

BREAKING DOWN THE WALLS: FOSTERING OPPORTUNITY AND DIGNITY
AMONGST REFUGEE WOMEN AND GIRLS THROUGH SPORT

by

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THESIS ABSTRACT

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Sports for Development and Peace (SDP) refers to the intentional use of sports in the pursuit of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This thesis primarily centers on three SDP Goals: #3, Good Health and Well-Being; #5, Gender Equality; and #16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions. Through a series of semi-structured interviews with SDP organizations located in various parts of the world, I have identified common barriers and challenges to including female refugees into sports programs and propose strategies to overcoming these barriers.

This thesis situates sports in the context of International Development and details the significance of women in sport through the lens of gender equality and empowerment. It suggests that empowerment surrounds ideas of opportunity and agency, discusses the critical distinction between gender equality versus equity in sports, and highlights that a critical component of sports programming with refugee populations is dignity.

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CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION

In 2018, I lived and worked in Kampala, Uganda for an organization that uses soccer as a tool to work with refugees, teach English, and empower girls. Being raised as a competitive athlete, sports had a profound impact on my own life. Yet, despite this self-recognition, before my time in Uganda, I had never heard of sports being used as an interventionist tool in the development arena. Throughout my ten months in Uganda, I observed the meaning sports added to the lives of adolescent refugee girls. However, despite international attention on Sport and Development and the ongoing refugee crisis, studies on Sport for Development and Peace (SDP) and refugees are scarce amongst academic literature. It was also during this time where I became acutely aware of the reliance of the phrase girl's 'empowerment' in the development context, despite the lack of a clear meaning or definition.

The topics of women's empowerment and refugees remain important elements of the international development agenda. The purpose of this study is to provide a deeper understanding of the value of SDP and its legitimacy as an interventionist tool among women and girls in the development arena. Furthermore, this study considers how a refugee status impacts the empowerment process for this population. Sports for Development research is gaining momentum and there remains a need for better understanding on how sports are being used to contribute to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Existing literature centers on soft skills gained through sports.¹ Life skills learned through sport are acclaimed to empower individuals and enhance psychosocial well-being such as increased self-resilience, self-esteem, and connection with others (United Nations, 2003, p.2). Yet there are critical research gaps in the arena of Sports for Development and Peace (SDP). First, there is an absence of adolescent girls in both qualitative and quantitative studies as most work in the SDP field centers on boys and men (Grabska, de Regt, and Del Franco, 2019). Second, the majority of work has been conducted in the Global North (Brady, 2005; Collison, Darnell, Giulianotti & Howe, 2019). Finally, to date, most research has focused on traditional competitive sports such as soccer and basketball, and how they are being used to improve the health and well-being of disadvantaged populations (Thorpe, Ahmad, & Williams, 2019). While the use of action sports (skateboarding, surfing and climbing) has been growing, yet has received much less research attention. Recognizing these gaps, this study is designed to inquire about adolescent girls, incorporate organizations working in the Global South, and include nontraditional sports.

This study seeks to provide a better understanding of organizations conducting Sports for Development programming and addresses gaps in the literature concerning sports, gender, and refugees. Furthermore, recognizing the need to include non-traditional sports in research, I include nontraditional sports such as skateboarding and climbing in this study. To understand more of what SDP encompasses and hopes to achieve, this study is guided by the question: how are sports such as soccer, skateboarding and climbing being

¹ In contrast to “hard skills” which are technical, soft skills are less tangible and more difficult to define and measure. Soft skills include but are not limited to leadership, teamwork, communication, responsibility, and confidence (Tulgan, 2015).

used amongst refugee populations, especially in relation to promoting gender equality and empower women and girls?

After first describing the methodology guiding this research, my thesis starts with a comprehensive and in-depth literature review. The literature review is divided into two sections. The first section is concerned with the history of development. This is significant because it provides context to the field of Sports for Development. Without understanding the international agenda and values guiding development, the significant and nuanced nature of Sports for Development programming is left ambiguous. Therefore, the discussion on international development and its relevance to refugee policy will lead into the second section of the literature review that is directly concerned with Sports for Development. This section will provide background and context on the significance of Sports and Development, women in sports, and review already existing literature on how sports are being used to engage with refugee populations.

Next, the results of the research will be presented. This section is organized to parallel the literature review whereby findings concerning gender will be presented first and followed on findings directly related to refugee status. In this section, the definition of empowerment in Sports for Development settings is explored. Furthermore, the benefits and challenges of working with refugee girls is explored and potential strategies to overcome said challenges are outlined. Finally, I conclude this project by identifying three major significant themes within the results and providing recommendations for SDP organizations working with both girl and women and refugees.

CHAPTER II.

LITATURE REVIEW

History of Development:

The post-World-War II era marked the start and formalization of international development. Global economic dependency between sovereign states influenced the United States to take initiative for the political and economic resurrection of Europe. The United States started an ambitious development agenda which started with the Truman Doctrine and The Marshall Plan.² Although the United States now found itself on the top of the world power structure, its economy was limited based on the ability of other countries to purchase their products (Hite & Roberts, 2007, pp. 7). Therefore, the foreign aid embedded in these actions of bilateral programs were designed to be mutually beneficial. The perceived success of the Marshall plan (1948) led to the belief that similar interventions could work elsewhere in the world to improve the human condition (Holcombe & Howard, 2019, pp.10). The political, economic, and social devastation that emanated from the war shifted global power dynamics and evoked a surge of newfound internationalism.

Aimed at the prevention of future international conflicts and the promotion of global economic cooperation and prosperity, new global entities were formed. In 1944, forty-three countries came together at the Bretton Woods Conference in New Hampshire,

² Under the leadership of Henry S. Truman, the Truman Doctrine was enacted in 1947 to assist democratic nations from communist and authoritarian threats. The war had left much of Europe's industrial infrastructure destroyed. Economic dependence on foreign markets led the United States to shift foreign policy towards the re-building of Europe. The Marshall Plan was a four-year plan that funded the reconstruction of Europe after World War II. These initiatives are significant because they shifted U.S. Foreign Policy from a disposition of non-interference to playing a significant role in international mediation and development.

United States, and collaborated in the creation of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). In 1945, the United Nations (successor to the League of Nations) officially came into existence. While the Bretton Woods institutions centered on fiscal aid, the United Nations' mandate encompasses broad objectives such as to maintain international peace and security, protect human rights, deliver humanitarian aid, promote sustainable development, and uphold international law.³

The post-World-War II era represents the first 'consciously driven effort to improve the welfare of nationals on a global scale' (Offenheiser, 2019). However, the path to development was primarily approached through the lens of political economy, whereby success was marked by the rise of economic indicators such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The goal of 'development' was being pursued by bilateral and U.N. multilateral programs, multilateral development banks, inter-governmental entities, religious groups, and private foundations (Holcombe & Howard, 2019, pp. 10). This newfound commitment to global prosperity soon transcended the borders of Europe.

Development had very little to do with humanitarianism and was driven by ideas of a stabilized global economy and was strongly influenced by the onset of the Cold War in the late 1940s. Development aid served as a new foreign policy tool that re-shaped relations between nations and was delivered by the Global North to the Global South (Engerman, 2017). While poverty was being addressed on the global stage, the practice of development itself was being carried out according to geopolitical and ideological concerns (Offenheiser, 2019). For example, the United States expanded its bilateral

³ This can be found on the U.N.'s website: <https://www.un.org/en/sections/what-we-do/>.

development projects to the Global South with the Act for International Development and the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961. The purpose of development aid was to combat Communist influence in newly independent states while committing to ‘long-range economic assistance to the developing world’ (Rennack & Chesser, 2011). Therefore, Bretton Woods institutions recommended political and economic reform policies.

Development policy in the 1980s was rooted in neo-liberal and capitalist policy promoted in ‘the Washington Consensus.’⁴ Newly independent states that allied with the West and the Bretton Woods institutions bound themselves to political and economic liberalization in exchange for loans (Young, 1999). When these new market-led development strategies failed to lead to prosperity, states became dependent on donor agencies (Milner, 2009). Heavily indebted, the Global South had few alternatives to accepting the top-down approach to development. The uneven power dynamics between the Global North and South were continuously solidified. The changing international context, alongside slow economic growth, rapid population growth, and climbing debt in the Global South, strengthened the argument for internationalism.

Refugees and Development

The influx of refugees stemming from the World War I and II eras provided further opportunities for the United Nations and the new world superpowers, particularly the United States, to promote development agendas on sovereign states.⁵ The

⁴ The Washington Consensus is a set of neo-liberal principles laid out by John Williamson in 1989. The consensus was composed of ten guiding principles that promoted free markets and political democracy. Originally directed towards Latin American countries, many of which had histories of military dictatorships, the Washington Consensus became a ‘manifesto for capitalistic economic development’ and was promoted around the world (Birdsall & de la Torre & Valencia-Caicedo, 2010).

⁵ In this era, refugees were defined in the UNHCR 1951 Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees: “As a result of events occurring before 1 January 1951 and owing to well- founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is out- side the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail

extraordinary cross-national circumstances of the great wars transformed asylum whereby the process underwent a process of internationalism. (Fontanari, 2019). For example, the United Nations originally created the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to assist refugees displaced by World War II. (United Nations: Refugees). Although UNHCR's original mandate was limited to three years, the U.N. Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (Geneva Convention) was adopted in 1951 and the agency remains operational today.

While the UNHCR was always mandated to promote the implementation of refugee policy and norms, and monitor state compliance with refugee human right standards, the 1951 Refugee Convention gave more power to the UNHCR with the ability to 'supervise refugee conventions' (Loescher, 2001, pp. 5). In order to be accepted as a member of the international community, new states had few choices but to accept domestic refugee norms promoted by the UNHCR (Loescher, 2001, pp. 5).⁶ Furthermore, in the process of providing humanitarian relief to refugees, global development actors like the UNHCR also engaged in developing land infrastructure, agricultural and industrial modernization and political stabilization (Robson, 2017, pp. 626). Refugees were used influence the political and economic landscape of the Middle East when they were used to implement the agenda of the League of Nations and the United Nations, which was predominately led by western stakeholders (Robson, 2017). In this way, the refugee crisis constructed a case to establish 'practical modes of internationalist

himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.

⁶ In fact, the historical definition of a refugee itself reflects post-war II power dynamics and cold-war contexts. With the United States and other axis powers spearheading this process of internationalization, 'refugees' were considered to be 'anti-communist' white men (Chimini, 1998).

authority' in the Global South that would further the UN's own institutional values (Robson, 2017, pp. 626).

Refugees and the UNHCR, with its newfound power and influence, became important global actors in the Cold War context. The bipolar rivalry between Western values of capitalism and Eastern values of communism positioned refugees to be perceived as elements of power (Loescher, 2001, pp. 6). As destabilization and violence plagued Eastern Europe, the UNHCR managed the influx of refugees and the resettlement process to the West (Loescher, 2001, pp. 7). Therefore, refugees and refugee policy saved the lives of individuals forced to flee their homes and served the West's geopolitical interests as a symbol of the dangers and shortcomings of communism.

The chaos created by the Cold War extended beyond the West and bled into the Global South. In the ruthless pursuit of political control and economic supremacy, western powers exacerbated destabilization abroad, creating even more refugees. For example, during the Cold War, when the Prime Minister of new independent Zaire⁷ adopted nationalistic economic policies, the United States and Belgium intervened. The United States was particularly concerned with the nationalization of precious minerals that were used for its military arsenal, and allegedly assassinated the Prime Minister, installing a new, pro-west counterpart in his place (Veney, 2007). Throughout Africa,

⁷ Patrice Lumumba was Congo's first democratically elected leader in The Republic of Congo and served as a Prime Minister, despite the Belgium governments support for other candidates during the campaigning process (Weiss, 2012). He remains the only democratically elected leader today. Lumumba ran on a platform of national unity and was determined to gain control of natural resources in its territories, that were being exploited by Western powers (notably the United States), who were extracting Uranium to build the first atomic bomb (Nzongola-Ntalja, 2011). Mobutu Sese Sekou, considered to be more 'pro-west', became his predecessor, sparking political turmoil (Veney, 2007, pp.55). Mobutu renamed the country 'Zaire' to promote "cultural authenticity" (Veney, 2007). In 1997, after Mobutu had lost executive powers and was replaced by Laurent-Désiré Kabila, the country reverted to its original name, and is known as the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

similar cases of destabilization created more and more refugees. In 1960, prior to major international intervention in local economies and politics, there were only 300,000 refugees in Africa. Just twenty-seven years later, by 1987, there were over 5 million (World Refugee Survey, 1991).

Furthermore, prior to the universal application of ‘the Washington Consensus,’ individual states held much more autonomy over their own refugee policy. In the 1960s, African states provided sufficient transitions and support for refugees by providing them with a plot of land and agricultural tools (Milner, 2009). For example, throughout the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, both Kenya and Tanzania offered refugees land for settlement and sometimes even citizenship (Nowrojee, 2000). This allowed refugees to be self-reliant and become valuable assets to their host communities. However, market liberalization, in the form of Structural Adjustment Programs mandated by the World Bank and IMF, discouraged such kinds of public amenities. With the number of refugees rising, states began to lack the resources and organizational capacity to manage the scale of this enduring problem. Local populations that were also suffering under these new policies began to see refugees as burdensome on the also-dwindling public services, and various states set up camps for refugee that were funded by UNHCR. (Milner, 2009; Loescher, 2001). These programs changed the social, institutional and economic capabilities of host states to provide for both their own constituents and for refugees (Gibney, 2004). Therefore, states had an influx of refugees and less resources to support them.

By the 1990s, the refugee crisis was so overwhelming that host countries started demanding action by development entities within the United Nations and other

international nonprofit organizations. Support from donor countries and development agencies became increasingly reluctant to delegate funds towards the refugee crisis and “African states became subject to ‘a comprehensive super-structure of international accountability’” (Young, 1999, pp.34-5). Concurrently, African states argued that the crisis was indeed a matter of international affairs and therefore development entities should share the burden (Loescher, 2001). In fact, African states had long been calling for international action, which had led to the *International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa* in April 1981. The conference formally recognized the refugee crisis as a universal collective responsibility and called for the mobilization of western resources to support host countries. This is foundational to the international community’s response to modern refugee crises whereby significant oversight and resources are provided to United Nations’ offices like UNHCR. Although African states were able to influence international action, the power dynamics between donor and host states remains imbalanced, making burden sharing a difficult challenge to overcome. Many refugees today never escape the harsh realities of life inside a camp and have become increasingly dependent on international assistance to simply meet their basic needs (Milner, 2009, pp.26).

Women in Development

As a social construct, gender is determined by culture, opposed to sex (Rogers, 1980). According to western male ideology, the ‘natural’ place for a woman is in the home based on her biological reproductive abilities (Rogers, 1980). Western male ideology confined women to unpaid, labor intensive housework (Rogers, 1980).

Despite this cultural norm being regarded as a universal fact, pre-colonial societies frequently placed males as key caretakers of children (Rogers, 1980). The industrial revolution and the rise of capitalism reinforced the economic patriarchy when western women became reliant on the cash economy that favored men's work (Rogers, 1980). Therefore, the phenomenon of women being disproportionately burdened with unpaid work can be traced back to western society, in which was spread through globalization, and more specially colonization.

