SEPANDARMAZ MASHREGHI

DECOLONIAL RE-EXISTENCE AND SPORTS

Stories of Afghan youth in Sweden

DECOLONIAL RE-EXISTENCE AND SPORTS

Malmö Studies in Sport Sciences Vol. 40

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Illustrator: Mahla Ebrahimi

ISBN 978-91-7877-218-6 (print)

ISBN 978-91-7877-219-3 (pdf)

ISSN 1652-3180

DOI 10.24834/isbn.9789178772193

Printing: Holmbergs, Malmö 2021

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Stories of Afghan youth in Sweden

Malmö University, 2021
Faculty of Education and Society
Sport Sciences

The publication is also available at:
mau.diva-portal.org

To Jasmin, Ali, Mohammad, Baset, Farhad;
and to my parents, Hossein and Fleur,
who taught me to recite poetry,
appreciate the taste of pomegranates,
smell the aroma of saffron,
and enjoy the rays of sun.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The journey of this book is coming to an end, but the one thing that this journey has taught me is that, far from being linear, our lives are convoluted and constantly (re)turning and interconnecting with same and different people, places and spaces. And that our living without a doubt is a collective adventure which could not be lived without the generosity, wisdom and love of all those we encounter.

This book would have not been possible without the generous and dynamic contributions of my coresearchers.

این کتاب بدون مشارکت سخاوتمندانه و پویای یاران جوان ممکن نبود. یاسمین ، محمد علی ، باسط ، فرهاد ، از این که اجازه دادید من همیار شما باشم و از اینکه دانش خود را به اشتراک گذاشتید متشکرم. شما به من تواضع و مقاومت یاد دادید

Throughout this project, I had the privilege of being guided by several generous and supportive people. My encouraging and caring supervisors, Kutte Jönsson and Sussana Hedenborg, many thanks for supporting me and believing in me throughout this not-so-easy journey; and how can I thank you enough for taking the time to translate the abstracts at the end, and for everything else that does not fit here. Susanna, thank you for being there from very beginning. Kutte, I am grateful to your generosity and patience, and for taking care of that darned ethics application! Kelly Naes, thank you for planting the seed in my head and encouraging it to grow. Aage Radmann, thank you for giving me shelter (literally!) and your generous friendship. Anna Maria Jennerheim Hellborg, I appreciate your friendship, readings and valuable insights. Nicola de Martini

Ugolotti, thank you for reading and commenting, and for understanding what I want to do/say, and providing me with the exact insight I need. I am so glad I sent an abstract to that CfP! Linda Liebenberg, I feel so lucky that I was able to take part in your workshop in Edmonton, your work has been a great inspiration for me ever since; I am thankful for your guidance. Shahrzad Enderle, I am grateful for your friendship and for that (not-so) random call which led to our writing together. Pouran Djampour, despite our short acquaintance, your book has been my companion all these years; thank you for inspiring me. Kjell Eriksson, many thanks for being a great friend and editor, and for connecting me to IDV at Malmö University so many years ago!

I would also like to thank my colleagues at IDV and LS who provided me a home (away from home) so that I can grow. Torun Mattsson and Gun Normark, thank you for accommodating my travels and special circumstances related to my residency permit; and for giving me the opportunity to be an active member of the department. Johan Norberg, Anne Harju, Malin Ideland, Torbjörn Andersson, Håkan Larsson, Jonas Sjölander, Thomas Persson, Mats Johnsson, Lars Lagergren, Jyri Backman, Karin Book, Jenny Vikman and Anna Fabri, thank you for your insights and support throughout this journey. Emelie Niléhn, Emelie Nilsson and Björn Hansson, many thanks for being so generous and always kind. Catarina Christiansson, thank you for putting up with my emails and questions, and for organising practically everything! Maria Rosén, words cannot express my gratitude to you, thank you for contacting Skatteverket on my behalf and following up my case (for more than a year!) until it was resolved. I am especially grateful to Malin McGlinn who translated the summary of this thesis. Malin, many thanks for putting up with my awkward and terrible attempts in explaining the concepts, and doing a wonderful job anyways!

My fellow PhD colleagues, past and present, in Malmö and beyond, Isak Lidström, Lovisa Broms, Matilda Lindberg, Alexander Jansson, Daniel Bjärsholm, Sara Karlén, Leah Monsees, Aurélien Daudi, Verena Lenneis, Emma Hall, Camila Safrankova, Mattias Melkersson, Joakim Ingrell, Sofia Sebelius, Camilla Strömberg, Emelie Wiklund, Liubov Timonina, Shari Bloom, Jelena Jovičić, Adrian Lundberg, Klara Boije af Gennäs,

Rebecka Fingalsson and, last but by any means not least, Maria Howding, tack för trevliga fikastunder, your brilliant and insightful discussions, for always engaging and keeping me on my toes, and most of, all thank you for your support.

My gratitude also goes to the staff and teachers at school who opened their doors to me and supported this project.

خانم شهلا ، من نمی توانم به اندازه کافی از شما تشکر کنم، شما، با روی خوش، در کلاس خود را به روی من گشودید و دانش خود را سخاوتمندانه در اشتراک گذاشتید. من برای همیشه سپاسگزارم

Natalie thank you for being so generous with your time and knowledge.

My special thanks have to go to the brunch ladies, Claudia Fonseca Al-faro, Zahra Hamidi, Ingrid Jerve Ramasøy, Marwa Dabaieh, 'Mina' Papoulia, Elena Gonzalez Arribas, Lia Camporeale, Erin Cory and Termeh Eskanari, for creating such a wonderful supportive group. I still cannot believe we managed to eat breakfast, lunch and dinner at that restaurant and not realise the passage of time!

I am also grateful for those very special people who have given me their friendships throughout the years. Ritu, you know you are my soulmate (the app said so!), thank you for reading and editing my early papers. Selma, how can I forget our serendipitous first meeting in the bus to Læringssenteret, and how we shared our interesting migration journeys and our plans to complete PhD education!? Thanks for being my friend. Marie Larneby, thank you for being my first (and best) friend, and for sitting with me in the hotel cafeteria that very first day! (I know I may have overshared that day), and for so many other things that does not fit here! I love you all dearly.

Maman o Baba thank you for always believing in me and being my biggest fans, and for reminding us that:

باغ ما در طرف سایه دانایی بود

Baba joon, thank you for teaching me to love Khorasan, its peoples and its pomegranates. And thank you for your sense of adventure, which I have obviously inherited! What a long journey has it been since I walked into the house with a suitcase in my hand so many years ago, and you said

“Good, now you go and finish your PhD!”. Maman joon, thank you for teaching me to love stories and poems, and to cherish the humans in them. And thank you for sharing your thoughts and insights and listening to mine. And of course, for finding me poems and for taking the time to translate all the materials I have sent your way throughout this PhD. Tina joonam, you will always be my little sweet baby. Thank you for your support during these last difficult years.

بابا و مامان، بهار و تینا دوستتان دارم

And the final words of gratitude are for my life partner, Kurt Olsen. Kurt, I have never met a person as kind and generous as you. Thank you for putting up with my work moods (aka crazy times!), for listening to my gibberish, for being the first reader of all my works, for encouraging me, supporting me and for being there for me always. Without you, this journey would have not been possible. Jeg elsker deg.

Sepandarmaz Mashreghi
Hønefoss, October 2021

INTRODUCTION

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بشنو این نی چون شکایت می کند
از جدایی ها حکایت می کند
که از نیستان تا مرا ببریده اند
در نفیرم مرد و زن نالیده اند
هرکسی کو دور ماند از اصل خویش
باز جوید روزگار وصل خویش

*Hearken to the reed (flute) as it laments
and tells stories of separation:*

*“Since from the land they uprooted me
my song has expressed humanity’s agony.
But any who has been forced away from their home
seeks to connect and find that home once more”*

