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Time to Score the Goal of Integration

A Case Study of a Football Club's Impacts on Integration for Youth Girls with Foreign
Backgrounds in Stockholm Sweden

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Abstract

There is a need for more efficient measures to ensure responsible migration in host countries. Sports are recognised as a key measure to promote integration. This thesis's purpose is to increase the understanding of the impacts football clubs have on integration for youth girls with foreign backgrounds in Stockholm, Sweden. This is done by exploring social relations' role in integration and examining what aspects of clubs can contribute to integration. The Indicators of Integration framework outlines three kinds of social capital's importance for integration and is selected to interpret the findings. The thesis has adopted a case study design and focuses on a football club.

The thesis concludes that football clubs can accelerate the formation of social relations that can positively impact integration. The thesis also opens up a discussion on the different impacts sports clubs can have on integration. Further, findings include that certain locations and club aims can make clubs more likely to contribute to integration. The implications drawn from the study outline criteria that can promote accelerating impacts on integration. These include that clubs should promote access, inclusion and social connections outside the residential community.

Key words: migration, integration, Sweden, sports, football clubs, social relations, youth girls with foreign backgrounds

Word count: 14 764

Abbreviations

IOM	International Organization for Migration
SCB	Statistics Sweden [Statistiska Centralbyrån]
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SFA	Swedish Football Association [Svenska Fotbollsförbundet]
SSC	Swedish Sports Confederation [Riksidrottsförbundet]
StFA	Stockholm Football Association [Stockholms Fotbollförbund]
UN	United Nations

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Definitions

Development - “a multidimensional undertaking to achieve a higher quality of life for all people. Economic development, social development and environmental protection are interdependent and mutually reinforcing components of sustainable development” (United Nations, 1997: 1–2).

Integration - “the two-way process of mutual adaptation between migrants and the societies in which they live, whereby migrants are incorporated into the social, economic, cultural and political life of the receiving community” (IOM, 2019: 106)

Migrant – “an umbrella term, not defined under international law, reflecting the common lay understand of a person who moves away from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons.” (IOM, 2019: 132).

People with foreign backgrounds - people who migrated or are born in the country and have parents who are migrants (Tunström and Wang, 2019).

Youth - people between the age of 15-24 (World Health Organisation, no date)

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1. Introduction

Migration is one of the significant challenges of this century (Foresti and Hagen-Zanker, 2018). IOM's World Migration Report 2020 shows a numerical and proportional increase of international migrants over time and suggests that the trend is likely to continue (McAuliffe *et al.*, 2019). The need to be better prepared for future migration has been recognised in Agenda 2030, the first international development framework to include migration as an essential factor in achieving sustainable development (Foresti and Hagen-Zanker, 2018). Furthermore, the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 10.7 states "Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies" (United Nations, 2015: 21).

To achieve the SDG target 10.7 on migration, measures have to be applied to each part of the migration cycle, including origin, transit and integration in host countries (IOM, 2019). The social, political and economic inclusion of all is also recognised as an important element in the Agenda 2030's goal on reduced inequalities (United Nations, 2015). Researching inclusion in host countries is a pressing topic. Inclusion has been more complex to achieve over the past 50 years due to increased diversified migration concerning the country of origin, socioeconomic backgrounds, cultures, ethnicities, religions and reasons for migrating (McAuliffe *et al.*, 2019). An inability to promote inclusion and failed integration have negative implications on many aspects of society, such as economic growth, social sustainability (Tunström and Wang, 2019), political stability and social cohesion (Bossard, 2009).

A commonly adopted strategy for local integration is sports, allowing migrants to interact with locals (Agergaard, 2019). The rationale suggests that sports provide an arena with a universal language that defines the game, which creates an opportunity for people from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds to meet on a mutual ground (D'Angelo, 2019). Particular emphasis is on its ability to promote social relationships between groups who would not meet and interact in another setting (D'Angelo, 2019). However, previous studies disagree on the type and strength of the social relations formed in sports and how these can impact the integration process (Walseth, 2008; Vermeulen and Verweel, 2009; Spaaij, 2012; Lundkvist *et al.*, 2020).

A country that has commonly adopted sports to promote integration (Peterson, 2008) and faces integration challenges is Sweden (SCB, 2019). Ethnic residential segregation in Stockholm, Malmö and Gothenburg are among the highest in Europe (Tunström and Wang, 2019). Youth living in the segregated areas of Stockholm often face stigmatisation and have fewer chances of participating in society on equal terms (Hanlon and Vicino, 2019). Girls with foreign backgrounds are an especially disadvantaged group in Sweden as they often have unequal access to the labour market and civil society (SCB, 2019). Sports in Sweden are organised around club participation (SSC, 2019a) and girls with foreign backgrounds are underrepresented in this domain (Norberg, 2020). However, an evaluation of newly arrived youth's sports experiences in Sweden indicates that many girls want to participate in sports clubs (Wagnsson *et al.*, 2019). Many clubs have also recognised that reaching and including this group is challenging (Arnoldsson, 2019). In addition, the Swedish Sports Confederation (SSC) has since 2015 distributed large amounts of funds to sports clubs to promote integration (Arnoldsson, 2019). Further research is needed to define the impacts sports clubs have on integration for youth girls with foreign backgrounds in Sweden.

1.1 Purpose & research questions

The purpose of this thesis is to increase the understanding of the impacts sports clubs have on integration in Stockholm, Sweden. The implications of this thesis can thereby contribute to more efficient measures for integration. This thesis focuses on football clubs, as football is the most popular sport in Sweden (SSC, 2019c). The following research questions are examined:

How do football clubs impact integration for youth girls with foreign backgrounds in Stockholm Sweden?

- How do football clubs impact social relations?
- What aspects can make clubs more likely to contribute to integration?

1.2 Demarcation

This thesis focuses on how football clubs impact social relations and how these relations influence integration. However, other studies have shown how sports clubs can impact integration in other

ways, directly and indirectly (Gísladóttir *et al.*, 2013; Spaaij, 2013; Arnoldsson, 2019). In addition to social relations, clubs can provide an arena for youth to improve language skills and learn about the culture and norms in the host community (Arnoldsson, 2019). Participation in teams can also positively impact physical and mental health (Gísladóttir *et al.*, 2013). Working in clubs and playing on a professional level have been highlighted as a possible way for upward social mobility (Spaaij, 2013). Even though these are crucial ways a football club can impact integration, the thesis focuses on social relations as these have been recognised as key contributors to integration (Ager and Strang, 2004; Berry, 2011).

1.3 Outline

The introductory chapter has provided the study's relevance and specified research questions and which aspects of integration this thesis focuses on. The background section sets the scene in which the study has been conducted. Section three covers the concept of integration and previous research on sports clubs' impacts on social relations and integration. Section four describes the framework that has guided the data analysis and the interpretation of findings. Section five addresses the method applied, its limitations and the ethical considerations made through the research process. The analysis section describes the thesis's main findings. The discussion section suggests implications that can promote efficient integration measures, with a focus on which clubs are likely to contribute to integration. The final section, the conclusion, places the findings into the broader development context and provides recommendations for future research.

2. Background

The background section outlines the relevant context information. It illustrates the segregated urban area and youth girls with foreign backgrounds' disadvantaged position in Sweden. It shows that sports clubs have often been used as an arena for integration. However, many girls with foreign backgrounds still have limited possibilities to participate in clubs.

2.1 Exclusion and segregation in Sweden

Stockholm is a segregated area, with a high portion of people with foreign backgrounds living in the city's outskirts, see figure 1. In the inner city of Stockholm, Södermalm, the share of people with foreign backgrounds is approximately 20% compared to Rinkeby-Kista, where this number is 80% (Tunström and Wang, 2019).

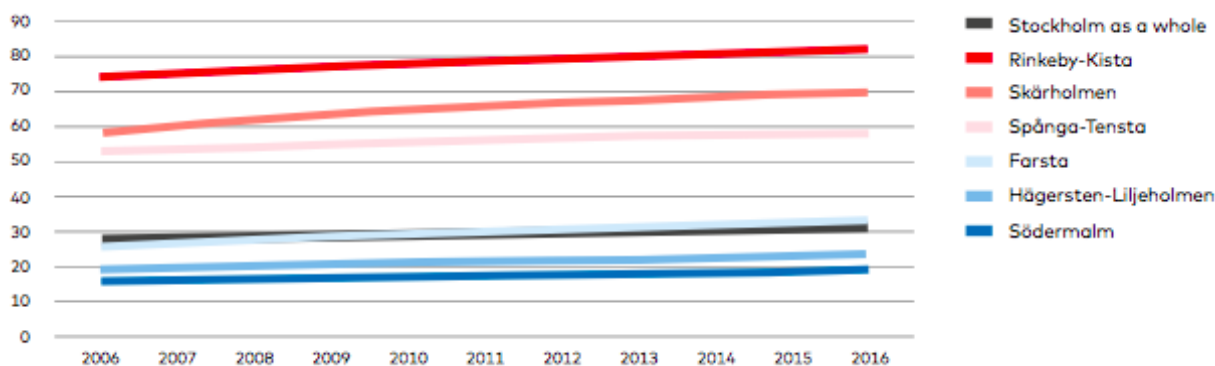


Figure 1. Share of the population with foreign background 2006-2016 (Tunström and Wang, 2019: 9)

The areas with a high portion of people with foreign backgrounds in Stockholm tend to have lower socioeconomic status and education levels compared to the inner city (SCB, 2019). Living in these neighbourhoods can adversely impact young people's employment and quality education (Öhrn, 2012). Labour market segregation, education segmentation and residential marginalisation have also negatively reinforced each other in Sweden (Sandberg, 2017). Öhrn (2012) also highlights a trend of ethnic segregation in schools, which is expected to have the most adverse impacts on youth with foreign backgrounds as their chances to learn Swedish is reduced. Youth growing up in these vulnerable socioeconomic neighbourhoods also face stigmatisation (Hanlon and Vicino,

2019). Alm (2014) adds that these youth often have a less optimistic outlook for the future. Youth living in these segregated areas are disadvantaged in many ways, which is expected to limit girls' possibilities to integrate.

