

Taekwondo-In as a platform for the social integration of migrants

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Abstract

This article examines the phenomenon of social integration of migrants through the practice of sporting and physical cultural activities. More specifically, it illustrates how Taekwondo, as a martial art and combat sport, can contribute to social integration. A collective instrumental case study gathered observational and interview data on three multicultural Taekwondo clubs. Following a directed content analysis, our findings suggest that Taekwondo can function as an effective platform for social integration promoting bridging, bonding forms of social capital and pluralised integrated identity as part of the development of a Taekwondo practitioner identity known as Taekwondo-In. In conclusion, we consider the unique features these kinds of martial arts appear to have for functioning as platforms for social integration for both migrant and domestic populations, but that further research is needed including work to better understand the specific processes and practices through which arts like Taekwondo achieve this.

Keywords: Migration, Social Integration, Taekwondo, Identity, Bridging, Bonding, Social Capital, Globalisation.

1. Introduction

The topic of migration is increasingly capturing the attention of scholars, policy makers, politicians as well as becoming the locus of public debate and politicised moral panic. The most recent available data show that “international migration remains relatively uncommon, with a mere 3.6 per cent (or 281 million) of the world being international migrants” (International Organisation for Migration [IOM] 2024). Nevertheless, the anthropologist, Erlandson (2010) shows that “migrations have played a fundamental role in human history” (p. 191), while historians Lucasson, Lucassen and Manning (2010, p. 4) articulate how migration has been a structural aspect of human life since the beginning, causing adaptations in language, technology, social systems and culture. They also acknowledge that at the same time, “patterns of migration

have changed along with modifications in technology, social organization, and ideology” (ibid. p. 18). The IOM (2024) confirms this, stating,

Ongoing technological, geopolitical and environmental global transformations are particularly relevant to help better understand strategic issues shaping the context in which people migrate, and the growing increase in displacement globally.

More sociologically, we might refer to these as one of the consequences of accelerating globalisation processes within an era of reflexive modernisation and multiple modernities (Lee, 2008; Fourie, 2012). Unsurprisingly the issue of *immigration* has risen on the political and civic agenda given significantly increased ‘forced displacement’ which the IOM (ibid) highlights is “the highest on record in the modern era” due to the ‘seismic shifts’ of technological, geopolitical and environmental transformation highlighted. The corollary to migration and immigration is *social integration*. Park and Burgess’s (1969, p. 735) classic definition of social integration suggests it is,

a process of interpenetration and fusion in which persons and groups acquire the memories, sentiments, and attitude of other persons and groups and, by sharing their experience and history, are incorporated with them in a common cultural life.

Brissette, Cohen and Seeman (2000) focus on the importance of relationships suggesting social integration is “the extent to which an individual participates in a broad range of social relationships” (p. 54), Wessendorf and Phillimore’s (2019) more recent, definition reflects a growing understanding of the importance of,

the relations migrants establish after they arrive in a new country. Such relations can be with members of the receiving society, through clubs, associations and institutions, or with co-ethnics. Importantly, social integration is considered to be instrumental regarding access to more structural aspects of integration because information about jobs, housing and schools is often gained through social connectedness (pp. 125-6).

Many of the politicised ‘moral panics’ are less about migrants themselves and more about the fear of their (assumed) failure to socially integrate. ‘Refugee-phobia’ represents one negative example of this encounter where migrants are effectively denied opportunities to socially integrate. This was illustrated in German and South Korean¹ incidents involving anti-refugee protestors.

More positively, migration can produce opportunities for encounters which promote a rich intermingling of diverse cultures developing intercultural understanding, tolerance (Parekh, 2002) and multiculturalism (Taylor & Gutmann, 1994). For these more positive outcomes to be a possibility, cultural encounters need platforms through which positive forms of social integration can occur. Our research contributes to the relatively limited research on social integration that may occur through sport and physical culture.

The paper reports on a study that examined how Taekwondo, as a martial art and combat sport, can contribute to social integration. It builds on Madsen’s (2015) work that concludes

¹ In 2018, 550 Yemeni refugees arrived in Jeju, South Korea, but faced hostility from anti-refugee protestors shouting, “We are the first [people/nation], Go back (Bo, 2018).” Emcke (2019, p.18), in ‘Against Hate’, criticised the German Klaunitz incident, in 2016, when locals shouted, “We are the people, you are not”, at a refugee bus.

Taekwondo fosters social integration in terms of sociolinguistics suggesting “such encounters show that the processes of integration involve more than just the co-presence of diverse groups of individuals” (p. 182). A collective instrumental case study gathered observational and interview data on three multicultural Taekwondo clubs. Following a directed content analysis, our findings suggest that Taekwondo functions as an effective platform for social integration promoting Putnam’s *bridging* and *bonding* forms of social capital, and Sen’s (2007) multifaceted ideas of integrated identity as part of the development of a Taekwondo-In practitioner identity. The findings illustrate how Taekwondo practice helps to build trust-based relationships, both within and outside of the Taekwondo club context. These acted as bridging and bonding forms of capital via social networks that facilitated not only the *social* integration of migrant practitioners but also their *structural* integration, which supports Wessendorf and Phillimore’s (2019, pp. 125-6) earlier point that these kinds of social integration activities are very important offerings for migrant populations and recipient communities alike.

