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La cittadinanza sportiva in
Italia: mito o realtà?

Beyond Intolerance
through Sports

Sport et immigration.
Changements sociaux et
pratiques d'intégration en
Europe

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Beyond Intolerance through Sports

Sport contributes to the social construction of reality: it creates a social order and helps to convey the image of the “other”, and in some cases to solidify “stereotypes” or to confirm a meaning of normality, thus helping to marginalise certain social categories, such as immigrants.

For these reasons, this paper presents research which gives an account, through sport, of the relationship between the acceptance of immigrants and secondary school pupils in the Campania region.

by Gianmaria Bottoni, Giuseppe Masullo, Emiliana Mangone

Sport, like any other cultural practice, actively contributes to the social construction of reality «because sport reflects society and social reality reflects sport culture» (Germano 2012, p. 35). Sport reproduces a given social order - for example, by observing the rules of the game - in the form of ideals and values specific to a particular group, but not exclusive to it.¹ Moreover, we must not forget how sports - both in the past and today - help to convey the image of the “other”, and in some cases to solidify certain “stereotypes” of the “other” or to confirm a given sense of normality, thus help-

ing to marginalize certain social categories, such as foreigners. Contemporary sports are criticized for focusing on competition, efficiency, and the pervasiveness of market logic. Whereas, on the contrary, if sport wants to be an answer to the current problems and concerns posed by differences, it must be guided by the values of well-being, cooperation and tolerance.

A new paradigm in sport culture is thus being established, as demonstrated today explicitly in the slogan “sport for all”. A new way of understanding sports which, according to Russo and Meglioli, can be traced back to the 70s with «the invasion of the inclusion of feminine athletes first and foremost, and then

Kenya. Refugees and aid workers in Dadaab run in support of #TeamRefugees and stand #WithRefugees © UNHCR



gradually with that of the elderly, the disabled, and of immigrants who see sport as an active and specific answer to their needs» (Russo, Meglioli 2011, p. 118).

Beyond differences: the inclusion of foreigners through sport

How does one look for a higher-order egalitarian content in sport? In fact, there are already numerous cases where sport is

used as a means of stimulating contact with the “other”, helping to overcome certain stereotypes and promoting inclusion and integration processes of those who are different - in this case, of the foreigner. For example, sports calling for “team spirit” that bring together local and foreign youngsters are good examples of how differences - linked to skin colour, linguistic and cultural diversity, and religious beliefs, etc. - are overcome thanks to the “cooperation” and sense of belonging resulting from the game. This is because sport, in the words of Xavier Medina, «is an instrument capable of giving identity, of generating identification in individuals and, therefore, of enabling them to participate, also symbolically, in the same reality, to share and feel part of something common; ultimately, to live together» (Xavier Medina 2002, p. 22).

Sport activities oriented in this way, are also paramount in promoting the fundamental step concerning interaction with the stranger which, according to Mucchi Faina, is needed in order to overcome certain social stereotypes guiding the relationship with the other; namely the transition from the process of “categorization” to that of “identification” (Mucchi Faina 2005). Sports, when oriented towards the integration and inclusion of the foreigner, can oppose the identification process with the cat-

Tab. 1 – How much do you agree with the following statements?

	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION
Sport has nothing to do with skin colour	8,96	2,608
Supporters insulting black players are wrong	8,96	2,538
Athletes' skin colour is not important, what matters is their ability	8,49	2,478
It's not fair for a black player to be part of the Italian national team	1,20	2,664
I would not care for a black coach	,91	2,056
My favourite champion will never be a black one	,90	2,221
It would bother me to have a black teammate	,69	1,889

egorization process; the one underpinning the construction of stereotypes and social representations of the foreigner. The identification process is that mechanism which, in taking into account the stranger we are relating to, refers to their specific characteristics which emerge during the very interaction with them and therefore those that are not attributable to previous schemes and ideas (Masullo 2015). It is

no coincidence that the *White Paper on Sport* (European Commission 2007) envisages a set of actions and measures to tackle violence and racism and particularly the racism which still widely exists within the world of sports today. Racism, which in some sporting contexts - such as football, for example - is not only associated with hostility towards the other as a “foreigner”, but also exists as a general feeling of intolerance towards all forms of diversity, as has recently been shown in the news of widespread homophobia in sports. It will therefore be up to the institutions to promote a new conception of sport as a useful tool aimed not only at competition, but also at the promotion of new forms of openness as well as reciprocity towards the foreigner. These ideas - which find wide application in the non-profit world -² must be more widely spread in the school context, starting with physical education (PE) lessons, which must not only be a fun time, but also a laboratory for testing new forms of citizenship, of open-mindedness and of opposition to discrimination by those presenting themselves as “normal”.