Globalization, in the form of development, uniquely impacted women. Economic restructuring, mobilized through Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPS), tended to exclude women (Blank, 1997). Now, alongside rising food prices and expenditure cuts in state subsidies, women struggled to participate in the newly founded global economy, brought on by development initiatives (Nzomo, 1994; Desai, 2002). However, by the 1970s, the idea that development was a linear process and industrialization would improve the human condition was being challenged. Ester Boserup confronted the assumption that development benefited men and women equally in her publication of *Women's Role in Economic Development*, in 1970 (Boserup, 2007). Boserup was the first researcher to systematically use gender as a variable in her analysis. In light of her findings, the framework of Women in Development (WID), was established (Rathgeber, 1990).

Recognizing that development had done little to improve the lives of women in the previous two decades, the WID movement aimed at addressing the "economic exclusion of women" within the economic development process (Okali, 2011, pp. 2). Thus, research shifted to the recognition that women's experiences were different then

men's, and focused on women's perceptions (Rathgeber, 1990). Instead of only being valued as wives and mothers, development planners needed to recognize women as agent of economic productivity (Snyder, 2006, pp. 29). The focal point was integration into already existing economic and social development initiatives through legal and administrative changes. For example, WID units were established within development agencies like the U.N. that were supposed to bring women and their voices into development projects and programs (Rowlands, 1997, pp. 5). These WID units were often spearheaded by women to oversee specific projects and evaluate and monitor how women's voices were being accounted for. Why women were left behind in the first place remained unaddressed. In this way, neo-liberal economic policies remained the most popular approach to development, and this new framework was a method to both recognize and utilize women's productive potential as economic, political, and social agents (Rowlands, 1997).

Gender and Development

The shortcomings of the WID approach influenced the shift to a new approach in the 1980s: Gender and Development (GAD). Drawing from the failures of WID, the GAD approach accounts for how key cultural, economic, and political structures in societies influence power disparities and inequality between men and women during the development process. In this framework, gender is understood as the "socially defined and constructed roles of men and women" whereby gender roles shift based on place, time and culture (Karl, 1995, pp.102). Therefore, the social construction of gender and the assignment of roles in the household and community, not women (*per se*), are being examined (Rathgeber, 1990). This was a powerful transformation in terms how the roles

of women were valued, recognized that the empowerment of women extended beyond having more female bodies in a room, and understood the importance of bringing men into the conversation of women's roles in development.

This approach is also founded in the idea that women need to be active agents in the development process and not passive recipients (Young, 1999). The WID approach, while successful in providing women with resources, including them in projects and organizing women's groups, tended to be delivering 'development' to women. This did very little to address gender inequalities and inequities (Rowlands, 1997). In contrast, GAD stresses that women needed to be their own agents of change and organize themselves into groups (Rathgeber, 1990). This holistic perspective acknowledges that development stems from the betterment of society at the individual level: politically, economically, and culturally.

Women and Empowerment

1975 was coined the 'International Year of Women' by the United Nations and marked a new era whereby development was no longer considered gender neutral (Karl, 1995, pp. 94). However, it was not until after the UN Decade for Women (1976-1985) that the concept of women's empowerment gained momentum in the development arena (Karl, 1995, pp. 97-108). By the 1980s and 1990s, women's empowerment came into being as a method to implement action against gender inequality (Cornwall, 2016). The idea of 'empowerment' is embedded in the GAD framework and shifts the understanding of poverty from the lack of material resources, to the outcome of unequal power dynamics between men and women (David & Nazeet, 2009; Rowlands, 1997). While there is a broad understanding that 'empowerment' implies the redistribution of power

and that women need to take ownership of change in their own lives, the definition of the term itself is a subject of debate. Stemming from the use of the word by development agencies as a program outcome without a clear understanding of what ‘empowerment’ means in the context of development programs, researchers like Jo Rowlands have conducted extensive work to contextualize it.

Rowlands’ work is foundational to understanding complexities of empowerment. According to Rowlands (1997), the confusion about empowerment in the context of development derives from inconsistent and overgeneralization of the term ‘power’ and how it is distributed in any given society. Through the rejection of Foucault’s views on power, Rowlands argues that to understand the empowerment process, different forms of power must be recognized.⁸ Focused on the structural basis of society in terms of gender inequality and collective action, different forms of power are identified as: ‘power over,’ ‘power to,’ ‘power with’ and ‘power from within’ (Rowlands, 1997, pp. 13). This distinction provides avenues for development entities to articulate program empowerment objectives more clearly.

Therefore, what ‘empowerment’ means for any given development initiative is dependent on the desired outcomes. For example, ‘power over’ can be loosely be defined as controlling power. Using this definition, empowerment means bringing people who are currently excluded from the decision-making process into it (Rowlands, 1997). ‘Power to’ is defined as productive power that creates avenues for action without undergoing

⁸ Foucault, a French philosopher, believes that power is dispersed throughout any given society and cannot be quantified, meaning that a person cannot possibly possess more or less of it than another person. While he does base power on knowledge, the power of another individual cannot interfere with another person’s agency to act or make choices. Under a feminist framework of power, Rowland argues that this neglects how internalized oppression, resulting from the structure of society which covertly promotes the subordination of women, creates barriers to women actively exercising their own power (Rowlands, 1997, pp. 12).

domination and 'power with' is characterized as a group of individuals who have the ability to take collective problem-solving action (Rowlands, 1997). Under these definitions of power, 'empowerment' is concerned with how "awareness of interests at the individual level can relate to other people in order to participate from a position of greater strength in decision-making and actually to influence such decisions" (Rowlands, 1997, pp.14). Finally, 'power within' is based off the human spirit that is unique to each individual. The inherent strengths possessed by individuals, serve as a basis for self-respect and acceptance that in turn, allows us to accept others as equals (Rowlands, 1997, pp. 13). In terms of development, this approach to 'empowerment' embraces a more holistic perspective by considering the full range of human potential, skills and abilities unique to different people. In summation, these different types of power can be categorized under individual, relational, and collective levels of 'empowerment'. These categorizations are important because they provide avenues for development entities to more clearly articulate program 'empowerment' objectives. For example, Rowlands states that "the failure to define and explore the practical details of how empowerment can be achieved considerably weakens the value of the concept as a tool for analysis or as a part of a strategy for change" (Rowlands, 1997, pp.8). They can also call attention to why simply bringing women into the decision-making process is not enough.

Drawing from Rowlands foundational work, Gender and Development seems to transcend the WID framework by bringing women into the decision-making process and emphasizing the needs for individuals to believe that they are both capable and entitled to make decisions (Rowlands, 1997, pp. 14). In this way, 'power within,' in the form of self-understanding (Kabeer, 1994) and 'power within,' in the form of self-expression

(Sen, 1997), become foundational to women's empowerment. Based on the idea of bottom-up development, 'empowerment' is often used as a synonym for capacity building and community building and is implemented by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (Gibbon, Labonte & Laverack, 2002).

In debates surrounding the need to clearly define 'empowerment,' NGO roles as agents of change are emphasized (Blue, 2005; Young, 1993). NGOs started to be major actors in development by the end of the Cold War when ideas of 'alternative' development began to emerge (Lewis & Kanji, 2009). 'Alternative' modes of development reject top-down development projects led by states, that tended to treat local populations as passive beneficiaries (Lewis & Kanji, 2009). Unlike large scale government administered development, NGOs were seen as community-based solutions (Blue, 2005). Non-governmental organizations were perceived as more participatory in nature and therefore a more viable way to empower local populations to become agents of their own change. This was especially true for development initiatives targeting the inclusion of women. According to Blue (2005), "the shift to NGOs in the administration of development aid was contemporaneous with an increasing international focus on including women in development" (Blue, 2005, pp. 102). NGOs of various sizes and missions readily adapted programmes to empower women in rural communities through capacity building, participation in local governance, and gender awareness trainings (Karl, 1995). While NGOs are still major actors in development, they are no longer viewed as radically different than more traditional and historical methods of top-down development.

Sustainable Development Goals and Gender

At the turn of the century, the UNDP, in accordance with its mandate to promote global development, formulated the UN Millennium Declaration in September 2000. This declaration acknowledged the need to ensure that globalization benefited all global citizens and outlined the values and principles of freedom, equality, respect for nature, tolerance, and shared responsibility.⁹ The UN Millennium Declaration laid the foundation for the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDGs were a set of eight goals that represented a shift away from ideas of linear economic development by highlighting a set of global social priorities (Sachs, 2012). The eight goals were: to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, achieve universal primary education, promote gender equality and empower women, reduce child mortality, improve maternal health, combat HIV/AIDS (malaria and other diseases as well), ensure environmental sustainability, and to develop a global partnership for development. The target outcomes outlined in the MDGs were set to be accomplished from 2000-2015 (Sachs, 2012). These goals were unique in that they were measurable and timebound, put immediate needs on sovereign states, and inspired new and innovative partnerships, especially with NGOs (Kumar, Neeta, & Vivekadhish, 2016; Sachs, 2012).

In 2012, global leaders met at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio, Brazil to redefine and establish new goals to replace the MDGs once they expired in 2015.¹⁰ Following a large number of such meetings throughout the world seeking local input, this led to the creation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2016. The MDGS, being formulated in the Cold War context, were

⁹ This information can be found at: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/Millennium.aspx>

¹⁰ This can be found at the U.N.'s website: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/rio20>

driven by the interests of the Global North and made to be delivered only to the Global South (Dhar, 2018). Unlike the MGDs, which were created behind closed doors, the creation of the SDGs was much more collaborative and included 70 Open Working Groups, Civil Society Organizations, surveys, thematic consultations, and country level consultations (Kumar, Neeta, & Vivekadhish, 2016, pp. 3). The SDGs expand upon the MDGs to include 17 goals that embrace a broad approach to human well-being by focusing on economic development, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability (Sachs, 2012).

Added goals included issues of energy, food security, oceans, and cities and expanded upon goals carried over from the MDGs.¹¹ MDG Goal 3, promoting gender equality and empower women, is now recognized as “SDG Goal 5: Achieve promoting gender equality and empower women” and serves as an umbrella for six targets.¹² The six targets are:

- To eliminate discrimination against women and girls.
- to eliminate all forms of violence against women, including human and sex trafficking.
- To eliminate childhood forced marriages and female genital mutilation.
- To recognize and value domestic work through strong social institutions.
- To aspire for equal participation in leader and other decision-making positions.
- To achieve universal access to sexual and reproductive health.

¹¹ This can be found at the U.N.’s website: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/rio20>

¹² Information outlining the six targets can be found at the U.N.’s website: <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/gender-equality/>

While these are certainly worthy goals, there is no clear paths outlined in how to achieve them.

There are three vague “means of implementation” for all SDGs, and states are encouraged to act upon more laws and policies that lead to the empowerment of women (Horton, 2015). The United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979 exemplifies this implementation strategy. As a convention directed at achieving women’s full equality by eliminating gender-based discrimination, CEDAW possesses synergy with the SDGs based on the systematic mainstreaming of gender throughout the SDGs (Rudolf, 2020). This plan of action is both vague and does not seem to consider enforceability of such laws (Horton, 2015). Therefore, while there seems to be universal agreement regarding the need to target gendered issues in order to improve the human condition, how to reach this target is still up for debate. Regardless, it is notable that there has been considerable progress worldwide and promoting gender equality and empowering women remains a global priority for development on the international, national, and local levels.

Sustainable Development Goals and Refugees

It has become almost impossible for development practitioners to ignore the global refugee crisis. According to the UNHCR, there are 22.5 million refugees dispersed throughout the world, with over half of them being under the age of 18 (UNHCR, 2017).¹³ The majority of the world’s refugee population resides in low-income countries.

¹³ It is important to note that this figure strictly accounts for those who are classified under a ‘refugee status,’ as mandated by the Geneva Convention in 1951. While the Geneva Convention also outlines rights and protection for other vulnerable populations such as displaced persons (Pisani, 2018), a refugee is defined as a person who “owing to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinions, is outside the country of his

In 2016, developing countries in the Global South hosted 84 percent of the world's refugees (UNHCR, 2017).¹⁴ Although the UNHCR is mandated to assist in the integration of refugees within their respective host countries, the system is overwhelmed by the sheer number of refugees and host countries are struggling to make adequate accommodations (Fitzgerald, 2002).¹⁵ This is significant because even wealthier countries (in the European Union, for example), which have more infrastructure to be inclusive of refugees (and of the SDGs), seem incapable of supporting refugees crossing the Mediterranean Sea.

Given the scope of this research, it is important to understand where refugee populations fit under the SDGs. Refugees are a vulnerable population which are frequently subject to unspeakable human right abuses. Before even arriving at a host state, many refugees will experience police brutality, extortion, humiliation, poverty and food shortages, and physical and sexual abuse (Briggs & Cordero-Verdugo, 2018), precisely the reasons why they are becoming refugees in the first place. Crossing borders into any given host country rarely provides relief, and most refugees will end up residing in a refugee camp. Refugee camps are regarded as so abysmal and insufferable that despite the humanitarian efforts of international agencies like UNHCR and international NGOs, they have become a “visible symbol of failed human rights campaigns (Holzer, 2013, pp. 837). Those arriving in countries like Kenya, where authorities’ isolate refugees, may never again live outside a refugee camp again (Fitzgerald, 2002;

nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country” (1951 Geneva Convention, Article 1A (2)).

¹⁴ For example, in 2016, Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan received about 4.5 million refugees from Syria alone (Klein Solomon & Sheldon, 2018)

¹⁵ In 2008, a refugee camp called ‘Ifo’ was temporary closed for new refugee registration when the Kenyan government declared the camp full (Rawlence, 2016).

Rawlence, 2017). The hardships associated with being a refugee can be especially devastating for girls and women.

Refugee women and girls are subject to harsh advertises and human right abuses in both high-income and low-income countries (Herrman, 2019). Gender-based violence (GBV) is often experienced both in transit and throughout the resettlement process (Freedman, 2016: Neil & Fleury & Foresti, 2016: Solomon & Sheldon, 2018). The frequency of sexual violence has reached such severity in many EU refugee camps that many women find themselves afraid to simply leave their tents (Freedman, 2016). Other alarming aspects of life in a camp disproportionately impact women, as they contribute to putting women in vulnerable situations, where they may be exposed to GBV. For example, on the Greek island of Kos, there is no running water, electricity, or gender segregated bathroom facilities (Freedman, 2016). Therefore, women and men are forced to share wash facilities. This sharing of space increases a women refugee's vulnerability. Despite that fact that they are under the protection of both the host state and the UNHCR, police authorities and refugee social service agencies offer little to no protection (Freedman, 2016). Therefore, despite intentions, refugee women become almost invisible in action taken to promote the SDGs.

Despite this, the SDGs provide a framework for national and international intervention. All SDGs are indirectly relevant to refugee populations. For example, Goal 6: Clean Water & Sanitation, is relevant to refugees living in camps, without proper wash facilitates. Goal 4: Quality Education pertains to the millions of adolescent refugees who have little to no formal education. However, while all SDGs are relevant to refugee populations, Goal 3: Good Health and Well-Being, and Goal 5: Gender Equality, are

particularly important. Refugee circumstances of poor education, health care, employment, and general security compound and increase the risk of both mental and physical health complications (Herrman, 2019b). Different forms of violence experienced both in transit and the resettlement process can lead to depression, anxiety, trauma symptoms, suicidal thoughts, and even substance abuse (Herrman, 2019b, pp. 2).

