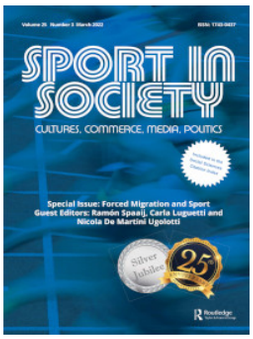

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'Should I *really* be here?': Problems of trust and ethics in PAR with young people from refugee backgrounds in sport and leisure

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ABSTRACT

Participatory Action Research (PAR) has been positioned as a means of addressing the current methodological limits within forced migration studies and sport. Yet, there are challenges in ensuring that PAR achieves its intended aims of collaboration, mutual respect, trust, accountability, fairness, and social transformation. This article stems from a PAR study exploring the relationships between sport and leisure and the wellbeing of young people from refugee backgrounds in London, UK. We offer a critical discussion of two overlapping and sensitizing issues in our work: (1) developing trust and negotiating reciprocal partnerships; (2) navigating ethical dilemmas and doing PAR with integrity. We argue that embedding a reflexive approach and developing trusting and reciprocal relationships allows us to collaboratively negotiate these issues and promote the benefits that may be derived to all partners involved through the participatory process.

KEYWORDS

Refugees; youth; participatory methodologies; partnerships; ethics; participatory action research

Introduction

A wealth of literature on refugee and forced migration studies has developed since the 1980s (Van Hear 1998), with the growing body of research on forced migration and sport reflecting more recent attention over the past 20 years. Spaaij et al. (2019) provide the first critical review of the literature, surmising that much of the work reinforces deficit models while failing to progress beyond the biases of Western policy categorisations of refugees and asylum seekers and recognize the complexities of forced migration and leisure and sport through the lens of intersectionality. These concerns illustrate a disconnect between researchers in forced migration studies and the lived experience of forced migrants themselves (Spaaij et al. 2019). Centrally important to the discussion in this paper and following Spaaij et al. (2019), there are also identifiable methodological limits to the current research including a lack of attention to lived experience – specifically emotional and embodied perspectives, narrow prescriptions of Western ontologies and epistemological frameworks,

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a lack of innovation in research methods, and limited exploration of key issues within research ethics and the overall integrity with in which knowledge production takes place.

In this paper, we argue that Participatory Action Research (PAR) methodologies may go some way to address these gaps in the literature bringing potential to move beyond a deficit approach by valuing the expertise of refugees and asylum seekers in knowledge production and involving them in developing all aspects of the research process. PAR is an established and rigorous methodology that seeks to engage community members in research, education and action on local issues to promote critical reflection on lived experiences and social transformation (Fals-Borda 1987). There are a growing number of studies that use PAR within the field of forced migration and sport, the majority of these with young people from refugee backgrounds; however, limited attention has been afforded to examining key issues of reflexivity, ethics, and partnership work which we argue underpin the potential benefits and credibility of PAR. This is particularly problematic considering that the integrity of the participatory research process is often determined by the quality of partnership relationships and the distribution of responsibility, power and participation (Frisby, Crawford, and Dorer 1997). Furthermore, many PAR approaches, including our own, are conducted by outsider researchers and tend to be framed by the very (Western) research methods and concomitant epistemological and ontological backdrop that we wish to critique.

In emphasising the need for critical reflection on the complexities of PAR with young people from refugee backgrounds, we offer discussion around two potentially fruitful sensitizing issues which, to date, have not been explored in depth within the forced migration and sport literature and which we have found useful in reflecting upon, informing, and adapting our thinking and research relationships and strategies. These issues are (1) developing trust and negotiating reciprocal partnerships; (2) navigating ethical dilemmas and doing PAR with integrity. In this paper, we set out these two key issues theoretically and bring to each of them a series of selected empirical examples from our work in an on-going PAR study with young people from refugee backgrounds in London, UK, exploring how sport and leisure programmes may contribute to wellbeing. We argue that developing trusting, reciprocal, and ethical relationships is vital in fostering authentic and credible collaboration and enhancing the transformative potential of PAR when working with young people from refugee backgrounds.

The paper is structured into four parts. The next section describes the origins and philosophy of PAR, explores how PAR has been applied in sport, leisure, and forced migration studies literature, and examines and defines reciprocity, trust, and ethics in partnership work. This is followed by a brief overview of the background to the study and a summary of the methods through which the arguments in this paper are developed. We then provide a theoretical-empirical discussion of the two key sensitising issues that have come to the fore in developing PAR with young people from refugee backgrounds in sport: developing trust and negotiating reciprocal relationships, and navigating ethical challenges while maintaining research integrity. Finally, the conclusion considers implications for participatory researchers who are working with refugee populations in sport and leisure.

