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Notti Magiche? Can football narratives shape
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A thematic investigation.

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Abstract

This thesis argues that football and sport can constitute a national identity, and Italian identity in particular. With an overview of scholarship on Italian football history, nation building, sports sociology and Italian identity, grounded especially on works by sociologist Benedict Anderson, concerning the imagined status of a nation (2006) and historian John Foot (2007, 2016), football is seen to have a constructive social and political role, and Italy, a disjointed national identity. Research on national imagination through sport is pursued through prominent and relevant themes of language, culture, narrative, belonging, emotion, memory and mediatic influence, identified from existing literature. Thematic analysis is further used to unpack and compare the results of a questionnaire sent out to individuals identifying as Italian, having treated the responses with utmost confidentiality and integrity. “Netnographic” and semiotic approaches to social media and media, covering Italy’s victory in the 2021 European Championships, supplement and complete the investigation and understanding of the themes observed throughout. The use of different methods and scrutiny of varied content create a work which tackles the vast world of sports sociology and nation building scholarship with diversity, breadth and depth - using the 2021 UEFA European football Championship as a case study. The analysis of celebrations and narratives surrounding Italy’s recent victory shows how footballing success grants the Italian nation some of the conditions foregrounded in this paper – unity, belonging, emotion, culture and identification; and how media boost these. This leads to the conclusion that a symbiotic link between football and Italian identity exists, since football is demonstrated to consolidate and restore Italian society, thus to help construct the idea of the Italian nation.

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Lastly, to all those people who felt I should not play or like football as a girl - thank you. Proving you wrong pushed me to be where I am today.

List of abbreviations

CdS = *Corriere della Sera* (Italian newspaper)

CONI = Comitato Olimpico Nazionale Italiano (Italian Olympic Committee)

Euro 2021 = 2021 UEFA European football Championship

FIGC = Federazione Italiana Giuoco Calcio (Italian Football Federation)

GdS = *Gazzetta dello Sport* (Italian newspaper)

NT = (Italian) National Team

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I. Introduction

Writer and historian John Foot once defined the 1982 World Cup as ‘one of the most powerful collective moments of national identification from Italy’s post-war period’ (2016: 356), arguing that football has the ability in Italy to create narratives which are cemented and perpetuated in popular memory, establishing a sense of community, belonging and national identity. The present research seeks precisely to confirm or deny the popular canonization of Italy as a “football nation”, and question whether “the greatest game in the world” can give identity, belonging and character to the citizens of a country historically divided on regional and linguistic grounds.

To give the research appropriate background and justification, the first part of the paper will address the history of Italian football, national identity and sociological sports studies, and the noted importance of football in Italian life. The criteria drawn out from scholarship on nation building (Anderson 2006, Gellner 1983, Hobsbawm 1992), will be applied to Italian contexts. This will highlight how “Italian identity” is a failed concept, since people are divided, lacking a uniform national language, character and culture.

In conjunction with identity studies, sports will be seen as mechanisms of national construction and consolidation, providing shared language, culture and stories for a group to identify with. Supporting this will be works on how football represents social constructs, universal conditions and allows fans to express emotions, belonging and solidarity, with sporting lexicon permeating daily life (Penn 2016: 159-60). Importance will be given to how the media exploit and respond to the emotions expressed by audiences.

A questionnaire was designed to uncover, through quantitative and qualitative methods, whether individuals who identify as Italian have a particular affiliation with football, find representation in it, and see it as reflective of their environment. The latter part of the analysis, with a “netnographical” and semiotic approach, valorizes media content and scrutinizes themes emerging from newspapers, television and social media, to recount how Italy’s victory at the 2021 European Championship invigorated Italian identity.

It is worth noting that a lot has been written in the realms of identity construction, Italian history and sports studies. By navigating the breadth of knowledge available, this varied analysis attempts to add a small contribution to the investigation of whether football can truly be deemed a means of Italian identity construction. Foot's work (2016) will be supplemented, by showing that the "Italian nation" is a historically weak concept, which is strengthened by association with football.

II. Historical background

A brief summary of the history of Italian football has been chosen as the way to commence this essay, following many works which use history to discuss football's social role, and to allow the analysis to later refer to this information. Italian football has a detailed history, which is difficult to recount in one chapter, and to extricate from its original social contexts. As a result, significant moments have been chosen, to support and introduce the investigation of links between football and Italian identity. Following the argument that national identity consolidation happens in contrast with the "other" (Patriarca 2010: 274); focus has been placed on international competitions for the Italian national team. This is intended as the men's team, seeing as women's football in Italy is a more recent and underdeveloped sport (Matteucci 2012: 357-60) – a factor which, later on, will also be seen to disclose aspects of Italian society.

II.1. Origins

It is widely acknowledged that the game of football, soccer (in America), or *calcio* (in Italy), as presently known, originated in the Victorian era in the United Kingdom (Porro 2008: 21-24). The great mobility of the English at the time enabled the game to reach worldwide shores, including Italian harbour towns, such as Genova (Porro 2008: 25-27). This is where the English game of "football" was first played and the first Italian football clubs established: Genoa FC (est. 1893) (Porro 2008: 39-40). The development of football has been linked to industrialisation; a developed England enabled football to spread. Similarly in Italy, the game initially flourished in Northern, industrialised towns (Genova, Turin, Milan) (Forgione 2017: 48; 50). In the South, characterised by agriculture and underdevelopment, football suffered disparities (Forgione 2017: 46). Consequently the first official football leagues in Italy only featured Northern teams; as Southern teams were set apart and scorned (Forgione 2017: 51).

II.2. Football under Fascism

The historically significant period of Italian Fascist politics affected the football world as well. Scholars have acknowledged how Mussolini, although not the biggest fan of *calcio*, understood the force of its congregative abilities. He exploited these for mass manipulation, and perpetuation of nationalist programs of Italian supremacy; depicting Italy as united and victorious as a football team could be (Forgione 2017: 55-56). Evidence for this is the Fascist regime's investment in

sports: new infrastructure was built, with the aim to communicate Italian strength and ambition to the world (Forgione 2017: 57-60). Another realm of Fascist control was the media: sports' commentary was used to incite and involve all supporters as Italian, regardless of differences (Forgione 2017: 64-65). Italian unity was thus promoted over local independence: Northern teams were forced to accommodate Southern ones in the national league - a struggling cohesion due to South's sporting deficiencies (Forgione 2017: 60-61). The apex of Italian football in Fascist years were the Italian World Cup victories of 1934 and 1938 (Forgione 2017: 64-65). These served as Fascist propaganda and confirmed Italian physical, mental, and militaristic excellence in the world (Forgione 2017: 65-66). The historical use of football by Fascism demonstrates how this sport can depict scenes of national glory and hence become a political and social tool of national identity consolidation.

II.3. Memorable football moments

In the 1966 World Cup, the Italian national team was knocked out by Korea. To react to and express disappointment towards this loss, the public coined the expression *Corea! Corea!* (Korea! Korea!) (Foot 2007: 15.9). When Italy was once again eliminated by Korea in the 2002 World Cup, to signify further humiliation, this saying was used again (Foot 2007: 15.20). This reuse showed how symbols, once understood, can convey the same meanings (Buscemi 2017: 132-33). A similar expression of shame and anger saw the public throwing tomatoes at the team upon their arrival in Italy (Foot 2007: 15.10). This generated the saying: *saranno pomodori*; literally, there will be tomatoes (for the players), threatening retribution for poor performances, as might happen to bad theatre actors (Foot 2007: 15.10).