The attitude towards the “stranger” in sports: a case study

Against this backdrop, the present paper analyses the existing relationships between the acceptance of diversity and junior

Fig. 1 - The three indexes by gender

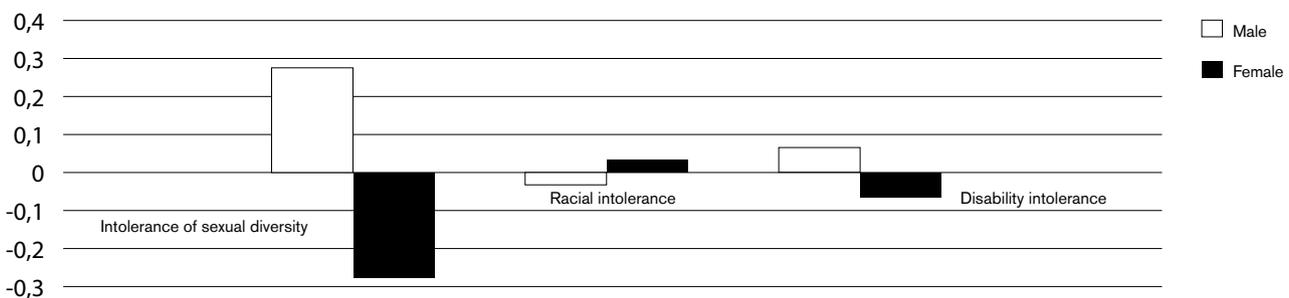
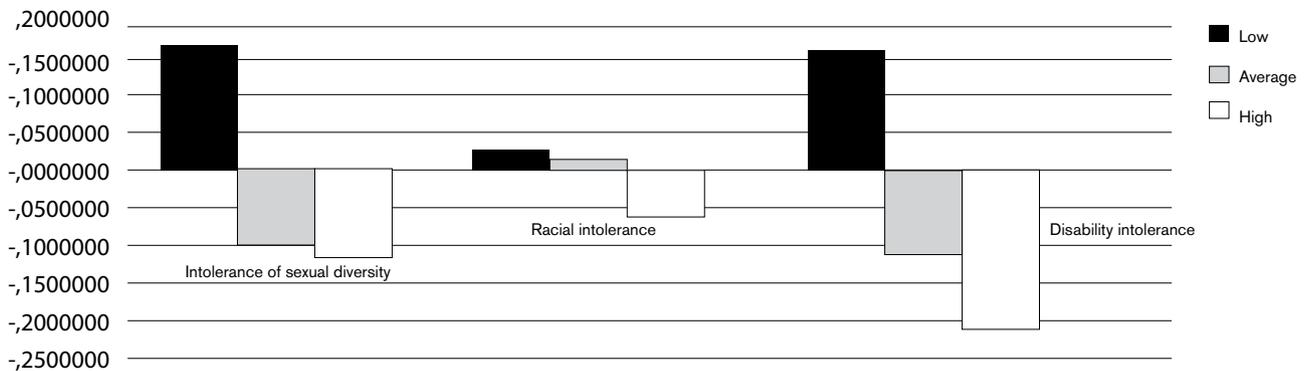


Fig. 2 - The three indexes by cultural capital



high school pupils in the Campania region. This territory has been the object of research aimed at analyzing sporting activities in pre-adolescent subjects, starting with the current literature and, in particular, with the most recent empirical research on the subject (Grimaldi 2011; Pioletti and Porro, 2013). The specific aim has been to verify whether and to what extent certain common misconceptions about the other have roots. The concept of “otherness” is here considered only as “the foreigner”, while the research in its entirety also involved the analysis of disability and homosexuality, and this supposed diversity proves to be a criterion for evaluating the skills and performance of athletes.

The respondents’ age group is of major importance, for it is during this development phase that the value and thought systems of the subjects start to take shape. Numerous studies have shown that the overall level of ethnic prejudice has gradually declined since the 70s, and that this decline is due to the apprehension, in childhood and adolescence, of those social norms oriented towards eliminating prejudices and fostering the feeling of tolerance (Brown 2011; Rutland *et al.* 2005). Indeed, young people, compared with adults, show lower levels of prejudice and intolerance against persons perceived as

different (Pettigrew and Meertens 1995; Vala and Costa-Lopes 2010). The debate about teens and prejudice is still open, although there is a substantial agreement among scholars that younger subjects are more open to diversity and less prone to prejudice than adults.

The surveyed population is made up of students from the final year of secondary school in the school year 2013-2014 of all secondary schools in the Campania Region. The sampling plan allowed us to obtain a representative sample of the population in order to allow the detection of valid information to then answer the cognitive objectives of the project. The gathering of the sample was carried out through a mixed sampling procedure: first a multistage sampling method, which allowed us to identify the municipalities hosting the schools for each province of the Campania region, and then a cluster sampling. This led to us extracting the municipalities (first stage) and then extracting the educational establishments from these groups (second stage). In summary, the sample size was composed of 804 cases: of which 49,6% were male and where the average age was 13.

