with immigrant athletes can benefit from this insight by focusing on how athletes immersed themselves within their sport community via their shared values, forging of social connections, and goals.

**Conclusion six: Immersion through skill level.** Within the sub-theme of *immersion through skill level*, the moving stories highlighted how the athletes' skill level was the first and best port of entry into their sport community and new community. Previous acculturation research has identified some of the possible reasons why people are permitted entry into a new country due to their work skills, and what they might value they might have in their receiving country (Schinke et al., 2016; Schwartz et al., 2010). The stories surrounding this sub-theme allows for the highlighting of the important of skill level for newcomers in terms of how it helped the athletes' find success within their sport context, resulting in the athletes' feeling valued, connected, and accepted by

teammates and sport providers. Within this moving story, the athletes' articulated that their talent and athletic skills got their foot in the door, but it took a lot more for them to immerse themselves into their sport contexts. The athletes' revealed that as a result of their athletic skills and talent they felt they were contributing to their sport community success in some way, leading to feeling connected and part of the 'web' or connected to something bigger.

**Implication six.** Even if the athletes are immersed into their sport communities as a result of their skill level, the challenges associated from their adaptation to a new country and sport environment might be difficult. These difficulties can lead to isolation and difficulties establishing interpersonal relationships. The consequences might affect athletes' performance and create stress in the athletes' daily life. A further implication relates to the importance of ensuring that every athlete, regardless of his or her skill level feel accepted, supported, and valued within his or her sport environment. As practitioners, it is important that we create an environment in which athletes feel safe and accepted regardless of skill level, an environment in which all learners together and where athletes feel a sense of togetherness.

**Recommendation six.** The findings from this moving story highlights the important of skill level for newcomers in terms of how it helped the athletes find success in sport community, resulting in the athletes feeling valued, connected, and accepted by teammates and sport providers. I recommend that future research consider how athletic skills and talent facilitates or hinders athletes' ability to immerse them within their sport context. As we move forward, I recommend approaches grounded in case study (i.e., field notes, observations, snapshot vignettes, auto-ethnography) in order to extend this area of

research. The influence of skill level, athlete development and immersion within their sport community is an advantageous avenue for future research. Research grounded in case study approaches allows for in-depth, multifaceted exploration of complex issues in their real-life context.

**Intervention six.** Intervention programs should consider the effect of the acculturation process of the athletes and its influence on identity and performance. It is necessary for practitioners to consider the mental health of the athletes by striving to improve their well-being and integration within the sport and non-sport community. There should be open dialogue between sport providers and practitioners to help promote and maintain the mental health of immigrant athletes. The development of trust and dialogue between athletes and sport providers as a result of their immersion in that sport environment can also make a significant contribution towards the building of support and inclusive sport environments.

**Conclusion seven: Openness creates ease of communication.** As revealed through the moving stories, the sub-theme of *openness creates ease of communication*, the athletes' stories illustrate their willingness to accept the receiving countries' values and cultural practices as a result of their various interactions with members of the receiving community. The athletes' stories within this sub-theme also focused on their integration within the larger society, which was based on the mutual interactions and harmonious relationships they developed within the receiving/larger community (see chapter five). Our findings are consistent with previous research on acculturation in sport psychology, where there process of forging new social ties with others in the receiving culture is gradual (see Schinke et al, 2013; Schinke et al., 2016a; 2016b). In keeping with

more critical conception of acculturation (Chirkov, 2009; Rudmin, 2009), acculturation is played out, and it is non-linear with no fixed outcomes or end point. Utilizing moving, the current project provides an in-depth understanding of how acculturation is a dynamic two-way process that is experienced by the immigrant athletes as well as the individuals in the receiving community in which culture and context are very much intertwined (see chapter five). Our findings highlight the importance of the context in which acculturation occurs, which cannot be overestimated because they offer a more comprehensive view of the acculturation process, with all its nuances and inequities. The moving stories reveal that the athletes were adapting their personal identity, which was continuously negotiated through their contact with individuals in the receiving community.

**Implication seven.** Building on previous research examining the acculturation process (Blodgett & Schinke, 2015; Schinke et al., 2013; Schinke et al., 2016a; 2016b), our findings illustrate the experience of “a push” of the new culture and “a pull” of the old. That is typical for the acculturation process as it is not fixed but on-going and constantly changing. The implications of this moving story points to how immigrant athletes might navigate acculturation challenges outside of the sport environment. There is evidence that integrating within the non-sport aspect of the receiving community can be extremely delicate, highly social, and possibly damaging to athletes. Sport psychology consultants and practitioners have an important role to play in terms of working with athletes to come up with solutions to help alleviate any challenges encountered outside of the sport environment. A further implication relates to the importance of ensuring that newcomers made a conscious decision to make the effort to step out and establish relationships with people from other cultures within the receiving community. Once you

have made the decision to engage with people different from you, you can then engage with them in much as the same way as with anyone else.

**Recommendation seven.** The findings from the current study highlighted that openness and willingness to engage with others in the receiving community gave the athletes an adaptive advantage. This openness enabled the athletes to perceive and interpret various events and situations in the receiving community without judgment or contention. Future researchers are encouraged to consider how immigrant athletes smoothly acquire communication competency within the host community and take part in the receiving community with greater ease. Future research should also consider how immigrant athletes navigate cultural transitions and make the necessary adjustments in themselves and facilitate their own intercultural transformation upon relocating to an unfamiliar country. Utilizing various qualitative methods (i.e., mobile methods, life story, narratives) and epistemology approaches, researchers will be able to provide a deeper insight into the complex nature of acculturation, allowing for more localized understanding of acculturation in the context in which it occurs.

**Intervention seven.** Before working with a newcomer, it is important that practitioners consider the athletes' level of acculturation or connections within the receiving culture or the level of connection or link to their home culture. Acculturation in this case can be viewed as how much the newcomer feels they have adapted to the receiving community. For instance, if an athlete feels they are not highly acculturated, interventions that assume a high level of acculturation (i.e., a high level of familiarity with the receiving culture and skills in negotiating between cultural practices) may not be very effective. Ideally, acculturation levels should be matched between athletes and the

practitioner, as well as between client and content of intervention. For practitioners working with immigrant athletes it is encouraged that they are aware of the athletes' perceived acculturative status in terms of their level of acculturation within the receiving community or the Canadian society. Additionally, it is also important to note that before engaging with immigrant athletes, practitioners should examine their own cultural identity and any personal values, beliefs, or presuppositions about immigrant athletes based on their cultural backgrounds. Practitioners who are aware of their own cultural backgrounds are more likely to acknowledge and explore how culture affects the athlete-practitioner relationship. The practitioner should also remain aware of his or hers own personal biases, beliefs, and attitudes while providing service.