Relating to Goal 5, refugee women suffering from ill mental health are subject to discrimination on two fronts: stigma regarding mental health and based on their gender (Herrman, 2019b). Herrman (2019b) states that “partnerships within and between health and non-health sectors are needed to support the human rights of the women and reduce exposure to adversity” (Herrman, 2019b, pp. 2). Alongside diverse set of partnerships, including involvement for NGOs, prominent philanthropic actors such as Melinda Gates, call attention to the need to empower women so that they can realize their own power (power within) to advance well-being in their own communities (Gates, 2014). Therefore, global development actors promoting SDG goals should see refugees as a critical population to engage with, especially in pursuit of achieving well-being and gender equality.

Women and girl refugees must not be excluded in the SDG development framework. According to the UNHCR and Resolution 70/1: Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, “all nations and peoples and all segments of society” must be reached (United Nations, 2015). Therefore, to achieve the SDGs, refugees, internally displaced, and stateless people need to be included. Through the discussion of WID and GAD, it becomes apparent that women are key actors in development. UN agencies and NGOs often seek to provide refugee women with

development assistance alongside emergency assistance (Fitzgerald, 2002). In fact, the promotion of development initiatives aiming to empower refugee women are not entirely separate from addressing their urgent needs.

As the global refugee crisis is classified as an emergency, humanitarian support is approached through a lens of temporariness and are not considered as long-term projects (Fontanari, 2019). According to Blue (2012), women refugees in Guatemala lacked the skills needed to access social programs and services designed to meet urgent needs in refugees' camps. The purpose of the SDGs are to be a universal agenda for all people, including those facing persecution, poverty, violence, and forced displacement, making all SDGs applicable to refugees (Brolan & Forman & Dagon & Hammonds & Waris & Latif & Ruano, 2017). To adequately promote SDGs in any vulnerable population, empowerment must be highlighted in order to mobilize women to access resources relating to other SDG goals.

Sport for Development:

Throughout history, sports have been linked to promoting 'social good.' In fact, views on athletics for personal and societal growth can be traced back to classical Greek societies (Millington & Kidd, 2019). In the late eighteenth to early twentieth centuries, sports were used as a strategy for colonial empire expansion, especially by the British (Millington & Kidd, 2019). Material and logistical assistance were provided to colonies, aiming to use sport as a method to promulgate cultural values of those colonized (Levermore & Beacom, 2009). In this way, sports were perceived as a mechanism to combat 'barbaric local customs' (Mangan, 2006). However, it is important to note that traditional or indigenous sports were not held in high regards, and often were pushed

aside in favor of colonial sports. Additionally, during post-World War II reconstruction efforts, sports were used throughout Europe, mostly in orphanages and refugees' camps, and were led by the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration for Reconstruction and Rehabilitation (Millington & Kidd, 2019; Millington, 2015).¹⁶ Furthermore, upon the renewal of the Olympic Games in 1894, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) formed the 'Olympic Movement.' The 'Olympic Movement' aims to "contribute to building a peaceful and better world by educating youth through sport practiced in accordance with Olympism and its values" (Leading the Olympic Movement, 2020). Therefore, states and international actors such as the IOC have long used sports as a tool to promote their political and social interest such as development, modernization, and international unity (Peacock, 2011).¹⁷

Leading up to the formalization of using sports as a method to achieve development initiatives, the international community declared that sports and or leisure activities were essential to youth development through a series of conventions and declarations. Dating back to the post-World War II era, Article 24 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that "everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay" (United Nations, 1948). Additionally, the 1959 Declaration on the Rights of the Child recognized access to recreation as a fundamental human right.¹⁸ The United Nations Education,

¹⁶ UNRRA was created in 1943 with the mission of administering relief to victims of war. The agency was dismantled in 1949. Under the scope of providing these basic services, the UNRRA budgeted for sports supplies in refugee camps (Archives and Records Management, 1943)

¹⁷ The Olympic symbol is made up of five rings. According to the IOC, "The Olympic symbol expresses the activity of the Olympic Movement and represents the union of the five continents and the meeting of athletes from throughout the world at the Olympic Games" (Olympic Charter, Rule 8).

¹⁸ The Declaration on the Rights of the Child can be found at: <https://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention/convention-text#>

Scientific and Cultural Organizations (UNESCO) further solidified the international communities' commitment to promoting more accessible recreation through the 1978 International Charter of Physical Education and Sport (UNESCO, 2020).¹⁹ In 1989, the value of sport was confirmed through the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, whereby Article 31 states that “every child has the right to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts” (The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child). Finally, the 1995 Beijing platform highlighted sports as a human right and the need for more accessible recreation (Kluka & Goslin, 2017) Despite this history, the use of sports to pursue development initiatives was not institutionalized within international development frameworks (Giulianotti, Coalter, Collison & Darnell, 2019).

The rise and popularity of sports for development models was the result of the socio-political environment that informed global affairs. As the international community shifted away from economic development strategies that defined the 1970s and 1980s, and the structural adjustment programs in the 1990s, more human centered developed goals emerged (Millington, 2015). In this post-Cold War world, state intervention declined and was replaced by do-it yourself and neoliberal ideology (Millington & Kidd, 2019). The universally accepted benefits of sport were believed as a strategy to promote entrepreneurialism and increase local social capital. Such benefits include but are not limited to cooperation, communication, respect for self and others, discipline, confidence, resilience, leadership, and the value of effort (Beutler, 2006). Being led by NGOs and

¹⁹ More information on the International Charter of Physical Education and Sport can be found at: <https://en.unesco.org/themes/sport-and-anti-doping/sport-charter>

athletes and funded by state, private, and development entities, SDP programs emerged as a dynamic mix between bottom-up and top-down of development (Black, 2019).²⁰ Previously considered a distraction from more important matters, it is only recently that sports have been accepted as a legitimate development tool and have been incorporated into major development policies, including the MDGs/SDGs (Millington & Kidd, 2019).

In the new international climate, sport fit into development frameworks because of the shift of focus from economic development to sustainable human development. Notions of human development emphasize the need to increase individual choices and expand opportunities for all members of society (United Nations Inter-Task Force, 2003). This led to the formulization of Sports for Development and Peace (SDP) in the 1990s (Giulianotti, Coalter, Collison & Darnell, 2019). SDP can be broadly conceptualized as a social field in which sports and related activities are utilized to pursue social development and peacebuilding goals around the world (Giulianotti, Coalter, Collison & Darnell, 2019). When defining SDP, it is important to make a distinction between the development *of* sport and development *through* sport (Levermore & Beacom, 2009) Opposed to development *of* sport whereby activities promote the professionalization of sport and sports-based skill acquisition, development *through* sport centers on using sport activities as a vehicle to achieve social, economic, and political objectives (Levermore & Beacom, 2009, pp.8). Therefore, sports are used as a vehicle to engage communities, and participation in sport is seen to lead to increases in human capabilities by improving

²⁰ Many SDP programs are funded by state development agencies in the global North. Examples include USAID, UK's Department for International Development (DIFD), the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORDAD), The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) and The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) (Straume, 2019, pp.48)

physical health, contributing to education, and fostering social relationships, social capital, and integration (United Nations, 2003, pp. 3).

The pursuit of achieving the MDGs at the turn of the century accelerated the formalization of SDP. As assumptions that ideas of linear economic development would result in prosperity were challenged, development practitioners looked for new strategies, methods, and actors to pursue the newly institutionalized MDGs (Levermore & Beacom, 2009). Sports were deemed a viable alternative because it was perceived that sports were a tool for community regeneration, social inclusion, post-conflict resolution, individual health, and soft skills acquisition (Beutler, 2006; Brady, 2005; PCPFS, 1997). The United Nations declared 2005 “The International Year for Sport and Physical Education,” marking the formalization of SDP (Cameron, 2006). Prior to this declaration, the United Nations created the UN Inter-Agency Task Force on Sport for Development and Peace in 2002 to establish, review, and monitor how sport were used within the system of the United Nations (United Nations Inter-Task Force, 2003).²¹ Additionally, the task force aimed to promote SDP activities amongst international actors such as NGOs, governments, sports miniseries, and development organizations (Beutler, 2006). By 2003, the United Nations General Assembly, in accordance with the Inter-Agency Task Force, adopted Resolution 58/5 that identified “sport as a means to promote education, health, development and peace” and ultimately make progress towards the MDGs (United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force, 2003, pp. 26). More specifically, sports were used to target gender equality, health, and education (United Nations Inter-Task Force, 2003).

²¹ The United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force uses a broad definition of sport that recognizes ‘sports’ as “all forms of physical activity that contribute to physical fitness, mental well-being and social interaction” (United Nations Inter-Task Force, 2003, pp. 2).

Therefore, at the turn of the century, the international community transcended their ad hoc use of sports, and committed time, resources, and policies to realizing the benefits of sport for humanitarian assistance.

As a key component of “The International Year for Sport and Physical Education (2005),” the second Magglingen Conference on Sport and Development served as a call to action to achieve MDGs through sport (Millington, 2019). The conference brought together major development entities such as UNESCO, the IOC, the General Association of International Sports Federations (GAISF), the World Health Organization (WHO), and various NGOs.²² These organizations used the conference as a platform to assess success, develop a long-term vision for future SDP programming, and raise global awareness of ‘sport for all’ (Cameron, 2006; Dudfield, 2019). SDP became even more pronounced with the emergence of the SDGs. In fact, the 2030 Development Agenda directly recognizes that sports can contribute to sustainable development (Dudfield, 2019; Dai & Menhas, 2020). However, while the SDG framework emphasizes the need for institutional and structural changes in approaches to development, SDP programs tend to focus on individual ‘empowerment’ and well-being outcomes (Lindsey, 2016; Sanders, 2016). With the SDGs and human development on the center stage, SDP began to influence international aid trends and attract development agencies from both the Global North and the South (Straume, 2019).

To accomplish these goals, heterogeneous entities, including governments, development programs, and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), who

²² This information can be found at: <https://www.icsspe.org/sites/default/files/Magglingen%20Commitment%20for%20Physical%20Education.pdf>

vary in size, scope, and funding, are connected through SDP models of programming (Straume, 2019). While international and governmental development entities play a huge role in funding and guiding implementation strategies, there has been a huge increase in the utilization of NGOs for program delivery. For example, between 2005-2015, FIFA supported 450 SDP programs that were delivered by 170 different NGOs in 78 countries (FIFA, 2014; Straume, 2019). FIFA was responsible for funding, equipment, and event organization while NGOs worked directly with target groups by operating SDP programming (FIFA, 2014; Straume, 2019). Attributed to this international emphasis and funding on sports SDP programming, there was an increase in SDP NGOs between 2000 to 2018 (Suzuki, 2019). Therefore, it is important to note that NGOs have become primary actors in SDP efforts.

Women in Sports:

The history of women in sports is complex and heavily impacted by the history of development and colonialism. Evidence of women participating in sports prior to western intervention in global affairs indicates female oppression in the athletics relates to cultural expectations of western societies. Historical documentation of ancient sports indicates that prior to colonization, women experienced freedom to participate in sports in many parts of the world. For example, prior to colonialism in Polynesia, both men and women practiced the sport of surfing (Finney, 1959; Southerden, 2005). In fact, surfing was practiced universally by “men, women, children, chiefs, and commoners” (Finney, 1959, pp. 328). Furthermore, women excelled at surfing and were respected as athletes (Finney, 1959, pp. 328). The arrival of Captain James Cook in Hawaii shifted surfing culture (Southerden, 2005). On top of the decimation of surfers by diseases, the Christian

missionaries (arriving in 1820) declared surfing un-Christian and outlawed the sport (Moser, 2016; Southerden, 2005). By the 1890s, surfing was on the verge of extinction, and the new political systems and consumer values installed through colonialism had greatly shifted gender norms (Moser, 2016). Louise Southerden concludes that “by the 1900s, even though missionaries began to lose control of the islands, new ways of life had been adopted in meaning, which was bad news for the women. Instead of going surfing, they were now expected to spend all their time cooking, cleaning, and looking after kids” (Southerden, 2005, pp.13). This demonstrates that colonial systems shifted the role of women in their households and consequently in sports.

Well-documented in the western world and dating back to Ancient Greek societies, western women played domestic roles and were expected to maintain a feminine arete and were therefore not allowed to participate in sports (Spears, 1984). This image of inferiority and helpful women continued to be the dominate narrative during the 1800s (Mather, 2007). Therefore, when the Muscular Christian Movement mobilized the use sports to develop Christian values, women were excluded on the grounds that their role in domestic life made these values irrelevant to their lives (Mather, 2007). This demonstrates that sports competition were historically a domain for men and exclusive to women (Robinson, 2017).

By the late 1880s, upper-middle class women started to have more opportunities to engage in physical activity (Mather, 2007). However, these activities were limited based on societal gendered restraints. For example, individual sports were considered more appropriate for women than team sports (Henderson & Ingoldsby & Shuey, 2017). Under these pretenses, women’s sports emulated grace, beauty, and fun while men’s sports were

demonstration of manliness (Mather, 2007). Based on this criteria, women sports focused on qualities such as balance, flexibility, and agility, such as gymnastics (Cohen, 2017). In short, sports deemed appropriate for women were congruent to societal gender norms (Henderson & Ingoldsby & Shuey, 2017).

Ironically, present day advancements in women in sports is attributed to major strides taken in the west. Following the ratification of the 19th amendment in 1919 allowing women to vote, women started surfing in the U.S. in the 1920s (Southerden, 2005). In 1920, the University of Wisconsin created the Girls Athletic Association that promoted intermural sports for women such as field hockey, baseball, tennis, and hiking (Bower, 2007). Despite this progress, the formalization of women's sports was slow, and when the National Intramural Association (NIA) was formed in the 1950s, women were banned from attending NIA conferences until 1971 (Bower, 2007).

Despite policies targeting gender equality in sport, like Title IX in the U.S., women still lacked the right to participate in sports in some countries.²³ Women all over the world, especially in the Middle East and Africa face significant barriers to engaging in sport. Barriers range from verbal and physical abuse and family pressure to stop playing, to outside state-mandated prohibition on women's sports (Grainey, 2012). In 2006, Libya, Oman, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, and Kuwait had no formal soccer

²³ In 1972, the United States passed Title IX (of the Education Amendments Act) into law. This federal ruling mandated that colleges and universities in the U.S. must have equal athletic opportunities for males and females. While this law has not created gender equality in sport, it served as a catalyst for increased access to sports for girls and women. While before Title IX came into effect were not playing soccer (for example) in significant number, it is now the most common sport for American girls to play (Grainey, 2012)

opportunities for females (Grainey, 2012). Prior to the 2012 London Olympic games, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Brunei banned female citizens from competing in the Olympics (Carrejo, 2016). While more and more women and girls are getting the opportunity to compete in sports throughout the world, they still face significant barriers.

Furthermore, researchers and feminists call attention to the distinction between an increase in number of female athletes and gender equality in sport. For example, Title IX has increased female participation in sport, but has not had an appreciable effect on equality between men and women's sport and how they are valued throughout society (Robinson, 2017). According to Meir (2015), "a simple quantitative increase of sportswomen in key positions does not automatically foster gender equity or female empowerment as these are both outcomes and processes: (Meir, 2015, pp. 970). This phenomenon was brought to the surface during the 2021 NCAA Women's and Men's March Madness Tournaments²⁴ when women athletes were given singular weight racks (the heaviest dumbbell being 30lbs) when the men were allowed access to a fully furnished weight room (Tschinkel, 2021). This speaks to the everlasting presence historical attitudes on both the value of women athletes and on what role women should play in society (Robinson, 2017).