Jalaladin Mohammad Balkhi, (known in the West as Rumi), *Masnavi Mowlavi*,
book one (My own translation).

~~~~~

One was, and an-other was not...

This is a phrase that I heard every time my mother would start a story. This phrase signifies how the Iranic peoples¹ stories begin, a sort of once upon a time. One was, and an-other was not. There is a foreboding hint of shadows in these words, of another existence that is not (there), of an alternate reality, if you will. I remember asking my mother: who is not? The answer was: those whose story this is not. I was not relieved by this answer, in fact, it frightened me, the possibility of lives I could not see, other existences that were in darkness.

This phrase also demarcates a border, a line, sometimes quite transparent and thin, which separates the two existences, one in the zone of being (Fanon, 2008/1952) and the other not. This border, adds yet another ominous layer, the possibility and perhaps the ease with which some can easily fall through and become not. I think this is what scared the most, was I or was I not?

Yet, “there is possibility in those words” (Bashardoust, 2020). The blurry line between the two worlds makes possible the existence of an in-between place, a third space, where one can both be and not be; a borderland (Anzaldúa, 2012/1987), where existing in an-other way is made possible, where the ‘otherwise’ (Walsh, 2015) dwells.

This is the story of those who are not, the ‘otherwise’, those whose stories are kept hostage by the idea that there is only a single temporality of being: Western-imagined temporality (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). They are ‘othered’, constructed as radically different from those who are legitimate inhabitants and owners of the universal reality and imagination (Ratna & Samie, 2018; Said, 2003/1978). But they exist nonetheless in the darkness of the borderlands, or rather re-exist as they are always redefining and re-signifying life in conditions of dignity (Walsh, 2015), transforming the

¹ I have used Iranic (instead of Iranian) to refer to the expansive region that goes beyond the borders of modern Iran, and includes the Caucasus, Western Asia, Central Asia and parts of the Indian Subcontinent etc. In this sense Iranic Peoples is a spatial term that refers to the diverse Indo-European ethno-linguistic peoples who have been historical inhabitants of the Iranian Plateau and beyond. (Frye, 2004).

‘other’ to ‘otherwise’. This is also my story, the story of my research, my thinking, doing and being, as I explore, unlearn and relearn (Tlostanova & Mignolo, 2012) my geo and body-politics of knowledge (Mignolo, 2009; Tlostanova & Mignolo, 2009) and my borderland existence.

The purpose of this study is to explore the stories of sports and physical activity of a group of young Afghan refugee(d)s in Sweden, categorised as unaccompanied children², as it was researched and analysed with and by the youth themselves, within and beyond a participatory action research (PAR) paradigm. In choosing to (as Zapatista say) ask while walking with the young people, I have moved beyond the boundaries of PAR and have taken a decolonial option in my praxical and actional standpoint. In using multiple perspectives from across various epistemic loci, I have also attempted to view this research from a ‘trans-disciplinary’ standpoint that rejects bordering and separation of individual disciplines and aims to un-discipline knowledge (Tlostanova & Mignolo, 2009).

Reclaiming the borderlands

I was not always thinking trans-disciplinary. In fact, I viewed school and living as two separate entities. I was educated as a psychologist first and a sport psychologist later. My education stressed the importance of application of a plethora of theories and quantitative methodology, from an objective point of view, in order to make deductive conclusions with clear models that could predict the human experience. My education thought me to separate my life from my academic learning as if the two existed in two different worlds with clear impenetrable borders. In school and university, I learned to dissociate from my senses. This dissociation was present to some degrees from the beginning of my education in my homeland, Iran, but it was intensified when I became a young immigrant in Canada. I clearly remember the first day I attended the physical education (PE) class in Canada. In my homeland, I was athletic and I participated actively in school life and in PE classes, in fact I was a member of my school’s basketball team. In Canada, my experience on that first day left

² According to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and Swedish laws, an ‘unaccompanied child’ is an individual under 18 years who at time of arrival is separated from their parents or guardian (CRC, 2005; Law(1994:137), n.d. 1 b §).

me exposed, uncomfortable and awkward. I dropped out of PE immediately after that. The same thing happened in literature, art and drama classes, despite the fact that I was an accomplished and well-read young artist who participated and wrote school plays in Iran. As a result, I was ‘stuck’ in studying natural sciences which I excelled at, and yet through them speaking objectively from the hubris of zero degree was reinforced (Castro-Gomez, 2007 as referenced in Demuro, 2015). Hubris of zero degree describes the delocalised and disembodied vantage point that eliminates the co-existence of diverse ways of knowing and being by ordering the human knowledge on an epistemological scale from traditional to modern, which positions Eurocentric epistemology as the only valid way of thinking and being (Castro-Gomez 2007 as referenced in Tlostanova, 2019). I learned to separate the two worlds, drawing a solid line between my education and my life through what Cecilia Salinas (2020) calls a pedagogy of detachment. What I learned at school was knowledge while what I lived was ‘culture’ (Said, 2003/1978). My academic education reinforced this binary opposition: “mind and body, culture and nature, self and other, the coloniser and the colonised, the speaker and the spoken” (Salinas, 2020, p. 23). In Canada, my experiential, cultural and early scholarly knowledge was left out of the clearly demarcated boundaries of what constituted as knowledge. Nonetheless, I always ‘sensed’ that I was not quite on the inside, somehow hovering in between worlds; but it was in the process of this thesis, in asking while walking, separately but together, with the young Afghans in this study, and in taking a trans-disciplinary stand that I have come to see and grasp this third space: the borderlands. Anzaldúa (2012/1987) articulates the borderlands as an ambiguous and unfixed third space constructed by both the wounding and contestation of the exiled other. Existing in the borderlands necessitates the re-birth of a hybrid form of consciousness that is made up by, and in constant state of, transversions and crossings. This thesis, and the papers that it includes, demonstrate this crossing and my journey as I walk from the core to the periphery, asking and questioning until I come to reclaim my borderland existence and my geo and body-politics of enunciation and knowledge generation. Claiming one’s geo and body-politics of enunciation asserts that not only all knowledges are situated and constructed but they are also generated by subjects that are located within specific geographical, biographical, historical and political loci (Mignolo, 2009).

Privileging and reclaiming this epistemic space, therefore, disrupts the notion of the universalised subjectivity of the objective knower and contributes to decolonial work.

Delinking from modernity/coloniality

Mignolo (2009) argued that modernity is entangled with coloniality. He expounded that modernity, is a self-serving narrative of progress propagated by European colonial powers, that is based on dualistic logic that separates subject/object, reason/emotion, human/nature. This dualistic logic necessitates an underside to modernity: coloniality, which is the violent systems of oppression on which modernity is built and advanced (Mignolo, 2009; Tlostanova & Mignolo, 2012). In this way rather than viewing modernity as a series of linear events and processes, modernity is viewed as an epistemic frame through which much of the world's history has come to be understood and is inseparable from the European colonial project (Mignolo, 2009; Stein et al., 2020). Therefore, taking decolonial options necessitates delinking from “models of thinking, making and interpreting the world on the norms, created and imposed by/in Western modernity.” (Tlostanova et al., 2019, p. 290). This epistemic disobedience rejects modernity's claims of universalism of temporality, thinking and knowing, humbling European (Western) epistemology to its geo-political locations, while also affirming those ways of knowing and knowledge generating that have been negated by the totalitarianism of modernity (Mignolo, 2009). It is important to denote that delinking does not mean to abandon or reject; instead, it means to make an epistemic shift to the borders of modernity/coloniality, in order to discern ways to manage and compost the sediments of its totalitarianism (Mignolo & Tlostanova, 2006; Stein et al., 2020). Decoloniality, therefore is an epistemic, political and cultural shift from modernity/coloniality's limitations that foregrounds “the fact that achievement of modernity are inseparable from racism, hetero-patriarchy, economic exploitation and discrimination of non-European knowledge systems” (Tlostanova et al., 2019, p. 290).

Taking this epistemic shift, I have started this thesis with the Iranian peoples' version of once upon a time, not only to demarcate a different beginning for this story, but also because this different beginning captures

eloquently the dark underbelly of modernity, and delineates the borders drawn between the zone of being and nonbeing. Fanon (2008/1952) described the precarious existence in these zones and elucidated that those in the zone of being are recognised in their humanities and their stories, their subjectivities and epistemologies accepted. While the humanity of those who are 'not' is questioned and their subjectivities, epistemologies and access to material resources are negated and/or minimised (Fanon, 2008/1952; Grosfoguel, 2016).

The protagonists of this thesis, the unaccompanied youth, are not unfamiliar to these practices as they are constructed by the Swedish institutions, namely the media, as radically different to other Swedish youth. They are often categorised as either vulnerable victims, who have been exposed to traumatic experiences such as poverty and forced labour, or as tricksters who lie about their age in order to abuse the Swedish welfare system (Djampour, 2018; Stretmo, 2011, 2014). Such rhetoric is also embedded in Swedish border management policies which have become increasingly more confusing, restrictive and convoluted (Collison & De Martini Ugolotti, 2022; Djampour, 2018). Within the asylum system, for example, performing invasive bodily examinations on the youth, for the assessment of their age, has been normalised. This is despite wide-spread criticism from the medical and scientific community in relation to the validity of these tests (Djampour, 2018). Furthermore, since November 2015, an interim three-year legislation has been implemented that only allows for short-term temporary residence permits for young asylum seekers. These temporary permits expire six months after high school education is completed, and the youth then can apply for permanent residency, but only if they have secured employment (Swedish Code of Statutes, 2018: 756). This shift in discourse and policy has meant that the need of the young refugee(d)s has been replaced by what is argued to be a crisis for the state, which in turn has legitimised the prosecution and deportation of the youth (Agergaard et al., 2016; Agergaard & Lenné, 2021; Djampour, 2018). Academic researchers have also been complicit in reproducing such skewed narratives; that is despite an increasing interest in researching the refugee(d)s youth, majority of research has been deficit-oriented and preoccupied with the youth's psychopathology and developmental concerns (Djampour, 2018; Wernesjö, 2011). In this way

the youth are positioned as problematic ‘others’ whose stories, dreams, ambitions and their existence as present and future generation is repeatedly negated.

Sports and (de)coloniality

Another modern/colonial institution that have been particularly involved in the lives of the migrant youth has been sport (and physical activity), as it has been offered by various governmental and non-governmental bodies as a way to manage and integrate the youth (Agergaard et al., 2016; Azzarito, 2012). Modern sport has been entangled in colonialism since its invention in the mid-nineteenth century by European colonial powers (Besnier et al., 2018; Carrington, 2015). This invention came about as a result of codification and regulation of physical activities that were meant to be proof of unflinching superiority of Europeans as civilised, as men, as Christians and as white people; in contrast to the ‘savage’, unchristian, undisciplined and uncivilised other (Besnier et al., 2018; Carrington, 2015). The sports that predominate the world today are all sports that explicitly contributed to the colonialism and were used by the colonial powers to spread and entrench their control over non-Europeans (Besnier et al., 2018). In contrast, other non-European forms of sports and physical activity and their influences on modern sports have been either downplayed or ignored altogether (Carrington, 2015).

The quest for control over the world later manifested in a mission for civilising/modernising/development that still prevails in the sport for development and peace discourse and underlines the general policies of international sports organisations (Darnell & Hayhurst, 2011; Sykes & Hamzeh, 2018). This civilising/managing mission is also extended to sport for integration discussions that are taking place in various global North institutions in response to an increase in migration from the global South (Agergaard et al., 2016; Spaaij et al., 2019). As briefly discussed before, these debates and the consequent academic interest in the topic reflect border management and ethno-nationalistic policies that are flourishing in Europe and beyond (Agergaard & Lenneis, 2021; De Martini Ugolotti & Caudwell, 2022). Schinkel (2018) argued that measuring integration is a neo-colonial practice that is grounded in the legacy of raced

work and cultural/ethnic classification of earlier modern/colonial era. It revolves around positioning and assessing ‘modern/civilised’ individuals against ‘underdeveloped/uncivilised’ others. Within this context integration is turned into the property of individuals such as migrants and their children, which in turn pits them against the society at large (Schinkel, 2018). Within sports, physical activity and leisure, the tendency to centre research on policy-driven themes such as integration has produced short term answers to limited questions which has made the more critical questions and issues irrelevant and invisible (De Martini Ugolotti & Caudwell, 2022; Spaaij et al., 2019). In Scandinavia, for example, there is an over-emphasis of researching assimilation and participation of ethnic minority youth in established sports clubs; whereas research on various leisure activities of the migrant youth, as an independent subject, is rather limited (Agergaard et al., 2016; Spaaij et al., 2019). Aside from notable exceptions, scholarship within integration theme have rarely problematised these assimilatory tendencies of integration policies; nor have they critically discussed how such policies transform societal problems such as economic inequalities and unemployment onto the migrants. Furthermore, this body of research has often ignored the role that migration management and bordering policies play in shaping the experiences, needs and accessibility to sports and physical activity for the refugee(d)s (Agergaard & Lenneis, 2021; De Martini Ugolotti & Caudwell, 2022; Spaaij et al., 2019). As a result, similar to youth and children’s studies, scholarship on sports, physical activity and (forced) migration, for the most part, have consistently contributed to creation of deficit-centred and problematic narratives in relation to refugee(d)s and migrants.

As such, sport is seen as a universal civilising agent that must be managed and directed by benevolent Northern stewardship (Darnell & Hayhurst, 2011; Jeanes et al., 2015). In Sweden, sport interventions have been mostly enacted through the organised sports associations. The sports organisations and clubs are the backbone of Swedish sport model and a major component of Swedish youth politics since approximately 90% of Swedish children and youth have belonged to a sport club throughout their lives (RF [The Swedish Sports Confederation], 2019). The programs run by these organisations have aided in the reproduction of othering as they have mostly focused on controlling what Azzarito (2012) called the

‘at-risk-bodies’ of the young migrants by monitoring their leisure time and promoting engagement in politically recognised and normative leisure activities (Agergaard et al., 2016). Swedish scholars have further argued that Swedish sports clubs are problematic structures since meanings, values and organisation of sports inherent in the integration discourse, policies and programs enacted by them are that of normative Swedish society, and does not necessarily reflect wider ideas about sports (Fundberg, 2012; Karlefors, 2016).

This last critique delineates an important element related to sports. While modern sport, in its hegemonic form, has emerged within colonising relations, sports have never simply been delivered around the world by colonial powers (Carrington, 2015; Darnell & Hayhurst, 2011). That is, there have always been resistance, re-negotiation and remaking of sports and all that they entail. Post-colonial scholarship on local histories of sports has demonstrated that sports have played a major role, both explicitly and in more subtle ways, in subaltern resistance and anti-colonial endeavours (Besnier et al., 2018; Carrington, 2015). In addition, there have also been sporting forms (although few in numbers) from the Global South/East that have become prevalent in the Global North. Within the context of sport and migration, the discussion of sports as a contested domain has been a key argument of critical sports studies (see for example De Martini Ugolotti, 2015; Gulamhusein, 2022; Mauro, 2016; McDonald et al., 2019; Mohammadi, 2022; Nunn et al., 2021; Spaaij, 2015). Although few in numbers, these studies have shown again and again how sports and physical activity remain a contested arena “where power, knowledge, subjectivity, belonging and marginality are constantly negotiated along the intersecting lines of class, gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, physical (dis)ability and legal status” (De Martini Ugolotti & Caudwell, 2022, p. 3). A decolonial scholarship in sports, therefore, should attempt to delink from Eurocentric thought and instead work to uncover “hidden histories of alternative forms of physical culture and bodily practice that generate different meanings to those of the dominant competitive sports cultures of the West” (Carrington, 2015, p. 111).

As I have demonstrated above, research within policy-driven themes (i.e., integration) have consistently flattened out the migrants’ experiences,

meanings and understandings of sports and physical activity to make sense for, and from, Eurocentric perspectives and framings; thus, muting other relevant, alternative and already existing ways of living sports and physical activity. To start the process of this doctoral project, therefore, it has been important for me to delink from the rhetoric of sport and integration and/or Swedish sports clubs; and to begin from another starting point, from the geo-body loci of the lived experiences of the youth as they themselves co-author and co-generate this knowledge. In this way, rather than focusing on what the borders do to the youth, the aim has been to show what the youth do to the everyday bordering they experience in their lives.

Delinking from modernity/coloniality in generation of knowledge also means to delink from the colonial rhetoric of ‘discovery’, be that discovery of places, peoples or experiences. Indigenous scholarship has taught us that under the doctrine of discovery, one of the first principles of international law established by European monarchies, investigating, mapping, claiming lands and colonising of non-Europeans were legitimised (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014; Neel et al., 2007; Smith, 2005). Universities, as modern/colonial institutions have also been complicit in advancing the rhetoric of discovery by their constant request for something new which legitimises the study of some people and experiences from a delocalised and disembodied vantage point (Smith, 2005). To give an example, I will recount a recent experience. A short time ago, I watched a documentary called *Three Identical Strangers* (Wardle, 2018) depicting the story of three brothers who were separated at birth and adopted. The documentary revealed that the adoption of these three boys, now middle-aged men, was but one case of a large-scale twin study executed by psychologists and medical researchers who were interested in ‘discovering’ the answer to nurture vs. nature. The researchers had separated the children in the study and had kept the information regarding their status as twins or triplets a secret from the adoptee parents; instead, the children and their families were filmed and investigated under the guise of welfare policies for adopted children. It is sufficed to say that this unethical action has had tragic consequences for the children (now adults) and their families that are still unfolding. These ethical concerns had finally led to the discontinuation of the study and locking away of the collected material. What

struck me as most disturbing in this documentary was not the existence of such unethical practices in the scientific community, there are plenty of such examples out there; rather it was the attitude of the psychologists involved with the project who were interviewed years later, when the film was produced. The psychologists who had conducted this research expressed great remorse not for their unethical actions but for the loss of the collected material, as they lamented their inability in discovering new frontiers that were now barred to them. They had effectively turned the people in this unethical study into objects to be dissected and investigated for gratification of their own desires and academic achievements. This attitude that one has an inherent right and entitlement to ‘discovery’, to know, is what colonisation embodies (Neel et al., 2007). This view regards ethical mishaps as unfortunate accidents or, at most, harmful by-products of its right to discover and own, rather than co-constituents of its philosophy.

I, therefore, would like to point out that I have in no way attempted to discover things or experiences in this work. To emphasise this, I have no research questions to neatly outline for the readers; or rather, as I will elaborate in later chapters, I have had to give up those intrusive questions at the commencement of my participatory work with the young Afghan refugee(d)s. Instead, choosing the decolonial option and following the tradition of PAR, my intention with this work has been to foreground the stories, experiences and knowledge of the youth (and that of my own research journey) while acknowledging the complexities of life and knowledge generations.

Research aim

This thesis stems from the willingness to delink from the rhetoric of sport and integration by taking the stories, lived experiences and knowledge of the youth, who co-researched with me, as the starting point. In dialogue with decolonial, Indigenous and PAR scholarship, I have aimed to present the stories of sports and physical activity of this collective of storytellers as it is researched and analysed by themselves. My aim has been to demonstrate how the young Afghan refugee(d)s navigate, experience, create meanings and generate knowledge in relation to physical activity

and sport. Furthermore, I have aimed to reveal how the youth think theory from their everyday praxis as they resist, enact agencies, do ‘otherwise’, and bring about re-existence in the margins.

The intention here is not to write *about* but rather to *show* how re-existence and decoloniality happens both in my own process of thinking and doing and also in the lives of the Afghan youth in this thesis. This thinking and doing from the modernity/coloniality’s other, margins and cracks is what I strive to embody in my own practice. This position carries an inherent dilemma: How to write neither without being reinscribed in the dominant structure nor without reinscribing what I argue against (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2015; Stein et al., 2020). Accepting this dilemma ensures that I continually struggle against it in the ways I think, do and address the place of my thinking and doing. As a member of academia who is raised in a middle-class family and educated (mostly) within the dominant system, I carry a privilege that I cannot negate. Yet, I am also a woman of colour, an immigrant to both North America (Canada) and Europe (Scandinavia), who is in a constant state of (epistemic and geographical) border-crossing. This position grants me a vantage view into the workings of the dominant system and ways through which it negates and disavows other ways of being, thinking and doing. This particular locus also allows me insight into how life affirming struggles are ensued in the margins. Writing, thinking and acting from this vantage place in ways that work to illuminate the cracks and fissures of the dominant system and ask/walk a decolonial otherwise are concerns that underline my decolonising intentions in all aspects of my life. By mentioning this place of enunciation, I do not mean to merely fulfil a requirement for researcher’s positionality disclaimer, but I would like to invite the readers “to move beyond a simple reading *of* and *about* towards a thinking *from* and *with*, a thinking-doing that requires the contemplation of one’s own place of enunciation and relation with the so-called universality of Western thought” (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 21).

The structure of the thesis

This is a compilation thesis and as such consists of two main sections; the first half is comprised of 5 chapters where theory/praxis, methodology

and general reflections are discussed. By providing an overview, not only have I described the above-mentioned topics in relation to the aims of this study, but I have also detailed and examined the process of this doctoral journey. The second half of the thesis is compiled of the four papers that I have written in the process of my doctoral education. The papers each mark a different point in my journey to the borderland. The first paper, although critical, is firmly rooted in modern/colonial social sciences and more importantly located within the discipline of sport and exercise psychology. My orientation and place of enunciation changes as I move from paper I to paper IV. In the final paper, I reclaim and write from the borderlands, and attempt to do an otherwise dissemination of the knowledge generated during this journey.

I have supplemented certain themes with poetry (mostly from my homeland, Khorasan) not only to contextualise those themes, but also to provide a cartography of my epistemic stand. The thesis also includes a number of personal stories that start certain chapters. By including these stories, I have tried to give more context and illuminate certain personal experiences that have influenced the writing of this thesis.

PRAXIS AND THEORY

My PhD journey has not been an easy one, and I have encountered various difficulties, from writing and re-writing the ethics application, and arguing for my choice of using participatory methods to navigating the unknown and unfamiliar landscape of Swedish academia while being a newly arrived immigrant in Norway. Needless to say, that there have been numerous border-crossings, both spatial and physical, in this process. In one particular disheartening moment, I received the following excerpt in an email from my mother in Canada:

The Torrent of Words, by the way, thunders down from the Sea of Stories into the Lake of Wisdom, whose waters are illuminated by the Dawn of Days, and out of which flows the River of Time. The Lake of Wisdom, as is well known, stands in the shadow of the Mountain of Knowledge at whose summit burns the Fire of Life. This important information regarding the layout- and, in fact, the very existence- of the Magical World was kept hidden for thousands of years, guarded by mysterious, cloaked spoilsports who called themselves the Aalim, or Learned Ones. However, the secret was out now. It had been made available to the general public by Rashid Khalifa in many celebrated [stories]. So, everyone ... was fully aware that there was a World of Magic existing in parallel with our own non-Magic one, and from that Reality came White Magic, Black Magic, dreams, nightmares, stories, lies, dragons, fairies, blue-bearded genies, mechanical mind-reading birds, buried treasures, music, fiction, hope, fear, the gift of eternal life, the angel of death, the angel of love, interruptions, jokes, good ideas, rotten ideas, happy endings, in fact almost everything of any interest at all. The Aalim, whose idea of Knowledge was that it belonged to them and was too precious to be shared with anyone else, probably hated Rashid Khalifa for letting the cat out of the bag.

Salman Rushdie, 2011, *Luka and the Fire of Life*.

Rushdie in this small excerpt, sent to me across the borders, expresses, in his own magical way, the power that academia has held over what counts as knowledge and how it is generated. My own difficulties in attempting to do ‘otherwise’ is a testimony to this control. Yet, he also makes visible that there are other and already existing ways of knowing and generating knowledge, i.e., stories, that cannot be controlled by the academia. The Fire of Life after all burns at the summit of Mountain of Knowledge and thus, living is a knowledge generative practice that cannot be contained neither by the academia, nor within a single onto-epistemological paradigm. Generation and regeneration of knowledge is intertwined with everything we are and do. So perhaps the Aalim never had total and undisputed ownership and control of the knowledge of the Fire of Life.

The cross-borders journey of this excerpt also illuminates the fluidity of borders and perhaps the generative space of being in-between, the space that I occupy and write from. Regardless, receiving this excerpt at that specific time gave me the courage to continue my course of praxis-grounded research.

One of my main interests in this thesis has been to engage with knowledges that are from the ground up, knowledges that emerge “within and through embodied struggles and practices [which] in turn, continually generate and regenerate knowledge and theory” (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 19). Theory is not just an intellectual pursuit but it is contextual and relational as it is woven within the everyday living, feeling and doing (Lorde, 2007/1984; Walsh, 2015). That is why I will start this chapter by discussing and presenting decoloniality as a conceptual framework and a praxical way of being-becoming in the world. Within this framework, I will discuss the concepts of borderland and the works of Indigenous scholars and decolonising methodologies. Next, I will follow with another thinking-doing matter, participatory action research (PAR) as an epistemological challenge that shifts the location of knowledge. I will then discuss the possibilities and limitation of PAR in relation to decoloniality and decolonising work. In relating the work of this thesis to Indigenous, Black and Chicana scholarship, I am not appropriating these categories, that is I am not trying to use this scholarship to benefit modern/colonial university apparatus (Tlostanova & Mignolo, 2012). Rather learning from such scholarship, I depart from another beginning; a beginning that does not start with modern or post-modern theories. Lastly, I will complicate the concept of sport sciences as a modern/colonial discipline and answer an ever-present question “where is the sport sciences in this work?”. When discussing sport sciences, I refer to the larger discipline that is involved with researching different aspects related to sports, physical activity and physical culture. There are different synonyms for this discipline, for example kinesiology or sports studies.

Decoloniality

Decoloniality is not a single field of study, rather, it is an option amongst many other ways of being in the world, including the hegemonic option of modernity/coloniality (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). In this way, decoloniality is not a mission nor an abstract universal imperative, but rather a praxical way of living and thinking which involves “interrogating the structures of knowledge and of knowing that have thrown us, all of us on the planet, into the world” (Mignolo, 2018, p. 381). The decoloniality school of thought emerged in the works of Latin American scholars such

as Anibal Quijano (2007), Walter Mignolo (2009) and Maria Lugones (2010) among others, and was further developed by Medina Tlostanova (2009, 2019) within Eurasian and Scandinavian contexts.

Quijano (2007) argued that colonisation of Latin America began the constitution of a new world order that, over five hundred years, became the planetary world order. He named this matrix of power modernity/coloniality, and further elucidated that this coloniality of power was not only expressed economically and politically but was strongly associated with coloniality of knowledge, of imagination, of being and thinking. Thus, modernity that defined (and still does) Europe and Europeans has been deeply entangled with European colonial domination over the planet and it is impossible to separate the two. That is coloniality is not a derivative but constitutive of modernity, and consequently there is no modernity without coloniality (Bhambra, 2014; Mignolo, 2009; Quijano, 2007). Coloniality in this sense may have started with colonialism of Latin America but it has evolved and is distinct from political and economic colonialism, and it did not end when economic and political colonialism ended (Tlostanova & Mignolo, 2009). Maria Lugones (2010) built on this concept and argued that modernity/coloniality, rearticulated the world into homogenous and separable categories that are arranged in hierarchical dichotomies, categories and arrangements that are still present in our everyday living. “In a way, as modern subjects, we breathe coloniality all the time and everyday” (Maldonado-Torres, 2007, p. 243) as coloniality is maintained alive everywhere, in our books, common sense, cultural patterns, criteria for academic performance and in aspirations and imaginations for oneself. Decolonial option, hence must move beyond the struggles of political and economic sovereignty and instead interrogate these universalised assumptions and rearticulations. To further clarify these concepts, Stein and co-authors (2020) offered a metaphor by describing ‘the house modernity built’. They explained that the

...foundations of the house are built on solid concrete that separates humans from the rest of the nature, and creates degrees of hierarchical value that rank these ‘separate’ beings against each other according to their perceived utility. These fantasies of separation and hierarchy lay

the onto-metaphysical groundwork for the rest of the house. The carrying walks of the house are represented, on the one side, by the tiles of Western humanist values and Enlightenment knowledge traditions, which promise consensus and universal relevance, and which are secured by denying the relevance of non-Western knowledges. On the other side is the wall of nation-states, which promise security through mechanisms of borders, rights, and national homogeneity, all of which are ultimately secured through processes of state sanctioned violence 'at home' and abroad... Thus, while the house modernity built offers shiny promises, these promises are subsidized by a colonial underside: the externalised and invisible costs of building and maintaining the house. (Stein et al., 2020, p. 49)

Using this metaphor, coloniality of knowledge means that, in Enlightenment rationality, knowledge is considered as a relation between an individual and something else. That is, in line with Cartesian thought, an individual self-actualises through knowing about an object: I think, therefore I am. In this sense, without the object, the subject cannot self-actualise, yet the object is deemed unchanged, and only a mechanism for the self-actualisation of the subject (Tuck & Yang, 2012). This individuated form of knowing has at its core the radical absence of the 'other' as well as complete negation of the co-relationality and co-construction of knowledges by subjects in relation to one another (Lorde, 2007/1984; Mignolo, 2018; Said, 2003/1978; Stein et al., 2020). In this way, Enlightenment rationality assumes a delocalised and disembodied vantage point that eliminates the co-existence of other subjects with epistemologies of their own, positioning Eurocentric epistemology as the only valid way of thinking and being (Castro-Gomez 2007 as referenced in Tlostanova, 2019). This has enabled modernity/coloniality to conceal its coloniality and be understood only as modernity presenting a universal and a zero-point epistemology (Mignolo, 2009).

Mignolo (2009, 2018) further elaborated the concept of modernity/coloniality in relation to what he called geopolitics of knowledge and knowing. He proposed that the concepts and structures of knowing are not universal but they are geographically, historically and politically situated. That is, epistemology is not only historical, but it is also geographical in

its historicity (Bhambra, 2014; Mignolo, 2009). Decoloniality as an endeavour, therefore, starts from posing the questions of who, when, why and where knowledge is generated and by doing so, one breaks away from the logic of modernity/coloniality, and turn the Enlightenment concept of 'I think, therefore I am' inside out. "...rather than assuming that thinking comes before being, one assumes that instead it is a [gendered and] racially marked body in a geohistorical marked space that feels the urge or get the call to speak" (Mignolo, 2009, p. 160). Lorde (2007/1984) expounded this idea further when she contested the sight/thought-centric basis of Europeans subjectivity and instead foregrounded the senses and experiences of lived reality: "The white fathers told us: I think, therefore I am. The black mother within each of us...whispers in our dreams: I feel, therefore I can be free" (p. 38). This epistemic delinking, or epistemic disobedience works to change the terms, assumptions and concepts as well the content and histories of the conversations on modernity/coloniality, while affirming those other ways of knowing and being that have been denied by the totalitarianism of modernity/coloniality matrix of power (Bhambra, 2014; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018).

