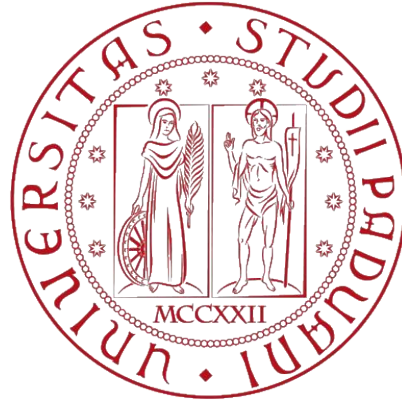


UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI PADOVA

Department of economics and management “M. Fanno”



MASTER PROGRAM IN
ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND INNOVATION

**TEAM DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT IN SPORTS:
the phenomenon of ethnic subgrouping problems
and real cases analysis**

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RINGRAZIAMENTI

I take up this work to thank firstly my family, for the support, the patience and the economic effort that allowed me to face these five years of academic journey; secondly the Università degli Studi di Padova for the whole path and the opportunity lived between 2021 and 2022, namely the Erasmus in Nice, lastly I want to thank all the people that supported me throughout this pathway.

Team diversity management in sports

A chi mi vuole bene

Dichiaro di aver preso visione del “Regolamento antiplagio” approvato dal Consiglio del Dipartimento di Scienze Economiche e Aziendali e, consapevole delle conseguenze derivanti da dichiarazioni mendaci, dichiaro che il presente lavoro non è già stato sottoposto, in tutto o in parte, per il conseguimento di un titolo accademico in altre Università italiane o straniere. Dichiaro inoltre che tutte le fonti utilizzate per la realizzazione del presente lavoro, inclusi i materiali digitali, sono state correttamente citate nel corpo del testo e nella sezione ‘Riferimenti bibliografici’.

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Firma

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Davide Fighetto". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

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INTRODUCTION

“Sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire. It has the power to unite people in a way that little else does. It speaks to youth in a language they understand. Sport can create hope where once there was only despair. It is more powerful than governments in breaking down racial barriers. It laughs in the face of all types of discrimination.” (Nelson Mandela, 2000).

Globalization do affect every aspect of the daily life in our planet. As it is so pervasive and diffused, it touches and scan every moment of people’s day: from the influences findable in exotic meals, in the multiethnicity of the neighbourhoods in most cities, to the easiness and readiness in finding no matter which traditional Asian ornament in no matter which big supermarket around the world. These are only some examples of the degree of globalization pervading the world today, to say.

Among these aspects, some of them interest more the general topic of this thesis, namely the multiculturalism and its consequences in the working and sporting environment, how the presence of such different cultures affect organization and teams’ dynamics and the birth of subgroups (or cliques) because of ethnic proximity among team members and how the language barriers can facilitate or increase these differences.

The primary focus of this work is to investigate how to deal with and manage the cultural diversity present by now in most if not all sportive organization, mostly those concerning team sports and the internal dynamics that this variety can cause, whether positive or negative. The point here is to try and make a parallel between the management of sport teams and the same construct in a different context, namely a more traditional working environment where team dynamics directly affect the survival, prosecution, or evolution of some organizations. There is increasing evidence that internationally distributed teams are prone to subgroup dynamics characterized by an us-versus-them attitude across sites (Armstrong & Cole, 1995; Cramton, 2001; Hinds & Bailey, 2003). Research over the last decade (see Gibson & Cohen, 2003; Hinds & Kiesler, 2002) has begun to explore the ramifications of distributed work arrangements on the dynamics of the teams involved (Cramton, Hinds, 2005), yet they state: “little work has yet considered the dynamics and effects of within-team subgroups on distributed, particularly internationally distributed, teams”.

In the first chapter, globalization and its effects on migration and athletes’ migration, consequently, takes the scene. Working and living conditions are the main driving factors that push people to move

from a country to another, or simply to change city within the same country, and it often happens that this migration goes North, following the abundance of money that usually resides in northern countries. Indeed, ex-colonial territories in Africa still have intense flows of people, athletes more specifically, with their former ruler, France, Netherlands, and United Kingdom to cite some. This migration of people, athletes and talents made teams more multicultural than the past and the interaction between ethnic groups became more difficult to manage, mostly for communication and cultural problematics. The second chapter focuses its attention on the management of multicultural teams indeed, in general and more specifically according to the different levels, ages and countries. What is more, in order to explain why teams have become such culturally mixed, a study of passive and active politics of recruitment has been made, touching the social, economic and technical organizational rationale behind these choices, with an original perspective being the one of the athletes' s well, to understand what pushes them to migrate. With that being said, namely the effects of globalization on people migration and the flow of athletes to compose multicultural teams, literature study on the structure has been made, in order to deepen the analysis of the team as a system and investigate its declinations and fractions, namely the subgroups. The third chapter indeed has its main attention on the subgroup structure, its origin, and negative fragments, namely the cliques in case of a detrimental outcome that affects team dynamics. Furthermore, in this chapter, the subgroups formation in sports is analysed, with its positive and negative implications and the subsequent conflict within teammates. It is firstly introduced in this chapter the nationality fault line as a driving factor for the ethnic subgroups' formation, as well as the communication as fundamental tool in order to be introduced in the new environment and practices. A first case study is then introduced and analysed to present what has been made in the last chapter, namely a Black American basketball players' subgroup within and team and the following dynamics.

Lastly, in the fourth chapter, the core of the thesis is displayed as qualitative research in terms of face-to-face interviews has been made: four coaches have been asked open-ended questions about the influence of globalization on their careers, thus the teams they managed, group structure and subgroup formation, ethnic influences in team dynamics and the methods they use (or used) to coach and integrate all the team components. These interviews were realized using the open and axial coding, namely two methods to analyse, group and structure the collected data that allowed the individualisation of the four main themes. Conclusions and limitations were added to give a comprehensive view of the developed work, with its strengths and weaknesses.

FIRST CHAPTER

ANALYSING GLOBALIZATION THROUGH TRANSNATIONAL ATHLETES' MOBILITY

Chapter 1.1 Athletes' migration

Sports labour migration is arguably gathering momentum and appears to be closely interwoven with the broader process of global sports development taking place in the late twentieth century (Maguire, Bale, 1994). Over the past 20 years, the problematic of globalization has become a recurring theme in the social sciences, while today it has largely outgrown the economic sphere where it first came into being (Brenner, 1999). With rising globalization and professionalization within sports, athletes are increasingly migrating across national borders to take up work, and their athletic and nonathletic development is thereby shaped and lived in different countries (Agergaard, Ryba, 2014). A growing number of sport participants migrate within and between nations for a variety of reasons, such as athletic career development, sport tourism, and international assignments. During 2013, the International Organisation for Migration estimated that 214 million individuals were considered to be migrants (Ryba, Schinke, Stambulova, Elbe, 2018). Acknowledging the fact that geographic mobility has become a crucial aspect of career development in the twenty-first century, Ryba and Stambulova (2013) proposed a term “transnational athlete” defined as: mobile individuals who construct their careers across borders and whose athletic and non-athletic development is constituted by transnational practices (Ryba, Schinke, Stambulova, Elbe, 2018). Indeed, temporary mobility or permanent migration to new workplaces (and societies) can be crucial for an individual’s career trajectory (Agergaard, Ryba, 2014), also, as both youth and top athletes are increasingly taking part in sports labour migration, transnational perspectives are becoming progressively more relevant (Maguire and Falcous, 2010). Mobility is defined as a highly valued commodity whose production is based on the local material conditions where the migrant currently is and where he or she intends to arrive. Those local conditions and the relationship between them shape migrants’ ability to produce their own mobility (Carter, 2011). Transnationalism refers to ‘sustained ties of persons, networks and organizations across the borders, across multiple nation states, ranging from little to highly

institutionalized forms' (Faist, 2000), and it is indeed the case of a flow of transnational athletes, following their antecedent compatriots, that aim to more competitive leagues or seek more profitable wages and better overall living conditions. Based on studies of sports labour migration Carter (2011) represents mobility as a highly valued commodity, highlighting the particular characteristics of (voluntary) athletic migration, which are different from migrations that are forced or resulting from displacement (Engh, Agergaard, 2015). Mobility is defined as a highly valued commodity whose production is based on the local material conditions where the migrant currently is and where he or she intends to arrive. Those local conditions and the relationship between them shape migrants' ability to produce their own mobility. (Carter, 2011).

To migrate as part of the broader global sports process is often portrayed as something to celebrate, reflecting the individual's right to move, or viewed in unproblematic terms (Maguire, Falcous, 2010) but the reality can be different and sometimes deceiving: sport mobility and migration sees itself in a global system embedded in a series of power struggles as Maguire and Falcous (2010) define, "a series of political, cultural, economic and geographical issues and pressures", varying according to the sport played and the country of destination. These issues just listed are present and diffused more or less in all countries where sports are played at international levels, as the hand of globalization extended worldwide and took with it strengths and weaknesses. Indeed, a similar trend is also evident on a trans-continental level. Movement of sports labour occurs between North American and Europe in sports such as basketball, American football and ice hockey, e.g., over 400 Americans currently play in Europe's professional men's basketball leagues (Maguire, Bale, 1994). Sports labour migration also occurs between countries located within the same continent (Maguire, Bale, 1994), with examples being the inter-state flow of athletes within the US or European soccer players that criss-cross the old country aiming to play in the top 5 leagues (these being La Liga, Serie A, Premier League, Bundesliga and Ligue 1). A tangible case of this intra-continent migration is going on between eastern and western Europe: the outflow of talent from Swedish, Norwegian, Finnish and Hungarian leagues to central-western Europe may be a precursor of a broader pattern involving the Old Continent (Duke, 1994). In this connection, questions arise concerning athletes' rights and the free movement of labour on the one hand, and the deskilling of underdeveloped countries on the other (Maguire, Bale, concerning Arbena's work, 1994) and a similar path is run on a trans-continental level.

Chapter 1.2 South-North Migration

Athletes are on the move. The migration of sports talent as athletic labour is a pronounced feature of sports development in the late twentieth century (Maguire, Bale, 1994). Indeed, research on sports labour migration has developed over the last two decades, pioneered by the work of John Bale and Joseph Maguire (Engh, Agergaard, 2015), (e.g. Bale, 1991; Bale and Maguire, 1994). Studies have shown how historical relationships between different nation states, such as those between former colonial territories and colonial metropolises, go far in explaining where migrants travel from and where they arrive (Lanfranchi and Taylor, 2001). Weak national economies and financial crises cause the movement of playing talent from Africa, Latin America, Asia, and Eastern Europe to the West (Lanfranchi and Taylor, 2001). Indeed, this movement of sports labour on a trans-continental level is not confined to that which takes place between Europe and North America (Bale 1994), Africans are prominent in French, Belgian, Portuguese and Dutch soccer leagues (Maguire, 1991). The migration of labour and sports labour on a trans-continental level is also evident in the involvement of first- and second-generation Afro-Caribbeans in English soccer (Maguire, 1988). Examinations of flows and politics in African football migration to Europe, for example, has been described as shaped by neo-colonial exploitation and an active underdevelopment of African football (Bale, 2004; Darby, 2000, 2007, 2009; Darby et al., 2007; Lanfranchi and Taylor, 2001; Poli, 2005, 2006). It is important to shed a light on this phenomenon as it is fundamental to understand the scope of this work and, what is more, act as a “trait d’union” between the multiculturalism and the reason of the presence of athletes with the same nationality in some teams. When a certain “route”, intended as destination from and to which athletes migrate, becomes commonly targeted, it is normal for younger athletes to follow their predecessors. Sharing news and information about the state of improved health and working condition from the migrated athletes to those still in the home country favour even more the ambition and fuels the desire to, someday, joining the compatriots in a new environment. For instance, it has been argued that ‘friends-of-friends’ networks, involving colleagues and former and current players, have been particularly important tools for passing information about migratory destinations and employment opportunities (Bale, 1991). The world of mouth though, as well as the undisputed source of information nowadays Internet, are effective tools through which compatriots can share details about their experience abroad. Indeed, the rapid development of communication, transport, and economic interconnectivity through globalisation has made it easier to maintain the connections to two or more places (Ryba, Stambulova, Elbe, Schinke, 2018). The importance of border-crossing social networks for establishing mobility has been widely recognised as by means of networks, migrants learn and

inform each other about jobs, paperwork, where to go, best ways to get there, how to find places to live, and so on (Thorpe, 2010; Vertovec, 2004).

Examples of athletes' movement from their hometown to their place of recruitment and subsequent professional careers can be found in American football, baseball, basketball, cricket, ice hockey, track and field and soccer (Bale, 1989), as well as in the UK, where similar features of labour migration are evident both in the soccer and rugby leagues. Sports labour migration also occurs between countries located within the same continent (Maguire, Bale, 2003). If one considers the states within the United States of America, inter-state migration of sports talent is extremely widespread and is not without controversy (Rooney, 1980). It is more than common to find Mexican or Dominican Republic talents playing baseball in the MLB (Major League Baseball) or soccer in the MLS (Major League Soccer) and it is rather intuitive figuring out the reason behind this flow of athletes: labour movement flows across the continent with those more economically powerful leagues attracting a standard of player commensurate with their ability to pay transfer fees and the salary of the players concerned (Maguire, Bale, 1994). Another example is the migration of Irish players (including Northern Ireland players) to England to pursue a career in professional football (Elliot, 2017): Irish players (to date) continue to migrate to England to test their abilities and further their own progression and development, whilst seeking inflated salaries as opposed to plying their trade in the Irish leagues that are considered to be economically and culturally less attractive than the EPL (Elliott, 2014). With that being said, examples of South-North athletes' migration are presented in this paragraph but can be found all over the world, for the most different sectors, not only regarding the sport one. It is natural to associate this flow with the economic trends the countries go through and so their possibility to develop a better and more competitive league, allowing to its participant to improve wages and the level of the offered performance. As well as the improved overall system, the management of both the infrastructures and the athletes' relationship take a step forward: in order to welcome new players from abroad and form a multicultural team, not only facilities but people and skills as well need to be implemented. What is more, other aspects of this South-North migration need further investigation: migration has a seasonal pattern for sports like cricket or rugby, for other sports, as motorcycle or Formula 1, the migration's pattern is transitory. These migration patterns are nothing new, rather it appears however, that the process is speeding up (Bale, Maguire, 1994).

Chapter 1.3 Globalization and economic trends

The increased rate of sport labour migration throughout the years (it has accelerated since the late 90s') has brought by some new significant features as well: an increase in the number of international agencies; the growth of increasingly global forms of communication; the development of global competitions and prizes; and the development of notions of rights and citizenship that are increasingly standardized internationally (Maguire, Bale, 1994). There is evidently a connection thus, between the improved rates of athletes' migration and the influence of globalization in which it is enmeshed. In the (recent) past, there has been a diffusion of sport and the establishment of sport organizations globally, as well as the global standardization of governing sports' rules in order to set some standards, the growth of competition among individuals and club teams from different countries and among the national sides of such countries, thanks to global competitions such as the Olympic Games, soccer's World Cup tournament and the athletics world championships (Maguire, Bale, 1994). Within this brand-new context, it grew the number of professional sports. Professional sports, as the name suggest, are played by professional athletes and as it is their profession, they require a certain wage and certain standards in order to play for a specific team rather than another one. Anders Limpar, in his analysis, harshly reckons that personal finance is the sole purpose of professional football: "every footballer who does not say money is the basics is a liar ...at the bottom, it is the money that talks, and that is just a fact for every athlete in the world." This is a strong view that covers all professional footballers and indeed professional sports people in general (Magee, Sugden, 2002). Talking about migrant athletes, Limpar continued: "why should you play abroad if you can earn the same money where you settle [are reared]?". Within the sport industry, it is the employers who are fixed to specific geographical locations (i.e. the English Premier league), whilst the employees (i.e. players) move between cities, countries and continents, a process that has accelerated in recent years (McGovern, 2002). The migration of football labour, for instance, is a reverse condition and follows an inward pattern from the external arena to the core. Not all roads lead to the core but, in the main, follow an inward pattern as labour moves to the stronger and more affluent leagues (Magee, Sugden, 2002). In that sense, globalisation appears to be tightening its grip on global sport, altering the landscape (Poli & Ravenel, 2008) through liberalised player markets that have been facilitated as a result of the Bosman ruling¹ (Maguire & Stead, 1998; Alvarez, Forrest, Sanz & Tena, 2010). Nevertheless, it is

¹ Prior to the Bosman ruling, professional clubs in some parts of Europe (but not, for example, in Spain and France) were able to prevent players from joining a club in another country even if their contracts had expired. In the United

often that case of professional teams owned by private “investors” or holding company that operate in other sectors as well, in order to allow a financial sustainability to the organization, to the investment, and diversify the risk. As it is evident in the capitalistic modern era, “money rules the world” and the world of sport is, sadly, not excluded from this quote. The richest clubs can afford to pay incredible wages to new-born stars and improving the team each year to become even more successful, enabling the organization to acquire more and more visibility, thus profits, thus power in a vicious and endless circle: e.g., soccer labour movement flows across the continent with those more economically powerful leagues attracting a standard of player commensurate with their ability to pay transfer fees and the salary of the players concerned (Maguire, Bale, 1994). As recently happened though, health, financial or social crisis can influence the global economic trend and cause financial losses at all levels. Being clubs owned and managed by private investors, these latter must focus primarily on their main business and only secondly on the team they are owner of, with the risk of worsening the situation and consequently the performances of their team. The world of sport follows subsequently the economic trend that society goes through and as naturally happens, in period of general and diffuse crisis, also the clubs with more economic power must adapt to the “hard times”. As a consequence of this, they (the clubs in general, not only the richest ones) act less in the market in terms of acquisitions and a new process starts, based on the juvenile sector where young talents have been cultivated with the hope, both by the club and the youth themselves, to be helpful in the most important stages and competition in the future. That being said, so when organizations stop to invest in the market and trust their youth sectors as a response to financial crisis and the subsequent impossibility to operate economically to improve the overall level of the team, it is a natural consequence that the flow of foreign athletes to new and more developed countries, suffers a slowdown.