Participatory action research and forced migration studies in sport and leisure

Participatory approaches have gained increased popularity in both forced migration and sport studies. Cornwall and Jewkes (1995) argue that the key factor differentiating participatory

and conventional research methodologies is the more equal distribution of power away from the researcher to other stakeholders throughout the research process. 'Participatory methodologies' describe various approaches to enquiry, ranging from Action Research (AR), to Participatory Research (PR). From these two approaches, came Participatory Action Research (PAR), a strength-based framework that values the local knowledge of stakeholders and emphasizes their agency in facilitating social change (Fine et al. 2003) through processes of reflection, action and education (Fals-Borda 1987). Participants move from being researched on, to partners involved in developing all aspects of the research process (Cornwall and Jewkes 1995; Fine et al. 2003).

PAR, as coined by Fals-Borda (1987), blends strands of PR and AR. AR was first developed by Lewin (1951) in the global North to bridge the divide between research and practical application for the purposes of problem solving in industry (Lewin 1951). From AR, PAR places emphasis on participants engaging in cyclical process of action and reflection to promote beneficial societal outcomes (Kemmis 2006). PR was popularized in the global South by Freire (1972) in the context of adult education and is embedded within critical theory. PR centres a commitment to working in partnership with communities to examine the social forces that reproduce inequalities within their lives and re-create this knowledge to empower political action and transformation of these hegemonic structures (Freire 1972). Freire (1972) argued that the basis for this transformation lay within the development of what he referred to as horizontal relationships between students and teachers that are characterised by trust, love, and hope. Inspired by PR, Fals-Borda (1987) developed and named the *Participatory* in *Action Research* to signify a commitment to working in partnership with the community to challenge hegemonic structures and foster social change.

Within forced migration studies and sport, there has been a small, yet growing number of studies published recently that utilize PAR. In Australia, Rosso and McGrath (2016) worked with stakeholders to co-design sport programs to increase the participation of youth from disadvantaged 'Culturally and Linguistically Diverse' (CaLD) backgrounds. In Canada, Robinson et al. (2019) employed Kemmis (2006) cyclical framework of Action Research to co-design/implement a Syrian Youth Sports Club and Middleton et al. (2021) utilised Community Based Participatory Action Research (CBPAR) with forced immigrant youth to create vignette stories about the role of sport within their life journeys. In the UK, Stone (2018) explored the relationship between football, hope, and belonging among adult male refugees and asylum seekers and used PAR alongside ethnography to co-create a recreational football program. In Brazil, Venturini-Trindale (2021) used PAR to conduct a program evaluation of a leisure-based intervention for male-born transgender individuals seeking asylum. In Sweden, Mashreghi, Yasmin, and Ali (2021) utilised PAR with unaccompanied Afghan children to explore their physical activity experiences during displacement and settlement. Further, in Australia, Luguetti, Singehebhuye, and Spaaij (2021) used an activist approach to explore barriers and facilitators to participation in sport for African-Australian refugee-background young women, then co-created and delivered a workshop for coaches. Within this body of literature, we can see that PAR has been utilized in building research-practice partnerships, co-designing and evaluating sport and leisure-based programs, and exploring the diverse lived experiences of refugee-background participants and community sports organisers.

Within sports studies, there is growing emphasis on embedding critical PAR methodologies to maintain the integrity of the participatory process (Hayhurst, Giles, and Radforth

2015; Rich and Misener 2020; Smith et al. 2021; Spaaij et al. 2018). Yet, within forced migration and sport, only three papers described employing a critical PAR methodology including Robinson et al. (2019) who used Kemmis' cycle of action research (2006), Luguetti, Singehebhuye, and Spaaij (2021) who embedded a critical theoretical activist approach (Freire 1972), and Mashreghi, Yasmin, and Ali (2021) who utilised PAR within a decolonial framework. Further, although the majority of studies provided an in-depth description of the research process, limited analysis was typically afforded to the PAR methodology including ontology/epistemology, philosophy, partnership work, and reflexivity. Indeed, Mashreghi, Yasmin, and Ali (2021) were the only scholars to embed PAR within a decolonial framework. Finally, despite PAR being positioned as a tool to address the gaps in the literature (as outlined in the introduction) and centre ethical relationships and practices (Spaaij et al. 2019), many of these studies also lacked reflexive discussion around research ethics. Luguetti, Singehebhuye, and Spaaij (2021) and Mashreghi, Yasmin, and Ali (2021) were the only scholars to embed a critical reflective approach and extensively discuss their positionality; yet they did not explicitly highlight the importance of negotiating reciprocal and ethical relationships in PAR.