Madina Tlostanova (2006, 2009), co-writing with Mignolo, expanded the concept of decoloniality when she discussed it in relation to the imperial march of Russia in Eurasia and Central Asia. It is important here to reiterate that decolonial option is not a universalised concept that can be applied uncritically to various histories. Instead, Tlostanova and Mignolo argued that despite the differences and incommensurability that existed between the many local histories of Central Asia and Latin America, they shared a commonality which was modernity/coloniality (Tlostanova & Mignolo, 2012, 2009). More recently, Tlostanova and colleagues (2019) have critiqued the Nordic academia in application of the words 'decolonial' and 'decolonising'. They argued that how these words are understood in academic projects and initiatives are problematic since they do not mean an epistemic or existential delinking, but rather a general critique from within the modernity/coloniality matrix of power (Tlostanova et al., 2019). This misuse and co-option, albeit unintentional and not fully conscious, has depoliticised the concept of decoloniality since it has obscured the reality of lived experiences and struggles of the Global South

and Indigenous peoples. They further added that the overuse of the de-contextualised and delocalised concept of representation within the Nordic context allows for the reproduction of the Global South subjects through the Eurocentric epistemic tools which leads to many academics speaking on behalf of the other (Stein et al., 2020; Tlostanova et al., 2019). Decolonial option instead could mean engaging in collaborate work with the other to co-produce knowledge from “within the sites of alterity and multiplicity” (Tlostanova et al., 2019, p. 291).

Common across Latin America, Central Asia and Nordic countries, despite multiple and different local (colonial) histories, is the totalitarianism of modernity/coloniality, which includes coloniality of knowledge, and therefore the colonial wound. Colonial wound is the site of struggles, the geographical and epistemological frontiers that were/are drawn to mark exteriority and the positionality of coloniser-colonised, subject-object or as Fanon (2008/1952) described it, zones of being and nonbeing. Decolonial option consequently comes to existence from within these borders as a way of being-becoming in multiple ways, but always in response to the various ways modernity/coloniality has been enacted. Thus, “modernity/coloniality inadvertently generates critical dimension from within” (Tlostanova & Mignolo, 2009, p. 146). That is the seed of decoloniality grows from inside this matrix at the borders and from the colonial wound. In this way decolonial option does not start with modern or post-modern theorists “slightly modifying their theories to make them fit the analysis of the post/neo-colonial reality” (Tlostanova et al., 2019, p. 168), instead it starts from a different genealogy and a different location, from the borders. Epistemic disobedience means that one situates their place of enunciation at a different place and a different beginning; at the borderlands, the spatial site of struggles that ensued as a response to coloniality. Decoloniality in this sense, is not new, it has always existed in the borderlands (Mignolo & Tlostanova, 2006).

Borderlands and epistemology of the borders

The US-Mexican border es una *herida abierta* [open wound] where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds. And before a scab forms it haemorrhages again, the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country-a border culture.

(Anzaldúa, 2012/1987, p. 25)

In this quotation, Gloria Anzaldúa (2012/1987) highlighted several aspects of the borders. She affirmed that, far from a one-time event, the pervasive nature of border operations and the marked violence that accompanies them, are continuous and ever-present. This violence is not only geographical but it also invades the spiritual, psychological and existential being of the individuals it marks. Yet, this space is also generative and creative. Borders are drawn to signify difference, they are definitive and dividing, yet at the moment that borders are drawn a third ambiguous space is born, a borderland that is neither there or here. Borderland is a “vague and undetermined” (Anzaldúa, 2012/1987, p. 25) space that forms as a response to the violence of constructing borders (Mignolo & Tlostanova, 2006). Anzaldúa (2012/1987) explicated that borderland is never fixed and final, but in continuous state of becoming. The inhabitants of borderland are the exiled, the prohibited and the forbidden, “the squint-eyed, the perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulato, the half-breed” (Anzaldúa, 2012/1987, p. 25). They are transgressors who constantly remind modern ‘legitimate’ subjects of the glitch inherent in the system. Borderlanders are in a state of perpetual crossing under the ever-present violence of the borders. This makes them vulnerable; they experience pain, tension and multiple intersecting oppressions (Anzaldúa, 2012/1987; Motta, 2015). And yet Anzaldúa chose this marginal dark space because the ambiguous nature of borderlands can also give rise to *la facultad* [the capacity] to see, be and think otherwise. *La facultad* develops as a sense, a feeling that arises from living in darkness, from the conditions of living in borderlands, always vigilant and oversensitive. Anzaldúa explained that this capacity, if developed, is “excruciatingly alive to the world” (Anzaldúa, 2012/1987, p. 60) and has a tolerance for ambiguity and contradictions; it includes rather than excludes and unites rather than separates. It is not merely a mosaic of separate pieces or a

balanced existence of opposing powers, rather it is aiming at synthesising a third element, a hybrid consciousness, a mutable and malleable species that is “in continual creative motion” (p. 102), breaking down dichotomies and crossing boundaries continuously. In this way, she underlined not only what borders do to the inhabitants of the borderland, but more importantly what these dwellers do to borders.

Audre Lorde (2007/1984) described a similar concept when she spoke about the possibilities within the darkness and pain of being in a state of constant contradictions, learning to “bear the intimacy of scrutiny and to flourish within it” (p. 36). And so, Lorde also favoured this place because it is “ancient and hidden; [it has] survived and grown strong in darkness” (p. 36) and within it lays an incredible source of creativity and power. One comes to realise such possibilities when one chooses to not think of these contradictions as problems to be solved but rather as situations to be experienced and felt deep within one’s own “ancient, non-European consciousness” (p. 36). Lorde also contended that survival in this place is incumbent upon the fusion, recreation and synthesis.

Borders, therefore, are not only geographical but they are also epistemic. The epistemic borders that have emerged in the renaissance, out of the European consciousness, and continue to exert their dominance and superiority as models to be followed today have constructed a dominant universal subject and epistemology while simultaneously creating a multiplicity of inferior colonised, racialised and othered subjectivities (Demuro, 2015; Grosfoguel, 2013; Mignolo & Tlostanova, 2006). Border thinking has risen from this othered space and from and within the wound of this unnatural edge that was endowed to ‘others’ by modern/colonial hegemonic discourse. It is the “epistemology of the exteriority; [the non-European consciousness (Lorde, 2007/1984)] that is of the outside, created from the inside; and as such, it is always a decolonial project” (Mignolo & Tlostanova, 2006, p. 206). Border thinking and theorising from the borders offers a different point of departure that encompasses the fluidity, ambiguity and complexities of border existence. Such thinking also rejects a simplistic approach that reduces the lived realities, experiences and resistances of the borderland to a European-vs-non-Euro-

pean dichotomy (Anzaldúa, 2012/1987; Demuro, 2015; Khan, 2013). Instead, the complexities of borderlands that come about because/in response to coloniality of knowing and being create a hybrid ontological being that is in constant state of crossing; such hybridity can start the journey to decolonising with a yearning for a world where many worlds could co-exist (Mignolo & Tlostanova, 2006; Motta, 2015; Stein et al., 2020). Speaking from this epistemic space makes possible the emergence of decolonising methodologies that reflect meanings, imagination and struggles of the inhabitants of the borderlands.

Indigenous research and decolonising methodologies

Speaking from the margins of the modern/colonial world system, Indigenous communities and researchers have long and often contested the mechanisms through which such system has colonised their lands, bodies and subjectivities, and negated their ways of being and thinking (Smith, 2005). One such influential scholar is Linda Tuhiwai Smith who, speaking from the epistemic view point of the colonised, talked back to the processes and understandings of what constitute modern research and scholarship. She pointed out that history of research from the vantage point of Indigenous peoples is “so deeply embedded in colonisation that it has been regarded as a tool only of colonisation” (Smith, 2005, p. 87). For Indigenous peoples, she argued, research is a ‘dirty’ process that has aided in extraction, exploitation and appropriation of Indigenous ways of knowing, their imagery and their creations (Smith, 2012/1999). Such knowledge about the other has been collected, analysed and classified under the universal objective Western gaze (Mohanty, 1988) and from the hubris of zero degree (Castro-Gomez, 2007 as referenced in Demuro, 2015), and then represented back to those who have been colonised (Connell, 2016; Said, 2003/1978; Smith, 2012/1999). Smith contended that such research assumes that Western paradigms are the only rational ideas possible. It is an approach that presupposes an inherent superiority with an underlying paternalistic attitude and desire to bring salvation/progress in all matters of living to the Indigenous peoples (Neel et al., 2007; Smith, 2012/1999). Indigenous researchers have been active in ways that disrupt this totalitarianism of Western scholarship and instead develop methodologies and frameworks that privilege Indigenous knowledge,

voices and reflections (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014; Smith, 2012/1999). Decolonising knowledge in this sense is a political agenda that aspires to transform not only institution of research and all that it entails, but also the epistemological foundations from which it was constructed (Said, 2003/1978; Smith, 2012/1999), that is the universalised notion of European epistemology. Recognising the heterogeneity of Indigenous peoples and their differing and multiple approaches to what decolonising methodologies entail, Smith argued for scholarship that enables peoples and communities to reclaim and tell their stories in their own ways and to give testimony to their collective histories and struggles. She further explicated that embedded in such stories are the imaginations, yearnings and ways of knowing and being that derive resistance and reaffirm life for the Indigenous peoples (Smith, 2005).

Decolonising methodologies therefore, are not about creating diversity and new discoveries. Indigenous researchers, alongside others, have warned of the neo-colonial and neoliberal nature of the current conditions of research that continue to commodify knowledge and demand for new discoveries. Under such conditions Indigenous knowledge is one of the new frontiers of knowledge (Smith, 2005; Stein et al., 2020). Neoliberal desires of acquiring new knowledge in conjunction with the salvation/progress rhetoric leads to either the reproduction of epistemic paternalism or a surface level epistemic diversity (Berry, 2021). Such approaches do nothing to decolonise the process and epistemological foundations of research. Epistemic decolonising is not about recognising diverse knowledges and integrating them into the existing scientific paradigms, rather it is about mobilising other ways of knowing and being in order to challenge colonial and totalitarian legacies and injustices of existing scientific structures (Berry, 2021). In this regards, participatory praxis, where the research questions, aims, methodologies and concepts are grounded in the margins, in epistemologies of borderlands, can be a starting point in gesturing towards decolonising.

Participatory action research

Participatory action research (PAR) is a collaborative approach to research that moves the investigation from a linear cause and effect analysis, to a participatory dialogical agenda that reflects the context of people's lives through transformative cycles of acting and reflecting (Dimitriadis, 2010; lisahunter et al., 2013). PAR stems from the struggles of South American peasants and Indigenous peoples in the face of colonial and post-colonial practices in that region (Freire, 2005/1970). Its philosophical roots derive from Freire's (2005/1970) idea of praxis, a critical cycle of action and reflection which emphasises the importance of critical consciousness- Freire named this: *conscientização* [conscientisation]- in instigating personal and social transformation. This process is achieved collaboratively and dialogically through a cyclical non-dichotomising course of "reflection and action upon the reality of the world in order to transform it" (Freire, 2005/1970, P. 51) by the people who are living that reality. The collaborative dialogue, therefore, is a key factor in PAR whereby the praxis is generated upon the reality which is to be transformed. This dialogue is neither an act of depositing ideas in another, nor is it a simple exchange of ideas. Nor yet, can it be between experts and objects of the investigation. It is an act of creation that occurs between subjects as co-investigators of a problematic reality (Freire, 2005/1970). In this way, PAR offers both the academia and the community to dialogically work together in a collective to address specific issues which are not being addressed adequately by the current means of knowledge production (Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991; Heron & Reason, 2001; Kidd & Kral, 2005). The academic researcher, involved in PAR, consequently, becomes a member of a group of researchers who are collaborating and sharing their knowledge in addressing the issues that involve the whole of the community (Kemmis et al., 2014; Kidd & Kral, 2005). This research collective, together and through the process of conscientisation, investigates and challenges the established structures and becomes aware that conditions of injustice are produced and not natural and therefore changeable (Freire, 2005/1970). Influenced by critical theories, PAR emphasises that research is not a neutral activity and it is always political, working to maintain or change dominant power relations (Cammarota & Fine, 2008; lisahunter et al., 2013; Spaaij & Jeanes, 2013). The aim here is to offset and transform power relations and taken-for-granted ways of

knowing through foregrounding marginalised voices in the process of research, action and knowledge production (Macdonald, 2012).

PAR philosophy maintains that knowledge is generated through collaboration and within critical and relational dialogues of those who are living the problems being investigated. In this way, PAR is part of a political agenda that questions the hegemonic understanding that knowledge is the domain of academia. PAR scholars recognise that expertise and knowledge are broadly spread out; and those who have been systematically excluded and marginalised, are especially well-informed on the structure, consequences and entry points for resistance in that unjust social system (Fine, 2008; Spaaij & Jeanes, 2013). Through PAR, individuals (both researchers and the community) learn about complex histories and consequences of certain discourses as well as their own histories and lived experiences; they begin to re-imagine and denaturalise taken for granted realities of their personal and social worlds and embark on generating and implementing ways of contesting such realities based on the knowledge accumulated through this reflective and critical enquiry (Cammarota & Fine, 2008).

Even though, use of PAR within sport and exercise research has seen a modest increase over the last two decades, the number of PAR projects are still limited (Spaaij et al., 2018, 2019). There are, for example, a handful of studies within various fields of sport research (see for example Azzarito, 2016; Blodgett et al., 2013; Enright, 2010; Hopper & McHugh, 2020; McHugh et al., 2013; Schinke & Blodgett, 2016; Walseth et al., 2018), mostly located in North America as well as several research in sport for development context across the globe. The number of PAR projects within migration and sport/physical activity studies is even more limited (Spaaij et al., 2019). In a critical review of the literature over the span of 23 years (1996 to 2019), Spaaij and colleagues (2019) demonstrated that only a handful of published literature had employed participatory principles and even then, the participation was mostly limited to methodology and data collection. In most of these studies, the participation had not been extended to analysis of materials nor to dissemination of knowledge, and therefore, the actual process of knowledge generation had remained within the control of the academic researchers. In the same

paper, Spaaij and colleagues (2019) warned about a Eurocentric bias demonstrated by the geographical distribution and thematic focus of the academic literature. They further argued that academic research alignment with sport as means for promotion and monitoring of integration of refugee(d)s in destination countries is neo-colonial form of knowledge production. In order to disrupt such neo-colonial tendencies, the authors called for innovative methodologies, praxis and frameworks that break away from the narrow focus of this rhetoric (Darnell & Hayhurst, 2011; Spaaij et al., 2019).

PAR a new way to colonise?

Although potentials of PAR in research seem abundant, PAR is not without its challenges and criticism. One of which is that the “potential frustrations and ambiguity of PAR contexts are breeding grounds for researcher insecurity and the potential to fall back on the comfort of one’s power and social position” (Kidd & Kral, 2005, p.190). Engaging in PAR means entering into the messy space of uncertainties where issues of reflexivity, representation, of who speaks for whom and how this came to be are brought into the surface (Kidd & Kral, 2005; lisahunter et al., 2013). The invisible role assumptions are made visible and force the researchers to renegotiate their preconceptions regarding goals, methods and actions of the PAR projects. Researchers must be willing to alter their role from the ‘expert’ holders and imposers of all knowledge to contributors of some knowledge who are exploring areas of enquiry within a partnership with those who are living the problems (lisahunter et al., 2013). This means that it is the community that makes the research questions, the aims and the ways to do the research. In reality, this loss of control, on behalf of the academic researchers, is difficult and challenging and may not always realise fully. The beginning of this project, for example, was not participatory, that is, it was I, the academic researcher, who approached the youth and set the limitation of sports and physical activity as the topic of research. As I will elaborate in the methodology chapter, the youth, nevertheless, were active participants in generation and analysis of research material as well as dissemination of the generated knowledge.

Another issue is the extensive time that PAR projects often demand. Since the research project is not ‘expert’ driven and requires a hands-on approach from everyone involved, it is often lengthy and time consuming. Researchers, therefore, must be prepared for the open-ended and extensive course of PAR projects (Isahunter et al., 2013). A third difficulty, which has drawn criticism from scholars, is to do with the complex and often ambiguous power relations that engender perpetuation of broader systemic injustice and inequalities. This can manifest in two ways. One is that researchers can lose track of being critical of all perspectives, including those of the co-participants and ignore the power relations and existing hierarchy between them (those to do with gender, class, ethnicity, cast etc.) that produces their perspectives (Kidd & Kral, 2005). A second issue regarding power is that most PAR projects are locally based and are therefore micro-level interventions; as such they can obscure or even reproduce broader and more systemic macro-level injustices (Cooke & Kothari, 2001). PAR projects in this regard, run the risk of integrating marginalised populations into the established systems rather than questioning those systems. A last concern is the ideological aspirations of PAR that may render PAR as a magic bullet that can bring liberation to everyone. These aspirations obscure the reality of living and working within a modern/colonial system, the difficulties in attempting to transform such a hegemonic system, and how easily modern/colonial patterns and relationships can be reproduced (Tuck & Guishard, 2013).

These last concerns underscore a highly significant limitation in relation to decoloniality and decolonising work. In fact, decolonial researchers have argued that PAR philosophies are firmly rooted in modernity/coloniality anthropocentric understandings of knowledge (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Smith, 2012/1999; Tuck & Yang, 2012). They have argued that Freire’s notion of *conscientização* [conscientisation] echoes and continues the Enlightenment rhetoric of mental emancipation “whereby the thinking man emerges from the dark cave of ignorance into the light of critical consciousness” (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 20). Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012/1999) further argues that in practice, research often regarded as derived from Freire’s philosophies have denied and obscured the possibility that research and approaches can be generated from a different value system and world view, silencing the praxis and thought of Indigenous,

Black feminists and ethnic minority theorists and scholars. Such research therefore, has not only made a metaphor of decolonising work-free the mind and rest will follow-, but also has repackaged the old rhetoric of salvation/civilising projects in a new form (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). Such shortcomings in Freire's philosophies have turned decolonising into the Western doctrine of liberation which is preoccupied with philanthropic enterprise or desires to discover 'new' knowledge (Smith, 2005; Tuck & Yang, 2012). As my extended reflections in the last chapter will warn, PAR, in this way, can easily become a tool to (re)colonise.

However, I believe that despite Freire's limitations, in particular in relation to modernity/coloniality, much of his praxical and dialogical thoughts remains relevant. His notion of dialogical praxis can be expanded to lead not to critical consciousness but to Zapatista's concept of *Preguntando, caminamos* [Asking, we walk], which signifies that to walk, to do the work, together and separately, we must ask first (Holloway, 2011; Walsh, 2015). This is what I have tried to invoke in my use of Freire's philosophy of dialogical and actional research as I have approached the protagonists of this thesis with hands forward and open in humility (Smith, 2012/1999) and asked while walking, separately and together, with them. The process has been messy, unclear and not always fruitful. Yet, it has also been a start to shift beyond and outside Freire's limitations and into the cracks and borders of modernity/coloniality, into the darkness of the borderlands, where an otherwise knowledge is remade and comes to re-exist.

Where is the sport sciences in this³?

In the discussions of my praxis and thinking in relation to this thesis, there is hardly any reference to sport or physical activity theories and theorists, no self-determination theory, no talks about motivations for sport participation, no modern or post-modern analysis. In taking the decolonial option, I have instead delinked from modern/colonial thought to ground this work in a different epistemic locus, in the works of borderland, Black, Chicana and Indigenous theorists. The question then arises: "Where is the

³ A version of this section has been published in Idrottsforum.org on May 18, 2021

sport sciences in this?” This question has followed me from the beginning, from the first presentation of my initial project plan. At that time, this question unsettled me for various reasons and I did not have an answer to it. Firstly, I was concerned with the legitimacy of my area of interest and whether addressing this will meet the requirements of my doctoral program. Secondly and most importantly, it troubled me that after all the discussions that I had presented in relation to exploring sports from the point of view of the refugee(d)s youth, answering this question was even deemed important. At the time, my theory and thought process, albeit radical and critical, was still firmly centred in the Western hegemonic theory. Since then, from the start of my thesis to now writing this, I have crossed multiple epistemic borders and have moved outside the Western canonical thought, beyond sport and sport sciences discipline but of course, the question has still remained. Here I argue that the constant return to this question arises from our, the sport researchers’, anxiety in the prospect of ending what has benefited us and in which we have invested our lives. At the same time, it denotes our desire to protect the discipline, and ourselves, from such possible collapse.

The critique of the discipline of sport sciences is not new. In fact, Jerry Thomas had criticised the physical education discipline as early as 1987, arguing that over specialisation has fragmented the discipline and therefore has jeopardised its future. In his 1987 article adequately named: “Are we already in pieces or just falling apart”, he claimed that the physical education and sport sciences has become too narrow, and for it to survive it needs to maintain its interdisciplinary and holistic approach to concepts (Thomas, 1987). In a later paper, Loland (1992) offered an example of this holistic approach when he analysed the mechanics and meanings of Alpine skiing from two different disciplinary standpoints and argued for a pluralist research strategy that reflect an open-ended and infinite view of the process of research (Loland, 1992). Later, Tinning (1997) critiqued various aspects of sports and physical activity research. He questioned the dominance of performance discourses in the field that reproduce the commercialisation of sport and the marketing of the bodies. He also problematised the tenuous assumption that fitness equals health and argued that this rhetoric has resulted in negation of the health costs to individuals. His recommendations were a rethinking of the nature of sports and physical

activity that goes beyond the gym and the field (Tinning, 1997). Fast forward to the first decades of the twenty first century, the academic journal *Quest* dedicated a special issue on the future of higher education within the sport sciences (kinesiology). Despite the variety of arguments and different problematisations, the question at the heart of each article was how to save the discipline. Hopsicker and Hochstetler (2016), for example, problematised the marginalisation of philosophy as a discipline in the larger field of sport sciences (Kinesiology) and argued for sport philosophy sub-discipline to be revamped and evolve along with sport sciences itself, taking a more central role within the discipline of sport sciences. They also commented on the word 'sport', drawing attention to its limitations as a concept within the discipline as a whole. They, however, conceded that a name change might be a step in the wrong direction which can jeopardise the existence of the whole discipline (Hopsicker & Hochstetler, 2016). In the same issue, Block (2016) delineated several critical matters facing higher education as a whole, namely corporatisation of universities, risk to academic freedom and compromised intellectual integrity. She further encouraged a more utilitarian path for sport sciences scholars in creating cutting edge research and programs (Block, 2016). She delineated that for sport sciences to survive in the age of posthuman, where knowledge can be stored in chips and inserted in human brains, the sport scholars must also be cutting edge and learn to re-tool and use technology to their advantage (Block, 2016). These two different trajectories of critique, although coming at different times and with different recommendations, signify not only a desire for the sport sciences discipline to survive but also its inherent right to exist as a discipline of knowledge. It is interesting though that the more recent critiques have, in some ways, surrendered to the problematic, and yet 'inevitable' (according to the authors) concepts that the earlier scholarship had critiqued.

Despite the various reforms that the above-mentioned scholars have argued for, from holistic thinking and interpretation to advocating for creating interdisciplinary and utilitarian cutting-edge research, none of the scholars have questioned the ontological basis of sport sciences and its larger umbrella of social sciences. They have all assumed that what they believe to be social science research, in its current hegemonic understandings, is the only way to gain access to human (and life) experience. It is

not surprising, therefore, that the reforms that earlier scholars had proposed did not deliver its promised solution to ‘save’ the sport sciences and in turn resulted in the submission of scholars to problematic issues that persist in sport sciences and the institution of university as a whole. In line with decolonial thinkers, I argue that implicit in what we call sport sciences (Kinesiology) is colonial structures and imagination that attempt to conform bodies to healthy, gendered white ideals and reinscribe structural power relations (Joseph & Kriger, 2021). Therefore, I believe that questioning the ontological foundation of the discipline as well as the institution of research in which it is located, in this case social sciences, through a decolonial lens can add a different layer of comprehension as to why and where of the discontent with sport sciences, and the nature of the question “where is the sport sciences in this?”. Using the decolonial lens, I only present a brief overview of what I believe to be the ontological basis of what we call social sciences today.

As discussed earlier, the social sciences in their current hegemonic form emerged from the European social thought of the Enlightenment era and consolidated themselves as disciplines in the nineteenth century in Europe (Heilbron, 1995). The social sciences expanded around the world and became the Western empire’s companion. In this way they were (and still are in their hegemonic form) part of building Western civilisation and its imperial expansion (Mignolo, 2014). It is clear that these expansions were encountered by resistance, and many scholars (in particular the Third World scholars) were denouncing the imperial bent of the social sciences. In response to this discontent, there was an attempt to ‘open the social sciences’ in the mid 1990s (Mignolo, 2014; Tlostanova & Mignolo, 2009). This was a reformative attempt that came from the hegemonic core of social sciences itself, and did not mean to question the implicit and totalitarian ontological basis of social sciences mentioned earlier. Using the arguments mentioned earlier within sport sciences as examples, this reform did not mean to change the terms but rather expand the boundaries of suitable contents. In effect, it meant to ‘save’ the social sciences, their implicit ontological beliefs and to a broader extent the totalitarianism of Western civilisation (Mignolo, 2014). This is precisely why this reform and opening could not address the core issues that many scholars (both in

the core and from the peripheries) considered problematic and disconcerting. The sport sciences reforms that were discussed previously, reflect this idea of saving and protecting the discipline in its current hegemonic standing, albeit with a little more flexibility. Moreover, implicit in the question “Where is the sport sciences in this?” lies the desire to preserve and save the ontological totalitarianism of the discipline (and by extension modern/colonial institution of university). Sport sciences scholars, regardless of where we fall within our critique of the discipline, are dependent on the “enduring affective investments in, and desires for, the continuation of its promises and pleasures” (Stein et al., 2020, p. 54). Any attempts to reform the discipline without addressing and interrupting these desires will ultimately reproduce circularities (Stein et al., 2020) that seek to restore or retain the underlying structures (I will return to these circularities in the last chapter).

The attempt to ‘open the social sciences’, although somewhat limited and circular in its intentions, still managed to shed light on the cracks of this totalitarian space and through these cracks, a different kind of yearning has seeped through (Stein et al., 2020; Walsh, 2015). Born in the borderlands, in the cracks and margins of this totalitarian system, these yearnings are about imagining an otherwise thinking and being. They aim to decolonise, to reformulate the principles and structure of knowledge by being grounded in otherwise ontological and epistemological grounds, and re-constitute what Eurocentric social sciences have disavowed (Stein et al., 2020; Tlostanova, 2019; Walsh, 2015). The yearnings are asking different questions because they were shaped and created at the moment of the establishment of the totalitarianism of Western/European thought (coloniality of being) in the thought process of those whose ways of thinking and being were negated and deemed outside of this totalitarian thought system (Mignolo, 2009; Tlostanova & Mignolo, 2009). They ask different questions because they are about giving life and sustenance to the otherwise and are not concerned with saving a discipline (Mignolo, 2009; Walsh, 2015). They are about creative and generative joy of knowing beyond the disciplines. They are trans-disciplinary (not multi or interdisciplinary) because they reject the disciplinary limitations and aim to un-discipline knowledge (Tlostanova & Mignolo, 2009). In this way, they attempt to delineate that European thought and its organisation of

knowledge is not universal; that there are other ways of thinking, knowing and being that describe a different relationship to knowledge and its generation. The point of departure for these yearnings is on the “principal that the regeneration of life shall prevail over primacy of the production at the cost of life” (Mignolo 2009, p. 161), even if that production is of a discipline or a field of study. What Salman Rushdie (2011) attempts to signify in the quotation that I shared at the beginning of this chapter is exactly this. That is despite the attempts of European thought to pass itself as universal in order to control the generation of knowledge and what knowledge means, knowledge and life cannot be bound and contained by any single onto-epistemological way of imagining, theorising, researching and being. Decolonial yearnings attempt to make this explicit by showing that indeed otherwise possibilities already exist (Stein et al., 2020).

My aim in this work arises from these yearnings. What I would like to do is to *not* work within the boundaries of a disciplines but to interrupt the circular reproductions within/of it. I wish to start from a different genealogy, from the lived experiences of the inhabitants of borderlands. In taking the decolonial option, I have journeyed from the core of the discipline, moved through its peripheries and crossed to the borderlands. My work, therefore, is concerned with widening the cracks so as to see the otherwise possibilities. I am not concerned with answering the question “where is the sport sciences in this?”, I am also not interested in saving the discipline of sport sciences, even though I have benefitted (and still do) from its existence. What I am concerned with is to show how the disavowed peoples, ontologies and epistemologies have managed to sustain their disavowed subjectivities and relationships; and how they have survived and even thrived on the margins. In relation to the work of this thesis, my intent is to demonstrate how the Afghan youth in this study have made and remade different relationships and understandings to and of sports despite and against the (Western) universalised concept of ‘sport’, in ways that goes beyond mere resistance but enact a re-existence. My chosen praxis, theories and places of enunciation, discussed in this chapter reflect these yearnings.

METHODOLOGY

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We were returning home from one of our family road-trips. I must have been about eleven or twelve years old. My father liked to drive at night so as to escape both the heat and the traffic of the daytime. I was randomly moving the FM dial of the car's radio, searching for something entertaining, when I landed on a radio station from Afghanistan. Up until then, I had never really listened to any radio programs from Afghanistan; but that night, the radio hosts were reading poetry. As we found out, the program on the radio station was called the Night Stories and that night's story was Nizami's Khosrow and Shirin. This is a medieval romantic poem that was written in late 1100's and is considered to be one of the most valuable literary works in Persian literature ("Khosrow and Shirin", 2021). Hearing the voice actors on the radio recount this epic poem in their Dari dialect surprised me. Up to that point, my understanding of the Afghans, which was based on what I had heard or read mostly in the Iranian media, was that of an uneducated and often criminal population whom one should avoid. That night changed my thinking in profound ways that influence me still. Not only did I re-learn one of the most famous love stories of Persian literature, but I, also, was made aware of the deeply problematic narrative present in Iranian public discourse in relation to the people of Afghanistan. The voice actors and that radio program disrupted this problematic image and made me think deeply about how and why such images were made popular and whom did they serve and what did they obscure. That night, that radio program re-positioned people of Afghanistan for me, not only as people who have history and culture, but also as people whom I share this history and culture with. That night, my relationship with the people of Afghanistan was re-created and brought to re-exist.