In what follows, we identify empirical research that has been conducted in the area of social integration through sport and physical culture before covering the concepts of identity construction and bridging and bonding forms of social capital. Next, we explain the methodological strategy for this study and then present, interpret and discuss our data. The conclusion considers the unique features these kinds of martial arts appear to have for functioning as platforms for social integration for both migrant and domestic populations. It also delineates areas of focus for further research.

2. Sport, physical culture, Taekwondo and Social integration

Social integration as theory, policy and practice has been studied extensively for decades (see Park & Burgess, 1969; Glazer & Moynihan, 1970; Alba & Nee, 1997; Bisin & Verdier, 2000; Parekh, 2002; Penninx, 2005; Gebhardt, 2014). More specifically, there is a growing body of research literature considering social integration through sports and physical culture (Andrei, 2016; Elling et. al, 2001; Seippel, 2005; Said & Amine, 2022; Höglund & Bruhn, 2022) and some studies that draw on developing social capital in this focus (Richardson, 2012; Schulenkorf, 2013). However, importantly, we acknowledge those studies related to our research on the contribution of sports and physical cultures to the social integration of immigrants (Coalter, 2007; Doherty & Taylor, 2007; Hofmann, 2008; Agergaard & Sørensenb, 2010; Spaaij, 2011; Makarova & Herzog, 2014; Blecking, 2015; Braun & Nobis, 2016; Buser, et al., 2016; Whitley et al., 2016; Allin et al., 2017; Piatkowska et al., 2017; Carmi & Kidron, 2018; Moyo, 2018; D’Angelo, 2019; Doidge, et al., 2020; Flensner, et al., 2020; Kölbel, 2024; Lee et al., 2021; Nagel et al., 2020; Michelini, 2020; Chatzopoulos, 2021). Notable amongst these is Spaaij (2011), who examined how engagement in sport enabled Somali migrants in Australia to cultivate social capital and negotiate the challenges associated with integration. Similarly, Whitley et al. (2016) assessed sport-based youth development initiatives for refugee populations, concluding that such programmes enhance psychosocial well-being and foster a sense of belonging within local communities. More recently, Michelini’s (2020) systematic review further substantiates the role of physical activity and sport as significant platforms for refugee integration across a range of domains identifying three key

mechanisms through which sport facilitates refugee integration: (1) social connection building, (2) health and wellbeing promotion, and (3) cultural orientation. While martial arts and combat sports research does not typically generically address social integration, recent research suggests that nevertheless, they can foster meaningful social connections by enhancing interpersonal engagement (Purnamasari, 2017). Furthermore, martial art disciplines have been associated with improved psychosocial well-being through the cultivation of inclusiveness, mutual respect, and a sense of communal belonging (Healey, 2025), as well as the reinforcement of self-confidence, which is essential for effective social interaction (Calinog et al., 2021).

Given the above literature, it is perhaps surprising, especially so because of the intrinsic geographic origins of many martial arts, with a few important exceptions we mention later, that there remains a lack of research on the social integrative function of martial arts. As well as responding to this obvious gap in the research literature, our study identified Taekwondo as containing features that can play a positive role in social integration. The principal reason is the sociality of “Taekwondo-In” which according to Tadesse, (2015; 2016) is as an essential feature of the art’s social interaction and a holistic and collective element of the Taekwondo personality. We consider these features make it well suited to developing social integration.

Madsen’s (2015) study of Taekwondo argues that recent research in the sociology of sports assumes that participation in sports clubs fosters the integration of socially marginalised youth minority into mainstream society. She highlights how, in Danish popular discourse, the lack of participation in organised leisure activities is a symptom of problems in social integration and, there has been a focus on increasing the number of members in sports clubs for the integration of ethnic minorities in Denmark. In her book “Fighters, Girls and Other Identities” (2015), Madsen studied Nørrebro Taekwondo Club in Denmark, examining how Taekwondo fosters social integration. Through interviews with ethnic youth in the multi-ethnic Nørrebro environment, she used identity categorisation to analyse how they navigate their social position. Madsen found that minority youth, by showcasing their skilled techniques, reinforce social distinctions, positively impacting the social integration of immigrant youth. Notably, Taekwondo was seen to transcend ethnocentricity, acting as a platform for forming a new community identity and enhancing social integration. Finally, ‘Taekwondo-In’ is ‘태권도인’ in Korean and ‘跆拳道人’ in Chinese. The word ‘인; 人; In’ means a person. Taekwondo means the way of using the feet and hands correctly. It is a person who practices and embodies the meaning of Taekwondo not only practising skills and techniques but also cultivating the inner self (Song & Na, 2011).

As the above section delineates, there has been a steady development of research on social integration, social integration in sport and social integration of immigrant populations through sport specifically. However, there remains a gap in research literature on social integration of immigrant populations through traditional martial arts, generally and specifically here, Taekwondo. The study seeks to contribute to the social integration literature by building a more nuanced understanding of how arts like Taekwondo may foster both bonding and bridging social capital, facilitate pluralised integrative identities, and support structural integration pathways for migrants. Employing a comparative, multi-sited case study approach across diverse cultural contexts, the study provides empirical insights into the unique cultural, pedagogical, practical and philosophical dynamics of Taekwondo that may contribute to social cohesion. It also lays the

groundwork for imagining future longitudinal and comparative research, positioning martial arts not merely as recreational activities, but as potent policy instruments for migrant integration.