Chapter 1.4 From global sport to global teams.

As observed in the previous paragraph, the influence of globalization within the world of sport is more than remarkable: indeed, several aspects of sports development highlight the interconnections between this migration and globalization (Maguire, Bale, 1994). The combination between globalization and the spread of sports around the globe, had, among the others, the effect to produce more and more multicultural teams. Within teams those intended as multicultural are composed by

Kingdom, Transfer Tribunals had been in place since 1981 to resolve disputes over fees between clubs when transferring players at the end of their contracts. The Bosman ruling meant that players could move to a new club at the end of their contract without their old club receiving a fee. Players can now agree a pre-contract with another club for a free transfer if the players' contract with their existing club has six months or less remaining.

athletes, coaching staff and owners that have different origins (regarding the place of birth) than those of where the club or team is situated and plays. It is enough to have one member of the organization whose origins differ from the others' to be called a multicultural team.

The migration of people in order to look for better living and working conditions has affected every sector, pervading the one of sport as well: as anticipated and explained already, people are evaluated throughout their performances and must get the right reward, both in terms of wages and benefits. It goes accordingly that athletes as well, even more those who are professionals, follow a profit logic and migrate where the facilities and the overall conditions offer the best opportunities. Thus, it is not difficult to observe how the poorer countries cannot offer the same conditions as the overdeveloped ones so that indigenous talents are naturally brought to migrate, looking for a different lifestyle for them and their family back home. It is in this way that nowadays almost every team is formed by multiculturals, and a bunch of different languages are spoken each day in the same organisations.

It is more than challenging for organizations as well though, to offer and dispose of facilities, training method, working and living conditions to which each nationality present inside the team, can adapt without suffering too many misunderstandings or difficulties.

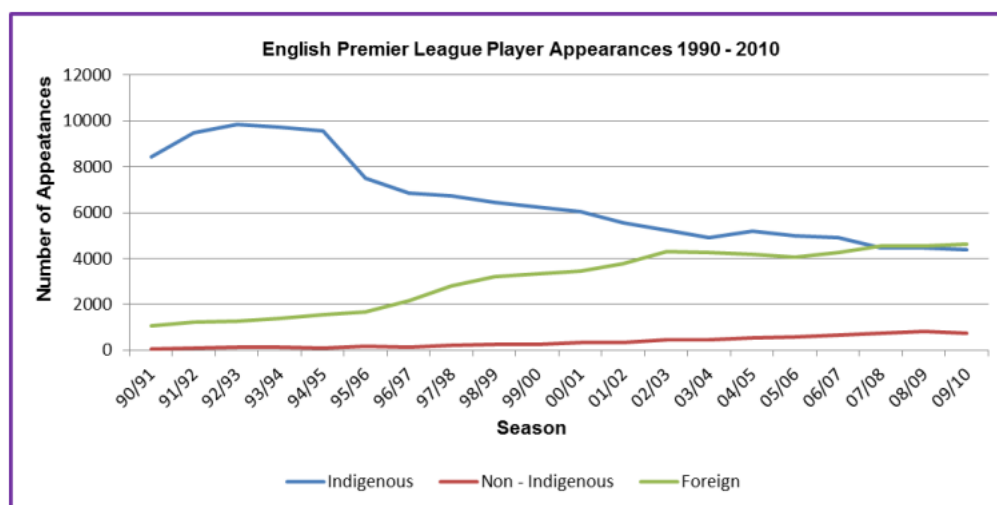


Figure 1, Accumulative Player Appearances within the EPL 1990 – 2010 (Elliot, 2017)

This figure shows the trend regarding the number of foreign players through the years compared to the indigenous ones, between a twenty-year span, from 1990 to 2010 in the English Premier League, the top European football championship. As it observable, the trend pertaining to the number of appearances of indigenous athletes is down sloping, while it is up sloping for the foreign players. This is clear evidence of how globalization and the flow of foreign talents is not only pervasive and diffused, but also increasing by its numbers yearly.

It is with these premises that this brief introduction about the globalization and its consequences on the global sport ends, to leave some space for a deepened analysis of the management of the multiculturalism within sport teams, the reasons behind migration, pros and cons about this latter and the measures and instruments that organizations take in order to face this problem/opportunity and the consequences that go by with this international flow of athletes.

In order to support what the theory about globalization and migratory flows says, here are shown some graphics and data about the numbers of migrant citizens around the world firstly, and to be closer to the country (Italy) where this thesis has been written, some more specific data are illustrated to witness how this phenomenon really is global and pervasive.

Classe di età		totale														
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Principali Paesi di																
cittadinanza																
■ Mondo		159 878	102 892	262 770	132 389	109 620	242 009	87 835	89 419	177 254	54 705	51 798	106 503	126 096	115 499	241 595
■ Europa		19 273	23 959	43 232	21 262	26 577	47 839	18 367	22 326	40 693	10 572	13 357	23 929	27 522	38 545	66 067
■ Africa		84 754	33 913	118 667	54 899	30 905	85 804	25 421	21 496	46 917	17 275	13 684	30 959	41 807	28 073	69 880
■ Asia		43 580	27 054	70 634	41 444	31 117	72 561	30 967	27 116	58 083	19 622	14 641	34 263	44 676	31 280	75 956
■ America		12 050	17 642	29 692	14 555	20 732	35 287	12 914	18 215	31 129	7 151	10 027	17 178	11 951	17 446	29 397
Oceania		201	299	500	203	272	475	145	240	385	68	66	134	103	132	235
Apolide		20	25	45	26	17	43	21	26	47	17	23	40	37	23	60

Figure 2, Immigrati.Stat, yearly entry of non-communitarian citizens globally, in Europe, Africa, Asia, United States and Oceania

These data show how the number of non-EU citizens migrating worldwide, has increased in the last five years span, despite suffering a slowdown in 2020 because of the COVID 19 pandemic outbreak, with the consequences we all know it has had. From the data on the total, it is clear how continents like Europe and America have attracted non-EU citizens towards their territory, thanks to the working and living opportunities and conditions, improved compared to developing countries like Asian or African ones, where clearly numbers have followed the other trend, a down sloping trend to be more precise, witnessed by the total number of immigrant in Africa being 118.667 in 2017 and 69.88 in 2021. This testifies how the South-North migration affects not only athletes but all the sectors.

Stranieri residenti al 1° gennaio - Cittadinanza ¹

Tipo di indicatore demografico																																			
popolazione straniera al 1° gennaio																																			
Territorio																																			
Italia																																			
Seleziona periodo																																			
2019			2020			2021			2022																										
Sesso																																			
maschi			femmine			totale			maschi			femmine			totale																				
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Figure 3, Immigrati.Stat, Resident foreigners as of 1st January in Italy, for the 2019-2022 period

This table shows the number of foreign residents in Italy during the last four years, testifying how the number is in constant growth even in our country.

Residenti totali e residenti stranieri		
Anno	Residenti	Residenti stranieri
2000	209.641	8.963
2005	210.985	18.263
2010	214.198	30.933
2015	210.401	33.395
2020	209.420	34.370

Figure 4, total and foreign residents in Padova²

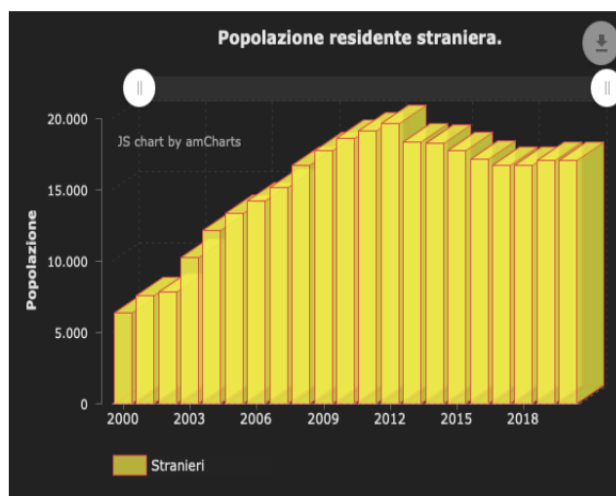


Figure 5, foreign residents in Vicenza³

These two tables up here show the total number of foreign residents in Padova and Vicenza, two north-Italian cities, where clearly the total has more than doubled in the last twenty years and the trend is the same in both cities. These examples have been brought to the attention of the readers in

² Table taken from the City of Padova website - Foreign population - Residents with foreign citizenship in Padua. year 2020 - monograph - <https://www.padovanet.it/informazione/la-popolazione-padova>

³ Graph taken from the Municipality of Vicenza website - Foreign resident population - <https://www.comune.vicenza.it/uffici/cms/statistica/pagina.php/140971>

order to prove with authentic numbers what the theory claims about the globalization and its consequences on migratory routes, migratory numbers and where these fluxes are directed.

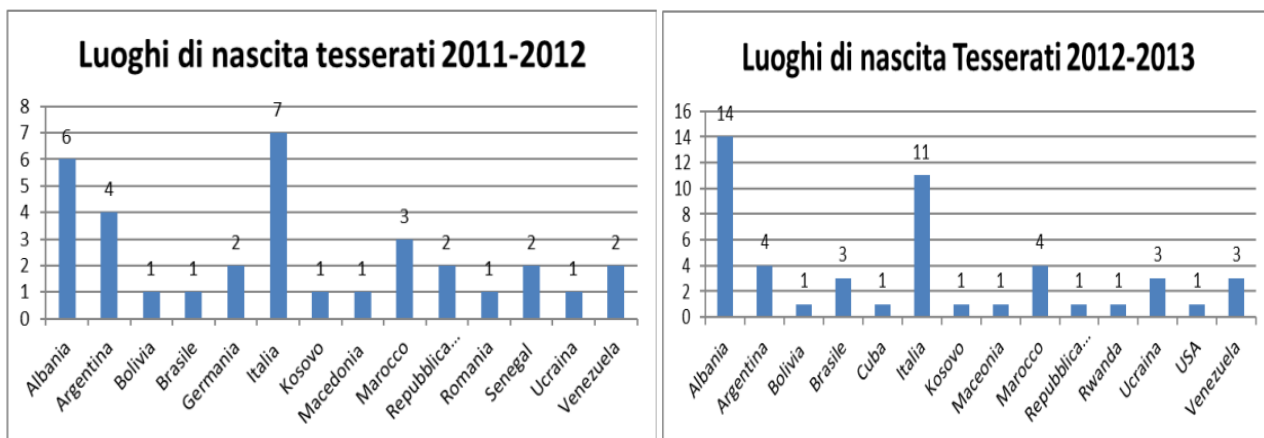


Figure 6, 7, representing the birthplace of new members in some Sportive Federations in Teramo, Italy⁴

For what concerns figures 6 and 7, the number of new members subscribed to some sportive associations in Teramo, in two subsequent years are compared. It is evident how the number of foreign athletes, as well as Italians to be precise, increased from one year to the next one, synonym of an improved number of foreign citizens and kids consequently in that city.

⁴ Croci, 2016, Sport, immigrazione ed integrazione delle seconde generazioni. Uno studio di caso nella Provincia di Teramo.

SECOND CHAPTER

TEAM DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT IN SPORTS

Chapter 2.1 Managing multicultural teams.

Managing a culturally diverse team, as any other workforce, is a complex management issue (Ely & Thomas, 1996). A diverse workforce comprises a multitude of beliefs, understandings, values, ways of viewing the world, and unique information (Shen, Chanda, D'Netto, Monga, 2009). The fast rise of phenomenon as internationalization and globalization have enhanced the significance of workforce diversity: a cross-cultural and multicultural workforce is a common thread not only in organizations in western economies but also in corporations globally and as a result, diversity has increasingly become a “hot button” issue in political, legal, corporate and educational arenas (Shen, Chanda, D'Netto, Monga, 2009). Work groups and sport teams do possess some strong similarities (Barker, Rossi, & Puhse, 2010). For example, outcomes such as individual and group productivity, member satisfaction, and so on are of principal concern in work groups and sport teams (Paradis, Carron, Martin, 2014). Over the past decades, plenty of debates went on regarding the difficult relationship between the team diversity and the results, thus the outcomes of this heterogeneity, present in various forms inside the teams. It is evident to everyone, at this point in time, how heterogeneity is present in every team, in sports or organizations, from the little team in the neighbourhood composed by six years old children to the biggest professional clubs in basketball, football or volleyball; from the classes of the children at school, to the factory or local market in the city next to us. “If you recall the sport teams you may have belonged to, you will quickly recognize that every team is composed of members with diverse individual characteristics” (Kim, Panza, Evans, 2021). Individual characteristics include things like members’ age, gender, ethnicity, personality, and attitudes. These features represent an individual’s attributes, which represent a type of a group input. Effectively integrating the collection of individuals who possess diverse attributes is the essence of group success (Kim, Panza, Evans, 2021). Because sport is universal, participant and fan communities are bound to include diversity; therefore, organizations that want to support their participants and fans must reflect and engage those differences. Diversity can be a good stimulation for intellectual, emotional,

economic and social growth (Andersson, 1993). Developing this diversity within a workforce is an issue in every business and culture (Lewin & Stephenson, 1996), therefore the management of multiculturalism and the research for emerging talents that are able to bring freshness and new skills, as well as economic advantages and publicity, must coexist, in order to deliver the best possible outcome for the team. This diversity can be expressed in myriads of ways: age, sex, religion, race, nationality, experiences, knowledge, habits, etc.; giving as an outcome a team composed by very different individuals with even more diverse backgrounds. All these differences give the birth to a characteristic that is moving and evolving with each one of us: the culture, which if shared by a consistent number of people, becomes an organization's culture. Culture is to society what memory is to individuals (Kluckhohn, 1954). Being part of a culture provides a source of identity for its members: in organisational teams is therefore thought to influence them in three potentially opposing ways (CIPD, 2021). Firstly, people tend to work alongside those they find closer in terms of values, beliefs and attitudes. Secondly, people categorise themselves into groups and categorise others as outsiders or as members of other groups (CIPD, 2021). This prompts the favouritism towards those members belonging to the same group and stereotyping of others. A third perspective positions cultural diversity as an opportunity rather than a problem, suggesting that it helps bring more varied contributions to teams, enabling new information and perspectives to be heard and subsequently enhancing the team's problem-solving and creativity (CIPD, 2021). People with different cultural backgrounds (multiculturals from now on), have special abilities for what concern the interactions and integration with different cultures, especially useful when embedded in an environment where they constantly must adapt to changing cultural conditions such as multinational companies or sport teams (Hong, 2010). Multiculturalism has always been the most important dimension of diversity in Western countries, including the EU nations, Australia and New Zealand, where there are a large number of international migrants with diverse cultural backgrounds (Shen, Chanda, D'Netto, Monga, 2009). Especially in the sport sector (or world), plenty of interactions are among people with different cultures, social status and other characteristics and this mix does not have a precise and definite outcome: there are a lot of studies demonstrating how different the results can be in multicultural teams, both in direction of a positive impact of the diversity and in negative one. But a constructive management of diversity, whether it is social or cultural or sportive, does not involve only the comparison with others and their differences, but also the recognition of the shared common goals and interests (Raiola, G. et al.: Sport & diversity management). Culture is the means through which communities perceive and develop their identity (Giossos, 2008) and modern sports constitute one of the numerous forms of culture which provide a vehicle for meaningful expression and communication (Giossos, p. 53). Cross-border expansion, internationalization, and escalating numbers of multiculturals in society are increasing work-force diversity (Szymanski, Kalra, 2021), multiculturals

are though the people who identify with, internalize, and have knowledge of more than one culture (Vora, Martin, Fitzsimmons, Pekerti, Lakshman, & Raheem, 2019).