2.2 Youth girls with foreign backgrounds in Sweden

Women born outside of Europe who have stayed in Sweden for less than nine years are a disadvantaged group with worse education performance, lower incomes and a weak position on the labour market (SCB, 2019). This is particularly the case for young women. These girls are also less active in civil society and often have a limited social network (SCB, 2019). Their weaker position in Sweden is also evident in the sports movement (Norberg, 2020). Youth living in the inner city have higher club participation than those living outside Stockholm (Larsson, 2019). The difference in participation based on socioeconomic background has increased in Stockholm over the past years (Elogsson *et al.*, 2019). A study by Dahlstedt & Ekholm (2019) found that girls were often absent in the football-based initiative they studied in different areas of Sweden, even though the practices were open for everyone. The initiative had positive impacts on friendship creation and establishing a sense of belonging, but these impacts were limited to males as these were the ones participating (Dahlstedt and Ekholm, 2019). Ekholm *et al.* (2019) argue for including girls with foreign backgrounds more when planning inclusion interventions as male coaches and managers often assess their needs. Common challenges for entering a club included lack of previous sports experience and time for sports and practices times being late at night (Ekholm *et al.*, 2019; Lundvall and Walseth, 2019; Lundkvist *et al.*, 2020). Another addressed theme was cultural traditions which opposed girls being active in sports (Lundvall and Walseth, 2019). This section has illustrated how youth girls with foreign backgrounds in Sweden are a vulnerable group, which needs increased support to achieve integration.

2.3 Sweden's use of sports

Over the past century, sports have been used in Sweden to promote a wide range of social objectives (Peterson, 2008). In addition, Sweden's policy on counteracting segregation has recognised sports clubs as an important arena for people with different backgrounds to meet and interact (Regeringskansliet, no date). Nonetheless, Lundvall and Walseth (2019) point out how

policymakers in Sweden often assume that sports lead to integration. They also suggest that research has not confirmed this belief. An external evaluation of the SSC also found that sports are often pictured in a positive light in relation to integration in media, but those critical of sports' positive impacts on integration tend to be researchers (Arnoldsson, 2019). This suggests a gap between the impacts policies expect and the impacts that researchers have found.

The sports movement in Sweden aims to be a place for everyone (Peterson, 2008). However, an evaluation of the government's support for sports, and the yearly follow-ups, illustrate how this vision is seldom achieved (Peterson, 2008; Norberg, 2020). Initiatives such as "Handslaget" (2003-2007) and "Idrottslyftet" (2007-2019) have aimed to include underrepresented groups in sports clubs. An evaluation of "Handslaget" revealed that the funds primarily strengthened the existing programs and reached groups already active in sports (Peterson, 2008). The sports clubs which managed to reach girls with foreign backgrounds had often moved away from traditional structures and did not have sports achievements as the primary objective (Bjärsholm, 2020). In 2020, the objectives of "Idrottslyftet" were incorporated into the work of the SSC (SSC, 2019b). This resulted in "Strategy 2025" with the vision that everyone should, regardless of ambition, age, gender, abilities or other qualifications, be able to participate in the sports movement (SSC, 2019b). In addition, the Swedish government distributed 264 million SEK to the SSC to support the integration of newly arrived youth during 2015-2018 (Arnoldsson, 2019). The majority of these funds were distributed to local clubs, as these were expected to allow newly arrived youth to become active members of the Swedish society (Arnoldsson, 2019). As shown, sports have often been used in Sweden to promote integration, but there are mixed views on sports' impacts. In addition, promoting equal access to sports clubs seems to be a persistent challenge even though funds have been directed to this aim over the past 20 years.

2.4 Sports in Sweden

Participation in sports clubs is common among youth in Sweden. About 90% of children and youth have at some point been members of a sports club (SSC, 2019a). Traditional sports clubs are mainly run by volunteers and require active involvement from parents (Bjärsholm, 2020). Stenling and Fahlén (2016) found that sports clubs in Sweden have different club identities, which have implications for the club's inclusiveness. The high-performance clubs prioritise sports results,

which often leads to the exclusion of youth without the required skills. On the other end of the spectrum is the social fostering club, whose primary objective is to contribute to broader societal development. These clubs tend to be more open and focus on letting everyone participate (Stenling and Fahlén, 2016).

2.5 Sports for integration in Sweden

Several studies have been conducted on request by the SSC to evaluate sports for integration in Sweden. Molin (2019) examined coaches' experiences of clubs' integration projects. Many described the challenge of reaching and including youth girls with foreign backgrounds. Further, a common practice in the integration projects was starting separate teams for newly arrived youth rather than including them into the existing ones. Many of the coaches questioned that this practice contributed to integration (Molin, 2019). Another of SSC's studies examined newly arrived youth's experiences of sports clubs in Sweden (Wagnsson *et al.*, 2019). Their findings concluded that approximately 25% of the newly arrived youth in the study were active in sports clubs, 19% had previously been a member and 56% had never been a part of a club. Out of those who had never been a part of a club, the majority stated that they wanted to join. The youth expressed frustration regarding how clubs did not reach out to them and how they lacked information on how to participate in clubs (Wagnsson *et al.*, 2019). This points to an untapped potential for including more youth into clubs. A summative report of the studies by the SSCs concluded that newly arrived girls are a challenging group to reach (Arnoldsson, 2019). It recommends clubs to be more active in reaching out, potentially by working closely with parents and collaborating with schools and refugee housing.

According to Bergdahl (2021) and Johansson (2021) at the SFA, there has been increasing interest from football clubs to contribute to integration during the past three years. They also highlight opportunities for clubs to apply for funding and receive support, such as knowledge sharing from the SSC and the SFA. There is also a trend among clubs aiming to promote inclusion, to offer open practices to increase access as everyone can participate regardless of skill level and ambition (Dahlstedt and Ekholm, 2019; Flensner *et al.*, 2020). A key point from the background section is that girls with foreign backgrounds often have limited opportunities to participate in clubs in Sweden, even though many want to participate. There is also a growing number of clubs that have

started to work towards integration, even though many of these clubs struggles in reaching and including youth girls with foreign backgrounds.

3. Literature review

Section three illustrates integration as a complex concept that needs to be distinguished from assimilation. The section also covers previous literature on sports for integration and the role of social relations in this process. Three different kinds of social capital (social bonds, social bridges and social links) are defined. The literature review describes which kinds of social capital have previously been found in sports clubs. The literature review ends by highlighting research gaps that the thesis aims to fill.

3.1 The concept of integration

Integration is a complex concept which is highly individual and contextual (Ager and Strang, 2008). This means that there is no single strategy for people to integrate and integration can look differently depending on the person and the local context. The definition of integration used in this thesis highlights that migrants should be included in social, economic, cultural and political life in the host community (IOM, 2019). Another central part of the definition describes integration as a two-way process. This distinguishes the concept from assimilation, where the migrant is the only part that should adapt, which often requires adopting the host country's cultural norms, traditions, values, and behaviours (IOM, 2019). Even though these are separate concepts, assimilation has in some contexts been used as a synonym for integration (Strang and Ager, 2010). Dowling (2020) found that local initiatives for integration built on assimilation ideas, which contributed to strengthening hierarchies in sports. Similar findings occurred in Ekholm's (2019) study in Sweden, where a sport-based intervention primarily relied on minority groups' assimilation prior to participation. The thesis focuses on integration as a two-way process requiring adaptation and accommodation from minority groups and the host community.

3.2 Sports for integration

There are mixed opinions on sports' potential to contribute to integration. Those who are critical commonly point out that tensions between groups in society are also evident in sports clubs which limit their potential to contribute to integration (Krouwel *et al.*, 2006; Dowling, 2020). Another common argument made is that sports' focus on performance and its competitive element

contributes to excluding people (Skille, 2011; Stenling and Fahlén, 2016). Another study found that sports did not meet the expected integration outcomes (Lundkvist *et al.*, 2020). Participation in sports did not lead to having native friends and did not reduce problem behaviour in Sweden (Lundkvist *et al.*, 2020). Those who support integration through sports often point to its potential for building social relations, which is expanded on in the next sections.

3.2.1 Social capital

Many studies examining sports' impacts on integration have focused on social relations through exploring the concept of social capital. According to Putnam (2001), social capital refers to social networks, which are believed to be a private and public good. Social capital comes in many different forms such as the extended family, civic organisations and acquaintances in the community. Social capital consists of three elements; generalised trust, norms of reciprocity and networks of civic engagement, which reinforce each other (Putnam, 2001). Participation in associations, such as sports clubs, is a way for people to form social relations and networks, which enhance trust and cooperation (Putnam, 2001).

Putnam (2001) described two forms of social capital, namely social bonding and social bridging. Bonding refers to social capital formed between people with similar characteristics. Bonding is suggested to lead to solid loyalties within the group. Bonding promotes homogeneity and is sometimes referred to as exclusive bonding as only certain people are welcomed into this group (Putnam, 2001). Social bridging capital refers to forming relations to people across social dimensions such as age, ethnicity, gender and religion. Bridging social capital is suggested to be more outwards looking and inclusive to different groups. Groups tend to form social bonds along certain social dimensions and bridges across others (Putnam, 2001). For example, a group can form relations between people of different social classes but only between people from a certain ethnicity. An additional form of social capital has later been added, namely social links. This refers to a connection that facilitates access to services and the wider community (Ager and Strang, 2008). Social links include engagement with local governmental and non-governmental services (Ager and Strang, 2004). Studies have explored how these three kinds of social capital have been formed in sports, elaborated on in the next section.