1970 was a memorable World Cup for Italy, as the team reached and lost the final in Mexico City. Italy's semi-final against Germany has been dubbed "the match of the century" (Foot 2007: 15.11), showing how some sporting moments are historically commemorated. Accordingly, films and books have been made about "Italia-Germania 4-3", creating narratives and shared culture. The 1982 World Cup was a similar occasion for Italy. The national team went into this tournament on the back of a national betting and match-fixing scandal, *Totonero* (1980), which implicated one of Italy's star players, Paolo Rossi (Foot 2007: 15.13; 2016). Low national hopes (Foot 2016: 346) were greatly exceeded by Italian victory, and celebrations followed. The World

Cup win of 1982 is one, but not the only example, of football's ability to negatively and positively affect the national climate; and, in the event of a victory, to unite a divided and angry people in the celebration of a nation (Foot 2016: 353).

II.4. *Oriundi* and Othering

The Fascist system had supported the return of foreign born players with blood links to Italy, *oriundi*, to their Italian homeland, “naturalising” them as citizens so they could play on the national team (Forgione 2017: 64). This process continued and allowed later international stars to play for Italy (Foot 2007). However, these foreign-born players were often blamed for Italian losses and suffered discrimination in Italy. This culminated in the exclusion of all “foreign” players from Italian championships from 1965 until 1980, a move which aimed to “safeguard” Italian football, but acquired political connotations (Foot 2007: Appendix; Papa and Panico 2002: 17.3). This aspect of Italian football history serves as an example of the exclusion and intolerance of those defined as “other”, to strengthen a weakened national identity (Oncioiu 2016: 35-36; 40-41; 45). Although the presence of immigrant players is a very common phenomenon in contemporary international football (Oonk 2020: 3), the assertion of national identity, using racism and injustice to abuse those who are seen to not immediately belong, still occurs in football, as in daily life (van Campenhout and van Houtum 2021: 10-12; 14). A current example was given by van Campenhout and van Houtum, on how Mesut Özil's Turkish origins are still not fully accepted in German society (2021: 8-12).

II.5. A World Cup on home soil

There is a strong belief in the footballing world that the public can often be the “twelfth man on the pitch”, which makes playing on home soil, with a home crowd, a great advantage (Forgione 2017: 95)e. Consequently, the 1990 World Cup which Italy hosted, and their skilled national team (Foot 2007: 15.16), presented a great opportunity (Forgione 2017: 338). The Italian government undertook so many economic expenses to build infrastructure, finance, and promote this World Cup (Foot 2007: 15.16; Forgione 2017: 338-46) - that Forgione argued it is still paying for them (2017: 346). Expectations were disappointed, as Italy lost the semi-final match to Argentina in Naples. In this match, Diego Maradona, a Naples club player and Argentinian national, encouraged his Neapolitan fans to support him, not Italy (Forgione 2017: 206-7).

Destabilising national pride with club loyalty contributed to the confusion which overall lost Italy the game (Foot 2007: 15.16). More importantly, an allegiance to club over country attested to a prominent facet of Italian identity - later addressed in this paper - namely Italy's national (North-South) divisions and strong regional characters (Forgione 2017).

II.6. Victory returned

The *Azzurri* - “the light blue ones”, the term used for Italian athletes since they wear light blue in international competitions - were once again football world champions in 2006. This team also competed on the back of an Italian club match-fixing scandal – *Calciopoli* – which involved even captain Fabio Cannavaro, and coach Marcello Lippi (Foot 2007: 15.22). Critical media coverage of the team prior to the tournament conveyed low expectations due to the turbulent footballing situation in Italy, and recent international failures (2002 World Cup and 2004 UEFA European championships) (Foot 2007). In a defeat of the odds to 1982, the 2006 squad went on to win the tournament. The media (newspapers etc.) re-enforced the similarities between the victories of 1982 and 2006: Fabio Grosso's celebration was compared to Marco Tardelli's in 1982 (Foot 2007. 15.22). Both instances had seen under-rated, but united, teams help the country forged shameful scandals (*Totonero* and *Calciopoli* respectively), and turn to national celebrations (Foot 2007: 15.22). Moreover, new expressions of celebration also emerged, such as the chorus ‘*po-oo-po-po-po-po-po-oo-po-oo*’ – taken from a White Stripes song’ (Foot 2007 15.22) and the phrase “*Il cielo é Azzurro sopra Berlino*” (the sky is Light-blue over Berlin) by commentator Marco Civoli (RaiSport 2020). These still signify Italian success and are re-used to convey this meaning, even beyond football contexts. For example, the Italian band *Måneskin* chanted “*po-oo-po-po-po-po-po-oo-po-oo*” upon their victory of the 2021 Eurovision song contest (YouTube); as did Italian athletes celebrating at the 2021 Tokyo Olympics.

II.7. Italian football in recent years

Following its success in 2006, Italy struggled to regain glory at international level. Group stage exits in the 2010 and 2014 World Cups culminated with the failure to qualify for the 2018 World Cup. This had not occurred since 1958 and was dubbed the “Apocalypse” of Italian football, weakening confidence in the national football team. However, the most recent 2021 UEFA European competition seemed to signal a turning point. The current national squad was strongly

promoted by media, sponsors and by the documentary *Sogno Azzurro* - produced by national television network, *Rai*; telling their journey up to the competition. In 2020, Italy was particularly hit by the Covid-19 crisis, and the footballing world also shut down: club football was suspended, and supporters banned from stadiums. During the 2021 European Championships, fans could finally re-enter stadiums, and this was the case for the matches held in Rome. The study of interviews, commentaries, newspapers, social media and television surrounding this team and tournament showed how the victory was narrativized and celebrated, to symbolise football and national restoration, post-pandemic.

III. Literature review

Moving on from the past of Italian football, theories of national identity construction, research in sports sociology, and the history of Italian identity will be reviewed. Scholars of identity and belonging acknowledge the difficulty in defining a nation and a national identity; and to support themselves, draw on the work of Benedict Anderson. Anderson defined nations as ‘imagined political communities’ bound by a shared imagination (2006, Revised Edition: 6), and nationalities as constructed by communal, meaningful, cultural artefacts (2006: 4). His prominence in scholarship makes these terms a starting point for an inquiry into whether football can generate the same conditions which determine national belonging - especially in the case of an otherwise weak Italian identity.

III.1. Determining national identity and belonging

Anderson felt that an attachment, love or feeling of belonging was an inevitable outcome of identification with a nation (2006: 141). To generate this, countries needed to grant citizens something to attach themselves to. Scholars have studied the mechanisms which promote love for a country and consolidate its identity - nationalism and patriotism (Anderson 2006, Gellner 1983, Hobsbawm 1992) – as well as the symbols from which citizens can find and express belonging (Anderson 2006: 141). In this review, three criteria are foregrounded as key elements in the processes of national identity construction and popular engagement: language, culture and narrative. A known national language will be seen as paramount for communicating shared culture and values, and constructing a narrative of national identity. These narratives, filled with cultural symbols which people can attach to and share due to national linguistic understanding, are deemed responsible for generating patriotic love.

III.1.1. Language

Anderson gave fundamental importance to national languages for granting communities a shared means of communication and constructing national (his)stories (2006: 145). To strengthen his point with historical evidence, he attributed the birth of nation states to the elevation of vernaculars to literate level, from the rise of ‘print-capitalism’, and the decreasing supremacy of Latin throughout Europe (Anderson 2006: 42-46). This allowed emerging European states to consolidate uniform national languages with which to express cultural messages (Anderson

2006: 42-46). Similarly, sociologist Ernst Gellner gave importance to literacy for fostering shared culture, triggering a successful cooperation of people and a movement from farming societies to modern states (1983: 141).