Centring trust, reciprocity, and ethics in partnership work

Partnerships are integral to the principles of developing more equitable, democratic and effective decision making in collaborative and participatory research (Houlihan and Lindsey 2008; Mansfield 2016) and enhancing the transformative potential of PAR. Yet, these partnerships are complex, often involving wide-ranging and diverse stakeholders, at the micro (individuals with lived experience), meso (organisations, charities, schools), and macro (policy) levels (Numans, Van Regenmortel, and Rene 2019). Partners bring with them a dizzying array of expertise, skills, and knowledge and commonly position themselves in relation to the research and its context in differing ways, thus challenging the commonly held rhetoric that partnerships are characterized as a formal arrangement between stakeholders working together towards a collective goal for mutual benefit (Kernaghan 1993). In practice, these relationships are shaped by power dynamics and characterized by a struggle over resources, outcomes, and meaning and despite claims to their egalitarian and effective character are often exclusive, ineffectual, and autocratic (Grix and Phillpotts 2011, Mansfield 2016). In forced migration studies, these research partnerships often reproduce unequal power hierarchies (Halilovich 2013) as research is typically conducted by outsider researchers, with research aims predominately driven by policy objectives rather than local priorities, and communities seldom consulted about methods or impact (Pittaway, Bartolomei, and Hugman 2010). As such, refugee communities have typically received little in return for engaging in research (Mackenzie, McDowell, and Pittaway 2007; Pittaway, Bartolomei, and Hugman 2010). Scholars have highlighted the importance of developing and sustaining trust, mutual respect, and reciprocity between the researcher and the participants (Halilovich 2013; Hynes 2003), although there is little detailed analysis or guidance about how to achieve this.

In practice, building and sustaining reciprocal relationships with diverse stakeholders is a messy, ongoing process, which is highly dependent on the fragile and contextual dynamics of trust. Here, we define reciprocity as the give and take of partnership work including the exchange of resources, ideas, and knowledge between people (Maiter et al. 2008). Through

taking a 'stance of reciprocity' (Trainor and Bouchard 2013, 988), we recognize that reciprocity is a dynamic, ongoing process, during which social exchanges occur at different points in time, and in different spaces and places, affording diverse and sometimes unequal benefits to various partners (Maiter et al. 2008). We suggest that trust is a core component in developing and sustaining this stance of reciprocity and define trust as the belief that the trustee will act in the trustors best interests and carry out the behaviour or action that the trustee expects of them (Offe 1999). Yet, this process is also highly complex and precarious as trust is impacted by past behaviour displayed by the trustee (Rousseau et al. 1998), the context in which the relationship takes place, and expectations derived from previous relationships (Wuthnow et al. 2004). As an outsider researcher working with refugee communities, trust is difficult to achieve and maintain because the displacement and settlement process presents an ongoing environment in which refugees come to mistrust others at the same time as being mistrusted themselves (Daniel and Knudsen 1995; Hynes 2003). As Ni Raghallaigh (2014) explains, young people from refugee backgrounds find it challenging to trust people as a result of past experiences of trauma and betrayal, anxiety around the consequences of telling the truth, not being accustomed to trusting others, being mistrusted by others when navigating an asylum system built around suspicion and disbelief, and not having strong and long-lasting relationships with others. As such, Hynes (2003) and Ni Raghallaigh (2014) argue that developing and sustaining strong and trusting relationships over time should be a priority for practitioners and researchers working with refugee communities. Yet the complexity of undertaking research with refugee communities presents challenges to developing trust.

Ethical requirements such as informed consent, doing no harm, confidentiality, and representation (Block et al. 2013), for example, can inhibit the development of reciprocal and trusting relationships. Institutional ethics review boards aim to uphold formal ethical principles including respect for persons, beneficence, non-maleficence, and promotion of justice to maintain research integrity (Beauchamp and Hollingsworth 1979). Yet, the rigidity of these boards and the processes imposed by them may fail to capture the complexities of conducting ethically robust research and developing trust with young people from refugee backgrounds (Block et al. 2013). This is particularly problematic considering the power hierarchies between researchers and participants which have led to research historically being a site of exploitation, symbolic violence, (re)traumatization, and misrepresentation for refugee communities (Block et al. 2013; Pittaway, Bartolomei, and Hugman 2010). As such, scholars argue that researchers should differentiate between procedural university ethics and everyday ethics whereby one identifies and responds to people's unique circumstances and lived experiences and navigates everyday issues as they arise throughout the process (Banks et al. 2016; Mackenzie, McDowell, and Pittaway 2007; Pittaway, Bartolomei, and Hugman 2010).

Through embodying participatory values, challenging power hierarchies, and advocating for research that moves beyond simple and narrow notions of doing no harm (Mackenzie, McDowell, and Pittaway 2007), participatory methods have been positioned as a more ethical and empowering means of conducting research with refugee populations (Block et al. 2013; Halilovich 2013). Yet in practice, PAR brings unique ethical challenges. After outlining our methods in the next section, we will detail the ways we navigated these ethical challenges and negotiated trust in our PAR project.

Background to the research

The arguments are developed out of a larger three-year long research project which used Participatory Action Research (PAR) to explore how community sport and leisure programs are designed for and understood by young people from refugee backgrounds in London, UK. The research aimed to critically explore refugee and asylum-seeking youth wellbeing and examine how the design and delivery of sport and leisure programming in youth services might enhance their wellbeing,