3.2.2 Social capital in sports

The kinds of social capital that can be formed in sports seem to depend on the type of team one participates in. Previous literature has distinguished between ethnically-mixed and ethnically-separated teams. Janssens and Verweel (2014) suggest that policies on sports often promote participation in ethnically-mixed teams. However, Vermuelen and Verweel (2009) argue that policies should value ethnically-separated teams to the same extent as mixed ones, as bonding does not only occur in minority groups.

A study found that ethnically-mixed team participation promoted learning about other cultures and backgrounds and increased self-confidence (Theeboom *et al.*, 2012). Another study also found that in these teams, strong bridging social capital formed across ethnicity when there was a good atmosphere in the club (Verhagen and Boonstra, 2014). Walseth's (2008) study also focused on an ethnically-mixed team for female youth in Norway (16-25 years old). The participating youth had different ethnicities but shared a migrant background. Bridging social capital formed between these youth. However, bridging did not occur to youth without a migrant background as these youth were not participating in the team. Walseth (2008) suggested that some barriers limited mixing between youth with migrant backgrounds and youth without. These barriers included that participating in certain teams relied on paying high membership fees and having parents who could drive to games. These aspects were found to limit some girls with migrant backgrounds' opportunity to participate in those clubs. This suggests that there is also a need to look at which ethnicities are participating in the team to promote bridges between youth with and without migrant backgrounds. Furthermore, Walseth's (2008) study also found that bonding ties were created around team belonging and immigrant status in this ethnically-mixed team. In Ekholm's (2019) study on an ethnically-mixed team in Sweden, social bonding occurred along similar experiences of social exclusion and living in a segregated community.

Participation in ethnically-separated teams, consisting of only one ethnicity, impacted social relations differently. Having friends and family participating is the most common reason for choosing a specific club (Theeboom *et al.*, 2012; Verhagen and Boonstra, 2014). Verhagen and Boonstra (2014) suggest that choosing a sports club can have segregating effects as people commonly preferred participation in teams with others similar to themselves. Ethnically-separated

teams were found to create stronger personal relations and participants more often helped each other outside of the sport compared to the ethnically-mixed team (Theeboom *et al.*, 2012). In addition, participating in ethnically-separated teams could function as a relaxing leisure activity as one could interact with people with a similar background, which was suggested to be important for minority groups (Spaaij, 2012). In Spaaij's (2012) research on an ethnically-separated team, opportunities to form bridging social capital across ethnicity primarily occurred during games. However, the competitive element was an obstacle to forming these social relations. Racism, distrust, discrimination and tensions prevalent in sports were also suggested to have detrimental effects on bridging and linking social capital in other sectors of society. Further, Spaaij's (2012) study also examined the social links formed in the club. Minority groups were suggested to have increased chances of obtaining working positions in ethnically-separated teams. However, these positions were argued to be unequally distributed, particularly concerning gender. Women had limited opportunities to participate in the club fully and were disadvantaged in obtaining job positions (Spaaij, 2012).

This sub-section has illustrated that the type of team one participates in has impacts on the social capital formed. Participation in an ethnically-mixed team promoted interaction between people of different cultures. Social bridges across ethnicity could be strong, but in certain contexts these relations were only formed between youth with foreign backgrounds. Social bonds formed related to team belonging, migrant background and similar experiences of exclusion. In ethnically-separated teams, it seems that stronger personal ties were developed. It was also advantageous in forming social links. However, the potential to form social bridges in ethnically-separated teams seems to be limited. The distinction between the types of teams and its impacts on social relations are crucial to consider as these social relations can have impacts on integration. The social relations' impacts on integration are examined further in the following section.

3.2.3 Social capital's role in integration

Previous studies disagree on the different kinds of social capitals' role in integration. Uslaner and Conley (2003) suggested that strong social bonding ties can prevent bridging capital and thereby limit opportunities for integration. Their findings illustrate how people with strong bonding ties are more likely to withdraw from wider societal participation than those with looser ties to one's

in-group (Uslaner and Conley, 2003). Strang and Ager (2010) oppose this and suggest how strong bonding capital can promote bridging as the former can enhance emotional support and self-esteem. Walseth (2016) endorses this and adds that social bonds can promote the formation of a collective identity, which can facilitate finding a place in the new society. Furthermore, in a mixed housing project arrangement for Syrian refugees and Dutch youth, the bonding social capital was not an obstacle to ethnic bridging relations (Czischke and Huisman, 2018). Further, there is consensus that the formation of the other two types of social capital, bridges and links, contributes to integration (Uslaner and Conley, 2003; Strang and Ager, 2010; Spaaij, 2013). In addition, Spaaij's (2012) study examined whether social relations in sports could contribute to integration for Somali people in an ethnically-separated team in Australia. The study concluded that some of the social capital formed in the sports club could facilitate integration, but other sectors, such as employment and education, played a more crucial role.

To sum up this section, out of the three kinds of social capital, it is primarily social bonds that have been questioned to contribute to integration. Even though most studies support its contribution to integration, some support Putnam's (2001) notion that social bonds can strengthen exclusion and thereby limit integration. Many studies support that social relations in sports can contribute to integration, even though other sectors have been recognised as more important.

3.3 Research gap

Sports have often been promoted as a strategy for integration. In Sweden sports clubs are believed to be an arena for this aim. However, some argue that research has not confirmed its expected positive impacts on integration, suggesting that more research is needed on sports clubs' impacts on integration.

Further, there is a need for more research on sports clubs' potential to contribute to social capital and its impact on integration, as there is uncertainty regarding which social relations can be formed for youth girls' with foreign backgrounds in Sweden. Some argue that social bonding strengthens self-exclusion, whereas others highlight social bonds as a facilitator for forming social bridges and social links. There are also mixed results on the strength of the social relations and the possibility

to form social bridges between youth with and without foreign backgrounds. Social links have received limited attention in sports clubs and thereby need to be researched further. Therefore, the thesis explores the three kinds of social capital formed for youth girls in football clubs and how these impact integration. In addition, the thesis also studies the impacts football clubs have on youth girls with foreign backgrounds who are not in clubs. There is a lack of research on how these girls' limited opportunities to join clubs influence their social relations and integration process. This thesis has thereby included the perspective of girls outside clubs as this is a part of the problem situation around integrating youth girls with foreign backgrounds through sports clubs in Sweden.

Furthermore, the literature review indicated that the type of club one participates in, ethnically-mixed or ethnically-separated teams, impacts the social capital formed and the integration process. However, further research has to explore what other aspects of clubs can make them more likely to contribute to integration through promoting social relations. To sum up, this thesis studies football clubs' impacts on integration by exploring social relations and what aspects of clubs can promote integration. This is expected to increase the understanding of football clubs' impacts on integration.

4. Theoretical grounding

Section four briefly describes how social relations are a crucial element in development studies. It also outlines the Indicators of Integration framework applied to interpret the findings. It illustrates that the social relations formed in sports clubs are interpreted as key domains of integration. The social relations' impacts on integration are assessed by looking at a set of indicators defined by the framework.

4.1 Social capital in development

Social relations are crucial to incorporate in development theory, research and policy (Woolcock and Narayan, 2000). It is suggested to "...hold the key to understanding the prospects for development in a given society" (Woolcock and Narayan, 2000: 243). Robinson and Flora (2003) add that social capital is an essential complement to economic models, as these alone are insufficient in predicting behaviours. Social capital is also expected to have an important role in achieving additional development objectives through counteracting social divides and promoting social cohesion and trust (Woolcock and Narayan, 2000). A framework that has highlighted different forms of social capital's central role in integration is the Indicators of Integration framework. This framework is explained further in the next part.

4.2 Indicators of Integration framework

The Indicators of Integration framework by Ager and Strang (2004) outlines ten domains crucial for successful integration, illustrated in figure 2.

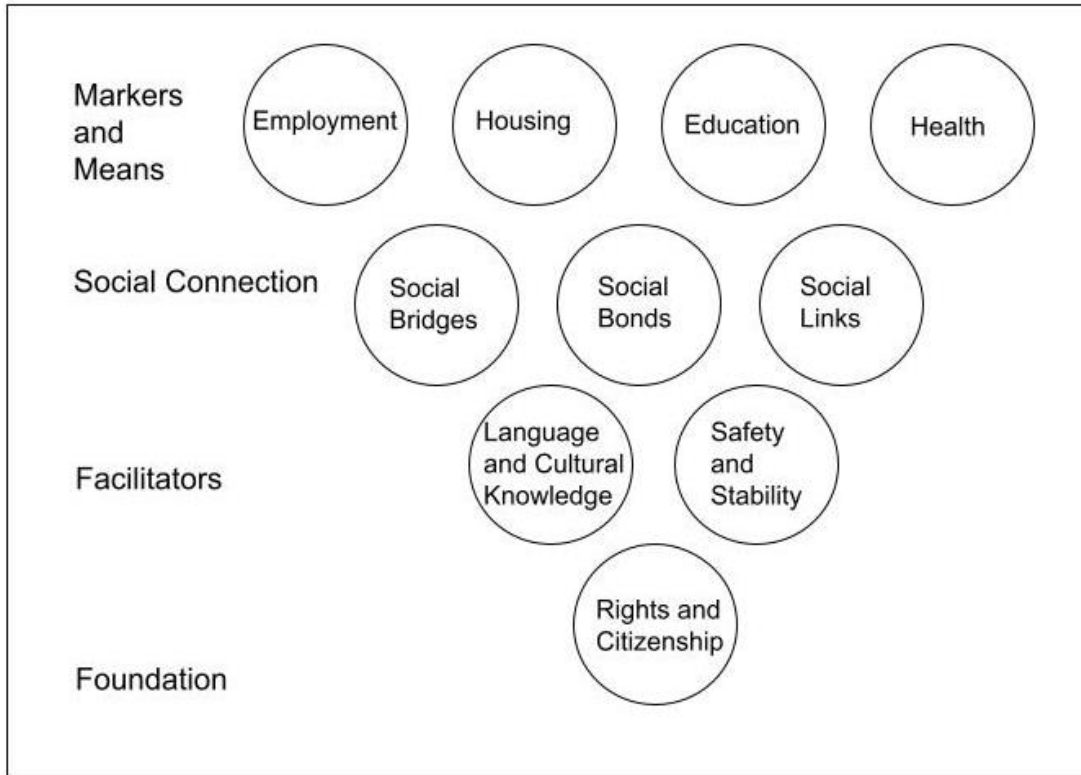


Figure 2. Indicators of Integration framework (Ager and Strang, 2004: 13)

The relationship between the domains is complex and the achievement of one domain can support the achievement of another (Ager and Strang, 2004). An example of this is how education provides a chance to learn the skills and competencies required in the labour market and it is also recognised as “the most important place of contact with members of local communities, playing an important role in establishing relationships supportive of integration” (Ager and Strang, 2008: 172). There is no hierarchy or particular order for achieving the domains (Ager and Strang, 2004), which illustrates the view that there is no clear path for integration that fits everyone.