Gender and Sports:

Complex and situated within various social contexts, gendered perspectives are further complicated by histories and cultures within the SDP framework (Zipp & Smith & Darnell, 2019). As seen in the discussion on women in sports, societal gender norms constrain engagement in sports for men and women (Chawanksy & Hayhurst, 2015). For

²⁴ March Madness is an annual NCAA basket tournament.

example, research indicates that these attitudes in the West were shaped by industrialization, urbanization, and the first wave of feminism, when family roles started to shift between men and women (Crosset 1990; Kimmel 1990; Messner 1988). During this transition, sports and other physical activities served as a mechanism for middle class white men to reinforce their superiority over others (Dworkin & Messner, 2002).

Therefore, through sport, men were able to subtly exercise ‘power over’ women (Rowlands, 2015). In turn, women internalize these systematic messages of inferiority and believe societal norms dictating passive behaviors (Rowlands, 2015). These power dynamics create resistance for acknowledging women as equals in the athletic area from both men and women.

Due to these internalized values, women all over the world are underrepresented in sports (Meir, 2005). Symbolic and ideological boundaries create barriers for participation, even before direct engagement with the sport occurs (Carter, 2017). Carter (2017) finds this to be true amongst female American football players. American football is seen as a symbol of masculinity, and women participating in such a physical and aggressive sport is perceived as illegitimate (Carter, 2017). While women are actively challenging the generalization of sport, there is a lack of media representation. The lack of media representation of women’s sports is an exercise of patriarchal power used to maintain gender boundaries (Carter, 2017; MacDonald, 2017). For example, 40 percent of athletic competitors are female, yet they only receive 4 percent of total media coverage (MacDonald, 2017). This substantial disparity in media coverage is alleged to create significant barriers for women’s sport participation. According to Bernstein (2002), it diminishes women’s athletic accomplishments and discourages women from participating

in sports (MacKay & Dallaire, 2012). Furthermore, Kane and Maxwell (2011), argue that masculine dominance is reproduced in sport when sports women are trivialized through media representation. The trivialization of women's sports impacts the opportunities that they have (Wheaton & Thorpe, 2018). Media representation therefore becomes one way in which scholars are challenging ideas that women sports are positively challenging hierarchal and patriarchal norms.

It is argued that the disparities in media representation are the results of *laissez-faire* economics whereby people just do not want to watch women's sports. However, Robinson (2017) challenges these ideas and states that the lack of media representation in the U.S. goes back to the opposition of Title IX (Robinson, 2017). When institutions were ultimately forced to adopt Title IX, institutions ensured that men's sports teams would remain economically superior (Robinson, 2017). To do this, they marketed men's basketball and received higher levels of donations through the exchange of season tickets to men's games (Robinson, 2017). Therefore, Title IX "reinforced hierarchical difference by sex that favors male participation in sports" (Cohen, 2017, pp. 2017).

Women athletes have also been devalued and delegitimized through modification of sports to make them more 'achievable.' While this does not impact a recreational player, it creates less opportunities for aspiring professional female athletes (Cohen, 2017). Cohen (2017) uses the example of professional women's cycling to point out the detrimental impact of rule modifications for females. For example, race durations for women cyclists are shorter than men's races, making women ineligible to compete and major cycling event such as the Tour de France (Robinson, 2017). Rules like this are common distinctions between men and women sports, like ice hockey, where girls are not

allowed to ‘check’ the other players or make aggressive physical contact (Robinson, 2017). Although women and girls are continuously gaining more access to recreational sporting opportunities, significant barriers exist at the professional level for those aspiring to compete at the highest-level. Despite the International Olympic Committee’s (IOC), claimed commitment to providing opportunities for diverse groups of women, there is a lack of equality of representation in female sports. Wheaton and Thorpe (2018) find that even though “there are ton of girls at the skate parks... there’s less than 30 or 40 girls of at the Olympic level” (pp. 330). These examples of professional cycling and ice hockey indicates that it is the different governing rules of men and women sports that contribute to the lack of professional female athletes.

A major barrier for females to access sports is societal ideas that sports are considered ‘unfeminine’ (Petry & Kroner, 2019). Girls and women internalize these messages that sports will put their femininity at risk (Apelmo 2016; Petry & Kroner 2019). Cultural tensions between athleticism and the desire to preserve femininity has had significant impact on the appearances of female athletes (Cahn 1994; Hargreaves 1994). As a result, it is common for female athletes to emphasize their femineity through their uniforms and appearances (Cahn, 1994). According to Henderson, Ingoldsby, and Shuey (2017), “contemporary gender expectations in U.S. culture places dual pressure on female athletes wanted to excel at their sport yet also maintain a feminine persona that balances the masculine cue of athleticism (Henderson & Ingoldsby & Shuey, 2017, pp. 203). On a societal level, this can also be demonstrated by our previous example with the comparison between weight room between the men’s and women’s teams competing at the NCAA’s March Madness tournaments. This example demonstrates how female

athletes are expected to compete at the highest level of their sport, but be ‘shapely, trim, and lean’ (Henderson, Ingoldsby & Shuey, 2017, pp.205).

Despite systemic inequality, women have pushed the boundaries in the athletic arena around the world. Even sports that are heavily rooted in displays of power and masculinity, like boxing and baseball, are being practiced around the world (Messner, 2002). While sports like ‘track and field’ are widely recognized as ‘appropriate’ for women to participate in, there is much more resistance against inclusion of women in more traditionally masculine sports, like boxing. For example, the IOC Executive Committee unanimously declined women’s boxing as an Olympic Sport in 2005, before the Beijing Olympics (Meir & Saavedra, 2009)²⁵ Undeterred by societal acceptance, women continue to push the boundaries in these contested spaces. For example, a Zambian woman named Esther Phiri won the Women’s International Boxing Federation Intercontinental Junior Lightweight title (Meir & Saavedra, 2009) As Zambia is a country with high levels of gender inequalities, this example demonstrates that even the most ‘masculine’ of sports are not seamlessly patriarchal institutions, but are instead at the heart of paradoxical gender regimes (Messner, 2002).

Sports, Gender, and Development:

As ‘the girl child’ is seen as essential to reducing global poverty, girls and women have become key actors in the pursuit of the SDGs (Collison, Darnell, Giulianotti & Howe, 2017; Hayhurst, MacNeil, Kidd, & Knopper, 2014). In accordance with this shifting international climate, more SDP programs are targeting gender equality goals (Collison, Darnell, Giulianotti & Howe, 2017). There are numerous acclaimed benefits of

²⁵ The IOC overturned this vote for the 2012 London Olympics.

using sports to make progress towards SDG 5: Gender Equality. Education and health serve as the primary indicators for reducing gender inequalities (Petry & Kroner, 2019). Petry and Kroner (2019) finds sports programs have increased girls' access to education and contributed to more healthy lifestyles for girls and women through physical activity and increased mental health. Even more directly, the physical nature of sports creates an opportunity to use SDP programming as a mechanism to address gendered health issues like sexual and reproductive health (Petry & Kroner, 2019). It is believed that sports, particularly in the developing world, enhance girls' positions in society by challenging gender norms, building leadership skills, and enhancing well-being, including physical and mental health (Saavedra, 2009). For example, Ullman's (2007) research emphasizes the importance of female-only self-defense programming by observing improved self-worth amongst women participants while simultaneously challenging conventional gender-roles. Furthermore, equal opportunities in terms of social participation and in decision making processes are also important (Petry & Kroner, 2019). According to the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Sport for Development (2003), sports expose girls to new opportunities and new interpersonal links, which is of critical importance to girls who typically do not get their own space.

Another common objective of SDP programs is to 'empower' women and girls (Kay, 2009; Beutler, 2008; Darnell, 2010; Meier, 2005). Meier (2005) and Meier and Saavedra (2009) conclude that sports have the potential to ameliorate gender inequalities and foster empowerment. The integration of empowerment outcomes is often connected to health, education, and decision-making power. This is highlighted through an example of an SDP organization called Grassroots Soccer. Grassroots Soccer developed a soccer-

based life skills intervention curriculum targeting adolescent girls at risk for HIV, violence, and reproductive health issues (Merrill & Merrill & Hershow & Barkley & Rakosa & Decelles & Harrison, 2018). This intervention is described as “an activities-based program that uses noncompetitive soccer to empower girls, create safe spaces for discussion and learning, and encourage girls to advocate for their rights” (Merrill & Merrill & Hershow & Barkley & Rakosa & Decelles & Harrison, 2018, pp. 13). Studies cite safe space associated with girls’ clubs as having empowerment outcomes (ActionAid Research, 2013). Sports can provide this safe space where women and girls are safeguarded against violence (Jeanes & Magee, 2013). Finally, studies have also concluded that women feel empowered by sports participation, alongside increased freedom of mobility and expression (Sikes & Jarvie, 2014).

The acclaimed benefit of empowerment is also challenged within the field of SDP on the basis that there is no clear definition or understanding of what empowerment means in the context of sports and development programs. For example, Saavedra (2005) argues that empowerment can relate to the structural and cultural levels of civil society while Hayhurt, MacNeill, Kidd, and Knoppers (2014) argue that “lessons in empowerment” in the context of SDP interventions occur at the individual level. While Brady (2005) defines empowerment outcomes as the bolstering of self-esteem, Campbell (2009) argues that empowerment outcomes are rooted in the shift in power between men and women. Based on this definition of empowerment, sports are identified as a paradoxical space to challenged gendered issues, given the hegemonic masculinity embedded into sports culture (Campbell, 2009; Saavedra, 2009). Therefore, on top of

unclear definitions of empowerment outcomes, scholars challenge the idea that sports truly create an environment to challenge gender dynamics.

Sports are seen as a vehicle to challenge gender norms because the exclusion and underrepresentation of women and girls at all levels of sport is an international problem (Coche, 2017; Meier, 2005). Women and girls throughout the world have had to fight for the opportunity to participate in sports, which has traditionally been regarded to as ‘male turf’ and have performed well above previously held expectations (Hargreaves, 1994; Hayhurst, MacNeil, Kidd, & Knopper, 2014; Milner & Braddock II, 2017). Kay and Collins (2003), claim that “sport is a prime site to challenge gender ideology, and it is therefore a particularly valuable area for encouraging involvement by the most disempowered women” (pp. 97). The conversation on the ability of sports to challenge gender norms is more complex than simply agreeing or disagreeing.

While Saavedra (2005) argues that women in sports could be a transformative process that challenges traditional values that uphold gender inequalities, some researchers have found these ideas to be over simplified and based on assumptions. Gender dimensions and the effectiveness of sports as an intervention tool requires gendered understanding of societal norms, culture, and local politics (Brady, 1998). Also, evidence indicates that sports interventions can change the behavior of women and girls, without shifting gender norms on a societal level. For example, Hayhurst, Macneill, Kidd, and Knopper’s (2014) case study of female martial art SDP programming in Uganda found that the programming did not change men’s behavior but improved the girl’s ability to withstand abuse and shaming. Therefore, more research is needed to explore the ability of sports to challenge and transform harmful gender norms.

It is important to note that while extensive research has been conducted in the discipline of women in sports and gender and sports that most of the research has been executed in and about the Global North (Meier, 2005). Most of the materials of this literature review come from the West, such as the example of professional cycling, collegiate athletics, and the historical impact of muscular Christian sporting programs. It is largely assumed that conclusions made in western case studies will be applicable in the Global South. For example, participation in sports is seen as an avenue to develop leadership skills. This is widely supported by case studies in the U.S.. A 2002 case study revealed that 82% of executive businesswomen played organized sports growing up (Hums & Yiamouyiannis, 2007). The same pattern holds true for concerns on sexual and reproductive health. Research in the U.S. showed that girls and women involved in sports were less sexually active and had lower rates of teen pregnancy, while SDP aims at improving sexual health for girls and women as well (United Nations Inter-Task Force, 2003). While these examples are compelling evidence, more research is needed on sports interventions in the Global South.

Sports and Refugees:

Sports are perceived as a tool to promote peace and tolerance and have a long history of being used to bring people of different nationalities, ethnicities, cultures, and religions together (Ubaidulloev, 2018). Based on this perception of sport as a peace building tool, the UNHCR highlights the potential of exercise and sport as an intervention measure in refugee camps (Nordbrandt et al., 2015). Such measures are primarily targeting mental and physical health interventions and social inclusion (Spaijij et al, 2019). Regarding mental health, refugees have the tendency to suffer from

psychopathological disorders such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), anxiety, and depression (Knappe & Colledge, & Gerber, 2019). Western political blocks hosting refugees and asylum seekers such as the EU, North America, and Australia have invested heavily in sports-based intervention programs for refugees (Spaaij et al, 2019). However, despite such dialogue, little research has been dedicated to the effects of sports-based interventions with refugees and there is a lack of evidence indicating that sports are a viable solution to treat PTSD symptoms (Knappe & Colledge, & Gerber, 2019; Nordbrandt et al.). This section will provide a comprehensive overview of the research conducted on SDP and refugees, covering acclaimed benefits such as social inclusion, integration, and mental health.

Mental Health

Exercise and sport are considered fundamental to human wellbeing and have been used to treat psychiatric disorders (Lederman et al., 2017). Few social science researchers have applied these findings specifically to refugee populations. Madsen et al. (2016) applies these theories to refugees in sport and Body Awareness Therapy, finding that traumatized refugees reported relieved pain and tension, peace of body and mind, and improved sleep. Knappe, Colledge and Gerber (2019) found similar results when their eight weeklong study on sport, refugees, and mental health in Greece revealed an increase in mental health amongst participants. Alongside improved mental health increased physical health was reported (Knappe & Colledge, & Gerber, 2019b). In contrast, Nordbrandt et al. (2015) challenges that sports are always beneficial to the mental health of refugees. In their study, refugees reported that training made them feel mentally unsettled as it would remind them of past traumatic experiences (Nordbrandt et al. 2015).

Social Inclusion

A major element of SDP programs targeting refugee populations is social inclusion (Eime et al., 2013). People with refugee backgrounds often have difficult living conditions and suffer from social exclusion, discrimination, and exploitation (Knappe et al., 2019). According to Pizzolati and Sterchele (2016), joining sports clubs reduces anti-social behavior. Sports are seen as an instrument to reduce anti-social behavior, improve community cohesion, and foster confidence, social connectedness, and a sense of community belonging (Block & Gibbs, 2017; Hoye et al., 2015, Spaaij, 2012). Similarly, Olliff (2007) argues that alongside the promotion of health, SDP programming with refugees can help facilitate settlement as an entry point to community participation and social inclusion. By functioning as a supportive environment, people from refugee backgrounds can make connections with individuals with similar cultural backgrounds and members of the host community (Nathan et al, 2013). These connections are an important aspect of social inclusion and social capital whereby participants and coaches can share information regarding systems and services (Olliff, 2008). Therefore, literature indicates that SDP programs for refugees creates a critical sense of belonging to refugees, despite their positions of uncertainty and isolation.