3. Identity and social integration

The recognition of ‘Others’ is an important identification process humans often use to form individual and group identities (including, ethnic group, occupational, identity regional, national, broad culture and even civilisational (Giddens, 1991; Giddens & Philip, 2017; Huntington, 2002; MacClancy, 1996). The root of the term ‘identity’ is the Latin *idem*, which means ‘same’ (Lawler, 2014). ‘Same’ can only be defined by ‘different’. In explaining the construction of identity through difference, Young (1990) points out that, “...by seeking to reduce the differently similar to the same, it turns the merely different into the absolutely other” (p. 99). Therefore, according to the principle of alterity it is not possible to recognise ‘same’ without awareness of ‘difference and otherness’, and in so doing recognize those who are ‘different’ from ‘us’ as ‘Others’. The Other category is problematic because it “lies outside the unified as the chaotic, unformed, transforming, that always threatens to cross the border and break up the unity of the good” (ibid, p. 99). This is what typically happens with migrants who become Othered as ‘outsiders’ and threaten to break up the presumed unity of a given collective group identity.

Set against this theoretical backdrop, we use Amartya Sen’s (2007) work which challenges Othering processes through a different form of identification in the hope it may produce a more organic form of multiculturalism. For Sen, identity is *multi-faceted, pluralized and de-centred*. We see ourselves and others situated in various identity groups in the different contexts of our daily lives. Sen (2007) contends that the assumption people have only one unique or ‘primordial centred’, ascribed identity generates an ‘illusion of destiny’ which is found in the dogma of fundamentalist beliefs and breeds mistrust of and violence towards the Other. Sen (2007, pp. 27-28) argues for the plurality of identity passionately:

The insistence, if only implicitly, on a choiceless singularity of human identity not only diminishes us all, it also makes the world much more flammable. The alternative to the divisiveness of one preeminent categorization is not any unreal claim that we are all much the same. That we are not. Rather, the main hope of harmony in our troubled world lies in the plurality of our identities, which cut across each other and work against sharp divisions around one single hardened line of vehement division that allegedly cannot be resisted.

The totality of each group to which a person belongs provides the person a specific identity. However, none of the groups a person belongs to can be considered that person’s only unique identity or a single membership category. Therefore, individual identity forms as an accumulation of the various group identities suggesting better integrated individuals have greater likelihood of developing a pluralized identity where Othering is less of a defining feature of identity construction. Therefore, when we recognise ourselves in others and others in ourselves Othering is displaced and replaced by what we refer to as *pluralized integrative identification*.

4. Social capital and integration

Since Bourdieu (1986) added notions of cultural, social and symbolic capital to Marx's (1976) notion of economic and incorporated capital, the concept of social capital has been widely developed (see for example, Briggs, 2004; Putnam, 1995, 2000; Vidal, 2004; Woolcock, 1998). In this paper, we use elements of Putnam's social capital.

Putnam (1995) defines social capital as "social organisation such as networks, norms, and 'social trust' that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit" (p. 67). His interpretation of social capital is uniquely developed to explore social integration occurring through the sub-concepts of *bonding* social capital and *bridging* social capital (Putnam, 2000). Bonding social capital articulates relationships between members in the 'within-group' and community. It strengthens the relationships and ethnic-cultural identity of homogeneous groups. In contrast, bridging social capital articulates relationships with more distant colleagues and associates: 'inter-individuals' and 'inter-groups'. It connects people or groups who previously did not interact with one another.

Putnam (2007) theorises that when the community becomes ethnically more diverse, there are more 'others' who are 'unlike us'. It causes people to tend to 'shrink down' and withdraw, reducing social connections and lowering levels of mutual trust. In short, increased ethnic diversity reduces the ability to establish social capital in the community compared to homogeneous ethnic community relatively speaking. Put differently, increasingly diversified multi-cultural societies do not automatically connect majority and minority groups. In the sociological sense, in general the *minority group* is used to refer to groups which have less power and benefits such as minority ethnic groups (particularly non-white people), women, and so on in relation to the dominant group considered as a *majority group* in society (Ghosh, 2000, p. 281) despite some minority groups being relatively influential in certain contexts, e.g. Jewish, Irish or Italian minority ethnic groups in the US. Within each insular community, the bond by the cultural similarity of the homogeneous group is relatively easily formed as bonding social capital but, bridging ties through group interchanges are less easily formed, but critical for social integration. Putnam (2000) argues that capital theory suggests active participation in sports fosters social bonding and bridging capital. While bonding social capital reinforces cultural identity within ethnic groups, bridging social capital exposes individuals to diverse experiences and the opportunity to interact with people from different ethnic backgrounds. Putnam (2000) emphasises that sports can contribute to ethnic integration by bridging the gap between majority and minority groups, highlighting the need to "transcend our social, political, and professional identities" (p. 411) for the building of bridging social capital.

Theeboom et al. (2012) explored Putnam's bonding and bridging social capital empirically from the viewpoint of social integration of ethnic minorities with an ethnically separated sports group and an ethnically mixed sports group with a diverse culture. The study findings did not support the common-sense idea that a 'mixed sports group context' provides more social integration potential to the members than a 'separated sports group context'. Rather, their data analysis suggests that bridging and bonding social capital can be acquired as key elements of social integration in *both* types of clubs. It is a very significant finding that the increased bridging capital of mixed ethnic group is based on the survey findings that many of the ethnic minority participants in the mixed group have a positive image of the ethnic majority and learn socially

from them. These conceptual elements serve as a foundation for our analysis of the data and are applied to ascertain better the integrative function of Taekwondo emerging from its practices and from Taekwondo-In identity development.