The ten domains include markers and means that can support the achievement of integration and be indicative of integration (Ager and Strang, 2004). The social connection level describes the relationships and networks that can drive the integration process. Language and cultural knowledge as well as safety and stability are facilitators that can enable people to be engaged within the community. Lastly, the foundation of integration is citizenship which incorporates what it means to belong to the nation in that specific context, such as rights, expectations and obligations

of citizens (Ager and Strang, 2004). Through this framework, people are integrated in society when they:

- “achieve public outcomes within employment, housing, education, health etc. which are equivalent to those achieved within the wider host communities;” (Ager and Strang, 2004: 5)
- “are socially connected with members of a (national, ethnic, cultural, religious or other) community with which they identify, with members of other communities and with relevant services and functions of the state; and” (Ager and Strang, 2004: 5)
- “have sufficient linguistic competence and cultural knowledge, and a sufficient sense of security and stability, to confidently engage in that society in a manner consistent with shared notions of nationhood and citizenship.” (Ager and Strang, 2004: 5)

This definition of an integration person aligns with the definition used in thesis by IOM (2019). Strang and Ager (2010) explain how the framework views integration as a two-way process. They outline that integration often requires migrants to adapt one’s lifestyle and to a certain degree accept the fundamental norms of the host society. The host community has an essential role in securing rights and access to government services. This includes health clinics and facilities to practice a language and learn about the culture. The community also needs to promote places for people with foreign backgrounds to meet and interact with locals. To achieve social connection, the host community may also offer the citizens trainings to reduce discrimination (Strang and Ager, 2010).

As this thesis primarily studies the clubs’ impacts on social relations, the main focus is placed on the social connection level of the framework. The incorporation of social bonds in the framework was intended to highlight how co-ethnic identification and strong bonding ties do not negatively impact the host community (Strang and Ager, 2010). The inclusion of social bridges, social bonds, and social links in the framework conceptualises that each has an important role in integration.

Each domain has several indicators that can illustrate when achievement in the domain contributes to successful integration (Ager and Strang, 2004). The authors of the framework highlight that the indicators have been established based on empirical research in the United Kingdom. When applying the framework elsewhere, it is recommended to adapt the indicators to the local context (Ager and Strang, 2004). In this thesis, one indicator for each social connection domain is selected for the analysis of the data. The selected indicators are those relevant and feasible to study for youth girls in sports club in Sweden. The indicator of social bridges selected is the mixing of local and migrant youth in activities. The indicator of social bonds is a sense of belonging to the community for youth with foreign backgrounds. For social links, the indicator is the use of local services (Ager and Strang, 2004). How this framework is used to analyse data is further discussed in the following section on methodological discussion.

5. Methodological discussion

Section five describes the methodological considerations made through the research process. This includes the design, data collection, methods of analysis, ethical considerations and limitations.

5.1 Design

This thesis has adopted a qualitative methodology, suitable for studying a complex and context-dependent social problem (Creswell and Poth, 2018). The qualitative approach chosen is a case study, defined as an in-depth investigation of a contemporary phenomenon in its ordinary setting (Yin, 2014). The single case study allows for a detailed examination (Yin, 2014), which is suitable for this thesis as it studies a complex concept such as integration which is impacted by numerous factors. Purposeful selection has been applied, which allows for selecting a case based on expected desirable outcomes (Creswell and Poth, 2018). The club Rågsveds IF was chosen for its richness in information and as it has been recognised a success case by representatives of the SFA and in media (Gyllensten, 2018; Tonström, 2019).

5.1.1 Description of the case

Rågsveds IF – Founded 1958 Vision: Rågsveds IF is a club for everyone regardless of gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age or disability.	
Club goals set for 2022 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 700 member (200 girls) • Gender equality goal- 40 % female leaders/coaches 	Status 2020 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approx, 750 members (212 girls) • Gender equality goal- 27.5 % female leaders/coaches
Teams in Rågsveds IF <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women’s team div. 3 • Men’s team div. 3 • Youth – 34 teams (7 girls teams and 27 boys teams) • Women’s and men’s futsal teams 	Open Programs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborations with schools • Dance program • Basketball program • Individual training • Open football practices
Traineeship program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purpose: develop youth leaders to create role models for the next generation • Includes courses in leadership, pedagogy and football methodology led by the StFA, the Swedish School or Sports and Health Sciences and SSC • Includes 5-10 youth leaders each year 	Integration Project 2015-2019 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purpose: include newly arrived youth in Swedish sports clubs • Conducted in collaboration with schools and housing for newly arrived youth • A team for newly arrived youth who trained and played games together with the club’s youth leaders
Area Characteristics	
Location: Hagsätra/ Rågsved Suburb south of Stockholm	Population with foreign backgrounds from outside Europe: Rågsved: 52% (Stockholms Stad, 2021b) Hagsätra: 39% (Stockholms Stad, 2021a).

Table 1. Description of Rågsveds IF

The information in the table is from the club’s website (*Rågsveds IF Passion & Ambition*, 2021), value document (*Rågsveds IF - Värdegrund*, no date) and the interview with the sports manager.

In addition to people in the club, the data collection has been complemented by including perspectives outside the case. This includes youth girls with foreign backgrounds who are not a part of any club team. Their perspective has been included in the first sub-research question. Four interviews were conducted with representatives from the SFA. These interviews served to provide an overview of clubs' work with integration in Stockholm and in selecting the case. Information from the interviews with the representatives of the SFA has been included in the background section but is absent in the analysis.

This thesis has also included perspectives from two other clubs located in Stockholm. Their inclusion allowed for comparisons to be made to the case. Their perspectives have been included in the second sub-research question on what aspects of clubs can contribute to integration. Botkyrka Konyaspor was chosen based on its similar characteristics to Rågsveds IF. The club has also received attention for its integration work (Larsson, 2017). The club is located in Alby, which has a high portion of people with foreign backgrounds (61 %) (SCB, 2021). The second club was chosen based on its different image. The club remains anonymous, based on a request from the club. However, the club's primary objective is to promote football achievements and develop the most talented players. The club functions as a representative of a bigger brand club in Stockholm.

5.2 Data collection

A case study relies on multiple sources of data collection (Yin, 2014). Identifying themes in different data sources can increase the validity of findings (Creswell and Poth, 2018). This thesis has relied on interviews, a focus group, personal observations, analysis of different documents and media, see details in table 2. The sources for the documents and media can be found in appendix 1. Eight in-depth interviews were conducted with people in Rågsveds IF.

Rågsveds IF		
Data Source	Title	Description
Interviews	Sports manager	Employed by the club
	Integration manager	In charge of the integration project 2015-2019
	3 Female youth coaches	Coached different teams, leaders for open practices, participants of the traineeship program, former players, 17-23 years old
	3 Female players	Play in organised teams and live in the area, 15-24 years old
Documents	Operation plan document	Description of the program and teams including the club's goals
	Value document	Description of the core values
	Policy documents	Guidelines for leaders, coaches, parents and players
	Action plan against discrimination	Outlines the procedure in the event of discriminations
Media	Rågsveds IF's website	Overall description of the club
	Articles by local newspaper and SSC	Articles describing the club's integration work
	StFA article	Describes Stockholm's Coach of the Month
	Podcast by SFA	Describes Rågsveds IF's plan for promoting opportunities for everyone to participate regardless of economic standing
Observations	Participated in open practices	Played together with youth over 15 years old and adults
	How interviewees answered questions	Interpreted how participants spoke about the club
	Spending time in the community	Walked around in the neighbourhood

Table 2. Data collection Rågsveds IF

The additional data collected with participants outside the club is specified in the table below.

Additional data collection	
Participants	Description
Youth girls with foreign backgrounds outside the club	Focus group with 8 participants with girls with foreign backgrounds outside of Europe and with different length of stay in Sweden, 18-23 years old
	Three individual interviews with girls with foreign backgrounds outside of Europe and with different length of stay in Sweden, 19- 23 years old
Other clubs in Stockholm	Botkyrka Konyaspor – Interview with youth manager
	Anonymous club– Interview with the integration manager
SFA Representatives	Corporate social responsibility manager
	Project manager for SFA’s project on including girls with foreign backgrounds in football clubs
	Project leader for SFA’s project on including girls with foreign backgrounds in football clubs
	Project manager for developing new football forms to lower the threshold of participation

Table 3. Data collection to complement the main case

Gatekeepers played an important role in this thesis. The sports manager of Rågsveds IF facilitated the contact with people in the club and a civil society organisation facilitated the contact with the girls outside clubs in Stockholm. The remaining interviewees were asked about participation through email. The focus group was important for selecting participants for the individual in-depth interviews. All the interviews relied on a semi-structured approach which allows for flexibility and adapting the questions during the interviews to receive the richest information possible (Turner, 2010). The interviews were conducted in Swedish, as all the interviewees preferred this option to English.