The research site, BelongHere,*[1] is a charity situated in London, UK providing holistic services for refugees and asylum seekers from diverse backgrounds. The youth division offers support and activities for participants referred to as Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC), alonsgide asylum-seeking and refugee youth aged between 12 and 24 years old. The services include therapy, case work, English classes, and weekly sport and leisure activities. The leisure activities include a drop-in youth club that offers diverse activities including sport, art, drama, workshops and outings, a football program with a professional coach, a youth-led social action program, and peer mentoring. At the time of writing, 245 young people are registered with BelongHere, we refer to this group collectively as 'young people from refugee backgrounds' although it is important to acknowledge the heterogeneity of the young people in relation to their home country, age, gender, sexuality etc and how their diverse immigration statuses greatly impact upon their identities and lived experiences (Bakewell 2008). 10% of the participants are young women predominately from Syria, Iran, and Afghanistan who arrived in the UK under UNHCR refugee resettlement schemes, while the majority of participants are males who hold UASC status. These young people have predominately fled from Eritrea, Sudan, Afghanistan or Iran, are aged under 18 years old, and arrived at the UK border independently, applying for asylum in their own right as they have no adult guardian in the UK (United Nations 1989). As such, they are categorised for decision making and support services as looked after children until they reach 18 years old (Home Office 2019). Indeed, they are typically only afforded discretionary leave to remain until they reach 17.5 years old and are often subject to intrusive age contestation processes (Chase 2010).

Research activities

Following the principles of PAR, the project was organised into two overlapping research activities: (1) formative partnership building; and (2) co-design, delivery and evaluation of a sport/leisure programme to promote wellbeing.

The first author spent around 300 hours over nine months from June 2019 to February 2020 volunteering twice weekly at BelongHere, supporting young people from refugee backgrounds by delivering sport and leisure programs such as fitness, dance, art, drama, and cultural/social outings. This time allowed the first author to begin to build respectful and mutual relationships and partnerships (Spaaij et al. 2018) with young people and staff at BelongHere and partner organizations who support young people from refugee backgrounds including social workers, youth workers, and programme co-ordinators. In this paper, we refer to BelongHere staff and community partners as stakeholders. Formative partnership building enhanced the first author's understanding of the young peoples lived experiences and the complex stakeholder arrangements within the system. During this period, BelongHere were awarded funding to create a new sport and leisure programme to

promote wellbeing and offered the first author part-time employment which focused on the co-design, delivery and evaluation of this new project alongside inviting her to conduct fieldwork at the organization. Ethics approval was obtained by Brunel University London Research Ethics Committee (21131-MHR-Feb/2020- 24778-2) for the research that followed.

During a three-month co-design phase, the first author and BelongHere staff held three participatory co-design workshops with 39 young people in which we discussed (i) past experiences of participating in BelongHere programs, (ii) program aims and logistics, and (iii) future program delivery. We also launched two surveys completed by 28 young people exploring their needs, interests, and desired activities. We established 'Action Club'; a group of 16 young leaders involved in guiding the design and delivery of the programs. Using insights from the workshops and surveys we co-created a new program of sport/leisure activities, a theory of change model,[2] and updated safeguarding policies. The delivery phase spanned five months and consisted of 60 sport and leisure sessions (approximately three sessions per week). Following this, the first author was asked to lead on developing and implementing a mixed-methods evaluation and monitoring strategy. The strategy consisted of participatory evaluation workshops, administering and analysing the Short-Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale, unstructured staff observations on young people's behaviour and mood at activities, young peoples' feedback surveys conducted via Survey Monkey, and youth-led creative evaluation activities. Throughout the co-design, delivery, and evaluation phases three data collection methods were used: (i) participant observation, (ii) semi-structured interviews with stakeholders, and (iii) participatory creative data collection (e.g. digital storytelling, digital diaries and photo voice, and WhatsApp photo challenge). Prior to explaining details of these methods, we introduce the participants involved in this project; young people from refugee backgrounds and stakeholders.

Young people from refugee backgrounds and project stakeholders

To explore the experiences of young people from refugee backgrounds and project stakeholders in a deeper, rigorous and systematic way, young leaders from refugee backgrounds at BelongHere were invited to engage as co-researchers in participatory creative data collection and project stakeholders were invited to be involved in semi-structured interviews. We recruited the young people both in person and via telephone and invited stakeholders via email to participate. 13 young leaders from refugee backgrounds at BelongHere and 11 stakeholders volunteered to be involved. Our 13 co-researchers (5 females and 8 males) had between 1-2 years' experience engaging at BelongHere, were aged between 16–20 years old, from diverse countries including Afghanistan, Iran, Chad, South Sudan, Kuwait, and Iraq, had resided in the UK for 18 months to 5 years, and held diverse immigration statuses. Our stakeholders included three youth workers, two volunteers, and an art therapist at BelongHere; a community engagement programmer at a museum, a youth worker at a large youth network, two programme managers who lead projects for young people from refugee backgrounds in London, and a social worker.