**Conclusion eight: Preserving home culture while learning and accepting new cultures.** Within the final sub-theme of *preserving home culture while learning and accepting new cultures*, the athletes' accounts were framed around the notion of malleability in that the athletes had to learn and adapt to the receiving community while they preserved their home cultural practices and values. Our findings were consistent with previous acculturation research which identified how athletes developed interpersonal contacts within the receiving community and with individuals outside of their ethnic group, embarking on a path of adopting the Canadian values and norms, while also attempting to retain elements of their home culture (Blodgett & Schinke, 2014; Schinke et al., 2016a, 2016b, Stodolska et al., 2004). The athletes' stories within this sub-theme centered on the athletes' ability to shift their cultural identity and engage with other immigrants from their home country and with people outside of their ethnic group, thereby highlighting how successfully and fluidly they navigate within both their home

and host culture. The current findings also support the conception of acculturation that has been advocated by critical scholars (Chirkov, 2009; Rudmin, 2009; Schinke & McGannon, 2014), that acculturation is fluid and dynamic psychological and socio-cultural process involving movements in and between different cultural standpoints.

**Implication eight.** A final consideration for research and practice relates to the importance of adapting to the values and norms of the receiving community, while also attempting to retain elements of their home culture. The findings from this moving story revealed that finding people who understand what you were experiencing and who can support you through challenges experienced due to acculturation is important, as immigrant athletes might experience this process as the collision of multiple worlds. Due to the fact that the receiving community was accepting of immigrants, newcomers proceeded at their own pace in the process of adaptation to the new country. The findings from the moving story add to our understanding on how immigrants are provided with the opportunity to make their choice as to the way and extent to which they retain their ethnic identity and develop a new identity as part of their integration within the receiving community.

**Recommendation eight.** The moving stories revealed how the athletes were negotiating between both their heritage cultures and receiving culture that created a bi-cultural orientation at times. Most people who relocated to an unfamiliar country understood and were prepared for change as part and parcel of relocating. This understanding equips newcomers with a sense of personal responsibility and determination for new learning while vacillating between multiple cultural viewpoints. Further research is needed to uncover the feelings, challenges, and ways in which the

athletes maintain their cultural identities and through socialization adapted to the receiving community's cultural practices and nuances. As immigrants vacillate between two or more ethnic identities may experience a feeling of conflict or tension arising between affiliations. As such, I recommend that future researchers should look to continue to move towards epistemological and methodological pluralism in the search for emerging methodologies that are able to provide practitioners with a deeper understanding of how athletes oscillate between different cultural positions depend on the context in which athletes find themselves.

**Intervention eight.** The findings from my study points to the importance for practitioners to be aware of immigrant athletes' possible cultural differences. As such, culturally sensitive approach is recommended in understanding immigrant athletes' ethnicity, beliefs system, and how they navigate between multiple world-views. Practitioners can incorporate cultural sensitivity into their work to provide an inclusive environment/space that accommodate and respect differences in opinions, values, and attitudes of various cultures and ethnicity. To have an inclusive approach when working with athletes with diverse cultural backgrounds, practitioners must develop multicultural competencies in order to effectively work with these athletes. When the client perceives the practitioner as culturally competent, they might be more likely to form positive and fruitful relationships with them, leading to better intervention outcomes. It is also important that practitioners working with immigrant athletes to gain awareness of different social and cultural identities and the implications of clients multiple identities. Practitioners can encourage a positive environment by inviting diversity into the intervention. For example, providing a range of opportunities for athletes to share their

personal stories creates an atmosphere of cultural respect and acknowledgment of diversity. The use of arts-based methods could help in this respect. Practitioners working with immigrant athletes can encourage these athletes and others from the receiving community to engage in cultural activities and take pride in their heritage and cultural backgrounds.

## **6.2 Closing Remarks**

Although research on the acculturation and adaptation of immigrant athletes has grown significantly over the last two decades, I believe that there are still many aspects within acculturation research that can be improved. The most important of these involves recognizing the importance of family and community in the lives of immigrant athletes. Within this study, family, and community (i.e., sport and non-sport) are two salient contexts in which acculturation occurred for the athletes through their stories. Through moving stories, I was able to push research on athletes' acculturation to a deeper level in terms of providing contextualized insights into how the family and the receiving community/ sport context supported the athletes and helped in facilitating more meaningful relocation processes. In this chapter, I highlighted the findings from the study, implications, recommendations for future research, and interventions, where researchers and practitioners can benefit from the results and conclusions of this study. Acculturation is notable for its complexity; as such, there is a need to move beyond simple acculturation links to more deeply examine the contexts that shape the acculturation stories of immigrant athletes. That is, to understand acculturation and its links to cultural adjustment, more research is needed that considers the interactions among individuals in the receiving community, the family, and community contexts, the larger

societal context, the context of the individuals home culture. A notable conclusion from the moving stories was that the acculturation process involves an oscillating intercultural boundary-crossing journey from identity stability to instability and from identity familiarity to unfamiliarly. By utilizing moving stories, I was able to bring to light aspects of the sociocultural context in which a story is told and further insight into how athletes construct their stories in relation to their acculturation journey.

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## Appendices

## Appendix A: Recruitment Script



**Laurentian University**  
**Université Laurentienne**

**Study Title:** The Adaptation Challenges of Immigrant Athletes Relocated to Canada During Adolescence

**Project Team:** Robert Schinke, Kerry McGannon, and Diana Coholic (Laurentian University), Greg Wells (University of Toronto and CSC Ontario), Mark Eys (Wilfrid Laurier University)

**Athletes Needed:** The Canadian sport system includes athletes born outside of Canada. These athletes are newcomers to the Canadian sport system. If you are an athlete immigrated to Canada during adolescence or early adulthood, we invite you to participate in a new athlete research project supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and the Canadian Sport Centers: Toronto, Montreal.

**Research Topic:** The purpose of this project is to understand pre-elite and elite immigrant athletes' cultural experiences as part of the Canadian sport system. We are also interested in how immigrated athletes try to adjust to an unfamiliar culture through their sport training. As an immigrant athlete, you will be asked to share some of the communication and more general challenges that may result during your training and competition and also some of the strategies you have developed to build relations with teammates and coaches.

Your participation in this project is valuable because sport researchers have not yet fully considered the challenges that immigrant athletes experience or the solutions they may use in their sport environments. Understanding this topic will be an important step in developing athlete, coach, and sport management education regarding how to overcome cross-cultural challenges when sport participants work together and originate from two nationalities.