5.3 Methods of analysis

The documents, news articles, podcast, transcriptions of the interviewees and the focus group and observation notes were incorporated into the data analysing program NVivo 12. The program served to code the data into themes. The analysis included both inductive and deductive logic, which is common practice in qualitative studies (Creswell and Poth, 2018). The Indicators of Integration framework informed the research problem and guided the data collection, which illustrates the deductive element (Creswell and Poth, 2018). The themes emerged inductively through the analysis of the different sources of data. The emerging themes were inserted to the framework to interpret the findings. The findings presented in the analysis section received the common mentions and appeared in the different sources of data.

The Indicators of Integration framework was utilised in several ways in the analysis. It provided the three kinds of social connection that the emerging themes were incorporated into. The selected indicators of the framework were used to examine whether the social relations contributed to integration. In the main research question, football clubs were explored as a possible addition to the framework.

A central aspect to consider in the analysing process is what generalisations can be made. A case study allows for analytical generalisations based on theoretical propositions (Yin, 2014). The analytical generalisations, sometimes referred to as the lessons learned, should provide insights beyond the case (Yin, 2014). Flyvbjerg (2006) adds that the case selection plays a key role in which kind of generalisations are possible. Selecting a case requires considering the most/least likely cases to confirm or reject propositions. This can allow for generalisations such as “if this is (not) valid for this case, then it applies to all (no) cases” (Flyvbjerg, 2006: 28). A similar logic is applied in this thesis and generalisations such as “if positive integration impacts are not achieved in this club, then other clubs are unlikely to produce those results” can thereby be made.

5.4 Ethical considerations

5.4.1 The role of the researcher

A researcher's reflexivity and transparency regarding how one's background could influence data collection and interpretation of findings is crucial in qualitative studies (Creswell and Poth, 2018). Social factors such as age, race, nationality and socioeconomic status require consideration in this aspect (Rose, 1997). The author of this thesis is female, has ancestors from within Europe and grew up in a community with a relatively high socioeconomic status in Stockholm. This could induce a power relation with youth who recently came to Sweden or those living in an area with lower socioeconomic status. Therefore, ensuring voluntary participation and informing participants regarding their rights were crucial. This was achieved through informed consent which is described further in section 5.4.2 .

In addition, the author has first-hand experiences of football, both as a player and a coach in different areas in Sweden and in the United States of America. The shared interest for sports seemed to make the interviewees feel comfortable sharing their challenges and opportunities related to integration through sports. The author's pre-existing knowledge about football in the context also shaped the interviews. Evident in the transcriptions were "silent knowledge" which relied on understanding sports related terms to fully grasp the nuances. However, important to point out is how the researcher's previous knowledge and experience could shape the interpretation of findings. In order avoid this, locating themes in multiple sources played a crucial role.

5.4.2 Informed consent

The interviewees were informed about their rights prior to participating in the study, either verbally or through a form sent in advance. Block et al. (2013) highlight how informed consent is crucial when conducting research with youth with refugee backgrounds. Therefore each interview was preceded with information on how the participants could refrain from answering any questions and withdraw from the interview at any time without giving any reason. They were also informed that quotes and information from the interviews could be included in the final thesis. The interviewees were also asked for permission to record the interviews, which all approved of. The sports manager of Rågsveds IF approved that the name of the club was used in the thesis. The remaining

interviewees from the club were informed that the name of the club and their titles/roles would appear in the thesis. The girls outside of clubs were informed that their answers would be anonymised.

5.4.3 Interview procedure

In ensuring that interviewees did not feel pressured to participate in the study, gatekeepers were crucial. Having someone they knew asking if they wanted to participate in the study was deemed an important ethical consideration, as it was expected to facilitate declining participation. Further, the interviews with youth were informal and resembled a casual conversation regarding their experiences and thoughts. This was suitable as a research strategy as well as an important element in making the participating youth feel comfortable.

5.5 Limitations, alternative methods and quality of data

5.5.1 Single case

Single case studies are commonly criticised for involving limited opportunities for generalisations as it focuses on one case (Yin, 2014). A critique towards this study could be that the main focus was on one club, in one area and the number of participants in the study is few. However, the quality of the data was strengthened by including multiple data sources and examining the perspectives of people with different roles in the club. Further, it also included a small scale comparison to other clubs as well as perspectives from representatives of the SFA to gain a better understanding of the overall situation for football clubs in Stockholm. In addition, Rågsveds IF was strategically chosen to allow for certain generalisations to be made. An alternative method would have been a multiple case study which would have allowed for greater comparisons between different clubs. However, the choice fell on a single case study as the author of the thesis aimed to gain an in-depth understanding. This would have been difficult to achieve in a multiple case study within this scope.

5.5.2 Participating girls - a diverse group

The girls participating in the study have been a diverse group in terms of age, length of stay in Sweden, cultures, country of origin, reasons for moving to Sweden and whether they came alone or with their families. This could reduce the quality of the data as multiple factors are involved.

All these factors and individual characteristics can impact the integration process and opportunities to participate in sports. An alternative method would be to study a more specified group of girls, which would have enabled the author to make more detailed recommendations on how to improve their situation. However, the focus of this thesis was on sports clubs' impacts on integration, which requires clubs to be inclusive to a diverse group. In addition, separating youth in a club or a civil society organisation based on certain characteristics to be included in the study was deemed not to be ethically appropriate.

5.5.3 Bias

The interviewees from the club either participated in the teams or were employed to work with football. These people could, consciously or unconsciously, portray the club in a positive light. Those who participated in interviews were also those who had chosen to stay in the club. These aspects could have resulted in a biased discussion favouring the club's positive impacts on integration. The quality of data could have been strengthened by including former coaches, players and employees of the club and those who might have chosen to go to other clubs. This could have yielded a more nuanced discussion on the main case's contribution to integration. However, the author of the thesis was not able to access these kinds of participants. Selecting the participants in the club was also assessed as an effective way to collect rich data as they had experiences of the club's impact on integration. In addition, including the perspective of youth outside the club was crucial to promote a more nuanced understanding of the impacts clubs' can have on youth.

In addition, there is also a risk of an entry bias from the author as she has first-hand experiences of football and its potential to form social relations. In this aspect, the author has aimed to avoid bias through designing neutral questions and accurately present findings based on the data collected.

Further, the author also had a pre-existing relationship to some of the participating youth outside the club, which could have impacted the data collected. The relationship between these girls and the interviewer seemed to create a safe space where participants felt comfortable to share their stories and experiences. This could have been especially important when discussing a topic such as integration which could be sensitive.

5.5.4 COVID-19 restrictions

The major impact of the COVID-19 restrictions on this thesis included a missed opportunity to observe practices and games. During the spring of 2021, spectators during practices and games were not allowed. These observations could have strengthened the quality of data as it would have allowed for observing teams in their ordinary settings. However, as this was not possible enhanced emphasis was put on observations by participating in the clubs' open activities and on the other data sources. In addition, as a result of the restrictions, all interviews were conducted digitally, which also limited the opportunity to capture nuances in how questions are answered and the body language. However, a potential positive impact is that the interviewees could participate in an environment they felt comfortable in.

6. Analysis

The analysis section presents the empirical data in relation to the Indicators of Integration framework and previous literature. The analysis is structured into three parts, where each section addresses one of the research questions. As the two sub-research questions are important in answering the main research question, these are answered first. The analysis ends with reflecting on alternative interpretations of the findings.

6.1 Social relations for youth girls with foreign backgrounds

This section addresses the first sub-research question on how football clubs impact social relations for youth girls with foreign backgrounds. The three forms of social capital are explored separately. The last part of the section studies the perspectives of girls who have not been able to participate in sports clubs.

6.1.1 Social bridges

The first domain, in the Indicators of Integration framework, explored is social bridges. An essential consideration for integration is whether social relations are formed between people of different ethnicities in the club. Rågsveds IF's vision states that everyone can participate regardless of ethnicity (*Rågsveds IF - Värdegrund*, no date), which illustrates the club's aim to promote ethnically-mixed teams. This vision seems to be achieved as the teams consisted of people with and without foreign backgrounds. One of the coaches also shared that she actively promoted the inclusion of newly arrived youth in the club by collaborating with the neighbourhood's refugee housing. The inclusiveness of the club was also evident through employees', players' and coaches' descriptions of the club, which involved "feels like a home", "a club for literally everyone", "welcoming" and "including". One of the players, who started in Rågsveds IF after she came to Sweden when she was 15 years old, described:

“I was very quiet initially, but I did not care because I wanted to play. Everyone made me feel very welcome in that team. They tried to explain the drills and what everything meant. I didn’t understand anything sometimes but the practices went well.”

The quote also points to the inclusiveness of the club, which was also confirmed by participating in the open practices as people around the club area were asked to join. Further, strong relations seemed to occur between team members. The players and coaches shared that they had made many friends in the club and that they commonly spent time together outside football practices. Further, the club takes an active stance against any forms of racism and has an action plan against discrimination (Rågsveds IF, no date a). This plan also encourages coaches to arrange activities outside football to promote team-building. These aspects could have played a role in enabling these friendships.

These findings point to social bridges being formed across ethnicities for girls in the club. This is in line with Verhagen and Boonstra (2014), who suggested that strong social bridges could form when there is a good team atmosphere. As friendships were formed between girls with and without foreign backgrounds, the findings differ from Lundkvist et al. (2020), who suggested that club participation did not lead to forming friendships with natives.