Chapter 2.2 Diversity management at different levels and age

Continuing with the talking about multiculturalism, a distinction on more levels needs to be done: clear differences in the management of diversity emerge when the level of the competition improves or the athletes grow older, demanding a more specific and prepared strategy to deal with diversities and results. At the younger ages, when kids first interact with sports, the presence of multiculturalism comes naturally and it is neither requested nor prompted from the organizations, which rather “suffer” indirectly and unvoluntary the always increasing rate of globalization: as most of the people that played in some team sport can remember and witness, at least one component of the team came from a different city, region or country; had parents with origins different from the majority of other parents’; had a different religion or so on... At this young age and with no competitive results expected from the team, the integration and the management of the cultural difference happens naturally both from the kids’ standpoint and from the educators or teachers or coaches’ one. This is because the diversity is not really perceived and the innocent mind of the kids it is not touched still from the influences of the society. The only objective at this stage is to have fun, being introduced to a sport and to have, thanks to the intrinsic characteristics of this latter, an enhanced education, and a safe environment in which to grow, with cultural diversities making it even more colourful. A second level distinction regards the teen-age, where sport teams begin to look at the performance, but the environment is still not professional- neither economic-centred. At this age and level, where results start to be looked at like something to achieve, and amusement becomes a secondary objective, sport teams try to recruit not just people and athletes from the community, but also from a wider basin, in order to have better performers despite the distance or the cultural background. Of course, the higher the level or the blazon of the team, the wider the basin; but the standards remain those of a non-professional environment, usually not trespassing the city/regional limit as an area in which to look for the players. At this stage, backgrounds and cultural diversities start to come out and differentiate the way in which people build up relationships between each other and with the whole team, influencing thus integration and performance. Nevertheless, heterogeneity in the teams is still manageable without putting specific resources in order to take care of it, as cultural differences remain limited by the narrow extension of the basin or by the limited distance regarding the place of birth of

the various team components. What is more, it cannot be forgotten that the environment is still not professional and dedicated resources would not worth the expense and the time dedicated. Things start getting more serious and challenging at the third stage of this analysis: it is the case of professional teams recruiting from all over the world (or where talents are more flourish) with certain outcomes and sportive results attended by the organization or the property. Differences are clear in terms of investments and number of resources dedicated, as top teams have financial and organizational resources that are n times greater than small clubs, but professional teams, at all levels of professionalism, do dedicate specific resources to deal with and manage the multiculturality. Those resources (people, time, money) could be grouped in an endless list of instruments to cope with language barriers, climate differences, cultural and social differences, just to cite a few ones, as for example language courses, organised events or encounters with local people, dinner with the whole team members present and so on...

But this is not the main interest of this chapter.

Chapter 2.3 Extending the research abroad.

Diversity can help clubs and associations to clarify, explore and transform their current values and practices (Hultin, Lundh, 2005). An area where cultural diversity has developed a strong tradition is that of athletics, particularly that of sport clubs, where many of the teams are based on players coming from different countries and with different cultures (Hultin, Lundh, 2005). It is sufficient to think that the European Champions League Final on May 19, 2012, between Football Club (FC) Bayern Munich and Chelsea Football Club at the Allianz Arena in Munich, Germany, was a multicultural event. In all, 8 of the 18 players of FC Bayern Munich and 13 of the 18 players of Chelsea FC were born outside the home countries of these two clubs. Altogether, players from 15 countries and 4 continents participated in the match, including Germany, Ukraine, Netherlands, France, Belgium, Brazil, Japan, Croatia, Czech Republic, Portugal, Nigeria, England, Ivory Coast, Spain, and Ghana (Maderer, Holtbrügge and Schuster, 2014). But this is the case not only for the most famous sport in the world. There is plenty of reasons why an organization should look for workforce outside of the local territory or the country in which it is based: to enrich its cultural diversity, to find a pool of skills not developed in the local area, convenient cost of the workforce, in addition to fiscal benefits, commercial and social ties with new countries or cultures and new rules on the players' transfers. This phenomenon has been researched in the sport sciences field, particularly looking at the migration trends and

interdependencies of transnational athletes because international sport has become more and more of a commodity producing an attractive and competitive labour market (Semograd, 2019). What is more, managing a culturally diverse team implies that a club can gain competitive advantage and improve its performance through human capital by consciously seeking and managing a team that is diverse in terms of its sex, age, race and ethnic composition (Lewin & Stephenson, 1996). About this list, not only globalization forced people, and so future athletes, to move in search for better opportunities; but also, weak national economies and financial crises gave the opportunity to richer clubs (talking about every sport, not only football even if it is the most evident and known case) to sign contract with players offering wages not even comparable to those possibly perceived in their home countries. Table 2 shows the results of the comparison of the performance ratio achieved by the three types of teams.

Table 2. Value of the coefficient of performance for teams (%)

	Team efficiency			
	0-0.25	0.26-0.5	0.51-0.75	0.76-1
Nationally homogeneous teams	23.3	39.5	34.9	2.3
Two-nationality teams	11.9	47.6	35.7	4.8
Multinational teams	12.8	42.6	36.2	8.5

Source: own elaboration.

Figure 2 (Table 2, page 95, Kołodziej, 2019)

The data in Table 2 indicate that the more nationally diverse teams, more often than homogeneous teams, achieve the highest range of the coefficient of effectiveness. Teams in which players represented two nationalities twice as often, and teams more diverse almost four times more often than homogeneous teams, were able to win more than threequarters of all matches. It seems that these differences clearly indicate higher effectiveness achieved by multinational teams (Kołodziej, 2019). At the same time, these results allow us to assume that teams of more diverse nationalities will more often achieve top positions in the analysed tournaments (The International DOTA 2 tournaments).

Chapter 2.3.1 Economic reasons

International studies (Armstrong, Flood, Guthrie, Liu, MacCurtain, Mkamwa, 2010) have shown how an appropriate management of diversity can benefit organizations in economic terms (reduction of the organizational costs, sales, market and profit shares, improved shares value), competitiveness (increased productivity and individual results, group and organisational results, satisfied clients), reputational (improved employer branding skills). In order to further develop the argument regarding the economic reasons on why to look for other athletes abroad, the first and most common reason is the financial aspect of the operation. As it is observable for all the organizations, even outside the world of sport, the bigger the organization (both in terms of turnover and number of employees), the higher the possibility to offer high wages and better working condition and facilities. Although fallacious to recruit foreign talent rather than investing in indigenous home-grown talent, managers insist they have little option but to scout the continent for cheaper foreign imports, as it is inferred that a ramification of the Bosman ruling has been to inflate the value of prosperous indigenous home-grown players (Frick, 2009; Littlewood, Mullen & Richardson, 2011) as they are offered lucrative contracts by clubs in fear of losing them on a free transfer (Maguire & Pearton, 2000; Fee & Meuhlheusser, 2003), thus increasing the attractiveness of foreign imports (McGovern, 2002). This is even more true for sport organizations, where nowadays the difference in the financial power between the big clubs competing in the top leagues and the smaller ones, is more and more wide. Thus, if these days the flow of information circulates faster and faster, large sports organizations have ambitions that will lead to increased influence in different geographical areas that will lead to an increase in power and profitability (Ritzer 2003). In this regard, we can see the case of British teams that frequently organize promotional tournaments in countries in Asia, Australia or North America. Sport is one of the areas that best illustrates this phenomenon of globalization (Giulianotti, Robertson 2004). Another case is the one regarding some measures taken in Italy, for example, where the law 24bis “del Testo Unico delle Imposte sui Redditi” applied in 2017, as long as the growth decree in 2019, that both favoured the acquisition of foreign players. These measures were introduced in order to encourage strangers and people from abroad to bring capitals in Italy, but ended to favour, as said before, the transfers of foreigner athletes thanks to the convenient discount on the fiscal impact of the wages offered by the Italian clubs and enterprises, and a reduced impact of the taxation on the revenues of the single athlete. Taking advantage of the fiscal policies and of the financial power, big clubs are then often able to offer richer contract, benefits and better working conditions, when dealing with athletes coming from poorer countries or smaller clubs. And in a world dominated nowadays by money and visibility, it is then understandable why players are choosing more and more with the

brain (or wallet) than with their hearth; after all, for professional athletes, it is more of a job than a sport. But when the ability to earn high incomes depends on the presence of other similarly skilled individuals within the state or access to specialized industry know-how, we have an example of an agglomeration economy: the positive spillover benefits an economic actor receives from being in close proximity to other similarly situated actors (Driessen, Sheffrin, 2017). One other reason of profitability for clubs and organizations in attracting and acquiring athletes from abroad that can be considered as part of the economic rationale of looking elsewhere, is the creation of marketing bonds with the country in which the player (or players) is (are) bought. To optimise the financial gains of such global strategy, clubs exploit the image benefit of hiring players from strategic “global cash cows”. For example, European football clubs are increasingly identifying China, Japan, South Korea (but not limited to) as strategic market space (Opute, 2012). The outsourcing of player training goes hand in hand with the setting up of centres in countries like Latin-America, Africa or Asia, the conclusion of partnership agreements with local clubs aiming at transferring young players to Europe for a lesser cost, and by the creation of global observation networks (Poli 2010). All these structures for the seek of diversification as diversity may enhance a team’s network of external contacts (Jackson & Joshi, 2004). One of the greatest sporting associations, the NBA (National Basketball Association), after the resounding defeat in the Seoul Olympic Games in 1988 against the URSS, gave definitive access to the acquisition of players not only coming from the close Canada, but also to some players coming from the Europe, mostly East-European ones. The participation of such athletes like Dražen Petrović and Toni Kukoč gave incredible visibility to the NBA in Europe and the return in economic terms for the whole association and for the specific clubs was enormous. But it does not end here: the real turning point for the commercial and marketing explosion of the association (the NBA) outside the United States happened with the acquisition in 2002 of Yao Ming by the Houston Rockets. The Chinese superstar was selected as first choice at the 2002 draft and brought an incredible amount of fame to the NBA in the Chinese country, and as the Chinese population is double the European one, the impact was predictably strong in terms of visibility and revenues for the NBA. Similar examples can be observed in football, volleyball, Formula 1 and other sports, just to highlight and ascertain the importance and impact of the marketing shade of the acquisition of players and athletes from abroad on the revenues and visibility of the various organizations and teams.

Chapter 2.3.2 Social and diversity reasons

Over the years, sports such as basketball, football, tennis, golf, cricket, and skiing have all partaken in international imports and exports of professionals in the sporting industry (Maguire & Stead, 1998). For what concerns the availability and diversity of skills, that is directly connected with the enrichment of the cultural diversity, there are some countries in which athletes for a specific sport are just naturally better off than the others: South Americans and European for football, African for running over long distances in the athletic competitions, Nord-Americans for Basketball, New Zealanders for rugby, etc... This can be due to natural physical characteristics or because of the customs and traditions of a country in playing that specific sport or discipline. By signing foreign players, club officials also hope to benefit from the specific strengths of individuals with different cultural backgrounds. Athletes and players with different origins often have diverse skills, as sport education is focused on different qualifications (Lanfranchi and Taylor, 2001; Theweleit, 2009). It is understandable then how the compilation of diverse skills in multicultural teams is thus expected to enhance their success (Maderer, Holtbrügge and Schuster, 2013) and bring to each team a set of different options at its disposal, in order to have a victorious outcome and multiple solutions to face arising problems in original ways, thanks to the different capabilities and experiences brought by the various backgrounds of the team components. The advantages are then perceived to lie in the better quality of performance – with foreign players improving the standards of existing players and also acting as a role model for younger players (Maguire, Falcoux, 2010). Even though, as it will be shown further in this thesis, there is not a granted result or a secret recipe in order to make the things work and having a winning team.

Chapter 2.4 Athlete's perspective

Long are the discussion and the work already done regarding the organisation or team perspective on why to look elsewhere for players that could fit well inside the team, in order to improve the overall team-performance and bring results in terms of victories and economic returns; but little are the talks around what makes or pushes the athletes to choose an organisation rather than another one; thing that, at the end of the day, directly influences their performance on the field and contributes to create the best working environment for them and their colleagues. As already introduced in the previous paragraph for teams and organizations, there is plenty of reasons for athletes as well to change team

and in doing so, sometimes also changing country, culture and environment. The first reason, once again, is the economic return of going to big teams or more competitive leagues in general: the higher the level of the league, the higher the visibility, the higher the amount of money in the circle and the higher the wages' average. As athletes are often seen as professional workers, the wage is relevant when discussing a contract, not only for them but also for their families and surroundings, as a big contract can change the life of the players and the generations to come. This is the reason why lots of football players recently moved to China, Arab Emirates or United States: despite the level being far less competitive than the European leagues, the wages offered abroad were tempting enough to make them decide to move that far away from their home-country or continent. As already anticipated earlier in the document, financial and fiscal policies as well, play a big role in facilitating the choice of the preferred destination, when talking about rich contracts. A second reason, that will be further and better investigated in the second chapter, but first introduced in here, is the chance to find a subgroup of people coming from the same country/region or simply talking the same language in general. Many athletes take the leap during their athletic journey and pursue opportunities abroad to improve and develop their career profile. These migrant athletes are faced with acculturation to the psychological, sociocultural, and physical demands of the foreign cultural contexts (Ryba et al., 2018). The arrival in a new country that has different work ethics, habits and lifestyle is proved to be more than challenging for young athletes and the time it takes to be getting used to the novelties can result in a loss of trust, sense of loss and difficulties in the integration process and results on the pitch consequently. To some extent, life as a professional athlete overseas may be glorified through the eyes of spectators, but their reality commonly includes a high demanding lifestyle with environmental changes inducing discomforts (Semograd, 2019). Such challenges highlight the complexity of 'acculturation', the migratory process, and the perceived psychosocial implications for players in search of success within soccer (Richardson, Littlewood, Nesti & Benstead, 2012). This is when the importance of finding a familiar environment, at least for a language speaking point of view, or sharing the same rituals, prevails as it can facilitate the first steps towards a new organization and working environment. It is in fact more than common the creation of subgroups within the different teams, as they are united by the same origins or the language spoken indeed, resulting in better connections on and off the field and a smoother adaptation, directly affecting the sportive outcomes or performances. The internal cultural diversity of a team as well as its members' boundary-spanning ties to different team-external groups enables access to better and more diverse information and opportunities (Burt, 1992; Hansen, 1999; Reagans & McEvily, 2003).

Regarding the athletes' perspective, Magee and Sugden (2002) realized an interesting analysis of the different types of athletes' labour migration:

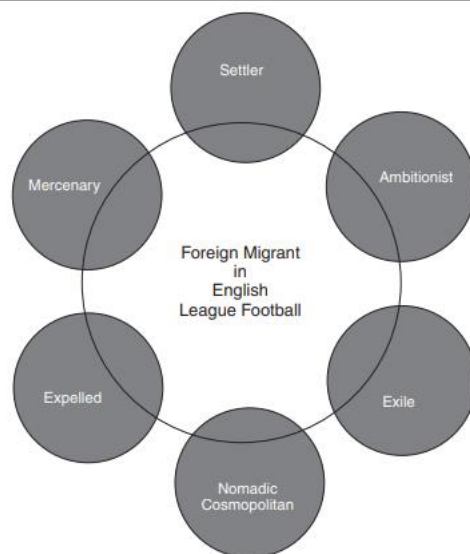


Figure 2, A typology of Football Labour Migration, Magee & Sugden, 2002

The law of supply and demand operates in football just as in any other sphere of the marketplace (Magee, Sugden, 2002). Professional athletes trade their sport labour to attain a livelihood, and with recent standards, they have never been in a better bargaining or trading position. The typology identifies a combination of overlapping categories surrounding a central sphere, namely the foreign migrant in English league football (Magee, Sugden, 2002). This sphere, or model, can be applied to all team sports as the inner reason behind transfers are shared among professional athletes, even though the circle of affairs differs from sport to sport.

As described by the name, the *mercenary* is the migrated athlete attracted only by the high wages and the earning possibility that the new experience can offer. The economic reward becomes then the central sphere around which the athlete makes his decision, mostly athlete at the end of their careers when they can catch their last big chance to play in a profitable way. Famous are the cases of football players migrated in the Arab United Emirates, China, America or Australia just because of the incredible wages offered in order to supply the lack of competitiveness and talent in their leagues; or volleyball players migrating in Russia where super teams are made thanks to the dollars coming from the gas market, where volleyball club's owners are directly involved.

All that glitters is not gold, as for others there are multiple reasons to change environment: the *settler* is someone who has moved and remained in the foreign country (or simply city) for a sustained period (Magee, Sugden, 2002), of four or five seasons or more usually. It can be an advantage to become

settlers for those athletes who have families or project to have one in the upcoming future, as their children can grow up as bilingual and have a multicultural background.

The third category regards the *ambitionists*, namely those athletes who have the desire to achieve and sustain a professional and meaningful career. Second to this, their desire is often to compete in the most challenging leagues, so that to prove themselves firstly, to the media secondly, their worth.

The fourth description belongs to the *exile* someone who, for athletic-related, personal, or political reasons (either voluntarily or through domestic threats to his career, his liberty, or his life), opts to leave his country of origin to play abroad (Magee, Sugden, 2002). Sometimes, these exiled athletes can take advantage of their position of prestigious in order to espouse political or social causes happening in their homelands, so that to be the voice of a protest, inspire and acknowledge the more people they can.