If you are interested in this project, you will be asked to participate by completing a questionnaire and an individual interview during 2012-13. The individual interview will be conducted online via Skype, by telephone, or in person, as you prefer. The interview will take approximately 75-95 minutes. During the second phase of the project in 2013-14, one of us will ask to accompany you during a day's training, where you will be able to show us first-hand some of your training experiences, walking us through a typical day's training / competition.

Should you be interested in participating in this project, or know of an athlete who would be, please contact Kelly Olesen Research Coordinator at either:

E-mail: [olesenmck@sympatico.ca](mailto:olesenmck@sympatico.ca)

OR Tel: 705-522-9869

## Appendix B: Informed Consent

### Informed Consent

**Study Title:** The adaptation challenges of immigrant athletes relocated to Canada during adolescence

**Investigators:** Robert Schinke, Greg Wells, Mark Eys, Kerry McGannon, and Diana Coholic

**Study Purpose:** For immigrant athletes, the adaptation challenges associated with achieving performance objectives include stresses such as arduous training shared by all athletes. However, adaptation to a new culture exacerbates these challenges that also include learning cultural nuances and transitioning away from home without social supports (3).

**Our research has two objectives.** The first objective is to gain an in-depth understanding of the adaptation challenges of male and female elite national team (i.e., amateur) athletes immigrated to Canada during their adolescence. The second objective is to encourage the adaptation, acceptance and retention of immigrants in Canadian sport contexts by expanding immediate and long-term access to multi-level adaptation strategies (personal, social, and organizational). This project will (a) develop understanding of the adaptation challenges encountered by immigrated athletes within their sport contexts, and the impact of such challenges on athletes' lives, and (b) develop practical recommendations to ease immigrant athletes' adaptation challenges.

**Benefits:** This project might well be beneficial to you as you make sense of your cultural adaptation experiences. The benefits derived from this project might include increased reflection of how you have adapted, perhaps reinforcing effective strategies, ongoing. In addition, this project will inform practice and research in the area of immigrant athlete services. The information from this project will be shared with sport administrators, coaches and athletes in the Canadian Sport System through scheduled presentations and applied publications.

**Risks:** The risks to you are minimal. The topic matter will pertain to challenges you've encountered within the sport system and how you have worked through these challenges. It is possible that the day-long activity scheduled for Year Two might will make for a long day. However, the researcher will be trained in being supportive of you throughout this day, and the researcher will not intrude on you day's scheduling.

**Right to Withdraw from the Project:** If at any point you feel uncomfortable sharing certain personal experiences during any phase of the research, you will be supported not to share those aspects or share them and indicate that whatever aspects you wish not to share beyond the interview be excluded from the project data. Further, it is your right to opt out of this project at any time with no consequence to you. You



## Appendix C: REB Approval



### APPROVAL FOR CONDUCTING RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

Research Ethics Board – Laurentian University

This letter confirms that the research project identified below has successfully passed the ethics review by the Laurentian University Research Ethics Board (REB). Your ethics approval date, other milestone dates, and any special conditions for your project are indicated below.

TYPE OF APPROVAL / New / Modifications to project X / Time extension X	
<b>Name of Principal Investigator and school/department</b>	Patrick Oghene, PHD candidate Human Kinetics, supervisor, Robert Schinke, Human Kinetics
<b>Title of Project</b>	The adaptation challenges of immigrant athletes relocated to Canada during adolescence
<b>REB file number</b>	2012-05-08
<b>Date of original approval of project</b>	May, 2012
<b>Date of approval of project modifications or extension (if applicable)</b>	August 31 <sup>st</sup> , 2016
<b>Final/Interim report due on: (You may request an extension)</b>	May, 2017
<b>Conditions placed on project</b>	

During the course of your research, no deviations from, or changes to, the protocol, recruitment or consent forms may be initiated without prior written approval from the REB. If you wish to modify your research project, please refer to the Research Ethics website to complete the appropriate REB form.

All projects must submit a report to REB at least once per year. If involvement with human participants continues for longer than one year (e.g. you have not completed the objectives of the study and have not yet terminated contact with the participants, except for feedback of final results to participants), you must request an extension using the appropriate LU REB form. In all cases, please ensure that your research complies with Tri-Council Policy Statement (TCPS). Also please quote your REB file number on all future correspondence with the REB office.

Congratulations and best wishes in conducting your research.

Rosanna Langer, PHD, Chair, *Laurentian University Research Ethics Board*

**Appendix D:** Article published in International Journal of Sport Psychology.

Oghene, P.O., Schinke, R.J., Middleton, T.R.F. & Ryba, T.V. (2017). A critical examination of elite athlete acculturation scholarship from the lens of cultural sport psychology. *International Journal of Sport Psychology*, 48, 569-590 doi: 10.7352/IJSP2017.48.569

### **Abstract**

Today it is not uncommon for sports teams and clubs to be ethnically mixed and multicultural. One contributing factor to this diversity is the movement of athletes between and within countries. Although the reason for relocating varies for newcomer athletes, they all experience the challenge of navigating between a home and a new (e.g., receiving) culture. Researchers have also recently begun to recognize the reciprocal and dynamic nature of acculturation: individuals in the receiving community also experiencing a change (e.g., in practices and attitudes) to their society. The acculturation of migrant athletes has been considered from various disciplines and theoretical perspectives. Within this submission, elite athlete acculturation is examined through sociocultural and psychological lenses; the aim being to identify key gaps and inconsistencies in the research. The review only included conceptual and qualitative submissions to move beyond theory and towards understanding richer lived experiences. The authors provide a foundation to further research on acculturation by recommending creative and progressive qualitative methodologies and epistemologies to capture the complexities of this process. The authors then advocate for acculturation research to align with critical, cultural, and interdisciplinary understandings of sport participants in multicultural societies.

*Keywords:* adaptation, cultural transition, cultural sport psychology

## **A Critical Examination of Elite Athlete Acculturation Scholarship from the Lens of Cultural Sport Psychology**

Elite athletes represent a microcosm of the modern world in which the number of people moving homes outside of national borders has steadily increased over the past 15 years (i.e., 173 million in 2000 to 244 million in 2015, see United Nations, 2016).