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In this chapter, I will present the methodological framework and material used in this thesis. The majority of the material generated in this thesis comes from a PAR project that I collaborated with a group of Afghan students (paper II). However, this thesis covers more than just this single project. It also includes my own thought processes before (paper I) and especially after the PAR project (paper III and IV), that is my own journey from the core to the margins and finally to the borderlands of modernity/coloniality. The methodology concerning these various parts differ slightly and goes beyond the methodology used during the PAR process. Methodology is not only a discussion of tools used in collection of information but it also concerns ontological and epistemological bases of those methods (Djampour, 2018; lisahunter et al., 2013). As discussed in the previous chapter, this thesis has been praxis-oriented and as such it consists of an intertwining of lived experience, action and research from a particular place of enunciation, from the borderlands of modernity/coloniality. Taking a decolonial stand has meant that I acknowledge that my choice of methods has not been merely about gathering information but a highly political act; that is what and how I choose to do research affects what knowledge is generated and how that knowledge then impacts reality (Smith, 2005, 2012/1999). It has also meant that I recognise and give privilege to my own memories, thoughts and lived experience as active constituents of this process. In the present chapter, I start by positioning myself in relation to this research, and in particular to the people of Afghanistan, in order to invite the readers to contemplate their own place of enunciation and to read and think with/from rather than about. Next, I will discuss and present art-based research (ABR) as a decolonising methodology and a way of thinking-doing research that can reaffirm other ways of knowing and being. What follows is a brief overview of the epistemological relationship of peoples of Khorasan, in particular across the borders of Iran and Afghanistan, to art. Lastly, I will present and discuss methodological steps taken throughout the process of this thesis and ethical considerations that followed.

The I in this research

غروب در نفس گرم جاده خواهم رفت
پیاده آمده بودم، پیاده خواهم رفت

طلسم غربتم امشب شکسته خواهد شد
و سفره ای که تهی بود، بسته خواهد شد

!و در حوالی شب های عید، همسایه
!صدای گریه نخواهی شنید، همسایه

همان غریبه که قلک نداشت، خواهد رفت
و کودکی که عروسک نداشت، خواهد رفت

*At sunset in the hot breath of the road I shall leave
I came on foot, and on foot I shall leave
The talisman of my exile will be broken tonight
And the tablecloth, which was always empty, will be folded tonight.
And on the eves of feast days, neighbour!
No more will you hear the sound of weeping, neighbour!
The stranger who had not a penny shall leave
And the child that had no dolls, too shall leave*

—Mohammad Kazem Kazemi, *Piadeh amadeh boodam, piadeh khaham raft*, (my own translation)

My relationship with the people of Afghanistan is ancient, complicated and spans across three continents. I am from Khorasan, the Easternmost province of what is currently called Islamic Republic of Iran. Khorasan is an ancient region and its name, translating to land of the sun, refers to its geographical location in the east of the ancient Iranian federative system (Mojtahed-Zadeh, 2004). Coincidentally, my last name, Mashreghi, also means from the eastern lands and, as the family legend goes, was chosen by my ancestors to affirm and declare their Khorasani heritage. As discussed later in the chapter, this place of enunciation plays an important

role in my choice of methods as it relates to my epistemology. Historically, Khorasan has been an elastic and expansive region in Central Asia that covered most of what is now called Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and easternmost provinces of Iran (Crews, 2015; Mojtahed-Zadeh, 2004). The many peoples⁴ of this land have shared cultural, historical and linguistic ties since antiquity (Crews, 2015). However, the north-eastern parts of this land were partitioned in mid-nineteen century and were included in Russia and the new country of Afghanistan (Mojtahed-Zadeh, 2004). Development and reform policies enacted by different governments across the newly formed borders varied significantly and in turn gave rise to various cultural and societal differences between the many peoples of this region (Adelkhah & Olszewska, 2007; Mojtahed-Zadeh, 2004; Najmabadi, 2005; Shams, 2021). My ancestors happened to be located on the Iranian side of the borders. Despite having direct links to places and people in Afghanistan, this chance coincidence allowed my great-grandparents to have Iranian citizenship and prosper within relative stable conditions during the early 1900s, which in turn granted me the privileges of a middle-class family.

The differences produced in societal, political and cultural fabrics of the different nation-states of greater Khorasan also changed the circumstances and conditions of each country in relation to the political events that took place in last two decades of the twentieth century. In late 1970s and early 1980s, the countries of Iran and Afghanistan both experienced political turmoil. In Iran, a revolution took place that toppled the monarchy and brought the current Islamic Republic regime to power. Soon after, the western borders of the new republic were invaded by US-backed Iraqi army (Young, 2003) and an eight-year war ensued. The new regime, however, persisted and managed to end the war with its borders remaining intact, and has since experienced a relative stability despite its precarious relationships with the US. In Afghanistan, a coup installed a Marxist government which resulted in a civil war that brought the Soviet army to the country (Adelkhah & Olszewska, 2007; Crews, 2015). Afghanistan as a country has been suffering since from widespread internal violence involving various local powers and international states (Adelkhah &

⁴ I have used the word peoples to denote the heterogeneity and diversity of the those who come from this expansive region.

Olszewska, 2007; Crews, 2015). There were many displaced people, internally and internationally, within both of these countries; however, the conditions in Iran were different, both due to the fact that the war ensued there was an invasion and not a civil war, and also because of the already mentioned differences in development and reform policies enacted earlier in the century. I spent my childhood at the heart of this turmoil in Iran, and although I lived through the eight-year war, I lived the majority of it in the province of Khorasan, in the east. This meant that although war was part of my everyday living as a child, I did not (for the most part) experience its overt effects such as bombings, displacement and violence. As a child living in Khorasan, I also came to contact with the many Afghan refugee(d)s who had escaped the violence and war across the eastern borders. My earliest memories regarding the Afghan refugee(d)s in Iran is their negative depiction in the Iranian media as criminals and rapists. This relationship took a different turn when quite by accident I was exposed to a counter-narrative while being on a road trip with my family. I have described this event at the beginning of this chapter.

This new connection and understanding drove me to counter essentialist depictions of Afghan migrants in Iranian society. As a young child, I wrote extensively about these issues during my school years in Iran. Why did I do that? I am not sure where this drive for social activism comes from, perhaps it is rooted in my guilt of benefiting from and being complicit in the production of these injustices. Regardless of the reason, this drive stayed with me when I, as a teenager (along with my family) immigrated to Canada, and propelled me to be active as a volunteer in several NGOs assisting migrants' and refugee(d)s' transition. During this volunteer work, I came to know many Afghan migrants, both professionally and personally. These colleagues and friends made me aware of the problematic understandings that Iranians, including myself, have in relation to Afghans. They made me aware that many benevolent Iranians view Afghans as an extension of their Iranian-ness, and therefore, worthy of fair treatment, rather than as self-determined and sovereign humans who deserve justice regardless (Hakimi, 2020). The thought that I could be reproducing exclusionary notions that denied humanity of people and perpetuated social injustices troubled me deeply and made me more reflexive of my own attitude and behaviour. Later, my arrival to Scandinavia for

academic and personal reasons coincided with the arrival of many Afghan youth seeking asylum in Norway and Sweden. I was, once again, confronted with various and mostly negative stories of the young migrants in the media, this time in relation to the integration discourse. Arriving to Scandinavia as an adult also allowed me to observe and name the othering that I, myself, experience everyday (and had experienced in Canada) as an Iranian woman. The academic works I read granted me ways to name the colonial difference I had always 'sensed', especially in relation to my field of study, sports and exercise.

All these experiences have informed my choice of theory, praxis and methodology in the production of this thesis. My first-hand experiences in relation to people from Afghanistan have made me aware of my own biases, privileges and complicities. My own experiences of colonial difference have made me take seriously the epistemic force of local histories and struggles. It is with these troubles and complicities in mind that I have chosen to ask/walk with the Afghan youth in this thesis and to give attention to the ways they think theory through their lived praxis.

Art-based research

In my attempt to be transdisciplinary and in line with my decolonial praxis, I have utilised art-based research (ABR) as a way to foreground local epistemology of the peoples of Khorasan. By arguing that art is a way of knowing and being in Khorasan, I do not intend to claim any exclusionary rights to it, rather I would like to draw attention to the ways in which art has been and still is a way through which knowledge is generated, thought about and transmitted.

ABR is a systematic use of the artistic processes as a primary way of understanding and investigating lived realities. It is a transdisciplinary approach that aims to address knowledge generation holistically through the use of creative arts in any or all phases of research, from problem formation to content generation, analysis and dissemination (Leavy & Chilton, 2014; Pentassuglia, 2017). ABR may make use of various forms of literary art, performative art, visual art, audio-visual art or multimedia art. Despite a debate in the research community as to whether ABR is a

paradigm or a methodological field (Leavy & Chilton, 2014), I understand it as an epistemology. That is, I believe this process of enquiry is, in itself, a way of knowing and being that can create and convey meaning. This view recognises that art includes multiple ways of knowing (i.e., imagery, sensory and kinaesthetic) and has been able to bring about awareness, meaning and knowledge (both of self and others) in relation to lived reality (Gerber et al., 2012).

ABR has a long history in social sciences (Blodgett et al., 2013; Pink, 2003). Ethnographers and visual anthropologists have used orientalist (Said, 2003/1978) visual representations, i.e. photographs or drawings, to document ‘exotic’ cultures in the last century (Collier & Collier, 1986; Literat, 2013) and psychologists as early as Carl Jung in the 1910s have used art imagery as a mode of enquiry (Leavy & Chilton, 2014). ABR has also been instrumental in advancing embodiment theory and phenomenology (Leavy & Chilton, 2014; McNiff, 2008). With the advent of feminist and critical race theories and poststructuralists’ advocacy for researching *with* rather than *on* people, PAR researchers took up ABR as a legitimate mode of enquiry (Literat, 2013; McNiff, 2008; Pentassuglia, 2017). But despite the long-standing history of ABR in social sciences, ABR research within sport, exercise and physical activity and especially within a PAR paradigm, is only now gaining momentum (Azzarito, 2012). The few PAR projects that I will discuss here are rich examples that highlight the potentials of ABR in the field. These studies have engaged PAR in conjunction with ABR to investigate various themes such as transforming PE curricula, critiquing popular physical culture, public health agendas and foregrounding the lived realities of marginalised populations (Azzarito, 2016; Blodgett et al., 2013; Enright, 2010; Enright & O’Sullivan, 2013).

In an innovative project positioned within cultural sport psychology, Blodgett and colleagues (2013) used Mandala (circle) drawings in their community-based PAR research with Indigenous athletes in Canada to explore the relocation experiences of those who had moved out of their communities to pursue sport opportunities. The use of art and circle drawing deeply resonated with the participants and offered an informal yet expressive alternative (and/or supplement) to words. The unique drawings

of the Indigenous athletes revealed the nuanced experiences of their relocation and fitted together to reflect a more collective narrative about the young athletes and their journeys to pursue their sporting careers. These mandalas are currently displayed on a community blanket at the local youth centre serving as an educational tool by the community members to discuss what it is like to relocate for sport opportunities and, thus, continue to perform the action of the PAR in this particular community (Blodgett et al., 2013). Enright and O'Sullivan (2010, 2013) implemented a series of PAR projects in collaboration with adolescent girls in middle schools in order to understand, critique and transform aspects of the adolescents' lives that influenced their perspectives of their bodies, their physical activity (PA) and their engagement in physical education (PE) in school. In their project, Enright and O'Sullivan illustrated how the co-participants rose to the challenge and took ownership of their learning. Their research demonstrated that the experience of creating a PE curriculum was a positive, meaningful and energising experience for the young girls, albeit not without challenges, through which deep learning followed (Enright & O'Sullivan, 2010). In a follow-up study, Enright and O'Sullivan (2013) utilised the PAR approach to problematise the effects of popular physical culture on young girls' understanding and relationship with PE and their bodies. The use of innovative methods such as scrapbooking (cut off pictures and text from magazines etc.) opened an expressive learning space where the young co-participants intentionally selected and interrogated their ideas and feelings about their experiences of popular culture. The act of cutting up cultural material literally equated to deconstructing some of their preconceived perceptions about the inequalities in the physical culture and prescribed ideas about their bodies (Enright & O'Sullivan, 2013, p. 412). In another project, Azzarito (2016) engaged in PAR to foreground the voices of ethnically diverse youth through the use of photos in order to address the lack of representation of youth in youth related health and PA discussions. The student-researchers in her study expressed their understanding and lived experiences of PA through taking photos which were then curated and displayed in an exhibition in a community centre as a site of public pedagogy for social change. The ethnically diverse young people in this study were personally involved in the research experience and gained subjective knowledge about their bodies

within a PA context. Through the exhibition, the student-researchers' embodied experiences were made visible to the public so as to open a dialogue about the many different ways these young people engaged in PA in their communities. In this way, this project aimed to produce a counter-hegemonic discourse which disputed the health paradigms that frame these youths as 'at risk' or as 'problem', as well as enriching the local community by displaying creative and contextualised personal and cultural expressions of movement and embodiment (Azzarito, 2012, 2016).

As the above studies demonstrate, ABR have numerous advantages that serves my praxis of asking while walking better than other methodological tools. For one ABR, in accordance with Freire's dialogic pedagogy, is more collaborative and discourages the sense of hierarchy between the academics and coresearchers (Blodgett et al., 2013; Eales & Peers, 2016; Literat, 2013). Secondly ABR is enjoyable and legitimatises the coresearchers as experts of their own lives (Azzarito, 2016; Blodgett et al., 2013; Literat, 2013). This is particularly important for those populations who are often placed in problem-centred narratives and discourses (Blodgett et al., 2013; Smith, 2012/1999). A third advantage of ABR is that it is more expressive and nuanced; saturated with sense of ambiguity, it has the ability to pull the audience into its own reality and allow for multiplicity of readings (Eales & Peers, 2016). A forth benefit is the ABR's ability to overcome the limitations of the usual logical-scientific, yet inaccessible, academic language and not only engage the coresearchers in the creative process, but also talk to a variety of audience and, therefore, act as a tool of public pedagogy (Azzarito, 2016; Eales & Peers, 2016). Finally, and most important for my purposes, ABR is advantageous in decolonial work. ABR has the potential to foreground and re-constitute alternative ways of knowing and being (i.e., oral history and storytelling traditions) that have been muted or rejected due to coloniality of knowledge and imagination. It also has the power to emphasise the lived experiences, ideas and humanities of its creators, and therefore, effectively unsettle and resist the dominant discourses that dehumanise (Said, 2003/1978). Following the aims of decolonial research ABR has the potential to enable the colonised to reclaim and tell their stories in their own ways,

and in doing so challenge what is considered knowledge. Moreover, ABR by necessity brings an audience into the process and in this way, not only it allows for an act of witnessing (of collective histories and struggles) to occur, but also by involving others in the process of its generation, it disrupts the subject/object distinction.

As mentioned earlier, ABR has been used extensively and for various purposes in social sciences, whether to create stereotypical and orientalist images as accompaniment to the Western empire or within poststructuralist theories and phenomenology with the aim of creating multiple understandings and meanings. Once again, my interest in ABR is neither of these, rather, aligned with Black and Indigenous feminists and borderland theorists, I view art as an epistemology. Western colonial thought, in its separating and ordering of things, has made a distinction between theory and art; that is art expresses what is felt, and theory states what is known. One is produced through the heat of the moment while the other is scholarship (Bereano, 2007). But borderland and Black feminist thought takes a sharp turn from this rhetoric when it declares art as a vital necessity of existence (Lorde, 2007/1984). Lorde (2007/1984) affirms that “[art] is the way we help give name to the nameless so it can be thought” (p. 35). It is this negated epistemology that I work to reconstitute in my thesis. I argue that art has been the dominant mode of enquiry and generation of knowledge in different parts of the world, in particular in Khorasan. Through the application of ABR in my thesis, therefore, I work towards reconstitution of this epistemology in ways that can bring re-existence for those whose ways of being and knowing has been negated, rejected, exotified and excluded from what is known as knowledge.

Art and Poetry in Khorasan and Afghanistan

تا کجا می برد این نقش به دیوار مرا؟
_ تا بدانجا که فرو می ماند
چشم از دیدن و
لب نیز ز گفتار مرا.

لاجورد افق صبح نیشابور و هری ست
که درین کاشی کوچک متراکم شده است
می برد جانب فرغانه و فرخار مرا

*How far away does take me the design of these tiles?
-So far that cannot be contained in speech, nor in eyes,
It is the blue of Nishapur and Herat's skies
that is captured in these small designs...*

Mohammad Reza Shafiei Kadkani, , *Hezareye dovhome ahooye koohi*
(My own translation)

Art is ancient and potent and it has a particular place in the cultural heritage of Iranian peoples. The many different peoples in this region (among many others in the globe) have expressed their philosophies, histories, identities and struggles through various art forms such as music, songs, poetry, painting, textile, architecture and landscape design (Farahani et al., 2016; Hejazi, 2003; Olszewska, 2015). The geometric design elements present in music, poetry, carpets and gardens in the region, for example, has been linked to the beliefs about interconnectivity and circularity of life (Farahani et al., 2016; Hejazi, 2003). The presence of water and vegetation symbols in poetry and carpets are argued to emphasise their sacred status in creation and sustenance of life (Farahani et al., 2016). The repetition of various elements in poetry, architecture and carpet design is indicative of the concepts of infinity and multiplicity in the universe (Hejazi, 2003; Olszewska, 2015). My aim in this section is not to give an overview of Iranic art and its symbolisms, as that is both irrelevant and beyond the aim of this thesis. Rather, I would like to demonstrate how art

and in particular poetry are elementary components of everyday living in Iran and Afghanistan, and therefore an appropriate methodology for the generation of knowledge in this thesis.

Poetry has long had a significant place throughout the Persian/Dari/Tajik-speaking world. The figure of the poet has been viewed as the epitome of greatness, "the learned philosopher-scholar for whose thoughts verse was the most appropriate vehicle" (Olszewska, 2015, p. 10). People often use the prefix "شاعر می گوید" [the poet says] to give legitimacy to an argument. Ahmad Shamlou (1976), one of the greatest contemporary Iranian poets/philosophers, argued that "In my country, people deem poets as prophets onto whom they bestow enviable love" (Talebi, 2020). Throughout the history of Iranic literature, poetry has been the language of scholarship, mass communication and every day discourse (Olszewska, 2015). Poetry in the region is a form of knowing-being so hegemonic that it is present in all layers of social life, from scholarly texts to children's games (Manoukian, 2004). This relationship with poetry is especially strong in Afghanistan and Khorasan where Khorasani scholars, and here I refer to the historical region, have continuously participated in the generation of knowledge in various fields of philosophy, astronomy, medicine, linguistics, feminism, identity and public discourse through poetry (see for example, Molana Jalaloddin Balkhi 'Rumi', Khayyam, Avehinna, Ferdowsi, Meena Keshawar Kamal and Mohammad Kazem Kazemi, as referenced in Paper IV). Poetry is also a form of cultural heritage that is practiced across all walks of life regardless of the degree of education, literacy levels or socioeconomic status (Olszewska, 2015). This may be a surprise to some readers as they may connect poetry to a pastime of, or even intelligent work, of the middle class. In fact, when I first presented the proposal for this thesis, I was critiqued for this exact point, but for us, Khorasani people,

"شعر، برداشت هایی از زندگی نیست؛ بلکه یک سره خود زندگیست" [poetry is not just an expression of lived lives but it is life itself] (Shamlou, 2012). Poetry is in everyday life, it is often seen written on the walls in the streets, on the back of trucks and taxis; it is used by parents to teach their children the importance of certain values and concepts; it is rehearsed by non-literate people in rural regions and it is written by scholars and social commenta-

tors. Olszewska (2015) describes her arrival to the most deprived neighbourhood in Mashhad, Iran by seeing the following quote written by the locals, mostly Afghan refugee(d)s, on a run-down building:

“دنیا جز هیچ در هیچ، هیچ نیست” [The World is nothing but nothing-within-nothing]. I, myself, remember that during an outing to a village, I partook in a game called مشاعره (I did not find an adequate translation for this word) with a group of children there. The premise of the game is that one recites a verse from a famous poem and the next person has to recite another verse that starts with the last letter of last verse of that poem and so on. One of my Afghan acquaintances informed me that the retired elders in his village also pass their time with this literary game despite the fact that they are mostly nonliterate. Poetry is also rehearsed loudly during the various children’s games such as hopscotch, dodgeball and a multitude of other local games (عمو زنجیرباف, ائل مثل, تب تب خمیر, etc). My first visit to the school, where the protagonists of this thesis studied, was coincidental with their Dari class project presentation on famous poets from various countries around the world.

In the region, poetry has also been an instrument of cultural and political contestations and throughout the history, the poets have written social commentary and criticism on religious and political tyranny (Ghani, 1988; Olszewska, 2015). The open-ended, ambiguous and allegorical qualities of poetry have bestowed a certain degree of license for social criticism that has allowed the ordinary people to embrace it as well, and express their everyday struggles through it (Manoukian, 2004). It is from this epistemological ground, and in relation to taking a decolonial stand, that I decided to use poetry and art in the process of this thesis.

Decolonising research, as Smith (2005) argues, enables the people to reclaim and recount their stories in their own ways, and in doing so challenges what is considered knowledge. If modernity/coloniality has perpetuated certain ways of thinking-knowing at the cost of negating others, then reclaiming those other ways leads to re-creation of a language that is not in relation of dependency to modernity/coloniality (Fanon, 2008/1952; Mignolo, 2009; Tlostanova, 2019). In this way, the process of telling of own stories of struggle, not only serves to regain a lost dignity and constitutes counter-narrative to the hegemonic ideology, but it also

bears witness to the existence of these muted subjectivities (Anzaldúa, 2012/1987; Fanon, 2008/1952; Smith, 2005). In the case of this thesis, it is poetry and art that are the ways through which I along with the protagonists of this thesis have reclaimed and recounted their stories, testifying to their collective struggles and hopes.

The PAR Process

The school

This PhD project was enacted in a secondary school in south of Sweden. The school was located in a rural area and provided service for a large number of students from the surrounding towns. The school offered various programs, one of which was a secondary school preparation and qualifying program-*Språkintrödn*- that was geared towards young refugee(d)s. That is the students enrolled in this program had to pass certain number of courses in order to gain access to secondary education. Physical education and health (PEH) was one of the courses offered in this program. My introduction to the school was facilitated by a senior colleague who introduced me to one of the PEH teachers at the school. This teacher discussed a number of concerns and issues in relation to the PEH curriculum in contrast to what actually happened in classes and she was very interested in hearing what her students have to say about these concerns. Considering the fact that I had chosen PAR as my research approach, my main aim was to work with the students, and therefore, what was to be researched would be up to the students. However, this process of working with the students could potentially also answer some of the teacher's concerns or, at the least, create more self-awareness in the students. At that time, I still looked positively towards Freire's idea of conscientisation. Researching the students' questions was one the main points that I referred to in my application for ethical vetting which was approved in September 2018. A few other PEH teachers at the school were also interested in the process of this research and allowed me to attend their classes. In the school, I was also introduced to the students' Dari teacher. Dari, the Afghan students' mother tongue, was one of the mandatory subjects in the program. The Dari teacher was also really interested in the research process and most kindly allowed me to attend her classes. It was during

her classes that I could speak in Dari/Persian to the students. Dari and Persian are dialects of the same language and mutually intelligible.

At the start of the academic year in 2018, I started to participate in the students' Dari and PEH classes. As mentioned before, collaboration and dialogue are one of PAR's main constituents, therefore I spent a lot of time building relationships with the community of Afghan students in this program. This time was important not only in becoming acquainted with the students individually and providing them with opportunities to test and question my trustworthiness, but also in learning about possible concerns and limitations that we needed to negotiate and overcome.

The students

The students who decided to participate in this PAR process were among the Afghan students I met in the Dari and PEH classes at the school. They were all male with the exception of one female student. The students in these classes knew from the beginning that I am interested in working with them in a research project. During the long period of rapport building, I made myself available to their scrutiny. I had to be humble, respectful, open and honest. Many of the Afghan students had been born and lived in Iran where they had endured a lifetime of discrimination and racism by Iranians, and were subjected to the discriminatory and oppressive policies of the Islamic Republic of Iran (Adelkhah & Olszewska, 2007; Hakimi, 2020). Even though I identified myself as a person with Khorasani heritage, I had to openly acknowledge this systemic discrimination and the ways through which I had engaged in and benefitted from it. This openness and humility made it possible for students to examine my trustworthiness. I also became more acquainted with the students and their hopes and dreams, as well as certain limitations. For example, I soon found out that the majority of the students had had limited access to organised school throughout their lives, and therefore they had limited writing and reading skills. I had to modify my ideas on the use of mainly poetry and decided on having a more open approach to art in general. In addition, I observed that the many students were quick to support each other, clarify concepts and help each other with school projects. They also

extended this support to me when I exposed my fears and difficult experiences of my own migration journey as a teenager to Canada. In addition, I have no knowledge of Swedish language or education contexts and after learning this, the students lent their support and helped me navigate around the school. Recognising, discussing and questioning the ways that I had benefited from ‘othering’ of Afghans in Iran while also exposing my own migration experiences, as well as learning about the students’ vulnerabilities and limitations, made it possible for all of us to engage in dialogue through a politics of mutual vulnerability, which helped us recognise the complexities in our lives and work together across our differences (Tuck & Guishard, 2013).

Finally in October 2018, I presented the research project and premises of PAR and decolonial framework to the students in one of their Dari classes. I also emphasised that the whole process was to be a collaborative work. Ten students volunteered to work in the project and consented to become coresearchers in order to share their stories and analyses with the larger public and academia. I will refer to these students as coresearchers from this point onward. The ten coresearchers comprised of nine male and one female (the only female present in the class) between the ages of seventeen and twenty. Their diversity is representative of the larger population of young Afghan migrants in Sweden. Five of the coresearchers had initially migrated to Iran with their families as infants and three were born there. The female coresearcher had first sought asylum and lived in Pakistan for a few years and the last male coresearcher migrated directly from Afghanistan. Eventually between the years 2014 and 2016, all had arrived in Sweden as unaccompanied children. At the commencement of the project, all but one lived independently. Their experiences with physical activity were varied on account of their gender, legal and social status in their former places of residence. Eight of the coresearchers who had lived in Iran had some access to public sports facilities or physical activity centres and had engaged in football as well as martial arts in the past. The female coresearcher explained that she had engaged in playing basketball and doing yoga since moving to Sweden but did not elaborate on her experience prior to her arrival. The only coresearcher who had previous access to formal school and formal PE was the one male coresearcher who had immigrated directly from Afghanistan. To sum up, the research team

for the PAR project consisted of the ten coresearchers and myself, as the academic researcher and facilitator.

The research material

To begin the collaborative work with the coresearchers, together, we decided that the students can depict their stories of sports and physical activity on individual posters starting from a time of their choice. The students had autonomy and control over the what and how of their expressions. They could use words, drawings or a combination of both, as long as it related to sports and physical activity. What I soon found out was that the coresearchers definitions of what constitutes sports and physical activity covered a wide range of activities. This included a wide variety of leisure activities such as playing music and dancing, as well as physical labour or functional activities such as commuting etc. Moreover, they discussed sports and physical activity in relation to their education, hopes and future dreams. This class activity was done over two 2-hour sessions and it included all the students who attended the Dari and PEH classes and not just the ten coresearchers, that is it was done as a class activity. Both Dari and PEH teachers expressed that this activity will enhance students' self-knowledge and also create a more cohesive social group; moreover, it would also allow the teachers to become more familiar with the students. Aligned with ethical consideration, this insured that all the students, in the class, regardless of their participation in the study, benefited from this activity. The working languages during the session were Dari/Persian as well as some Swedish and English. During these sessions, the PEH teacher and I both provided posters depicting our own individual stories of sports and physical activity throughout our lives as examples. These two examples varied so as to provide more options for the students in ways they could put their stories on paper. I guided the research team along with their classmates and assisted them in constructing their posters.

Of course, this process was not without its challenges. For example, many students felt that they had to create something special and therefore it took a long time for them to put anything down on paper and some refused to do anything, as participation in this activity was completely voluntary.

Others took inspiration from, or sometimes copied, each other or the examples we (the PEH teacher and I) had provided. The students also worked together and discussed various issues that came up during the process, for example whether certain activities should be mentioned or not. This somewhat collaborative process resulted in various representations of the students' life experiences with sports including, timelines, words, drawing and even poetry. Some of the students were more expressive with words and others with drawings; still some others found it easier to replicate what they thought was a good idea to represent their stories. The latter led to the creation of a number of similar depictions—i.e., drawing of trees as a symbol representing life. Once the students had produced their individual posters, the works of the ten coresearchers were separated and treated as research artefacts. Nine of these artefacts are shown in figures 1-9. The tenth work has been left out as per wishes of the coresearcher.

Conversational interviews

After the works of the ten coresearchers were collected, I proceeded to conduct individual interviews with each one in order to create more context for the artefacts. These interviews were open conversational interviews that provided the space for storytelling and ensured a high degree of control over the creation and delivery of these stories by the coresearchers. Conversational interviews allow the interviewer to respond to the stories which can provide both the interviewer and interviewees the flexibility to cocreate both what is said and how things are said (Blodgett, 2015). Considering both the vulnerability and somewhat precarious contexts of the coresearchers' lives, I decided to only take notes during these interviews. Since historically marginal communities have been exposed to data extraction by (Western) researchers equipped with high-tech devices (Smith, 2012/1999), not recording the interviews also were more aligned with my decolonial stand. During these interviews, which took about thirty minutes to an hour each, the coresearchers and I expanded on their artefacts and highlighted aspects of their engagement with sports and physical activity that they felt were important. The interviews were somewhat varied, some only discussed their experiences of sports and physical activity and others discussed more personal aspects of their lives; some were quieter and others more talkative but overall, they were open in discussing their posters. The coresearchers also had a chance to discuss information that they did not want to share openly with others. Even though my plan was to never single out a particular experience or expression by an individual, after each interview I ensured that the coresearchers felt comfortable about what was going to be shared publicly with the rest of the research team. Despite differences, their collective experiences were very similar, regardless of their place of birth and previous countries of residence. I had to be more careful in relation to the single female coresearcher's stories since, although still quite similar to others, there were key elements that could identify her as the narrator. In general, my strategy was to openly discuss only what I had permission to; this left the floor open for the coresearchers to discuss what, and when, they wished to share with others. On several occasions during the group discussions, some of the coresearchers felt more comfortable and shared what they had previously deemed private, others did not. In facilitating this process, I was inspired by the works of Azzarito (2016), Enright

(2010), Blodgett (2015) and Liebenberg, Jamal and Ikeda (2020). In these works, the researchers investigating various aspects of sport, leisure and physical activity, have involved youth in the process of research. The extent to which the youth in these studies have participated in the process of knowledge generation is different, but in my project, my main aim was to involve the youth as much as possible in all the stages, including analysis and dissemination.

Participatory thematic analysis of material