The *nomadic cosmopolitan* then, decides to migrate for less noble reasons but purer than solely the money: to experience and visit different cultures throughout his career and live in the major cities in different countries.

Finally, the expelled is a player who is, in effect, forced to migrate to foreign countries as social or political problematics arises and the only possibility remaining is the migration. Eric Cantona of France is one example, as he had to leave France to continue a professional football career because of problems between himself and the French football authorities (Magee, Sugden, 2002).

Chapter 2.5 The bright side of the multiculturalism

Current theory and research in international and cross-cultural management tends to overemphasize problems and barriers instead of making room for aspects that potentially could enrich cultural encounters and interaction (Drogendijk & Zander, 2010). On the other hand, there is a wide recognition of the value of workforce diversity (Shen, Chanda, D'Netto, Monga, 2009). As testified by the research by the Australian Centre for International Business (ACIB), team components' diversity improves the quality of management's decisions, and provides innovative ideas and superior solutions to organizational problems (ACIB 2000). The effects of diversity are not differentiated by the source: all sources of diversity — including gender, age, function, as well as culture and ethnicity — are assumed to have the same impact. Although there are clearly some parallels among different diversity sources (Van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007), it is possible that cultural diversity affects teams differently than other diversity sources (Lane, Maznevski, DiStefano, & Dietz, 2009; Lane,

Maznevski, Mendenhall, & McNett, 2004). Managing diversity is premised on recognition of diversity and differences as positive attributes of an organization, rather than as problems to be solved (Thompson 1997). As already anticipated during the current chapter, cultural diversity brings into the team a set of different skills, knowledge and experiences, which can be summed up into one word: creativity. Furthermore, to explain the link between diversity and creativity, it has to be considered not only the input into (or context for) creative processes, but also the process itself. For example, in a culturally diverse team, members may continue to challenge ideas and provide input long after a monocultural team has reached a saturation level and experiences groupthink (Stahl, Makela, Zander, Maznevski; 2010). While there is evidence that short-term progress is affected by conflict and communication problems, by bringing a wider range of perspectives to problem solving, diverse teams foster speed and innovation and produce substantially higher quality solutions over whole development cycles (Shen, Chanda, D'Netto, Monga, 2009). As this reasoning is more than valid for the world of work, it is applicable with the same consistency as well in the sport one, where the different sets of characteristics each player or team-component brings to the collective, help to deal with multiple situations in different ways and with creative strategies coming from their different past experiences and ways of facing situations. As enlightened in paragraph 1.2.2 "Social and diversity reasons", not only past experiences and habits give a strong contribution to the variety of ways a team can face adversities, but also physical and technical characteristics specific to determined populations. Self-esteem is a feeling deriving by the positive encounter with different cultures and the belonging to an organization: sport participation increases self-esteem through affiliation and identification with other team members, because the participants all wear the same team colours. Because they all know the other players' positions and names, they feel an integral part of the team (Joubert, 2013). Here again is highlighted the importance of the connection athletes (that are human beings firstly) make and the overall environment that the organisation is able to create and provide for the workforce. The cohesion that is created within the group or the team helps to increase the self-esteem of each component of the organisation, directly improving the results and the atmosphere. It must not be forgotten that all of this, that is the efforts made both economically and organisationally, is operated pursuing an improved performance and an efficient management of the organisation itself, in order to have a return in some way. This is to explain that each practice or strategy that can end up having a positive influence, in this case it is the pursuit of international athletes to be added up to the already existing team, is undertaken considering all the possible impacts, whether positive or negative, on the overall outcome and on the performance. Another positive aspect of the variety of cultures within a team is related to the satisfaction: working in a multicultural team creates conditions and satisfies needs that are not met in teams characterized by other types of diversity. Working in a

multicultural team may fulfil individual needs for variety, development, or even adventure in ways that working in otherwise demographically diverse teams does not (Stahl, Makela, Zander, Maznevski; 2010). Satisfaction can derive not only from the results achieved on the pitch but from the chemistry attained between team-mates and within the overall organization as well; and this level of satisfaction is proved to be richer in terms of emotions, because of the initial difficulties encountered and indeed overtaken. Member satisfaction can be derived from the facing and successful handling of the inevitably demanding challenges that are inherent in multicultural teams (Stahl, Makela, Zander, Maznevski; 2010). Working and solving problems together increase trust between the team members, which makes them more willing to share knowledge and collaborate (Levin & Cross, 2004; Uzzi, 1997; Zaheer, McEvily, & Perrone, 1998), thus victories in sport help to increase the strength of the group itself and build up a strong cohesion within the organisation. sport, cohesion within an organization or team represents “a dynamic process that is reflected in the tendency for a group to stick together and remain united in the pursuit of its instrumental objectives and/or for the satisfaction of member affective needs” (Carless and De Paola, 1 p. 213). Group cohesion is linked to a multitude of positive individual and organizational outcomes (Park, Kim and Magnusen, 2021). For some sports migrants, transnational lifestyle prompts self-growth leading to greater personal and social reflexivity (Thorpe, 2012). Regarding the personal reflexivity, a positive aspect of the multiculturalism interests personal growth indeed: there is some evidence to suggest that cultural diversity may have a positive effect on diverse teams’ ability to learn (e.g., Fiol, 1994; Herriot & Pemberton, 1995). This is once again thanks to the cultural mix that is present in multicultural teams and the different approach to each (or some) situation(s), meaning that foreigners with their different habits and work ethic can bring innovative solutions or skills, in order to improve the team performance and hence the outcome. South American athletes are known for their music listening habits before the games or the training sessions, and some team-mates witnessed that this ritual helped to face each match’s eve with calmer and clearer mind, relaxing the tense atmosphere that was hovering over the dressing room. This and other cultural mix traditions are then proven to be useful to improve the results and would not (or less likely at least) have happened in a monocultural team. What is more, the above discussed virtuous circles of creativity, satisfaction, and communication are likely to work cumulatively creating a positively reinforcing feedback loop furthering learning for the team members, and contributing to the development of improved group processes, and increased team capability (Stahl, Makela, Zander, Maznevski; 2010). Despite the high level of debate, the foreign migrant has engendered as a result of club stratification procedures, the

acquisition of foreign players has perceived benefits (Elliot, 2017). These include enhanced host nation player performances through the circulation of skill and tacit knowledge, which is developed through player interaction, thus improving the overall standards of performance (Richardson & Littlewood, 1999; Maguire & Pearton, 2000; Elliott & Weedon, 2011). It is argued that this can increase human capital, which is important since players are seen as ‘marketable assets’ (Alvarez, Forrest, Sanz & Tena, 2010).

Chapter 2.6 The “dark side” of the multiculturalism

“All that glitters is not gold”: alongside the bright and positives aspects of the presence of different cultures within a team or organisation, there are dark or negative shades as well, that can directly influence the atmosphere and the results a team is expected to achieve and that need to be managed properly and looked after carefully, indeed previous studies in the team management literature reveal that cultural heterogeneity may not only positively influence team performance but also have negative effects (Chevrier, 2003; Maznevski and Chudoba, 2000). As already anticipated, each strategic decision regarding the seek and acquisition of international athletes to be added to the team, is deeply thought before being operated and this is because of the direct and indirect effects the latter can have both on the team and on the athlete itself. More than negative aspects of multiculturalism, they can be defined as problematics that arises because of the cultural mix and the different habits present inside the team that need to be dealt with. It is without a doubt an expensive challenge for organisations to acquire the services of foreign athletes, as investments both in the negotiations and insertion phases are huge thus the outcome better be what is expected by the property. The organising processes are not to be forgotten as talent scouts, translators, ways of transport and all that goes behind the research of international athletes does not only take away a considerable amount of money from the organisation reserves, but also really are time consuming: sometimes weeks, months or even years are spent looking for interesting players to be added to the team, and when the investment does not go as planned, it is a waste both of resources and opportunities. Therefore, the risk, as for every other investment, in investing in foreign players that need to go through the adaptation to a new culture and work ethic, it is considered to be the negative side of the coin when wanting to have a richer cultural diversity inside a team. Another critical phase is the adaptation one: adaptation is a process of adjusting individuals or groups to norms, so that they can be adapted to the conditions that exist in their environment (Novia, Anshari, 2020). It must be underlined that most of the transfers happens between teams that are situated in the same country or restricted geographical area, so that the changes

in terms of culture and rules are not so impacting for the athletes and the adaptation phase goes smoothly, giving results in a no time span. It is often more problematic when the transfer is transoceanic or regarding completely different cultures, as for example south American football players that go in Europe, European basketball players that make the other way around to play in the NBA, etc... In these cases, players could face a real shock: culture shock is a feeling of anxiety and shock when an individual enters a new culture that is different from the culture that is inherent in him. The culture that is inherent when entering a new culture will not be effective because each culture has its way (Novia, Anshari, 2020). This is why, as explained before during the digression about the investments each organisation makes to smoothly run the adaptation phases, events, translators and any type of practice are undertaken in order to help the new components. Related to communication, the former Scottish manager of the Manchester United football team, Sir Alex Ferguson states in his autobiography that "language is the biggest obstacle" when a foreign player comes to the culturally diverse team (Ferguson, 2013). Communication itself is the biggest problem when facing the arrival of a foreign athlete, for both parties (staff and the athlete itself), being the ultimate and easiest way people can communicate with. Without further ado, when members of multiple cultures are organized together, how they see the situation will differ: this potentially leads to conflict, dissonance, and ultimately team process losses (Narkhede, 2011). The dark side of the moon of having different cultures inside a single team or organisation is that it can become detrimental to the environment and results as a direct consequence: a mix of different work ethics and mentalities may collide and create obstacles to a uniformed manner of directing the routinely work. Managers and their staff are asked to work and find ways to obtain the maximum results with the workforce at their disposal, but when part of the team or even some subgroups do not cope with or participate actively, the task is far from being easy to be achieved. When the work ethics of some athletes are deeply different from the ones of the new organisation they are into, some difficulties may arise and a loss of trust or sense of loss may occur for those athletes, meaning worsened performances both individually and as a team. Not only at the level of the work ethic difficulties can arise, but also for the lifestyle that is required: big clubs or professional teams in general have some standards and requirements for what concerns the behaviour to be maintained inside but mostly outside of the pitch and sometimes for athletes catapulted in new realities, it is difficult to attain to some rules. It is often the case for young players or athletes coming from the South America to go through a tough period when trying to stick to the rules imposed by the different organisations: staying up till late in the night, drinking or eating out of the diet specifically planned for them or other "childish behaviours". This has shown to have a direct negative effect on the longevity of their careers and on the performances on the pitch. Some studies also pointed to the ways in which athletic migrants' motivating and demotivating experiences

interweave with their adaptation processes, state interventions, and (implicit) integration strategies in their clubs (Agergaard, 2008; Botelho & Agergaard, 2011). What is more, disadvantages are seen to stem from the lack of opportunities for indigenous players and the concomitant lack of investment in good quality talent identification and development by clubs (Maguire, Falcous, 2010). This effect can negatively involve the whole national movement, as the employment of “too many” foreign players can lead teams to enter a phase of ‘dependent development’ (Maguire, Falcous, 2010) because of the limited involvement of emigrated indigenous players in other leagues, with the balance of employment of players pending towards the foreign ones, exacerbating the problem. The impact that this phenomenon is having on the youngster is even greater: the rewards for success and the cost of failure are so great that managers cannot afford the promise of longer-term youth development (Maguire, Falcous, 2010) preferring then in the choices “readymade” and experienced athletes (both local and foreign, depending on the cost of the operation) that can improve the chances of an immediate success or, at least, less room for mistakes due to the inexperience of the players. The overall result is an even worse decline of national playing standards that can affect the movement in the long period.

Chapter 2.7 Dealing with multiculturalism within teams and sport organisations.

Team diversity refers to the distributional differences among members of a team with respect to a common attribute (Harrison & Klein, 2007). Multicultural teams have been a central focus of research for many years in the international business context. With the rapid rise of multinational and even global interactions, the multicultural team has become both more common and more important (Stahl, Makela, Zander, Maznevski; 2010). It is then common to try to find the positive and negative aspects of having to manage a culturally diverse team, in order to invest in the best strategy, both from the economical and sportive point of view. Most of the time, though, the aspects are considered singularly without having a complete picture of the situation and without considering that every case really has its own development. What is more, the world is always changing and evolving, thus new methods or approaches are adopted daily. This does not mean that reading about past cases is useless or time-consuming, because it can help in dealing with general problems related to the subject, already faced or interpreted by major experts. This does mean though that there is no secret recipe, and each team composition has its up- and down-sides that this chapter has tried to describe in a general way. These dynamics need to be considered in the process of building up a multicultural workforce. It is then up to the management and to the staff firstly, to the whole organisation secondly, dealing with all the

different shades of behaviours and creative solutions that the cultural diversity within the team has brought up. The literature on multicultural teams shows that the characteristics of its members are highly relevant for team performance, however, few studies focus on the influence of culture on supporting processes such as boundary-spanning activities (Engelhard, Holtbrügge, 2017). Consequently, staff members need to act as “facilitators”, meaning that they do not only connect dispersed people and resources as ‘cultural brokers’ (Au and Fukuda, 2002), but also assist in locating and tapping information (Engelhard, Holtbrügge, 2017), knowledge and resources in different communities and facilitating cross-border communication (Butler et al., 2012). In particular, boundary spanners in the form of team facilitators are regarded as important mediators between the cultural diversity of team members and multicultural team performance (Marquardt and Horvath, 2001; Verkuyten and Pouliasi, 2006; Yagi and Kleinberg, 2011). They are fundamental as such they do not simply translate between the different cultures but “bridge across team members’ cultural, linguistic, and national differences” (Zander et al., 2012). The parallel between the sport teams and the workforce in a general environment is more than appropriate, as difficulties and benefits are pretty much the same in every sector, with the common intent of having the best performances with the most limited collateral or negative consequences arising from the cultural diversities and the different backgrounds. Managers are likely to be seen as coaches of sport teams, sharing the responsibilities of directing and organising the teams in order to have productive methods and profitable results: a winning situation in every case.

THIRD CHAPTER

CLIQUES AND SUBGROUPS DYNAMICS INSIDE THE TEAMS

Chapter 3.1 The group structure

Before describing subgroups' characteristics, their formation and development, it is mandatory to analyse the bigger structure from which they stem: the group.

Turner (1982) suggested that the sufficient condition for psychological group formation is the recognition and acceptance of some self-defining social categorization. Thus, a collection of individuals becomes a group in the psychological sense when those individuals perceive and define themselves as members of the same social category (Ullah, 1987). Such a formulation is useful because it explains how group formation sometimes occurs in the absence of interdependence, the desire for personal gain, or interpersonal attraction (Tajfel et al., 1971; Billig & Tajfel, 1973; Tajfel & Billig, 1974; Turner, 1978). Group formation results from the internalization of self-defining social categorizations: once internalized, self-definitions produce stereotypic perceptions of the self and other group members, thereby increasing intragroup similarity, attraction, and shared uniformities in behaviour (Ullah, 1987). Hence attraction between team components is the product of identification rather than the cause of it. It is then evident how the self-identification in social categories, defines the belonging to a group rather than another one. It is the most similar, the closest to our self-identification or personal made-up idea of ourselves that attract us. It is possible though, that under some conditions, acceptance of a self-defining social category is not associated with group formation (Ullah, 1987): for example, for people who lose their job, the acceptance of the label 'unemployed' may be associated with negative feelings arising from the membership of this social category. Bales (1953), instead, defines a small group as: "any number of persons engaged in interaction with one another in a single face-to-face meeting or a series of such meetings, in which each member receives some impression or perception of each other member distinct enough so that he can ... give some reaction to each of the others as an individual person, even though it be only to recall that the other was present". Objections can be made, namely a definition such as this seems too inclusive,

classifying temporary aggregations together with stable groups (DeLamater, 1974). Thirdly, according to Cattell (1951): a group is a collection of organisms in which the existence of all (in their given relationships) is necessary to the satisfaction of certain individual needs in each. Lastly, for Homans (1950): a group is defined by the interaction of its members; if we say that individuals A, B, C, D and E form a group, this will mean that ... A interacts more with B, C, D, and E than he does with M, N, O... who we choose to consider outsiders or members of other groups. In essence, each member must interact more frequently with other members than he does with anyone else (DeLamater, 1976). After the general definitions of group and small groups, four are the sticking points that emerge as defining properties of these ensembles: interaction between individuals, perceptions of other members and the development of shared perceptions, the development of affective ties, and the development of interdependence or roles (DeLamater, 1976). By *interaction* it is intended the contact and face-to-face relationship developed between group members and how this contact affects each-others' behaviours. There is always an exchange following an interaction, whether positive or negative, bonding or dividing, but some feelings and sensations arouse after an interaction within individuals. *Perception* refers to how the interaction influence how individuals perceive each-other and the emphasis put on the perception of these latters and how close they are to our self-perception, basically an evaluation on how probable it is to start and build a deeper knowledge and relationship with these individuals. By *affective ties* are meant the emotional reactions that are partly influenced by how the others perform their roles, whether their behaviour meets group norms (DeLamater, 1976). It goes without saying that since the affective ties are between group members, they are typical of each group and cannot generally be compared with other groups' ones. Indeed, each group has its ow internal dynamics determined by the bonds created between group and subgroups members. *Interdependence* can be viewed as basically interdependence with respect to the completion of some task(s) or goal achievement (DeLamater, 1976) and stays at the basis of group formation since the goal or objective is achievable only thanks to the group, individuals all alone could not achieve the tasks requested. It is then the main goal which gives coherence and the direction the group is oriented towards, as well as the structure and the consequent roles. These variables need not to be conceptualized as possessing only two states, as either present or absent. Such an "all or none"; approach creates the need for arbitrary logical and empirical cut-off points, on one side of which a set of persons does not have the characteristic and is not a group, while on the other side it does and is (DeLamater, 1976). All these described are dynamics and foundations regarding the group formation, structure, and general characteristics.

