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# 1. A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE INTEGRATION OF REFUGEES THROUGH SPORT: "THE CONTACT THEORY"

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Sports participation can foster health, well-being and social inclusion due to the physiological and psychological benefits that it offers. This is why sport is often seen as a social policy tool that not only promotes physical and mental health, but also reduces anti-social behaviour, increases community cohesion, helps with language acquisition, and also builds self-esteem and self-confidence (Hoye, Nicholson and Brown, 2015; Spaaij, 2012).

Within the context of the present study, we reviewed a plethora of programmes offering varied and diverse provision to engage the refugee community. Overall, it is important to note that the current provision, in the majority of programmes we analysed, consists of offering sport activities FOR refugees. However, if the ultimate objective is to promote the societal inclusion of refugees through sport, there is an additional stage that needs to be activated in order to enhance opportunities for integration between refugees (out-group) and the host nationals (in-group). Indeed, offering sporting activities that involve BOTH refugees and host nationals is what is currently missing

in most of the programmes offered in EU. This specifically is something that future programmes should consider doing. A sound theoretical basis for any future programmes aiming to promote IRTS can be the utilisation of the 'intergroup contact theory' which is outlined below. The relationship between positive intergroup contact and sports participation has been evidenced in numerous studies examining racial (Hartmann, Sullivan, & Nelson, 2012) and cultural (Lyras & Welty Peachey, 2011) factors, however, despite this there has in general been scarce use of this well-evidenced theoretical framework in the context of using sport as a tool for the inclusion of refugees.

It is important that policy makers and relevant stakeholders who work in sport for all organisations consider employing theory-driven initiatives when designing sport interventions that aim to promote the inclusion of refugees through sport. One such suggested theoretical framework could be based on one of the most influential theoretical perspectives in the field of social psychology and intergroup relations, namely the 'contact theory' (Allport, 1954), which states that contact between members of different groups (in our context refugees and people from the host nation) is key to improving social relations and for reducing intergroup bias.

**Allport's Contact Hypothesis (1954) states that for contact between groups to be successful, four pre-requisite features must be present.**

**THESE ARE:**

- Equal status between the groups;
  - Common goals;
  - Co-operation and
  - Support by law authorities and social norms
- (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew, 1998).

According to Allport, it is essential that the contact situation exhibits these four factors to some degree. Several studies have demonstrated that optimal contact is crucial in reducing prejudice and in the establishment of cross-group friendships (Pettigrew, 1998). Indeed, those factors are present in most friendships and relationships, and sport activities provide an excellent platform for these to flourish. Friends share equal status and they work together to achieve shared goals. On the contrary, whenever authorities or societal norms have imposed severe societal limitations such as segregation laws or the assignment of differential statuses, then the contact conditions and opportunities are minimised.

Since the inception of Allport's contact theory several studies have confirmed the importance of contact in reducing prejudice. Positive contact experiences have been shown to reduce self-reported prejudice towards black neighbours, the elderly, gay men, and the disabled (Works, 1961; Caspi, 1984; Vonofako,

Hewstone, & Voci, 2007; Yuker & Hurley, 1987). The theory dictates that when there is contact (social or physical) with a group of people, the likelihood of prejudice (judgements formed without sufficient reasoning) is greatly reduced.

According to Allport, the above mentioned four pre-requisite conditions can promote favourable intergroup relations and reduce prejudice.

Table 1 outlines the four conditions of contact theory and provides the meaning of each of these conditions with evidence. Furthermore, best practices are then provided bridging the gap between theory and practice for each condition.

*Table 1. The Four Conditions of the Contact Theory and its Application to the Integration of Refugees Through Sport (Adapted from Everett, 2013)*

<b>CONDITION</b>	<b>EQUAL STATUS</b>
<b>MEANING</b>	Members of the contact situation should not have an unequal hierarchical relationship.
<b>EVIDENCE</b>	Evidence has indicated that having equal power is important both prior and during the contact situation (Brewer & Kramer, 1985; Cohen & Lotan, 1995).
<b>BEST PRACTICES</b>	<p><b>CRICKET IN SWEDEN:</b> Aiding integration of new arrivals from Asian countries, for many of whom cricket can be considered the national sport- START towards equal status as they have expertise with the sport (<a href="http://irts.isca.org/goodpractice/000_78">http://irts.isca.org/goodpractice/000_78</a>).</p> <p><b>BUNTKICKGUT. INTERCULTURAL STREET FOOTBALL LEAGUE OF MUNICH:</b> 150 teams with approximately 1,500 players. The players are a mix of refugees and disadvantaged youth, all from a variety ethnic backgrounds. When new teams join, seasoned participants help them to learn the rules. The teams are almost always made up of players from a cross-section of cultural communities (Equal Status encouraged-empowerment <a href="http://irts.isca.org/goodpractice/000_82">http://irts.isca.org/goodpractice/000_82</a>).</p>