5. Methodology

5.1. *Collective instrumental case study design, sampling and data collection and ethics*

Bourdieu (1990) emphasises the importance of engaging with concrete empirical cases to avoid passive empiricism and grand theorizing. He advocates for a reflexive sociology that interrogates systematically particular instances of a more general phenomenon. Drawing on extensive experience of the first author in teaching Taekwondo generally and to minority ethnic and immigrant groups specifically, the research was able to identify three specific instances where Taekwondo practice appeared to promote social integration. These instances are organized into three cases, forming an *instrumental collective case study* approach.

Dillon and Reid (2004, p. 26) define this approach as: “not the study of a collective but an instrumental study extended to several cases, e.g. an issue is studied in several situations.” The authors also highlight that such a methodology serves several functions, including exemplification and valorisation. Thus, our purposive sample sought to exemplify and valorise if Taekwondo does indeed, for some individuals at least, promote social integration. We also sought to use the case study method to ascertain if *bridging*, *bonding* and *pluralized integrative identification* prominent in the social construction literature were suitable to understand this phenomenon.

The three cases were each multi-ethnic Taekwondo clubs, which we have named the Sanctuary, Harbour and Bridge respectively for disambiguation purposes. Sanctuary Taekwondo club is run by a Korean-American instructor in an affluent Californian region in the US known for high levels of migrants. Harbour Taekwondo club is run by an Iranian-British instructor in an ethnically diverse setting in Wales, UK. Bridge Taekwondo club was run by the first author, a migrant instructor (now UK resident) from South Korea, located in a less privileged post-industrial setting also in Wales. Within these clubs purposive sampling extended to observing and interviewing Taekwondo instructors and practitioners of various ethnicities from January 2018 to January 2019. Principal sources of data included participant observations semi-structured interviews, and documentary data. The author observed the participants in his own class almost every week for the duration of running this class as an observer/instructor for approximately one year. Table 1 below presents the interviewees (names are pseudonyms ages are approximate) although many more students across the three schools were observed anonymously.

Characteristics	Interviewees				
	1	2	3	4	5
Interviewee	MinJun	JiHun	Malcolm	Ahmad	JeongHun
Sex	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male
Age	12	10	45	52	47
Ethnicity	Half Korean/ Half Welsh	Half Korean/ Half Scottish	Scottish	Iranian	Korean
Nationality	British	British	British	British	American
Belt Level	Blue Belt	Red Belt	Red Belt	6th Dan	5th Dan

Table1. Characteristics of Interviewees

5.2. Researcher Reflexivity and Ethics

We also recognized the critical role of the researcher-as-instrument in producing knowledge (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995). This necessitated reflexivity to acknowledge their influence on the study's design, procedures, and findings. Berger (2015) defines reflexivity, as involving continual self-evaluation of the researcher's positionality and its potential impact on the research process and outcomes. The first author's unique position as a Taekwondo teacher involved collecting data both as an objective non-participant and a subjective participant in Taekwondo sessions. This is posed both benefits and challenges. While his close relationship with participants facilitated access to interviews and the research field, it also required maintaining a proper distance to avoid biasing actions and responses. Balancing the roles of insider and outsider was crucial to leveraging the benefits of this dual perspective. To mitigate potential biases, the research was guided by Finlay's (2002) advice that "it is the task of each researcher, based on their research aims, values and the logic of the methodology involved, to decide how best to exploit the reflexive potential of their research." Accordingly, the first author drew on range of reflexivity types identified by Finlay including *introspection*, *intersubjectivity* and *mutual collaboration*. used his teaching experience to engage in what Finlay calls introspection to excavate the wide range of experiences of teaching the art to migrants, he used a form of intersubjective introspection to corroborate his emerging interpretations with the other two teachers who were also participants and finally, he used a version of mutual collaboration to work with the second author as a critical friend who could raise questions and issues surrounding the research design, data collection, theory selection, analysis and interpretation processes.

Before fieldwork began (January 2018), the researchers considered ethical issues following Creswell (2014) and Neuman (2013) and obtained approval from the authors' university research ethics committee. To protect participants' anonymity and confidentiality, they provided an information sheet and a consent form and altered interviewees' names and specific details. Additionally, it was clearly stated that participants had the right to withdraw at any time without providing a reason.

5.3 Data analysis and representation

The collective instrumental case study focus was deliberately employed to exemplify and valorise the phenomena of social integration through Taekwondo practice using a conceptual framework of integrative pluralised identity construction and the development of bridging and bonding forms of social capital. As a result, it was decided that the best analytical technique for this purpose was that of what Hsieh and Shannon (2005) refer to as *directed content analysis* which is typically used when the purpose is to “validate or extend conceptually a theoretical framework or theory” (p. 1281). In this case, the a priori theory on social integrations processes informed the observational lenses, interview questions and the types of codes that were used in the analysis, which involved evidence of collective and individual identity development, formation of relationships and the categorisation of these into bonding and bridging types of networks.