Smith (2012/1999) discussed various ways in which research methodology can be decolonising which included methodology that allows for giving testimonies, reclaiming, reframing the community and writing theory. The participatory analysis of the material collected not only responded to this call, but also enhanced the coresearchers agency and ownership of this research. Before presenting the steps taken in this participatory analysis, I would like to highlight that the analysis of the material was already interwoven within our participatory work from the start, and in no way was a stage that was separate temporally and spatially from the rest of our work. The coresearchers and I, in depicting their stories and in our conversational interviews had already started to construct meanings and generate certain understandings. However, a more thorough and participatory analysis took place over two 2-hour sessions in a workshop style format where all of us, working together, used thematic analysis to identify themes in the material gathered. In conducting this workshop, I followed the guidelines provided by Liebenberg and colleagues (2015) in their manual for conducting PAR with youth. This manual is a practical guide for people who want to involve youth in research, particularly in analysis and dissemination stages.

Thematic analysis systematically condenses a large amount of data into a set of important themes by carefully examining the patterns of meaning across a qualitative dataset (Braun et al., 2021; Liebenberg et al., 2015). The benefit of using thematic analysis is that it is not tied to a particular theoretical framework and as such can be used in a variety of research. Moreover, it is fairly accessible for novice researchers and the empirical material generated can be easily shared with public (Braun et al., 2021).

It also provides a rich and detailed description by creating codes that reflect the information gathered and identifies reoccurring patterns among them. The identified themes are then used as categories for further analysis and presentation of the empirical material (Braun et al., 2021; Liebenberg et al., 2020). Thematic analysis of the material was done through an organic and messy process that I have attempted to organise in the following steps:

Familiarisation with material

The material used for this phase of the research included the ten artefacts depicting stories of physical activity, that the coresearchers had created, in addition to the notes that I had taken and was allowed to share during the individual interviews with each coresearcher. I had already written these notes on large papers in order to facilitate ease of analysis. During this first step, which took about an hour, the coresearchers studied the posters and the notes collectively. I encouraged questions and facilitated the lively conversation that followed. The coresearchers were interested in each other's stories and experiences and were not shy to ask each other questions in order to clarify and elaborate various issues. The working language was Dari/Persian with some English and Swedish represented in the artefacts.

Generating initial codes

Once the coresearchers were familiar with the general content of the material, I started the process of generating codes with them. I explained that codes are descriptive words and phrases that identify a piece of information as important in relation to the research aim and that they often mark information segments as belonging to a particular group (Braun et al., 2021). To facilitate the process of code generations, coresearchers were equipped with a stack of post-itTM notes which they used to write the codes on, and stick it to the relevant places on the material. The coresearchers continued to converse in high spirits and work collaboratively while producing a comprehensive list of codes. This process took about an hour which marked the end of the first participatory analysis workshop.

Identifying themes

We all met again in the same week to continue the analysis of the generated material. We continued our work with the organisation of the codewords into themes. Themes represent overarching patterns in the empirical findings and highlight important relationships and contextual considerations in relation to the research aim (Braun et al., 2021; Liebenberg et al., 2020). I collected all the post-itTM notes containing the codewords and placed them on a round table so that they all could be visible. The coresearchers went around the table and while discussing together started the process of grouping these codewords. This took about thirty minutes since all had to agree on the groupings. The coresearchers took liberty of reproducing some of the codewords that they felt belonged to more than one grouping. I acted as a facilitator of this process and guided the coresearchers when necessary.

Reviewing research materials to understand and explain the meaning of themes

In working with the young coresearchers, my aim has been to foreground their knowledge and their reflections and, therefore, discussing the relationship between codewords and the themes was one of the most important steps. Understanding how and why the pieces of the empirical material relate to one another is how theory is developed (Liebenberg et al., 2015). For this step, we all sat around the table with clusters of the word groupings laid out in front of us, and I facilitated a discussion regarding the relationship between codes in each cluster as well as the relationship between the different groupings. Eventually a thematic map was created which can be seen in figure 10. Once the discussions were completed, it was time to name the themes. For this purpose, I asked the coresearchers to first name each word grouping with a short phrase and then to compose a collective statement that elaborated the meaning of each theme. In summary, the coresearchers established five themes, which they called stories, as well as constructed five collective statements that elaborated and explained each theme more thoroughly. In order to ensure that these themes accurately reflected the research material, I then asked the coresearchers to go back to the raw material and extract quotes, anecdotes or representations that could be directly linked to each theme. In this way, the youth worked backwards; they chose a theme and then

added phrases, words and drawings that reflected that theme. They all had to agree and discuss their reasoning for their choices. Once again, some anecdotes and phrases were seen as related to more than one theme. This provided each theme with a rich assortment of quotes and anecdotes which then could be used to represent the empirical material.

Figure 10. Thematic map in progress

Maintaining credibility and coherence through ensuring inter-coder agreement

Assigning criteria of good research within decolonial as well as participatory frameworks is quite challenging. Smith (2012/1999) argues that methodological assessments in decolonising research should be concerned with the broader politics and strategic goals of the research itself. She recognises certain projects that decolonising research can strive to do, claiming, re-presenting, testimonies, storytelling, celebrating survival and remembering (Smith, 2012/1999), all of which can be linked to the work done in this study. However, to ensure that the above projects were done

with accuracy and credibility in mind, I also employed what Burke (2016) distinguished as alternative criteria for assessing qualitative work. Burke argued that the quality of any qualitative research is both revealed and resides in the report, assigning the responsibility of assessment not only on the researcher but also on the reader. This list includes topics such as resonance, credibility, and coherence (Burke, 2021). Many of the activities mentioned above ensured that these criteria were maintained throughout the process. Since the generation and the analysis of the material was done in groups accompanied by lengthy discussions before a final agreement was reached, accuracy, coherence and inter-coder agreement were maintained.

Producing the final empirical report

We used the last part of this workshop to finalise and prepare the generated knowledge for dissemination. As mentioned before, overall, five themes were generated. The coresearchers called them stories, relating the themes to their collective life histories. Each theme or story was accompanied by a collective statement that the youth had created, as well as a rich assortment of personal quotations, words, drawings and phrases. In keeping with decolonial and feminist traditions that recognise the collective knowledge and efforts contained in individual stories and experiences (Mohanty, 2003; Smith, 2005), I made the choice to compound the personal quotations, words and anecdotes into one composite vignettes for each theme.

Composite Vignette

Vignettes have been used for various purposes in research (Blodgett et al., 2011; Spalding & Phillips, 2007). For example, Blodgett and colleagues (2011) used vignettes as a narrative strategy for presenting the research voices of Indigenous community members. Spalding and Philips (2007) used vignettes to encapsulate what they found in their action research in a reflective and analytical manner. Alternatively, Smith and colleagues (2015) used vignettes as a tool for knowledge translation in relation to disability research with the aim of facilitating impact for disabled people and health professionals. As I have discussed in paper II, I used vignettes to represent the empirical material and findings in an ethical

way that reflected the collective experiences of the coresearchers. Composite vignettes are vignettes that combine experiences and voices of multiple people into a single, synthesised narrative (Schinke et al., 2016). Drawing on feminist and Indigenous traditions, I believe that composite vignettes acknowledged and showcased collective histories, hopes, ways of knowing and efforts of the young coresearchers that derive their resistance. These narratives provided a more whole, evocative and collective depiction of the coresearchers' experiences (Schinke et al., 2016; Spalding & Phillips, 2007). In addition, employing composite vignettes was an effort to honour all the coresearchers by including all their stories in each of the presented narratives. Moreover, in keeping with the ethical responsibilities and the requirements set by Swedish Ethical Review Act (2003) and the EU Data Protection Ordinance (2016), composite vignettes ensured the anonymity of the coresearchers, who are deemed vulnerable due to their age and refugee(d) status by Swedish law.

Even though, the use of vignettes in this thesis was effective, it was not without limitations. It must be noted that I was the one who constructed the vignettes and therefore, they reflect my beliefs, interpretation and thoughts. Granted that each vignette was composed of a collective of words, individual experiences and drawings that the coresearchers had identified already, they, themselves, were not involved in the final creation process. Looking back, involving the coresearchers in this process would have elevated the collaborative dialogue which has been my main intention throughout this work. But unfortunately, time limits and my inexperience prevented this from happening.

Participatory dissemination

Continuing the aim of the study, conducting participatory dissemination was the last step in this PAR project. Considering the negative discourse and problematic narratives regarding unaccompanied children (Stretmo, 2014; Wernesjö, 2011), engaging in participatory dissemination has the potential to enhance the young people's agency and self-expression, enabling them to enter public conversations about their own lives (Azzarito, 2016). In addition, providing public educational spaces outside of the context of PEH classes makes it possible for the coresearchers to voice their

opinion and represent their embodiments so that they can be understood on their own terms (Azzarito, 2016; Enright, 2010). It also provides them with the opportunity to express their needs and advocate for support and resources (Liebenberg et al., 2020). For the coresearchers in this study, their main hope in doing the research was to re-present themselves to their teachers, staff and students at the school and to show that they have a past and history. In this sense their intentions were local but when the context was provided to go beyond their school and reach the community and beyond, they fully engaged with it.

At the end of the participatory analysis, I asked the coresearchers how they would be interested in disseminating their project and provided them with some examples. They expressed that having an exhibition, that would showcase their art and their findings, in their school would be the most appropriate, since it would allow them to tell their stories to their teachers and classmates. I also suggested to have the same exhibition at the university so as to engage a broader public, particularly future PEH teachers. As stated above, the coresearchers showed interest in engaging with the second exhibition as well. It must be noted that in conducting participatory dissemination, it is crucial not to burden the coresearchers with more work or decision making than they want or can manage (Kaukko, 2016; Liebenberg et al., n.d.). This was especially true for the coresearchers in this project since they were already facing numerous challenges such as the stress of their academic work which was directly linked to precarity of their status as refugee(d)s. The young Afghans were busy trying to meet academic requirements in order to enter the job market and find more stable residency status. Therefore, I had to step up and take charge of organising the exhibitions. I decided to stage the exhibition in three languages of Dari/Persian, English and Swedish. The themes, the collective statements and the composite vignettes were translated to English (by myself) and to Swedish (by the PEH teacher). The students' Dari teacher also helped me with correcting the Dari/Persian grammar. The first exhibition was showcased at their school with the students and the teachers at their school as the intended audience. The exhibition was on display for a week at the entrance of the school and the school staff and teachers were notified of its content and purpose. With the permission of the youth and the school, I also invited a local reporter to the first day of

the exhibition. The second exhibition was a one-day event at Malmö University in conjunction with a lecture that I gave to future PEH teachers. Even though the main audience of this event were the future PEH teachers, attendance to this lecture was open for the university staff and students as well as the larger public. I had also invited representatives from local refugee advocacy organisations and independent media agencies. Even though the coresearchers had not taken a large role in organising these events, during the events they took control and ownership of the projects. In fact, during the first exhibition, I disappeared to the background as they engaged with the audience and the reporter in lively conversations. This resulted in a news report in the local newspaper which was delivered free of charge to the members of the community. The coresearchers were excited about this report since many of them lived in the community and therefore had received the paper copy of the newspaper. Some told me about how they have shared pictures of the news report with their families in Iran; others were quick to remind me (and each other) that despite the good content of this report, it will take only one wrong action from a refugee(d) person to put a bad light on everyone, demonstrating once again how aware they were of the everyday bordering that happened in their lives. Yet, almost everyone volunteered again to participate in the second event. Some even wanted to have a short public presentation in Swedish for the audience, but the audience in the second event was a lot larger and that overwhelmed the coresearchers at first, so they forgo the public talk. However, once again, as time passed, many of them took more control and participated in engaging conversations with the attendees. They expressed their satisfaction with the second event as well and felt that their talks with the PEH teacher trainees were generally fruitful.

The process of participatory art-based research that I have described here may sound seamless and without difficulties. In reality, this process was simultaneously effortless and challenging. It took a considerable amount of time to plan and facilitate the various stages. These concerns coupled with the fact that I, myself, was not familiar with Swedish context and did not speak Swedish created many obstacles; navigating the Swedish school system, the students' various efforts, skills and commitment levels, the logistic of meeting all the students at the same time, the fact that some of

the students who initially volunteered to participate relocated shortly after the start of the project were just some of the challenges that I have had to overcome. As I will elaborate later, another challenge was the unpredictability that goes hand in hand with engaging with the concept of consent as an on-going process. This meant that the coresearchers had the final say in how and when they participate, and therefore, I had to create contexts where their participation, if they wished, was possible and welcomed. However, I believe these challenges are present in any research project to some degrees and in many ways, I had prepared myself for the work and commitment that this project needed.

On the other hand, our (the coresearchers' and mine) comfort with art as a way to communicate, express and narrate stories was what made the process seem effortless. Engaging in the process of research via art reconnected us to our own ways of knowing and therefore made the research process smoother. This does not mean that all the coresearchers produced complicated renditions of their life stories, but that through art, they were able to show and tell what they had experienced, felt and thought about. Another factor that influenced the progress of the project was my insider position both in terms of familiarity with language as well as the cultural contexts in which the coresearchers discussed their experiences. More importantly and as I will discuss later in this chapter, it was my ethical accountability to the students that led to the development of mutual trust between us which, in turn, advanced the course of the project.

Processes external to PAR

The remaining part of this thesis is comprised of two broad intertwined sections. First is a theoretical reading of my own thinking-doing in this process, in relation to decolonial scholarship as well as borderland, Indigenous and Black feminism works. Second is a systematic evaluation of the PAR project using the analytical tool offered by Spaaij et. al. (2018). Spaaij and colleagues (2018) offered a multi-dimensional model for evaluation of participatory research in the context of sports and physical activity. They proposed that participatory research can be conceptualised along the three dimensions of degree of participation, degree of power changing and degree of reflexivity. Since these three dimensions bring

forth the epistemological, methodological and political issues, they also need to be considered in relation to the structures of authority present in the context of the research project (Spaaij et al., 2018). The first dimension is participation and it is defined in terms of both level and scale, where level of participation marks the depth of the local community's involvement in the research process and the scale indicates the breadth of the community's involvement. Level of participation ranges from shallow participation where researchers control the whole process and community participation is limited to consultation, to deep participation where control of the research process and its ownership rest in the hands of the community (Spaaij et al., 2018). Degree of power-shifting is the second dimension and it is inextricably intertwined with the degree of participation. Research has described power-shifting as one of the most important yet challenging aspects of PAR process (Kidd & Kral, 2005; lisahunter et al., 2013; Luguetti & Oliver, 2018; Spaaij et al., 2018). Participatory research requires a reconceptualization of power relations between the academia and the coresearchers which affirms that knowledge does not reside only within academia, and people are capable of generating valuable knowledge that can lead to life-affirming strategies (Cammarota & Fine, 2008b; Smith, 2012/1999) This, in turn, repositions the role of the researcher from a detached director and extractor to a facilitator and collaborator (Spaaij & Jeanes, 2013). Who has the control during the research process, whose knowledge is counted and for whose benefits is the research are some of the critical questions that need to be addressed and negotiated (Spaaij & Jeanes, 2013; Tuck & Guishard, 2013; Walsh, 2015). Contemplating these questions leads to the third dimension of the model which is reflexivity. Freire (2005/1970) argued that "those who authentically commit themselves to the people must re-examine themselves constantly" (p. 60). Reflexivity broadly refers to an understanding and questioning the subjective, institutional, social and political process through which research is conducted and knowledge is generated (Hamdan, 2010). In addition, reflexive researchers acknowledge their own values, beliefs, world, spatial, temporality, geographical contexts, cultural contexts, etc. and that these concepts are changed and remade in the process of research (Hamdan, 2010; McGannon & Smith, 2015). However, decolonial researchers have advocated for more radical reflexive practices that consider not only the researchers' positionalities but also

larger systemic power relations between people and institutions, including the systems of imperialism and colonialism (Darnell et al., 2016; Fine, 1994; Spaaij et al., 2018, 2019).

Even though PAR approach has been offered as a way to democratise the research processes, there are various complex and often ambiguous power dynamics, systemic and institutional practices as well as logistical issues that interfere with this goal (Chase et al., 2020; Cooke & Kothari, 2001; Spaaij et al., 2018). Spaaij and colleague (2018) identify two broad institutions of sport and education as structural authorities that interfere with emancipatory aims of participatory research and influence the three dimensions of participation, power-shifting and reflexivity. In many instances these institutions reproduce and reinforce hierarchical power dynamics and hegemonic ways of knowing and being (Darnell & Hayhurst, 2011; Stein et al., 2020). Even though Spaaij and colleagues (2018) have offered this model within the context of sport for development, their contentions, that scholars engaging with participatory practices must do so with full awareness of whose knowledge and questions are addressed and centralised, converges with decolonial critique, making the above-mentioned model a suitable analytical tool for the assessment of this PAR project.

Ethical considerations

Ethical conduct has been an essential and required feature of my thesis from the beginning to the end, not least because as a somewhat insider researcher, I have had to live with the consequences of my research in my daily life (Smith, 2012/1999). The process of researching with the Afghan youth has exposed numerous ways through which my own life, both as a young migrant in Canada and now as an adult in Scandinavia, has been similar and different to the youth's lives. These similarities and differences have made me recognise my own vulnerabilities, strengths, blind spots and biases (Tuck & Guishard, 2013). Tuck and Guishard (2013) maintain that the emphasis on procedural processes by various ethics boards only safeguards individual rights and autonomies while leaving undisturbed the scientific research's complicity in sustaining racist, heteropatriarchal and colonial systems and relationships. Instead, they argue

for relational ethics where partnerships, commitment, accountability and social justice are foregrounded (Tuck & Guishard, 2013). Therefore, for me, being ethical, has meant that I move beyond procedural ethic guidelines set out by Swedish Ethical Review Act⁵. That is aside from following the minimalist and mandatory codes outlined in the ethical vetting process, I have had to consider doing what is right (Palmer, 2021) in relation to the partnership, commitment and accountability that I have towards the youth.

Taking a decolonial option has already made the process of this research personal. Being from Khorasan and an immigrant youth myself, “Scientific objectivity was barred to me, for the alienated, was my brother, my sister, my father” (Fanon, 2008/1952, p. 175). Positioning myself as a somewhat insider researcher gives rise to the dilemma of loyalty and responsibility. However, this has meant that I needed to be highly reflexive of my own positionality and my complicities as well as my ethical responsibility to the coresearchers. In choosing to walk with the coresearchers and ask, I have closed the objective distance between us because I agree with Anzaldúa that:

In trying to become ‘objective’, Western culture made ‘objects’ of things and people when it distanced itself from them, thereby losing ‘touch’ with them. This dichotomy is the root of all violence. (Anzaldúa, 2012/1987, p. 59).

Following Anzaldúa’s argument, I have delinked this research from the rhetoric of objectivity. This does not mean that this dissertation is not trustworthy, rather it means that through a rigorous process of collaborative dialogue with the coresearchers, I have attempted a more ethical analysis of the coresearchers and my own lived realities. In the section that follows, I will further expand on and discuss specific ethical concerns that I struggled with and negotiated in the course of this study.

⁵ According to Ethical Review Act in Sweden, researchers must complete an ethical vetting process in cases where humans are involved and in particular vulnerable population. This project was approved and given the reference number: 2018/263

On research questions

The small body of literature pertaining to doing a graduate research using PAR warns of the many challenges that doctoral students face in the course of their studies (Klocker, 2012; McCormack, 2004; Moore, 2004). The demand to meet the institutional requirements while also challenging those same hierarchical structures is seen as a daunting prospect (Klocker, 2012; Moore, 2004). As I denoted in the previous chapter, my aim of decoloniality have complicated adherence to certain institutional requirements, both theoretically and methodologically. Another area of tension has been the issue of designing research questions. At the beginning of this process and before meeting the coresearchers, I had designed certain research questions; however, I soon realised that the young Afghans were not interested in researching those. To give an example, I had initially thought to investigate the coresearchers experiences in relation to their PEH class in Sweden, but they were absolutely not interested in this topic. What they learned in PEH class was irrelevant to them. Instead, they wanted to speak about their own stories in order to re-present themselves on their own terms to their teachers and classmates. In a way, what they were taught was not important, what had relevance to their presents and future hopes was what *they* had done to learn and live; and this was what they wanted to speak about. Keeping with my decolonial stand, and my commitment to walk/ask with them, made it imperative that I respect their wishes. I, therefore, laid my questions aside and instead attempted to formulate questions out of what they wanted to research. But as I continued my reading of decolonial, Indigenous and borderland scholarship, this too felt wrong.

Decolonial scholars have argued that, under modernity/coloniality, the objective knower's sense-of-self is bound to his knowledge-of-others. This philosophy justifies the acquisition of bodies and territories, and the rule over them (Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Tuck & Yang, 2014). "Thus, [in modern/colonial logic], the right to conquer is intimately connected to the right to know" (Tuck & Yang, 2014, p. 3). In this way the notion of 'discovery' has legitimised the study of some people while placing the researcher in a superior position of expert in relation to those who share their experiences or knowledge (Djampour, 2018; lisahunter et al., 2013; Said, 2003/1978; Tlostanova et al., 2019). Under modern capitalist labour

market then, knowledge becomes a commodity that can be bought and sold, and new knowledge is highly prized (Smith, 2005).

In the current times, the efforts of previously silenced people to reclaim their ways of knowing have coincided with institutional interests in those same knowledges. The old adage of ‘doctrine of discovery’ (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014) has taken a new shape as universities and researchers race to ‘produce’ and own the newest knowledge (Jordan, 2003; Smith, 2005). As discussed earlier, even the most participatory models are being co-opted and turned to metaphors (Tuck & Yang, 2012) “for the purposes of supporting and reproducing the social relations of accumulation in their multifarious forms” (Jordan, 2003, p. 195). Perhaps a great example of this is the multitude of times, and in different academic contexts, that I have been asked for my research questions, and my discoveries in relation to them, when presenting this work.

As mentioned earlier rather than posing research questions and then working to discover their answers from a position of expertise, I have outlined a general aim. Having already stated that I have not discovered new experiences or phenomena, my intent has been to walk asking, in order to acknowledge and make visible the ways in which the Afghan youth make and remake meanings in relation to sports and physical activity, enact agencies, resist and re-exist in the margins. Yet, I am not certain whether refusing to pose research questions has been disruptive; or it has, in fact, concealed the doctrine of discovery, which some argue is inherent to the work of modern/colonial institution of university (Bhambra et al., 2020; Tuck & Guishard, 2013). These are questions that I still have no answers for.

On consent

Even though, acquiring an informed consent from the participants is one of the mandatory steps of doing research involving humans, many argue that the concept of consent must go beyond bureaucratic institutional requirements. How do we know if the consent given is, in fact, informed? Or voluntary? And if it was given at one time, will it hold from that point onward? Many researchers involved with participatory methods have

written on the issue of consent (Hopper & McHugh, 2020; Kaukko, 2016; Nunn, 2018; Spaaij et al., 2018; Whitley et al., 2014). This is particularly important when the people involved in the research could be placed in vulnerable positions (Chase et al., 2020; Kaukko, 2016; Whitley et al., 2014). For the purpose of this research, I too had to acquire a written consent form. This consent form was translated to Dari/Persian first and then reviewed by the students' Dari/Persian teacher to assure its accuracy. Considering the students differing ability in term of reading Dari/Persian, I also went through the form with the students and explained it word by word and only then obtained the signatures of the ten coresearchers. This was, however, just a first step. Throughout the PAR process, from generation of material to their analysis and dissemination, consent was an ongoing issue that needed to be negotiated again and again. I did not want the coresearchers to feel that they are required to participate in various steps of the project in any way, and therefore, had to reiterate the voluntariness of each step. There were many instances when some of the coresearchers volunteered for something but then backed out, and there were other situations when coresearchers, who were hesitant at the beginning, stepped in to do a job. Overall, I found that true participation meant that firstly, the context and conditions for that participation had to be created; and secondly, the option to participate had to remain within the control of the coresearchers (Kaukko, 2016).

Coresearcher, what's in a name?

In her dissertation, Djampour (2018) questions the academic tradition of acknowledging members of academia who have somehow contributed to the thinking process of researchers in terms of methodology and theory as colleagues, while not extending the same courtesy to the participants of the research (Djampour, 2018). I reiterate her recognition of asymmetric power relations as one reason for this. I too get paid for completing a job that the coresearchers helped me with. This asymmetric power relation is especially problematic when it is the work and voices of the so-called *other* that is at the centre of the research. In fact, through maintaining this asymmetric power relation, much of the research *about* the other is a colonising discourse of the other (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2015; Fine,

1994; hooks, 1990). Discussion of one's research implications for the participants, therefore is necessary if one is to be ethical. On the other hand, Fine (1994) argues that the tradition of writing *about* has obscured the entanglements that connect the researcher to the participants; that is, it inscribes the other and blurs the self and refuses to engage the contradictions that is present in research. Working the hyphen, that is the space in between, means that one acknowledges the that "there is no simple binary opposition of Self and Other, nor of the texts that inscribe and texts that resist" (Fine, 1994, p. 75). Having these critiques in mind, and in light of my decolonial praxis of walking and asking, I have chosen to call the young people, who collaborated with me in generating, analysing and disseminating the empirical material in this dissertation, 'coresearchers'. In addition, I have acknowledged our collaborative work by including them as co-authors, albeit symbolically, in one of my papers. At the end, however, this is *my* thesis project, for which I alone am accountable to my university but to have claimed it as purely my work would have been inaccurate and unethical. In choosing to call the young Afghans coresearchers, not only have I acknowledged their contribution to the PAR project, but I have also recognised the ways this relationship has changed me as a researcher and shaped the contents of this thesis. This does not mean that I have freed myself from being complicit in reproducing certain injustices. In fact, by calling the youth coresearchers, I may have, in some ways, forced upon them a certain role, a role that, unlike me, they do not get paid to complete. Furthermore, in highlighting their agency, I may have risked undermining their vulnerabilities and hindered due response by governmental bodies. These dilemmas, that are yet unresolved in this work, have made visible the ethical accountability and responsibility that us, academic researchers, have towards those who participate in our studies.

On becoming an auntie⁶

My ethical responsibility towards the coresearchers has also meant that the relationship that we constructed throughout this process have contin-

⁶ It is common for Iranians and Afghans to call people whom they feel close to auntie or uncle. This signifies a symbolic familial relationship even though it is not bound by blood.

ued on and, in some cases, expanded beyond the boundaries of the research, taking different and multi-layered roles. That is, it is not only them that need to be named; depending on each coresearcher and how we interact, I have become a خاله [auntie], friend, tutor or have remained a researcher.

When I first met the Afghan students and was introduced to them as a researcher, they called me خاتم [Ms.]. Since the majority of the care workers and educators in the lives of the young refugee(d)s are women, being an adult woman made it easier for me to interact with both male and female students. As the students and I interacted more and my collaboration with the coresearchers advanced, some of them started to call me خاله [auntie]. By calling me auntie, not only they announced that I have been deemed trustworthy enough, but they also bestowed a certain responsibility onto me. That is by trusting me with their stories, they also expected that I would be worthy of this trust. Tuck and Guishard (2013) discuss that meaningful trust and reciprocity means addressing the direct needs of the community and as such I found myself offering support as a tutor, translator, friend or advocacy guide. However, this trust has been moderated by gender, and thus has had its limits. My attempts to develop deeper connections with the coresearchers beyond the scope of the project has resulted in only three meaningful relationships, one of which is with the female coresearcher. These various roles, some of which quite intimate, does not mean that the coresearchers became dependent on me. Rather it means that we developed meaningful and reciprocal relationships based on mutual trust.

On anonymisation

It is part of the ethical requirements of any research involving people, and in particular those who may be in vulnerable positions, to anonymise names and identifiable details. However, I have found this procedure problematic from the start. How can I change the names of people who are coresearching with me? How can I deny them the right to own the process they are co-creating? Answering these questions became even harder when nine out of ten coresearchers did not want to be anonymised. In fact, they participated in this project so as to be able to create narratives

about themselves and publicise their stories in their own ways. They wanted to be named as the creators of the empirical material. So, what does it mean to anonymise the names of the people who want their names to be recognised, especially when I know who they are? On the other hand, the coresearchers are young and in vulnerable positions. There are also legal and ethical limitations in relation to their identities in Sweden and in countries they have lived. In addition, there is always a possibility that some unforeseen and unfortunate event in the future could jeopardise their lives. These are the thoughts and questions that I have had to cope with. At the end, and after discussing these questions with the coresearchers, I made certain decisions alone and others in collaboration with them. I have deliberately chosen not to go into details regarding what type of changes have been made when presenting them. Instead, as previously mentioned, I have attempted to present their narratives collectively. As noted in the previous section, I have acknowledged them as symbolic co-authors in one of the papers included in this thesis but once again, I have chosen to deliberately not disclose the details of their identities.

The teachers in the school: A lesson in discomfort