<b>CONDITION</b>	<b>COOPERATION</b>
<b>MEANING</b>	Members should work together in a non-competitive environment
<b>EVIDENCE</b>	Aronson's 'jigsaw technique' structures classrooms so that students work cooperatively, this approach has led to positive results across various international contexts (Aronson & Patnoe, 1997).
<b>BEST PRACTICES</b>	<p><b>HEJ FRÄMLING! (HI FOREIGNER):</b> Integrates newcomers into the new society and also to give a space for interaction with locals- non-competitive, focus on outdoor pursuits and life as well as culture (<a href="http://irts.isca.org/goodpractice/000_76">http://irts.isca.org/goodpractice/000_76</a>).</p> <p><b>Example: #BIKEYGEES:</b> Collaborative team building activities- to overcome a challenge - rather than competition with each other. This encourages co-operation between groups. Berlin- women focused on teaching refugee women how to ride a bike, which gives mobility, empowerment and inclusion in the society for refugee women, encourages friendships, and also bridges the gap of fear of contact for all sides, newcomers and hosts- non-competitive and collaborative approach (<a href="http://irts.isca.org/goodpractice/000_67">http://irts.isca.org/goodpractice/000_67</a>).</p>

<b>CONDITION</b>	<b>COMMON GOALS</b>
<b>MEANING</b>	Members must rely on each other to achieve their shared desired goal
<b>EVIDENCE</b>	Hu and Griffey (1985) have shown the importance of common goals in interracial athletic teams who need to work together to achieve goals.
<b>BEST PRACTICES</b>	<p><b>ANERA:</b> focus on a specific common goal: hosting soccer tournaments for hundreds of children under the "We play for peace" slogan (<a href="http://irts.isca.org/goodpractice/000_75">http://irts.isca.org/goodpractice/000_75</a>).</p> <p><b>FC LAMPEDUSA HAMBURG:</b> opportunity to train and play for all immigrants, refugees and local Hamburg residents, it also gives them a space to speak up about both their situation and desires and share their common love for football (<a href="http://irts.isca.org/goodpractice/000_69">http://irts.isca.org/goodpractice/000_69</a>).</p> <p><b>HONG KONG REFUGEE PROGRAMME:</b> Free to Run operates on the basic principle that sport is a human right and not a luxury; common ethos and goal, as well as running events (<a href="http://irts.isca.org/goodpractice/000_68">http://irts.isca.org/goodpractice/000_68</a>).</p>

<b>CONDITION</b>	<b>SUPPORT BY SOCIAL AND INSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITIES</b>
<b>MEANING</b>	There should be social or institutional authorities that explicitly support positive contact
<b>EVIDENCE</b>	Landis' (1984) illustrated the importance of institutional support in reducing prejudice in the military.
<b>BEST PRACTICES</b>	<p><b>BEYOND SPORT:</b> Project set up by the German Olympic Sports Confederations (DOSB) and the Commissioner for Migration, Integration and Refugee, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees and the IOC, which represents clear institutional support for the project (<a href="http://irts.isca.org/goodpractice/000_81">http://irts.isca.org/goodpractice/000_81</a>).</p> <p><b>IT STARTS WITH SOCCER:</b> The Refugees in Sports Initiative now provides young players with a "passport" to local clubs, as well as financial support, to enable them to join- importance of support and partnerships to reduce barriers (<a href="http://irts.isca.org/goodpractice/000_80">http://irts.isca.org/goodpractice/000_80</a>).</p> <p><b>NEGATIVE- INSTITUTION ENGAGEMENT:</b> "We had two players who were picked for the Under-19s and Under-17s but because of their immigration statuses, they couldn't go over to any neighbouring countries, so we had to cancel matches in Denmark."</p>

### 1.1. EQUAL STATUS WITHIN THE SITUATION

Contact must occur under conditions of 'equal social status', meaning that groups must enter the contact situation with equal status and then retain equal status during the contact situation.

If the minority group has contact with the majority group as a subordinate then this is likely to perpetuate negative stereotypes of inferiority, thus reducing the likelihood of integration and inclusivity. Contact must be in the form of co-operative interaction, meaning that both groups (in the case of this project, refugees and host nationals) must be have a shared, mutual investment, as co-operation is necessary for reductions (Sherif, 1966). If this is not present, meaning that one or both groups are not engaged in collaborative interaction, this may intensify intergroup bias, as neutral contact is not sufficient (Hewstone & Brown, 1986).