Another example illustrated the formation of social bridges across ethnicities between girls of different teams. One of the youth-girls teams in Rågsveds IF started a collaboration with another team located in an area of Stockholm with a low portion of people with foreign backgrounds (SCB, 2021). The collaboration has received attention from the StFA (2020), suggesting that this kind of collaboration between clubs is relatively unusual. The collaboration started after a game between the two teams. The coaches kept in contact and the teams started to practice together. The coach described this as:

“As an outsider you may think that Rågsveds IF and [name of the other club] are from two different worlds, but we saw that we have a lot in common, dedicated players but few numbers. We started to have practices together so the girls could get to know each other better, get new friends and get insights on how similar but yet different it can be to play in clubs in different areas. The girls really liked each other. For them it was just fun to meet new friends and play football.”

The coach also shared that the two teams played together in a tournament and that a few girls played with the other team during games. One of the players in Rågsveds IF described this as:

“It was really nice, we got to meet other girls and got to see how they practiced. It was unusual to do collaborative exercises as we usually play against other teams. I do not have any contact with them anymore but sometimes someone reaches out and asks how the football is going, which is fun.”

The descriptions of this example point to that social bridges were formed across ethnicity between girls of different teams. However, these bonds were rather weak, which could result from not spending enough time together. To summarise this section, Rågsveds IF promoted strong social bridges across ethnicity for girls in the same team. The club also enabled these social relations between girls of different teams, even though these ties were not as strong.

6.1.2 Social bonds

The next form of social capital explored is social bonds. The data analysis points to social bonds being primarily formed around certain common grounds such as migrant background and club belonging. One of the female coaches described these social bonds around migrant background as:

“I have an immigrant background, so I can relate a lot to this group, which makes us understand each other better. In my team there are primarily boys with immigrant backgrounds and I am an immigrant so it makes us feel connected.”

The sports manager also described this as:

“The coaches from this neighbourhood are the ones reaching the girls because they trust them. If I talk to parents or older siblings, it is always a friendly conversation but perhaps with a bit of scepticism. I look like I do and come from where I come from. So the key is our coaches who are fantastic and can be role models.”

These quotes illustrate how the shared migrant background can contribute to people feeling connected, which resembles Walseth’s and Ekholm’s findings (2008; 2019). In addition, the data also illustrated strong social bonds along club belonging. For example, one girl shared that she started coaching because she still wanted to be a part of club even though she did not want to play herself. This was supported by one of the other coaches. She had considered quitting coaching a couple of times, but she always stayed another season because of the community in the club. In addition, one of the players also described the club belonging as:

“I changed club a couple of years ago because my team split up and I had some friends in another team, but I came back after a season because I felt that Rågsveds IF was where I belong.”

These descriptions support Putnam’s (2001) argument that social bonds lead to strong loyalties within the group. The close bonds were also evident in the observations. The youth decided to stay after their practices and spent time together with their friends and coaches. The findings illustrate a strong feeling of club belonging which promoted close friendships. To summarise, social bonds were formed around migrant background and club belonging for youth girls with foreign backgrounds in Rågsveds IF.

6.1.3 Social links

The final form of social connection explored is social links. For the coaches, social links were formed through participating in the traineeship program (more information on this program in table 1). The sports manager described this as:

“As an older youth, it is important to realise what a contact creator the club is and the network that is involved, and how you can benefit from it. The girls and boys in this program see this and how it can impact their future resume.”

One of the coaches described her experiences in the traineeship program as:

“I have become a good leader, I have taken courses in leadership and I have become a referee as well. Everyone in Rågsveds IF know each other and I like that. I have met so many new people, I have learned how to communicate with parents and coach the kids.”

Participation in the traineeship program increased the youth’s access to wider societal structures, such as the other universities or organisations where the courses were held. It was also an opportunity to improve leadership skills and their resume, which could increase engagement in society. However, the youth participating in this program represent a small portion of the club’s members. Some examples were provided on how social links could be formed for the players in the club, which were described as a results of one’s expanded network. One of the players shared that when she practiced with the women’s team, one of the older players helped her get a job interview for a company. Social links could also be formed for the girls in the team who had shared practices with the other team located in Stockholm, as it strengthened connections outside one’s residential community. However, these examples relied on coincidental interactions, making it challenging to plan for the formation of social links for players. In addition, these social links were described as weak. To summarise, social links mainly developed for youth in the traineeship program. The social links formed by the players were a result of one’s expanded network. These

social links are assessed as challenging to rely on as they were described as a result of coincidental interactions.

6.1.4 Impacts on girls outside of clubs

As the background section revealed that many youth girls with foreign backgrounds face obstacles in entering clubs, it is essential to study football clubs' impacts on their social relations. The focus group revealed that the interest in joining a football club varied. Some girls had not actively tried to join since they had no interest in the sport. These girls did not describe any adverse impacts of not participating. However, others' experiences differed. A couple of the participating girls shared similar experiences on being rejected when reaching out to clubs. One of the girls described this as:

“I have reached out to a lot of clubs, but no one wanted me to play for their team, I lacked the basic skills. I did try-outs, but I didn't make it. During a year I didn't play football, I gave up and thought I wasn't going to play any more football because I wasn't as good as them.”

For the girls who wanted to participate in clubs, the rejection was found to have damaging impacts. One of the consequences was that it strengthened feelings of isolation. Two of the girls described this as:

“I heard that if I wanted to play football, then I had to pay. I came here by myself and I did not have much money. It was tough, then I felt like there was a difference between myself and other youth living here.”

“It is a part of the Swedish culture that you try different sports. I believe all children growing up here have tried many different sports until you find one you like. But it is not like that where I come from. I think that is what is missing and not being able to join makes you feel excluded.”

These quotes illustrate that these girls felt excluded and different from other youth. It was also described as adding to previous feelings of exclusion from other areas of society. A few girls shared that they also felt excluded in schools, which corresponds to Öhrn's (2012) observed trend on increased segregation in schools in Sweden. One of the girls described that peers in school did not talk to her. Another girl stated that she only spoke to people in her language class, as she felt more comfortable in that setting as the group only consisted of other youth who recently came to Sweden. The experience of additional exclusion could have adverse impacts on social relations as the girls felt isolated from society.

As a result of the challenges around entering clubs, some girls sought opportunities to play football elsewhere. Therefore, some started to play in different sports-based initiatives, which were football teams for newly arrived youth. Participation in those teams was described to increase self-esteem, similar to the findings of Strang and Ager (2010). Some girls also stated that they formed close friendships with other girls in a similar situation. For some, the team for newly arrived youth was the perfect fit, whereas others described it as their only chance to play football. These girls also spoke of a missed chance to form social relations when not participating in clubs. Three girls described this as:

“I still feel like I am not entirely integrated because I have no Swedish friends. And when I say Swedish friends, then I don't mean people who are born somewhere else or have parents who are born somewhere else. I think of blond people who you see in Sweden. You want them to be a part of your football team to. I believe it [the team for newly arrived youth] was the first step towards integration, but not the last. It needs to be complimented. You can start there, but you can't stay there your whole life, because you won't improve much. They could do the initiative 2.0 version. Then there could be Swedes playing and us. Maybe they are really good at football but we can play together and learn.”

“It needs to be a mixed team because you get to know each other, what they have been through, those who are born here and what we experienced. That would have been good. It is important for Sweden, people are not mixed here. There are Swedes and immigrants. It is bad for society, and you have to improve it.”

“I think that if there are only girls that recently came here, then something is missing. We become more interested when others come here as well, because then you see that it is not just me, it is everyone.”

These quotes illustrate a positive view on mixing and a wish to establish contacts with local youth, which at least one of the girls associated with being integrated in Sweden. The teams for newly arrived youth contributed to some social relations, particularly social bonds to other girls in a similar situation. However, participation in these teams did not lead to social bridges to “Swedish” youth, which some of the girls were longing for.

To summarise, Rågsveds IF promoted social bridges across ethnicity and social bonds along migrant backgrounds and club belonging. Social links were developed for some, which strengthened connections to other aspects of society. The findings have illustrated that some girls experience rejection from football clubs, which led to strengthened feelings of isolation. Even though another form of football participation enabled some social relations to be formed, it did not promote friendships with “Swedish” youth. This section has illustrated the different impacts football clubs can have on social relations for youth girls with foreign backgrounds.

6.2 Aspects that can make clubs more likely to contribute to integration

This section addresses the second sub-research question. The findings of Rågsveds IF have been compared to two other clubs’ in Stockholm. In the analysis, a club’s location and aim were found to be key aspects that can make clubs more likely to contribute to integration. The club’s location can secure access to the club. Those participating in Rågsveds IF were almost exclusively girls living nearby. The club also primarily targets youth in the area, which is evident in the descriptions

of the club and how the club collaborates with the schools located nearby (*Rågsveds IF Passion & Ambition*, 2021). This points to a need for clubs to be located in an area with a high portion of youth girls with foreign backgrounds. However, the integration manager suggested that this location can also limit integration. It was described as:

“Let’s say 5 Afghans come to the spontaneous football practice. They can form relations to others, learn the language etcetera. But are they really integrated? They could be integrated in the local community, but does that mean that they are integrated in the Swedish society? Therefore, I believe that it could be better for these youth to play in a club which is not migrant dense...”

The quote illustrates a distinction between integrating into the community and integrating into society. This suggested that being integrated into this neighbourhood, a segregated area, may not be enough to be integrated into the wider society. It is suggested that relations to others in the community, such as social bonds and social bridges, can be formed through participating in the club. However, if participation does not strengthen connections outside the residential community, social links, it may not fully contribute to integration in the wider society. The youth manager at Botkyrka Konyaspor made a similar argument:

“For us it is important to get out of Alby. For example you should go to the city, to museums, visit the parliament, watch a football game. I think it is important to be integrated outside of Alby. This is also from my own experience of growing up here, it is always Alby, Alby, Alby and nothing else. But you have to get outside of Alby and see the world outside, therefore I would say that participating in this club can definitively be a way for players to integrate.”