Rhetoric surrounding SDP and social inclusion is challenged based on loose definitions of inclusion. As discussed, there is a consensus that sports can foster feelings of social connectiveness that are vital to refugee well-being. Block and Gibbs (2017) emphasizes the need for more agreement regarding the social value of various types of social capital to assess the true impact of SDP programming in refugee communities. Haudenhuyse (2017) contributes to this critique through his policy-based discussion on

social inclusion versus exclusion. Social inclusion tends to be uncritically defined in relation to social exclusion. As such, sport-for-inclusion policy that is frequently applied to refugee populations can become hyper focused on rising participation rates in programming instead of addressing and examining other exclusionary mechanisms embedded within their own policies (Haudenhuyse, 2017). Therefore, SDP inclusion policies must transcend basic measures of inclusion and assess social capital in local contexts.

Alongside social inclusion, integration is an acclaimed benefit of SDP programming with refugees. In its simplest form, integration can be understood as the process of including new elements into a social and institutional systems (Heckmann, 2005; Heckmann & Schnapper, 2016). Accordingly, refugees are the additional elements in need of inclusion as they commonly reside completely outside of normal society in refugee camps or in disadvantaged neighborhoods, experience barriers to education, and face discrimination in their host communities (Block & Gibbs, 2017). According to the *Home Office Indicator of Integration framework* (2019), access to leisure is a key marker and means to achieving integration (Spaaij et al., 2019). Sports provide a natural opportunity for refugees to meet people from the host country and as a result, can learn about and participate in local customs (Block & Gibbs, 2017; Elbe et al., 2018; Waardenburg et al., 2018).

In relation to integration, SDP programs are seen as a mechanism to promote language acquisition in refugee populations that allow them to communicate in local languages. Research discussing the benefits of sports for refugees and language acquisition is a more contested field. Block and Gibbs (2017) and Elbe et al. (2018) find

that SDP programs help refugee integration efforts through acquisition of the host countries languages. However, Knappe et al. (2019) and Mohammadi (2019) find that language differences can hinder effective SDP programming and negate acclaimed benefits of social inclusion. Given that many of the benefits from overall SDP programming are seen to come from the social connections and the platform it creates for deep and meaningful conversations, Knappe et al. (2019) argues that language barriers hinder the abilities for refugees and the trainer to foster personal relationships and share values. Mohammadi (2019) furthers this argument through his study on a Bike Bridge in Australia. The Bike Bridge SDP program brought refugee and local women together to learn how to ride bicycles. Interviews with refugee women indicated that despite wanting to build strong connections and friendships across cultures, language barriers limited successful integration outcomes (Mohammadi, 2019). This demonstrates how language barriers make it difficult for SDP programming to be used as a tool to create meaningful social capital amongst refugees and people from different backgrounds.

Women, Refugees, and Sports:

The existing literature encompassing the themes of women, sports, and refugees is scarce. Corresponding with this gap in knowledge about female refugees and asylum seekers, the European Parliament emphasized the need for more gender-sensitive and specific inclusion policies for female refugees and asylum seekers based on higher levels of risk for social isolation compared to men (Sansonetti, 2016). Studies examining gendered experiences between refugees indicate a need to apply a feminist lens to SDP and refugee programming. For example, Seiberth et al. (2018) reports that refugee women are less interested soccer than men and is therefore a less effective integration tool for

women compared to men. Perhaps this finding corresponds with Spaaij's findings that female participants did not believe that they had the freedom and opportunity to participate in sports and that girls did not perceive sports as an avenue for inclusion in school friendships (Spaaij 2013; Spaaij et al. 2019). Guerin et al., (2003) and Mohammadi (2019) address how these perceptions are based on the additional barriers that female refugees face based on the cultural norms and expectations within their countries of origin. Despite the lack of research and findings highlighting the barriers that refugee women face in sport, Mohammadi (2019) indicates that there is value in SDP programming for female refugees. For example, in his study of a cycling program for women refugees in Australia, Mohammadi (2019) finds that the acquired sport skill of riding a bicycle and increased knowledge of local traffic regulations increased women's physical mobility throughout the host country.

Conclusion:

This literature review is presented in two parts: the history of development, and sports and development. The purpose of the first section is to explain and illuminate the importance of the development phenomenon. The history of development highlights how various complex motives shaped the global agenda for addressing the refugee crisis and gender inequality. Key concepts are also defined that are foundational to understanding findings presented later in this thesis. The reviews on 'empowerment,' Women in Development, and Gender and Development are inherently related to the original research question and frame the conclusion presented in this thesis.

Outlining the history and politics of development brings forth a discussion on how and why development practitioners and international development agencies like the

United Nations are turning to new methods of development interventions. This leads into the section of the development review regarding Sports for Development and Peace. The shift of focus from economic development to human development presented an opportunity for SDP intervention. The second section of the literature review centers on sports and development, sports and women, sports and gender, and finally sports and refugees. This review of literature provides a comprehension summary of past studies and demonstrates the gaps of literature discussed in the Introduction Chapter of the thesis.

Through the story of rigid economic development and neo-imperialism to shifting attitudes towards more humanistic development, I am drawn to the key international agreements still used today that emphasize the important of recreation and including the voices of women and girls in development. Furthermore, given the colonial legacy of sports and development and the flow of refugees stemming out of cultural conservative countries, I found myself curious to learn more about the complex intersection between harnessing the prescribed benefit of sports such as mental health, language acquisition, and social capital and ideas of gendered cultural imperialism. It is through these themes and lines of inquiry that I developed the research question itself: *How are sports such as soccer, skateboarding and climbing being used amongst refugee populations, especially in relation to promoting gender equality and empower women and girls?*

CHAPTER III.

METHODS

Personal Standpoint:

My interest in women in sports stems from a lifetime of experience as a multi-sport female athlete. My lived experiences have led me to develop a complex understanding of the intricacies of gender and sport long before I engage in this research. From playing Division 1 collegiate soccer in the United States, where the sheer number of women athletes and equality laws disguise uneven power dynamics in sports, to rock climbing with my friends, I have personal feelings of both empowerment and disempowerment associated with sport. Furthermore, before conducting this research, I spent 10-month working with one of the organizations that was interviewed. I would like to acknowledge both my personal biases and my privilege. As a woman in the United States who has always had support from my parents and community to freely engage in sport, I will never understand the experiences of female refugee athletes. To mitigate the risk of inserting my own bias into this study, this qualitative design of this study uses semi-structured interviews and other research strategies to combat any bias. Throughout the research process, I continuously review the information learned through the interview process to ensure that findings and conclusions are grounded in the research and not in my own experiences.

Significance:

This study seeks to provide a deeper understanding of the value of SDP and its legitimacy as an interventionist tool among girls and vulnerable women in the

development arena. It uncovers barriers to entering sporting spaces for girls and women across different local contexts and sport. By comparing and contrasting program experiences and policies, I uncover and share common trends, areas in need of improvement, and solutions.

Design of Study:

This study avails a qualitative research design, starting with an expansive literature review which explores the phenomenon of development and situates the role of sports in meeting these international objectives. Given the thematic nature of this research, any non-profit organization working with girls/women, sports and refugees are viable candidates for this study. These organizations are identified through personal networks and data bases for Sports for Development and Peace organizations such as <https://www.sportanddev.org>. While 27 organizations were identified and contacted, only 7 organizations agreed to participate in this study. Although a thorough search for organizations meeting this criterion was conducted, it is important to note that it was not exhaustive, and it is possible that organizations working in this field were not identified.

The use of semi-structure interviews allows the research to be guided by the original question, but accounts for my pre-conceived notions by allowing the research to evolve based on what is learned from the participants in the study. All interviews were conducted in English and are focused on the organization delivering programming, not the experiences of individual participants. Furthermore, to promote and create open dialogue about the challenges and effectiveness of programs, participant organizations and the interviewee will be left anonymous. Instead of citing the names of the organizations interviewed, each NGO has been given a code that us used throughout the

research process (See Table 1). These procedures were approved by the University of Oregon’s Institutional Review Board (IRB). The interviews took place via Zoom, Skype, and phone between January 1 - April 15, 2021, and lasted between 35 minutes to 1 hour long.

Table 1

Code Name	Location	Sport	Refugee Status
NGO#1	East Africa	Soccer	Refugee Only
NGO#2	Middle East	Skateboarding	Mixed Status
NGO#3	Europe	Multiple Sports	Refugee Only
NGO#4	X	Climbing	Mixed Status
NGO#5	Europe	Soccer	Mixed Status
NGO#6	Europe	Soccer	Refugee Only
NGO#7	Europe	Soccer	Refugee Only

All interviews started by asking the interviewee to give a general overview of their program. The intention behind this question were twofold: to provide context and to start to develop an understanding of the priorities of the organization. In short, it gave interviewees an opportunity to freely share what they perceived as most important with minimal leading from the interviewer. All interviews included a discussion on what the objectives of the program are and are asked to share the relevance of these outcomes to development. Next, all interviews included a conversation on girls programming. How girls benefit from sports, challenges to participation, and strategies to overcome these challenges were addressed. If the interviewee mentioned ‘empowerment’ as a development outcome, it was discussed in depth. To ensure the study focused on gender opposed to women and girls, I included a discussion on the dynamics between boys and

girls in all the interviews. Finally, all interviewees were asked to share their experiences working with refugees, why they specifically work with this population, and the implications of programming for refugee girls.

Data analysis followed a process of coding the qualitative data. First, the interviews were transcribed using the method of ‘intelligent transcription’, whereby every word was accounted for, excluding pauses and filler words. Inductive coding was used to create grouping codes according to themes from a ground-up approach. In this way, group codes were not created before the analysis. Apart from decreasing bias and providing a more accurate representation of participant responses and meanings, thematic coding has other benefits such as increasing validity and transparency.

Limitations of the Study:

It is important to note that this research was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic. While I had initially intended to conduct the research in the field, the research design was adapted to be carried out remotely. Without traditional fieldwork, no distant observation or participant observation occurred. I was completely reliant on the perceptions of staff members from the multiple programs that I engaged with. This impacts the findings of my studies because I explore the empowerment process through the eyes of staffers instead of participants themselves. To adapt to the new set of circumstances, I decided to include more organizations in the study, and approach the topic thematically. I had planned to interview between 10-15 adults via Zoom. However, based on willingness to participate I only interviewed 8 adults.

CHAPTER IV.

RESULTS: LEVELING THE PLAYING FIELD? GENDER, REFUGEES, AND EMPOWERMENT

Introduction:

The realities of each organization interviewed represent different contexts in which SDP programs are situated. Soccer was the most common sport used for the purpose of development and was represented in this study by organizations in Europe, the Middle East, and Africa. In contrast to the use of widely popular organized sports, two organizations represented the lifestyle sports of climbing and skateboarding. Climbing for development was represented in the Middle East and in Europe with skateboarding represented in the Middle East. Finally, a program in Greece used a variety of sports such as yoga, running, martial arts, and soccer to engage with the local refugee population. By request and in respect for participant organizations wishing to remain anonymous, the names of the organizations are not revealed. Instead, the quotes used as supporting evidence throughout this chapter remain without a citation, but instead are assigned a code that is consistently used throughout this thesis. While this detracts from the ability to directly compare program outcomes geographically, this measure created a more comfortable environment for staff at participant SDP NGOs to speak freely. This study is designed to include different sports in various points of the world to isolate common themes amongst SDP organizations working with both refugees and girls and women.

In this chapter I examine how the term ‘empowerment’ is being used in relations to girls and women in sports and how that translate to populations with a refugee status. I start by examining how the concept of empowerment is being defined as implemented

amongst girls and women in their SDP organizations. Defining empowerment through the lens of SDP presupposes and contextualizes a rich discussion on how the world of sports and development and gender equality intersect. Based on the dynamic and multifaceted nature of engaging in SDG Goal 5: Gender Equality through sports, the intersection between empowerment and gender equality is illuminate through a thematic section that addresses the use of female role models.

Next, findings on empowerment and gender equality are applied more specifically to the target population of this study: refugees. This section contributes to existing literature in the academic field of SDP by exploring the intersection between gender, refugee status, and sports. Given the absence of comprehensive research on this intersection, these findings contribute a broad overview of how SDP organizations with different missions and goals use sports for social change while navigating working with people with refugee statuses. As such, findings from this study outlines different acclaimed benefits of using sports to work with refugees. After a succinct overview on SDP and refugees, the acclaimed benefits of sports for refugees in examined in more detail through the sub-sections of ‘safe space,’ ‘employability,’ and ‘social capital.’

Empowerment:

During the interviews, four organizations claimed empowerment as a program objective and outcome. Conversations surrounding empowerment tended to include a brief definition, followed by examples on how sports can be used to achieve empowerment outcomes. Brief definitions of empowerment included: “to give youth a chance for their voices to be heard”, “to show them what is possible”, “to give them more power to choose what they want to do or not do”, “to provide opportunities”, “to increase

confidence and self-esteem”, “to provide opportunities to lead and to choose”, and “to help someone get somewhere.” These sentiments of empowerment appear throughout multiple aspects of all programs, regardless of if the word was used directly.

The most frequent description of empowerment surrounded the theme of ‘opportunity.’ At SDP programming, a safe space is created where participants can freely express themselves. Having a safe space to try new behaviors is frequently emphasized as a program outcome. In terms of girls empowerment, this space creates opportunities for youth to try things that are traditionally considered male behavior. A staff member from NGO#7 observed that,

...in some communities, there are examples of women who want to grow and try things. They have all the energy and knowledge. Maybe they have the power, but the community where they live make it hard for them to do this kind of thing. So here, they have the opportunity to express themselves and do what they want maybe.

Formalizing sporting spaces is considered very important for girls because they do not have the same opportunities to play sports as boys. Amongst refugee families in Africa and the Middle East, boys are free to play with their friends while girls are required to stay home to do household chores. Families also express more safety concerns for their girls than their boys. In this space, girls can explore their strengths, abilities, and interests with the support of their peers.

Furthermore, the opportunity ‘to choose’ is stressed. Sport programs serve as a platform for the exercise of choice. Several organizations create opportunities for girls through youth leadership programs.

An interviewee from NGO#1 who trains girl participants to be assistant coaches states that,

We give them more power to choose. More power to choose if they wanted to do it or not. We give them the power to gain the confidence on their own, but also support them. Rather than throwing them out on the training field and saying, “this is the opportunity... not go and coach.” No, it has to be more than just the opportunity to go and coach.

Therefore, opportunities need to be presented, but girls must use their own agency to take ownership of such opportunities. Three organizations in Greece and Lebanon offer multiple sports for participants to choose from ranging from soccer to yoga. An interviewee from NGO#3 describes the benefits of allowing girls and boys alike the opportunity to choose between different sports,

When they find a sport that they are good at or prefer they feel even more excited because they can find something that they are good at. I think that this really helps all of the children.

This power of choice therefore can contribute to the development of higher self-esteem and self-confidence.

Outside of teaching leadership as a soft skill directly through sport participation, organizations are creating actual leadership opportunities for girls and women within their programs. Two programs specifically encourage participants, girls and boys alike, to work to become assistant coaches or instructors. Relating to other aspects of empowerment defined above, leadership positions are seen as a vehicle to increase confidence and self-esteem. Furthermore, leadership programming can encourage local ownership and teaches young people to take responsibility for their own programming and spaces. For example, an organization facilitating skateboarding lessons with refugees in the Middle East provides training for dedicated youth to become skate teachers for the

program. In return for their service, they are awarded parts for their own skateboards. The theory is that these youth leaders will be motivated to continue skateboarding, to take care of the community, and to bring new kids into skateboarding.