Data excerpts were coded separated, and categorised by case and conceptual theme, illustrating the interpretational process. According to Harrison et al. (2017, 3.4.3), this approach, typical of an interpretive case study, positions the researcher as a partner in knowledge discovery, utilising direct interpretations and thematic grouping of findings. The first and second author discussed the emerging findings as a form of intersubjective mutually collaborative reflexivity. The representation can be seen as a modified realist tale (Sparkes, 2002)². However, the modification occurs by the addition of a confessional dialogue provided by the first author about his role in the data production, collection and analysis process as well as his participation as one of the study instructors investigated. Data are presented, interpreted and discussed below in three sections corresponding to each case study with each discussing social integration via the themes of *integrative pluralised identification*, and *bridging*, and *bonding* social capital.

6. Data presentation, interpretation and discussion

6.1. Case 1: Bridge Taekwondo Club

This club is run by the first author as described in the methodology. He is a 6th grade WT (World Taekwondo, the so-called Olympic Taekwondo) black belt. He has been teaching his martial art to various ethnic background students (Gulf Arabian, European, Levant Arabian, African, North American, Korean, and other Asian) since 2006 abroad in Yemen, Jordan, and Wales. He aims to enhance the mental health and physical well-being of practitioners.

Bonding, bridging and pluralised integrative identification are each observable in the author’s story of teaching Taekwondo at Bridge Taekwondo. Indeed, bonding occurred before the first author arrived in Wales, because he had junior Syrian students (who also became his first students in Wales) waiting to learn Taekwondo from him. He was informed this from an acquaintance, who volunteered at a charity for asylum seekers and refugees in Wales when the first author met the acquaintance when he visited Jordan. The father of these children, a Syrian refugee, wanted his children to learn Taekwondo from the first author, because he had had a positive experience learning Taekwondo from a Korean instructor when he was a child in Syria. This reveals the

² Conventions of a realist tale include author-excavated construction through use of the third person neutral, and the use of the passive voice. In addition, “extensive, closely edited quotations...used to convey to the reader that the views expressed are not those of the researcher but are rather the authentic and representative remarks ... of the participants” (Sparkes, 2002, p. 44)

integrative pluralised identity and also bonding capital of the Syrian father (through his connection with Taekwondo), acquired through Taekwondo practice created trust in the Taekwondo network and became an important motivation for the first author's decision to move to Wales. He thought it could be very meaningful to teach this martial art to other migrants including Syrian refugees in Wales as he was already teaching Taekwondo to Syrian refugees in Jordan and found it rewarding. Just as the first author's identity as a Korean from Taekwondo's dominant country of origin facilitated his transition to teaching Taekwondo in Wales, this integrative pluralized identity facilitated bridging capital form himself and his students in their new location.

The Bridge Taekwondo Club was originally intended to be set up to teach Korean immigrants in the city and Welsh students from their network of contacts and was in operation from 2017 to 2019. The first author, as a Taekwondo instructor taught this martial art, emphasising mutual respect as an essential part of Taekwondo-In spirit. However, through the aforementioned Syrian bridging relationship, the first author eventually established Taekwondo clubs in three urban areas in Wales. These produced opportunities for bridging relationships for immigrants across Wales in the form of a wider social network, for the author, also promoting social capital that enabled his own structural integration into UK society via gaining a permanent residency and settlement in Wales.

Pluralised integrative identification was in evidence in the building of Taekwondo-In identity, through repeated Taekwondo practice. The first author taught three Korean children, two half-Korean and half-Welsh children (the mother's side is Korean and the father's side is Welsh), and four white Welsh children in addition to the Welsh and Korean adult students. Through observations and a small group interview of two Children Taekwondo practitioners from Bridge Taekwondo club (both of them are from multicultural families with a British father and Korean mother). MinJun and JiHun are proud of the fact that Taekwondo is Korean and proud that they are Koreans,

JiHun: (When) I grew up in Korea. My Taekwondo teacher told me that Taekwondo is Korean.

MinJun: Taekwondo is Korean. Now everyone does Taekwondo. A lot of people know Taekwondo is Korean. It's like... (Taekwondo) People speak in Korean. Hana, Dul, Set, Net... (Korean counting numbers)

JiHun: ... I did a presentation about Taekwondo. I took a PE lesson from my Taekwondo and I taught Taekwondo. ... I was literally just teaching the whole afternoon.

Discussing JiHun's Korean identity, his father Malcolm (another Taekwondo practitioner) commented,

I think we want him to stick with it (Taekwondo) because he is Korean and because something distinct that he can say 'I can do this because I am Korean and this is Korean (martial) art.' So we want him to value that. In terms of cultural influences, Taekwondo is a very important part of that. At his school, he can learn British culture for his British identity.

Malcolm is a British man from Scotland who spent his childhood in Canada and from his experience, Malcolm wants his children to establish the right identity as Korean and British³. Ghosh (2000, p. 294) affirms the importance of pluralised identification in aiding bonding relationship and social integration commenting,

Strong ethnic identification with one's own ethnic culture as well as with the dominant culture is the ideal way to integrate because one needs to know where one is coming from in order to know where one is going.

Indeed, from over eighteen years of teaching experiences with Koreans living in Yemen, Jordan and the UK the first author observed that Korean identity can be strengthened by learning Korean culture through Taekwondo, such as Korean greeting manners, Korean Taekwondo terms, and Korean number counting, etc.. Thus, as JiHun's example illustrates building and forming the identity of Taekwondo-In through the process of repeated Taekwondo practice helps reinforce Korean identity. Taekwondo practice helped these migrant and multi-ethnic Koreans develop self-esteem and self-confidence, establish and reinforce their Korean ethnic and national identities, build mutual trust in relationships with others and integrate into the social environment in which these people are involved – all elements of bonding relationships. On the other hand, through Malcolm's comments below, we can see that the confidence (based on constructed identity) that his son, JiHun, gained from practising Taekwondo promoted bridging relations and social capital as his value extended beyond the Taekwondo club in his classmates and PE teacher.