Sherif and his colleagues (1961) conducted a series of experiments in summer camps, where 11-year old boys formed groups and engaged in competitive

tasks. After that, they had the opportunity to interact with the different groups either under neutral or under positive contact (Sherif, Harvey, White, Hood, & Sherif, 1961). The results suggested that neutral contact was not enough to reduce intergroup bias and in some incidences, it led to intensified intergroup bias (Hewstone & Brown, 1986).

Within a sporting context one way to make this possible would be to vary the participant roles, for both the in and out group. By ensuring both the in-groups (host nationals) and the out-group (refugees) have the opportunity to engage with differing roles such as coaching, refereeing and even leadership/captaincy positions, in order to encourage empowerment, ensuring that the hierarchical position is not always a host national.

## 1.2. COMMON GOALS

Furthermore, it is important for intergroup members to have common goals and engage in a goal-oriented effort. There is no better context than **team sports** to provide an opportunity to work towards a common goal. For instance, the ultimate objective in football is to score by putting the ball into their opponent's goal, while in basketball the goal is to put the ball through a hoop on the opposite side of the court, and in hockey the two teams try to manoeuvre a ball into the opponent's goal using a hockey stick.

Mixing ethnic groups together in the same team is crucial to foster collaboration and social cohesion among participants from different ethnic groups. Furthermore, working towards a common goal can help reduce prejudice and intergroup conflict. Promoting activities in which participants share common goals is quite straightforward to achieve within a sports setting, as members of the team rely on each other to achieve the shared goal associated with the sporting activity. This can be seen by the fact that winning teams are frequently the teams that work best together, and cooperate to achieve a common goal. When participants from different ethnic groups play together in the same team, and work towards a common goal, a group identity re-categorisation happens, meaning that individual participants' group identities are replaced with a more superordinate group, and new common identity can be formed as members of an ethnically diverse athletic team.

In a study conducted in ethnically divided Sri-Lanka, Schoellkopf (2010)\* gathered evidence of how well designed, ethnically mixed sport events have the potential to help the creation of interpersonal friendships and to promote inclusive social identities, therefore creating 'momenta of togetherness' for members of disparate ethnic groups

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\* Schulenkorf, N. (2010). Sport events and ethnic reconciliation: Attempting to create social change between Sinhalese, Tamil and Muslim sportspeople in war-torn Sri Lanka. *International review for the sociology of sport*, 45(3), 273-294.

### *1.3. INTERGROUP COOPERATION – NO COMPETITION*

The third condition is 'Intergroup cooperation – no competition', this may be difficult in some incidences to control within a sports-based settings, as even in a recreational setting, often competition forms a fundamental part of sports-based activities and provision. Evidence has highlighted that competition in games and every-day events results in negative feelings, stereotypes and bias towards the outgroup (Bettencourt, Brewer, Rogers-Croak, Miller, 1992).

A possible way to overcome this challenge regarding competitive sport may be to encourage the use of modified sports activities and team building activities, so participants are working together towards a common goal of solving the challenge or problem - rather than competing traditionally towards a 'win' or 'lose' scenario- which will create a competitive environment. For example, there is a modified version of softball and baseball called 'tee ball' where there's no pitcher, and the ball is hit from a stand ('tee') to make it easier to hit. There are a number of popular modified sports such as Auskick football, Aussie Hoops basketball, Milo T20 Blast cricket and Try Rugby Kids Pathway that have shifted the focus away from competition by modifying or eliminating contact rules and the competitive classification. The focus in these modified versions of classic sports is mainly on participation in line with Pierre de Coubertin's spirit, not on the results. In this guise especially, games can be the catalyst towards the creation and the establishment of new relationships of friendship, trust and acceptance. Non-competitive sport activities can be of great use to challenge stereotypes and to bridge conflict divisions. A very good example of how non-competitive activities can be used in the context of inclusion of refugees comes from a programme which was founded in 2007 in Jordan called 'Generations for Peace – GFP'. This pilot initiative of the Jordan Olympic Committee aimed to utilise sport for peacebuilding activities in schools for Jordanian and Syrian children. The overall objective was to 'strengthen resilience and social cohesion, and to reduce violence'. More information on this programme can be found here: [http://www.icip-perlapau.cat/numero27/articles\\_centrales/article\\_central\\_4/](http://www.icip-perlapau.cat/numero27/articles_centrales/article_central_4/)

And for a more illustrative demonstration, this video has been produced: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5ZLq7aX1CA4&index=1&list=PLG70viqHSw3z-ADGo8iNa86-PkbQ6Goqk>