III.1.2. Culture

Academics converged on the importance of shared culture for an established national identity. Anderson's 'imagined communities' of nations were seen as united by ideas; and the 'self-sacrificing love' one ought to feel by being part of a nation; expressed by the 'cultural products of nationalism – poetry, prose fiction ...' (Anderson 2006: 141). Historian Eric Hobsbawm also defined nationalism as an ideology, communicated through images (1992: 93). He felt that patriotism was love for the state, perpetuated by 'inventing traditions' (Hobsbawm 1992: 92), which can be seen to hold a function similar to Anderson's images of shared culture, by fabricating a nation and creating attachment to it (Hobsbawm 1992: 91-95; Anderson 2006: 6-7). Gellner defined nationalism as a 'species of patriotism', sustained by 'anonymous, fluid and mobile' people, 'homogeneity' (1983: 138); and a 'shared ... literate sophisticated high culture' (Gellner 1983: 141), which created a nation's identity. In this way culture and cultural values were seen to constitute the images which trigger patriotism, national pride and belonging, for all who share them (Anderson 2006: 141-47).

III.1.3. Narrative

Francesco Buscemi's paper is a further point of reference for this analysis. By also drawing on known theorists and definitions of nation building, his argument saw national identities constructed as narratives (2017: 130-31). To support this view, he referred to the work of cultural theorist Stuart Hall on how nations need to be narrated, with origins, traditions, myths and links to a primordial race (Buscemi 2017: 131). He used this structure to investigate how YouTube videos recount versions of Italy's past (Buscemi 2017: 131). Buscemi's 'theoretical framework' (2017: 130-33) justifies the emphasis placed in the present argument on narratives as what construct a national community, by combining shared cultural symbols and ideas via a known national language. Buscemi identified social media as containing some of the cultural messages which can create a narrative of national identity (2017: 131-32) – another concept which will be taken forward in this work.

The study of narratives is also important because sports have been recognised to have an ability to create powerful and emotional stories, understandable from the many films, fictional and academic books made about sporting successes. By studying football fiction, Alexis Tadié (2012) understood how stories of footballing glory can foster national belonging. Foregrounding footballing heroes, fans and their allegiance, showed how sports enable athletes to represent a nation and its people, allowing spectators to be represented and identify with them, and hence, with the nation (Tadié 2012: 1786). Taking Tadié's work in conjunction with Anderson's explains how footballing stories convey images, comparable to Hobsbawm's invented traditions and Anderson's shared cultural products, which consolidate narratives of national pride and attachment. After all, fictional and imagined can be synonymous.

This present analysis has been mostly positive, but creating conditions of national and cultural homogeneity also presents dangers. Accordingly, many have argued that the construction of certain nations developed from the stigmatization of an "other", against whom the main inner nation defined itself and its terms of belonging (Oncioiu 2016: 27-28; 39-40; 47, van Campenhout and van Houtum 2021: 8-10). Thus, nationalistic policies have been seen to have disastrous results, such as genocide (Oncioiu 2016; Anderson 2006: 141); which explain current problems of integration and immigration. This work is mindful of the negative derivations of nationalism, but, following Anderson, love and belief in the nation expressed through culture, not hate, will be seen as conditions of national identity construction (2006: 141). To see whether football generates a stronger and more uniform culture, language and narrative, creating a more solid Italian identity, than the state historically has done, these parameters will be scrutinised in relation to Italian identity.

III.2. Sport and society

This paper builds on Tadié's work, to demonstrate how and why exactly football has a socially important role, as this justifies connections between football and Italy. Tadié himself supported the argument that football can uncover deep truths regarding contemporary society, considering it 'a way of channelling things' (2012: 1781), a 'central social cultural event' (2012: 1782), which 'models what happens to the country as a whole' (2012: 1784) and 'a means to meditate on the relationship between individuals and the nation' (2012: 1784). As evidence he analysed

narratives which separated the reader from reality and allowed the sport to disclose many aspects of a culture (Tadié 2012: 1786).

The vast number of sports' sociology studies enables football to be called “more than a game” (Porro 2008: 9; Siebetchu 2017: 132); a starting point for discussing how sports have social significance. An example is Bergesen Dalen and Seippel's study of how networks in sports organisations encourage initial socialising amidst young people (2019: 323-24). They understood that, because sports foster certain social categories, such as gender, they can be used to study broader social issues (Bergesen Dalen and Seippel 2019: 325-26). Academics have written on the importance of football in particular, as a highly popular sport (Molina: 2007 169-71, Tadié 2012: 1782) for understanding one or more cultures. Aspects which have been studied include politics, Archambault (2006, 2016) and citizenship, van Campenhout et al. (2018); Oonk (2020¹, 2020²). Racism and sexism: Litchfield et al. (2018); Matteucci (2012); Sandoval-Garcia (2005). Violence and hooliganism Sekot (2009); Dunning, Murphy and Williams (1986). These studies provided grounding for further analysis and research on the position and influence of football in these contexts and especially within Italian society.

III.2.1 Football and belonging

Globalization is an important aspect when considering how sport, and football in particular, affects belonging. The world-wide practice, popularity and televised representation, of football have led it to become emblematic of universal values, and as such, scholars acknowledge that it can be studied as an example of globalisation (van Campenhout et al. 2018: 1076; Molina 2007: 173). Roger Penn's comparison of the development of Italian and English football (2013) asserted that, ‘football became a global game very swiftly from the mid-nineteenth century onwards’, thanks to the creation of international federations and competitions (Penn 2013: 348). Berndt Schulze investigated such international sports' federations (2004); arguing that sports now have a global nature due to international media interest and audience interaction by players (Schulze 2004: 57). Nevertheless, he identified Europe's ‘strong institutional influence’ (2004: 62) in this global sporting world (2004: 57). Known scholars of sports sociology, Richard Giulianotti and Roland Robertson understood that globalisation processes entail the loss of national or local identities and cultures, in favour of worldwide systems and operations (2007:

168-9). Similarly, Paddy Dolan and John Connolly felt that globalisation weakened the idea of ‘the nation state’ (2016: 193). Gijsbert Oonk saw how the context of international football, with players choosing to belong to one or another national team (2020: 1050), has become emblematic of world-wide mobility and multiculturalism, in turn destabilising categories of citizenship, nation and belonging (Oonk 2020: 1047; 1059-60).

However, identifying European particularity in the world, and national differences within Europe (Puig and Gomes 2010: 178-79), undermines globalisation’s overtaking of all national identities. Penn himself argued that, since international contests enhance national pride and motivation, ‘national templates remain very powerful’ (2013: 348-49). Furthermore, Fidel Molina’s quantitative and qualitative study of a Spanish football club, through interviews and surveys, found that emotional participation in football clubs still creates attachments to teams on a local level, reinforcing close and particular ‘cultural, community identities’, in spite of globalised systems (Molina 2007: 173). Molina defined this combination of local support in a globalized footballing context as ‘glocal’ (2007: 173-74) and he was not the only one to do so. Giulianotti and Robertson also adopted the term ‘glocalization’ as ‘ “real world” endeavours to recontextualize global phenomena or macroscopic processes with respect to local cultures (Robertson 1992: 173–4; 1995)’ (2007: 168). They used glocalization as a way to overcome the divide between what are seen to be overarching global systems and local, national ones, by seeing localisms permeating generalizations, and particular identities strengthened from contrast with global assimilation (Giulianotti and Robertson 2007: 168-69). These studies and definitions support a more nuanced reading of globalisation, and show how sports can be studied as contexts in which feelings of belonging are asserted and generated on global or local stages.