Malcolm: In his class, he (JiHun) led a Taekwondo class in his school one day, actually, he was asked to do it twice because he did very well. It's teaching him some skills for leadership and (self) confidence. ... It is helping him in a lot of ways as well.

JiHun's confident Taekwondo performance has built trust in his PE teacher (an important component of bridging social capital), and this trust allowed the PE teacher to offer him the opportunity to teach Taekwondo again. In conclusion, it can be said that JiHun's identity as a Korean and as a practitioner of the Korean martial art Taekwondo, which was strengthened through the Bridge Taekwondo Club, helped him to develop bridging social capital, which contributed to his social integration that strengthened his position in the community (school).

6.2. Case 2: Harbour Taekwondo Club

Ahmad: As a work(er)... I left the UK, then I came in 2004 again. ... In 2004 I applied to the Home Office I wanted to stay here and they gave me (a visa).

The first author: You applied to be an asylum seeker or refugee?

³ At some point in his young age, he moved to South Korea and lived there for more than fifteen years before coming to Wales. His life in Canada and South Korea was longer than his life in the UK (It is the reason why his English accent is much closer to the Canadian English accent, as he explained to the first author). Even though he is British, after he returned to his homeland the UK, he had the experience of confusion about his identity, such as having difficulties with cultural differences.

Ahmad: No, just as a worker.

The first author: So, at the time, what visa did you get?

Ahmad: Work visa. I worked at a port. You know, in south Iran, we worked in the port when I was (a) little boy. Here, I got experience in the port in the crane, in the (tanker) ship, ye, jetty... to be honest, Taekwondo helped me. As a Taekwondo instructor, I applied. I got about five second ... or primary school. They gave me (work visa) as a Taekwondo man. ... That is part of my life. Why bad? Because I've got five primary schools in my name. (That's) I registered in my name. ... 20 years I passed my age here. They gave me ... It was not easy but...

The first author: When did you start Taekwondo?

Ahmad: 1983 in Iran ... (I started TKD) I was, that time, teenager. ... I played (with) my friends. ... because people like TKD. ... There are Karate, there are Kungfu, there are freestyle wrestling but most public they like TKD. They grew up... you know, (like) tree... small tree... they grew up with them... I don't know why they love this sport. They love inside... because inside. ... and they had now league... exactly the same as football. Same as Manchester...

The first author has known Master Ahmad for around eight years at the time of the study. Master Ahmad is an Iranian British Taekwondo instructor. He was born in the Arab area of Iran and speaks Arabic, Persian, and English. He visited the UK first in 1998 and returned to Iran. In 2004, 6 years after his first visit, he migrated to the UK to settle in this country. He runs Harbour Taekwondo Centre, which has diverse ethnic background students, in a Welsh conurbation. Ahmad had been working in the port since his childhood in Iran, so he was able to get a job at the port in the UK. At the same time, he taught Taekwondo at five primary and secondary schools. According to him, the fact that his name was registered at those schools in Wales as a Taekwondo instructor was considered an important component when his application was in the process of getting the work visa. Ahmad's story is illuminated by Stuart Hall (1990, p. 225) description of the dynamic relations between (cultural) identity and time:

Cultural identity ... is a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. ... Identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past.

Ahmad's pluralized identity is integrative and pluralized, and the Iranian and Welsh dimensions are integrated through the formation of his Taekwondo-In identity and his experiences as an instructor. His Taekwondo practice, which began as a child, continues to this day in the mid-50s. Also, he remains committed to teaching ethnically diverse students. Moreover, Ahmad's cultural identity as a Taekwondo-In instructor and practitioner provided valuable bridging social capital that played a decisive role in his structural integration in terms of his settlement in the UK. Light (2004) emphasizes mutual metamorphosis as one of the important properties of capital. According to him, "human, cultural, and social capital metamorphose into one another as such as physical and financial capital's mutual metamorphosis (ibid., p. 147)." Ahmad's case illustrates the fluidity of capital transformation by showing how his incorporation of Taekwondo-In became a form of capital that was converted into bridging social capital during the migration

process where having a skill to offer and provide him with employment and settling in the country he migrated to was critical not only to his social integration but also structural integration into UK economy.

However, Taekwondo-In is not just about physical skills but also about moral and social dispositions. The transcript below demonstrates how this *inner* identity of a Taekwondo-In that not only helped to integrate himself into society but also helped students from different ethnic backgrounds to form the ‘trust’ in others necessary to achieve bridging and bonding social relations here.

The first author: What are the ethnic backgrounds of the students?

Ahmad: I got many nationalities. Chinese, Somali, Syrian, Libyan, English from Bristol, Wales, Indian, Iraq, Iranian... it's mixed.

The first author: What are the students' religious backgrounds?

Ahmad: Muslims, Christians, Buddhist, Hindu ... Mixed.

The first author: Do you think that the students learn Korean culture through learning Taekwondo?