Multiple interviews expressed the specific need to ‘empower’ refugee populations. Participant organizations emphasized that this need is not directly related to their legal status as a refugee, but because of the stigmatization and rejection of this already socially vulnerable group in host countries. A staff member of an SDP NGO in Austria defines empowerment as being very strongly connected to self-awareness and self-esteem and describes the critical importance for kids and young people to know their own potential and have the ability to take control over their own decisions. The interviewee elaborates that is particularly important for vulnerable populations like refugee youth, who have often been left out of the school systems along their journeys. Similar to other organizations, it is perceived as important to remind refugees of what kind of potential and skills that they can or already have. A leader from NGO#5 states:

For example, someone coming from a refugee background is likely really good at adapting to new situations really fast. That is a soft skill that they already have. But most of the time, this is something that they do not know because of the stigma that they receive as a refugee. They often do not think that they can also use this experience for their good.

This organization recognizes that stigmatization is detrimental to the mental health of young refugees and reinforces that that a refugee label is not a defining characteristic of these individuals. They do this by emphasizing that on the climbing wall, no one is a refugee and that everyone is equal.

In the process of refugee empowerment, organizations are prioritizing showing their participants that they already have a lot of skills that are valuable and applicable in

their new host countries. Once again reinforcing local ownership, all organizations employ refugees as coaches for their programming. Both programs in Greece discuss this in depth. The interviewee from NGO#3 states,

They were coaches, and they were athletes in the countries where they came from, so why is it up to us to teach other people? We can hold their hands and give them whatever they want or need, but that is not our role in the organization. We are not here to save them. We are here to empower them to build a life, and that is what they want. That is what they need. And that is our role and mission and goal as an organization and what should be the goal of many organizations.

In these cases, the NGOs perceived their role to be a supporting one, where they provide equipment and access to spaces to practice various of sports. The goal is to “support them so that they are able to continue their sport to gain self-confidence, and also build their skills to be able to make it into society here and to give them opportunities to develop themselves.” Therefore, when engaging with refugee populations, the connotation and process of empowerment does take on a slightly different form.

In contrast to empowerment, multiple interviewees warned that without proper consideration of gender equality and dynamics, girls are at risk of experiencing ‘disempowerment.’ In order to ‘level the playing field,’ a common practice is to add rules to the game that challenges players in new ways. For example, in a game of soccer, everyone can only kick with their weaker foot. The thought behind this is that it will decrease the skill level of every player, making it a more even competition. Another common rule is that if a girl scores a goal, that it is worth two points. This second example of a gender equality rule is so widely accepted, that it is even frequently adopted by intermural sport organizations in the U.S. The idea behind this rule is to encourage boys to be more inclusive to girls in mixed-sex games by passing them the ball. Despite

good intentions, an interviewee calls attention to how this can be ‘disempowering to girls’ and assumes that all boys are better at sports than girls. One interviewee from NGO#7 cautions that it is an organization’s responsibility to help empower the girls without making them feel weak. She states,

With these kinds of rules, we think about how we can use these kinds of rules where we can empower the girls without making them feel like they are something less than the boys. We have girls that are better athletes than the boys in their groups. For example, in the Greek program there is a girl who is the best player. So, for that girl, it was an offense to say that if a girl scores a goal, that it counts for two. For her, scoring a goal was not a big deal.

Therefore, strategies are needed that can motivate girls by making them feel like a respected competitor, without making them feel like they need to be treated differently than the boys by being given special advantages. Positioning girls to feel ‘lower’ than the boys is ‘disempowering.’

Gender Equality:

The participating SDP organizations in this study all had unique ways to promote gender equality in their programs. All organizations try to make their program accessible to girls. The most universal target was to have equal participation among boys and girls. Attendance is universally used to monitor and evaluate progress. Another common but not universal method to address gender equality is to facilitate interactions with boy participants. While all organizations provide an avenue for boys and girls to play together, only a select few organizations highlight gender equality as a program outcome. For those emphasizing sports and gender equality, the sporting aspect of their program serves as an environment where both boys and girls are taught about gender equality.

Among these organizations, different levels of engagement with gender equality were present. The most basic level of promoting gender equality was setting behavior codes for participations whereby oppressive behavior is not tolerated. This was reported by some interviewees as an informal process done through conversation and program culture cultivation, while others reported as having stricter rules. The second level of engagement was less common but included gender equality as one of the facilitated life skills in their programming. For example, while one session might be on leadership or adaptability, another one is about gender equality. Therefore, conversations on gender equality are formalized and a part of the curriculum. Most participant organization fell into this category. Finally, the most intensive level of promoting gender equality was to use a ‘gender lens’ to inform all programming. A key feature of this was programming for both boys and girls outside of the sports environment. For example, a soccer SDP meets with all girl participants one day each week to discuss and practice empowerment, leadership, life skills, and feminine hygiene. In symmetry, the U16 boys’ team would meet at a different time to have open and honest conversations on gender roles and how to treat girls and woman. In this way, organizations can attract interest in these social justice programs through the tool of sport. Without the sport, the opportunity to include youth in these different projects is missed. Specific programming for young men on gender equality was only observed by the soccer organization in Uganda.

Regardless of the level of engagement, all organizations experienced challenges in being inclusive to girls. At the most basic level of inclusion, a common theme was for organization to have a hard time getting girls to show up and consistently participate in training. The most frequently cited solutions were creating safe space for girls and

parental involvement. Creating a safe space for girls started by finding appropriate times for girls to train. This meant that training had to end early enough for girls to arrive home before dark and have access to affordable and safe transportation. In program sites such as Switzerland, Austria and Jordan, the challenge of affordable transportation is more pronounced.

Having high female participation rates is perceived as something to be proud of.

NGO#2 states,

We have 45% girls participation and it is something that we are proud of. I think that a lot of people would never expect this. This would surprise people because we are in a big Muslim country, but it is impressive just given that background of skateboarding. I think that we have more girls skateboarding in the Middle East than in Europe or the U.S. I think that this is something cool.

This illuminates that having girls attend programming sessions themselves is perceived as having a significant program impact. In cases where the SDP location is in a Western country, just seeing female athletes as leaders in the community challenges gendered norms among refugee boys. For example, at a program in Greece, participants are surprised to see local girls and women freely exercise. One interviewee from NGO#3 shared this anecdote,

A male participant walked up to me and I could tell he was going to ask a deep question. Then he asked, “is it true that normal women in your country run so much?” I explained that it is normal and not at all a problem. They are just completely not used to the fact that women can actually do sports.

NGO#4 shared a story about how just seeing girls and women practice sports can challenge gender norms at a societal level. At a session with 14–15-year-olds where a female participant was outperforming the group, a boy stood up and addressed his peers,

I have to tell you something. It is unfair that women are supposed to stay at home and only work in the kitchen. They should have the same rights as men because they can climb as good as we can. So, we are equal.

In both examples, seeing female athletes was key to challenging gender stereotypes.

Having mixed gender teams was another strategy to promote gender equality. However, organizations reported that they had to start with segregated teams to make newer girls feel comfortable. This was especially crucial at the beginning of the organization. Not only were the girls uncomfortable with men watching them play, but it can cause problems with the parents of the girls as well. This is most attributed to that fact that refugee girls and women are coming from countries where girls do not play sports. According to NGO#3,

It is an obstacle that it is not normal for these women to do sports and they do not want to train with men or have men watching them train. That is why we have specific classes for women and girls. During these times, the gym is completely closed for men and we have a sign outside the door saying that it is closed.

NGO# 5 found success enhancing accessibility of their program to girls by starting with all-girls teams. According to this source “small groups of girls will attract more girls,” which will help create equal numbers of boy and girl participants. Organizations in Uganda, Austria, Greece and Lebanon consistently create separate spaces for girls and women to engage in sports away from boys and men. For example, a program in Greece has a Yoga center that is closed to the public during women classes. Creating safe spaces by having women and girl zones only is a commonly adopted policy in the international development area.

While all organizations have female-only spaces, a common trend was that, over time, girls and women will feel less shy and become more comfortable interacting with the opposite sex. This is largely seen as the result of girls becoming better at the sport and having more confidence. For example, when strategizing on how to be more inclusive to girls, NGO#2 was consulted by an outside NGO to have girls only sessions. While they followed this advice, programming occurred in a public space and it was not entirely possible to ensure boys and men were not watching. As girls became more comfortable with their sport, and coaches talked to male participants about respect, it soon became evident to the organization leaders that it was not a problem for the girls to have boys around. The transition from segregated sessions to mixed-gendered sessions was described as organic whereby,

People just realized that they can skate together. Now the aim is to always let them skate together without separate groups. It is also really cool to see some girls from the neighborhood forming this little clique and they come to the park together. The vibe is really supernatural between the different gender groups. It is more like brother and sisters at the park. We really pushed for this mentality of equality, like respecting each other, and now you can really see it in the park.

While this worked for this program, others report that mixing teams is only viable for younger participants.

Another key element of increasing girls' participation is working closely with parents. Organizations reported that meetings were facilitated to explain program methodology and safety protocols to parents. For an organization facilitating climbing lessons, the most critical strategy

implemented in these meetings is demonstrating to parents that the program is about more than playing and promotes child development. This strategy was also successfully implemented in Uganda, where parents participate in English learning games that their children play at the pitch. As a result, parents gain insight to how soccer is being used to teach English. Furthermore, these meetings exhibit the professional nature of the program, convincing parents that their daughters were safe when participating in programming.

Role models

Among strategies to increase participation and empower girls, strong sport female role-models are identified as critical by SDP organizations participating in this study. Positive female role-models can inspire girls to believe in themselves by demonstrating that girls and women can be successful athletes. One male interviewee describes his experiences working with female climbers who follow world-class female climbers on Instagram. After analyzing the influence and value and impact that these virtual role-models had on female participants, organization leadership decided to pursue and emphasize local-female role-models with participants from the host country, who were most receptive to climbing and sport. The organization is hoping that having local female role models will create an environment whereby more refugee girls will participate. The theory is that local role-models serve as living examples on how it is possible to break gender barriers and help debunk myths.

NGO#1 has invested in local-role models within the structure of their paid staff. A female soccer player and coach at NGO#1 shares her experience as being a role-model to her girls' teams. After learning that many of her players were hesitant to play soccer

because they were afraid that they would lose their femininity or become too muscular, she invited her teammates to come and speak with the girls. The girls got to see many examples of women who have played soccer for many years, and saw for themselves that many of the cultural norms and myths they had believed were not true. These women were able to both enjoy playing soccer, dress like a woman, get married, and have children.

This was a good start for breaking barriers for the girls. Furthermore, having grown up herself in a society that maintains that girls cannot play soccer, she understands the challenges that her team is facing,

The girls will come up to me and tell me that they want to play soccer like me. They will ask me how I do certain tricks and then ask to learn them. It gets the girls more interested in soccer. They tell me that they want to become like me. Whenever they have struggles at home, they come to the pitch, look at me, and start smiling. They tell me that I am another reason to live because they get to play football. So that is really good.

This case demonstrates how important role-models can be to girls. While the relationship is facilitated through sport, it extends beyond training or activities. As a trusted adult who has demonstrated her own abilities to break gendered barriers, girls learn that they can come to their coach with their problems, even if that problem extends beyond the program or sports. Three interviewees confirmed that this kind of relationship is not common among girls' teams who are coached by men.

Coaches are the most mentioned role-models in SDP programs. One interviewee expressed the critical importance of coaches in SDP programs when stating that any program was only as good as its coaches. NGO#5 states,

In the end, it is not so important what sport activity you use as a development tool, but it is people who coach. They need to be really passionate about it and live up to what they say.

While five programs reported that they had an equitable coaching staff between male and female coaches, NGO#1 reports that it is extremely hard for them to find female coaches. In the past, they have relied on international volunteers for female coaches, but have taken proactive steps creating a local solution to the program. Through a partnership with the German Federation, this organization has spent the last two years training female coaches throughout Uganda. After each training, new coaches are given equipment to use with their teams. These training sessions occur twice a year and last a weeklong each. Between sessions and after, the program staff travels to the villages and follows basic monitoring and evaluation procedure and sees how the new coaches are doing.

This specific project is seen by NGO#1 to promote gender equality in multiple ways. First, these new coaches are given leadership roles. Having leadership roles in a male dominated occupation is seen as an important step in challenging harmful gender norms. Secondly, many of these coaches form their own teams in remote places where girls' teams did not currently exist.

Through this kind of sports programming, SDG Goal 5 is actively being addressed.

Having strong female role models is a strategy to engage more girls from conservative refugee backgrounds to participate in sports. In this study, all organizations were working with refugees from conservative cultures. A coach describes that this means that girls are expected to stay home to cook and take care of younger siblings, they should not get jobs, and they should not get paid for work. While not explicitly stated, it is indicated that local or refugee role-models are more effective. For example, NGO#4 shares how they had a lot of international volunteers in the past, but they are now trying to activate their older local participants to run their own sessions and be role models. The program had some success with refugee girls between 10–13 years-old participating regularly, but they dropped out once they became “too old.” The hope is that if refugee girls see older non-western girls continuing to climb, that they may be more open minded to continue coming to program.

It is important to note that this idea was not a part of a specific strategies but regarded as an opportunity. Among Lebanese participants in the program, 75 percent were girls who were seen as motivated and dedicated to the sport. A leader of NGO#4 shares that:

It was not a part of a certain strategy, but it still creates an opportunity to have local role models that can get more girls from more conservative background involved. In the end, it might have also been problematic to have sessions organized by international volunteers... this was how we did it two years ago

Dedicated teammates can also serve as role models and show younger teammates what is possible. For example, at NGO#5, the program helped a long-term participant find employment at a local program that provided childcare. This was something that the woman had never perceived as possible for herself. The other girls in the program looked up to this woman and learned that working and having children is also possible for them. According to NGO#5,

Other girls see this, and they start to think what kind of possibilities that they could also have. It is something that they never thought about before. But seeing this girl and other girls who have already been in the program for a long time, it gives them a nice example of what they could achieve as well . . . When the girls have a good example, they can copy that and build a better world for the future. I hope that those children are growing at our program and in the future, they are able to return to their countries and create new communities where people are accepted, and people can do whatever they want and have equal right.

The above quote exemplifies the hope that role-models can ‘empower’ players to create a more equitable society. Therefore, there is a broad consensus that role models are a critical part of programming, especially in terms of empowerment and that these nonprofits believe that positive female role-models in their participants lives can help address issues of gender equality on the community level.

Empowering Refugees through Sports:

Now that key thematic areas of empowerment and gender equality have been discussed, these findings will be applied more specifically to refugee populations. The intersection between empowerment, gender, and refugees exposes the realities,

knowledge, challenges, and best practices used and experienced by participant organizations. The gender lens utilized in the design of this study allows the reexamination of how identifying as a women or girl with a refugee background might impact one's experiences and ability to access the potential benefits offered through SDP programming.

All organizations referenced refugees' status as a vulnerable population as a reason for including them into their target population. Interviews exposed that a primary motivation for working with this population was due to goals of social inclusion. Refugees are just one target population that is encompassed under the scope of social inclusion. Refugees are considered a vulnerable population for several reasons. The refugee experience itself is regarded and traumatic situation that creates a lot of stress and instability, which is especially detrimental to adolescents. Other vulnerable groups include at-risk populations such as children with disabilities and out-of-school youth. Each organization had a unique origin story but can thematically be group together into three distinct motivations: developed agendas, 'filling the gap', and moral obligation by travelers.