Academics have addressed how a country’s identity can be constructed and confirmed through the values represented by a national sporting team (Hobsbawm 1992: 143; Sandoval-Garcia 2005; Podoler 2008). An important example were Hobsbawm’s observation of how sport can be a way to convey ‘national struggle’ and athletes ‘primary expressions of their imagined communities’ (1992: 143). His reasoning was that successful or striving athletes represented a nation excelling, thus making ‘the imagined community of millions ... more real as a team of eleven named people’ and letting singular people feel proud of and represented by their nation

(Hobsbawm 1992: 143). As well as being cited in subsequent analyses of national sport (Oonk 2020: 7; van Campenhout and van Houtum 2021: 3, 6), these conceptions by Hobsbawm are instrumental in grounding the argument that football can lead to strong feeling of national identification (in Italy and beyond). Oonk also built on theses by Anderson, Gellner and Hobsbawm to argue that athletes on a national team have great responsibility in representing the values of a whole nation (2020: 2-3, 7, 15). Presently, football players themselves find playing for a national team a special and meaningful event (more than at club level) due to the emotive significance of its national symbols and history. For example, Andrea Pirlo has recounted how, kicking a penalty for Italy in the 2006 World Cup Final against France, helped him feel truly Italian, connected to the rest of his co-citizens and proud of his country (Pirlo with Alciato 2013: 23; Foot 2016: 4).

III.2.2 Sport and emotion

The emotions sports have been seen to rouse in audiences during matches augment their significance in social contexts, and ability to construct belonging (Mutz and Wahnschaffe 2016: 327-28). Michael Mutz and Kathrin Wahnschaffe drew on what they called an ‘influential work on the emergence of western civilization’ (2016: 327), by Norbert Elias, and his argument that modern society has led to emotions in daily life being suppressed (Mutz and Wahnschaffe 2016: 327-28). Thus, from studying Elias, Mutz and Wahnschaffe identified a social need for emotional release, and recreational activities, such as sports, as excellent realms for this release to take place in (2016: 328-29). They argued that this is the case because sports allow fans personal involvement and identification ‘with a particular team or a particular athlete’ (Mutz and Wahnschaffe 2016: 327), leading to a ‘mimetic experience’ or ‘an enjoyable stirring of emotions’ which grant an exciting break from normality (Mutz and Wahnschaffe 2016: 327).

Aleš Sekot’s study of violence in sport (2009) supplemented Mutz and Wahnschaffe’s paper, with the argument that audiences use sporting events to unleash angry, violent feelings – also pent up due to social restrictions (Sekot 2009: 38; 42). Furthermore, Sekot’s point that the public can release inner aggression because they are distant from an event, and in no danger (2009: 38), complemented Mutz and Wahnschaffe view of sports as granting ‘cathartic relief of tension and accrued emotion’ (2016: 327). Their works justified how watching sport, and in this case

football, enables audiences to feel represented, but also removed enough to express passionate feelings which they may otherwise may not be able to. On the topic of identification and representation through emotional participation in events, Randal Collins' study of the micro-sociology of sports (2016), precisely viewed emotion as a ritual, confirming 'feelings of group identity and solidarity' (2016: 198). For Collins, any kind of crowd - sports teams and fans - could feel unity from 'emotional solidarity' and 'emotional domination'; which in turn could aid a victory over an opponent (2016: 204). This explains why managers, to be successful, aim to create inner team cohesion; solidarity amongst audiences supports the view that emotions felt during sporting events can unite people. In conclusion, emotional engagement can be seen to generate identification with a team during a sporting event (Mutz and Wahnschaffe 2016: 327), as well as unity and solidarity for a group (Collins 2016: 204). Applying this to national contexts, that watching the national team play can strengthen national belonging, identification and homogeneity of a people.

III.2.3 Audiences and media

Ivana Matteucci also viewed sport as a meaningful 'cultural model in modern Italian society'. (2012: 353). By conducting quantitative research on women's football in Italy, Matteucci aimed to show that sporting culture perpetuates existing gender norms and ideologies (2012: 357), stunting the development of sports such as women's football (Matteucci 2012: 360-62). She demonstrated her point by focusing on how the increased mediatic presence in football has turned it into a spectacle for monetary and cultural profit in a consumer-driven society (Matteucci 2012: 353-54). She saw the media as essential for creating: 'a kind of folk-tale aimed at an audience... not limited to those attending the event in person' and allowing football to become a 'socially shared experience' (Matteucci 2012: 354). She found that changes such as advertisement campaigns, paid television programs and supporters being paying customers, all occurred thanks to audiences' emotional involvement in sports and their worship of athletes (Matteucci 2012: 354-55). Matteucci also highlighted how Italian women's football games and successes receive less press coverage, attention from television or the Internet, than their male equivalent (2012: 371). Her point was that less media consideration made female sports unable to draw as much interest and hence as much profit (Matteucci 2012: 371). Since gain was seen to equal popularity, the lack of attention received by female football and the mediatic spotlight for

the men's game, reflected and re-enforced disparities of gender in society (Matteucci 2012: 371). She disclosed how media determine which sports are popular and reach people, but also how the public's emotional involvement in a sport increases mediatic attention and profit. Her work is instrumental in this analysis which argues for the important social status of sport, and its use to understand a wider public. Stefano Martelli also studied how audiences drive the inter-relations between media, sponsors and sports (2014: 248). He argued that football in particular rouses male Italian audiences, leading to its increased mediatization; and that women seem to join in in crucial moments, to share collective feelings (Martelli 2014: 247-48). His work confirms the two-way link between sporting (and football) reactions and media: sports affect and drive people, whose reactions draw the attention of media and advertisements, which propagate sports even more. The social significance of sport therefore warrants an analysis of media and social media, which will disclose how popular opinions and reactions to sporting performances, and football in Italy, are expressed (Litchfield et al. 2018 155-56).

III.3 Italian identity

Football has been seen to affect and disclose issues beyond sport, which allows the present argument to use it to investigate Italian identity. To begin with, it is necessary to address how Italian identity has been defined as divided, with regional and linguistic impediments to unity.

III.3.1 There is no "Italian language"

The importance given by Anderson to an institutional, written language for the emergence of modern nation states (2006: 44-6; 70-5; 78) is a parameter of national identity construction against which Italy can be scrutinised. Celebrated scholar of the Italian language, Tullio de Mauro, wrote various volumes on its history (1991, 2017). He too felt that language supported the formation of many European states' identities, including how in *Risorgimento* Italy, language was used to assert belonging to the nation (de Mauro 2017: vol.1.I.1). Nevertheless, de Mauro noted that geographical divisions throughout the country enabled minor local identities and dialects to survive, reflecting cultural and class disparities, and stunting the spread of the national idiom (2017: vol.1.I.2, vol.1.II.1, vol.1.II.2). He identified how, a lack of educational programs in Italian, which would have enabled culture and tradition to be communicated through the same medium, and fostered political and cultural unity across the people (as had been the case with

other European states) made the language less well known (de Mauro 2017: vol.1.II.1). This meant that, although Italian existed as a language, in practice dialect remained the preferred means of expression for emotions and daily events, perpetuating national linguistic divisions (de Mauro 2017: vol.1.I.3, vol.2.IV.6). Census results further demonstrated how the learned used the national language due to patriotism, but the lower classes communicated in dialect (de Mauro 2017: vol.1.II.2, vol.1.II.4). When Italy was united, over 78% of the people resulted as illiterate, and nearly 80% of the people lacked the chance to learn written Italian. Struggles with the spoken language were further reflected from how upon unification, only 2,5% of the people in fact spoke Italian (de Mauro 2017: vol.1.II.4).