Ahmad: Definitely, Taekwondo is part of life. They learn how to bow, how to respect their parents, how to respect (people) outside, how to respect each other... you know, how to stand against bully, Taekwondo help them stand against bully... Ye ... I teach them, I told them as well how to give the stuff to each other, saying ‘thank you’, bow ... They help each other. I taught them how to help each other everything. This is part of Taekwondo. One team supports each other. ... One united... This is I teach them how... This is part of Taekwondo. One as one, together as one. That is part of Taekwondo. ... We have no problem with this... All of them know each other... I haven't heard, haven't seen (the problem). I had white, I had black, I had Arab ... All of them (be) friend each other.

Ahmad regards ‘respect’ as an important spiritual, cultural and social value that Taekwondo emphasises and he teaches this to students. In terms of his emphasis, ‘respect’ (as a basis of ‘trust’) can be seen as an essential integrative value contributing to social integration as well as teaching the importance of unity to students of various ethnic backgrounds. Ahmad, who is well integrated into British society as a person from an ethnic minority background, shows a typical Taekwondo-In model. In particular, he encourages his students, who come from diverse ethnic backgrounds, to internalise and practice not only the techniques of Taekwondo, but also the spiritual value of ‘respect’, emphasising that it is a core part of the art/sport. This is an important integrative element of identity that helps practitioners from different ethnic backgrounds build mutual trust in their communities and contributes to their integration into the community. The first author observed how many of Master Ahmad's students have become socially integrated members of their communities and society, at least in part due to Master Ahmad's teaching and example.

6.3 Case 3: Sanctuary Taekwondo Club

The third case is that of Taekwondo Master 'JeongHun', who runs the Sanctuary Taekwondo Club and examined how Taekwondo training affects practitioners' social integration. Master JeongHun emigrated to the US in 1986 at the age of 13 and became a US citizen 13 years later in 1999 at the age of 26. JeongHun began practising Taekwondo in the first year of elementary school and became a black belt in this martial art in 1996, three years before becoming a citizen, and a Taekwondo instructor in 1998.

Although Taekwondo did not lead him to settle in the US and become a citizen like Ahmad or the first author, his coaching career seems to have made a positive impact in his community such as taking students outside the club to serve the community across ethnic and religious boundaries and has been an underlying factor in his successful social integration into the US.

JeongHun: As assistant instructors, they learn how to treat people well while teaching junior students and grow into confident leaders in front of people. Moreover, I see that students have a very healthy spiritual worldview by experiencing volunteer activities while teaching Taekwondo in the local community and abroad outside of club...the students practice and interact with other people regardless of ethnicity, language, culture, or religion.

In 2010, after 12 years as a Taekwondo instructor, he founded Sanctuary Taekwondo Club, as his business and has been running it successfully ever since. Sanctuary club is located in an affluent Californian region in the US known for high levels of migrants and the resident population is ethnically very diverse which is reflected in the club practitioners' ethnicities.⁴

First author: ... I found the specific term 'trust' through the website. What does that mean?

JeongHun: It shows the parents that 'We do not lie, and we truly treat you. We are always telling the truth.' It means building up 'trust'.

First author: Do you emphasise 'trust' in the training for the practitioners?

JeongHun: I emphasise the term 'Integrity' to my students. The foundation of 'trust' is integrity. For example, when I let the students do push-ups, I emphasise 'Integrity' saying 'Cheating is cheating yourself. Do not deceive.' 'Integrity' is about honesty, no matter who sees or not. Only a person of 'Integrity' can be trusted by others. [...]

First author: Do practitioners think most people are trustworthy?

JeongHun: They (practitioners) say that the people who do Taekwondo are generally trustworthy but it is not about outsiders. They think that the person who does Taekwondo is honest and trustworthy. By doing Taekwondo, a very high sense of trust is formed among practitioners.

As illustrated above, Master JeongHun encourages the practitioners to build up integrity as their inner character and the practitioners have actually been building up 'integrity', which is a key foundation for building up 'trust' among members of the community and society. Furthermore, 'trust', is a key element in measuring the growth of social capital, building up among the members

⁴ About 40 percent is Asian (including Koreans, Chinese and Indians), about 30 percent is white Slavs (Including Russians and Poles), about 20 percent is mixed ethnicity, about 8 per cent is Hispanic (including Mexicans) and about 2 percent is African-American.

of this club can be articulated as a form of bonding social capital appears to be an essential homogenising facet of social integration.

JeongHun: I teach 'discover', 'master' and 'share'. Discover is the stage where you realise who you are. When you know who you are, then you move to the next stage 'master'. On this stage, you try to be an expert by working hard on yourself. The next stage is to share with others. I encourage my students to develop themselves and become influential leaders and return their abilities to society. [...] When the practitioners become Black Belts, I give them the opportunities to teach other practitioners. ...As assistant instructors, they learn how to deal with people well while teaching junior students and grow into confident leaders in front of people.... Moreover, I see that students have a very healthy spiritual worldview by experiencing volunteer activities while teaching Taekwondo in the local community and abroad outside of club.

Through the holistic teaching of Master JeongHun, Taekwondo practitioners have been getting somatic (holistic) Taekwondo-In identity. Like the first two instructors, Master JeongHun also considers the Taekwondo-In identity is not only technical, but also spiritual, physical, moral, ethical, and social and as such, further highlights the pluralised integrative identification process we suggest is occurring in these settings. In addition to integrity and trust, in this process of growth, self-confidence plays a key role in establishing the appropriate self-identity to become a functional member of society. Therefore, Master JeongHun's emphasis on the social and moral dimensions of Taekwondo-In's identity encourages his students to develop bridging capital, which is focused on social cohesion and organic solidity in their communities.