Data collection

Throughout the co-design, delivery, and evaluation of the sport and leisure programme, the first author spent over 400 hours, approximately 10 hours per week, engaged in participant observation "the process of learning through exposure to or involvement in the

day-to-day or routine activities of participants in the researcher setting" (Schensul, Schensul, and Compte 1999, 91). During this time, the first author was a fully immersed youth worker and could be defined as an actively engaged member (Adler and Adler 1987) in the youth program. This time represented a collaborative development phase of the work in which the youth sport and leisure programs were designed and delivered and in which strategies for embedding evaluation activities were discussed and agreed (Mansfield et al. 2015). Detailed fieldnotes were written up after engaging in activities at BelongHere including staff meetings, meetings with partner organizations, program planning, designing/delivering sessions, or supporting young people. Using a field guide, the first author documented the space, activities, objects, and interactions within the space (Atkinson and Hammersley 2007). Participant observation was conducted in person alongside virtual spaces including Zoom and Instagram live. A total of 252 pages of written fieldnotes were collected.

The first author also kept a detailed reflexive diary, which can be a helpful auditing process to examine biases and enhance methodological and ethical rigour (Lincoln and Guba 1982). In the diary, the first author included a log of methodological decisions, reflections on research partnerships, the history of the research process, ethical dilemmas that emerged, and personal introspections, including emotions and feelings that arose throughout the process (Lincoln and Guba 1982). Daily entries were created after participating in activities at the research site, following conversations with stakeholders, supervisory team, and critical friends, especially when working through challenging methodological and practical issues or developing new ideas. The first author who conducted the fieldwork is a white, young, British queer Women, and can be considered a cultural outsider (Clifford and Marcus 1986). Her PhD was supervised by the second and the third author. As a team, we employed critical understandings of reflexivity through engaging in introspection, alongside intersubjective and collaborative reflexive practices (Finlay 2002). Alongside the researcher reflexivity diary, we also embedded collaborative reflexive practices (Finlay 2002) through engaging in monthly supervision meetings and, more often, weekly informal discussions. Given the high level of immersion as an outsider-researcher and the emotionally laborious nature of this project, these discussions allowed the first author to maintain an involved-detached stance (Mansfield 2007) whereby she could use her involvement as a source of motivation to advocate for the young people while maximizing detachment through managing emotions and stressors (Brackenridge 1999). These discussions were documented in the researcher reflexivity diary and informed the analysis.

Eleven semi-structured, in-depth qualitative interviews were conducted with stakeholders during the program delivery and evaluation phase. The interviews were a two-way, active dialogue between the researcher and the participants in which knowledge was co-constructed (Sparkes and Smith 2014). The informal conversation style was facilitated by the high level of existing rapport between the first author and the participants (Adler and Adler 1994). Interviews were conducted virtually over Zoom, audio recorded and spanned between 18.13 and 75.15 minutes, lasting on average 57.02 minutes. The interview guide was informed by insights generated during participant observation (Adler and Adler 1994) and themed around four key areas: understandings of refugee youth wellbeing; leisure program design, program evaluation and monitoring, and reflections on the participatory process. The data in this paper is drawn from the reflections on the participatory process and focused on navigating relationships and exploring methodological and ethical challenges that arose within the PAR process.

Participatory methods aim to maximise young people's participation in the data collection process through co-designing and engaging in methods that typically involve art, digital approaches, and task-based activities (Pain 2004). The 13 co-researchers co-designed and implemented three participatory methods to explore their experiences of participating in the youth programs and how these programs impacted their wellbeing. These methods were (1) WhatsApp Photo challenge; (2) digital diaries and photo voice interviews, and (3) digital storytelling. We do not intend to provide the precise details of these methods as they will be the subject of future writing and are beyond the scope of this paper. Suffice to say that each of these methods took place over eight months and produced bespoke and creative knowledge about young people from refugee backgrounds, sport/leisure, and wellbeing.

Data analysis

The research produced qualitative data in the form of fieldnotes, photos, interview transcripts, and a researcher reflexivity diary. Data were catalogued and organized in chronological order of the research process; this combination of rich data from various sources allowed for multiple and in-depth understandings of lived experiences (Guba and Lincoln 1994). The first author conducted a broadly inductive, reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006) whereby coding and theme development were directed by data content. We (re)read and coded all of the data that related to aspects of the participatory process, including ethics, partnerships, action, participation, relationships, reflexivity, and collaboration. The analysis of data is drawn predominately from participant observation fieldnotes and the researcher reflexivity diary, with selective examples from stakeholder interviews and conversations with young people throughout the design, delivery and evaluation phases of the project. Here, we present an open and reflective account of key challenges and potential solutions relating to the PAR process in terms of developing trust and negotiating reciprocal relationships, and navigating ethical challenges while maintaining research integrity.

Issues of developing trust and negotiating reciprocal partnerships

In this section, we argue that developing trusting and reciprocal relationships with young people from refugee backgrounds was central to the effectiveness of the participatory process with regards to fostering collaboration, minimizing power hierarchies, and enhancing the transformative potential of PAR. Yet, given the temporal, contextual and fragile nature of trust (Hoffman 2002) and the high level of mistrust among refugee communities (Hynes 2003; Ni Raghallaigh 2014), we caution against the romanticization of trust; instead, we take a reflexive approach to explore how the dynamic process of trusting and being trusted evolved throughout this project and how this impacted the norms of reciprocity.