De Mauro observed that, in contemporary society, dialectal speech has permeated and modified the wider language, causing linguistic divisions and lacunas among Italians (2017: vol.2.IV.4, vol.2.IV.6, vol.2.IV.9). To resolve the issues of a people, who were historically not used to speaking the state language, he argued for the need of a stronger linguistic teaching program, and culture with it (De Mauro 2017: vol.2.IV.9). De Mauro's historical account showed how Italy failed to establish a strong identity and remained divided, since it lacked the linguistic unity to convey shared culture and ideas, and foster national cohesion.

III.3.2 Regional versus national belonging

Others also acknowledged the geographical divisions which de Mauro had foregrounded for Italy. Luigi Manconi is one of many who dealt with the topic of *campanilismo*, in relation to Italian identity; an antiquated, but still prominent condition which sees attachments to local communities as stronger than to the national entity (1998: 39). Others agreed that, against the fast moving, modern world, people return to local belonging for comfort and identity confirmation (Ferrarotti 1998: 32). Manconi identified local attachment to *campanili* (church spires) as stemming from the Catholic church's historical dominion throughout Italy, which compelled people to worship and attendance of mass in their local churches, fostering attachments to the Church, not the state (1998: 36-38). Anderson's comments that a weakening of religious communities aided the formation of national ones (2006: 11; 19) showed how religious hegemony could have stunted national integrity.

Scipione Guarracino also treated the subject of a divided Italy (2012), and referred to accounts of foreign visitors throughout Italian history who could give useful impressions of the country, as outsiders (Guarracino 2012: 83-84; 88-89). Guarracino's book complemented Manconi's use of *campanilismo* by arguing that a multiplicity of independent small cities prevented Italy from having a true point of central focus, and without this, Italians lacked unified opinions, culture and customs (2012: 95-102). Similarly, he held the Church responsible for emphasizing local divides and directly preventing the spread and integration of the Italian language across the peninsula, segregating it as a language for elites, by forbidding the reading of the Bible in vernacular languages (Guarracino 2012: 77). Furthermore, Guarracino added that Italy's inability to unite its people derived from how, instead of gathering together against a common enemy, sharing ideals and solidarity (2012: 89); in Italy, the state grew as bigger cities engulfed and controlled smaller ones (Guarracino 2012: 99; 102). This did not create a uniform identity for the cities which were now controlled by other regions, but only fostered independent local thought and identity (Guarracino 2012: 99; 102). Although treating events in a distant past (15th century), his analysis identified Italy's problem as one of national character, which persists due to its historical flaws (Guarracino 2012: 73-94). Italians never had to defend their country, as it was given to them, thus people of different regionalities never integrated nor cooperated; nor was a love for the country, which would have pushed individuals to fight and die for it, developed (Guarracino 2012: 89). This recalls the love Anderson took as fundamental for nation formation; further demonstrating Italy's weak national status.

III.3.3 Italian national character

On the subject of Italian national character, Silvana Patriarca has written a book: *Italianità - La costruzione del carattere nazionale* (2010). She argued for the importance of film for depicting stories which convey a national character (Patriarca 2010: VIII), whilst highlighting how recently, what it means to be Italian has been questioned, and how the answer has often seemed negative (Patriarca 2010: X-XI). Like Guarracino, she highlighted the importance of contrast with difference for constructing a sense of a nation (Patriarca 2010: 274). Sharing further similarities with Guarracino, Patriarca presented the idea of Italians historically conceived as 'good people', who did not fight, which she felt had been used to fuel nationalistic and patriotic schemes (Patriarca 2010: 277). As a criticism of the discussion on national character, she also

pointed out the lack of social unity in Italy (Patriarca 2010: 277) and how foregrounding one trait for all Italians to adhere to might be problematic, and lead to exclusion, especially of those not born in Italy (Patriarca 2010: 277-78).

By studying the history of Italian national character, Patriarca traced how originally, in the *Risorgimento*, patriots celebrated the superiority of Italian civilization, and the restoration of ancient greatness and virility, to unite the nation and re-build character on moral grounds (2010: 9; 37). To acquire this status, virtue and masculinity were promoted, over vices and femininity, which were seen as currently permeating Italy, making it morally inferior (Patriarca 2010: 9-10; 12-13). These definitions however consolidated character divides even in unification programs, as Northerners felt Southerners embodied similar negative values (Patriarca 2010: 20). During the World Wars, the rebirth of national character was exploited to motivate Italians to fight and augment nationalistic programs, as Mussolini did (Patriarca 2010: 137; 140-41). Patriarca felt that Italian film in the fifties, sixties and seventies, attempted to reverse and re-construct the image Fascism had given to Italians, through satirical and self-ironizing comedies (2010: 241-48). Nevertheless, she illustrated that, although in the new, post-war Republic, nationalistic ideologies no longer composed Italian politics, the myth of the nation might persist in attempts to express national culture through images (Patriarca 2010: 239-40) – a process which could be seen to correspond with the creation of Anderson's 'imagined community' (2006: 6).

III.3.3.a A male-oriented character?

Gigliana Gori's paper on "Supermanism" in Italy (1999) supported the argument that if Italian national character was built by promoting male strength; it is logical to see the resulting society heavily gendered and sexist. She focused on how Futurist (1900-1920) aspirations for Italian men to reject femininity, become courageous and ideal-looking, were adopted and promoted by Fascism (Gori 1999: 160-63). Since both ideologies used sport to convey gendered attitudes in national schemes, and no effort was made to dismantle them; Italian identity, sexism and sport can be seen as entangled, with sports remaining a lens for observing how gendered values are socially ingrained - as Matteucci's study demonstrated (2012).

This section identified the historical flaws which weaken and discredit Italian identity. De Mauro's linguistic studies (2017) demonstrated that an initial and existing lack of knowledge of the Italian language among its citizens, and regional dissents, crippled identification with Italy and the construction of a national culture. Patriarca's critical reconstruction of the historical attempts to define what being Italian means, illustrated how narratives have been used to paint a picture of a people, and how in Italy this has often changed, been contested, or negative (2010). The present argument will address how football could be the key to giving Italians shared identification, language, culture, love and sense of belonging to their homeland.

III.4. Football and Italy

Existing scholarship offers useful comparisons and points of departure for the significance of football for the Italian nation. When analysing how Korean football channels patriotic values of national unity even for two separate countries, Guy Podoler argued that 'football provides one of the few opportunities for maintaining the notion of a single ethnic nation' (2008: 2). His conclusion should be taken forth when addressing the divided and incoherent state of Italy. Similarly to Gori, but with regards to Costa Rican identity, Carlos Sandoval-Garcia also argued that, since football matches allow masculinity and nationalism to interact and generate (male) respectability (2005: 219-23), masculinity develops in football, and both these factors can construct national identities (Sandoval-Garcia 2005: 227-28).

When addressing how football generates feelings of belonging, academic research has been conducted on how sport becomes a powerful social tool for immigrants navigating conflicting national identities. Studies on Italian immigrant communities in Australia (Ricatti and Klugman 2013) and France (Favero 2008) illustrated how sports, including football, represent and construct nationalities, as immigrants engage in them, to maintain part of their values and identity in a foreign context. Furthermore, how, by being social activities, sports also enable immigrants to integrate and find themselves in their new worlds (Favero 2008: 974; Ricatti and Klugman 2013: 471-73). Importantly, victorious national teams have also noted the importance of imparting national pride and celebration to their co-nationals living abroad (Ferrarotti and Beha 1983: 103-104). The most recent example is Italy's coach Roberto Mancini, after winning the 2021 European championship.