Athletes relocating face challenges adapting to an alternate culture to which they were initially socialized, and experiencing change in their culture through contact with others in the receiving culture as part of a reciprocal, shared process. An increased understanding of the psychology of relocating allows for improved support of migrants in their search for a sense of belonging and establishment of connections in their new home; both of which have been connected to well-being (Correa-Velez, Gifford, & Barnett, 2010; Hatzigeorgiadis, Morela, Elbe, Koili, & Sanchez, 2013). The most widely accepted theory used to study acculturation - a process through which two distinct groups with different cultures come in continuous contact resulting in changes to the original patterns of either or both groups (Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits, 1936) - is Berry's (2005) two-factor model. According to Berry, an individual's orientation towards acculturation can result in four possible acculturation outcomes – assimilation (adoption of the host culture), integration (orientation towards both cultures), separation (retention of only the home culture), and marginalization (rejection of both cultures). This model represents a modernist perspective suggesting that the pathways associated with acculturation are fixed and applicable cross-culturally. More recently those advocating for interpretivist perspectives, outside (Chirkov, 2009) and within sport sciences (Ryba, Haapanen, Mosek, & Ng, 2012; Schinke, McGannon, Battochio, & Wells, 2013), have proposed a need to

rethink approaches to examining acculturation. They have urged researchers to use a critical cultural epistemology along with research designs that centralize the complexities of acculturation as it is experienced or presented. Contextualizing acculturation research has also been promoted, because such knowledge could lead to the enrichment of localized descriptions of acculturation, highlighting the ideographic nature of the process dependent on where newcomers relocate from, relocate to, and all parties involved throughout these experiences (Chirkov, 2009; Schinke & McGannon, 2014).

Within sport contexts much of the research has involved elite athletes and coaches. Scholars have explored sports where relocation is commonplace, such as ice hockey (Schinke, Gauthier, Dubuc, & Crowder, 2007), and soccer (Magee & Sugden, 2002), as well as international student-athletes who relocate to pursue academic degrees whilst participating in intercollegiate sport (Richards, 2014; Yukelson, 2008). Although, these settlement experiences are idiosyncratic (i.e., unique to each individual, situated within a local cultural context), all such athletes face the task of adjusting to a new country/context; encountering and negotiating unfamiliar social norms in a different cultural environment. Researchers have looked to further understand the acculturation experiences of elite-athletes to understand how to best support newcomers during their relocation.

Redfield et al.'s (1936) early definition of acculturation has recently become more recognized with current research finding that there is a need to examine acculturation as a process that is shared between newcomers and the receiving culture (e.g., Schinke, et al., 2013), regardless of whether the receiving culture is active in learning about the newcomers' cultures (Elbe, Hatzigeorgiadis, Morela, Ries, Kouli, & Sanchez, 2016). The

findings have led to a shift in perspective towards looking to understand the experiences of the individuals in the dominant (i.e., receiving) culture and their changing attitudes during the acculturation process. Elbe and colleagues (2016) recently found that the involvement in sport of young athletes from diverse cultures (e.g., both immigrant and dominant cultures) offered them an opportunity to interact, with appropriate team structures facilitating integration, resulting in a new multicultural reality. However, further research is needed to develop a deeper understanding of the role sport can play in aiding in healthier acculturation experiences for all involved.

To the best of our knowledge, only two reviews have focused explicitly on the cultural transition experiences of athletes. Stambulova and Ryba (2014) systematically analyzed research on athletes' career and assistance programs around the world. Although, not focused on migrant athletes per se, transnational mobility is identified as playing a role in the rapid changes occurring in career development patterns. Examining the limitations of acculturation research conducted in sport psychology. Schinke and McGannon (2014) proposed that the acculturation process occurs in three forms within sport (i.e., one-sided responsibility, limited reciprocity, and immersed reciprocity). With these forms of acculturation, the authors acknowledged its complexities as a process and encouraged discussion to develop a better understanding of how acculturation is navigated within sport contexts.

The above-mentioned reviews highlight the growing need for collaborative work in furthering our understanding of the acculturation process encountered by athletes. One-way forward in this collaboration are attempts to bridge gaps between discussions occurring in different disciplines. Stambulova and Ryba (2014) proposed a shift in

perspective towards collaborative work as an important future step due to the difficulty in exploring the multifaceted nature of individual's experiences from a singular perspective. We aim to bridge the gap between sport sociologists and sport psychologists in relation to acculturation. With knowledge from both disciplines, we are better able to explore findings related to the dynamic interconnectivity between the psychological and sociocultural aspects of elite-athletes' experiences embedded within cultural transitions (see Agergaard & Ryba, 2014; Schinke et al., 2013). Our aim is to provide a critical examination of the existing literature allowing researchers and practitioners to understand how their findings relate to contributions within and outside of their disciplinary perspective and how alternate perspectives may be incorporated into future research projects. This submission is based on the two field of sport sociology and sport psychology. Our review was guided by the following questions:

- a) What are the current findings in research on acculturation within sport?
- b) What major gaps currently exist in the research on acculturation in sport?
- c) Which methodologies might best capture acculturation's intricacies and richness?

### **Methodology**

We utilized a systematic review to (a) synthesize the existing research, and (b) critically appraise the scholarship (Grant & Booth, 2009), within sport sociology and sport psychology. This review is situated within a social constructionist epistemological stance, which is compatible with attempts to synthesize qualitative literature (Paterson et al., 2001). Social constructionist scholars focus on how individuals come to construct and apply knowledge in socially mediated contexts emphasizing the importance of culture and

context (Crotty, 1998). This research tradition enables researchers to explore how knowledge is created, disseminated, exchanged, and used to inform practice while acknowledging that reality is ultimately subjective. Therefore, the interpretations provided in the following review reflect the authors' worldviews and alternative interpretations of a process such as acculturation are plausible (Mishra, 2014).

### **Search Strategy**

Prior to beginning the search the decision was made to exclude quantitative research due to our focus on research that centralizes the individual experiences of the athletes involved. Quantitative research is generally built around testing a hypothesis and generating empirical generalizations rather than allowing space for interpretivist and constructionist approaches to understanding (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). The first step was a comprehensive search for any primary study/paper that employed qualitative methods or anecdotal experiences. We used a wide range of electronic databases (i.e., EBSCO, PyschINFO, PsychARTICLES, Science Direct (Elsevier), Google Scholar, and Medline) to locate studies using the keywords: “athlete acculturation” or “athlete adaptation” or “immigrant athlete acculturation” or “migrant athlete acculturation” or “qualitative research on acculturation in sport.” Second, the reference list from each retrieved study and book chapter was explored to identify further relevant studies. The initial search resulted in the identification of 76 papers. The inclusion criteria for identified resources were as follows: they were a) published in the English language, b) indicated, through specific wording, a focus on the acculturation or adaptation of elite, pre-elite, and developmental athletes, c) published (peer reviewed) and unpublished (e.g., non-peer reviewed articles, book chapters, websites), d) explored acculturation either empirically or

conceptually, and e) published within the realm of sport psychology and sport sociology. After examining the abstract of each paper a total of 44 articles and book chapters were included in the analysis.