Engaging in formative activities at BelongHere was central to building reciprocal relationships and it allowed for the negotiation and development of sustainable trust over time. Third sector refugee organizations are often mistrustful of researchers due to typically experiencing limited benefit in return for engaging in research (Mackenzie, McDowell, and Pittaway 2007). Staff at BelongHere described negative experiences of engaging in research previously, whereby despite researchers stating their intentions for sustainable involvement and mutual benefit, this did not happen in practice. These

unfavourable past experiences can pose challenges to developing trust in future partnerships (White-Cooper et al. 2009). When the first author initially approached BelongHere, staff were wary of her intentions for wanting to engage in partnership work and sceptical about the mutuality that could be derived from this partnership. Youth worker Aala* commented:

> I am wary when researchers get in touch as their intentions were not always good. Like it's so important that you can offer us something in return… there is no way I would have let you done research here without volunteering first… I believe that there is a process, and also this process of trust, that allow people to share genuine things, especially with young people.

Here, it is important to note that trustworthiness goes beyond stating intentions of good will, rather it is more authentically articulated through social actions and behaviours in inter-personal relationships (White-Cooper et al. 2009). As discussed in the section above, seeking to develop sustained and sustainable trustworthiness throughout the project, the first author spent ten months engaged in formative partnership building activities at BelongHere. Through engaging in mutual acts of exchange, the first author could demonstrate behaviours that may be favourable in partnership work, Such behaviours included commitment (Spaaij et al. 2018) through spending a prolonged time volunteering; an ethic of care (Banks et al. 2016) through showing kindness and understanding when the young people experienced challenging situations; collaboration through embedding a youth-led approach when designing and delivering programs as a volunteer such that all aspects of the programs were informed by the young people telling us what they needed and wanted from a programme; and transparent communication (Houlihan and Lindsey 2008) through setting boundaries and communicating openly with young people when following safeguarding protocol. When considering future partnership work, these behaviours may have enhanced the confidence that the first author was trustworthy and that the organization would be able to access and benefit from the resources that she had to offer (White-Cooper et al. 2009), and thus experience mutuality from this partnership.

Formative partnership building also provided the opportunity for the first author to critically reflect upon her intentions and the competing expectations of conducting research for the PhD while safeguarding the best interests of the partners as a relatively young outsider-researcher. This fieldnote extract was taken from the early stages of formative partnership building:

> I keep questioning and asking myself what on earth am I doing here - what is my right to be in their space and what can I offer these young people? I do not have lived experience, I can't speak their languages, I am not a trained therapist. Is this research going to add any value to their lives? I am just not sure right now.

The first author initially felt great degrees of discomfort in this space as an outsider with such diverse lived experiences and was hyperaware of her gender, education, whiteness, Britishness, and queerness. This led to her initially feeling uncertain about how she could connect meaningfully and develop relationships with the young people and questioning whether she was best suited to conduct research with this group. These reflexive discussions around positionality and the intent and extent of mutuality (Trainor and Bouchard 2013)

framed many of our supervisory meetings and frequently led to questioning about for whom we were doing this research and whether we should be in this space.

For all partners, formative partnership building acted as a probationary period in which we could get to know each other, decide whether expectations and personalities may fit, and explore whether future partnership work may take place. We had a sense that trust was building slowly with BelongHere when we were invited to collaborate in the development of a new sport and leisure program and conduct research with the young people and wider stakeholders. This offer of collaboration enhanced the mutual benefit that could be derived from the PAR process as it resulted in co-designing a research project that aimed to increase organizational capacity, enhance the wellbeing of the young people, and meet the PhD studentship requirements.

The longer-term involvement often required in PAR (Kindon, Pain, and Kesby 2007), provided greater opportunities to develop gradual trust with the young people, yet posed additional challenges to maintaining this trust over time. When the first author began volunteering, the young people were sceptical of her intentions as an outsider-researcher (White-Cooper et al. 2009). It was clear that they wished to keep a distance and evident, for example, that they did not volunteer to share personal information about themselves and their quest for asylum, nor did they initially seek advice on any other matters. Chase (2010) suggests that for young people from refugee-backgrounds choosing which information to disclose, to whom, and under what circumstances is a display of agency against the systems of surveillance and a means of crafting a future detached from past trauma. We found that trust between the first author and the young people was developed gradually through building familiarity with one another during informal sport and leisure activities. The youth-hood of the first author, her personality, and aspects of shared cultural capital also helped to develop these relationships (including a shared love of TikTok and occasionally being spotted wearing the same outfits as the young people!). Co-researcher Rey* said: "I am so happy that we have somebody like you, somebody who is close to our age, likes similar things, who is down to laugh, joke and work."

Trust was gradually developed and over time some of the young people were more willing to share their opinions, discuss challenges/achievements in their lives, and seek/take support from the first author. These changes signalled an establishment and deepening of trustworthiness in the relationships. However, trust was never absolute or fixed, rather it was dynamic, fluid, fragile, and was easily eroded. The fragility of trust was exemplified by the duty to adhere to institutional safeguarding and ethics policies and report causes for concern where needed, alongside the time-bound nature of the PhD project, which limited the length of our relationships. As such, from the onset of the partnership, a gradual exit strategy (Banks et al. 2016) was agreed with staff and this was communicated regularly to young people and staff.