Chapter 3.2 Definition of Cliques and Subgroups

While great emphasis has been put on dyadic-level relationships as athlete-athlete or coach-athlete, less attention has been directed towards the smaller groups within a team, also referred to as subgroups (Shelly, McGuire, 2020). Established literature within the broader fields of psychology and recent evidence in sport suggest subgroups play an impactful role in shaping group member experiences (e.g., Carton & Cummings, 2012; Wagstaff & Martin, 2017). Groups are an inevitable feature in the context of sport. Indeed, sport represents social activities where the outcomes of participation rely heavily on interactions between individuals (Carron & Eys, 2012; Eys et al., 2019). What is more, interactions arise not only between single individuals, but also between distinct groups within the same team: group dynamics is a term that refers to “the actions, processes, and changes that occur within and between groups” (Forsyth, 2014). The social environments that characterize sport organizations have recently received research attention in the sport setting (Wagstaff, Martin, Thelwell, 2017). This peak of attention is not to be ignored given that most sports involve groups, whether in competition or during training. Indeed, even in individual sports, athletes typically practice and compete alongside teammates and require a team of support staff, coaches, managers, and administrators to facilitate both grassroots participation and elite success (Wagstaff & Lerner, 2015). Yet, substantially less attention has been dedicated to the “groups within the group,” or as they are more commonly referred to in sport, the subgroup or the clique (Wagstaff, Martin, Thelwell, 2017). Generally speaking, recognizable smaller groupings of individuals within a larger group have been described as peer groups, cliques, and/or subgroups (e.g., Brown & Dietz, et al., 2009; Carton & Cummings, 2012; Henrich et al., 2000). Members of these smaller groupings exhibit unique structural features or behavioural tendencies that are distinct from the superordinate group (Shelly, McGuire, 2020). As unique structural features it can be intended the sum or the set of shared characteristics belonging to the specific subgroup, giving it its interdependency from the total. It is important to remember that some characteristics, behaviours or tendencies are already shared and common within the general group, as for its definition group members must have something in common, at least the purpose. Henrich (et al., 2000) help us with another definition of subgroups, describing them as “tightly knit groupings whereby members form reciprocating relationships with others”. The expression “reciprocating relationships” perfectly explains the particularly close social bonds that emerge between members of the subgroups, as they make these smaller groups more exclusive and the individuals even more interrelated between them. Because subgroups consist of at least two individuals, they can often ensure that everyone has at least one person to turn to for support (Gibson,

Vermeulen, 2003). This would be expected to act as a strong mechanism to promote perceptions of social integration among members of the team (Robert Jr., 2016). As for the definition of the “cliques”, it is the same of the subgroups, as they must be part of an already existing group and share some common features, but the perception from outside is different. Subgroup formation can hinder group performance through increased intragroup competition and decreased communication, information sharing, and motivation to contribute (Bezrukova, Thatcher, Jehn, & Spell, 2012; Lau & Murnighan, 2005; Thatcher, Jehn, & Zanutto, 2003; Thatcher & Patel, 2012). Indeed, the only thing differentiating cliques from subgroups is the negative connotation they are looked at when describing their exclusivity and dynamics, citing Martin et al., 2015: “when a subgroup no longer positively contributes to team functioning, athletes often label them as cliques”. Athletes believed cliques to be both unavoidable and variable over time and felt their emergence to be influenced by characteristics such as team cohorts, skill level, status, and individual similarities (Wagstaff et al., 2017). Cliques are then often described as antisocial and bearer of the risk of increasing conflicts within the group, leading to a decrease in productivity and a worsened overall performance. It is then up to the subgroups to have “free boarders” and being as less exclusive as they can, having the special bond that distinguishes them formed naturally and kept alive throughout spontaneous interactions. Athletes tend to describe subgroup development as an inevitable and normal process (Shelly, McGuire, 2020) that happens thanks to the similarities between members of the same teams. Groups are widespread throughout life and group memberships strongly influence individuals (Forsyth, 2014). Individuals are often not forthcoming in team settings when they believe they hold a minority viewpoint (Robert, Dennis, Ahuja, 2008). Subgroups indeed, which are composed of two or more members, can provide support to encourage team members to share their information (Lionel, Robert Jr., 2016) and ensure that at least one other person will support that opinion (Gibson, Vermeulen, 2003). This process provides opportunities to develop strong social ties with teammates, enhance team cohesion, and potentially facilitate team and individual performance (Wagstaff et al., 2017). After having ascertained that the formation of subgroups (or cliques) is an inevitable dynamic within the teams in general, even more in the sport teams where the theme of the common nationality or language facilitates this process; a deeper analysis on whether their impact on team members and overall organizations can be in both facilitative and debilitating ways, must be considered.

Chapter 3.3 The subgroups' impact within the teams

Further assessment of team components' experiences and behaviours can contribute to enriching the limited knowledge that is shared among researchers, about the impact that these subgroups have on the athletes themselves, the coaches, the staff and the overall organization. Whereas there have been recent efforts to explore subgroups in the sport context, historically, this construct has received relatively little attention because of the widespread belief that they are detrimental to team success and should be avoided at all costs (e.g., Yukelson, 1997). There are two major schools of thought on how cultural diversity may impact group functioning (Kim, Panza, Evans, 2021). According to the first one, social identity theory posits that individuals are naturally attracted towards others who are perceived to be similar (Tajfel, 1982). This identification school of thought suggests that culturally diverse groups may be more prone to conflicts and social division within the group (Kim, Panza, Evans, 2021), thus performing less effectively than groups sharing the same cultural background. On the other hand, researchers adopting an information processing perspective believe that more culturally diverse groups have more variety of resources and information available (Kim, Panza, Evans, 2021), and thus perform better than culturally homogenous groups (Mannix & Neale, 2005). The effect of being in-members of subgroups can differ, meaning that either interactions within subgroup members are preferred to the others', or that interactions with out-members tend to be avoided. As explained before, subgroups tend to be rather exclusive and the ties between subgroups' component are so tight that they can cause feelings of jealousy, envy and detachment within the whole team members, mostly those who have been left out from some subgroups' dynamics. Members in the in-group are seen as like oneself while members of the out-group are viewed as different (Lionel, Robert Jr., 2016). This is explained by the fear of rejection inherent in each one of us, that can cause sense of loneliness and exclusion, so doing impacting at the emotional level the members that are not inside the subgroup. For example, a prominent aspect of the competitive environment is the selection process, and those deselected from their intended team experience a wide range of negative psychosocial and emotional outcomes (e.g., sadness, frustration, anger; Neely, McHugh, Dunn, & Holt, 2017). These discrepancies can limit the strength and unity of members' purpose and can have detrimental consequences to the overall performance and state of health or cohesion of the team. It is also proven that membership can also promote the uptake of aggressive and delinquent behaviours among members depending on the popularity or social dominance exhibited by a group (Closson, 2009). Higher-status leaders may act more aggressively towards lower-status members to maintain conformity within the group (Shelly, McGuire, 2020) and in turn, negatively impacting group

dynamics (e.g., Closson, 2009; Ellis & Zarbatany, 2007). Although followers may be able to establish harmonious relationships with a narcissistic leader regardless the degree of the followers' narcissism, an important contingency factor may be the goal congruence between the narcissistic leader and their followers (London, 2019). Goal congruence refers to the presence of shared goals and values between followers and leaders (Bouckenooghe et al., 2015). Within sport teams, the common purpose is the outcome of the team effort, namely the performance; but as it is previously described, the negative feelings towards a subgroup (or more) could create the chance for detrimental dynamics to happen, thus negatively impacting the dispatch of the squad. Summing up, teams with subgroups can behave more like two uncooperative - or in some cases competing - halves rather than one cohesive unit (Lionel, Robert Jr., 2016). As a result, subgroup formation decreases social integration variables like trust and satisfaction and increases relationship, task, and process conflict (Li, Hambrick, 2005). Being a member of a subgroup (or more) has been associated with many positive aspects (Shelly, McGuire, 2020) as well, otherwise the formation of these smaller groups within the whole one, would not be as natural and common as it is. Positive aspects that regard both the emotional support for the subgroup's components, and the technical support and advantage that the cohesion between the latter objectively give to the overall team performance. Indeed, subgroup membership has been associated with an increase in task achievement (Shelly, McGuire, 2020), thanks to the closeness of the components that help each other with more willingness and this counterbalance the negative effect that excluded members can add to the overall team performance. What is more, the feeling of having a greater importance in responding properly to the organization's demanding is enhanced; punctuality and professionalism are improved, and absenteeism is reduced between individuals that satisfactorily belong to a group or subgroup. A great cohesion between members of the same line or department, for example, can have a significant impact on its performance, automatically improving the qualities of each component and having a beneficial impact for the whole team: in addition to the presence of subgroups based on relationships, cohort, or living arrangements, another participant discussed a clear faultline pertaining to playing positions within the team, and described them as having "pre-clique" qualities (Wagstaff et al., 2017). Not only practical, but also inner positive effects: Baumeister and Leary (1995) proposed that humans have a fundamental motive for interpersonal attachments, such as experiencing an increase in social and emotional support (Ebrahimi, 2005), gaining social support through these special boundaries and higher levels of self-esteem (Tarrant et al., 2006). Social and emotional support strengthen the ties between subgroups components, laying the foundation for quality intimate relationships in the future, as well as to enhance feelings of companionship, belongingness (Ebrahimi, 2005), and support (e.g., Tarrant et al., 2006). Indeed, perceptions of belonging have been associated with improved satisfaction, social cohesion, and motivation (Allen, 2006), making athletes readier to face precompetitive anxiety and stress: the feeling of not being alone

when facing a challenge makes individuals push further, past their limits. Uniting team members can make them exceed their performance expectations (Jonson, 2018), more specifically positive team dynamics are a competitive advantage belonging to the list of things that can affect a match; and doing as many as possible of them strengthens the chances of victory. That list includes good teamwork, unity and communication (Jonson, 2018).

Chapter 3.4 Subgroups consequences in the sport world

There are two broad reasons to advocate for a research focus on the dynamics of small groups in sport and exercise contexts (Eys, Bruner, Martin, 2020). First, groups are pervasive within physical activities: team sports and exercise classes are the primary situations evoked when considering group scenarios involving physical activity. Second, results and findings housed under the umbrella named “group dynamics”, ascertain that sport/exercise provides the contexts through which the need to belong (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) can be satisfied, and this need can also fundamentally alter the experience of physical activity (Eys, Bruner, Martin, 2020). The significance of group dynamics is salient across physical activity contexts (Eys, Bruner, Martin, 2020), similarly, Bailey, Benson, and Bruner (2017) highlighted how important organizational culture, social unity, shared experiences, and common goals were to those participating in CrossFit classes. From a practical perspective, few would argue against the strong influence that groups and group dynamics have within physical activity contexts (Eys, Bruner, Martin, 2019). Indeed, in comparison to most other types of organizational teams, sport teams have unusual clarity and consistency in terms of member ability, goals, role definitions and relationships, team structure, the rules and procedures by which they must function, and other aspects of their context (Wolfe et al., 2005). What is more, the clear structure, membership rules and public character of the teams make it easier to access data on their members. At the same time, players in these teams often have similar demographic characteristics such as gender and age (Kołodziej, 2019). These effects and dynamics just discussed, both positives and negatives, do have even more impactful consequences on teams and organisations in the sport world: teams are usually composed of relatively smaller number of athletes, compared to other sectors as can be factories, agencies, private societies and so on, where the teams are intended of many people (40, 50, 100, ...) and subgroups’ dynamics are rather easier to deal with and less impactful, without having dramatic effects on the organisation performance. Thus, the formation of subgroups of four or five members within a team of twenty athletes, can affects more the internal dynamics and the

outcome of the team effort because the “counter part of the balance” is weaker if composed of less members. It depends as well on the charismatic impact of the subgroups within the whole team and on the role the members of a specific subgroup have inside the team. As it was described before during this paper, it is demonstrated that individuals tend to install deeper relationships with people sharing similar behavioural features, and this is the case of subgroups composed of peers having in common, for example, the same personality or self-confidence. These phenomena will lead to formation of subgroups with objectively different degrees of importance in terms of impact within the team: most charismatic subgroups indeed, will be looked with a sort of “sense of respect” and distance, possibly causing envy in those who are excluded from these cliques (it is used the noun “cliques” as in this case the connotation is negative); on the other hand, though, subgroups of excluded or marginal team components would form naturally and would not have the same weight within internal dynamics of the overall group. The strong bonds that arise inside the subgroups’ dynamics tend to strengthen and improve the performance of the single smaller group, while it can be detrimental for the overall performance if subgroups within the same team “play against each other”, meaning that the feelings of envy, resentment or distrust often influence negatively the outcome of the team effort. This is why organisations in general, managers and staff in specific, tend to invest lots of time and resources in the management of group dynamics and human resources (athletes, at the end of the day, are the labour force of the teams); notably, coaches reflect on the extensive efforts taken to maintain awareness of team members' relationships and groupings, with the intention of obtaining an insight to the team's social environment (Wagstaff, Martin, Thelwell, 2017). With so doing, the organisation’s staff aim to promote potential benefit coming out of the inevitable formation of subgroups and both to limit the negative outcomes of the cliques. In the literature on MCTs¹, leadership is not often specified as crucial for team performance, although it is frequently concluded that management matters (Zander & Butler, 2010), highlighting how team leaders play an important role in facilitating interaction between team members and resolving conflicts (Hajro & Pudelko, 2010).

Chapter 3.5 The origins of conflict within teammates

In a search of subject indices in various sport psychology textbooks, the term “conflict” failed surprisingly to emerge (Lavoie, et al., 2007), considering the presence of conflict as inevitable in any group (Robbins & Judge, 2010), as well as in any part of life and relationships, thus an important phenomenon to be understood in sport teams (Lavoie, et al., 2007). Conflict is then defined as *interference behaviour* reflected by incompatibilities and interpersonal interference or obstruction (e.g., Alper, Tjosvold, & Law, 2000). Wall and Callister (1995) described conflict as “a process by which one party perceives that its interests are being opposed or negatively affected by another party”. What is more, conflict has been defined by the existence of *negative emotions* in task and social situations (e.g., Jehn, 1994; Bodtker & Jameson, 2001). A third perspective views conflict “simply” as disagreement, meaning discrepant views or interpersonal incompatibilities (Paradis, Carron, Martin, 2014). It is important to start with the origins of team conflict as the exploration of the ‘whys’ takes the research behind the mounting evidence that conflict is not uniform, shared, or static (Shah, Peterson, Jones, Ferguson, 2020). The different origins clarify the understanding of why conflict experiences and perceptions tend to differ among team members, and perhaps why the link between task conflict and performance has been so elusive (Shah, Peterson, Jones, Ferguson, 2020). Teams' scholars have historically conceptualized and measured intragroup conflict at the team level, but emerging evidence suggests that perceptions of intragroup conflict are often not uniform, shared, or static (Shah *et al.*, 2020). That is to say that discrepancies do not only emerge at the team level, even though intragroup conflict is a team level perceived “state of discord” (McGrath, 1984; Hackman, 1987; Jehn, Northcraft, and Neale, 1999; De Dreu and Weingart, 2003), but originate at individual, dyadic or subgroup levels as well. First, an origin implies an attributional account of the source of the conflict—that is, we can identify one or more individuals who drive the conflict experiences for the team (Shah *et al.*, 2020). In case of an individual source, it is the single team component that instigates or evokes conflict with other members, so doing, invalidating the overall group functioning (Felps, Mitchell, and Byington, 2006: 180): their low level of agreeableness causes them to disregard interpersonal relationships; their lack of conscientiousness causes them to show minimal concern about contributing to team tasks; and their emotional instability restricts their ability to manage external stressors - all of which create turmoil that potentially spreads through the team (LePine et al., 1997; Barrick et al., 1998; Neuman and Wright, 1999; Bono et al., 2002). The dyad conflict, instead, regards discrepancies in the relationship between two members of the team, without the direct involvement of other group components. Several studies advocate for the importance of dyadic

conflict as an origin of team conflict (Shah *et al.*, 2020), with this type of conflict being the most relevant context in which team conflict is expressed and experienced (Humphrey *et al.*, 2017) because of the lack of agreement and trust it causes between the two directly involved and consequences as miscommunications and misunderstanding that affect the overall team performance as well. The third shade of intragroup conflict is at the subgroup's level, and it is the one that interests this work the most: narratively, subgroups may be the origin of intragroup conflict when it occurs across two or more factions within a team (Shah *et al.*, 2020). It is the result of multiple studies (Jehn, Northcraft, and Neale, 1999; Pelled, Eisenhardt, and Xin, 1999; Polzer, Milton, and Swarm, 2002; Carton and Cummings, 2012) investigating team diversity dynamics that ascertained how different characteristics and points of interest among subgroups can lead to an internal conflict. This literature suggests that demographic and non-demographic attributes can divide a team into subgroups across faultlines (Shah *et al.*, 2020), particularly when faultlines emerge in a similar form across multiple attributes (Lau and Murnighan, 1998), with nationality of the athletes being a reason for the formation of subgroups sharing indeed the same roots thus the same interests or typical behaviours. The fourth and last level of analysis of intragroup conflict concerns the team as a whole: whole team conflict as a point of origin is a pattern in which most team members are in direct conflict with each other (Shah *et al.*, 2020). A great part, namely the majority, of team components are behaviourally involved in the conflict, denoting a general disagreement and incompatibilities among the group without the possibility of discerning single, dyadic or subgroup factions within the whole. Whole team conflict then represents a routinized pattern of interactions (Marks, Mathieu, and Zaccaro, 2001).