This quote also supports how social links are crucial to be integrated into the wider society. The findings around the club’s location point to that clubs are more likely to contribute to integration

when located in an accessible area for youth girls with foreign backgrounds and when the club can promote social links.

In addition to the location, a club's aim was also an essential factor in the club's integration work. Rågsveds IF's aim to include everyone was argued to be important for the social relations that were formed. It enabled extensive planning to integrate girls with foreign backgrounds into the club. The club's integration work relied on a clear strategy for action, passionate individuals and collaborations with schools and the municipality. Another key was having paid employees, as working with this on a volunteer basis would be challenging. These aspects were described as a result of the club's aim as it guided the actions and decisions towards being an open club for everyone. Further, the club's aim was important to overcome obstacles to social connection. The integration manager suggested how socioeconomic status can limit participation in certain teams:

“We usually have youth from the community participating, commonly youth with foreign backgrounds outside of Europe. Some went to other clubs where the youth usually had higher socioeconomic status and at least one Swedish parent. These youth usually come back to our club after a season or two. Because in order to succeed there you have to be a skilled player and you have to adapt to the norms. If you don't have parents who can help out and support, there is a slim chance that you are going to be accepted and enjoy your time in the long run.”

This quote offers an example of how low limited parental support hinders participation in teams with higher socioeconomic status, which corresponds to Walseth's (2008) findings. However, the aim of Rågsveds IF enabled the club to overcome this challenge. A coach shared an example of how she has picked up girls to and from practices to enable participation. Further, the club facilitated participation for youth whose families could not afford the membership fee by setting up individual payment plans and directing families to other organisations where they could apply for financial support (Podden Svensk Fotboll, no date). An openness to shedding light on potentially excluding structures and norms of the club is an important factor in contributing to integration, where the club's aim played a central role.

Furthermore, the club's aim was also important in promoting integration rather than assimilation. In Rågsveds IF, many examples were provided on how their practices and programs were adapted to fit the girls' needs such as changing practice times and days and offering open practices in other sports that the youth were interested in, which is also described in SSC's article (Gyllensten, 2018). This illustrates that the club promoted integration as a two-way process. The Rågsveds IF case thereby differs from the previous findings of Ekholm (2019), where participation solely relied on an adaptation of the participants.

How the club's aim impacted integration was also examined in the two other clubs in Stockholm. The youth manager at Botkyrka Konyaspor suggested that the club's aim was essential in achieving integration outcomes. Their main objective was changed from promoting sports-related achievements to integration a couple of years ago, which was described as a contributing reason to how the club had managed to create multiple girls teams. The integration manager of the other club, with sports-based achievements as the primary objective, confirmed that including youth without the required skills in existing teams was almost impossible. This results in a missed chance to form social bridges and social bonds to participants in the teams. This finding supports that a club with this aim has limited chances to promote integration. However, the club had organised social projects to help youth find their first job. Because of the club's brand, sponsors wanted to be associated with the club. This resulted in an opportunity to engage sponsors in the clubs' local projects. A previous example was that companies had hired youth. This suggests that this kind of club could have enhanced opportunities for promoting the formation of social links. This implies that a club's aim can influence the type of social connection that can be formed for the youth in the club.

To sum up, a club's location and aim are aspects that can increase the likelihood of clubs to contribute to integration. The club's location is crucial to ensure access. However, being located in an area with a high portion of people with foreign backgrounds could require the formation of social links to fully contribute to wider societal integration. In addition, a club's aim is crucial in enabling the extensive work needed, overcoming excluding club norms and ensuring integration rather than assimilation. Further, findings point to how a club's aim can dictate which type of

social capital that can be formed. This suggests that a club with an aim of promoting integration can be advantageous in promoting social bridges and social bonds. However, a club with sports-performance as the primary objective can be more likely to support the achievements of social links.

6.3 Football clubs' impacts on integration

The main research question asks how football clubs impact integration for youth girls with foreign backgrounds in Stockholm, Sweden. This requires consideration of how the social relations formed in the club impact the youth's integration process. This is done by exploring the selected indicators of successful integration. These results are compared to other data on the club's potential to contribute to integration.

6.3.1 Indicators of integration

Whether the social relations formed contribute to integration depend on the achievement of certain indicators, according to Ager and Strang (2004). For social bridges the selected indicator of successful integration is the mixing of local and migrant youth in activities. It is evident that Rågsveds IF promotes this mixing of youth girls with and without foreign backgrounds. These interactions occurred both in the club and with another team. The findings also suggested that the social bridges between players in a team were strong as they often spend time together outside the boundaries of the club. These social relations formed are thereby interpreted to contribute to successful integration following the logic of the Indicators of Integration framework.

The selected indicator for social bonds is the youth's sense of belonging to the community. The observation notes included that youth in the club proudly described their neighbourhood. The high portion of people with foreign backgrounds was described as a positive part of the community's image. One of the coaches also described that she wanted to improve and give back to the community as:

“I thought it was impossible that no girl in the area likes football. There has to be an underlying problem and I wanted to contribute to a change in this area.”

This quote also implies a sense of belonging to the community and even a will to improve it and help girls access sports. Even though more research would be required to determine the club’s role in creating a sense of belonging to the community, the data suggests that the social bonds formed through the club could have contributed to this. The shared migrant background was described to contribute to youth feeling at home in the community and the club has been found to promote bonds around migrant background. In addition, the club is well-established in the community, which is also recognised in the local newspaper (Tonström, 2019), suggesting that the social bonds along club belonging could contribute to a sense of belonging in the community. Even though more research would be needed on this, the social bonds along migrant background and club belonging could have contributed to a sense of belonging in the community, and thereby to successful integration. In addition, an important aspect to consider related to social bonds is its contribution to integration, as it has previously been questioned (Uslaner and Conley, 2003). The social bonds in this case, were not described as an obstacle to the formation of social bridges and links, similarly to the findings of others (Strang and Ager, 2010; Walseth, 2016; Czischke and Huisman, 2018). This thesis’s findings thereby support the inclusion of social bonds as a domain contributing to integration.

The selected indicator of successful integration for social links is enhanced use of local services. Firstly, it is important to highlight that the club aimed to promote this by including youth girls into the club. In addition, participation in the club could promote wider use of local services. This is particularly evident for the youth in the traineeship program. They participated in courses and worked as a coach and a referee for the club. The skills and competencies developed through the program could increase opportunities to enhanced use of local services. The social links in this club were also equally distributed to the girls in the club, which thereby differs from Spaaij’s (2012) finding. The operational plan of Rågsveds IF illustrated gender equality goals, which specified that the same number of girls and boys should participate in the traineeship program. For the youth in the traineeship program, the use of local services was increased as a result of

participating, contributing to successful integration. For the players in the club, some relations built could support the enhanced use of local services. Even though these can be impactful, they are challenging to plan for and rely on. However, participating in a club can increase the likelihood of establishing relations that promote enhanced use of local services.

The thesis's findings point to how participation in Rågsveds IF could contribute to achieving the indicators of successful integration. However, for the other girls, clubs can be interpreted to have negative impacts on their integration process. The additional exclusion could strengthen the feeling of not belonging to the community, which is the selected indicator of social bonds. Based on the logic of the Indicators of Integration framework, this is interpreted to negatively impact integration. Seeking football opportunities elsewhere could have some positive impact on integration as close social bonds were formed between girls who shared similar experiences. However, these teams did not provide opportunities to form social bridges to "Swedish youth", which thereby does not fulfil the indicator on mixing local and migrant youth. The rejection from clubs could even limit the opportunity to form social bridges in other settings, as it made some of these girls feel different from other youth. A similar argument is made by Spaaij's (2012), who states that adverse experiences between groups in society can negatively impact the formation of social bridges and social links. As shown, the rejection from clubs can negatively impact the indicators of successful integration in Ager and Strang's (2004) framework, implying negative outcomes on integration for these girls.

This section has illustrated how football clubs can impact youth girls with foreign backgrounds' integration differently. The social relations formed for the girls in Rågsveds IF could contribute to the selected indicators of successful integration, suggesting that the club can positively impact integration. However, for other girls clubs can create negative experiences which can have adverse impacts on their integration process.

6.3.2 How a football club contributes to integration

The findings related to the indicators of integration are compared to other data related to the club's potential to contribute to integration. The case illustrated that even a club like Rågsveds IF, which

was selected as a success case struggled in reaching girls to the same extent as boys. This was evident through participating in the open practices where the vast majority of participants were males. There is also a significantly higher number of boys teams (27) compared to girls teams (7) in the club. This indicates how challenging it can be for clubs to achieve positive integration outcomes. Further, the integration manager of Rågsveds IF also questioned the extent the football club impacted integration. It is described as:

“A football club can’t do anything about the residential and educational segregation that is evident in the bigger city regions. A football club is a good complement to youth’s integration. However, you can’t forget that integration through school, decent housing, good contact with social services are the basics. These parts all have to work in order for football to be the icing on the cake.”

The integration manager highlights how other sectors play a more pivotal role in the integration process. In his view, a football club can be a bonus rather than a factor driving integration on its own. A girl in the club also described that the participation in the club did not impact her integration process as:

“I did not feel excluded from society, I started in the club when I was 14 years old. Then I was aware that I was a Swede even though I was not born here. So I don’t think it affected me much.”

These arguments suggest that the sports club only had a limited impact on integration and that other sectors (employment, housing, education and health) are of a more fundamental role to the integration process, similar to Spaaij’s (2012) findings in Australia. However, two other players at Rågsveds IF suggested that the football club could be advantageous to schools in forming social relations, as the shared common interest can support the formation of friendships.