Reflecting the temporal and contextual nature of trust, the COVID-19 pandemic shifted the relationship dynamics and expectations. For young people who have experienced loss and lack ontological security (Chase 2013), fostering sustained feelings of safety and security is paramount in developing trust (Bergholz et al. 2016) and these challenges were exemplified during the pandemic. Sustaining relationships in virtual spaces was facilitated through behaviours that demonstrated trustworthiness including running daily online activities, checking in with the young people weekly, often daily via text/phone, being a reliable source

of support, and displaying vulnerability through sharing her own struggles during this challenging time.

Reflecting the gendered dimension of participatory and forced migration studies research (Pain 2004; Lenette et al. 2019), building and sustaining trusting relationships with young people from refugee backgrounds can come at an emotional cost to the researcher. Indeed, participatory research has been found to be more emotionally laborious and pose additional risks to the researchers' wellbeing (Lenette et al. 2019). These challenges were exemplified during the COVID-19 pandemic. During the beginning of the first national lockdown, the first author wrote in her reflexivity diary:

> I am struggling; I've been crying all day, all I want right now is to build a blanket fort and hide out. But I can't. It's like this overwhelming sense of responsibility that I have to try and be there for the young people; they are struggling here. Gotta wipe those tears and try to pull myself together to run the youth catch up tonight.

The first author felt an overwhelming sense of duty to support the best interests of the young people, and at times, these expectations placed on the relationship came at an emotional cost and threatened the conditions needed for social change. hooks (1994) argues that educators must be actively committed to engaging in processes of self-actualization that enhance their own wellbeing or they may not be able to create the conditions in which to empower students and promote social change. Working with refugee populations, poses additional challenges to maintaining wellbeing and places professionals at greater risk of burn-out and secondary trauma (Akinsulure-Smith et al. 2018). At times, supporting the young people through challenging situations impacted the first author's wellbeing, alongside her ability to connect with other young people and hold the space for them to critically reflect on their lived experiences. In maintaining wellbeing and a certain degree of detachment (Mansfield 2007), it was vital to engage in critical reflexive practices through considering the expectations and costs of ethical relationships, having an ongoing supportive space to de-brief with supervisors and set boundaries, and seeking out additional wellbeing support where needed.

Negotiating ethical dilemmas and doing PAR with integrity

In this section, we argue for a reflexive and negotiated approach to embedding ethical thinking, processes, and practices in PAR. Through requiring disclosure of full research protocol and all possible ethical issues before recruiting participants, the institutional ethics review process assumes that research can be pre-planned and will progress in a linear fashion (Manzo and Brightbill 2007). These ethical prescriptions tend to constrain the PAR process through limiting democratization and not providing the flexibility for projects to develop iteratively in line with the fluctuating nature of the relationship dynamics including trust, interests of stakeholders, and the socio-cultural-political context (Manzo and Brightbill 2007). As such, we heeded the advice of participatory scholars and embedded everyday ethics (Banks et al. 2016) whereby we took an iterative and person-centred approach to ethics processes and navigating challenges. We staged our ethics applications over five phases, submitting separate ethics applications for the various data collection methods and gathering insights from staff at BelongHere during each phase. Seeking ethics approval for participant observation first, allowed us to co-design participatory creative data collection

methods and document the participatory process. Further, this iterative process promoted flexible engagement in data collection methods in line with the co-researchers interests and commitments. In addition to ensuring that institutional requirements were met, we also decided collectively with BelongHere staff to extend these ethical guidelines (Mackenzie, McDowell, and Pittaway 2007) to ensure that the process also met our participatory values and the needs of the young people.

One component where the negotiation of ethics took place was during the informed consent process. Derived from western notions of autonomy and self-determination (Ellis et al. 2007), informed consent involves information giving, voluntary participation, and competency (Kirk 2007). However, this concept may fail to hold meaning in the lives of young people from refugee backgrounds whose human rights may have been continually denied through displacement and resettlement (Block et al. 2013). Further, considering the multiple roles held by the first author, we were wary about how the existing power dynamics of the youth worker-client relationship may have influenced the young people's decision to take part in research. Within this context, the development of trust may also increase the risk of exploitation for people from vulnerable backgrounds (Mackenzie, McDowell, and Pittaway 2007). To increase the relevance and meaning of the informed consent process, we worked with staff at BelongHere to design the protocol. Alongside the adapted participant information sheets and forms, we created clear, youth friendly infographics, with key points translated; this information was also translated and relayed verbally to the young people. Key to promoting voluntary participation, was ensuring that the principles of consent were understood. The staff and first author facilitated discussions about what consent is and the young people were asked to provide examples in relation to their lived experiences. Further, the unpredictability and duration of this PAR project required a flexible approach to negotiating consent. As recommended by participatory scholars (see Kirk 2007; Mackenzie, McDowell, and Pittaway 2007), consent was gained iteratively, both informally through check ins and discussions, and more formally through the various project phases.