NGO#6 and NGO#7 discussed how their current programs strategic lines were aligned and influenced by the international development climate. Contributing to this conversation, an NGO#5 addresses how there are numerous opportunities for non-refugee youth in Austria, but limited access to these opportunities to people with a refugee background. In this case, their organization serves as a platform to 'fill the gap' left behind by social and economic institutions by providing a space that included refugees. The need to create these spaces was particularly needed in countries like Greece, where

the refugee crisis is impacting the daily lives of Greek citizens. Finally, NGO#1, NGO#2, and NGO#4 were created by men who gained a sense of moral obligation by taking action through passion for their preferred sport.

Benefits for Refugees:

Organizations universally claimed that SDP programming is beneficially for refugees. All interviews acclaim improved mental health to be an outcome of the program. This is framed by explaining how critical routines are amongst youth who have experienced trauma and are living in otherwise unstable environments. When a safe space is provided, participants have an avenue for stress relief and can simply enjoy themselves. For example, in high intensity sports like skateboarding, focus and concentration on the activity is needed. Several organizations reveal that upon joining programming, refugee children can be very aggressive. This is attributed to stress and poor mental health. However, coaches report that even within a few weeks, they can see noticeable changes in behavior such as appearing less stressed, expressing themselves more, and talking more with others.

Furthermore, six out of the eight interviews reference that SDP programming creates a sense of belonging for refugees in their new communities. When asked why it is important to prioritize social programming like sports in development initiatives when it is common for refugee communities to lack even the most basic of needs such as food, shelter, and adequate hygiene facilities, an interviewee from NGO#7 emphasizes the importance of mental health through feelings of belonging,

We also believe in programs that provide basic services such as food and hygiene, but we also believe in the social part. It is really important for a person... for these refugees... to feel a home here. This is especially true here in Greece where they get stuck for long

periods of time. So, these periods need to be as normalized as possible. The social part is not something that you can erase. Human beings are very social creatures. Sports are offering stress relief, promotes healthy habits for children, and creates bonds between children.

For children who embark on these journeys and are separated from their families, this sense of belonging is especially powerful. This narrative was confirmed through an external evaluation at a program sites in Greece and Lebanon, which reported that the program provided a sense of consistency and routine among participants and served as an anchor for children and their families to feel a part of something. While the kids are playing on the field together, parents are given opportunities to socialize and connect with the community through meeting other parents on the sidelines.

Safe Space

While complicated, SDP programs can contribute to the integration process. Sports have a unique property to bring people together from different cultures and nationalities. For example, an NGO#2 reports that they serve Jordanians, Iraqis, Yemenis, Somalis, and Syrians. NGO#1 reports that they serve youth from six different countries. Despite ethnic tensions and language barriers, people are willing to work along-side each other for the enjoyment of the sports activity.

Interviews reveal that tensions between refugee and host country citizens remains a consistent challenge. While in the home country of NGO#5 this is largely influenced by the rise of a right-wing populist movement, the influx of refugees is a heavy burden for most host communities. For example, in a small Greek city, the local community lacks the capacity, infrastructure, and space to sufficiently manage refugee influxes. As a result, essential public services such as the hospitals are overcrowded. In the location of

NGO#4, it was reported that contention is so severe that the word ‘integration’ itself should be avoided. It is important to note that these negative sentiments flow both ways. The local community does not want refugees to settle, and the refugee population does not want to permanently stay. Instead, the word ‘social cohesion’ is used.

Several strategies are employed among organizations to improve social cohesion. The most common strategy was to open programming to both refugee and local children. With mixed population programming, interviews highlighted that they do not only work with refugees, and their main concern is to focus on providing services to vulnerable children. This inadvertently requires refugee access and inclusion. While expressing the importance of diversity throughout the program, NGO#2 addressed the power of sports to impact integration,

The host community and the refugee community are not interacting too much. We thought it was a good idea to break these differences by using skateboarding to bring these people together. That is why it is really important to work in a public space and not only target refugees. It is really about targeting the people that live in the city to learn together.

In this way, children from different backgrounds get to play together without carrying the burden of political concerns. Play breaks down barriers for kids, allowing them to make cross-cultural friendships. Mixed sessions with vulnerable youth and refugees were also seen as beneficial to the kids from the local community who are also suffering. With consistent mixed programming, bonds are created between different groups of children.

NGO#1 works exclusively with refugees and makes efforts to create social cohesion among the host community and refugees outside of normal

programming. Traditionally, this is done through an annual youth festival where over six-hundred kids come every day for a week for dancing, soccer, and food. The festival takes place in January when the local children are on break from school, so that they can attend. Although time and consistency has contributed to a healthy working relationship with the neighborhood, in the past, friction between the refugee children and the residents was reported. Recently, this program has increased opportunities for their participants to interact with the local community through what they call the “Saturday Barefoot League.” To level the playing field between kids from different socio-economic positions, no one can wear shoes. Outside of these interactions, the program makes efforts to be respectful to the neighborhood of the youth center. During the holiday session, one way this is done is through food distribution and small gifts for the local children to say “thank you” to the residents for their patience and understanding. This dynamic of inclusion and demonstration of consideration makes both the host community, and the refugee kids feel more comfortable.

NGO#6, which operates in both Lebanon and Greece, conducted several external evaluations to assess the impact and effectiveness of their programs. The first evaluation reported that programming was positively correlated with higher levels of well-being and life-skills acquisition. While some life-skills and mental-health outcomes were obtained in a matter of weeks, others required long-term involvement in the program. In both Greece and Lebanon, evaluation results indicated that the life-skills gained in training were helping young refugees to overcome challenges relating to integration. In Greece, a

similar evaluation concluded that the Greek children who participated in mixed programming with refugees expressed higher levels of tolerance and acceptance compared to refugee children who did not participate.

Finally, SDP programs can help participants over-come language barriers so that refugees can communicate with the local populations. Furthermore, encouraging the use of a common languages can help expand social networks within the refugee community and increase overall senses of belonging. Given that these nonprofits are working with refugee backgrounds, many languages are spoken among participants. At NGO#7, Greek, Arabic, Farci, Greek, and English are the main languages spoken. While training sessions are translated by participants in multiple languages, the program encourages refugees to learn and speak English and Greek. NGO#1 also provides literacy classes as a part of programming, and only allows English to be spoken on the soccer field and in the community center. This rule is seen to provide an “opportunity to practice the language, to speak, to listen, and speak on the pitch.” This rule serves other purposes as well. First, it helps participants integrate into the host community, where English is the dominate language. Second, it helps participants makes friends within the program from different cultures and ensures that everyone understand each other.

Several programs reported that language barriers can be a challenge to successful programming. NGO#5 stated,

When we only had refugee groups, they would often segregate themselves by countries...So, it happens that we have different groups sticking together a lot. This was emphasized when they would start to talk in their own languages. Others could not participate in the communication because they could not understand what was going on. That is always a challenge.

Requiring participants to speak the language of the host country can be a potential strategy to encourage participants to make connections to their teammates outside of their own ethnic groups and create more integrative and inclusive environments. For example, a program in Austria encourages everyone to speak German during training sessions. The program believes that soccer is a good and safe space to break up these social groupings because during a soccer game, everybody has to interact with each other. Therefore, sports are perceived as a method to create a safe space for refugees to learn the languages spoken in their host communities.

Skills gained by participating in the programs provided by some of the SDP programs, like language acquisition, can help persuade parents to allow their girls to participate. For example, a parent of a participant at NGO#1 describes how the education of their daughter has been valuable for the family, especially in terms to navigating challenges associated with their status as a refugee,

When we had parent meetings, the parents that allow their girls to play would stand up and say, “my girl speaks better English now and now I do not need a translator when I go to the UNHCR because my girl is helping me.”

When other parents who do not allow their girls to participate in soccer training hear testimonies like this from other refugee parents, they often start to re-evaluate their decision to forbid their girls from participation.

Employability

An avenue to increase opportunity for participants is through training for future employment or direct employment. Three organizations do this by creating coaching opportunities for their participants and the refugee community. As seen in the example with opportunity and skateboarding, youth leaders are both trained as coaches, and then receive different skateboarding accessories based on the training sessions delivered. This stimulates real world employment whereby an individual is given real duties and responsibilities and is in turn compensated for their work. NGO#1 more directly facilitates employment opportunities by creating two year-long positions where volunteer youth assistant coaches are given a stipend for their work. Many of their previous assistant coaches are now employed full-time as head coaches. Furthermore, in the local context, coaching is a very viable future employment opportunity throughout community.

While the skateboarding program reported no gendered issues with their youth leadership program, this program had to employ specific strategies to help girls be successful in their new leadership roles. Despite dedication and sincere interest in coaching from the girls, NGO#1 observed that their male participants were much more successful in their leadership roles. After careful re-evaluation and exploration through a gendered lens, program staff realized that the girls did not understand the rules of the game as well as the boys,

In the society where I come from, and in the community we serve, soccer is not something that girls are typically allowed to play. There are a lot of myths surrounding it and religious and societal constraints that are refusing girls to get to the pitch. Even though we get girls to the pitch and get them interested in the game, they did not have the same time as the boys to learn the game, who have been playing and watching since childhood. You find that you have a 16-year-old joining a team for the first time and they first touched a

soccer ball when they came to our center. This is so different from the boys who have been playing since they were 4 years old. The amount of time that the boys have had to learn the game is much more than the girls. So, by teaching them these rules, it can balance that out. They have the passion, they have the commitment, but they did not know the rules of the game enough to coach it.

Recognizing the opportunities that boys inadvertently had through cultural and societal norms, the program created an opportunity for girls to understand the game by sending the female assistant coaches to a coaching clinic where they learned how to be referees. Additionally, NGO#1 concluded that they needed to give female assistant coaches more space to exercise their agency and use their voices. In this way, they gained two potential future employment possibilities. To ‘level the playing field,’ these staff members encourage SDP leaders working with girls to realize that not all opportunities are equal.

NGO#1 and NGO#4 are looking to create employment opportunities through product creation. NGO#4 is currently exploring the possibility of creating livelihood opportunities by the manufacturing of chalk bags or the exportation of climbing holds. NGO#1 takes a gendered approach to the facilitation of employment opportunities. One day every week, all their girl participants are welcomed into the youth center for the ‘Girls Empowerment Program.’ The curriculum of the program includes teaching the girls business skills like how to budget for a small project, and sexual health. This is followed by a crafts class where the girls are given the materials to create a craft that would be sellable at the local markets. Each season, the girls will work on one craft like making earrings or sewing athletic bags. The idea is that the girls could find all the materials on their own, create their own products,

and sell them at the local markets so that they can buy themselves essential hygiene products such as pads.

Alternatively, NGO#5 focuses on employability as a foundation for their program. Alongside offering soccer based soft skills for both refugee and local out of school children, one on one career counseling is offered. The goal of this service is to integrate these at-risk youth back into some form of educational program or into the job market. To do this, the organization has established a large network of companies, both small and large, who offered trail-based apprentices, and are willing to onboard refugees and other at-risk people. This organization has even experienced success with integrating women into the job market. For example, a young mom of a seven-year-old was placed at an apprenticeship that had childcare. This was previous believed to be impossible in the eyes of the woman.

Employment within the sporting environment might be particularly viable for refugee populations, especially when they are seeking asylum in Western countries. Many young refugees come from sparse educational backgrounds. Before settling in Europe, it is not uncommon for a young person to spend several years in various refugee camps in multiple countries. During this traditional period, many of them are not in school. For those who have passed primary school in their home countries, they can struggle in the European school system because of differences in curriculum. On top of this challenge, refugee students must take on extra course work to learn the language spoken in the host country. For example, in the home country of

NGO#5, refugee students must learn both German and English to overcome language barriers in the education system. The older the individual is, the greater this challenge becomes, and you must find alternative avenues to integrate them into the job market. Providing work opportunities in non-academically and professionalized fields are seen as a viable solution.

Compiling to the challenges associated with the lack of education, finding employment as an asylum seeker or refugee in the Western world is further complicated by the need for work permits. Despite legally residing in the country, it can take five years or more to be granted asylum and be given a work permit. Without this permit, refugees cannot access the formal economy.

Social Capital

In a new country, sport environments are a safe space to gain social capital through the expansion of social networks, often outside of the refugee community. Through both and formal programming that directly contributes to professional development, refugees work closely with local residents, who knows the cultural and structural infrastructure of the host country. In the example of one-on-one counseling, personal development goals are formalized, CVs are constructed, and they are connected to society at large through this personal connection. Sometimes, the mentor even manages to connect the mentee with fiscal support to pursue their professional and personal goals. The gaining of social capital is also developed in less formal ways.

NGO#3 does not provide any services to participants regarding the navigation of the Greek immigration process or accessing economic opportunities outside of coaching at an organizational level. However, this interviewee describes how because she runs with a refugee group every week, she feels as if they are like her brothers,

I think what is really special about our organization is that we are also super involved with our community members because we train with them. Like you know, your sports team becomes your friends. My running team is just like my little brothers.

While an employee for the organization, the interviewee also feels like a part of the team. Having these personal relationships with her teammates, she assists them on her personal time. In fact, the same week as this interview, they had already been to the police station three separate times. Therefore, while this extension of services is not their responsibility or apart of the organizations mission, the genuine relationships formed in this space can help in the integration process.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

Introduction:

This study discusses the benefits and challenges associated with SDP programming for refugee women and girls and identifies strategies to overcome potential shortcoming. Benefits attributed to SDP programs amongst participants organizations can be broadly categorized under ‘employability,’ ‘social capital,’ and ‘safe space.’ Consistent challenges that presented themselves across location and organization were retaining girls and women in sports programs. Participant organizations identify consistency over-time as a key strategy to involving more female participants. Other strategies implemented were utilizing positive female role-models, selected strategic times and locations for trainings, community participation and transparency. While these findings are useful when being shared amongst SDP organizations working with female refugees, I present three more key findings in this conclusion.

First, in accordance with the original research question, I have explored and analyzed how the term empowerment is being used in the field of SDP among female refugees. Grounded in Jo Rowlands work on empowerment, this analysis examines how different types of power are present in SDP programs. I hypothesize the potential impact this has on empowerment through sports and recommend that SDP organizations working with vulnerable populations like girls and refugees take the time to do an internal evaluation that considers how power flows through their organization and suggest strategies to promote empowerment. Next, I address the complex nature of gender equality through sport. This section seeks to provide a discussion on gender equality versus gender equity and explain the importance of this distinction in the realm of SDP. I

ultimately recommend that organizations need to extend their gender frameworks beyond quantitative participation rates between male and female players. The final conclusion drawn from this research is concise yet powerful: SDP programming with refugees restores dignity which is fundamental to the human spirit and overall well-being.

Empowerment:

This study addresses how sports are being used to empower girls and women in the context of refugee populations from the perspective of SDP organizations. Through an extensive literature review, the lack of gendered research is uncovered in the world SDP, despite the growing number of organizations emphasizing their inclusion of girls and empowerment outcomes. The term empowerment has a long-standing history of being viewed as ambiguous, even with Jo Rowlands and Naila Kabeer groundbreaking research. The use of empowerment as a development outcome has been left even more cryptic for organizations using sports as a vehicle for social change. Through semi-structured interviews with 8 SDP organizations who work with refugee girls and women, insight is gained on how empowerment is conceptualized in the SDP arena.