JeongHun: Training time for the students is very diverse. Usually, the practitioners train for 2-3 hours a week. Students who spend the most time in club are the members of players who go to competitions. They spend 6-7 hours a week for training, and for about an hour chatting with each other. I am careful to give enough time for the students to get along with each other. ... In general, parents seem to be getting closer. The players, who go to competitions, are more intimate because they go out together. They spend a lot of times when they go to competitions and come back around 2-3 hours. Especially, when they go abroad for volunteer activities, they have a lot of time to mingle.

These 'social interactions', are considered an essential practice developing of social capital, between Taekwondo practitioners before and after Taekwondo sessions, and also between the parents on account of pleasant environments formed by comfortable resting place and beverages from the vending machine. Moreover, the values obtained through Taekwondo practice in this club are summarized as the following three values that can be found on the website of this club: 'Self-development', 'building trust', and 'serving society'. Therefore, like the other cases presented, social integration appears fostered through valorising and encouraging bridging social capital (between various ethnic groups) and bonding social capital in the respect of a collective yet integrative and pluralised identification process as Taekwondo-In.

7. Conclusions

This article has examined the question of social integration through the practice of sporting and physical cultural forms of Taekwondo. We utilised a collective instrumental case study which

gathered observational, interview and documentary data on three multicultural Taekwondo clubs. Following a directed content analysis which drew on Putnam's (1995) constructs of bridging and bonding forms of social capital and Sen's (2007) notions of de-centred, pluralised, integrative identification, our findings suggest that in these settings, Taekwondo functions as an effective platform for social integration. The Taekwondo-Jang functions as a place for the identity formation of Taekwondo-In. Here, a Taekwondo practitioner interacts with the other Taekwondo practitioners and forms a unique collective identity through the process in which 'my' individual narratives and the narratives of 'others' are making 'our' shared stories in dynamic interaction. When this individual and collective identity as Taekwondo-In is recognised as an aspect of plural identity, which the other Taekwondo-In also have, the recognition causes a positive effect in terms of social integration promoting 'mutual trust', which is an essential aspect of bonding social capital. In the Taekwondo-In identity that 'You' and 'I' are formed in the Taekwondo-Jang. The core features of that identity are universal and so it doesn't (or shouldn't) matter that, for example, 'I' am a Christian from China, and 'You' are a Muslim from Syria. Moreover, when Taekwondo-Ins show each other empathy and tolerance promoted by self-confidence and respect through practices like wearing the same Taekwondo uniform, using the same specific language and practising the same techniques, patterns and etiquette regardless of ethnicity, skin colour, nationality, sex/gender, ability or social class, etc.. In and beyond the context of multi-ethnic the Taekwondo-Jang we begin to see how the integrative pluralised identities formed construct forms of bridging relationships which operate as social capital. In this we discover a brighter side of social integration and multiculturalism.

In summary, we conclude that the formation of a Taekwondo-In's identity (holistic: physical, spiritual, ethical and social) promotes social integration by opening the individual to shared integrative, pluralised Taekwondo-centred identities which fosters bonding and bridging forms of social capital.

While our findings contribute significant elements to the empirical literature on social integration through sport and physical cultures, further research is needed to develop a deeper understanding of this phenomenon. Follow up studies are needed to identify which specific practices and pedagogies are most impactful for bringing this social integration about. It also needs to corroborate if Taekwondo practice induces social integration in a broader range of Taekwondo-Dojangs, particularly those with non-migrant instructors and lower numbers of migrant students. Finally, given social integration is a relatively slow process, this research might add a longitudinal dimension to ascertain how long these integrative impacts take to occur, the degree of latency in the process and, also, if there is some longer-term stability to the type of social integration experienced by practitioners should they leave Taekwondo or move locations. Lastly, and crucially it is important that future research can establish a more direct connection between social integration and broader facets of structural integration. For example, how these sport-based social capitals translate into improved access to other social spheres such as housing, employment, and education. Within this, how researchers might in future consider how "linking capital" (Coalter, 2007; Agger & Jensen, 2015) as another form of exchangeable capital is developed in this physical cultural activity sphere.

In light of these insights, and the prevailing context highlighted in our introduction – of projected increases in population migration in the near future – the following recommendations are

cautiously offered: 1) Governments and NGOs might consider prioritising funding the implementation and research evaluation of martial arts programmes within migrant and multicultural communities as part of broader integration policies. 2) Sports clubs and instructors might be encouraged and incentivised (by the funding suggested above) to receive training in intercultural communication and inclusive pedagogical approaches to maximise both bonding and bridging social capital. Of course, beyond Taekwondo specifically, but as our findings highlight emphatically, many of these immigrants may be expert martial artists themselves, with particular skills to offer to the local community and in so doing provide bridging and bonding connections to cultures, practices and values of diverse immigrant and indigenous populations. In many ways, this has been one of the stories of the martial arts diaspora.

Finally, the potential limitations of sport as an integration platform warrant comment. As Spaaij (2011) cautions, sport participation alone cannot overcome structural barriers to integration like discrimination or xenophobic policy restrictions. The transformative potential of arts like Taekwondo may be constrained without complementary support in other social and cultural spheres. By operationalising these recommendations, stakeholders can more effectively leverage the integrative potential of martial arts as physical cultural activities and sports, thereby contributing to more inclusive and socially cohesive societies.

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