### **Analysis**

Articles meeting the inclusion criteria based on relevance (i.e., methodological transparency, analytic procedure, and availability of the findings) were read in their entirety by the primary author. Studies were then grouped into the disciplines of sport sociology and sport psychology within which they were found. The next step was a sub-classification (e.g., sport labor migration, acculturation challenges) of studies within these disciplines. The first and second authors discussed possible ways to sub-classify the study findings into categories, as well as looked for links and patterns that would allow a more comprehensive understanding of each disciplines contribution to the acculturation scholarship. Finally, we developed a taxonomy (Figure 1) to show their conceptual contributions and gaps within each foci point. Upon completion of the initial individual analysis, the first two authors discussed the findings and gaps within each set of literature until an agreement was reached. Within the review, all 44 papers included in the analysis were listed and cited in the results section. The references were marked with an asterisk indicate studies that were included in the review

### **Results**

Figure 1 represents a taxonomy tree showing the evolution of research on athletes' migration and acculturation. The taxonomy is designed to illustrate the evolution and various aspects of acculturation research with elite-athletes described through the following three foci points: (a) foundational work, (b) emergence of more diverse

approaches, and (c) critical acculturation research. Each level, or branch, of the taxonomy tree is organized according to the focal point within each discipline on athletes' acculturation and the overarching contributions that connects the different foci together. The base of the taxonomy tree is the foundational branch of acculturation research with migrant athletes. Sociological work on sport labor migration represents the initial fundamental work conducted on understanding the relocation processes of elite athletes. The second level of the taxonomy represents the emergence of sport psychology approaches to understanding the process of acculturation. The bulk of research conducted around this focal point is framed around two key approaches: (a) research designs underpinned by post-positivist epistemologies and methodologies, and (b) the introduction of cultural sport psychology (CSP) as a distinct research area promoting a focus on centralizing issues of culture and marginalized identity within sport contexts by generating culturally aligned understandings of diverse immigrant and transnational sport participants (Ronkainen, Harrison, & Ryba, 2014; Schinke & Hanrahan, 2009). The final branch of the taxonomy tree represents research on acculturation utilizing critical approaches to explore the dynamics of acculturation, utilizing inductive methodologies, and producing alternative understandings. Research conducted from a critical lens has often been interdisciplinary, allowing for integration of knowledge from various disciplines. Presenting our findings through a taxonomy tree allows us to classify the different themes emerging from the research surrounding athletes' acculturation, providing a comprehensive and holistic picture of this thematic area. The following sections present a more in-depth inspection of each branch of acculturation research.

### **Sport Sociology**

Researchers within sport sociology conducted much of the foundational work regarding the international mobility of elite-athletes (Klein, 1994; Maguire, 1993, 1999). Viewed through the dominant vantage of globalization (Maguire, 1993, 1999; Maguire & Stead, 1996), these authors focused on the movement of professional athletes within and between countries. The migration of elite athletes has been explored in various sporting contexts, such as football (e.g., Lanfranchi & Taylor, 2001; Magee & Sugden, 2002) and ice hockey (e.g., Elliott & Maguire, 2008) has highlighted the migratory flow of athletes, consequences of the unevenness of globalization, and the implications of sport labor migration. These studies can be grouped into macro and micro approaches.

**Macro approaches.** Macro approaches, rooted in Marxism, look to understand how local and global perspectives intersect with migration processes (Maguire & Stead, 1996). Power relationships between nations are assumed to be politically and economically uneven with nations divided into core countries, semi-periphery countries, and periphery countries, with the core nations dominating and exploiting labor (i.e., one-directional flow of athletes from a peripheral to core country; Bale & Maguire, 1994; Elliott & Maguire, 2008). This one directional flow, more pronounced with dominant countries looking for new markets in which to sell products and services, has led to inevitable challenges or losses for periphery countries (e.g., loss of athletic talent). The identification of the flow of migrants has implicitly informed research in sport sociology and sport psychology with researchers in both fields having largely examined the acculturation processes of migrants moving from peripheral countries towards core countries.

**Micro approaches.** Alternate research has been conducted using micro approaches, focused on social networks through which elite athletes migrate. Authors adopting micro approaches identify each athlete as the unit of analysis with the assumption that personal decisions to migrate are the outcome of a rational cost-benefit calculation to maximize personal satisfaction (Falcous & Maguire, 2005). To identify the various patterns of sport labor migration, Maguire (1999) developed overlapping categories highlighting types of athletic migration and athletes' motives to relocate. He created five categories: (a) settlers – interested in staying in the host country; (b) pioneers – engage with migration processes to promote the virtues of their sport; (c) nomadic cosmopolitans – wanting to experience other cultures; (d) returnees – aiming to return home after career; and (e) mercenaries – motivated by short-term gains. Magee and Sugden (2002) added three further categories: the (f) ambitionist – relocated due to the desire to play at the highest level; (g) exiled – migrated due to sports or political issues in native country; and (h) expelled – player who is forced to migrate. These categories generalized the different motivations of sport migrants and further revealed the complexity of the acculturation process. Sport psychology researchers would be wise to take these different motivations into account when considering the idiosyncratic nature of immigrant athletes responses to challenges they face when acculturating to the norms of their host community.

**Transnational perspectives.** Transnational scholars have attempted to highlight the attachments migrants make with people and organizations both within and outside of the boundaries of the countries they relocated from/to (Agergaard & Ryba, 2014; Agergaard, 2016). Those who draw upon this approach reject previous one-directional

descriptions that overlooked the dynamic and shared nature of athletes' relocation/migration experiences (i.e., degree to which responsibility for acculturation is placed on the migrant athlete). For example, Carter (2011) revealed how athletes forged formal and informal connections between places, implying that migration was more than a physical movement within spatial contexts, but also a psychosocial experience in which the migrant athlete was forever influenced by each contextual experience. Haugaa Engh and Agergaard (2013) found that the amalgamation of these experiences played a role in the decision-making process behind choosing to migrate through an examination of the general migration/relocation patterns of women footballers. Investigating the combining of multiple sociocultural localities has highlighted the importance of understanding the role that these diverse experiences play as athletes' search for a balance between sustaining a home and adding a receiving cultural identity. The above findings push researchers to examine multiple viewpoints (e.g., dominant culture individuals interacting with migrant athletes) when attempting to understand the acculturation process. The examination of this process as one that is shared between all involved allows for contextualized understandings of the transnational and relocation experiences of athletes in their everyday practices/environments.