III.4.1 The language of football

Given its importance in nation building, and having observed deficiencies in national Italian language and literature, football jargon becomes another starting point. Roger Penn's paper on this topic called football a '*lingua franca*', a means of uniting people and communicating even with strangers (Penn 2016: 159-60). Supplementing his work is Nicola Guerra identifying football as having a 'special language', with new linguistic terms (some transcended from different languages), which, in Italy's case, have permeated into regular speech, especially thanks to newspapers (2014: 67-68). On this, it is worth noting how in Italy, three daily sports papers dominate news coverage: *La Gazzetta dello Sport* (est. 1896); *il Corriere dello Sport* (est. 1924) and *Tuttosport* (est. 1945) (Foot 2007: 10.1). Gianni Brera, a journalist renowned for his style, has been credited for coining footballing terms, which now are used as Italian lexicon, such as '*melina* – the word for passing the ball uselessly around at the back' (Foot 2007: 10.1). His career and expressions fortified the central role football has in Italian media and language. Similarly, Guerra identified how by encapsulating chants and slang from local supporters and ultras, football and its language can efficiently represent multi-faceted Italian culture and overtake divides (2014: 62; 72). A comparison with how Italian started out as a language for the upper classes shows footballing language as more accessible to Italians than Italian itself. Not only does it include regional variants (in a way institutional Italian did not), but is also now part of general conversation, breaking class boundaries, (Ferrarotti and Beha 1983: 44; Guerra 2014: 72-3). And so, where Italian struggled to emerge as a mainstream language, impairing the integrity of the nation; football might more aptly seen as the unifying language of Italian society, due to its paramount linguistical presence.

Penn also acknowledged how football talk 'can be insulting, offensive, inflammatory and in extreme cases illegal' (2016: 158), with Italy providing examples of regional hostilities and racism (Penn 2016: 155-59). This confirmed that football can reflect and propagate deeper discriminatory attitudes, social issues and divisions. However, Penn went beyond stereotypes and identified how supporters' songs in stadiums can uplift the mood of the match and support a team (2016: 160). This was an example of how linguistic expressions linked to football can

become universally known and used, to bring a group of people together in solidarity (Penn 2016: 162), and create their own “imagined community”.

III.4.2 Football and Italian society

Raymond Siebetchu also identified football as an important cultural product which reflects what happens in society (2017: 132), and can propagate Italian culture in a multilingual and global world (2017: 136-38). Journalist Olivero Beha and sociologist Franco Ferrarotti discussed how the strong link and dependency between football and Italian culture make attitudes during football matches indicative of Italian society (1983: 101-104). Their realizations were not always positive, as they felt that national integrity was amiss from a lack of true sporting culture (Ferrarotti and Beha 1983: 55-6; 74; 88). Others similarly identified football as perpetuating and revealing racist, sexist, homophobic and discriminatory aspects of national culture (Penn 2016: 155-59). In Italy a prime example is how strong, acrimonious displays of regional team support confirm the divided nature of the country, as Penn’s study of Italian regional chants demonstrated (2016: 155-57). Similarly, Angelo Forgione dedicated a book to how the unstable unity of Italian football reflects and is interlinked with tense relations throughout the country (2017). He condemned the level of racism in football (2017: 159-64); but also argued that Italians perpetuate an historically regional type of racism, expressed through bitter North-South rivalries. The slurs and insults received by Napoli against Northern club such as A.C. Milan, Inter and Juventus (Forgione 2017: 164-67); were taken by Forgione as indicative of unresolved nation-wide prejudices and divisions, with no attempt of cooperation (2017: 186-204).

III.4.3 Football and Italian national identity

Italian, and football historian, John Foot sought to understand if sports operate in the same way as history, in creating the kind of emotion-evoking stories which re-enforce national identity, with an analysis of Italy’s 1982 World Cup victory (2016: 344-46). This provided the perfect example of how footballing events and individuals can be used as the shared cultural products Anderson referred to (2006: 4), to construct narratives which unify and rally a nation, especially in Italy.

III.4.3.a Emotion, language, memory and narratives in 1982

Foot understood that sports hold power in national identity creation; helping ‘a nation itself seem real, at least for a time’, because they trigger emotions and create publicly memorable events, which can even compose political narratives (2016: 342-45). He argued that in 1982, universally understandable language and emotion coalesced to convey Italian pride, glory and redemption, reenforcing the strength of the team, of Italian football, and reinvigorating the nation as a consequence (Foot 2016: 346-47). Tadié had accordingly shown that syntopies between the two derive from how football allows individuals to feel proudly represented by their nation (2012: 1782).

To link sport and national identity politics in the creation of emotionally stimulating narratives, Foot began from how parallels between the 1982 World Cup and Italian *Risorgimento* unification stories promoted unity (2016: 347-48). The camaraderie which was seen to fortify the *Risorgimento* heroes in their hard-fought victories was compared with the struggling, but united, 1982 team (Foot 2016: 346-48). As testament to a normally divided Italy, Foot pointed out how the World Cup winners in 1982 came from all over Italy, but nonetheless worked together, representing an enduring, homogenous nation (2016: 348). Links with *Risorgimento* heroes demonstrated how real-life players can become heroes to their spectators in narratives of national glory, such as World Cup wins (Foot 2016: 347-48); and confirmed why Tadié had identified authors giving footballing heroes a spotlight even in fictional stories (2012: 1776-79).

Foot highlighted the importance of a narrative of triumph for obscuring even the match-fixing scandal (*Totonero*) which had occurred in Italy in 1980, prior to the World Cup, and redeeming and hailing as heroes individuals such as Paolo Rossi, Enzo Bearzot and Dino Zoff (2016: 346-47). With the example of 1982, Foot supported the argument that certain footballing moments are cemented in shared Italian football memory, and compiled into emotionally effective, celebratory stories, which can be referred to in the future, with aspirations of similar glory (2016: 348). An example he gave was how ‘Tardelli’s scream’ was remembered because his goal celebration involved every spectator (Foot 2016: 348).

To show that football has much deeper social and political influence than ‘just a game would have’, Foot pointed out its events are used by politicians, according to their own intentions (2016: 355-56). He demonstrated this from how, in 1982, the Italian President Sandro Pertini associated himself with the Italian team’s success, which led him to receive acclaim (Foot 2016: 349-51). Foot argued that Pertini’s involvement generated the links football has with ‘politics, sporting language, the nation, television’, which only then paved the way for Berlusconi’s programs of football monopolisation to control Italy (Foot 2016: 355-56). Furthermore, he deemed Pertini’s image so strongly linked to positive feelings from football successes, that even recent politicians use it to elicit feelings of comfort, solidarity and happiness from that time (Foot 2016: 355-56).

III.4.3.b The collective and memorable effect of mediated celebrations

The power of the media in constructing sporting narratives and collecting people was also appreciated by Foot, who acknowledged the unifying atmosphere of the 1982 victory, since across the peninsula ‘between 32 and 40 million Italians’ watched the ‘same game, with the same commentary, without mobile telephones or twitter’; generating a ‘95% television share’ (Foot 2016: 353). Foot felt that commentator Nando Martellini re-enforced the triumphant narrative, from his iconic celebrations such as: ‘*Campioni del mondo, Campioni del mondo, Campioni del mondo*’ - three times for three world cups - which media at the time propagated (2016: 353). The symbolism of this exultation was confirmed by how, upon Italy’s fourth win in 2006, then commentator Fabio Caressa, repeated the phrase four times, for four world cups (Sky Sport). The importance Foot gave the media, in ensuring Italians could watch and be involved in the game is even more prevalent in an age where social media populate daily life (through Instagram, Facebook etc.) and sports especially. This further justifies analysing social media in the present work.