While I hypothesized that SDP empowerment outcomes would focus on ‘power within,’ other dimensions of power were addressed throughout the interviews. ‘Power within’ was discussed in terms of self-esteem and confidence. The connection to self-esteem and confidence was not nearly as emphasized as I predicted in comparison to other forms of power. When defining empowerment, the most common description was the creation and facilitation of opportunity. Leadership, language acquisition, and employment opportunities are presented to participants of these SDP organizations beyond the ability to engage in sport. These opportunities are not intrinsic in nature

whereby an increase in confidence or self-esteem leads participants to seek out opportunities independently. Instead, organizations are creating outlets for youth to explore their potential and life skills and intervening by creating opportunities internally or facilitating opportunities intrinsically.

Therefore, while I acknowledge that participants are likely experiencing empowerment ‘from within,’ I believe that the concept of ‘power over’ needs to be more adequately examined within the literature. The creation of opportunities appears as positive internal empowerment on the surface. However, findings in this study indicate that working with vulnerable populations like refugees and girls can make designing ethnical empowerment policies convoluted. This is best exemplified at NGO#1 through a discussion on empowerment and the creation of leadership position for female refugee youth. NGO#1 is dedicated to promoting gender equality and provides equal opportunities for boys and girls to become assistant coaches. Organization leadership assigned specific assistant coaches to coach different teams based on age and perceived capabilities at the start of the “Assistant Coach Program.” Through an internal assessment conducted through a gendered lens, the organization discovered that boy assistant coaches were consistently more successful than the girls.

Although subtle and logical in a managerial sense, the team assignment policy was enforcing a sense of control for the organization at the expense of the female youth leaders. While the male participants had been playing soccer their whole lives and were confident in their skills and their abilities, girls reported feeling unprepared and uncomfortable to coach certain teams and age groups. Therefore, when the girls were not only provided an opportunity, but were told on how to engage with the activity, they

frequently failed. Since the internal evaluation brought forth the ineffectiveness of assigning teams, newly selected female assistant coaches are asked about their levels of comfortability with different teams and age groups and are therefore also given the opportunity to practice agency through their ability to make the decision. Along-side this minute policy change, female assistant coaches were provided lessons on the rules of the sport. Between these two policies, female coaches started to show up consistently and more effectively assist the head coach. As an intangible and ambiguous force, power presents itself complicated ways.

When creating opportunities for female participants and vulnerable populations in general, I believe that it is important to recognize the position of influence and authority held by formal organizations. This is particularly noteworthy for SDP programs in the West that are working with refugees. With good intentions, SDP organizations can easily exert ‘power over’ their participants. To be clear, this is not a critique on SDP programs for having a level of ‘power over’ the vulnerable populations that they work with and alongside. Furthermore, this finding is distinct from other academic conversations on SDP and neo-colonialism. Instead, it is a call to action. The discussion based in Uganda on girl’s leadership positions as assistant coaches and disparities in success between male and female assistant coaches exposes the importance of internal assessments of ‘power over’ within SDP programs.

Providing girls the opportunity to choose and act upon internal agency can be simple. In the example in Uganda, girls are asked about their preferences. In this way, participants are being brought into the decision-making body. Opportunity and choice must coexist. One participant in Greece achieves this by simply facilitating a diverse set

of sports, intending to allow refugees to exercise their agency to choose. Based on this finding I recommend the following:

I recommend that SDP organizations implement annual internal evaluations that access different dimensions of power and empowerment through a gendered lens. While I acknowledge that it is difficult to measure outcomes tied to ‘power within,’ SDP organizations should consider first devoting monitoring and evolution resources into a gendered analysis of ‘power over’ throughout programming. Through this analysis, organization can gain a more comprehensive understanding and view on how to include participants into the decision-making body.

Strategies for girl’s and women’s empowerment must be strategic and policies must be consistently updated to adjust for local contexts. A thematic finding of this study is that empowerment takes time. SDP programs are continuously learning more about the populations they serve and the participants themselves are unique and consistently growing. Reoccurring internal evaluations can help organizations adjust to meet the needs and provide a space for participants, especially female participants, to be given a voice in the decision-making process. The use of female role models presented itself within this research as a critical empowerment technique and as a method to encourage sport participation for refugee female communities. Therefore, I recommend that youth leaders are given the opportunity to represent the needs of their community during internal assessments and are encouraged to take ownership of program policies.

Gender Equality vs. Equity:

This study exposes an important discussion on the distinction between equality and equity.²⁶ Conversations on gender inclusivity in SDP programs resulted in knowledge about how barriers to girls and women refugees are being considered. On the topic of addressing these barriers, participant organizations identified important strategies to help get females to sport practice such as providing athletic attire, facilitating safe transportation, meeting with parents, and conducting training at appropriate times to be outside the home. These are examples of equity whereby extra support and resources are allocated to getting female refugees to the program site. While not directly stated in the interviews, it is tacitly assumed that identifying how to include females in SDP programs is not only a key element of the global development agenda but expected from all SDP programs. I argue that this has left many organizations in an understandably difficult position whereby they are expected to equally engage with girls and women in their programs to attract positive attention from the international community. This fluid and unspoken dynamic between the international community and SDP programs seems to result in the promotion of equality through which equity is considered.

This is observed through the emphasis on having relatively equal number of girls and boys participating in sports programming. In this way, the focus is on getting the girls to the pitch, and not on what happens once they are there. While I recognize that the numerical measuring of female participation is important and relevant to the pursuit of SDP Goal 5: Gender Equality, more research is needed to assess if it has any impact on

²⁶ For the purposes of this study, equality can be loosely defined as treating everyone the same while equity can be defined as providing different levels of support to individuals or groups based on their individual or collective needs.

gender equality and empowerment. Equality and equity are interdependent and should be considered simultaneously when promoting gender equality, because without policies promoting equity, equality will remain an allusive goal. As discussed, SDP programs in this study have excelled in using equity as a tool to get female refugees to the sports site by removing barriers. However, it was unexpected to find that SDP organizations working with refugee girls do not all have gendered policies in place. The design of this study limited the findings in this regard, as all the information gathered was from the perspective of organization staff, and not the participants themselves. Based on these findings and drawing upon the example of the leadership program in Uganda, I hypothesize that an SDP program will have minimal impact on gender equality and empowerment unless a gender lens is streamlined throughout all of programming.

Adopting a gender lens throughout an organization highlights the importance of addressing both sexes. Demonstrated by Rowlands, the very heart of empowerment is *power*. Assuming that there is a limited amount of power in the world, power cannot meaningfully be given to a marginalized individual without power effectively being taken-away from another group. For example, Hayhurt's et al. (2019) research regarding self-defense programming for girls in Uganda found that boys continued to 'shame and abuse' girls. Despite the participants increased ability to withstand abuse due to their training, structural barriers such as time, financial constraints, and power relations persisted (Hayhurt et al, (2019). As seen through this example, when you just include girls and women in SDP programming aiming at improving gender equality, without directly addressing the barriers for girls to exercise their newfound power in outside the program site and in society itself, the challenging of gender norms can put girls and

women in more compromising positions. Therefore, there needs to be an equitable redistribution of power for female participants to experience the benefits of an SDP program. In short, it is not enough to give girls a bench so that they can see over the fence, the fence must be torn down.

Equity can serve as a pivotal framework to empower girls through SDP programming. However, it is critical to note that equity needs to extend beyond removing barriers to participate in the sport itself. I suggest that there are two levels of equity that should be considered in any mixed-gendered SDP programming. The first level of equity is whereby the SDP organization simply provides higher level of support to female participants to attract and retain them within the program. This is equity at its most basic form and does not challenge gender norms. The second level of equity the removal of these systemic barriers for females to participate in sport in the first place. Removing these systemic barriers requires directly addressing unequal levels of power distributed amongst men and women throughout society.

Addressing systemic gender inequalities through SDP programming means more than removing the barriers preventing girls and women to participate in sport. While it is generally understood that sport can improve confidence and self-esteem, and the findings of this study indicate other soft and hard skill benefits, I recommend that SDP organizations use their unique positions to equip girls with the tools they need to exercise their own agency, like in the example of NGO#1 whereby girls were given more choices. However, empowering girls through opportunity and choice cannot be done without engaging of boys and men.

Without including men and boys into the empowerment process, SDP programs are inadvertently operating without the framework of Women in Development (WID). I recommend that SDP approach empowerment through the Gender and Development (GAD) framework whereby the socially constructed differences between men and women are explicitly recognized and challenged. I argue that the adoption of the GAD framework in all SDP programs that work with boys and girls is critical to positive social outcomes on the basis that sport can have both positive and negative gendered outcomes based on program policies. While more data is needed on the perceptions of the participants themselves, SDP organizations working with vulnerable populations like refugees, who often come from socially conservative backgrounds that restrict women and girls from fully participating in public life, should be cognizant of potential dangers of not acknowledging power dynamics between men and women in a sports setting.

When power dysphoria is unaddressed, and females and male have equal opportunity, there is a risk of re-enforcing male power. I will draw upon two distinct examples to support this argument. The first example will demonstrate how men exhibit power in sport and social setting, regardless of good intentions. A key finding of this study was that SDP organizations are increasingly viewing female role-models as critical components to working with refugee girls in sports. During an interview with a staff member in Greece who works in the field, this is addressed through a discussion about how male coaches working with girls can negatively complicate sports trainings. The staff member can explain that while some girls develop “crushes” on male coaches, other female participants feel as if male coaches only give attention to certain teammates based on these “crushes.” This demonstrates that male coaches can unintentionally have ‘power

over' female players. By examining gender relations within a program, these challenges can be identified and addressed promptly. This example helps illuminate divergence between getting girls to the sports site, and how to ensure that the sport site is a healthy environment for female participants.

The second example is set in a context of where the organization is using soccer to challenge gender equality. In this context, male participants come to the program having grown up playing and watching soccer. Girls come to the program and touch a soccer ball for perhaps the first time. As such, it is no surprise that male participants tend to demonstrate more sport skills at program. By conducting mixed-sex programming without implementing strategies to confront the systemic barriers to women and girls, you are disproportionately giving boys power. The same opportunity will get boys much further than girls when power imbalances are left unaddressed. This organization firmly states the importance of their equity policies in place that address these discrepancies through conversations with both boys and girls and through special sports training sessions for the girls. Without these policies, they warn that male dominance in the sports domain is only reasserted. Therefore, I recommend that SDP organizations working with mix-gendered groups, especially those using well-known or traditional sports like soccer, should deeply consider implementing a gendered lens to their organizational approach. This recommendation is based on preventing harm and is not only relevant to organizations who embody gender equality within their organizational missions. Regardless of if the mission focuses on the environment, safe space, or inclusion, I argue that working with men, women, boys, and girls in a sports content demands consideration of gender dynamics and power.

Sports, Refugees, and Dignity:

Finally, it is compelling to acknowledge the subtle and underlining theme of dignity. In addition to direct conversations on dignity, this study finds that on average, SDP organizations are concerned with creating stability, providing opportunities, and recognizing past experiences and values of people with refugee backgrounds through sport. As such, this study finds that sports are being used as a method to revitalize dignity amongst refugee populations. This contributes to the story of humanitarian aid and development, which often centers on the provision of basic goods such as food and shelter in refugee contexts.

There is no denying that refugees need humanitarian assistance that addresses housing and hunger. Without such provisions, life will not be sustained. Based on testimonials gathered in this study, keeping someone alive does not mean you have given someone the opportunity to live. The attachment of a refugee status to a name seems to imply the lack of potential, education, and professional experience. Despite limited resource, I recommend that alongside the meeting of basic needs, an important step towards sustainable refugee policies is to implement dignity revitalizing strategies. While I acknowledge that more research is needed in the field of SDP and refugees, particularly in the realm of monitoring and evaluation, I believe that qualitative evidence presented in this study indicates that sports are a vital strategy. Although outside of the scope of this research, further studies could evaluate this conclusion based off media representation and perception of refugees by comparing images and stories portrayed of the realities of refugees versus what is communicating through the media of SDP organizations.

Concluding Remarks:

It should not be assumed that all NGOs in the SDP realm that work with women and girls are actively promoting gender equality. SDP NGOs in this study display a wide variety of mission statements. For example, while NGO#1 explicitly focuses on gender equality, NGO#2's mission centers on providing safe spaces for youth to play. While both NGOs are inclusive to women and girls, a distinction should be made.

By returning to the conversation on the history of development presented in the literature review, it is clear through discussions on human dignity and equitable spaces that SDP organizations are actively pursuing the new era of developed that is shifting away from rigid ideas of economic development to more balanced initiatives that are set on fostering social capital. These organizations are acting in accordance with key international declarations and initiatives such as the previously mentioned 1959 Declaration on the Rights of the Child, the 1978 International Charter of Physical Education and Sport, and the 1995 Beijing platform that all highlighted the right to play and access to recreational space. Therefore, SDP missions should inherently be recognized with some merit within the development framework.

However, I argue that as a contested gendered space, if women and girls are being included in programming, gender dynamics must be considered by organizations. This argument is based on the simple principle of doing no harm. As a basic element of any SDP organization, a safe space is not created for women and girls if they do not feel safe and dignified when engaging in sport. This concern is only confounded when applied to women and girls with refugee backgrounds, who are already vulnerable and often subjected and oppressed by laws, culture, and circumstance.

Without engaging with participants during this research project, it would be inappropriate to speak more about individual outcomes of empowerment. Despite this limitation, the adaptation of this study to be remote and focused on organizational levels of engagement provided unique insights into the realm of SDP. I conclude that SDP organizations have a lot of opportunity for collective and organizational notions of empowerment through both the frameworks of Women in Development. This is based on the consistent emphasize from interviewees that utilizing female role-models is a powerful tool for recruiting women and girls into their programs. SDP organizations are partially seen as a powerful development tool because they are more organically organized through ‘the bottom-up’ approach. I recommend that SDP NGOs capitalize on this inherent trait through interventions that recognize the need of women and girls’ voices in organization decision making bodies.

Furthermore, as organizations that represent the worlds response to the refugee crisis, SDP organizations are uniquely positioned to recognize and restore refugee dignity by also including them in leadership and administrative roles. On the surface, the investment in time and professional development resources creates relatable role-models. On a deeper level, this last concluding remark brings us back to the beginning: colonialism. Throughout history, we have seen how sports were a colonial tool that were weaponized to oppress and control both the Global South and women. Without detailed planning and consideration, it is entirely possible for SDP programs to continue this trend of neo-imperialism under the guise of adopting development trends. However, it is clear through these interviews that SDP organizations are engaging with refugees by fostering ownership through youth leadership programs and through the hiring of staff.

Therefore, I conclude that SDP NGOs are engaging with refugee populations by fostering opportunities for skill development, employability, and community building. This engagement is described as empowerment and therefore gender equality is dominantly fostered through basic equality and inclusivity. The next step is to adopt the framework of Gender and Development by incorporating the element of agency when working with both refugees and women and girls. If SDP organizations are truly committed to gendered programming, I recommend stepping outside easy monitoring and evaluation practices of equal numbers of boys and girls. Instead, break down the wall.

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