**Gaps in sport sociology.** Sport sociology findings enabled us to better understand the established channels of sport labor migration across sport contexts (Elliot & Maguire, 2008; Magee & Sudgen, 2002). These established channels of athlete migration have informed the way in which acculturation processes have been examined by most researchers (i.e., emphasis on relocation to western Europe and North America) within sport sociology and sport psychology. This colonial perspective has resulted in a paucity

of research in relation to migrant athletes moving away from core countries towards peripheral countries, resulting in a one-directional perspective of the acculturation process. The move towards research that considers the idiosyncratic nature of the acculturation process is a step in the right direction, one that has been followed by sport psychology researchers, resulting in a deeper understanding of the migratory processes of athletes. This research has begun to account for the complex and dynamic nature of acculturation and acknowledged the need to investigate the socio-cultural and psychological challenges faced by athletes when they migrate (e.g., Falcous & Maguire, 2005). The issues raised by sport sociology researchers have begun to be examined by sport psychology researchers through their examination of the psycho-cultural challenges faced by migrant athletes (e.g., changes in identity during adjustment to a new culture). Sport psychology research could potentially fill the gaps within this research area by connecting immigrant athletes' involvement in sport to other spheres of their social lives and the socio-cultural contexts in which acculturation occurs.

### **Sport Psychology**

The following section is divided into two approaches towards understanding the acculturation of elite-athletes situated within sport psychology research. Researchers have explored the sociocultural and psychological challenges faced by athletes, within and outside of sport contexts through two approaches differing in perspective, epistemological stance, and conceptualization of the topic. Findings from these studies have resulted in the development of a new line of inquiry, cultural sport psychology (CSP; Schinke & Hanrahan, 2009), and advanced our understanding of the complexities surrounding the idiosyncratic nature of the acculturation process experienced by elite athletes. CSP

represents a shift from traditional sport psychology paradigms to advocating for the inclusion of diverse sport participants (i.e., marginalized groups) within sport psychology research/practice (Ryba & Wright, 2010). Finally, recent research has gone beyond the one-directional perspective of migration by examining experiences of Aboriginal athletes during their acculturation to the dominant culture within their own country, as well as dual career athletes moving from one core country to another (Blodgett & Schinke, 2015; Campbell & Sonn, 2009).

**Post-positive approaches.** A certain amount of acculturation knowledge in sport psychology is gained through a deductive approach, based on pre-determined pathways and a linear perspective, meaning a progressive move toward a type of acculturation. Research conducted using this approach assumes the initial responsibility for immigrant athletes is to develop an understanding of the host country's cultural norms. The assumption is made that acculturation is a process of cultural adaptation - a process beginning with appraisal, continuing with effective actions and reactions, and ending with an adaptive/maladaptive response (Schinke, Battochio, Dube, Lidor, Tenenbaum, & Lane, 2012) - fraught with stressors and challenges; the identification of which have been a primary focus of scholars (see Battochio, Schinke, McGannon, Tenenbaum, Yukelson, & Crowder, 2013; Kontos, 2009). These challenges have been divided into challenges outside (i.e. separation, loneliness, communication, or social engagement) and within sporting contexts (i.e., adjustment to new training routines and roles; Lidor & Blumenstein, 2009; Meisterjahn & Wrisberg, 2013; Yukelson, 2010). Researchers focused on this line of research have proposed that athletes attempt to adjust to their new environment by seeking peer acceptance and social support (Battochio et al., 2013). Some

of this work was positioned around the concept of adaption/transitions and Fiske's adaptation pathways model (e.g., Battocchio et al., 2013; Schinke, Gauthier, Dubuc, & Crowder, 2007). Adaptation is a broad term associated with monumental changes in an athlete's life, including relocation stress. Schinke and colleagues (2011) examined the adaptation experiences of elite-athletes using Fiske's (2004) five core social motives. The core motives identified were: understanding, belonging, trusting, controlling and self-enhancement; all proposed as facilitating the social adjustment of athletes to a new country/sport environment (Schinke et al., 2007; Schinke et al., 2011). The above-mentioned writings have contributed towards applied practice in terms of highlighting the general challenges faced by immigrant athletes in their everyday practices and the resources that aided or hindered their cultural adaptation. These general guidelines have developed an initial base of understanding and provided future researchers with an opportunity to go further into developing an understanding of the acculturation process, one which is understood at a local level. The "one size fits all" approach to examining acculturation does not take into account the motivation of athletes to relocate or the unique qualities of the local community being chosen for settlement. Additionally, "the one size fits all" approach does not take into account the characteristics of the athletes' original cultures. Generalizing the acculturation process into categories has also failed to present and capture the voices of athletes, resulting in a lack of understanding related to the idiosyncratic nature of acculturation. Moving forward an alternative way of thinking about acculturation is needed, one which aims to develop guidelines that aid researchers and practitioners in developing locally contextualized understandings of the acculturation process.

**Cultural sport psychology (CSP).** Focus on topics such as culture, ethnicity, gender, and geography, and their associated complexities has increased in response to critiques to overly simplified approaches to understanding acculturation (Blodgett, Schinke, McGannon, & Fisher, 2014). CSP is an emerging research and practice area that focuses on centralizing culture within sport contexts by generating culturally aligned understandings of diversity (Schinke & Hanrahan, 2009). Researchers engaged in this line of research have emphasized connecting knowledge produced via research and practice more critically to the lives of athletes to engage in an agenda of social justice and change (i.e., cultural praxis; see Ryba & Wright, 2005, 2010). Through such work, researchers can challenge social inequalities through knowledge production processes that attempt to empower and engage marginalized athletes (e.g., Blodgett, Schinke, McGannon, et al., 2014). Understanding athlete acculturation through the lens of CSP has also pushed researchers to explore the fluidities surrounding cultural transition processes, advancing our understanding of acculturation, and resulting in alternative conceptualizations. This broadening perspective has allowed the focus to be placed not only on the experiences of elite athletes, but also on those with whom they interact with in and out of sport contexts (e.g., Schinke et al., 2013). Schinke and colleagues (2006) were among the first to consider the adaptation and cultural transitions of elite athletes and those with whom they interacted with (e.g., athletes, coaches) during their relocation. Schinke et al., and more recently Khomutova (2015), found that the impact of acculturation experiences on athletes' performance and wellbeing are dependent on whether these connections are one-sided (i.e., athlete expected to adjust to dominant culture) or shared (i.e., athlete and host

connections adjust to each other). Precisely, shared acculturation seemed to reduce the loneliness felt by the newcomer within a receiving community.