The scholarship on young (forced) migrants and especially ‘unaccompanied children’ has problematised the role of gatekeepers as an influencing factor on the who and how of the participation (Chase et al., 2020). How one attempts to access the participants can create “risks of selection bias, of silencing particular voices and of spotlighting certain experiences while ignoring others” (Chase et al., 2020, p. 458). My access to the youth was initiated through a PEH teacher and in this way, it was already limited to the students in this particular school. The PEH teacher connected me to other teachers and staff at the school, and helped me with the facilitation of the first workshop, as well as with the translation of the themes and stories to Swedish, which were then used in the exhibitions. Another important figure was the Dari/Persian teacher who allowed me to attend her classes in order to access and connect with the students. In addition, most of the PAR process from generation of material to analysis was done during her classes, that is she gave leave to the coresearchers to work on the project. She also offered her support for translating some of the material into Dari/Persian. In addition, I was in contact, although to a much

lesser extent, with some of the other staff, namely the school principal and other teachers directly involved with the youth. The staff and the teachers at the school were most hopeful in granting me access and resources but they were in positions of power in relation to the Afghan students. This is problematic since it runs the risk of pressuring the refugee youth to take part in the project or place the gatekeepers in decision making positions in relation to the specifics of the project (Chase et al., 2020; Enright, 2010; Kaukko, 2016). My strategy in this case was to purposefully distance myself from the school administration and teachers when the process started in order to fully support the youth. In a way, the teachers' involvements decreased more and more as the project advanced. However, this decision was not without repercussions. For the second exhibition which was displayed at the university, I did not involve the teachers directly. This created a grievance for the Dari/Persian teacher. She told me, after effect, that she wanted to have been there at the university and felt somewhat slighted that I did not make arrangement for her to be there. I apologised to her and informed her that everyone was invited from the start as this was a public event and we left it at that. But I am not sure how to take this. Was I somehow disrespectful to her and the support she had offered? Had I used my position of power to undermine her involvement in the project? Nonetheless, this small incident serves to remind us that engaging in emancipatory work with young people is always mediated through established and hegemonic power structures.

SUMMARY OF THE ARTICLES

In this chapter, I will summarise each of the four papers included in this thesis. These four papers each mark a different point in my journey of writing the thesis. The papers can be read in isolations but together they form a coherent picture of my understanding and thought process throughout the journey to the borderlands. They also make visible the complexities and affordances of engaging in decolonial and participatory work of asking/walking.

Paper one: Decolonizing sport and exercise psychology within a European context, a critical overview

Published in *Scandinavian Sport Studies Forum* (11), 2020, 25-42.
www.sportsstudies.org

Paper one marks the beginning of my doctoral journey. Despite the title of the paper, I now believe that, at this time I was still firmly rooted within the modern/colonial thought system. However, my own relocation experiences, in combination with theoretical readings that I had engaged in, had begun to make me critical of the discourse of sport and integration, especially within my (then) discipline of sport and exercise psychology. In this paper, I provide a critical overview of the field of sport and exercise psychology research in relation to migration, integration and acculturation discourse. Moreover, I argue for scholarship within the field, that is done by and with the marginalised communities, treating them as active agents of change within their own lived realities. I contend that such scholarship has the potential to decolonise the field of sport and exercise psychology. Now, I am not sure if this later argument is possible at all within the current structure of university. I reflect on this later in this thesis.

I start the paper by positioning myself and describe the uncomfortable feelings of being spoken for and about on a regular basis, by media, by research and by legislators. I, then, delineate that the act of being spoken for and about is done from a Eurocentric framework that has positioned people like me, ‘the cultural other’, as fundamentally different and less than my European counterparts (Ratna & Samie, 2018; Said, 2003/1978). I describe how sport and physical activity research has been important in (re) producing certain problematic narratives about the ‘cultural other’. In addition, such scholarship has “failed to critically interrogate the political implications of being an ‘outsider’ within the inequitable, able-bodied, gendered” (Ratna & Samie, 2018, p. 23) and Eurocentric field of sport. Next, I present a detailed critique of various sport and exercise research performed in Europe in relation to acculturation psychology. I argue that the majority of these studies, including my earlier work, have used (post) positivist models that depict acculturation and integration as linear and universal processes which obscure the lived realities of the people involved. I further maintain that such (post) positivist foundations tend to be present, even within more critical approaches of cultural sport psychology. I contend that by leaving socio-political and whiteness discussions unacknowledged, the research within the field runs the risk of becoming complicit in the perpetuation of power inequalities and the (re)production of problematic stereotypes about the ‘cultural other’. Next, I offer decolonial praxis of researching with and by the community involved as a way to counter hegemonic power of Western thought. Such scholarship can actively contribute to the development of both communities’ and individuals’ psychosocial well-being by shifting the focus to the needs and experiences of the ‘cultural other’, while also transforming the process of research, its assumptions, ethics and outcomes in the process. Lastly, I argue for participatory action research and art-based methodologies as ways to engage in such decolonial praxis.

Paper two: Decolonial stories of forced migrants in physical activity and sport, ‘we the Afghan kids’

Published in N. de Martini Ugolotti & J. Caudwell (Eds.). *Leisure and Forced Migration: Lives Lived in Asylum Systems*. (pp. 157-175). Routledge: London and New York, 2022. DOI: 10.4324/9780429341045-13

In this paper, my attempt to delink from modern/colonial thought becomes more apparent as I shift to the outside of the discipline of sport and exercise psychology. Instead, I ground the analysis in the lived experiences of Afghan youth, their local histories and their struggles to bypass the precarities associated with their refugee(d) condition. My aim here is to work against the dominant discourse of integration and sport which places the young refugee(d)s in problematic narratives that centre around their deficiencies. This paper is written as a book chapter in which I present the empirical findings of our (the coresearchers’ and myself) PAR project. To recognise this collaborative endeavour, I acknowledge the youth as co-authors, albeit symbolically.

Inspired by a lecture from Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2009), I start the chapter by emphasising the importance of many stories in countering the essentialising and othering effects of hegemonic discourse in relation to ‘unaccompanied children’. I also problematise the integration discourse in relation to sport and argue that sport in this way has become a neo-colonial and neoliberal tool for ‘civilising’ and managing the ‘uncivilised other’ (Carrington, 2015; Darnell & Hayhurst, 2011; Khan, 2013). I explain the importance of delinking from such rhetoric to reclaim one’s own stories and ways of knowing. I continue the chapter by presenting the methodology, the analysis process and the empirical findings of our PAR project.

Due to word constraints, I needed to combine the themes, collective statements and composite vignettes, discussed in the last chapter, into two overarching stories. The first theme or story showcases the youth’s agency in response to various encounters and experiences in their lives. Accompanying this agency, there is a deeply engrained notion of self-awareness and introspection that ties their stories together. The

coresearchers revealed that from a very young age they have been profoundly aware of the disadvantages in their lives, yet they did not merely endure them. Instead tapping into their cultural heritage, they developed resourceful strategies that turned these encounters into spaces of knowledge-making about themselves and their social world. Furthermore, they demonstrated that they continuously work to re-create conditions of dignity and re-existence amidst highly precarious conditions.

As much as it has been important to highlight shared stories and struggles of the coresearchers, it is also imperative to give justice to diverse viewpoints in these histories and struggles. The second theme explores the youth's differing attitudes in relation to motives and experiences of physical activity. A number of youths highlighted social opportunities present in formal or informal sport settings, such as football, as a motive to participate in sports; while others underlined that they engaged in sports to be more psychologically self-aware. In this way, contrary to the Swedish sports clubs' hegemonic understandings (Jakobsson, 2015), the coresearchers did not prioritise competition and skill development as reasons to participate in sports or physical activity. The youth also demonstrated an interesting and complicated relationship with football. While for the majority of the boys in this research team, football was a place of fun, friendship and community, others (the female coresearcher and another male) contested these unifying notions of football, and rendered football a gendered arena where they did not feel comfortable in. These two coresearchers, however, simultaneously offered a reinterpretation of their own relationship with football as football fans. As such, not only did they bypass the gender norms implicit in the sport but they also reaffirmed their connection to the global community of football, asserting their personhood and subjectivities. In conclusion, this paper presents the collaborative work of the Afghan coresearchers and myself in ways that showcases their agencies, subjectivities and deeply reflective thought processes in relation to sports and physical activity; affirming them as present and future generations.

Paper three: Methodological challenges and opportunities in working within a participatory paradigm in the context of sport, forced migration and settlement, an insider perspective

In press. Sport and Refugees: Displacement, Migration, and Settlement Journeys, Special Issue in *Sport in Society: Cultures, commerce, media, politics*.

Paper three is co-authored with Shahrzad Enderle, PhD, a colleague from University of Freiberg who is involved in participatory research with refugee(d)s women. She and I have written this paper in response to our feelings of discomfort after completing our respective participatory research projects. Our aim is to reveal the challenges and affordances of working within a participatory paradigm from our insider perspectives. In this paper we draw on our experiences of conducting participatory research with (forced) migrants in the two geographical sites of Germany and Sweden. We have both contributed equally to the writing process, including editing and revisions of the paper.

This paper starts with positioning our two different studies along the continuum of participatory research. Shahrzad had utilised a more Lewinian approach within the context of sport for development and peace, whereas I had employed emancipatory participatory research guided by Freire (2005/1970) with decolonial aims. For the analysis of our research, Shahrzad and I employ a three-dimensional model offered by Spaaij et. al. (2018), which was discussed fully in the previous chapter.

The evaluation of our projects in this paper reveals that the application of the participatory methods in these two projects was successful in facilitating more inclusive and reflexive enquiry into sport and forced migration. Moreover, these enquiries enhanced the participation of the refugee(d)s community as well as their ownership of the research process. In this way they were successful in shifting the power in the process of research. These developments, however, were not linear and needed to be negotiated continuously along the way. Moreover, these transformations were often short-lived and limited within the boundaries of the projects;

that is, they stayed local. We argue that these limitations question the theoretical aspirations and practical potential of participatory methods. Temporal aspects were another limitation of participatory methods. We found that in both of our projects, it took considerable amount of time and commitment to establish relationships that could enhance the participation and shift power to the coresearchers. This has been particularly important for Shahrzad and I, since as insider researchers we have to live with the consequences of the research in our daily lives. We found that the need for accountability and humility amplified for us as our commitment to the coresearchers and the projects' aims went beyond the boundaries of research and remained part of our day to day lives. In light of a growing popularity of participatory research in sports, we conclude that more open and honest discussions and reflections are needed regarding the limitations of participatory paradigms and their aspirations. We reiterate Tuck and Yang's warning (2012) that non-critical applications of participatory methods run the risk of turning transformation (and decolonisation) into a metaphor and obscure and even reproduce larger systemic injustices. In this way participatory research is compromised in becoming yet another tool in reproducing neoliberal and neo-colonial agendas of individualised choice and 'happy diversity' (MacDonald et al., 2009).

Paper Four: These are the stories of our physical activities, decolonial re-existence and poetry

Submitted to Creative Writing and Sport, Special Issue in *TEXT: Journal of writing and writing courses*

Paper four completes the journey of this thesis. Situating myself within the borderlands, in this paper, I, embracing my Khorasani/Iranian heritage, reclaim poetry to decolonise my research and dissemination practice. My aim in this paper is to present the empirical findings of my work with the Afghan coresearchers while also working to unsettle the totalitarianism of modern/colonial ways of generating and disseminating knowledge. By adopting the persona of شاعر [the poet] (discussed in the previous chapter), I aim to present an evocative and reflexive social commentary of my relationship with the coresearchers and their relationship with physical activity and sports.

The paper starts with a brief overview of my chosen mode of dissemination and my reasons for privileging it. The poem follows next, where I first explore my complicated history and my relationship with the people of Afghanistan. The largest part of the poem, underlining my praxis of asking/walking with the Afghan youth, presents a poetic rendition of the empirical material of our collaborative PAR project. I have chosen to let the poem speak for itself so as to allow for multiple readings across different temporalities and spaces. What comes next is the body of theories and epistemologies that have given rise to the poem. Lastly, the endnotes map the cartography of the epistemological root system that supports and sustains the body of theory and the poem.

REFLECTIONS

In the Borderlands
you are the battleground ...
you are at home, a stranger, ...
To survive the Borderlands
you must live *sin fronteras*
be a crossroads.

Gloria Anzaldúa, *To live in the Borderlands means you*

My aim in this thesis has been to explore the stories of sports and physical activity of a group of Afghan youth in Sweden through a collaborative research process *with* them. In dialogue with decolonial, Indigenous and borderland scholarship, I have taken these stories as a starting point in order to *show* how the youth, navigate, experience, resist, generate knowledge and re-create conditions of dignity in relation to sports and physical activity. Furthermore, in this process of asking while walking with the youth, this thesis also maps my own walk and attempt to delink from the modern/colonial matrix of power.

Main contributions

Viewing the four papers as a whole, this thesis contributes both theoretically and methodologically to the field of sports and exercise in relation to young asylum seekers and migration research. The use of participatory methods, in combination with art-based research, has resulted in rich and detailed stories that not only foreground the experiences of the youth and their agencies, but also challenge the colonial and reductionist rhetoric of integration discourse. Grounded in earlier modern/colonial raced work, integration discourse revolves around positioning and assessing ‘modern/civilised’ individuals against ‘underdeveloped/uncivilised’ others (Darnell & Hayhurst, 2011; Schinkel, 2018). Researching integration in relation to sport, therefore, constantly flattens out the migrants’ experiences, meanings and understandings of sports and physical activity to make sense for and from Eurocentric framings (De Martini Ugolotti & Caudwell, 2022; Nunn et al., 2021; Spaaij et al., 2019). In doing this, such research negates and mutes other and already existing ways of living physical activity and sports (De Martini Ugolotti & Caudwell, 2022; Spaaij et al., 2019).

In order to regain muted and negated subjectivities, decolonial scholarship argues for a delinking from Eurocentric thought to, instead, ground the process of knowledge generation within other onto-epistemological thought systems that have been disavowed by modernity/coloniality (Mignolo, 2009; Tlostanova & Mignolo, 2009). By grounding our collaborative journey in our shared Khorasani onto-epistemology, the youth and I, delinked their experiences from modern/colonial framings. In its place,

by giving attention to the ways coresearchers think theory through their lived praxis, we demonstrated how they make and re-make their own meanings, understandings and knowledge in relation to sports. Supporting previous research, the participatory analysis in this thesis revealed that for the Afghan youth in this study sports and physical activity are not separate entities. Rather, they are intertwined with various aspects of their lives, such as their experiences of child labour, pleasures, hopes for the future, leisure, social and mental aspects, and migration experiences (Khan, 2013; Stack & Iwasaki, 2009). Furthermore, the youth confirmed that through their deeply reflective praxis, they continuously, actively and consciously reinterpret their sport and exercise experiences to recreate conditions of dignity and belonging. This happens in spite and against the controversies surrounding their refugee(d) status and the ever-present violence of bordering/migration regimes (Djampour, 2018; Khan, 2013; McDonald et al., 2019).

The work of this thesis also highlights the affordances and limitations of participatory methods, art-based research and decolonising work. Although the participatory methods grounded in the epistemology of the youth (and myself), have allowed us to reclaim and tell our stories in our ways (Smith, 2005), they fell short in making lasting systemic transformations, limiting the decolonising work I had envisioned. Initially, I had hoped that this research will result in wider engagement with the school community, as well as speak publicly to policies in relation to PEH classes. Yet, as I will discuss later, these hopes did not realise. These limitations, however, have given rise to new questions and possibilities for future research in relation to how change and transformation are defined and researched; and whether these definitions are somewhat limiting and influenced by the colonial rhetoric of salvation underlining PAR basic principles of empowerment and critical consciousness. These challenges are particularly important considering the current popularity (and necessity) of participatory methods within sport and exercise research.

This thesis, as a whole, also maps my own journey of decolonial praxis. By drawing from across different disciplines and theoretical and methodological frameworks-working to un-discipline (Tlostanova & Mignolo, 2009)- and through the process of asking while walking with the Afghan

youth in investigating their stories of physical activity, I came to new understandings in relation to my own circular and colonial desires (Stein et al., 2020), my decolonial yearnings (Stein et al., 2020) and my borderland existence (Anzaldúa, 2012/1987). Through the course of this thesis, I gradually moved away from the individual discipline of sport and exercise psychology and adopted, instead, a more whole view of knowledge that is not limited by any single onto-epistemological framework. This allowed me to embrace and reclaim the epistemology of the borders (my Khorasani heritage alongside my position of West Asian immigrant scholar within Western university system) while gesturing towards decolonisation.

Empirical reflections: Re-existence

There is already a rich scholarship within the context of sport and refugee(d)s that has highlighted the role of sport as a form of subaltern resistance through which individuals express their agencies despite larger structural forces working against them (Carrington, 2015; McDonald et al., 2019; Robinson et al., 2019; Spaaij, 2015; Stone, 2018). In fact, this has been my argument in paper II of this thesis. However, here I would like to advance my previous argument and propose that responses of the refugee(d)s youth to the colonial and hegemonic discourses present in their lives (including within sports and physical activity) extend beyond mere resistance and enact a re-existence (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Walsh, 2015). That is through negotiation and recreation of meanings and experiences, life-affirming practices are advanced against and in spite of the constant presence of violence, death and trauma.

Walsh and Mignolo (2018) defined re-existence as redefining and re-signifying life in conditions of dignity despite the ever-present violence of coloniality. As it has been argued previously, coloniality is a system of domination that entails not only control over material and resources, but also over bodies, minds and imagination, ranking humanity into hierarchical categories, and creating separate and distinct borders (Arashiro et al., 2015; Grosfoguel, 2016; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Tlostanova & Mignolo, 2009). These borders are set up to define civilised and uncivilised, safe and unsafe places (Anzaldúa, 2012/1987; Grosfoguel, 2016).

In addition, these borders are not only geographical but are embedded in policy and daily encounters of people who are deemed unsafe and uncivilised. Yet, as definite as these borders (both geographical and everyday) appear to be, at the moment of their creation, and as a response to the emotional residue of these unnatural boundaries, a borderland is also formed (Anzaldúa, 2012/1987; Mignolo & Tlostanova, 2006). Borderland is an undetermined space inhabited by those who go through the confines of 'normal'. In this sense, borderlanders are in a state of constant crossings (Anzaldúa, 2012/1987).

Anzaldúa (2012/1987) proposes that the lives of inhabitants of borderlands are plagued with contradictions. These contradictions are evident and intertwined in the lives of the young asylum seekers in Scandinavia (Djampour, 2018). Within the media discourse, they are often presented as radically different from other youth who did not experience (forced) migration (Chase et al., 2020; Djampour, 2018). They are depicted as either vulnerable victims who deserve refuge or cunning strategists who abuse the asylum system (Chase et al., 2020; Djampour, 2018; Stretmo, 2011; Wernesjö, 2011). These practices of everyday bordering are also reflected in Swedish asylum and border management policies that have become increasingly more convoluted and restrictive (Collison & De Martini Ugolotti, 2022; Djampour, 2018). Directly linked to the lives of the coresearchers in this study, for example, is the establishment of a legislation that allows only short-term temporary residence permits for young asylum seekers which expire a mere six months after the completion of their high school education (Swedish Code of Statutes, 2018: 756). This means that unless the youth have secured employment within six months after their education, they will be deported. Throughout this study, most of the coresearchers were preoccupied with completing their education requirements in order to secure suitable employment against the looming possibility of their deportation. This obstacle limited their present and future options, and reduced, for instance, their availability and their access to leisure activities. Furthermore, they were unable to pursue higher education since it is not considered an employment according to the above-mentioned legislation. So, even if they wished for and their performance in high school was enough to grant them a place at a higher education institute, they had to forgo that option and keep to vocational

schooling that could lead to faster employment. These contradictions often necessitate the young refugee(d)s themselves to prove their ‘deservedness’ through recounting stories of persecution and trauma in a manner that satisfies the state and undermines their agencies (Chase et al., 2020; Dawson, 2011). Such rhetoric of vulnerability and deficiency is also reproduced within the context of sport and integration, where sport is seen as a civilising activity for the purpose of managing the ‘at risk bodies’ (Azzarito, 2012) of refugee(d) youth, as opposed to unstructured social and leisure time activity (Agergaard et al., 2016); or as a space where the youth can make and remake their own understandings, meanings and belongings (Darnell & Hayhurst, 2011; De Martini Ugolotti & Caudwell, 2022; Nunn et al., 2021). These contradictions highlight “the conviction that global social reality is predicated on latent inequalities” (Demuro, 2015, p. 117) and colonial power relations (Stein et al., 2020; Tlostanova & Mignolo, 2009). So, how do the young refugee(d)s response to the contradictions inherent in their borderland existence?

Anzaldúa (2012/1987) argues that the presence of contradictions in the borderlands brings about a tolerance for ambiguity which leads to the development of a mestiza consciousness. This form of consciousness and understanding arises at the focal point of collisions and contradictions. It necessitates an assemblage of all that is separate, not through balancing opposing powers or gluing separate pieces together; rather through the process of synthesising of a “third element which is greater than the sum of its severed parts. [This third element, the mestiza consciences, is] a source of intense pain but its energy comes from continual creative motion that keeps breaking down the unitary aspects of each new paradigm” (Anzaldúa, 2012/1987, p. 102). That is contrary to the concept of enlightenment, the places of possibilities in the borderlands are dark, both painful and buried deep within the consciousness (Lorde, 2007/1984; Tuck & Yang, 2012). These dark places of pain and creativity hold an incredible reserve of emotions and feelings, making the inhabitants of the borderlands hypersensitive to their surroundings (Anzaldúa, 2012/1987; Lorde, 2007/1984). The young refugee(d)s account of experiencing trauma and wonder simultaneously demonstrated this concept. Their day-to-day living, including their engagement with sports and physical activity, involved a conscious journeying that enabled the transformation of the pain

into a voice of hope and becoming (Motta, 2015). Bergstrom-Wuolo et al (2018) demonstrated this in their research on well-being and health of young asylum seekers in Sweden. They found that memories of migration, both good and bad, became a source of power, agency and hope for the young asylum seekers through which they found the strength to seek conditions of well-being in their daily lives (Bergstrom-Wuolo et al., 2018). De Martini Ugolotti (2020) referred to a similar concept when discussing experiences of asylum seekers in music-making activities. He argued that music-making became a site of intensity, both lived and felt, “where the gradual wounding produced by the asylum regime is both manifested and negotiated” (De Martini Ugolotti, 2020, p. 14). Djampour (2018) further demonstrated the presence and importance of hope, love and intimacy in the lives of young asylum seekers. She argued that through acts of hope, such as dreams for one’s future or expectations of reunion with loved ones, the young refugee(d)s acted outside of their position of precarity and their experiences of everyday bordering (Djampour, 2018). As such, sports and physical activity also become sites of intensity where pain, trauma, joy, laughter and hope rub against each other. In this way sports and physical activity are not separate from life itself. That is, for the Afghan youth life is less fragmented, and their experiences in sports and physical activity are linked to their hopes and dreams of future (Khan, 2013; Stack & Iwasaki, 2009). In advancing this concept, I argue that through this conscious and emotional journeying, the young refugee(d)s re-create conditions of dignity, render a time and place that exceed coloniality (Sykes & Hamzeh, 2018) and enact life-affirming practices. Their reflective analyses and stories demonstrate that despite various forms of oppression, trauma and hardship, they constantly returned, or rather, reclaimed life and future in their acts of self-reflection, friendships, love and hope within the context of sports, and life; and thus, moved beyond the mere resistance of the precarities in their lives to bring about a re-existence. This constant creating and re-creating of their worlds and futures, against and in spite of violence, is how decoloniality is formed and advances (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Smith, 2012/1999), transforming the other to the otherwise.

Theoretical and praxical reflections: Gesturing towards decoloniality

I had started this doctoral journey with the desire to decolonise my discipline of sport and exercise psychology. My first paper in this thesis testifies to this; yet in the process of this journey, I came to the realisation that such a desire may not only be an impossibility, but also harmful in reproducing the same entitlements that produced coloniality in the first place. Stein et al (2020) argue that yearning for and aligning with decolonisation does not stop one from reproducing modern/colonial desires, and that breaking away from these, and delinking from coloniality of power, is difficult, complex and unclear. All of us, as modern/colonial subjects, have affective investments in, and desires for, the continuation of the colonial world order, and its promises and pleasures. These affective investments re-produce colonial circularities in the very efforts to make change to the same system. In this way the efforts made to decolonise are routed back into the same desires and entitlements that made coloniality possible (Stein et al., 2020). As such, these efforts are foreclosed before they begin, turning decolonisation into a metaphor and allowing for business to continue as usual (Tuck & Yang, 2012). One such example is material investments in the system and, therefore its continuation, i.e., employment. Another is a desire for certainty for fixed outcomes and guaranteed solutions (Stein et al., 2020), i.e., following this exact procedure will lead to decolonisation. Yet another is a move to innocence, which attempts to remove involvement from implication in harm and reconcile guilt with colonial futurity, i.e., because I am doing this work, I am not complicit (Stein et al., 2020; Tuck & Yang, 2012). Significant here is that these circularities come about not (simply) as lack of information or internalised coloniality, but rather as a result of our enduring affective investments in the modern/colonial order. Any decolonising work, therefore, should attend, with compassion and critique, to these investments (Stein et al., 2020). The process of this journey made me aware and reflective of the ways in which I was and still am complicit in reproducing modern/colonial circularities and desires.

As well intentioned as my aim had been, it had glossed over my own complexities and the structural complicities I live in, “falsely assuming there is a clearly defined path [for] change” (Stein et al., 2020, p. 57). I

had also incorrectly assumed that my work will somehow result in transforming larger structures of authority and power relations. In reality, my efforts to contribute to re-presenting and reframing (Smith, 2012/1999) the Afghan youth in their own ways only resulted in local and short-term changes that had very little effect on larger structures of authority (Robinson et al., 2019; Spaij et al., 2018). As I have highlighted in paper III, even their school, as a local structure of authority, remained unchanged for the most part. For example, our attempt to showcase our work in a small exhibition in their school was met with lack of interest from most of the school attendees and teachers. Another structure of authority that has remained unaffected is the academic system and the university. Spaij et al (2018) highlight the limitations imposed by the academic system and university by discussing the pressure involved in the process of publication, privilege of certain languages as well as the forms of knowledge that are allowed to be researched and disseminated. Perhaps there is no better example than what transpired in one of my doctoral courses, which was concerned with different forms of disseminating research. The instructors of the course encouraged us to think out of the box and to present our research differently, but they strongly rejected my request to read a poem to summarise my PhD project, even when I argued the epistemological grounds for this work. In this way, thinking out of the box was only allowed as long as it happened within a specific epistemology and established rhetoric. Another example is the fact that paper IV, which represents my attempt to write a decolonial otherwise manuscript, has been rejected several times by journals specialising in qualitative research in sports and physical activity; and each time in resubmitting it, I have had to change the format in ways that make the paper fit more into the modern/colonial academic standards and move it further away from my own decolonial testimony. In addition, even when I could acknowledge the work of Afghan youth as coresearchers and co-authors of our PAR project (paper II), this was only a symbolic reference. There is no possibility within the current modern/colonial publishing practices to accommodate the contribution of the youth in concrete ways. In effect, much like my work in paper IV, I have been complicit in turning decolonisation into a metaphor and reproducing colonial circularities.

Another colonial desire was my intention to ‘bring’ critical consciousness (Freire, 2005/1970), to the youth. Tuck and Yang (2012) argue that the pursuit of critical consciousness is a move to innocence which conceals the rhetoric of salvation present in Western doctrine of liberation. Moreover, it propagates the concept that freeing the mind is enough; this reduces decolonisation into a metaphor and relieves us from feelings of guilt or responsibility without giving up power or privilege (Tuck & Yang, 2012). Working with the Afghan youth, I soon realised that they were already aware and highly reflective of the circumstances of oppression and power relations within their lives, and that they had developed strategies to negotiate these, long before they met me. In this way, they humbled me and complicated my own assumptions and intentions, clouding my path. This lack of clarity compelled me to reorient the ways I work with them. That is rather than pursuit of liberation through critical consciousness, I had to learn to unlearn (Tlostanova & Mignolo, 2012) and make the shift to ask while walking, with them and separately, in this unclear path. This shift taught me to be reflexive of my own complicities and uncertainties, of my colonial desires and decolonial yearnings. Stein et al (2020) delineate the importance of speaking to these yearnings, yearning for an otherwise kind of relationship and mode of existence, “while remaining aware of the ever-present traps of inherited colonial habits” (p. 45). This reflexivity forced me to ask myself: what exactly did I do in our collaborative PAR project and in my own thesis? How did I speak to decolonial yearnings?

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015), which was written in response to the atrocities, genocide and displacement of Indigenous peoples by the Canadian government in its ongoing history of colonisation, makes many references to the act of witnessing as an imperative for all. The commission defines witnessing as “the traditional and continuing Aboriginal practice of calling forth witnesses to validate moments of great historic significance” (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015, p. 397). This entails remembering, recalling and caring for the history that has been experienced and witnessed, and to carry this knowledge back home and into the future (Simons et al., 2021; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). Here I would like to in-

voke the act of witnessing as one of the praxical apparatuses that is enacted in the process of asking and walking. Witnessing, in this sense, does not mean recounting and re-writing stories of pain and suffering and telling it back to the communities in ways that produce colonial circularities (hooks, 1990; Tuck & Yang, 2014). Rather, it means paying attention “to the ways decolonial otherwise [operates] within and in the margin of modern/colonial order” (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 16). It means opening and exposing the cracks within the modern/colonial system where the otherwise dwells, resist and re-exist against the pain and suffering. It is important to note that I do not attempt to idealise and exotify ‘alternative’ ways of knowing and being. Doing this is the mirror image of negating and pathologising them; it is yet another move to innocence (Tuck & Yang, 2012) that allows us to escape the necessary work of unpacking our complicities, complexities and uncertainties (Stein et al., 2020). Instead, I argue that in being a witness to the otherwise, in carrying this knowledge back home and into the future, one is also a witness to one’s own uncertainties and complicities. That is carrying the message back home means coming face to face with one’s colonial desires. In this sense being a witness means being in a position of accountability and discomfort simultaneously, while looking into the future with hope and humility. Being a witness means being unsettled, embracing the epistemology of constant crossings (Anzaldúa, 2012/1987); it means staying with troubles (Haraway, 2016) and embracing the darkness of the journey because it is within these dark places that an incredible reserve of creativity and possibility is held (Lorde, 2007/1984). It is by unpacking one’s complexities, uncertainties and complicities that working towards decoloniality commences.