Chapter 3.5.1 Nationality fault line and subgrouping

In the second chapter of this thesis, the attention has been brought to the sphere of the cultural differences between individuals, and to the management of the multiculturalism between the components of a team, more specifically, teams in the world of sports. As all the features housed under the umbrella of the diversity management, multiculturalism has its positive and negative sides as well. That being said, the focus of the third chapter changed towards the natural formation of subgroups within the whole team and their consequences in terms of team's dynamics and outcome, as for example conflicts that may arise and the management of the latter because of nationality differences and the subgroups attitudes toward the whole team.

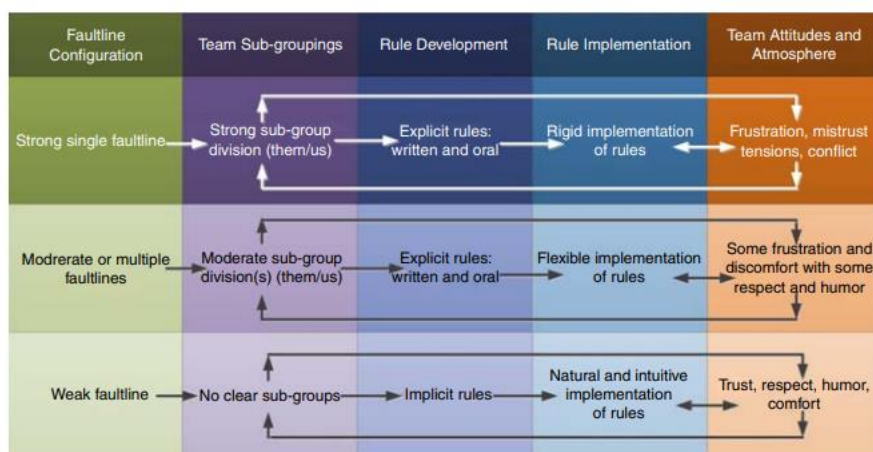


Figure 2. Interplay of rules, faultline configurations, and team dynamics (Vigier, Spencer-Oatey, 2017)

Faultlines, by definition, reflect the potential of a team to fracture into subgroups. According to Lau and Murnighan (1998), they lie dormant in a group until activated by some event: faultlines emerge through processes of self-categorization, social identification, and similarity–attraction whereby individuals within teams notice and identify with others who are similar (Lau & Murnighan, 1998). When faultlines are activated, Lau and Murnighan describe consequences that include subgroup awareness, formation, polarization and conflict, but they are not explicit about the sequence of events (Cramton, Hinds, 2005). Contrary to previous beliefs, it is not the total amount of diversity in a group that threatens social integration, rather it is the extent to which key attributes of members are correlated instead of cutting across membership (Lau, Murnighan, 1998) that facilitates the natural formation of subgroups. A realistic and actual example of key attribute, though faultline, for the division in smaller groups within the team is the nationality of the team components. The role of nationality and national diversity of sports teams in their effectiveness was the subject of numerous analyses (e.g., Prat, 2002; Brandes, Prank, Theiler, 2009; Franck, Nüesch, 2010; Kahane, Longley, Simmons, 2013; Ingersoll, Malesky, Saiegh, 2017). As already highlighted in the first chapter, an important factor for athletes to migrate and/or change team is whether there is the presence or not of compatriots or, at least, people speaking their same mother tongue: that is for sure a facilitating factor in the initial phases of introduction to the new environment and a possibility to create stronger and special bonds with teammates for the future. People in general, athletes in this particular case, are then instinctively led to interact more with team members sharing as many common features as possible; and being language the first and most important tool to interact between each other with, those sharing it are naturally brought to install immediate bonds: language proficiency has been long recognized as arguably the most foundational communication skill in multinational teams; without the ability to speak a language, skills like nuance, tact and other communication techniques are

frequently out of reach (Szymanski, Alon, Kalra, 2021). As already ascertained, grouping (or subgrouping) inside teams is a natural happening phenomenon and, being people sharing the same language naturally led to instantly match, one of the most common subgroup's types are the ones composed by compatriots. If that is the case though, that is to say nationality is beneficial for athletes both in the embryonic phase and in the future relationship with teammates, why is this phenomenon, cause of conflicts as well, and responsible for the creation of subgroups that deteriorate into cliques? This is the question on which is based the interrogation and deepening of this work, in order to answer through the analysis of antecedent case studies and actual interviews to this dilemma.

Chapter 3.5.2 Ethnic subgroups conflict

The natural tendency for people to categorize themselves and compare themselves with others can lead to the stereotyping of others and subsequent polarization of distinct social groups (Timmerman, 2000). Therefore, social categorization theory would predict that groups of people of different races and/or ages would be less productive because of the conflict and lack of cooperation produced by the stereotyping (Timmerman, 2000). All else being equal, groups of similar people should exhibit less internal conflict and greater task performance, with similar people intended those who share the same cultural or social background. Cultural diversity means the representation of majority and minority groups in a society according to their historical family wealth and political influence; it makes a distinction among ethnicity, race, colour, gender, and wealth (Parhizgar, 2002). Cultural diversity emphasizes dissimilarities among people; it emphasizes this notion that we are more different than we are similar (Narkhede, 2014). Lau and Murnighan's (1998) theory that conflict is a direct outcome of faultlines is supported for relationship and process conflict by many empirical studies (e.g., Bezrukova et al., 2009; Li & Hambrick, 2005; Polzer, Crisp, Jarvenpaa, & Kim, 2006), and subgroups formed on ethnicity bases as a faultline, commonly have the strongest ties within subgroup components, as sharing not only the language but having common behaviours, rituals and beliefs as well, leaves an important mark on the strength and dept of the relationship. It is the strength of these bonds between subgroups components that could represent a threat to the serendipity of the whole group though: very cohesive and united subgroups could be reluctant to the welcoming of new members, even more if these subgroups are composed by compatriots only. Considering that interdependent sport is characterized by competition between teams, general discourse pertaining to any division within a team has largely been seen as problematic (Martin, McGuire, Robertson, Saizew, 2020). This general premise is supported in the broader team building literature, where

factions or cliques were seen to divide loyalties or cause disconnect (Yukelson, 1997). Indeed, a specific outcome desired from team building has been the reduction or elimination of deleterious group properties (i.e., cliques; Brawley & Paskevich, 1997). While gender inequality is the oldest and most common diversity issue worldwide, religion and ethnicity separate people in India and Middle East and household status (hukou) differentiates off-farm migrants from urbanites in China, indeed Chinese rural migrants are routinely looked down on by urbanites and mistreated at the workplace and in society (Shen, Chanda, D'Netto, Monga, 2009). From here it is immediate and intuitive the link to the negative side effects that the exclusion from a group can have on individuals both emotionally and as part of a team that must work together in order to perform. The complexity of acculturation trajectories was fore fronted by showing how some migrants confronted racism, exclusion, and damaging stereotypes while simultaneously feeling disconnected from their ethnic communities as well as experienced marginalisation, identity crisis, and acculturative stress upon their return to their community of origin (Ryba, Stambulova, Elbe, Schinke, 2017), in this case represented by compatriots within the team. The difficulties faced by players of various racial backgrounds invite the possibility for 'ethnic subgroups' to emerge in multicultural sports teams (Khomutova, 2015); a process which is potentially conducive to isolation and/or conflict among separate groups of players (see Greenfield et al. 2002). It is true that the formation of subgroups based on ethnicity is not uncommon in culturally diverse groups in various contexts (Sidanius et al. 1999) and has been reported to adversely impact on wider group communication and team relationships (Panteli and Davison 2005) while possibly leading to conflict based on racial/ ethnic grounds (Greenfield et al. 2002). Recent studies have demonstrated how subgroups would be expected to have strong negative effects on social integration in teams high in either racial or gender diversity (Robert Jr., 2016). In these teams, the formation of subgroups is likely due to the strong presence of either race or gender differences. This sets the stage for two potential problems: first, both racial and gender diversity in virtual teams have been found to decrease the ability of virtual teams to develop a common identity (Robert, 2013); second, this common identity has been found to be a key factor in overcoming the tendency of team members to notice harsher dispositional attributes about, and lower cooperative behaviours toward, their teammates (Hinds, P.J., Mortensen, 2005). It is the case thus, that perceptions of subgroup formation in teams high in racial and gender diversity are likely to be associated with a more divisive team environment (Bos, Buyuktur, Olson J.S., Olson G.M., Voids, 2010). This makes for cold and potentially unpleasant interaction (Robert Jr., 2016) that can leave team members feeling less satisfied and less engaged with the team (Olson J.S., Olson G.M., 2000). Understanding how such dynamics impact upon the cohesiveness of professional sports teams is therefore of great importance in grasping the contemporary experience of athletes and their coaches

(Khomutova, 2015). It is rather intuitive to link these problematics to the formation of subgroups composed by members with the same cultural backgrounds as they often share the same challenges: it is indeed the case, according to other previous work in this area (Lawrence 2005; Melendez 2008; Orbe 1994), that an assumed need for Black American athletes to communicate with other Black Americans who are expected to have better understanding of their particular problems or situations (Khomutova, 2015), is common to happen. In addition, the difficulties faced by players of various racial backgrounds in similar situations invite the possibility for ‘ethnic subgroups’ to emerge in multicultural sports teams; a process which is potentially conducive to isolation and/or conflict among separate groups of players (Greenfield et al., 2002). Indeed, the formation of ethnic subgroups is not uncommon in culturally diverse groups in various contexts (Sidanius et al. 1999) and has been reported to adversely impact on wider group communication and team relationships (Panteli and Davison 2005) while possibly leading to conflict based on racial/ethnic grounds (Greenfield et al. 2002). Understanding how such dynamics impact upon the cohesiveness of professional sports teams is therefore of great importance in grasping the contemporary experience of athletes and their coaches (Khomutova, 2015).

Chapter 3.5.3 A. Khomutova’s case study analysis about Black Americans basketball players

Anastasiya Khomutova wrote in 2015 an article in the “Sport in Society Cultures, Commerce, Media, Politics”, trying to address a gap in research regarding the perspectives of coaches working within European teams comprising both domestic and immigrated players (Khomutova, 2015). The study regarded semi-structured, face-to-face interviews about the coaches’ experiences in working with multicultural teams. The interviews were conducted with six head coaches of professional basketball teams in Central and Northern Europe (two in Czech Republic, two in Germany, two in Latvia) and analysed using qualitative thematic analysis. The findings, that will be further explained, shed a light on three main outcomes: differences in values between foreign and domestic players/coaches; the formation of ethnic subgroups in teams; and race as a potentially problematic factor in coach–athlete relationships (Khomutova, 2015).

Table 1. Participants' information.

Name	Country of current team	Gender of current team
CO1	Latvia	Male
CO2	Latvia	Female
CO3	Germany	Male
CO4	Germany	Female
CO5	Czech Republic	Male
CO6	Czech Republic	Male

Figure 3, Interviews participants' information, Khomutova, 2015

This table sums up some information about the participants, regarding their nationality and the gender of the team they were coaching at the moment of the interviews.

Khomutova affirmed that the teams selected were such because of their habits to acquire and employ international athletes, whose presence was fundamental for her work and the subsequent interviews. All participants were professionals with at least 5 years of experience and were working in teams competing in the highest leagues of their respective countries (Khomutova, 2015).

The first and most common issue noticed is the different approach between the immigrated and local players with the latter having a more collectivistic orientation and the foreign a more individualistic one. This difference might create enough distance between the attitudes to come up as an obstacle for the acculturation of the immigrated players and limit the amalgam that a multicultural team must create in order to perform and compete with more cohesive teams. Indeed, the interviewed coaches all mentioned that they prefer a 'team-oriented' or collectivistic approach, which urges players to cooperate at a high level and share possession of the ball, and generally prefer strong team performance instead of stand-out individual action (Khomutova, 2015). The tendency of Black American athletes to stick with an individualistic mentality is a common outcome resulting from the interviews made to the coaches, even if operating in different regions and with different sexes. This orientation was said to be detrimental to the ideal atmosphere within the team and having multiple players sharing these behaviours could be the source of different problematics. As noticed, both male and female Black American players had this tendency of prevailing among the others, caring more to the self than to the team, denoting an evident influence of their cultural background. Coaches largely attributed the individualistic orientation of American players to their education or training which they had received at home, and in this sense, working with Americans was considered notably different to working with other migrant players (Khomutova, 2015). This is another reason why the formation of ethnic subgroups is more natural to happen: common behaviours are driver of an instinctive closeness between individuals, even more in new environment where rules and methods are far from being

usual and only part of the team or single components share the same cultural heritage. Extending from this, a consequence of the individualistic mentality of some components can directly negatively influence some other components: coaches frequently noted that the impact upon the local (i.e. non-migrant) players was such to make them feel side-lined by the arrival of foreign ‘star’ players (Khomutova, 2015). Envy and other feelings of detachment can arise inside other athletes’ minds and lead to the formation of subsequent subgroups, driven not by common behaviours but by the emotions felt. Ties in this way will be weaker compared to the ones uniting compatriots, but still having detrimental effects on the wellbeing of the team. To fight between subgroups for a place under the spotlights can have nothing but negative consequences and it is up to the coaches and the organization (or team) management to deal with these events. Khomutova (2015) reported that coaches tried two different solutions regarding these problematics: the first one is to give their top performers (Black American athletes in this case) the place they deserve, opting for the interest of their best athletes and trying with a different communicational approach towards the excluded components; the second strategy used by coaches when addressing differences between individual and collectivistic value difference involved trying to change the attitudes of individualistically oriented migrant players (Khomutova, 2015), which implies the limited reciprocity approach to acculturation (Schinke and McGannon 2014). By explaining to them the importance of playing like a cohesive team and thus being successful, such coaches aimed to reorient their migrant players to place team’s interests on the first place, over their personal recognition. Once again, Khomutova’s study (2015) highlighted how the ethnic background can be an important factor in coach–athlete relationships; for example, Black players may bond better with Black coaches, expecting to receive a higher degree of empathy from the coaches of the same race group (Jowett and Frost 2007), and are more likely to experience incivility from White head coaches (Cunningham, Miner, and McDonald 2013). It is indeed a problem remarked during the interviews by the coaches (all white Europeans) the one about the interference of the races difference between themselves and the Black American athletes as race became an important factor alongside cultural differences in framing the experience of working with a multicultural (Khomutova,2015). Even if it is a common thing then to perceive American athletes as more individualistic, regardless from their race, it is then true though that Black American are told as the most difficult to work with, not only because of their inner individualism but for their laziness as well. Solomon (et al., 1996) realized a study regarding the expectations that coaches have of working with athletes from diverse ethnic backgrounds, and how this can influence the relationships towards their players. The work of Khomutova (2015) confirms how the inner preconceptions about habits and behaviours of foreigners influence the perceptions about their attitude and how these preconceptions interfere in the players selection firstly and in the introduction processes secondly: “We specifically select American players to have a good character. It’s a coach’s job. Whether he [a

player] likes to go out, is he married and has kids. Because usually Black players come to Europe and go out to bars, having lots of attention from girls. We don't need that" said one of the interviewed coaches during the colloquia. Other interviews revealed how players themselves, without the influence of the staff and their attitudes towards them, formed ethnic subgroups: "In one team in Poland I had four Americans, two Lithuanians, one player from Montenegro, one from Macedonia, two Serbians and around four to five Poles. I came to the club in the mid-season, and they had groups in the teams. Poles hated Americans, because they couldn't speak their language. Americans hated Poles; thought they can't play basketball. Two Lithuanians were aside, they didn't know what to do. Serbians made their own Balkan gang of all the players from former Yugoslavia". Here again, the inner instinct of feeling like superstars by American players, made them perceive the other team components as inferior and not worthy of belonging to their same elitist group of "the bests". While this happens because of perceived difference in the talent of the athletes, the formation of other subgroups happens, instead, thanks to shared origins of athletes speaking the same mother tongue. These subgroups prevented the team from creating a cohesive and stimulating environment. Their perception of unequal status led to conflicts in the team between the immigrated and local (Polish) players as well as wider inter-group tension, which, according to the coach, drastically undermined team cohesiveness and resulted in the team constantly losing games (Khomutova, 2015). Similar conclusions were reported by other coaches, which tried to isolate or remove the components causing the major problems as a solution for overcoming the divisive consequences of such fragmentation. Some other (coaches) tried to intervene at the source, with this meaning at the selection phases indagating about athlete's past relationships with teammates and the overall organization, his/her personal side and the style of communication, in order to avoid the access of athletes who could create detrimental dynamics by leading the formation of cliques (ethnic ones usually). Meanwhile, other emerging strategies around attempts to find some common ground or common goals for all the players were tempted in order to build a more integrated team with a stronger mutual identity (Khomutova, 2015). It is then more than evident how the formation of cliques, especially ethnic, grounded ones, has to be avoided or limited and how different method all point to a common solution: improving the cohesion of the team in order to create a better environment and aiming to winning in case of competitive teams. It has been reported to be a positive strategy thus, to set common goals that encounter the interests of both indigenous and immigrated athletes: according to Martin, Carron and Burke (2009), team goal setting is considered to be one of the most effective interventions for team building regardless of the group.