Clearly the analysis will not consider the age of the subjects as an explanatory factor, since, as stated above, the unit of analysis is determined by pupils from secondary schools, thus making it impossible to compare them with older individuals. But an indirect confirmation of the greater openness of youngsters with respect to adults towards persons perceived to be different stems from an analysis of the answers to a series of questions designed to detect the degree of acceptance of “different” individuals in sports. Considering the open attitude towards diversity in sports makes the survey even more significant given the numerous and constant episodes of intolerance periodically occurring, mainly on the football pitch, but also in other sports. As we can see in **Tab. 1**, the statements with which the respondents tend to agree on more all concern accepting subjects of a different skin colour.

The sample is therefore highly homogenized towards a total acceptance of differences as well as individuals with such differences. But the analysis of univariate distribution does not allow for a reading of the studied phenomenon. Therefore, we employed the multiple factor analysis by applying the method of principal component analysis in order to obtain a less fragmented image. The analysis revealed the presence of three

Tab. 2 – The “Closed” ones and the “Friendly” ones according to gender and cultural capital

	CLOSED	FRIENDLY
Male	21,9	78,1
Female	10,9	89,1
Low cultural capital	21,4	78,6
Avg. cultural capital	12,6	87,4
High cultural capital	10,5	89,5

Oltre l'intolleranza con la pratica sportiva

La pratica sportiva contribuisce alla costruzione sociale della realtà: lo sport riproduce un ordine sociale e contribuisce a veicolare le immagini dell'altro, e in taluni casi a solidificare "stereotipi" o a confermare un'accezione di normalità contribuendo a mettere ai margini alcune categorie sociali come gli immigrati.

Si afferma così un nuovo paradigma nella cultura sportiva, che oggi trova esplicitazione nello slogan lo "sport per tutti". In realtà, sono numerose le esperienze che utilizzano lo sport come mezzo per stimolare il contatto con l'altro, favorendo processi di integrazione dei migranti. Gli sport che richiamano "spirito di squadra", unendo giovani autoctoni e giovani stranieri, costituiscono dei validi esempi per cogliere come le differenze si annullino, grazie alla "cooperazione" e il senso di appartenenza che scaturisce dal gioco. Non è un caso che il *Libro Bianco sullo Sport* preveda un insieme di azioni volte a contrastare il razzismo che emerge fortemente all'interno del mondo sportivo. Spetterà dunque alle istituzioni favorire un nuovo concetto dell'attività sportiva come strumento utile e finalizzato non solo all'agonismo, ma anche a promuovere nuove forme di apertura e reciprocità verso l'immigrato.

Fatte queste premesse, il contributo presenta una ricerca che dà conto, attraverso la pratica sportiva, delle relazioni tra l'accettazione dell'immigrato e i ragazzi delle scuole medie in regione Campania. L'obiettivo è stato quello di verificare se e in quale misura sono diffusi alcuni pregiudizi sul diverso (soggetti di pelle nera, gay/lesbiche, diversamente abili), qui considerato solo nella fattispecie dei soggetti di "pelle nera".

Lo studio ha fatto ricorso alla *multiple factor analysis* per la costruzione di un indice di intolleranza. Dai dati emerge che anche il capitale culturale incide sul grado di rifiuto/accettazione di soggetti di "pelle nera": al crescere del capitale culturale degli intervistati l'atteggiamento di rifiuto nei confronti di questi soggetti decresce progressivamente. L'indice ottenuto è servito per realizzare una *cluster analysis* che ha prodotto una tipologia di soggetti basata sull'orientamento di chiusura o apertura verso soggetti di "pelle nera": i "chiusi" e i "disponibili".

I dati emersi dalla ricerca mettono in luce come gli alunni delle scuole medie campane si mostrano disponibili nei confronti dei soggetti "etnicamente" diversi. Questo è un risultato di notevole importanza in quanto intervenendo sulla dimensione dell'accettazione delle differenze, attraverso la pratica sportiva, si potranno scongiurare episodi di razzismo e discriminazione che periodicamente si consumano.

components accounting for 43% of the total variance. These components refer to the subjects included in the total batch; in particular, the second one concerns the refusal/acceptance of black people and includes items such as "[m]y favourite champion will never be black" and "[i]t's not fair for a black player to be part of the Italian national team". In order to overcome some of the constraints inherent in the technique adopted, we employed the "principal component analysis in two stages" (Di Franco, Marradi 2003). It is a long iterative procedure, aimed at selecting a few clusters of variables identifying the most significant relationships among them and producing a more refined summary of the information. The variables selected by the technique of the two stages were subsequently combined into three indices through the single factor analysis (intolerance of sexual diversity, racial intolerance and disability intolerance). The bivariate analysis comparing the three indices reveals interesting aspects: women, for example, are the gender with positive values of "intolerance level" with regard to black subjects (Fig. 1). Also cultural capital - constructed by reducing the space of the attributes of the variables related to the level of education of the parents of the boys interviewed - affects the degree of rejection/acceptance of diversity: an increase in the cultural capital of the respondents leads to a progressive decrease in the attitude towards "different" individuals. As we can see in Fig. 2, in particular, a low level of cultural capital appears to have a significantly negative impact on the degree of openness and acceptance of the subjects perceived as different.