The long-term, action-orientated nature of PAR poses challenges to doing no harm through research, reinforcing the importance of taking a negotiated approach to ethics. It is well documented that PAR projects are resource heavy and this can place substantial emotional and physical burden on stakeholders (Banks et al. 2016) at the best of times, let alone during a pandemic. At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, given the immense physical and emotional labour undertaken by BelongHere staff in moving delivery to virtual platforms and the impact of the pandemic on the wellbeing of the young people, we collaboratively made the decision with staff to pause data collection for three months and the first author put her efforts into supporting the young people and organization as a youth worker. This extract from the first author's reflexivity diary reflects her feelings around the dilemma:

> All of the sudden bam. Two weeks into fieldwork and COVID-19 hit. I am conflicted, I really don't want to fall behind, only got so long to finish this PhD and all of this can't be for nothing, but this is not the time… Right now, standing in solidarity with the organization and young people means not conducting research.

At this time, we had already received ethics mitigation to continue the project in virtual spaces yet, following our reflective discussions on everyday ethics (Banks et al. 2016), it did not feel ethical to conduct research at this time. In the long run, this decision enhanced

trust and the young people welcomed an approach the genuinely valued their views on the challenges they were facing.

Beyond being advised to avoid sensitive topics and create a list of resources to distribute to participants in distress, the ethics review process provides minimal guidance around the practicalities of conducting research with young participants who have trauma histories. The participatory research process may pose additional risks to re-traumatizing participants (see Fine et al. 2003) as co-researchers engage in critical reflection and action upon the social forces that have shaped their experiences of oppression. Through developing respectful and trusting relationships with the youth workers and therapists at BelongHere, the first author was able to develop her knowledge of trauma-informed approaches including understanding how trauma may impact attachments to others and the nervous system, creating a safe space when conducting research and delivering leisure activities, and developing strategies for implementing grounding/mindfulness practices. This knowledge enhanced the capacity of the first author and shaped her ethic of care, arguably a central component of ethically appropriate PAR, when working with young people from refugee backgrounds as both a researcher and practitioner.

The PAR process may also pose challenges to ethical practices in terms of maintaining confidentiality and anonymity, which can be especially problematic when young people are critiquing systems that they are part of and hold little power within (Manzo and Brightbill 2007). In this project we were trying to facilitate meaningful opportunities for the voices of the young people to be heard and for them to engage in dissemination activities while still upholding our duty to safeguard the young people and maintain their anonymity. In particular, this posed challenges to maintaining anonymity while promoting youth voice during our digital storytelling project targeted towards social care professionals. Through discussions, the co-researchers were able to develop creative solutions such as sharing collective rather than individual stories and using animated characters that reflected their physical characteristics. We found that collaboratively negotiating the ethics and politics of representation was an on-going endeavour.

Conclusion

In this paper, we argue that developing trusting and reciprocal relationships is a dynamic and fragile process, that should be continually worked towards when developing and sustaining partnerships in PAR. Further, we have argued that ethics is not simply a matter of meeting prescriptive guidelines set forth by research ethics boards, but is more deeply embedded in negotiated processes throughout the lifetime of the PAR project, processes which are framed by participatory values.

There are a number of significant theoretical and methodological impacts of our work which also have potential for shaping policy and practice in PAR in the field of sport. First, we urge researchers to embed established and critical PAR frameworks in their projects and to draw from wider forced migration literature for best practice examples of how these can be applied. Second, in relation to methodological impact, we highlight the importance of taking a reflexive approach and to consider how and the extent to which such an approach builds and negotiates trusting and reciprocal relationships with stakeholders and young people from refugee backgrounds and, more broadly, how PAR projects can genuinely centre ethical relationships and practices. To achieve this, we urge researchers to consider how young people can be at the centre of the project through engaging in formative

relationship-building activities whereby they are able to engage in acts of mutual exchange, finding creative means to connect meaningfully with young people and build trusting relationships over time, and collaboratively negotiating with them ethical and methodological issues as they arise. Further, given the intersecting challenges researchers have and will continue to experience, when conducting PAR with young people during the COVID-19 pandemic, this paper highlights some of the challenges and opportunities in developing trust and sustaining ethical practices in virtual spaces. Through centring the development of trusting and ethical relationships, researchers will be better positioned to achieve the intended aims of PAR such as collaboration, mutual-respect, and social transformation, and in turn, enhance the effectiveness of the participatory process. While these examples are discussed in the context of PAR more broadly, these recommendations can also be applied for those hoping to develop more reflexive and ethical practices when using other types of research with people from a refugee or migrant backgrounds. Last, this study and our discussion of it, is particularly significant in highlighting the potential of using PAR with young people from refugee backgrounds as an effective strategy to inform policy and practice through meaningfully involving young people in decision-making processes, an approach that to date has been missing from the policy and programme development agenda on sport, leisure and forced migration studies.

Notes

1. BelongHere* is a pseudonym.
2. A methodology of planning and evaluation commonly used in third-sector organisations.

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