A second factor that has been investigated is the intended length of stay of a migrant athlete within a host country, as either temporary (transnational athletes) or permanent (immigrant athletes). The main distinction between these athletes is that transnational athletes' movements are based primarily on sport opportunities and development within a sporting context, whereas immigrant athletes' movements are motivated by sporting and non-sporting factors (e.g., Ronkainen, Harrison, & Ryba, 2014; Schinke et al., 2013). Several CSP authors have examined the impact of cultural transition experiences on transnational athletes' career developments (e.g., Ryba, Stambulova, Ronkainen, Bundgaard & Selanne, 2015). These researchers have rejected previous fixed descriptions of acculturation that were not open to fluidities during relocation, such as athletes' reasons for relocating, cultural norms of the country of destination, and support available. This perspective has also allowed for the framing of the acculturation process as an open-ended negotiation between maintaining a subjective sense of wellbeing and participating in everyday acculturative practices (Agergaard & Ryba, 2014; Ryba et al., 2012). With this shift in perspective the complex interconnection between the psychological and socio-cultural aspects of acculturation has been brought to light, highlighting the reciprocity between the psyche and culture that constitutes athletes' functioning in various contexts (Ryba, et al., 2012; Stambulova & Ryba, 2014). An important consideration here is the extent to which culture influences the way athletes learn and perceive their worlds, revealing how sociocultural context and psyche intertwine with each other. These writings also reveal how social structures and individual

agency influence athletes' motives for relocation and sense of belonging in a receiving culture.

Researchers framing acculturation through a CSP lens have also focused on athletes relocating from Aboriginal reserves (e.g., Blodgett, Schinke, Coholic, Enosse, Peltier, & Pheasant, 2014). These studies revealed that even during temporary relocation, acculturation is a dynamic psychological and sociocultural process that requires shifting in and between different cultural positions. Accentuated in this research is the exposing of acculturation as a process of shared effort, whereby athletes and individuals in the host culture must navigate through their differences and move between known (to them) and less-known cultural practices (e.g., Blodgett, Schinke, Coholic, et al., 2014). This positioning was made possible through an interpretivist epistemological approach, open and flexible in providing contextual accounts of elite-athletes' acculturations, as well as the utilization of co-participatory qualitative methodologies that have the potential to empower a person when the researcher provides a space for the participants to voice their own subjective experiences (Schinke et al., 2009). Understanding acculturation from this vantage has enabled sport psychology researchers to contextualize research processes through a localized understanding of the diverse population of elite-athletes resulting in the development of emancipatory and transformative research projects (e.g., Blodgett, Schinke, Coholic, et al., 2014).

Within this line of research a separate focus has been on the dual-career pathways of Aboriginal (e.g., Blodgett & Schinke, 2015) and transnational athletes (e.g., Ryba et al, 2015). Blodgett and Schinke (2015) examined the cultural transitions of relocated Aboriginal student-athletes and their dual career pathways. The authors highlighted the

issues encountered by Aboriginal student-athletes such as dealing with a loss of belonging in the Aboriginal community, breaking down negative stereotypes and attitudes about Aboriginal people, and the desire to prove themselves and give back to the Aboriginal community. Ryba and colleagues (2015) drew on a typology of athletic migrants similar to those used in sport sociology research on transnational athletes (e.g., Magee & Sugden, 2002), to classify three patterns of dual-career pathways based on the direction of geographic mobility during an athlete's transition and the foremost transition motive discerned from the athletes' life stories. These pathways included: (a) within EU mobility: the sport exile (i.e., motivated by better conditions in host country but education is second priority), (b) mobility to the U.S.A.: the sport mercenary (i.e., motivated by athletic scholarship), and (c) mobility to the U.S.A.: the nomadic cosmopolitan (i.e., motivated by desire to explore the world and seek new opportunities). These pathways represent different levels of commitments and motivations to continuing a dual career, with some athletes choosing to temporarily end or reduce their engagement in either their sport or schooling/vocation. The identification of these pathways allowed for an understanding of how athletes adjust to the demands they encounter and the coping strategies and resources they used (Ryba et al., 2015). Additionally, understanding the temporal and contextual fluidity associated with cultural transitions has been achieved through the utilization of narrative approaches, including life stories (Ryba et al., 2015) and vignettes (Blodgett & Schinke, 2015). Such story-based approaches capture the fluidity of the acculturation process by revealing elite athletes' multiple, shifting realities. Research conducted from a CSP perspective has helped reveal why developing a richer and deeper understanding of the acculturation process requires methodologies that centralize the multiple

accounts/truths of athletes' acculturation. The emergence of CSP scholarship has challenged researchers to consider culture in all aspects of sport, as well as promoting the local contextualization of research projects. Research on athlete acculturation conducted from this perspective encourages practitioners to seek a localized understanding of the diverse cultural backgrounds of the athletes they work with and to use this knowledge to provide better support to all athletes by addressing their psychosocial and sociocultural needs.

**Gaps in the literature.** CSP emerged in response to the need for greater diversity in the production of sport psychology knowledge. Research conducted from this perspective has begun to advance our understanding of cultural transitions in terms of how to support athletes transitioning to a new training context or country. However, this line of inquiry is relatively new and studies that have positioned culture and/or cultural identities as part of the relocation process at the core of their research endeavors remain rare. Researchers considering the cultural identities of both newcomers and those they interact with in the host culture are in a better position to understand and account for the multifaceted challenges athletes might encounter during their acculturation to a new context. One way forward is through the utilization of methodologies that align with epistemological and ontological orientations that can focus on describing culturally specific local knowledge. Blodgett and Schinke (2015) exemplified this localized way of knowing and doing through the utilization of mandala drawings and conversational interviews situated within a decolonizing methodology that centralized local Aboriginal knowledge and provided in-depth experiential accounts of athlete acculturation by partnering with community stakeholders. Moving away from ethnocentric perspectives

allows for the development of culturally sensitive and inclusive acculturation projects addressing the needs of newcomers, as well as those individuals they interact with in the receiving community.

### **Critical Acculturation Research**

A major critique of current research on acculturation has been the use of deductive and quantitative research paradigms that look to explain rather than develop an understanding of the process of acculturation (Chirkov, 2009). This shift in research has led to the understanding of acculturation as a linear and universal process rather than one that is ongoing and in constant navigation by newcomers depending on both the context they find themselves in and their interpretation of that context (Bhatia, 2002; Chirkov, 2009). Chirkov (2009) concluded that the prevalent use of a deductive approach has led to the elimination of the “unique and specific cultural and ethnic aspects of each group of immigrants” (pp. 100), due to the inherent need to generalize findings that discover the general laws which may be used to “predict successful acculturation.” Previously, Bhatia (2002) also discussed the presumptive assumptions made in a concept such as “acculturation strategies” that all immigrants can possibly achieve a happy balance, or blend, of two or more cultures. He proposed that each individual constitutes identity through a number of different “I” positions that are shaped by issues such as race, context, and power. From these perspectives, the process of acculturation is viewed as a construct that is complex, dynamic, and dependent on the contexts where it occurs. Chirkov (2009) proposed that social scientists have been too hasty in their development of models and theories and that researchers should aim to provide a cultural analysis of both the home and host country societies and the influence of these on the various domains of each

immigrant's life. He also proposed researchers employ qualitative methods such as ethnography, participatory observations, and other methods that result in developing an alternative understanding of the experiences of immigrants. Although not explicitly proposed by Chirkov, his use of the term social scientists highlights the need for approaches to be conducted from an interdisciplinary perspective.