IV. Methodology

Existing literature showed how principal topics of football, national, and Italian identity relate to the research question. The questions propelling this research include whether football generates strong feelings of belonging and constitutes an integral part of Italian identity; how football affects and reflects different aspects of Italian society; and how attachments to football and Italy are demonstrated. This next section describes the methodologies used to answer these questions.

IV.1 Questionnaire

A questionnaire (Appendix 2) was a chosen method of inquiry because, with the use of open and closed questions, numerical and qualitative results were obtained (Bryman and Bell 2019: 96-98). This questionnaire was electronic in format, and easily shared with participants via an online link. Respondents were not chosen specifically, as the survey was advertised by the researcher across various mediatic channels, asking anyone who identified as Italian to complete it. In this way, the hope was to reach people of different ages and genders, from various regions of Italy, to obtain results as diverse as possible.

51 questions, (23 open-ended) composed the survey: first participants had to consent and choose whether to state their age, gender, national, regional provenance and if they felt part of a minority ethnic group. Questions were designed to gauge the extent to which participants could be deemed “football fans”, inquiring if they followed football, supported the national team, sung the national anthem before a match and supported a club. Following these were questions on whether participants gave stronger support to their local club or to the national team and how they might cheer on a team. Some questions aimed to uncover the emotional impact of football: addressing its effect on people’s lives, how respondents felt when their team won or lost, their strongest memory of a footballing moment and whether they felt football had an aggregative power. Feelings of belonging and identification in relation to national team wins or losses were assessed. Following the social issues linked to football emerging from the literature review, questions engaged with whether participants felt that football dominated excessively in Italy on an economic, political, sporting or social level; and why. Responses were also sought regarding the role and influence of media (social, newspapers), television and referees. There were also questions regarding the salary and status of football players; whether football could still be

deemed a “sport”; the status of male and female football and ultras related violence. The last three questions were open ended, asking participants about their thoughts on racist attacks during football matches, athletes coming out as part of the LGBTQ+ community and whether they could recall any footballing scandals.

Multiple choice and Yes/No questions generated numerical data to be answered quantitatively. Most closed questions were followed by prompts so participants could elaborate or justify their responses. Quantitative analysis was chosen because it could be statistically processed to generate graphs, which immediately demonstrated the outcomes of the survey (Bryman and Bell 2019: 178-79). Comparisons and correlations could also be drawn from numerical results: for example, 55% of respondents called themselves football fans (139 out of the total 254). Of these 83% also declared they identified as male; but out of those who supported the Italian national team (218 out of 254, 86%), the split between female and male supporters was equal – 109 and 109. Quantitative analysis, numerical in nature, was deemed too weak to analyse the opinions and emotions arising from longer responses; and qualitative, thematic, analysis felt more suitable (Bryman and Bell 2019: 306). Studying emotions was prioritized, given the role they were given in nation building and sporting engagement. The use of both quantitative and qualitative analysis was justified by previous studies which employed both and understood their ability to complement each other (Cronin et al. 2008: 572-84; Fielding and Fielding 2008: 555-71; Bryman and Bell 2019: 324-42).

A thematic approach was chosen after reading academic discussions which hailed its usefulness and versatility as a method (Braun and Clarke 2006: 79-86; Bryman 2012: 578-81). The flexibility afforded by thematic analysis supported the discussion of numerous and varied results. This enabled principal trends to be identified and followed throughout, from the questionnaire to media content, and conclusive assessments to be made regarding the effect and role of football. Following the work of Braun and Clarke, after a studied and repeated reading of the answers, the responses to individual questions were coded into categories (2006: 86-88; also Bryman and Bell 2019: 284-88; 313-16), and relevant themes were drawn out from these (Braun and Clarke 2006: 89-93). Some responses were dismissive, vague or contained idioms and references which required interpretation and explanation by the researcher to be universally understood.

Considering results of this nature, categories were constructed for ease of analysis. For example, when addressing what participants had deemed their most memorable footballing moment to be, a section was created for any replies which related to a performance of the Italian national team in an international tournament, without mentioning a particular year or championship. Overall, categories were chosen to represent the responses comprehensively, extensively and in a manner relevant to the research questions.

IV.2 Media analysis: “netnography” and semiotics to uncover themes

It is important to note that the questionnaire was sent out and responses collected prior to the start of the 2021 European football Championships. It is possible that some answers would have been different or enriched if the reverse had been done; but the timeline of this paper necessitated the survey to be terminated earlier. To compensate, media content regarding the Italian national team in the most recent European championship was also analysed. Various sources were compared in accordance with studies which encouraged a multifaceted analysis across different kinds of content, using assorted methods (Murthy 2017: 569-70). Furthermore, supported by the work of Cronin and colleagues, on how ‘threads’ emerging from coded categories can be ‘followed’ across different data, to see how each aided a research question (2008: 576-77); the most prevalent themes were pursued to see if they persisted throughout the various datasets, and if this helped answer the research question.

Thematic analysis was used on online mediatic content from public accounts, deemed as pertaining to the research question. This was justified by Markham’s work on how the Internet can be studied to aid social research, since its nature enables communication, contact and social relations even from afar (2004: 95-97), and the notion that groups which interact online are a reflection of their offline environments and need to be contextualized as such (Kozinets 2010: 64; Quan-Haase and Sloan 2017: 3-5). Sources were chosen with the awareness that online and social media content is a depository of current popular attitudes, which social research can draw on (Buscemi 2017: 131-32; Salmons 2017: 177-79). Further scholarship on digital worlds prompted the investigation to also consider Internet *memes*, relating to players or events in the tournament, since these have been considered ‘groups of interconnected content units that share common characteristics’ (Shifman 2014: 53). Existing works have identified memes as

containing culture and allowing for its transmission and imitation, shaping ‘the mindsets, forms of behaviour, and actions of social groups’ (Shifman 2014: 18). Digital memes are further distributed and seen by many online, constructing and conveying ‘digital culture’, thanks to online platforms which propel the sharing of content (Shifman 2014: 4-7; 18; 37; 41). Digital memes allow local cultures to be expressed in the global world of the web, and hence studied (Shifman 2014: 151-52). And so, following the notion that ‘understanding them (memes) means understanding ourselves’ (Shifman 2014: 175); meme content regarding the Italian national team was scrutinised to understand how “Italian culture” might be constructed and actively propagated through online social media.

To conduct social research by analysing social media, Kozinets promoted the use of a ‘netnographical’ approach, defining ‘netnography’ as the observation of communities, online; with researchers situated in these online cultures (2010: 60). In particular, the present analysis followed the adoption by Litchfield and colleagues of ‘online ethnography, (“netnography”)’ to study ‘cultures and communities emerging through computer mediated communications from what is “publicly available on the Internet”’ (2018: 160). They declared to use ‘netnography’, to study how established racist and sexist social attitudes are expressed through abuse on social media (focusing on Serena Williams and intersectionality) (Litchfield et al. 2018: 166-67); even though they did not directly engage with participants. Instead, they called themselves ‘active viewers’: they observed social media, selected data from archives and analysed it (Litchfield et al. 2018: 160). A similar “netnographical” approach, of immersion without participant interaction (Kozinets 2010: 74-75), was adopted in this paper, regarding Italy and football. This kind of investigation covered existing social media content online (Salmons 2017: 182), posted on public accounts or servers, which made it accessible to anyone (Litchfield et al. 2018: 160). Sources included the accounts of individuals involved in football (Italian players and ex-players, coaches, staff, commentators); official institutions (FIGC, and so on), and fan publications (either from specific football related accounts or in reaction to the tournament).