Becoming such a witness in our PAR project, did not only belong or was entrusted onto me, the academic researcher. Such thinking is both arrogant and colonial, it is yet another move to innocence that assumes only I, in engaging with the youth, could become the authentic knower (Tuck & Yang, 2012). In reality, we, together, became witnesses to each other’s differences but also to each other’s pains, joys and memories. In walking/asking together, and separately, we laughed at familiar stories, were puzzled by new information, gave advice on future strategies, acknowl-

edged our individual and collective resistance and affirmed our re-existence. A good example of this is how organically our collective art-based research was conducted and how it affected each of our lives personally and collectively. One of the coresearchers, for example, decided to dedicate more time to his painting and calligraphy skills while another validated his passion in writing song lyrics. Yet others made certain decisions to enact their futurity. There were also moments of uncertainty, of not understanding, for example when in contrast to everyone else, two coresearchers insisted that they did not like playing football. This really surprised the rest of the group and we spent time conversing and investigating this new information. In this way working within our commonalities and differences, at times, afforded us to bring into being a time and place which exceeded coloniality (Sykes & Hamzeh, 2018).

The journey of asking/walking with the coresearchers affected me personally as well. It made it possible for me to re-learn certain aspects about myself that I had, in my attempt to fit within the modern/colonial university, dissociated with. At the start of my PhD journey, I was asked by a colleague, if I planned to incorporate art within the work of the thesis as well. At the time, I was not sure, how did one use art to present an academic work? Little did I know that in my attempt to reconstitute the negated epistemology of Khorasan, I was also learning to re-synthesise myself. The poem, presented in paper IV took me by surprise because I had not thought about writing poems for a long time. In writing the poem to generate and disseminate knowledge, I also reclaimed and brought into re-existence that which was forgotten and put aside in myself. In a sense, the process of walking/asking together with the youth in the darkness, afforded me a home-coming into the borderlands.

Concluding thoughts and future directions

I have come to the end of this thesis, yet reflecting on challenges, complexities and complicities of my journey has raised new questions and opened up new possibilities for future research. In this thesis, I have highlighted the limiting and harmful effects of policy-driven themes (i.e., integration) in sports scholarship, and have instead advanced a decolonial reading that foregrounds otherwise forms of engagement with sports and

physical activity. Subsequently PAR, with its focus on collaborative learning has become a useful mode of conducting such research; however, as my reflections in this chapter highlighted, there are certain complications in PAR that cannot be ignored.

The critique related to the concept of critical consciousness underpinning philosophy of PAR is one example that can be further extended to the language of ‘empowerment’ present in many critical research with forced migrants. Reiterating Tuck and Yang (2018) argument, such language serves to continue the myth of Western doctrine of liberation and turn decolonisation into a philanthropic process of helping the ‘at risk’. Juxtaposing this with the colonial desire for certainty and fixed outcomes examined previously, PAR philosophy can be questioned further in the ways action is often ambitiously defined as grand systemic and structural transformations. Klocker (2012) expressed that much of PAR literature is ‘judgmental’. That is, the literature focuses on linear and procedural processes that must pass the test of ‘purity’ in terms of participation or transformation levels. In this way PAR practitioners, albeit unintentionally, have created a binary of morally good ‘authentic’ research as opposed to morally bad ‘impure’ research, perpetuating the same myths-i.e., imagined binaries- that modernity/coloniality is grounded on. As my reflections revealed, despite not having much influence on the structures of authority present in our lives, all of us (the coresearchers and I) changed in much more nuanced, less visible but nonetheless deep ways. These subtle, yet profound changes also underline another shortcoming in relation to evaluating participatory research. In sport and leisure studies, evaluation and criteria of PAR projects often revolve around procedural aspects that can obscure the emergent and relational dimensions related to the processes of PAR conducted from a decolonial perspective. In the evaluation of my project in paper III, for example, there was no criteria for these relational aspects. Future sport research, then, can investigate the ways in which action and change can be redefined and made meaningful for the people involved and in relation to sports and/or leisure contexts, while also paying close attention to colonial desires and circularities that may foreclose efforts to make change. In addition, sport and leisure studies need to investigate the ways in which deeper and more subtle relational dimension of PAR can be investigated and brought to the fore.

One of the main aims of this study has been to walk/ask with the youth in order to highlight ways in which they think theory through their daily praxis, in relation to sports and physical activity. However, my inexperience, and limited time and resources hindered the possibility for more collaborative representation of the youth's stories (i.e., my role in the construction of composite vignettes discussed previously). Furthermore, demonstrating our collaborative work, in academic texts, was difficult and at most symbolic. Future research can, thus, explore ways for enabling co-authoring possibilities that reflect the coresearchers' generous efforts and engagements with the process of knowledge generation.

Throughout this work, I have outlined the importance of ethics in relation to both decolonial and PAR scholarship. Tuck and Guishard argue that relying solely on procedural aspects of (PAR) research does not resolve "ethical issues of representation and voice, exploitation, consumption, voyeurism and reciprocity" (Tuck & Guishard, 2013, p. 15). Instead, they delineate the importance of dignity, care, humility and relationality in conducting participatory research. These conditions become even more relevant for insider researchers because these individuals belong to the community they research and cannot leave when the research is over (Smith, 2012/1999); in a sense they live with the research, its consequences and the community every day. Within sport scholarship (and PAR), much of the discussion in relation to ethics of care revolves, rightfully, around the responsibilities of the researchers to the (co)participants in their studies. Yet, I believe that insider researchers have a precarious position of having both certain privileges, i.e., a job in the academia, while also experiencing the emotional and psychological effects of being (new) migrants themselves, i.e., being racialised, having limited access to resources, etc. As mentioned above, added to this is enhanced levels of commitment and ethical responsibility that accompanies researching one's own community. Shahrzad and I have briefly discussed these issues in paper IV; however, left out of that discussion is the exhaustion, stress and health-related issues that I experienced during this work. I do not mean to indulge in self-pity in this section, I have already embraced the contradictory, yet generative space of borderland and all that it entails.

Rather, I would like to encourage future sport scholarship in (forced) migration to not only investigate and discuss critically the ways in which ethical considerations can be redefined and remade to reflect dignity, relationality and care for the research participants, but also how they can be extended to the insider researchers.

Lastly, I wish to return to the concept of ‘discovery’ in relation to decolonial thinking. In doing this, I would like to draw attention to all the instances that we (the coresearchers and I) refused to engage with this principle. For example, how the female coresearcher refused to discuss, publicly, her life stories relating to time before her arrival to Sweden; or how the coresearchers and I refused to talk about the more personal details of their traumatic journeys and/or their survival strategies; or my refusal to pose intrusive research questions. Tuck and Yang (2014) present refusal to/in research as a generative orientation that puts limits on the modern/colonial social science research (see chapter on praxis and theory). Modern/colonial knowledge is built upon frontiers and a felt entitlement to transgress them. Refusal is a form of disobedience that attempts to place a limit on this conquest and underline that “there are some stories that the academy has not proved itself to be worthy of knowing” (Tuck & Guishard, 2013, p. 20). In this way refusal is an attempt to halt the commodification of stories of pain and trauma, to instead make space for examining what is relevant for the people whose lives are at the centre of the research (Tuck & Yang, 2014). In doing this, refusal to/in research is directly linked to decolonial yearnings that work to advance life-affirming practices. I believe future (PAR) research in sport scholarship can benefit from engaging in refusal to/in research and attend to ways refusal operates to illuminate what is relevant and life-affirming, and what is not. This is an area that I, myself, wish to examine more closely.

I wish to finish by warning of the dangers of making specific frameworks under which we research, i.e., PAR or decolonial scholarship, ‘things’ that we can achieve through sets of procedures or practices. Decolonial critique show us that location, space and history matter, therefore, there is no straight way to do the work. There is no clear, universal path with well-defined and guaranteed outcomes. We must embark on this journey recognising that our lives and livelihoods are continuously intertwined

with systemic, historical and ongoing colonial violence, and as such we can only gesture towards decolonisation (Stein et al., 2020).

SAMMANFATTNING PÅ SVENSKA

I relation till idrott och migration har studier inom mer policy-relaterade fält (exempelvis integration) konsekvent urvattnat migranternas egna upplevelser av och förståelse för idrott och fysisk aktivitet. Sådan forskning har ofta utgått från eurocentriska perspektiv och förståelseramar vilket har inneburit att alternativa upplevelser har tystats ned och bortsetts från. Kritiska idrottsstudier visar emellertid att sport och idrott är en omtvistad domän inom vilken mänskliga erfarenheter kontinuerligt förhandlas och omförhandlas utifrån intersektionella faktorer såsom klass, kön, genus, sexualitet, ras, etnicitet, juridisk status och funktionsvariation. Med utgångspunkt i en dekolonial tanketradition har syftet med denna studie varit att utforska och demonstrera hur ungdomar som har migrerat till Sverige navigerar, upplever och utmanar den allmängiltiga definitionen av vad fysisk aktivitet och sport är och vilken funktion de fyller. Vidare har syftet varit att generera en ny icke-eurocentrisk kunskap om vad fysisk aktivitet kan innebära för människor som flyr från ett land till ett annat.

Att ta avstamp från ett dekolonialt perspektiv innebär ett aktivt val att ta avstånd från en eurocentrisk tanketradition och epistemologi för att istället ge plats för alternativa geografiska, biografiska, politiska och historiska arrangemang. Målet har varit att upptäcka förhållningssätt och praktiker relaterade till idrottskultur som inte rymts inom en västerländsk hegemonisk diskurs.

Den Khorasanianska tanketraditionen delar jag med de tio afghanska ungdomar vars erfarenheter av idrott och fysisk aktivitet utgör studiens empiriska kärna. Inom ramen för deltagande- och konstbaserad aktionsforskning har ungdomarna och jag arbetat och forskat tillsammans vilket innebär att vi har samarbetat med att samla in och skapa forskningsmaterial, analysera materialet samt sprida den genererade kunskapen.

Med utgångspunkt i tanketraditioner som på olika sätt berör områden centrala för dekolonial teoribildning (exempelvis ursprungsbefolkningar, gränser och gränsskapande, 'Chicana' och 'svart' feminism), bidrar denna avhandling teoretiskt och metodologiskt till idrottsvetenskapliga studier som har kopplingar till migrationsforskning. Analysen visar att för de afghanska ungdomarna som deltog i studien utgjorde inte idrott och fysisk aktivitet en avgränsad enhet. Snarare var deras upplevelser av idrott och fysisk aktivitet sammanflätade med andra erfarenheter av exempelvis barnarbete, nöjen, framtidshopp, fritidsaktiviteter och migration. Genom ungdomarnas reflekterande analyser och berättelser framgick det att de, trots olika former av förtryck, trauman och andra svårigheter, kontinuerligt fann sätt att återta kontrollen över sina liv samt att de kunde bevara förmågan att reflektera över olika relationer, sin situation och sin framtid. Fysisk aktivitet fick, genom deras berättelser, en annan mening och betydelse än vad den traditionellt västerländska definitionen om vad som konstituerar meningsfull fysisk aktivitet tillåter. Deras berättelser om och deras syn på fysisk aktivitet kan därför tolkas som mer än bara ett motstånd mot en prekär livssituation utan bör istället betraktas som livsbejakande ögonblick av reflektion som har bidragit till en form av återfödelse eller omdefiniering av livet och dess begränsningar och möjligheter. Styrkan i att kontinuerligt behöva skapa och återskapa sin värld och sin framtid, alla svårigheter till trots, utgör ett exempel på hur avkolonialisering tar form och gör framsteg.

Artikel 1 är en kritisk översikt och samtidigt en uppmaning till att med verktyg hämtade från den dekoloniala tanketraditionen, utmana idrottspsykologins kunskapsproduktion. Detta görs genom att bemöta De Andra som aktiva aktörer i kunskapsprocessen.

Artikel 2 är berättelsen om tio afganska ungdomar boendes i en mindre stad i Sverige. De tillhörde gruppen ensamkommande barn som anlände till Sverige mellan åren 2014 och 2016. Inom ramen för dekolonialism har forskaren och ungdomarna samförfattat och analyserat ungdomarnas livshistorier i relation till fysisk aktivitet och idrott. Med stöd i deltagande- och konstbaserade metoder så som teckning, poesi och skapandet av posters, utforskades, analyserades och porträtterades

ungdomarnas mångfacetterade liv. Det blev även ett sätt att visa upp deras engagemang i fysisk aktivitet och idrott på kreativa vis.

Artikel 3. Det finns ett växande antal studier om (ofrivillig) migration, idrott och internationellt utvecklingsarbete, idrott och fredsarbete, samt föreningsidrottens arbete med integration som förespråkar användning av deltagande samt innovativa metoder. Trots det saknas forskning som tydliggör komplexiteten och utmaningarna med att genomföra den typen av studier i relation till idrott och (ofrivillig) migration. Med utgångspunkt i forskarnas personliga erfarenheter som aktionsforskare på två olika geografiska platser, syftar denna studie till att avslöja utmaningar och möjligheter att arbeta inom ett deltagande paradigm. Resultaten från denna studie kan ge praktiska verktyg för (idrotts-)forskare och utredare samt andra som använder sig av deltagande metoder.

Artikel 4. Med denna artikel vill jag sprida den kunskap som genererades under en deltagande konstbaserad aktionsforskningsstudie som jag gjorde tillsammans med en grupp unga afghanska asylsökande i Sverige. Fokus för studien var ungdomarnas erfarenheter av idrott och fysisk aktivitet. Jag har valt att förmedla detta genom en berättande dikt som jag skapade med hjälp av 'vox participare' (deltagarnas röster) (Norton & Sliep, 2019). På detta sätt har jag baserat spridningen av studien i våra folks gemensamma epistemologi, Khorasani-folken i Central/Västra Asien. Genom att anta personan شاعر [poeten] (Olszewska, 2015) och genom att skriva på ett reflekterande sätt som gömmer att jag själv är privilegierad, arbetar jag för att dekolonialisera forskningsprocessen och kunskapsgenerering när det gäller idrottsområdet. Jag försöker visa hur de afghanska ungdomarna återskapar idrott (och fysisk aktivitet) på ett sätt som skapar värdighet för dem själva och deras vardag. På detta sätt syftar jag till att problematisera de dominerande föreställningarna om vad idrott är, vad den ska göra och hur den kan användas av dem som lever med sociala orättvisor.

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I

Decolonizing Sport and Exercise Psychology Within a European Context

A Critical Overview

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Abstract

Until recently, sport and exercise psychologists have been researching acculturation and its relation with sport and exercise through a lens of universalism and (post)positivism. Using such ontological and epistemological assumptions, researchers have been preoccupied with finding linear patterns that predict the behaviours of immigrants in their new environments without much consideration to historical, sociopolitical and cultural contexts (Chirkov, 2009a). Acculturation, however, is a changing process that is extended over time and revolves within and around specific historical, political and cultural contexts. Considerations from post/anti/decolonial studies maintain that through the western eyes, race and ethnicity have become synonymous for non-white people who have been positioned as different and lesser than their white counterparts (Butryn, 2009). Western scholarship has continued to place this 'cultural other' in the margins of the society and in constant need of intervention. Despite a call for re-thinking the epistemological understanding of the acculturation and its relation to sport and exercise (Chirkov, 2009b; Ryba & Schinke, 2009), European and Scandinavias sport and exercise psychology has remained unchallenged territory for the most part. This critical overview is a call for decolonizing the knowledge and scholarship within sport and exercise psychology by utilizing transformative approaches that centralize the voices of the cultural 'other' and treat them as active agents in the process of knowledge production.

Keywords: integration, acculturation, anticolonial research, immigration, multicultural, othering, critical sport psychology, cultural sport psychology

From the vantage point of a Middle Eastern immigrant woman, “a position I choose to privilege” (Smith, 2012, p.1) and write from, I have been the direct product, consumer, reproducer and critic of the dominant public and academic discourse regarding non-Western diaspora, and in particular the Middle East. As a Middle Eastern person living in Europe and North America, I have witnessed how Western hegemonic discourses have become a familiar site where our most intimate relationships with ourselves, our families, our histories and our cultures are constantly questioned, investigated, translated and legislated by the media, legislators and academia (Smith, 1999; Young, 2003). Sport and physical activity scholarship has been especially important in (re)producing problematic stereotypes about us – the ethnic and ‘cultural other’ – and our bodies, “as well as [providing] a surface-level analysis that [has] mostly failed to critically interrogate the political implications of being an ‘outsider’ within the inequitable, able-bodied, gendered” (Ratna & Samie, 2018, p. 23) and Eurocentric fields of sport and physical activity. In order to address this important issue at this critical time, firstly, I would like to address the researchers in my field of study, sport and exercise psychology, and their role in reproducing and maintaining certain social inequalities pertaining to marginalized ethnic groups and immigrants within a European context. Secondly, I aim to emphasize the need for an increase in ‘decolonial’ scholarship that critically tackles the traditional epistemological understandings of sport and exercise psychology by centring the world views of ‘cultural others’ and treating them as active agents in the process of knowledge production. Thirdly, I intend to offer two approaches that can operate within decolonial frameworks to address these goals. The following is meant to be a critical overview of the above-mentioned concepts within Europe; therefore, in accordance with recommendations of Grant and Booth (2009) and their guidelines regarding a critical overview, I will only highlight European studies that have examined acculturation of migrants and ‘cultural others’ within the field of sport and exercise psychology that have been published in the last decade.

Framework

In order to define decolonial thought and decolonizing methodologies, I will first discuss colonization. Definitions of colonization vary across contexts and sites; in some cases it represents marked political and economic hierarchies, in others the production of certain discourses about visible ethnic groups and non-Western cultures; and yet, in other contexts it could refer to the appropriation of imagery, creations and ways of knowing of certain populations while rejecting the very same people who fostered those ideas (Smith, 1999; Sugawara & Nikaido, 2014). What I wish to address here is the application of the latter two denotations by academics, which has contributed to the creation of a ‘cultural other’ – a constructed homogenic group that is culturized, problematized and ‘othered’, in ways that are radically different to and less than its white counterparts (Eliassi, 2015; Ratna & Samie, 2018). Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) whose ideas inspired the title and my opening statement, emphasized that the taken-for-granted belief that academic research is inherently a noble profession is a problematic concept that has made adverse and harmful effects of research, and the existing inequalities within it, invisible. She further argued that many researchers embodying this ideal, have simply assumed that their work is ethical and will benefit humankind regardless of means and implications of their research for the communities involved (Smith, 1999). Sport and exercise psychology researchers have not been immune to such practices. University-based (Western) sport and exercise psychologists coming from positions of power and authority, have entered vulnerable communities, particularly communities of the ‘cultural other’ (i.e. Indigenous and immigrant communities), often without active consultation and reflections of the members of these communities (Blodgett, 2015; Smith, 1999). As a result, the knowledge produced by such means has tended to focus on negative social issues that debilitates the members of the community, ‘othering’ them further in the process (Forsyth & Heine, 2010). Additionally, many recommendations, interventions or theories that have been produced in this way do not give any legitimacy to the thoughts, world views and the agency of the people they are meant to influence. Reflections of Paulo Freire (1970/2005, p. 65) articulate this point eloquently:

Attempting to liberate the oppressed without their reflective participation in the act of liberation is to treat them as objects which must

be saved from a burning building; it is to lead them into the populist pitfall and transform them into masses which can be manipulated.

It is important to note that criticism of normative ways of research within the field of sport and exercise psychology, particularly when researching ethnicity and culture, has been continuously present (see for example Duda & Allison, 1990; Ryba & Wright, 2005). Duda and Allison (1990) argued that viewing culture and cultural identity as simple categorical variables reflective of ethnicity not only diminishes the experiences of ethnic groups, but also results in biased and distorted understandings of the human condition within these contexts. Subsequently, inspired by feminist scholarship, researchers have increasingly criticized the Eurocentrism of sport psychology scholarship and advocated a multidisciplinary approach of ‘cultural praxis’ that combines theory and practice and engages sociocultural as well as social justice themes (Ryba & Schinke, 2009; Ryba & Wright, 2005). As a result of such work, cultural sport psychology (CSP) has been developed as a valuable branch that can advance the field beyond its universalist assumptions towards a discipline that is ethically and politically concerned with equity and social justice (Ryba & Wright, 2010; Schinke & Hanrahan, 2009). Although CSP researchers are challenging the mainstream assumptions and working towards social justice, they are still few in numbers and their research for the most part continues to be within the framework of Western philosophies. Decolonial scholarship, on the other hand, entails contesting dominant (Western) academic paradigms as taken-for-granted approaches to research in order to actively transform not only the site but also the aspirations of knowledge production (Forsyth & Heine, 2010; Mignolo, 2009). This scholarship engages in knowledge-making processes to advance the cause of communities who are marked as ‘cultural other’ by questioning the underlying structures of research itself, from organization to dissemination (Forsyth & Heine, 2010; Mignolo, 2009). In this way, decolonial methodologies informed by local ways of thinking become praxis – action informed by reflection – embedded in the epistemologies of the ‘cultural other’ and the ways that people have generated and communicated knowledge historically and/or through their social relations and interactions with the world (Blodgett et al., 2013; Freire, 1970/2005; Smith, 1999). In such a way, voices from the margins can take the centre stage in the process of research and knowledge production, offsetting and transforming the structural power and uncontended ways of knowing while working towards community development and

rebuilding leadership from within the communities concurrently (Macdonald, 2012; Smith, 1999).

Against the backdrop of public debate relating to immigrants and the rise of populist ideologies in Europe and across the world, I highlight the importance of continuing to decolonize sport and exercise scholarship with the aim of centralizing the experiences, knowledge and ways of knowing of the people who are living the problematic realities that are at the centre of investigation as well as advancing critical perspectives on the dominant discourses. I will start by presenting and critiquing the current approaches and the knowledge that has been developed through their application in the field within a European context. Next, I will argue for decolonial approaches that can advance the current monolithic understandings about the ‘cultural other’ and produce critical scholarship that endeavours to value, reclaim and foreground the marginalized voices and epistemologies, transforming the site of knowledge production in the process.

Sport (exercise) and Acculturation Psychology

Sport (and later exercise) psychology emerged as an academic discipline in the 20th century (Ryba & Wright, 2005). In the early days of the discipline, despite having a variety of disciplinary orientations, most sport and exercise psychologists, seeking credibility, followed the well-travelled path of (post)positivism (i.e. rationalism, quantitative, neutrality, etc.). As a result, the research and knowledge that has been produced in this field is mostly quantitative as well as concerned with explaining and predicting athletic success (Ryba & Wright, 2005). Acculturation through and within sport and exercise/physical activity has not been an exception and the majority of sport psychology research in Europe (including my own earlier work) has employed cross-sectional sampling and linear models of acculturation (Berry, 1997) as a theoretical foundation (see Elbe et al., 2016; Hatzigeorgiadis, Morela, Elbe, Kouli, & Sanchez, 2013; Mashreghi, Dankers & Bunke, 2014; Morela, Hatzigeorgiadis, Kouli, Elbe, & Sanchez, 2013).

Berry and colleagues (Berry, 1997; Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006; Berry & Sam, 2013; Kunst et al., 2015), operating within a (post) positivist framework, which views social phenomena as compatible to natural phenomena (Chirkov, 2009a; Cresswell, 2013), formulated one

of the most prominent acculturation strategies models in psychology. Their model emphasizes the individuals' links to both their cultures of origin and their societies of settlement. These two dimensions overlap to create four categories of Separation and Marginalization, Assimilation and Integration. The model further explains that *separation* occurs when the individual values holding on to his or her original culture while involvement with others is avoided. *Marginalization* is ensued when neither cultural maintenance nor interaction with others is practiced. *Assimilation* happens when the individual has little interest in maintenance of his or her original culture and instead demonstrates a preference for interacting with the larger society, and *integration* exists when the individual has strong ties to both culture of origin and the larger society (Berry, 1997). Empirical evidence have also suggested that those with an integrative profile have the most effective psychological and socio-cultural adaptation outcomes, making integration an ultimate goal of an immigrant's acculturation strategy as well as the larger society's best adopted policy (Berry, 2016; Berry & Sam, 2013). As mentioned before, the majority of sport psychology acculturation studies implemented in Europe have used this model as a theoretical foundation. Here I will review some of this research.

Sport and Acculturation Research in Europe

Morela and colleagues (2013) investigated the relationship between team cohesion and acculturation of a group of youth participants who were first generation immigrants in Greece and engaged in team or individual sports. Their finding showed that participating in a sports setting with high team cohesion did not necessarily enhance integrative features of the acculturation model. It did however, have a negative relationship with feelings of marginalization and separation. Using the aforementioned parameters, my colleagues and I carried out a cross-sectional study in Sweden, where we investigated the relationship between acculturation and motivational environment of sports setting for adolescents (Mashreghi et al., 2014). Our findings suggested a relationship between non-competitive motivational climate and assimilation features of the model. In fact, in this study we observed a negative interaction effect between the non-competitive motivational climate and the ethnic belonging feature of the model. Interpreting this result within a Swedish con-

text, we suggested that students in this sample were more comfortable with assimilation features of the model rather than seeing and accepting ethnicity in themselves and in others. We argued that such perceptions run the danger of leading to further marginalization of more visible minority groups.

In a third study, Elbe and colleagues (2016) investigated young first-generation migrant athletes in Spain and Greece (with countries of origin located in Latin America and Eastern Europe respectively). The participants in Spain played in migrants-only teams while the participants in Greece were members of mixed teams which consisted predominantly of ethnic Greek players. The participants in Greece who were members of mixed teams scored much higher in either feeling marginalized or assimilated whereas the participants in Spain who were members of Latin American only teams illustrated a more integrative acculturation profile. The authors explained that this may be due to the societal context since migrant communities in Spain were more established in comparison to migrant communities in Greece. Once again non-competitive motivational climate was inversely correlated with integrative features of the model, suggesting that motivational climate within the sports contexts did not necessary enhance integration but rather may have aided in prevention of marginalization and separation. The participants in the above studies did not experience acculturation in homogeneous and linear fashions. Moreover, contrary to the political claims of integration, the sport environment (and possibly the wider society as well) were more assimilatory in practice. The presence of high feelings of assimilation alongside high feelings of marginalization demonstrated by the migrant youth in the Greek case (Elbe et al., 2016) problematizes these assimilatory practices. It is possible to assume that such practices can be beneficial to certain members of the migrant society that perhaps do not demonstrate visible markers of difference but it can simultaneously be harmful to others who fail to assimilate due to having those visible markers of difference.

Bearing in mind that the objectives of research within a (post)positivist framework is to predict behaviours and yield irrefutable correlations, the conflicting findings of these studies and the inability of the model to perform as it was assumed, underlined fundamental issues with this acculturation model that may reflect other psychological or socio-political factors. Consequently, in a position stand paper in *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology* (IJSEP), Ryba, Schinke, Stambulova and Elbe (2018) concluded that both quantitative and qualitative research in

sport psychology have depicted a non-linear process of acculturation that intersect with the socio-political environment, culture and ethnicity; and sport and exercise psychologists need to investigate beyond the linear models of acculturation.

The conclusion drawn by Ryba and colleagues (2018) is also reflected in the findings of numerous acculturation psychologists who have scrutinized Berry's model of acculturation on various grounds (see Bhatia & Ram, 2009; Chirkov, 2009b; Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga, & Szapocznik, 2010). One of the criticisms has been the model's universalist perspective which asserts the same two acculturation processes and the same four acculturation strategies describe all migrants alike – notwithstanding the type of migrant, countries of origin and settlement and the ethnicity of the individuals and groups. Moreover, as Bhatia and Ram (2009) further elucidated, Berry's model has failed to consider the issues of historical and current conflict and power, and has implicitly assumed that the two cultures in question have equal status. Despite Berry's (2016) later contentions regarding the required presence of equity as a precondition for full integration, his model of acculturation is founded on the assumption of equity of all cultures (Chirkov, 2009b) which, I believe, is rarely (if ever) the case in the current (or historical) contexts, especially considering the privileged position of Euro-American world views and the power they exert in the contemporary socio-political world. Another criticism has been the linearity that is implicit in the model, according to which integration strategy is an optimal end-goal. However, the experience of acculturation is far from a simple linear journey (Chirkov, 2009b). Thus, acculturation, from a critical perspective, is a changing process that is extended over time and revolves within and around specific historical, political, sociological and cultural contexts (Chirkov, 2009a). Acculturation scholarship, therefore, needs to consider and reflect on these issues.

Cultural sport psychology

In light of the above-mentioned critiques, a previously sporadic criticism on over-representation and centralization of Euro-American knowledge in sport settings, as well as in acculturation psychology, has gained momentum (Blodgett et al., 2008; Butryn, 2009; Ryba & Wright, 2005; Schinke et al., 2010; Schinke & Hanrahan, 2009). Over the last decade, sport and exercise psychologists, especially within North America, have

criticized the research and theories produced in the field, stating that despite the greater presence of the ‘cultural other’ within the field of sport, either culture has rarely been discussed, or it has been presented as a categorical grouping in studies (Blodgett, 2015). Responding to this criticism, scholars in the discipline have developed the field of cultural sport psychology (CSP) as a critically reflexive and contextually informed line of inquiry that contemplates contextual and cultural influences on the lived experiences of individuals and the meaning-making processes within the context of sport (and to some extent exercise) (Blodgett, 2015; Ryba & Wright, 2010; Schinke & Hanrahan, 2009).

Positioning their work within cultural sport psychology and building upon the work of feminist and indigenous researchers, Ryba and Schinke (2009) scrutinized the conventional methodology of Western scholarship, highlighting its ritualized Eurocentrism, a process through which Euro-American perspectives and methods have become the only legitimate and valid frameworks of knowledge. They stated that despite the marginalized groups’ objections to the hegemonic knowledge claims and presence of sophisticated frameworks of knowledge in the margins, the mainstream knowledge base in sport psychology has continued to be a Euro-American construction, established through ritualized (formal education in mainstream universities) methodologies that have imposed hetero-Euro-centered strategies across all populations and cultures (Ryba & Schinke, 2009). They, therefore, advocated the use of cultural praxis through “an active and reflexive process of blending theory, lived culture and social action” (Ryba & Schinke, 2009, p.266), with the aim of cultivating sport psychology scholarship that intersects with sociocultural difference, power and ethics, and facilitates a contextual understanding of marginalized voices.

CSP, though embraced more fully in North America, is still in its early stages in Europe, especially within the acculturation arena (see Ronkainen, Khomutova, & Ryba, 2017; Ryba, 2017; Ryba, Stambulova, & Ronkainen, 2016). Ryba, Stambulova and Ronkainen (2016) examined life stories of 15 transnational professional and semi-professional athletes (including one black and one mixed-race athlete) to understand the developmental dynamics of cultural transition and psychological mechanisms that assisted athletic career adaptability. Their findings provided rich stories that highlighted the intense feelings of loss, excitement and hope involved in migration experiences of professional athletes, as well as underlined the host countries’ organizational shortcomings in address-