**Critical approaches that situate acculturation in sport psychology.** Sport psychology researchers have recently begun to take up Chirkov's (2009) call for a more critical approach to the study of acculturation. Researchers have employed various qualitative inquiry methods including life story interviews (Ryba, Stambulova, & Ronkainen, 2016) and arts-based drawing methods followed by unstructured open-ended interviews (e.g., Schinke, Blodgett, McGannon, Ge, Oghene, & Seanor, 2016a; Schinke Blodgett, McGannon, Ge, Oghene, & Seanor, 2016b). The result has been the telling of newcomer athletes' stories, revealing the different voices and cultural positions that portray lived experiences (Bhatia, 2002). Furthermore, the change in approaches has allowed researchers to contextualize findings to reflect the open-ended nature of acculturation. Recently, Schinke, Blodgett, McGannon, and Ge (2016) provided an example of a multi-layered methodological approach (i.e., composite vignettes and conversational interviews) that was flexible, inductive, centralizing of the participants, and producing of more inclusive and in-depth understandings of athletes' acculturation experiences compared to previous static quantitative approaches. Furthermore, the utilization of vignettes in the presentation of findings allowed the authors to fully capture the richness of the idiosyncratic nature of athletes' stories in terms of how they navigated between satisfactions, dissatisfactions, hope, apathy, and desperation during their entry

into a national sport context. Similarly, Ryba and colleagues (2016) examined the cultural transition and acculturation processes of 15 professional and semi-professional athletes with a focus on understanding the dynamics of cultural transitions and ways in which time shapes the transition process. The authors proposed a temporal model of cultural transition, grounded in the athletes' narrations that encompassed various temporal and spatial vantage points. The use of a life-story narrative approach allowed for the presentation of the athletes' stories in powerful and evocative ways, revealing the underlying mechanisms of the transition process constituted in social repositioning, negotiation of cultural practices, and meaning reconstruction. The abovementioned approach encourages research grounded in the local experiences and knowledge of immigrant athletes.

The above writings aligned with calls from critical acculturation researchers in regards to opening up new forms of understanding and descriptions of elite-athletes' acculturation. This area exposes a shift towards a critical examination of acculturation within sport psychology. Positioned around post-modernist epistemological stances through the utilization of multiple qualitative methodologies, these studies were able to capture the richness and fluidity in stories surrounding athlete acculturation. Understanding acculturation processes from this holistic and critical perspective broadens the conceptualization of acculturation to account for issues related to culture and/or cultural identities, ethnicity, gender, and social context, while accentuating the idiosyncratic nature of each athlete's experiences. Through these efforts, sport psychologists are able to better understand the idiosyncratic nature of this process and its shifting nature due to contextual and temporal factors. This understanding of athletes'

acculturations is important if researchers wish to bridge the gap between research and practice. On this note, becoming more sensitive towards the various power differentials within research/practice will allow for a more open exchange of information. Bridging the gap between research and practice will also aid in moving forward the extension of this research area to examining the social connections forged by newcomers and those with whom they interact.

**Gaps within the literature.** Critical acculturation scholars have begun to answer the call for more inclusive research that produces rich and in-depth descriptions of elite-athletes' acculturation via exploring the dynamics of navigating between multiple cultural identities and practices (Chirkov, 2009; Schinke et al., 2013). However, there remain gaps within this emerging approach. One gap is the lack of depth given to the study of the cultures of both home and host countries in which migrants find themselves. Should we accept that 'culture' is an incorporation of the shared norms, rules, and meanings of a society (Chirkov, 2009), then an analysis within each culture using existing research would allow for in-depth contextualization of the migrant experience of navigating between multiple cultural realities. Expanding beyond cross-sectional research designs to include longitudinal designs aimed at going beyond an individual's story at one point in time would provide increased opportunity to investigate the changing dynamic of the acculturation process (Chirkov, 2009). Finally, there is a need for centralizing the individual, both newcomers and persons, within acculturation. Researchers should look to continue to move toward epistemological and methodological pluralism in the search for emerging methodologies. Filling these gaps will provide practitioners with a deeper

understanding of how athletes oscillate between different cultural positions dependent on the context in which athletes find themselves.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

This acculturation review joins the call for dialog in relation to athlete settlement. Thorpe and colleagues (2014) suggested that the integration of knowledge from sport sociology and sport psychology has the potential to create change and stimulate new research directions, also echoing Stambulova and Ryba's (2014) call for inter/transdisciplinary approaches. We have aimed to identify the gaps and inconsistencies remaining within athlete acculturation, while providing insight into one path forward through the inclusion of critical research. The resulting development of deeper theoretical understandings of acculturation will positively influence the usage of this knowledge, allowing for sport psychology consultants to develop informed interventions grounded in evidence that is locally contextualized and temporally relevant. The following suggestions are proposed for research and practice:

- 1) There has been a move towards interdisciplinary research approaches focused on acculturation. Through these approaches, researchers have begun to capture the dynamic interconnectivity between the psychological and sociocultural aspects of sport relocation and acculturation processes. Researchers should look to ground their research in multiple disciplinary viewpoints to explore complexities and uncertainties.
- 2) The shift towards research based on post-modern and interpretive epistemologies has gained traction. We promote this shift and encourage researchers to align their objectives with capturing participants' multiple realities embedded within the fluid

- nature of acculturation. We recommend that researchers employ creative and inviting qualitative approaches that enlist these multifaceted understandings.
- 3) There remains a lack of empirical research in relation to elite immigrant athletes seeking to relocate permanently. To help inform professionals tasked with helping these athletes with their acculturation more evidence-based research is needed.
  - 4) Based on current research findings, researchers and practitioners should incorporate inclusive perspectives, ones that are both critical and reflexive. These perspectives should integrate multiple worldviews (e.g., disciplines and perspectives).
  - 5) Building on the previous suggestion researchers should look to understand the idiosyncrasy of acculturation in relation to immigrant athletes' specific nationalities, ethnicities, and native languages in relation to acculturation experiences.
  - 6) The concept of shared acculturation as the best way forward for immigrant athletes and those with whom they interact with has been well documented. Professionals working with elite immigrant athletes should seek to create an atmosphere in which the role of learner is two-sided.
  - 7) We advocate that practitioners working with athletes from diverse cultural backgrounds increase their awareness about the challenges associated with their relocation and acculturation in terms of ways of supporting them through this process, potentially helping to ease any distress encountered by these newcomers.

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Fig1: Taxonomy of acculturation research