Chapter 3.6 Miscommunication and language problems

In order to unite cultures and people belonging to those cultures, language and communication are the ultimate tools to transmit the values and habits pertaining to each cultural background. It goes without saying that the verbal (and non-verbal as well) communication is a typical and often unique trait of each culture that enables people to identify themselves within a culture or region rather than others. Consequently, as already anticipated during this work, in a group filled with unknown members, individuals will be attracted by someone sharing their culture or their mother tongue at worst. Therefore, communication can be seen as the cause of ethnic subgroups formation within the whole team. Communication is very important in all aspects of life, especially in a team, whether it is a sports team or not (Lovin, Căpățînă, 2020). During some interviews realized by the latter (Lovin and Căpățînă) towards two women's volleyball teams from Romania and Belgium, it emerged from Charleroi's walon coach that, according to his experience, the most difficult thing in a multicultural team is communication. "Linguistic differences create as many problems as cultural differences" stated Galati's coach during an interview (2020), as the first and most immediate way to communicate is by dialogue: without having a common language to communicate with, it would be rather impossible to install meaningful conversations and pass the original message to the team components. Any player who wants to play abroad must learn English, thus, in the context of globalization, including players who do not necessarily want to play abroad are forced to learn English in order to communicate with those on the team and to understand the message of the coach when he transmits the instructions in English (Lovin, Căpățînă, 2020). It is indeed necessary not only for foreign players to acquire some communication skills and learn English at least, but for local players as well, in order to better communicate with foreigners. To support these statements, the Romanian coach goes on to say that most foreign players who do not speak English fail to adapt (Lovin, Căpățînă, 2020), ending hopelessly to form the subgroup of the excluded ones, creating a negative environment for them and the whole team. It can happen though, that some are contoured by some colleagues of them speaking their native language, colleagues that act as a way through to the general dynamics and understandings of the team. There are also rarer situations in which cultural proximity can compensate for the lack of language skills: it is the case for European emigrated athletes in the US, Asia or Middle-East countries, where clearly they are outnumbered, and finding some colleagues of them belonging to the same area thus culture, even if not speaking the same mother tongue, can be relieving and help them through the first phases of adaptation. Miscommunication and language problematics are not only a challenge for the whole team, but it can cause problems also for the selfish and lazy attitudes of some athletes: it often happens that foreign players take advantage of the fact that they do not understand the language in order to evade certain tasks or to evade the efficient performance of tasks

(Lovin, Căpățină, 2020). An efficient solution to this is said to be the offer of many motor explanations, the body language being thus extraordinarily important, mostly in the sport industry. It is intended that this technique works better in sporting environment or jobs where the practice is rather physical and mechanical, rather than thinking and abstract-related jobs. The same problem arises when the laziness of foreign players makes them reluctant to speak the local language and subgroups composed by foreign compatriots are seen as niches or cliques as their talking is not understandable by others. Indeed, a practical case is such as some Romanian local players feel frustrated when they hear foreign players communicate in a language they do not understand (Lovin, Căpățină, 2020); on the other hand, foreign players may feel excluded or marginalized when the native language is spoken excessively. In order to limit these situations as much as possible, when it is a group issue, it is discussed in English (the language common to all players), while in private discussions each discusses in native (Lovin, Căpățină, 2020). What is more, international players with past experiences abroad, should help each other and the local colleagues when the necessity to speak English arises and find a common point where all athletes are at ease.

FOURTH CHAPTER

REAL CASES STUDY THROUGH QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Chapter 4.1 Premises

In the fourth chapter of this thesis, some real case studies will be presented and analysed, namely some face-to-face interviews with coaches of different teams belonging to the sport world, in order not only to comprehend and get in direct contact with the staff responsible about the team management; but what is more, to hear direct witnesses of subgroup formation, ethnic subgrouping and how language affect all these dynamics. This research is indeed focused on the understanding of how to manage properly the diversity present in every team, the proper techniques, or methods, to collect and share consequently successful plan in order to deal with cultural differences among team members and athletes, in this particular case. All the information collected will be listed and divided according to the subject highlighted during a specific part of the interview, in order to be more easily separated and allow a confrontation between the cases and experiences of the coaches. The confrontation will hopefully allow to cover different aspects of the same problematic – namely ethnic subgroups formation and its consequences – and shed a brighter light to this uncovered topic, being this the scope of this work. Conclusions and limitations will then exhaustively explain the findings and future implications of this thesis, in order for future studies to have a starting point or a work to compare their findings with. Research methods, participants and results will be fully presented in the following paragraphs as well.

Chapter 4.2 Explanation of research methods and display of the interviews.

Globalization, culture, cultural adaptation and leaps, diversity, multiculturalism, emigration, new encounters and habits, people, teams, team sports. All these elements here listed have in common one thing: the single individual, who is experiencing them. After the analysis of how people and athletes

in particular, are affected by the globalization and live throughout it, having ascertained how multiculturalism is present in much of everyone's encounters and social moments, the direct experience of the individual and their point of view is what really matters. In order to fully understand, comprehend and explain what the diversity management and the role of subgroups in sport team really are. This study focuses then on the following research question: which are the reasons behind the subgroups fracturing, the cultural proximity within ethnic subgroups and, eventually, the management of culturally diverse teams. Our research methodology is based on semi-structured interviews with local coaches with years of experience on the field and on the management of groups, with them being locals because of time and contacts constraints. Despite the fact of them being locals, they still have the experience and the cases needed for research purposes. The objective stated in the precedent lines can be pursued using this technique, which is indeed a guided conversation and an inquiry tool typical of qualitative research. It is a methodology that leaves room for personal narrativity, aiding in the understanding of complex real phenomena, while adhering to the framework based on the theory (Corbetta, 2003). Individual interviews allowed indeed the interviewees to speak freely and fully about their stories and experiences. As interviewer, the interaction was similar to an informal chat, in order to keep the dialogue as natural as possible, but enough "professional" to gather useful information in order to build some case studies. Each interview took around half an hour, in order to allow participants to enrich with plenty of details their answers and gave important clues for the purpose of this work, with only one of them being made at the phone (with Francesca, living in Parma), because of organizational constraints. Each coach worked (some still do) in different context and different sports, allowing this work to cover a vaster "territory" in terms of variance of sports, age-range and sex of team members. What is more, their age and experiences are different, allowing this work to evaluate and propose some novelties in this research topic from different perspectives, with a comprehensive view on the cultural diversity management inside multicultural team sports. The complete structure of the interviews is reported in the Appendix. Being the qualitative research the chosen tool for this work, coding becomes the analytic methodology to be applied to the interviews realized. This method allows researchers to assemble, categorize and select the appropriate macro themes within the amount of collected data in order to provide a meaningful structured framework on which to work. Thanks to this deep analysis, macro arguments and common theme are individuated, to give a logical and sequential order to the display of the data and information. One of the main problems of conducting interpretive qualitative research is to decide an appropriate starting point for the research, and the basic framework within which the data will be collected and analysed (Lawrence, Tar, 2013). It not only generates large amount of data, but it generates data in a non-standard format which makes analysis problematic (Turner, 1983).

The goal of grounded theory is thus seeking a theory that is intimately tied with the evidence, so that the resultant theory is likely to be consistent with empirical data (Orlikowski 1993; Eisenhardt 1989). Data collection, coding rationale, integration of categories, abstracting from the data and construction of theory are thus guided by theory as it emerges (Lawrence, Tar, 2013). The use of grounded theory is founded on the premise that the generation of theory at various levels is indispensable for a deep understanding of social phenomena (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Glaser 1978). In grounded theory research indeed, three are the basic types of coding: open, axial and selective (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). These three-levels analysis allow the research: (a) to present the data without interpretation and abstraction, the participants tell their own story; (b) to create a rich and believable descriptive narrative using field notes, interview transcripts and researcher interpretations; and (c) building a theory using high levels of interpretation and abstraction (Lawrence, Tar, 2013). Coding gets the researcher off the empirical level by fracturing the data, and then conceptually grouping it into codes that then become the theory which explains what is happening in the data (Glaser, 1978).

Two of the three methods were used in this thesis, as the selective one has been excluded for the purpose of this work. The first one being the *open coding*, namely the analytic process through which concepts are identified and their properties and dimensions are discovered in data (Lawrence, Tar, 2013). During open coding the data are broken down into discrete parts, closely examined, and compared for similarities and differences, and questions are asked about the phenomena as reflected in the data (Corbin and Strauss, 1990). The researcher compares incident to incident with the purpose of establishing the underlying uniformity and its varying conditions (Glaser, 1978). In this thesis, the open coding consisted in the analysis of the single interviews, in order to perform a deep analysis of the answers, individuate and highlight similarities or differences within the responses and conceptualize the labels for the four main categories forming the structure of the analysis. The second method being the *axial coding*, namely a methodology that helps building up link within sub-categories and test the relationship among them. It is termed "axial" because coding occurs around the axis of a category, linking categories at the level of properties and dimensions (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Comparison enables the identification of variations in the patterns to be found in the data (Lawrence, Tar, 2013). It is indeed what happened in the second part of the analysis, when after the individuation of the first-order theme categories, the link between them enabled us to structure second-order categories or themes, being them the pervading globalization, the subgroup formation among team components, ethnic subgroups and their consequences within a team and, lastly, the different method adopted in order to manage a multicultural team, according to the coaches interviewed.

The first coach interviewed is Luca, he's 65 years old and has been coaching basketball in professional and semi-professional teams, with his biggest achievement coaching in the 3rd division (Serie B) of the Italian championship. He has a great experience in working with boys and men and has a precise and experienced methodology in working within multicultural contexts. Francesca, 45 years old, is a young and brilliant woman coaching volleyball in Parma, where she actually lives, even though she started from a little hamlet in the province of Padua and has been coaching for nine years now, starting from the younger girls (under 9) and now coaching in the Serie B2. For the first two coaches I would like to keep their surnames unsaid as asked by the interviewees themselves. The third coach interviewed is Gianluca Alloisi, 37 years old, born and raised in Padua where he has coached for 7 years, dealing with football teams at amateurish level in the local area. He has an interesting approach towards the subgroups as he sees no positive aspects of having divisions within the team. As for the last interview, I would like to say a special thanks to the handball sports club "Cellini Padova" as I had the honour and chance to interview the founder, Mauro Marchionni, who at 71 years old still coach and govern the club, coaching for as long as 45 years. "Cellini Padova" is the point of reference for what concerns the feminine handball in Padua, being alive since 1984. After the analysis of the interviews and precise research through them in order to find analogies or discrepancies compared to what can be learned from the literature, four main topics emerged, that can represent the core of this research and the base for future works on the management of cultural diversity within team sports.

Chapter 4.3 First theme: the pervading globalization

In order to follow the footprints of this thesis, after the presentation, each coach has been asked about its considerations on the globalization as a general phenomenon and its consequences in their lives, experiences and teams they coached more specifically, with this meaning the degree of internationalization of the teams and the cultural diversity brought by the migrating flows of people that affect the mixed cultural pot in every country. As a consequence of people's flows, and in order to satisfy the needs of migrants too, not only new customs have arrived in the cities, brought by people and their culture, but exotic foods and beverages have been introduced in the commerce as well: *"Globalization has certainly affected our life, my life for sure as I'm beginning to be in the oldest part of the population now. When I was younger, there was not the same availability of items, food, or people from outside your country, most of the product were "made in Italy" and it was rare to share the class or the team you played a sport in, with so many foreigners"*.

As reported by Francesca though, it is still uncommon in some hamlets or small country villages to find as much different cultures and nationalities as you normally encounter in big cities or commercial sites. It is indeed the flow of money, the number of working opportunities and sometimes, sadly, the mental closure of some reluctant venues to push migrant towards the welcoming arms of the big cities, as well as a nurtured presence of compatriots and other minorities.

“Globalization is, at least for my experience, more of an actual reality than a surprising phenomenon nowadays. The thing that I noted though, coming from a little city in the province of Padua (Este), is that the number of foreign athletes more than doubles in bigger and more commercial cities, symptom of how foreigners tend to migrate where they have the biggest chances to find a work and a higher flow of money and opportunities for their families.” She reported, when asked about globalization and its influence in her life as a person and as a coach. *“It is true though, that in the latest years it is more present than ever as a phenomenon, sushi and ethnic restaurants are everywhere, there are ethnic minorities and communities even in Padua or smaller cities and this gives the dimension of how much migration has brought cultures everywhere, without grounded borders anymore”;* *“Globalization is an evolving phenomenon, never stopping to change the shades of our cities and the composition of our neighbourhoods. For what concerns globalization and its effects, considering people and athletes migration, I can tell that foreign athletes started to come back in the late nineties, but really few cases. The “boom” happened in the first years of the new millennium [...]”.* Alloisi and Marchionni in this order, when asked about globalization and its consequences. Alloisi and Marchionni confirmed what has been said by others, though adding some confirmations on how this phenomenon is now more present than in the past, confirming the trends of these last years as seen in the first chapter, not only globally but locally as well.

Chapter 4.3.1 Second theme: subgroup formation and internal dynamics

Internationally distributed teams are an ideal context in which to understand the formation, dynamics, and effects of subgroups within work teams; and although the members are interdependent, these teams frequently are composed of two or more collocated subgroups (Cramton, Hinds, 2005). It is part of the focus of this thesis to investigate factors likely to promote or mitigate fracturing between subgroups, and consider the reason behind subgroup formation, the components of different subgroups, to evaluate the impact on task effectiveness and internal dynamics, lastly and most

importantly how to effectively manage this fraction of the whole, namely the team, and the diversities present within each team. Building from Lau and Murnighan's (1998) definition of faultlines, concept already anticipated in chapter 3, we do not only take acknowledgement that alignment of team members' demographic attributes increases the likelihood of subgroup dynamics (Cramton, Hinds, 2005), but we extend this thesis into the global panorama where internationally distributed teams give birth to ethnic subgroups more and more frequently, even more in competitive sectors as the sports' ones. The context in which interviews were made is without a doubt local, but thanks to the globalization, the presence of different nationalities thus ethnicities is spread worldwide. This is another reason why this work begins with the explanation of globalization and its consequences. It is indeed the case that all the four interviewed coaches had the chance to work within multicultural context, no matter their workplace. During the interviews though, two recurring themes emerged that confirm what literature has found: the natural formation of subgroups and the age-proximity as approaching factor.

“Subgroups were evident, and to my experience, it is natural to be in this way: some people just get better along with others, some others simply follow the “charismatic leader”, some unite because of physical characteristics, interests, or their role in the team...” tells Luca. According to Francesca, especially in the younger lads where maturity still needs to be achieved by many, charisma, and age proximity are the leading aspects when talking about driving factors: *“It usually happens with the younger team, where the girls are immature still and with a personality still to be formed, that subgroups emerge for age-proximity factors”*. This factor is still valid though, even for adult members of the teams she coached and seems to have positive hints in the literature as well: *“What's more, within the team I coach at the moment, younger athletes tend to be closer to their age peers because of the energy and time they have, while girls with families or intense working careers, have different rhythms and priorities in life, being these commonalities, a meeting point bringing them closer. Age is without any doubts an approaching factor in my experience.”* Aloisi as well confirmed the presence of subgroups during the entire duration of his career, even though only local, and highlights how often the new members that struggle to integrate, form a natural subgroup: *“Subgroups have always been present at the beginning of every season and it is normal to be in this way: newcomers need to adapt and know the others [...]”*.