## 1.4. AUTHORITY SUPPORT

Social norms favouring equality must be in place (**social and institutional support**) to encourage inclusion and integration between in and out groups. A recent European Commission Report, published in 2016, investigated the challenges of integrating refugees and immigrant communities into the workforce and also looked at restricted access to the labour market due to legal and administrative barriers, alongside a lack of institutional support or poor resourcing of available support were highlighted as challenges.\*

Within other contexts, institutional and governmental policies and rules have led to the segregation of many groups, i.e., Whites/Blacks, Catholics/Protestants across multiple international contexts including the US, South Africa, and Northern Ireland (Boal, 2002; Hewstone et al., 2005). This acts as a barrier limiting the ability of out groups to integrate, it also hampers the efforts of many stakeholders attempting to encourage the integration and equality of refugees within society, due to specific practices sanctioning contact.

According to the latest, extensive meta-analysis by Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) this is a particularly important condition for acquiring the benefits of intergroup contact. As there should be no official laws or policies enforcing segregation, which is evident within some governmental legislation surrounding refugees and their engagement with sport. Furthermore, an additional condition would be to illustrate support and assistance from institutional organisations to encourage integration between groups.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has been a very pro-active and supportive institution in providing refugee aid around the world. Thanks to the IOC's strong institutional backing, in the recent Rio 2016 Olympic Games, for the first time in history a Refugee Olympic Team (ROT), composed of ten refugee athletes, competed at the Olympics. The IOC enabled those athletes to march with the official Olympic flag at the opening ceremony and provided a good model of how sport can be a platform for inclusivity. In 2015, the IOC offered generous financial support and set up a \$2 million refugee fund, additionally the IOC recently formalised an agreement with the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCLR)\*\*.

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\* Reference:

<https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/librarydoc/challenges-in-the-labour-market-integration-of-asylum-seekers-and-refugees>

\*\* Reference:

<https://www.olympic.org/news/ioc-launches-olympic-refuge-foundation-in-its-commitment-to-support-refugees>

## *1.5. IMPORTANCE OF FRIENDSHIPS (CROSS-GROUP)*

Research has highlighted that friendships lead to more positive, stronger, attitudes towards the outgroup (Turner, Hewstone, Voci, Paolini, & Christ, 2007). This has been suggested as an additional important condition in addition to Allport's original four conditions.

Furthermore, when thinking about Allport's conditions, 'Friendship invokes many of the optimal conditions for positive contact effects: it typically involves cooperation and common goals as well as repeated equal-status contact over an extended period and across varied settings' (Pettigrew, Tropp, Wagner & Christ, 2011, p.276).

## *1.6. FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS*

The research of Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) indicated that these conditions are best considered as an interrelated group of characteristics, rather than individual factors, as together they may encourage prejudice reduction. Yet meta-analytic findings state that these conditions are not compulsory for prejudice reduction, reinforcing the importance of focusing on negative variables that prevent intergroup interaction and contact from lessening prejudice (Pettigrew and Tropp, 2006).

Further advancements investigating Allport's intergroup contact theory indicate that these conditions facilitate the effect, yet as stated above they are not essential (Pettigrew, Tropp, Wagner & Christ, 2011). Research illustrates that intergroup contact also leads to additional positive outcomes, alongside reduced prejudice, such as increased trust and forgiveness, with intergroup friendship being extremely valuable. Furthermore, these effects are evident amongst other, often stigmatised groups such as the disabled, mentally ill and homosexuals, alongside ethnic and racial groups (Pettigrew et al. 2011). Evidence has indicated that these effects can have a wider impact on the out-group as a whole, as the out-group members involved in the contact then "pass on" these benefits to other out-group members who are not as involved in intergroup contact. Importantly major, mediators of the effect are emotional: empathy and reduced anxiety (Pettigrew et al. 2011).

An important consideration that has to be discussed is negative contact - this typically takes place when the participant did not choose to engage in the contact and/ or feels threatened (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2011).

This provides an indication of the current practices being undertaken across multiple international contexts, and the association of this to the inter-group contact theory conditions. Where an illustrative example is not provided, research cases provide a representative case to demonstrate the ideal situation.

As seen in **Table 1**, it is evident that many of these conditions already exist sporadically. However, our research demonstrated that all four conditions of the contact theory were hard to find alongside each other in one single case study. There have been specific, random indices of employment of some of these conditions but this generally happens in an unsystematic way. Hopefully the present desk research will enable people and institutions who work within the field of inclusion of refugees through sport to consider using a sound and well established theoretical model when designing and applying inclusive interventions.

## WOULD YOU LIKE TO KNOW MORE?

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