ing the challenges of elite athletes' mobility and migration. In a second study, Ronkainen, Khotumova and Ryba (2017) examined the life stories of two athletes who migrated to a different country for work and family reasons. Their findings highlighted the open-ended path of acculturation and the importance of multiple relational and belonging contexts in the process. Despite the non-normative ways in which these two studies interrogated acculturation in sporting contexts, they did not fully engage in critical and decolonial paradigms so as to move the dialogue beyond explanatory discussions and into more transformative work. The above studies, for example, did not engage in analysis of psychosocial or racial – as it relates to whiteness studies – differences between the individual migrant athletes and how those differences might affect their acculturation processes. One example of such a difference could be the effects of historical racialization (and colonization) on internalized belief systems (as described by Fanon, 1965/2001) of the European and African athletes as well as their coaches and teammates, and the ways in which this effected their acculturation strategies. Moreover, as evidenced by articles reviewed in this paper, CSP research has been developed within the realm of professional or semi-professional sport and have not yet made any progress in areas of physical activity and exercise.

Considering this body of knowledge in sport and exercise psychology, the need for more critical scholarship pertaining to the 'cultural other' within a European context is evident. In spite of the rapidly growing field of CSP, approaches related to (post)positivist, assimilation, Eurocentric perspectives still linger on in the scholarship of the field. Even though acculturation studies within the framework of CSP have contested the normative discourse on understanding psychological processes as autonomous, by leaving socio-political and whiteness discussions unacknowledged, the research within CSP runs the risk of becoming complicit in the perpetuation of power inequalities and the (re)production of problematic stereotypes about the 'cultural other' (Butryn, 2009; Ratna & Samie, 2018). This is where decolonizing thought and methodologies can offer a different point of departure for researching sport and exercise and their relationship with acculturation.

Decolonizing praxis

As I outlined in the introduction, decolonizing methodologies are first and foremost political projects that intend to transform the site of knowledge rather than merely challenge or reform it (Smith, 1999). They do not revolve around incorporating the ‘cultural other’ in recognizable (and colonial) structures and their point of departure is not the current mainstream institutions of knowledge. Rather they are grounded in epistemic disobedience, which works to transform those same institutions and their underlying taken-for-granted ways of conducting, producing and disseminating knowledge. Concurrently, decolonial research aims to work for the revitalization of peoples who have been historically marginalized and denied their full humanity (Mignolo, 2009; Smith, 1999). Methodologies informed by decolonial thought become praxis that can empower people and communities to tell their stories in their own ways, acknowledging their collective histories and struggles as well as reclaiming their own ways of knowledge production and dissemination (Freire, 1970/2005; Smith, 1999). When researching acculturation in and through sport and physical activity, decolonial praxis can offer deep insights into the needs, interests and lived experiences of individuals who are deemed ‘cultural other’, insights that come from within the communities and highlight the invisible and deep-seated barriers that exist in relation to acculturation and integration strategies. Such scholarship can actively contribute to the development of both communities’ and individuals’ psychosocial well-being by shifting the focus to the needs and experiences of the ‘cultural other’, while also transforming the process of research, its assumptions, ethics and outcomes (Freire, 1970/2005; Smith, 1999). In this way, decolonial praxis can contribute in ways that are meaningful and ethical to the individuals’ acculturation as well as to the academia and acculturation psychology research.

Sport (Exercise) Psychology and Decolonizing Research

As mentioned in the previous section, a number of sport and exercise psychologists, especially in North America have taken up the notion of praxis, arguing for an active and reflexive process of blending theory, lived culture and social action, thus prompting a cultural turn in sport

and exercise psychology (Blodgett et al., 2013, 2008; Blodgett, Schinke, Peltier, et al., 2011; Ryba & Schinke, 2009; Schinke & McGannon, 2014). Working with communities seen as the ‘cultural other’, namely Aboriginal and immigrant communities, these scholars have employed research processes that are in line with the communities’ needs and interests. Employing innovative and culturally relevant methodologies (participatory, art-based and narrative methods), Blodgett and colleagues endeavoured to obtain deeper understandings of the process of relocation and acculturation for the Aboriginal athletes who participated in their study. They argued for the use of Indigenous methodologies as a way to advance past the culturally exclusive practices of traditional sport psychology research (Blodgett et al., 2013; Blodgett, Schinke, Smith, et al., 2011). Not only have these projects made visible the structural and systemic racialized practices in Euro-American (Canadian) contexts, they have also illustrated the nuanced and fluid process of acculturation, showing that it is not a finite process; it can re-emerge again and every time a new practice is encountered (Schinke & McGannon, 2014). Moreover, these studies have drawn their conclusions from within the marginalized groups through the use of meaningful methodologies which aimed not to exploit the individuals’ knowledge or invade their subjectivities (Blodgett, Schinke, Peltier, et al., 2011). As these examples illustrate, decolonial praxis is employed through various approaches and methods. A thorough discussion regarding the specifics of such approaches is outside of this article’s limits. A brief overview of two of these approaches, namely participatory action research (PAR) and art-based research (ABR), will have to suffice.

Participatory Action Research and Art-Based Research as Decolonial Praxis

The PAR approach moves the investigation from a linear cause and effect analysis to a participatory dialogical agenda that reflects the context of people’s lives through transformative cycles of acting and reflecting (Dimitriadis, 2010; Iisahunter, Emerald, & Martin, 2013). It is research that is conducted ‘by’ and ‘with’ the communities rather than ‘on’ and ‘for’ them. PAR is decolonial in its origins and stems from the struggles of South American peasants and Indigenous peoples in the face of colonial and post-colonial practices in that region. A central notion in PAR is the idea of praxis, action informed by thought and reflection, which

is created in the process of dialogue between subjects as co-investigators of a problematic reality (Freire, 1970/2005). Through PAR, cultural sport and exercise psychology researchers can open up a space for critical, multi-cultural and multi-versal dialogue about knowledge that extends and moves outside of the ivory tower of academia and its well-intentioned academics. Via this critical space, opened up in the process of PAR, individuals (both researchers and community members) can learn about complex histories and consequences of certain discourses as well as their own psychological and social attitudes and behaviours; they can begin to re-imagine and denaturalize taken-for-granted realities of their personal and social worlds and start generating and implementing ways of contesting such realities based on the knowledge accumulated through this reflective and critical inquiry (Camarrota & Fine, 2008; Dimitriadis, 2010).

Art-Based Research (ABR), which despite being culturally relevant has been particularly underrepresented in acculturation studies of sport and physical activity psychology, is another approach that, when used within a decolonial framework, can work to develop and strengthen the ‘cultural other’ communities and ways of knowing. In his pivotal work, *Orientalism*, Edward Said (1978/2003) highlighted one of the prominent features of the modern social science tradition in relation to the world of ‘cultural others’ as the “singular avoidance of literature” (p. 291) in favour of overemphasizing the facts and statistics. He argued that in this way modern social science has reduced and dehumanized the peoples and the regions in question to statistics and trends. He further contended that since ‘cultural other’ poets or novelists write of their experiences, ideals and humanities, they effectively unsettle the Western representation of their world and their peoples (Said, 1978/2003). I would extend this disrupting characteristic to all works of art, making art-based research a powerful tool that can centralize the marginal voices and revitalize their culture, language and ways of knowledge production. In many cases, such modes of inquiry are also epistemologically and methodologically aligned with the peoples and cultures in question and embrace local ways of thinking and being (Blodgett et al., 2013; Smith, 2012). This especially holds true in the field of sport, exercise and physical activity where the (non)moving bodies, their expressions and (non)performance are the centre of our inquiry. PAR and ABR in sport and exercise psychology have the potential to become decolonizing approaches that (co)produce knowledge from within and by the traditionally marginalized commun-

ities, benefiting the development and revitalization of those communities while working to challenge and transform the mainstream ways of research which reflect Eurocentric biases of those who have historically dominated academia.

Conclusion

Throughout this paper, I have reviewed and exposed various representations of the ‘cultural other’ within the field of sport psychology in order to “work against colonial discourses that further plunge us into hierarchical and binary juxtaposition” (Samie, 2017, p. 53) and situate the ‘cultural other’ as different and/or less than their Western counterparts. With the development of CSP, psychological knowledge about the ‘cultural others and their relationship to sport and physical activity has undeniably developed in the last two decades. Nonetheless, the European scholarship within sport and exercise psychology, particularly in relation to acculturation studies, is still lagging behind; in Europe, Eurocentric beliefs and constructions have managed to predominate and direct academia and research within this field. Guided by Western epistemology, this scholarship have further disconnected the communities from their histories and culture, and devaluing their knowledge and ways of knowing in the process (Fanon, 2001; Smith, 1999). Therefore, now, more than ever, sport and exercise/physical activity psychology researchers, particularly in Europe, need to critically re-examine the ritual of their knowledge production and utilize other ways of knowing that do not reproduce the same patterns of social inequalities that are being researched, other ways of knowing that are drawn from ‘within’ and ‘by’ the communities themselves and therefore are congruent with the peoples’ values and epistemologies. PAR and ABR, within decolonial frameworks, are but two such examples that offer great potentials for reclaiming values and epistemologies that have been eroded historically in the course of Western university-based research. In this way sport and exercise psychology researchers can work towards development and revitalization of marginalized communities and restore their humanity.

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Persian/Dari Summary

«ما بچه های افغان» داستان هایی از فعالیت های ورزشی

سپندارمذ مشرقی با همراهی یاسمین، محمد، حسن، علی، باسط وفرهاد

«هرروز به کارگاه ساختمانی که در آن به کار سخت جابجا کردن تیر آهن های سنگین و فرغون های پر آجر مشغول بودم می رفتم. ولی بعد از ظهرها وقت خوشی داشتم. با دوستانم "دمپایی خر" بازی می کردیم که در آن لنگه دمپایی کهنه ای را با هدف اصابت به دیگری به سوی هم پرتاب می کردیم. برای این که از ضربه برخورد دمپایی در امان باشیم، می بایست خیلی سریع حرکت می کردیم! این بازی ساعت ها ما را مشغول می داشت. وقتی بزرگتر شدیم، ما بچه های افغان، کال قدیمی و خشکی را به زمین فوتبال تبدیل کردیم. خوش می گذشت.»

این داستان ده نوجوان افغانی است که اکنون در شهر کوچکی در سوئد زندگی می کنند. آن ها بخشی از گروه انبوه نوجوانانی هستند که زیر نام «کودکان پناهجوی بی سرپرست» در فاصله سال های 2014 تا 2016 {آژانس مهاجرت} تا 2019) به سوئد آمده اند. مطابق کنوانسیون حقوق کودکان (CRC) و همچنین قوانین سوئد «کودک پناهجوی بی سرپرست»، پسر یا دختر زیر هیجده سال است که در هنگام ورود به سوئد بدون سرپرست بالغ باشد.

از اولین دیدارمان، کوشیده ایم تا داستان هایی از زندگی آنان در رابطه به فعالیت های بدنی و ورزشی بنویسیم و آنان را مورد موشکافی قرار دهیم. کاری در مقابله با باور غالب «یگانه روایت» (آدیچی 2009) از «کودکان پناهجوی بی سرپرست» در گفتمان عمومی که نتیجه اش "دیگران" انگاشتن کودکان و قرار دادن آن ها در بیرون از تصویر کلی دوران کودکی است. «دیگران» جریانی است از ساختن گروهی از مردم خارج از حوزه «گروه های خودی» بر مبنای گفتمان تفاوت های اجتماعی بومی و نژادی (راتنا و سامی 2018). با این شیوه «کودکان پناهجوی بی سرپرست» به ندرت در شمار کودکانی با آرزوها و رویاها، یا نسل امروز و آینده» (جمپور 2018) به شمار می آیند. آنها یا در گروه قربانیان آسیب پذیر، که در معرض تجربیات هولناک مانند فقر و گرسنگی و کار اجباری قرار می گیرند (جمپور 2018، استرتمو 2011) و یا نقشه پردازانی حيله گر و زیرک، که با فریب ماموران قانون در باره سن خود، سعی در بهره جویی از سازمان های رفاهی سوئدی دارند (استرتمو 2011 و 2014). در پاسخ به این «یگانه روایت»، سازمان های متنوع دولتی و غیردولتی سعی در مدیریت این نوجوانان با روش های گوناگون داشته اند که یکی از آن ها مدیریت توسط ورزش و فعالیت های ورزشی بوده است. این مفهوم به هم آمیختگی نوجوانان توسط ورزش و فعالیت های بدنی، خود غالبا به عاملی برای بازتولید تصویر «دیگران» از این «کودکان پناهجوی بی سرپرست» تبدیل شده است (اگرگارد 2018). حقیقت آن است که ساخت و ساز این «یگانه روایت» از باورهای اروپا/امریکایی در باره تعریف کودک و کودکی نشأت می گیرد و بر طبق آن نیازها و تقاضاهای همه کودکان در سراسر جهان تعریف می شود. این تعریف نادرست همچنین

ناشی از متدهایی است که موسسات پژوهشی غرب، با استفاده از دستورالعمل‌های اروپا محور (جمپور 2018 و مشرقی 2019)، این کودکان و نوجوانان را مورد پژوهش قرار داده و روی روایت‌های مشکل محور همسانی تمرکز کرده اند که این کودکان و نوجوانان را بدون هیچ پیشینه تاریخی در مدخل دروازه‌های اروپا معرفی می‌کنند (آگرگارد 2018). بدیهی است که فقر، گرسنگی و هراس زندگی این کودکان را شکل بخشیده است اما آن‌ها هرگز قربانیان منفعل چنین شرایطی نبوده اند. همچنان که داستان سرآغاز نشان می‌دهد، کودکان فعالانه و مداوم توانسته اند تأثیرات شرایط ناموافقی را که با آن روبرو بوده اند درک کرده و با آن کنار بیایند. آن‌ها توانسته اند در همین شرایط راه‌هایی برای لذت از بازی‌های کودکانه مانند هر کودکی بیابند و آرزوها و رویاهایی همانند بقیه کودکان جهان بپرورانند. همچنان که آدیچی (2009) می‌گوید، باور «یگانه روایت» لزوماً نادرست نیست اما یقیناً کافی هم نیست زیرا با تکیه بر آن امکان ارتباط را به عنوان انسان‌های برابر دشوار و گاه غیرممکن می‌سازد. در این فصل من بر سر آنم که با تعریف روایت‌های بسیار نوجوانان افغانی در رابطه با فعالیت‌های بدنی، ورزش و تحرک به مقابله با «دیگری» ناشی از «یگانه روایت» برخیزم؛ چنان که با همکاری خود این نوجوانان این روایت‌های فراوان پژوهش و موشکافی شده است تا این اندیشه رایج سوندی‌ها را زیر سوال ببرد که معتقدند مشاهده فعالیت‌های ورزشی و تربیت بدنی نوجوانانی که به مهاجرت اجباری دست زده اند نشان می‌دهد که آنان فرودست‌تر از همسالان سوندی خود می‌باشند (برای نمونه گزارش ولز، نرمو و اوتسبرگ 2017).

ساختار معرفت‌شناختی و بنیادهای نظری

به منظور درک و نمایش قصه‌های این نوجوانان، روش پژوهش عملی مشارکتی (PAR) را برگزیده و تلاش کرده‌ام با کاربرد روش‌های تحقیقات هنر محور (ABR) در چهارچوب «متدولوژی بازیافت هویت گمشده» به این مهم دست یابم. همچنان که میگنولو (2009) بیان کرده است، «متدولوژی بازیافت هویت گمشده» عرفی پذیرفته شده (فرایندی فکری و عملی) است که تعاریف استعماری (حقیر شماری نژادی، شرایط اجتماعی-اقتصادی مردان و زنان، و گونه بندی سیاسی برطبق تعریف خودساخته "عرفی و معمولی" اروپاییان از روی الگوهای رایج در اروپا) را به چالش کشیده و راه خود را از تعریف "عرفی و معمولی" برخاسته از معرفت‌شناختی غربی جدا می‌کند. بنا براین «متدولوژی بازیافت هویت گمشده»، در ذات خود کاری سیاسی است که اهداف گوناگونی را پی می‌گیرد. اولین و مهمترین هدف آن یافتن راه‌هایی برای تجدید حیات اجتماعی است که به طور تاریخی «دیگران» شمرده شده اند. دومین هدف این متدولوژی به چالش کشیدن موسسات و ساختارهایی است که این نابرابری و بی عدالتی را (مطلقاً یا ضمنی) تولید می‌کنند. در جهان مولد دانش، این چالش توسط انتقال مراکز معرفت‌شناختی و علم به اجتماعات «دیگران» انجام گرفته است. (فورسیت و هین 2010؛ میگنولو 2009؛ اسمیت 1999)

روش پژوهش عملی مشارکتی (PAR) که فلسفه اش را از ایده خرد نقادانه پائولو فریر برگرفته که ریشه در مبارزات روستاییان آمریکای جنوبی و بومیان آن سرزمین‌ها بر علیه ساختار استعماری در آن نواحی دارد (دیمیتریادیس 2010؛ فریر 1970/2005). فریر بر خرد نقادانه برای تغییرات

شخصی و اجتماعی تاکید دارد و ادعا می کند این روند می بایست با همکاری و گفتگوی چند جانبه به شکل بررسی دایره وار و برابر در موضوع "عمل و عکس العمل در جهان واقعی به منظور تغییر آن" (فریر 2005/1970، ص 51) به وسیله مردمی که در واقعیت زندگی می کنند، انجام گیرد. به این ترتیب پژوهش عملی مشارکتی فضایی فراهم می آورد که محققان بتوانند توسط گفتگو های مشارکتی با افراد این اجتماعات و همکاری آنان، از میان جامعه و توسط خود آن ها تولید حکمت نمایند. چنین روندی در مسیر رشد خود می تواند ساختارهای ناهنجار پذیرفته شده جهان را مورد سوال قرار دهد (کاماروتا و فین 2008؛ فالس- بوردا و رحمان 1991)

از سوی دیگر، متد های تحقیق دانشگاه محور که بر اصول مدل غربی استوار است، به طور سنتی پژوهنده را قادر می سازد تا بتواند به اجتماعات آسیب پذیر سراسر جهان دسترسی داشته، روی آن ها تحقیقات گوناگون پیچیده ای انجام دهد بدون آن که به اثر این پژوهش ها بر زندگی افراد آن اجتماعات اعتنایی داشته باشد (اسمیت 1999). چنین متدهایی در حقیقت رویا ها، خلاقیت ها و چگونگی شناخت آن جوامع را با نگرشی استعماری می نگرد و بکلی مردمانی را که صاحبان آن ایده ها بوده اند نادیده می گیرد (مشرقی 2019؛ اسمیت 1999). در مورد «کودکان پناهجوی بی سرپرست» در کشور سوئد، بیشتر پژوهش ها بر مبنای دستورالعمل های فرد محور انجام گرفته و تاکید آن ها بر شناخت روانی و نگرانی های مربوط به رشد و نمو افراد بوده است (جمپور 2018؛ استرتمو 2011). حتی مطالعات مربوط به هجرت و درآمیختن اقوام تنها بر یک جنبه روند مهاجرت، یعنی ورود آنان تمرکز داشته و در مورد روند ترک سرزمین مادری و مشکلات سفر که همواره با مهاجرت آمیخته است، سخنی نگفته اند (اگرگارد 2018؛ جمپور 2018). چنین مطالعاتی همچنین به چگونگی معرفت شناختی این مردمان و این که چطور این معرفت را از میان آداب و سنن و تاریخ خود کسب کرده اند، بی اعتناست (فورسیت و هین 2010؛ اسمیت 1999). مطالعات هنر- محور (ABR) توانایی آن را دارد که نه تنها این گونه معرفتی مهاجران را که متد های رایج در پژوهش و شناخت آنان را با نیرو بخشیدن به معرفت های مبتنی بر سنت اقوام که با تفکر استعماری نادیده انگاشته و انکار شده اند، به چالش بکشد (بلاژت و بقیه 2013؛ مشرقی 2019). متد هنر- محور مستلزم استفاده منظم و ارزشمند روند هنری، با هدف مدیریت تحقیق و تولید معرفت است (لوی و چیلتون 2014؛ مک نیف 2008). تعامل پژوهش گر با جوامع دیگر و نه نگاه یکجانبه و «دیگران» انگاشتن آن ها توانایی آن را دارد که به سنتی ضد استعماری تبدیل شود که حاصل آن احیای سنن حاوی معرفت آنان و قدرت بخشیدن آن جوامع با تکیه بر این معرفت خواهد بود (بلاژت و دیگران 2013؛ مشرقی 2019). بدین گونه مطالعات هنر- محور، و روش پژوهش عملی مشارکتی (PAR, ABR) و نگاه ضد استعماری می تواند به تولید معرفت از میان جوامع "دیگران" بینجامد که ساختار و گفتن «دیگران» سازی را به چالش کشد (بلاژت و دیگران 2013؛ مشرقی 2019).

اگرچه تحقیق حاضر از نوع پژوهش عملی مشارکتی است، اما در ابتدا همکاری برای مشارکت نداشت. من به عنوان پژوهنده پس از دریافت مجوز از کمیته بررسی اصول اخلاقی در سوند، با گروهی از دانش آموزان افغانی دبیرستانی در منطقه اسکان (SKANE) تماس گرفتم تا با استفاده از روش هنر_محور و پژوهش علمی مشارکتی درمورد رابطه این دانش آموزان و تربیت بدنی و ورزش مطالعاتی انجام دهم. پس از تماس های اولیه و ایجاد رابطه ای دوستانه با این گروه دانش آموز، نظریه خود را در رابطه با این پژوهش، با رویکرد ضد استعماری مشارکتی و هنر_محور، با دانش آموزان درمیان گذاشتم و آن ها داوطلب شرکت در پروژه شدند. آن ها موافقت کردند که به عنوان همکار در روند تحقیق، داستان های خود را بازگو و واکاوی کنند تا در میان عموم مردم و جامعه علمی-دانشگاهی منتشر شود.

تیم پژوهنده از ده نفر تشکیل شده (همنویسان) و من (سپندارمز مشرقی) به عنوان پژوهشگر دانشگاهی. برای معرفی خودم باید بگویم دانشجوی دوره دکتری در دانشگاه مالمو می باشم. در خراسان ایران به دنیا آمده و بالیده ام، شانزده سال اول زندگیم را در آن سرزمین سپری کرده و سپس با بقیه خانواده به کانادا مهاجرت کرده ام. سرزمینی که امروز خانه خود می دانم. سپس تر برای ادامه تحصیلاتم به سوئد آمدم و در حال حاضر در کشوری اسکاندیناویایی زندگی می کنم.

همکاران پژوهش این پروژه، افغانی هستند که آن ها را معرفی خواهم کرد. ابتدا بایستی به گذشته های دور بازگردم و تاریخچه سرزمین مادری آنان را بازگو کنم. و این بازگشت ما را به سرزمینی می برد که خراسان بزرگ خوانده می شد. در طول دورانی طولانی، تا سال 1863 میلادی نواحی گسترده ای از سرزمینی که امروز افغانستان نامیده می شود، بخشی از خراسان بزرگ بود (مجتهدزاده 2004). ایالت خراسان، که به سبب هجوم قبایل مختلف همسایه دایما در حال گسترش و کاهش بود، شرقی ترین ایالت ایران بود که تا رود بزرگ آمو دریا و پس از آن ادامه می یافت. باید یادآور شوم که سیستم حکومت در ایران به گونه ای ملوک الطوایفی بود. امروزه این ایالت گسترده در میان کشورهای ایران، افغانستان، تاجیکستان، ازبکستان و ترکمنستان پخش شده است. اهمیت سوق الجیشی این ناحیه سبب می شد که مدام میان امپراطوری های گوناگون دست به دست شود؛ زیرا این امپراطوری ها همواره در آرزوی گسترش و دست یافتن به منابع طبیعی بیشتر بودند. حاصل لشکرکشی های مداوم و تغییر جهت های ناگهانی سبب شد که ناحیه حاصلخیز و آباد خراسان ضعیف و نابود شود و از روزگار شکوهش تنها خرابه هایی بر جای بماند (کریوز 2015). اما تاریخ این سرزمین در حقیقت تاریخ اقوام مختلفی است که در تلاش ایجاد رابطه با یکدیگر و با جهان بوده اند. بسیار پیش از پدید آمدن کشورهای امروزه، مردمان این خراسان بزرگ با رشته های مستحکم تجارت، هنر، مدارس علمی و مهاجرت با جهانیان در ارتباط دایم بوده اند (کریوز 2015). در این فصل ده نوجوان افغانی همکار پروژه، که میان شانزده تا نوزده سال سن دارند، در پی همان حرکت و ایجاد ارتباط انسانی نیاکان خود هستند.

هجرت طولانی، آنان را از سرزمین ها و کشورهای گوناگون، بدون همراهی خانواده و بستگانشان عبور داده است؛ سرزمین هایی چون ایران و پاکستان که برخی از این نوجوانان مجبور به توقف طولانی مدت در آن ها شده اند. از میان این گروه، پنج نفر ابتدا با خانواده های خود به ایران آمده و سه نفر در ایران به دنیا آمده اند. یکی از این نوجوانان ابتدا به عنوان پناهجوی بی سرپرست به

پاکستان رفته و یکی مستقیماً از افغانستان آمده است. سرانجام همه آن‌ها به عنوان «کودکان پناهجوی بی سرپرست» به کشور سوئد آمده‌اند. اقامتگاه اکنون آن‌ها در ناحیه اسکان است که اغلب آنان مایلند در آن بمانند و آن را خانه خود بنامند. پیوندهای مشترک بسیار مرا و این همکاران نوجوان پروژه را به یکدیگر می‌پیوندد. اجداد ما در یک سرزمین بالیده و برآمده‌اند و با زبان مشترکی سخن می‌گوییم. من نیز مانند آن‌ها دست به مهاجرت زده‌ام، هم در نوجوانی و هم حالا به عنوان بزرگسال به اسکندیناوی. با این حال تفاوت‌هایی نیز میان ما هست مانند خاستگاه طبقاتی و اجتماعی، سن و سال، تجربیات و جابجایی‌ها، جایگاه و موقعیت مهاجرتی. در طول روند تحقیق تلاش کرده‌ام انعکاس پیوند‌های مشترک و همچنین تفاوت‌هایمان باشم بدین گونه که گفته‌های این نوجوانان را با احترام و امانت در مرکز توجه پژوهش قرار دهم و در همان حال مراقب آرامش و سلامت آن‌ها باشم.

در مقام سازمان دهنده این پروژه، از دستورالعمل‌های تعیین شده توسط لیبنبرگ، جمال و آیکدا پیروی کرده‌ام که دستورالعملی برای سازماندهی و اجرای روش پژوهش عملی مشارکتی با نوجوانان و تحلیل نتایج آن است. این پژوهش در نشست‌های دوساعته با نوجوانان مشارکت‌کننده انجام گرفته است. در این نشست‌ها، تیم پژوهشی را هدایت کردم تا خاطرات و ماجراهای مربوط به فعالیت فیزیکی و تربیت بدنی خود را روی کاغذ با استفاده از کلمات، طرح و نقاشی، یا آمیخته‌ای از این دو به نمایش آورند. در این هنگام من با دقت و توجه به کار آنان برایشان وجوه گوناگون فعالیت بدنی و حرکت را توضیح داده و شکافته‌ام. پس از پایان کار، با هریک از ده همکار نوجوان پروژه، به صورت جداگانه مصاحبه و گفتگو کرده و از آنان خواسته‌ام در مورد کار ارائه شده خود به تفصیل صحبت کنند تا همه چیز روشن و واضح باشد. مصاحبه‌های محاوره‌ای، فضایی برای تعریف داستان زندگی این نوجوانان فراهم آورد و این فرصت به آنان داده شد تا آزادانه از خلاقیت خود بهره برده و داستان‌های خود را بازگو کنند. روند گفتگو به مصاحبه‌کننده اجازه واکنشی مناسب را داد که در خلال آن هم مصاحبه‌کننده و هم مصاحبه‌شوندگان در کمال نرمش و انعطاف بتوانند در خلق آنچه حاصل این مصاحبه‌هاست همکاری کنند (بلاژت 2015). در طول این گفتگوها من با برداشتن مداوم یادداشت توانسته‌ام بر نکاتی که به نظر من و آن‌ها اهمیت فراوانی از منظر فعالیت فیزیکی و تربیت بدنی آنان در سراسر زندگی‌شان داشته تأکید نمایم.

سپس به تحلیل داده‌ها پرداختیم. باردیگر، با ده همکار پژوهش در جلسات دوساعته به تحلیل موضوعی کار آنان پرداختیم. در این روند گام‌های زیر برداشته شد (لیبنبرگ، جمال و آیکدا). ابتدا با ده اثر خلق شده توسط همکاران پروژه و یادداشت‌هایی که من در هنگام مصاحبه شفاهی با آنان داشتم، آشنا شدیم. برای این کار نمایشگاهی از آثاری که خلق شده بود تشکیل دادیم و همه همچنان که همراه هم به کار یک یک این نوجوانان همکار پژوهش به دقت می‌نگریستیم، یادداشت‌های مرا که در مصاحبه خصوصی نوشته بودم نیز مرور کردیم. این هنگام طرح سوالات و توضیح نکات مبهم گفتگوها بود. سپس یادداشت‌هایی در اختیار همکاران پژوهش قرار گرفت تا نظرات و برداشت‌های خود را با دیدن دوباره تصویرهای به نمایش آمده و یادداشت‌های افزوده بر آن‌ها، بنویسند و کنار تصویر بچسبانند. در این مرحله بیست تا بیست و پنج جمله در باره نقاشی‌ها نوشته شد. پس از آن از پژوهندگان همکار خواسته شد این بیست و پنج جمله را بنا بر ارتباط با یکدیگر دسته‌بندی کنند. دسته‌بندی این جملات به ارتباط آن‌ها با یکدیگر بستگی داشت چه از دیدگاه مثبت و چه منفی. پژوهندگان همراه سپس دریافته‌اند که برخی از این جملات می‌توانند به موضوعات مختلفی وابسته باشند و در نتیجه دوباره جملات را بازنویسی کردند تا بتوانند در زیر مجموعه موضوعات مختلف قرار دهند. روند این پروسه مدتی به طول انجامید زیرا پژوهندگان همکار می‌بایست با یکدیگر گفتگو کرده و

برای قرار دادن جملات زیر موضوعات انتخابی به توافق می رسیدند. به عبارت دیگر در مورد اعتبار این جملات و موضوعات انتخابی می بایست توافق قطعی می شد (لینبرگ و دیگران). سپس از آن ها خواسته شد برای هر گروه جملات عنوان و شرح کوتاهی برگزینند. بدیهی است که همه آن ها می بایست بر سر عنوان و شرح آن به توافق می رسیدند. پس از آن همراهان پژوهنده دوباره به سراغ کارهای هنری رفتند و تمام جملات را کنار آثار نمایشگاه برطبق وابستگی آن ها و مورد مثال بودنشان، همچنان که شرح داده و توافق کرده بودند قرار می دادند. سرانجام همه ما روی پنج موضوع و عنوان که با داستان های گوناگونی که گفته و نمایش داده شده بود توافق کردیم.

در این بخش تلاش می کنم عناوین موضوعات را چنانکه مورد توافق همه همکاران پژوهنده بوده شرح دهم. لازم به تذکر است که محدودیت های لغوی و همچنین حفظ حرمت همکاران جوان پژوهنده و ادارم ساخته که تغییرات اندکی در آن ها بدهم. بنا براین تمامی عناوین و موضوعات توافق شده را زیر دو عنوان اصلی گرد آورده و مفهوم مرکبی از آن ها ارائه می دهم. مفاهیم مرکب مفاهیمی هستند که ترکیبی از تمامی تجربیات و نظرات اشخاص مختلف زیر یک مفهوم و تعریف گرد آمده باشند و روایت ترکیبی هستند شامل همه روایت ها (شینک، بلاژت، مک گانون و گی، 2016). پس از مطالعه موضوعی تمامی داستان ها و کارهای هنری همکاران پژوهش و بررسی موشکافانه آن ها، به چندین سبب شیوه ترکیب این مفاهیم را برگزیدم. اول این که در این شیوه به راحتی می توان هویت گویندگان را ناشناس نگاه داشت که با توجه به آسیب پذیری و کم سالی و موقعیت مهاجر بودن همکاران پژوهنده بر طبق قانون مهاجرت سوئد ضروری و لازم است. دوم این که توسط این شیوه می توانستیم تجربیات و داستان های همه همکاران پژوهش را بیان کنم و کسی را از قلم نیندازم. سوم این که این ترکیب می تواند تصویری جامع تر از اشتراک تجربیات همه همکاران پژوهنده به نمایش بگذارد (شینک و دیگران، 2016). آمیختگی عناوین، نکات قابل توجه و شرح هریک، همراه با درهم آمیختگی مفهومی همه آن ها در این جا ارایه خواهد شد و سپس در چارچوبی ضد استعماری مورد بررسی موشکافانه قرار خواهد گرفت تا نشان دهنده چند لایه بودن داستان های نوجوانان افغان همکار در پروژه و رابطه شخصی هریک با حرکت و فعالیت بدنی آن ها باشد.

ما مقاوم، دقیق، و آگاه به شرایط خود بودیم

به سبب آن که مایلیم در باره شرایط جهانی و موقعیت خود در این جهان بیاندیشیم، (به ویژه هنگامی که به لحاظ فیزیکی فعال هستیم)، به خوبی می دانیم که دوران سختی را گذرانده ایم اما توانستیم مقاومت کنیم و ادامه دهیم و این مقاومت ما را نیرومندتر ساخت.

«دوران سختی برای من بود. آنقدر کار می کردم که تمام بدنم در می کرد و باید بگویم رفتار خوبی هم با ما نداشتند. روزگار تیره ای بود. اما امروز فکر می کنم بسیار بیشتر از کسانی که تجربه چنین دوران های سختی را نداشته اند زندگی را می شناسم. اگر این تجربیات را نداشتم، کسی که امروز هستم نمی بودم. آن روزگار تیره و آن کار های مشقت آور بسیار چیزها به من آموختند. نه تنها به لحاظ فیزیکی قدرتمندتر شدم، بلکه فرصتی یافتم تا مردمان را مورد مطالعه قرار دهم.»

«وقتی از مدیرانه می گذشتم، واقعا ترسیده بودم. مدام دعا می خواندم. اولین بار بود که این همه آب در اطرافم بود. مدیرانه آبی رنگ بود و زیبا و بی انتها. مدیرانه برای من نوید زندگی تازه و قدم گذاشتن به جهانی ناشناس می داد. فکر می کنم نشستن در قایقی کوچک در میان پهنه گسترده و بی انتهای آب خود نشان و علامتی نمادین است. در این مدت هیچ فعالیت فیزیکی خاصی نداشتم، لاقل نه آنقدر که قابل گفتگو باشد. البته باید بگویم راه درازی را باید می پیمودم. از ایران تا اینجا پیاده روی طولانی می طلبد. می شود گفت راهپیمایی طولانی داشتم.»

مفهوم انعطاف پذیری و تمرکز در این عنوان به مقابله با این بینش برمی خیزد که کودکان بی سرپرست پناهجو را قربانیانی منفعل یا حقه بازانی زیرک به تصویر می کشد. چگونگی انعطاف پذیری و دقت افراد امری به شدت فرهنگی و سنتی است (ثرون و بقیه 2011) و برای نوجوانان افغانی که در این جا هستند، این انعطاف پذیری و تمرکز توسط بازبینی آگاهانه آنان از موقعیت سرشار تضاد و مخاطره ای که این نوجوانان خود را میان آن یافته اند، نمایش داده شده است. به لحاظ تاریخی ناحیه خراسان سرزمین برآمدن اندیشمندان، فلاسفه و شعریایی بوده و هست که توسط اشعار و هنر خویش چالش های هرروزه زندگی خود را مورد دقت و توجه و همچنین مورد پرسش قرار داده اند (کریوز 2015؛ مجتهدزاده 2004). در این ترکیب مفهومی همکاران پژوهنده افغان برای تبیین و درک شرایط نامناسب و دشوار خود از این سنت فرهنگی خویش سود جسته و با دقت و تمرکز موقعیت خویش را ارزیابی کرده اند. همکاران پژوهنده افغان روشن می کنند که همواره (از سنین خردسالی) متوجه رنج و واهمه های ناشی از جابجایی دایم، فقر و گرسنگی در زندگی خود بوده اند. هرچند آنان چه به هنگام کودکی و چه نوجوانی فقط پذیرنده تأثیرات این مشکلات نبوده اند؛ و دیدگاه آن ها نشان دهنده پذیرش مطلق چنین وقایعی نیست (جمپور 2018؛ روتز و بقیه 2015). در مقابل آنان مفاهیم و راههایی یافته اند تا از تأثیر چنین رنج ها و کمبودهایی در زندگی خود بکاهند.

دومین روایت ترکیبی نشان می دهد که گذران زندگی همکاران پژوهنده در حقیقت همواره با بررسی شرایط و موقعیت روزانه بوده است. آن ها نه تنها بر مشکلاتی که هرروزه با آن روبرویند تأمل و تفکر می کنند بلکه باور و معانی عرفی را که به مشکلات گوناگون آنان وابسته است زیر سوال می برند. در این بخش آن ها معانی عرفی رایج (از دیدگاه غربی ها) در مورد تعریف تربیت بدنی و فعالیت ورزشی را به چالش می کشند. آیا کوه نوردی تنها هنگامی که برای تفریح و سرگرمی انجام گیرد فعالیت ورزشی به حساب می آید؟ نوجوانان افغانی چنین نمی اندیشند. آنها با کوه نوردی شمردن راهپیمایی طولانی خود از میان کشورهای مختلف دیدگاه تازه ای از فعالیت ورزشی و تربیت بدنی ارایه می دهند. سرفصل بعدی این مفهوم را بیشتر می کاود.

دوست داریم به لحاظ فیزیکی فعال و نیرومند باشیم اما به دلایلی متفاوت

- بیش از هر چیز ما بلیم با دوستان خود باشیم و از با هم بودن لذت ببریم. بازی های مختلفی با توپ مثل بازی فوتبال یک از بهترین هاست. بیشتر ما شیفته بازی فوتبال هستیم چه بازیکن باشیم و چه تماشاگر. ولی از بازی های دیگر هم لذت می بریم.
- گروهی از ما دوست داریم از فعالیت فیزیکی به عنوان وقتی برای مراقبه و تفکر در مورد زندگی مان استفاده کنیم. مثلاً هنگام دوچرخه سواری یا شنا و یا فقط دویدن.

«ورزشهای رزمی یا دویدن کارهایی هستند که مایلیم به تنهایی آن ها را انجام دهیم، این فعالیت ها را نمی توان با دوستان انجام داد. من هستم و خودم. هنگام انجام این فعالیت ها فرصت خوبی برای فکر کردن دارم. فوتبال را با دوستان بازی می کنی برای داشتن وقتی خوش. یکی از خواص برجسته فوتبال این است که با دوستان وقت می گذرانی.»

«فکر می کنم گفتن فوتبال. اما من فوتبال بازی نمی کنم. حقیقت این است که فوتبال بازی مورد علاقه من نیست. بسکتبال یا والیبال را ترجیح می دهم، ولی از تماشای بازی فوتبال خیلی لذت می برم، بخصوص اگر برادرم در بازی باشد. البته شیفته بازی های بین المللی هم هستم. از طرفداران پروپا قرص کریستیانو رونالدو هستم. دوچرخه سواری را هم خیلی دوست دارم، یادآور تمام زندگی من است. یادم می آید وقتی برادرم دوچرخه سواری به من می آموخت چقدر زمین خوردم تا بالاخره حفظ تعادل را یاد گرفتم. همینکه توانستم تعادل را روی دوچرخه حفظ کنم گویی سکان زندگیم را نیز به دست گرفتم.»

ورزش و سازمان های ورزشی سابقه طولانی در سوئد دارند و به عنوان "فعالیت بدنی همگانی" ستون فقرات مدل ورزشی سوئد به شمار می آیند (RF {کنفدراسیون ورزش سوئد} 2012). بنابراین ورزش، فعالیت های فیزیکی و تفریحات به عنوان فضایی برای در هم آمیختن نوجوانان تازه وارد به سوئد به شمار می آید (در بقیه اروپا هم همینطور است) (ایکولم 2019؛ کمسیون اروپا 2007). اما اگر توجه و مطالعه سنت قدیمی "فعالیت بدنی همگانی" در سوئد نشان دهنده آن است که ارزش ها، معانی و سازمان های ورزشی که در ذات این باشگاه های ورزشی برای "فعالیت بدنی همگانی" نهاده شده اند، ارزش ها و اعتبارات تعریف شده در جامعه سوئد هستند و لزوماً اعتباراتی جهانی نیستند؛ که در جای خود ساختار این باشگاه های ورزشی را با اشکال همراه می کند (فاندبرگ 2012، کارلفورز 2016). در ادامه روایت پیشین، این سرفصل نشان می دهد که برای نوجوانان افغانی ورزش و فعالیت بدنی معانی بسیار گسترده تری از باورهای رایج در کشور سوئد دارد (مشرقی 2019، راتنا و سامی 2018). برخلاف گفتن رایج که بر عضویت و مشارکت نوجوانان در باشگاه های ورزش متمرکز است، نوجوانان افغانی مورد گفتگو نشان می دهند که به انواع دیگر فعالیت بدنی و ورزش علاقمند هستند. همانطور که در روایت ترکیبی پیشین بیان کردند، آن ها به ورزش های گروهی نه چندان سازمان یافته که در اجتماعی که زندگی می کنند امکان دستیابی به آن ها هست، بیشتر متمایلند. رقابت، کسب و افزایش مهارت های ورزشی و فعالیت بدنی در ساختاری

ویژه الویت ورزشی آنان نیست. بعلاوه همان موضوع و زمینه فرهنگی_سنتی انعطاف پذیری آنان (در رابطه با جهان) در این الویت بخشی هویداست. نوجوانان افغانی بر این نکته تاکید دارند که هدف آنان از ورزش و فعالیت بدنی افزایش مهارت های فکری و بدنی برای رویارویی با مشکلات فضای پیرامون آنان است. چنین بینش شخصی در مورد ورزش و فعالیت بدنی، در بیشتر موارد با نظر رایج در جامعه سوئد که تاکید بر رقابت، افزایش مهارت های ورزشی و جستجوی فرصت های فیزیکی و اجتماعی است (یاکوبسن 2015). بار دیگر مشاهده می شود که همکاران پژوهنده این مطالعه، باورهای نهادینه جامعه را به چالش می کشند و انگیزه های بسیار بیشتری را برای شرکت در فعالیت های ورزشی پیشنهاد می کنند. آن ها همچنین ثابت می کنند که مانند دیگر نوجوانان و جوانان آنها نیز با شرکت در فعالیت های بدنی و ورزشی به بسیاری از نیازهای عاطفی و اجتماعی خود پاسخ می دهند.

ورزش فوتبال نیز مانند باشگاه های ورزشی از عوامل مهم برقراری آشتی، رشد فردی و فرهنگی، و پروژه های آمیختگی گروه های مختلف در یک جامعه به شمار می آید (برادبوری 2013). پروژه ها و مطالعات بسیاری به دفعات بر اهمیت ورزش فوتبال در زندگی پناهجویان پیر و جوان، به ویژه مردان در رابطه با آمیختن یا نیامیختن آنان در جامعه میزبان و حس تعلق یا بیگانه بودن آنان در این جوامع تاکید دارد (برای مثال: آندرسون 2009 ، ایل و بقیه 2016، ماورو 2016، اسپایژ 2015). پسرهای این گروه بچه های افغان نیز مستثنی نیستند. در حقیقت آن ها بازیکنان مشتاق فوتبالی هستند که در تیم های دوستانه خود یا در تیم های محله و شهر خود چندین بار در هفته مشغول بازی هستند. و بار دیگر این نوجوانان افغان ثابت می کنند که بازی فوتبال چیزی بیش از فعالیت بدنی و ورزش است. مهاجران به اجبار، هيجان هواداری از تیم ها، بخصوص در ساده ترین شکل آن یعنی تماشای بازی دوستانه عزیزانشان، مطلبی نیست که در تحقیقات مربوط به استفاده از ورزش برای آمیختگی مردمان با فرهنگ های گوناگون در جوامع چند فرهنگی چندان مورد پژوهش قرار گرفته باشد (راتنا و سامی 2018). بچه های افغان در این پژوهش بر این نوع هواداری به عنوان منظور اصلی رابطه خود با ورزش اصرار دارند. توسط بازی فوتبال یا ورزش های گروهی دیگر، روابط اجتماعی و خانوادگی آنان تثبیت می شود و قدرت می یابد. این مضمون همچنین عامل ارتباطی نوجوانان افغانی همکار پژوهش با جهانیان است. این نوجوانان نه از دنیا به دور افتاده اند و نه در انزوا روزگار می گذرانند (فریر 2005). آن ها توسط بازی فوتبال در میانه جهان و مرتبط با جهانیان زندگی می کنند به طوری که نه تنها با خانواده و جامعه خود، که با باشگاه های گوناگون جهان و هواداران آنها نیز مربوط و وابسته اند.

این نکته حائز اهمیت است که مضمون قید شده بسیار فراتر از برجسته کردن فوتبال به عنوان ورزشی همبستگی آور است. و البته موانع مشکل زای میان ورزش فوتبال و فرهنگ و سنت تماشای بازی فوتبال را برجسته می کند. پوشیده نماند که برای نوجوانان افغان همکار پژوهش، فوتبال فضایی مردانه است که حضور زنان و برخی از مردان حتی در آن پذیرفته شده نیست. بنابراین همکاران افغانی پژوهش برای دورزدن این موانع یا فقط به عنوان هواداران بازی ها را تماشا می کنند و یا برای فعالیت ورزشی در کنار زنان به ورزش های دیگری می پردازند.

در این فصل تلاش کرده ام بر علیه «دیگر شماری» و پی آمد های یگانه تعریف «کودکان بدون سرپرست» افغان که در تلاش است زندگی پیچیده و سخت آن ها را به تصویر کلیشه ای "بی سرپرست" فرو بکاهد، مقابله کنم. تصویری که برآیند آن نه تنها «دیگرشماری» که حقیر شمردن آن ها و قرار دادنشان در بیرون دایره همسالان سوندی آن هاست (آدیچی 2009، جمپور 2018). با استفاده از متد عرفی ضد استعماری PAR و ABR نوجوانان در این پروژه به عنوان همکار پژوهش شرکت کرده و داستان های خود را در رابطه با فعالیت های بدنی و ورزشی در اوقات فراغت بیان کردند. داستان های آن ها که سرشار شناخت خود و درک شرایط زیستی آن هاست قدرتمندانه پیچیدگی و چندلایگی زندگی آنان را به تصویر می کشد و نشان می دهد که چگونه این نوجوانان همواره از طرق گوناگون به فعالیت فیزیکی و ورزش پرداخته اند؛ فعالیتی که گاه همسو و گاه در سوی مخالف دیدگاه های رایج سیاست گذاری در باره ساز و کار باشگاه های ورزشی جوانان و نوجوانان سوئد است. سرگذشت این نوجوانان افغانی نشان می دهد که آن ها همواره در فعالیت های ورزش و تربیت بدنی چه به عنوان هوادار و تماشاچی و چه به عنوان بازیکن، در پی شاد بودن، تعلق به خانواده و گروه فرهنگی سنتی خاص، نمایش تفاوت های فرهنگی خود، تمرین آیین های سنتی و تمرکز و تامل بر جایگاه خود در رابطه با جهان، بوده اند. آن ها نشان می دهند که زندگی آنان بر مبنای مشاهدات و برآورد موقعیت هاست و بر مبنای حقایق و امکاناتی که در اختیار دارند به بازی و تفریح می پردازند؛ و بعنوان نسل کنونی و آینده به نیروی امید تکیه می زنند که نیروی پیشبرنده آنان است تا در حقیقت و تاویل مرزها را در نوردند و بر مشکلات بی خانمانی، فقر و گفتمان های عمومی فایق آیند.

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The background of the page is a stylized illustration. At the top, there are white, swirling clouds against a yellow sky. Three dark birds are flying in the sky. On the right side, there is a fence made of vertical posts and horizontal wires, with some barbed wire sections. The ground is a mix of green and blue, suggesting grass and water or a path. In the bottom left corner, there is a small illustration of a person with curly hair, wearing a yellow shirt, looking towards the right.

In the context of sports and migration, research within policy-driven themes (i.e., integration) have consistently flattened out the migrants' experiences, meanings and understandings of sports and physical activity to make sense for and from Euro-centric perspectives and framings. Thus, muting other relevant, alternative and already existing ways of living sports and physical activity. Critical sports studies, on the other hand, have demonstrated that sports (and physical activity) remain a contested domain where various human experiences are negotiated and remade along the intersecting lines of class, gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, legal status and (dis)ability. The aim in this study has been to work within a decolonial framework to demonstrate how migrant youth in Sweden navigate, experience, challenge and generate knowledge in relation to physical activity and sports.

Grounded in Indigenous, borderland, Chicana and Black feminist knowledges as well decolonial thought, this thesis contributes both theoretically and methodologically to the field of sport and exercise in relation to young asylum seekers and migration research. The participatory analysis demonstrates that for the Afghan youth in this study sport and physical activity was not a distinct entity, rather it was intertwined with various aspects of their lives, such as their experiences of child labour, pleasures, hopes for the future, leisure, social and mental aspects, and migration experiences. Through their reflective analyses and stories, the youth revealed that despite various forms of oppression, trauma and hardship, they constantly returned, or rather, reclaimed life and future in their acts of self-reflection, friendships, love and hope within the context of sport and life. They, thus, moved beyond the mere resistance of the precarities in their lives to bring about a re-existence.

ISBN 978-91-7877-218-6 (print)

ISBN 978-91-7877-219-3 (pdf)

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