“In football, I feel more at home because it is something I like. In school it can be more bickering and things like that. I met my best friend in my team, I see her every day. If you like football and play with others, then you already have something in common, something that you love.”

“ I would say that belonging to a club makes you develop strong bonds and it makes you feel very connected. As long as you love what you do and there is a group that likes the same thing.”

These quotes imply that the club could, for some, be an important arena for forming social relations. The thesis’s findings have illustrated that football clubs can contribute to fulfilling the indicators of integration. However, findings also suggest that football clubs cannot promote integration to the same extent as the markers and means of the Indicators of Integration framework. In addition, all girls in Rågsveds IF did not experience improved integration outcomes through participating in the club. Although, for some, it facilitated the formation of social relations. Based on these findings, football clubs have been added to the framework as a potential accelerator of social relations that can contribute to successful integration, see figure 3.

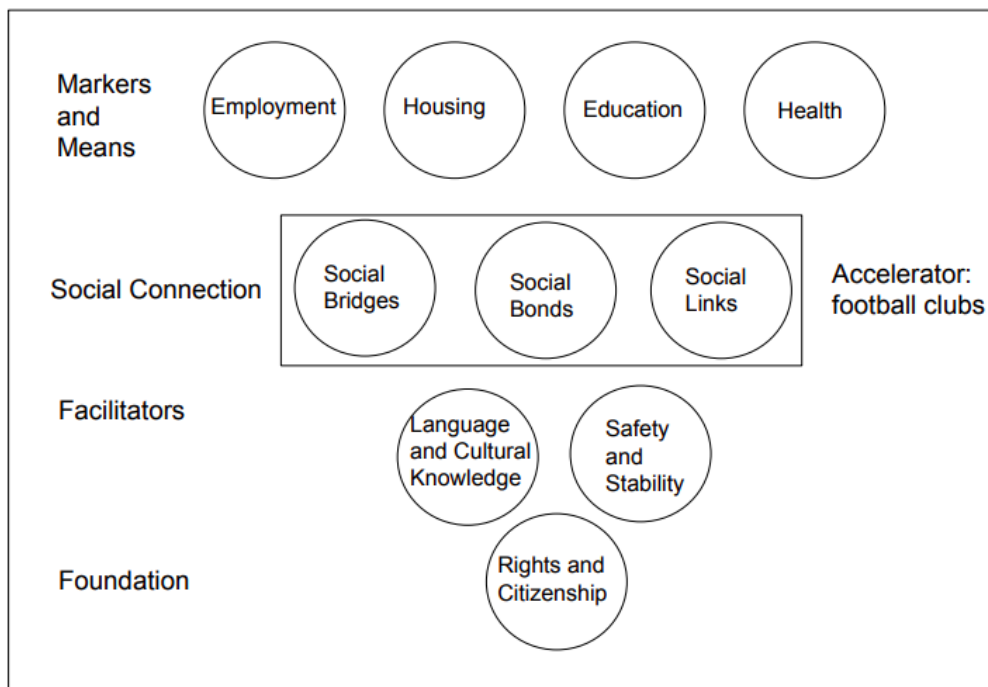


Figure 3. Adapted framework based on findings, original from Ager and Strang (2004: 13)

This addition illustrates the conclusion of how a football club can, in a best case scenario, impact integration as an accelerator for youth girls with foreign backgrounds in Stockholm, Sweden. Rågsveds IF was chosen as a success case on how football clubs can promote integration. Thereby, other clubs in Stockholm are unlikely to yield these accelerating effects on integration. The findings of the second sub-research question also concluded that Rågsveds IF's aim and location were important aspects that made the club more likely to contribute to integration. This implies that these are two central aspects to consider when assessing whether other clubs achieve similar results on integration. Further, the shared common interest was by many interviewees described to play a central role in the formation of social relations. This suggests that other sports, particularly team sports, could also be accelerators of social relations, which could yield positive results on the integration process. However, to be able to draw such conclusions, further research is required.

To summarise, the findings have shown that football clubs can accelerate the formation of social relations that can contribute to integration. However, this finding is not representative of other clubs in Stockholm. Further, the findings have also indicated how clubs do not always have accelerating results on integration for youth girls with foreign backgrounds. For some girls, football clubs can have negatively impact their integration process. To add to this complexity, a club's location and aim seem to play a role in whether participating in a club can yield integration incomes. The implications of these findings to promote more efficient integration measures are described in the discussion section.

6.3.3 Critical review of findings and alternative interpretations

This thesis has interpreted the findings using Ager and Strang's (2004) framework on the Indicators of Integration. Therefore, the football clubs' impacts on integration have been interpreted as a result of social relations. However, isolating social relations in this way is a simplification of reality. Social relations' connection to integration is complex and would require consideration of multiple factors. This includes consideration of language development and mental and physical health, as these factors can impact both social relations and integration (Gísladóttir, Matthíasdóttir and Kristjánsdóttir, 2013; Arnoldsson, 2019). These factors, which have not received extensive coverage in this thesis, could have played an important role in contributing to

integration. However, social relations have been involved in multiple frameworks studying integration (Berry, 2011), which points to its essential role in this process, making it an important area to study.

In addition, this thesis has suggested that the social relations formed in the club are contributors to integration, as suggested by the framework on the Indicators of Integration. However, the reverse relation is also possible. The girls participating in football clubs could be those further ahead in the integration process as a result of other factors. These factors could include individual personality traits, coming from certain cultures or living in Sweden for a longer period of time. The participation in the club could then be a result of these factors rather than a driver of integration. These two ways of interpretation are not expected to be exclusive, but rather complementary perspectives that can contribute to a more holistic view of integration. This suggests that both interpretations are important areas to study further.

7. Discussion

The purpose of this thesis is to increase the understanding of the impacts sports clubs have on integration. The club was found to accelerate the formation of social relations, important for integration. This thesis has also illustrated that football clubs' have different impacts on youth girls with foreign backgrounds' integration process. Further, a club's aim and location can make clubs more likely to contribute to integration. Based on these findings, several implications can be drawn to promote more efficient integration measures. This is done by outlining four criteria that make clubs more likely to contribute to integration for youth girls with foreign backgrounds. These criteria are expected to be useful in planning integration measures, both for clubs aiming to contribute to integration and in selecting which clubs should receive funding for integration work.

Firstly, findings from the thesis suggested that a club's aim impacts the type of social connection that can be formed. Therefore, depending on the type of social relation sought, a certain club can be more likely to succeed. In promoting social bonds and social bridges, a club needs to have a specific aim to include youth girls with foreign backgrounds as this group often faces obstacles in entering football clubs. However, if social links are sought, a club with a strong brand that can attract other organisations and companies in society can be advantageous. Thereby, consideration of the targeted social relations can promote more efficient integration measures.

Secondly, efficient integration measures can be promoted by considering whether the club counteracts excluding structures and norms and whether the club is willing to adapt its program to the participants' needs and wants. Clubs without these characteristics can unintentionally exclude youth with foreign backgrounds due to limited possibilities for parental support or affording membership fees. Further if clubs are not willing to adapt their programs, there is a risk that assimilation is promoted rather than integration.

The third criteria requires consideration of a club's location. A club like Rågsveds IF, that is open to everyone, has to be accessible to girls with foreign backgrounds to accelerate their integration process. This criteria suggests that a geographical consideration should be taken when planning integration measures.

Fourthly, if a club is located in a segregated area, it may need to have the capacity to stimulate the formation of social links to promote wider integration. Integration measures can be made more efficient by studying a club's capacity to promote connections outside the residential area.

To summarise, the complex impacts a sports club can have on integration have been illustrated through how sports clubs can both positively and negatively impact the integration process for youth girls with foreign backgrounds in Stockholm, Sweden. The implications drawn from this thesis includes four criteria that can promote efficient integration measures for youth girls with foreign backgrounds.

8. Conclusion

Youth girls with foreign backgrounds in Sweden need improved interventions that support their integration process. This thesis has examined sports as a path for integration through studying a football club in Stockholm. The thesis has opened up a discussion on the different impacts football clubs can have on integration for youth girls with foreign backgrounds. This thesis has also suggested criteria for promoting more efficient integration measures. The implications can be used to improve sports as a path of integration for youth girls with foreign backgrounds in Stockholm, Sweden. Integration in host countries remains a crucial part of the migration cycle. The agenda 2030 has pointed out a need to promote responsible migration, which this thesis has aimed to be a part of through increasing the understanding of football clubs' impacts on integration.

8.1 Future research

Future research should study more clubs to increase the understanding of how club characteristics impact integration through forming social relations. There is a need to research more clubs in Stockholm to capture the nuances of how different clubs' aim and location impact integration for this group. Further, this thesis suggested that clubs located in a segregated area could require social links to be formed to fully contribute to wider integration. Future research should look into how

the social relations are described in a more integrated community. This would add to the discussion on how to promote a more successful integration process.

In addition, this thesis has opened up a discussion on how football clubs impact youth girls with foreign backgrounds differently. A recommendation for future studies is to examine why the impacts differ. This could involve a study comparing two groups and targeting variables such as length of stay in Sweden, personality traits and country of origin. These insights would be valuable in the discussion on how football clubs impact integration.

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Appendices

1. List of documents and media

- Action plan against discrimination (Rågsveds IF, no date a)
- Article by SSC on how Rågsveds IF reached youth girls (Gyllensten, 2018)
- Local newspaper article on including youth in the club (Tonström, 2019)
- Podcast by SFA (Podden Svensk Fotboll, no date)
- Policy documents (Rågsveds IF, no date b, no date c)
- Rågsveds IF's operation plan document (internal document in the club)
- Rågsveds IF's website (*Rågsveds IF Passion & Ambition*, 2021)
- StFA article (StFA, 2020)
- Value document (*Rågsveds IF - Värdegrund*, no date)