Outside of the box is the answer of Marchionni who, since the foundation till these days, affirm how the creation of subgroup did not manifest as phenomenon in its sports club, partly because of the elevate number of foreigners, partly because most of the athletes play together since the early age: *“As for my experience, subgroups have never been a major issue as the girls are very close as a whole group, they spend plenty of time together, they tell me about their holidays together and dinners or*

social events are always tools to create an even stronger group. They've grown here with their teammates so little subgroups are the last thing that could be born in this club. I am very proud of this aspect, namely the closeness that has been created by the girls at all levels. To be honest, more than the athletes, parents and families form subgroups as African parents stick to communicate with Africans, Italians with Italians, and so on...". Here another aspect comes to our knowledge, namely the problematics related to parents and families and their approach towards culturally mixed realities.

We suggest though, for future studies and literature, to investigate this latest aspect emerged and its consequences on athletes' relationships, thus team dynamics. As shown by results, subgroup formation is not always the rule, it is though very frequent to happen for plenty of reasons: newcomers that need to adapt, long-lasting relationships that strengthen with time, age, or interests' proximity and so forth. The reason that seems to be more frequent though, because of the globalization's influence over people migration and a multicultural reality is the presence of diverse ethnicities inside the teams and the proximity between people of the same culture, nationality, or language spoken. This aspect will be further investigated in the next paragraph.

Chapter 4.3.2 Third theme: positive and negative aspects of ethnic subgroups

In this third paragraph resides the core of the qualitative research, as it is the question on which the whole thesis is based: the phenomenon of ethnic subgrouping problems. Through the interviews, the people directly and personally involved in the management of the team members have been asked about the frequency of this phenomenon, about positive and negative sides if there are, and how this affects the outcome of the team effort, namely the results. The composition of a team is the most important strategic decision a sports club has to make (Gaede et al., 2002: 216). By employing multicultural teams, a club seeks to tap the advantages of cultural heterogeneity (Maderer, Holtbrügge, Schuster, 2013). Diversity should be understood as the varied perspectives and approaches to work, which members of different identity groups bring (Ely & Thomas, 1996). Diversity can be defined as representation in one social system of individuals with distinctly different group affiliations of cultural significance (Aghazadeh, 2004). One of the key arguments of the advantageousness of cultural heterogeneous teams is that the variety of perspectives and experiences contributes to creativity, adaptability, innovation, and higher quality problem solutions (McLeod et al., 1996: 257; Wiersema and Bantel, 1992: 93). These and other strengths are matched in the words

of some coaches interviewed: *“Without any doubts though, the most positive aspect of ethnic subgroups is that they bring some exotic and fresh ideas, methods or spirit inside the team, being their identity and culture shared, it is easier for them to feel comfortable in behaving as they would back home, and this certainly affects positively the humour of the team.”*, tells Luca, when asked about pros and cons about culturally driven subgrouping phenomenon; *“Positive aspects of these subgroups are that loneliness is avoided in the first insertion phases within a new team or a new country, and that’s for sure a thing of massive importance when considering young athletes that completely change scenarios, customs, and rules. What is more, it definitely creates special and strong ties within subgroup members, that usually evolve in long-lasting friendship that develop outside of the pitch as well.”*, adds Francesca, highlighting once again the importance and delicacy of the adaptation phases and the critical need of belonging to a group in order to avoid the feeling of loneliness, especially for immigrant newcomers that need to adapt both to the culture and to the team dynamics.

Despite all the strengths here listed, most of the interviewed coaches pointed out the major significance of the negative side of the whole group fracturing into smaller subgroups and how this phenomenon threat to the unity of the team. Alloisi above all, affirmed how much contrary he is to this factual development: *“As for my experience, subgroups are detrimental for the whole team’s equilibrium, without exceptions. [...], it is easier to control and direct the team if all components get along well, act as a group and communicate without distinctions... Having too many fractured subgroups can only be negative and more difficult to manage. Furthermore, ethnic subgroups run the risk of feeling excluded because of the language barriers and the difficulty not only for their teammates, but for the staff as well, to get in touch with them.”*. Francesca claims the cohesiveness concept as well, being this aspect of massive importance for obtaining results and properly manage a team: *“Negative aspects are undoubtedly the cohesiveness of the overall team, if these subgroups are too numerous and too hostile within each other, they end up putting the subgroups’ interests before the team’s; the second thing is that, and this happened to me more than once, when ethnic subgroups are closed and the members tend to speak their mother tongue more often than the local language, the interaction with them is more difficult.”*

Marchionni, once again, speak from an out of the box situation, being his career as a coach, teacher and founder, “subgroupless”. In the interview by La Repubblica, an Italian journal, put at the end of his answers, numerous testimonies affirm how the great percentage of foreign athletes and the fact that they’ve begun together, strengthened the group and hindered the subgroups’ formation. He confirmed this aspect once again and plauded himself and the club for the way they managed their athletes: *“As for my experience, subgroups have never been a major issue as the girls are very close*

as a whole group, they spend plenty of time together, they tell me about their holidays together and dinners or social events are always tools to create an even stronger group. They've grown here with their teammates so little subgroups are the last thing that could born in this club."

These testimonies confirm what literature has been saying for years: it is not black or white when talking about the implications of group dynamics and structures, it rather depends on case to case as every team has its unique components, histories, and alchemies; thus every team needs to be managed in an original and different manner. No manual or method can be applied generally without considering the characteristics of team components. This is why, in the final part of the interviews, questions about specific methods or strategies have been asked to the interviewees, in order for this work to provide some suggestions or evidence for future research and help the management of multicultural teams that could find themselves in similar situations.

Chapter 4.3.3 Fourth theme: multicultural team management strategies and recurrent dynamics

A group develops its own culture, and the basis for group culture can be membership in a formal or informal group (Hultin, Lundh, 2005), namely an occupation, ethnic or religious background or a membership in a sport-team (Fransesco, Gold, 2005). A team is much similar to a group since they experience developmental stages, differentiate into roles, create norms, establish a culture and have communication structure (Hultin, Lundh, 2005). What really is challenging is the actual management of the team, directly involving someone who is responsible for the components and the results and must deliver to the stakeholders (all the people involved in and around an organization, whichever its type is) the best outcome possible with the resources he/she has at its disposal. In the sports world, results mean winning and this could not be achieved without athletes' talent and a good alchemy for sure, but most importantly a good management of the resources, namely players and staff, by the coach. This is why we asked how to effectively manage a team, which are the tools to avoid the creation of detrimental cliques within a team and, lastly, how to deal with ethnic minorities and make everyone feel involved. Professional sports team outcome in any given season is a function of the collective skills of the team's players, the abilities of the team's coaches to effectively assemble and direct the players, and the degree of team diversity and cultural distance (Sung, et al., 2020). Agreeing

with these statements are most of the coaches interviewed, as themes like embryonal and developmental phases are recurrent and, most importantly, having a communication structure is of fundamental importance: *“The management’s job is to manage indeed and deal with the dynamics that happen within a team, and this can be achieved by communicating a lot. To my experience, communication is key in solving problems and get to the soul of people [...]”*, says Luca; *“I rather prefer to talk individually with the players or, the training after the match, to analyse this latter with different peers and welcome their thoughts.”*, adds Alloisi, highlighting once again the role of communication within a team, even more if this one is composed by different cultures and nationalities. Marchionni as well, in order to deal with pitch or personal problems, adopt the tactic of communication, as problems arise with families as well: *“[...], talking a lot with my athletes has always been the key, as personal problems often arise, mostly related to their families as they are often backed by families in trouble, whether economically or socially”*. Francesca has a different approach, as she prefers to let the athletes communicate with each other and form natural bond: *“The thing that I tend to do, in order to involve everyone despite the closeness to one or another subgroup, is to split up the couples or the groups and make everyone work with a different teammate every training, so that to create a bond with all members and not letting subgroups nurture themselves and be even more “exclusive”.”*

What is more, some nationalities seem to behave in the same manner, showing distinctively traits, typical of the same culture, namely the openness or closeness to the others, the degree of involvement and the easiness in getting along with new teammates and structures. *“For what concerns significant aspects, I noticed that even if athletes come from the USA or Canada (I trained some athletes coming from Americans high schools or colleges), what matters the most during the adaptation phase is the cultural proximity: the closer you are to the welcoming culture, the easier it gets to get along with rules, methods and the environment. Sometimes athletes coming from countries just some kilometres away, struggled more than others to integrate with the organization.”*, affirms Luca, communicating furthermore the urge for the manager or coach to favour a real integration, *“[...], foreign newcomers instinctively tend to bond with other foreign, as they think they can learn faster how to adapt to the novelties, but this creates an even bigger gap between foreigners and local. It is up to management staff to create the right conditions to let the subgroups and members interact and merge.”* Francesca opens up about the characteristics of some ethnic subgroups, derived from their cultures: *“Mostly African and Asian subgroups are formed, and they are the most difficult to “break”, because of their reluctancy to open and because of the shyness of Asian girls, a common trait that I often noted during my years as a coach.”* Alloisi confirm the statements from Francesca testimony, as he affirms: *“[...], it often happens that Romanians or Albanians form subgroups, and these are usually the most difficult*

to integrate with the rest of the team, they are closed, shy and reluctant; Africans are more prone to integrate with others, at least for my experience.”

It is clear then, how much cultural traits affect the personal approach towards new environments and how this represents an undecipherable variable in terms of number of foreigners, number of cultures present in the same workplace, thus the novelties brought by each individual. All the factors here listed offer per se a set of dynamics that makes the management of culturally diverse teams a challenging work, even more in the professional or semi-professional sports sector where results must be obtained in a matter of months. It is then my belief that this work, as well as the testimonies here collected, can offer a guide for future managers or coach on which approach better fits its condition, a cue for future research on multicultural environments and an original enquiry on the management of local realities that, thanks to globalization, breath an international air and speak plenty of languages within the same team.

CONCLUSIONS

It is with this last paragraph that this work comes to a conclusion, being the interviews and their analysis concluded. This thesis opens with a general discussion about the globalization phenomenon and its influence on people mobility, thanks to the opportunities globally available. Geographic mobility has become of fundamental importance in a working career nowadays, for people to seek better job opportunities or improved living conditions, as well as for the cultural mix present in every working environment. As reported in the first paragraph, during the 2013, the International Organisation for Migration estimated that 214 million individuals were considered to be migrants (Ryba, Schinke, Stambulova, Elbe, 2018). In this flow of people moving through the globe, athletes have not been excluded, as the number of migrating athletes has increased as well in the recent past as showed by the table below:

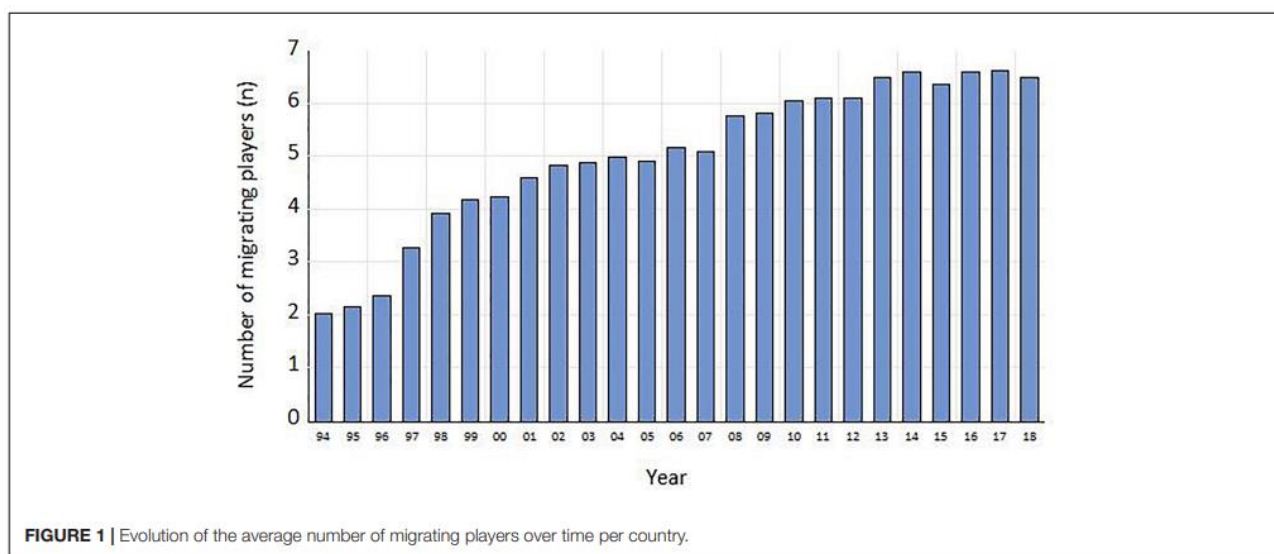


Figure 4, The average number of migrating players per country in the “big five” leagues in the period 1994–2018, (Lago-Peñas, Lago-Peñas and Lago, 2019).

This table proves once again that the number of players that decides to migrate is in constant ascent globally, even more in the biggest leagues where the money transfers are out of scale for the rest of the clubs, professional or amateur. This constantly improving migration has directly influenced the team composition, as athletes from all around the globe are free to move and teams have become international, even those that do not actively operate on the market but welcome passively foreigners, namely they do not seek international players but for geographic position are composed of

multicultural members. These trends have been confirmed in the interviews realized where Marchionni confirms how the natural presence of African families in the local zone, is a great catchment area from which to select athletes and future club components. Group and subgroup structures have been analysed and presented in order to introduce the group fractioning phenomenon that, according to the literature study, is a common theme when groups are formed, for a variety of reasons: age proximity, sex, religion, culture, nationality, language spoken and so on... These commonalities are drivers to unite people and form the basis of strong relationships that tend to last even outside of the sport environment and are for this aspect a positive side of the subgroups. This and other positive aspects have been related to the subgrouping phenomenon, namely: a strong cohesion among the subgroup components, an enhanced competition within team members that can improve the overall performances, an help in the first introductory phases in new environment and a relief to the sense of loneliness that can touch some migrant athletes. Negative aspects are at least such numerous as positive, as such as literature often highlights the detrimental effects of subgrouping, introducing the term “cliques” to denote the pessimistic slope that these structures can assume for the organizational wellbeing and outcome. Too much competition can indeed be detrimental for the team members and create a gloomy environment; the “subgroup of the excluded” can raise feeling of envy, hate and jealousy; a gap between subgroups can emerge and disfavour left-side team components. This last aspect becomes of fundamental importance when talking about ethnic subgroups that, for cultural or communicational reasons, create within the teams: if the language becomes a barrier that does not enable all the players to fully and freely express and communicate, it is a limiting factor both for the athletes that found difficult to express and comprehend, and for the whole team that can suffer a lack of resources exploitation, namely those of the foreign athletes. These affirmations found confirmations in the interviews, as the coaches testified how negative aspects often overcome the positive influences of the subgroup formation, with some of them even affirming how subgroups have nothing besides negative influence on the team. It is then managers’ and coaches’ job to communicate with the whole team and make everyone understand that the ultimate goal reside in the team to have positive results, namely winning. Human resources management in sports clubs becomes even more challenging and stressful because of the small amount of time conceded to the responsible to obtain results and satisfactory performances, mostly for professional and semi-professional sports club. In conclusion, subgroups in general, ethnic (or cultural) subgroups specifically in this globalized era, are naturally formed, thus impossible to be avoided. It is then up to the management to deal with their consequences and to manage indeed the people belonging to the organization and the team they are responsible for, exploiting the positive aspects if they think there are any, limiting the negative if they emerge. We hope this work to be

helpful as a comparative study and story telling collection for local manager, and sufficiently exhaustive in answering to the ethnic subgrouping problem that raised in a globalised reality.

LIMITATIONS

Because of time and organizational constraints, the interviews had to be made in a restricted geographic area, limiting thus the research to the local area: Padua, in the Veneto region, and Parma, Emilia Romagna; even though significant data have been retrieved in other studies analysed. What is more, the coaches interviewed did not have an international nor professional career background, limiting this thesis to express a statement to the semi-professional and amateur sectors. This study can though be an interesting starting point to compare the semi-professional world with the experiences of international coaches and managers and verify if there are any similarities or, instead, if the two worlds are two separate realities.

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APPENDIX

Questions for the interviews:

- 1) Briefly introduce yourself and describe your coaching career.
- 2) What about globalization and its effects on the composition of the teams you coached?
- 3) Were or are foreign athletes present in the teams you coached?
- 4) Which amount or percentage of foreigners was present?
- 5) Did subgroups form within the team? If so, what kind?
- 6) Which were the reasons behind their formation and how were they composed?
- 7) Was one of the reason the cultural proximity for subgroups formation?
- 8) What were the ethnicities?
- 9) Are there positive and/or negative aspects about subgroups formation?
- 10) And of those caused by cultural proximity?
- 11) How to deal with subgroups to make them work as a team?
- 12) Recurrent episodes during the coaching career?