The three indexes seen above, obtained through the analysis of the main components in two stages, subsequently helped in realizing a cluster analysis; the technique used is the "non-hierarchical clustering with K-means". The cluster analysis reveals the existence of two exclusive groups that we might call "closed" and "friendly". The first one, representing only 16,3% of the sample, shows positive scores (please note that the three indices spot positive polarity in the rejection dimension and negative polarity in the opposite acceptance dimension) on all three indices of rejection/acceptance, thereby showing a clear attitude of narrow mindedness against those individuals identified as "carriers of diversity" (gay/lesbian, black people, the disabled). On the opposite side, the "friendly" ones, which make up 83,7% of the sample, show negative scores on all the indices, thereby revealing an attitude of total acceptance towards "different" subjects. This essentially indicates that the three groups of intolerance identified by the principal component analysis, namely towards black people, sexuality and disability, actually underlie a single general factor of second order which could be considered as a general attitude of narrow mindedness / openness towards diversity which influences the three identified sub-groups.

Interestingly, although the sample of respondents was highly prone to display an attitude of acceptance, female students are more willing and open to diversity than male students. In fact, 78% of males fit into the "friendly" category, compared to 89% of girls, while of course the opposite is the case for the "closed" category (22% males vs. 11% females, Tab. 2). Here, too, cultural capital emerges as a factor which has significant influence over the attitude of rejection/acceptance of diversity: together with cultural capital, the percentage of subjects belonging to the "friendly" category gradually increases, going from 78,6%

among those with low cultural capital to almost 90% for students who enjoy a high cultural capital.

Interestingly, being “closed” or “open” towards having black people as teammates or coaches, or being willing to have them as one’s favourite athletes or not being against them playing in the Italian national team can influence the attitude and values associated with sports. In summary, it can be said that the “friendly” ones concerning the values associated with sports show an attitude more oriented towards respect for others, where sport is not intended as a means of achieving wealth but as a tool for sharing moments with others without the pressure of having to win, or even resorting to illegal means.

The dimension of equality is also of great importance, as well as the power that sports can exercise in dismantling all the differences between individuals through its “homogenizing” effect which sees the eradication of all dysfunctional identities in favour of a common feeling, whose vehicle is sport. Asked whether sport makes people equal, the sample focuses on three response options, “Yes”, “No”, “I do not know”, with a slight prevalence of “No” - 37% “No”, 32% “Yes” - while the rest of the sample does not state an opinion. The equality front is affected not only by gender differences, meaning that boys believe more than girls that sport makes people equal; an opinion held also by teenagers with the lowest sporting capital and those who have a very positive opinion about the benefits of sport.

In this regard, those falling into the “friendly” category appear more optimistic, arguing that sport can help erase differences. Indeed, 33% of the “friendly” ones declare that sport makes all equal, as opposed to 23% who think the same in the “closed” category.

Conclusions

The analysis highlighted how students in secondary schools in the Campania region show remarkable levels of acceptance of diversity.

Another interesting aspect emerging from the data is that a higher acceptance level is given to “ethnic” diversity. In other words, if in general the respondents are very open and friendly with regard to all of the three categories analysed (black people, gays/lesbians, the disabled), they appear to be a bit more open to “ethnically” different subjects.

This seems a remarkably important achievement for, by intervening with the acceptance of differences, perhaps through specific lessons devoted to the theme of diversity and the respect for others, in the future - given that our respondents are secondary school pupils - we will be able to ward off the many incidents of racism and discrimination regularly occurring and which in the most extreme cases - in the form of what we commonly call “bullying” - often lead to the extreme consequence of death, sometimes self-inflicted, of those who suffer this abuse.

NOTES

1 - As Germano further states: «Sport influences society and *vice versa*, in the sense of an orderly system of meanings and symbols according to which social interaction takes place, *i.e.* a precise symbolic order for the ever more active sporting public» (2012, p. 36).

2 - In this regard, Russo and Meglioli state that «the philosophy of sport reflects, for all, in fact a universal nature and a solidarity mission legitimately

acknowledged by bodies promoting sport, as associations of social promotion of national importance» (2011, p. 123).

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