Buscemi also provided an example of research using data from social media. His study focused on the way Italian identity is conceptualized through media – in YouTube videos – making it a paramount point of reference for this analysis. His direction was towards semiotics: by drawing

on two principal theorists of semiology ‘Peirce (1960) and Morris (1938)’ (Buscemi 2017: 132-33), Buscemi aimed to uncover the symbolic and deeper meaning of representations across his data; and how these have a role in nation building (2017: 132-33). Buscemi stated that his approach could be taken further and suggested looking at songs as means of national identity construction (2017: 142). Consequently, his work offered grounding to this analysis, and useful methods to adopt; principally the need to observe and interpret the symbols presented by data, to understand their meaning (Buscemi 2017: 132-33; also Bryman and Bell 2019: 288-89 on semiotic analysis).

Consequently, the latter part of the analysis, following the questionnaire, combined “netnography” and semiotics to reach thematic comparisons and understand how this data shows Italian identity as constructed by football and the national team. Netnographical immersion and observation of culture was conducted via social media accounts on Instagram, TikTok and YouTube. TikTok is a video-sharing platform, driven by an algorithm which stores previous likes and interactions, providing content in response on a “for you page” (Pham 2018, Schwedel 2018). In this way, even limited interaction with certain videos generates similar ones; creating the correct online environment for observation, with no need for participant interaction. Lack of interaction made the method not wholly ethnographical (or netnographical), as accounted by Kozinets (2010: 75; also Boellstorff et al. 2012: 65); so netnographical observations were combined with semiotic work. Interpretive work helped understand the true meaning of newspaper and television content; as well as social media posts by the general public - songs, videos and pictures - in reaction to the Italian national team. This allowed themes to be further uncovered and thematic analysis to continue across content.

IV.3 Limitations and Ethics

While the survey received over two hundred responses, no assumption was made that these were indicative of the general Italian population, nor that every Italian person would answer in the same way (supporting this was the variety amongst the responses received). Instead, survey responses were used as evidence and examples of possible attitudes amidst a much wider society; supplemented with the use of other sources. Furthermore, when taking into account the lengthy questionnaire, the numerous responses, and the remaining mediatic content, there was a lot of

data to analyse. It became time consuming and taxing for a solo researcher to go through every response (eliminating duplicates when necessary), potentially limiting, and made it impossible to include every answer in the analysis. The varying replies in the questionnaire meant that coding was a lengthy and difficult process, and worries arose that through the process of coding into categories, the original nature of the replies would be lost (Bryman and Bell 2019: 97; 312-13; 317-18). It is also worth noting that needing to translate the replies, given in Italian, into English, although conducted with utmost integrity, may have affected meaning due to general linguistic disparities. Finally, seeing as the researcher also identified with Italian nationality and as a football fan; extra care was taken to ensure results remained unbiased.

The questionnaire data provided some considerations. Firstly, since participants answered independently, and knew they were free to skip questions; not every question was answered by every participant. Their motivations for doing this are unknown but have meant that, during quantitative or qualitative analysis; only responses given were considered and counted. Furthermore, regarding regional provenance, 56% of the participants stated they were from the region of Emilia Romagna; whilst other regions were represented in smaller proportions (Figure 1). This can be attributed to the fact that the researcher is from Emilia Romagna and hence, when sending out the questionnaire, would have had contact more easily with co-regionals. This percentage was accounted for, with the awareness of possible impartialities; but the qualitative data could be analysed following categories which ensured there was no bias in responses towards Emilia Romagna.

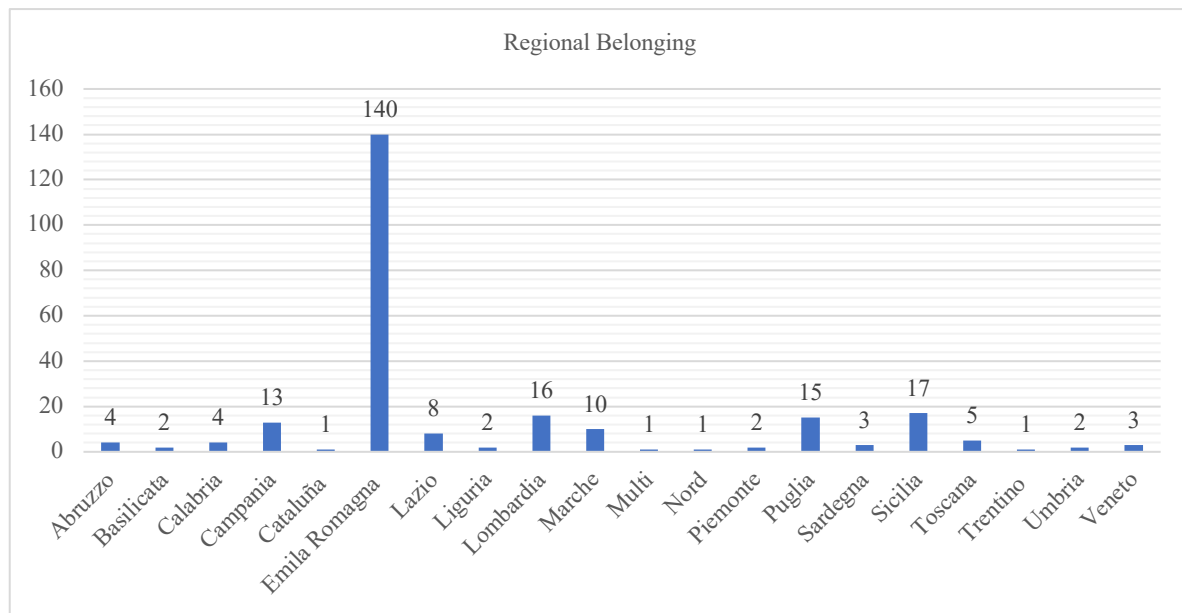


Figure 1. Table showing the regional belonging expressed by participants

Ethical measures were put in place when asking participants to fill in the questionnaire. A statement was inserted at the beginning, requiring participants to willingly give their consent. Participants never gave their names and were informed that they could miss out any question, including personal information, or terminate the questionnaire if they felt uncomfortable answering (Appendix 2). Results were stored securely by the researcher, on a password protected hard drive and were not shared with any individual or on any public forum. In this way complete anonymity, confidentiality and care were maintained towards all participants.

V. Analysis and Discussion

V.1. Themes arising from the questionnaire

From responses which justified participants' support for a club or national team, and happiness from its victory, evident themes included identification, unity, belonging, representation, patriotism and pride, emotion and memory. These recalled the discussion of national imagination and popular involvement in sport. Another prominent trend was how participants were aware that football constitutes culture, affects and reflects social attitudes, with economic and mediatic omnipresence in Italian life.

V.1.1 Identity and Belonging

Forgione had argued that Italian regional divisions persist in football, from perpetual disparities between Northern and Southern teams, in terms of wealth, status and respect (2017: 46-55; 90; 159-67; 186-204). Responses from the questionnaire attested to strong feelings of regional identification: 69% of declared football fans supported a local team (versus a team from another region) (Figure 2). 30% declared themselves club supporters more than national team supporters - 15% gave equal support (Figure 3).

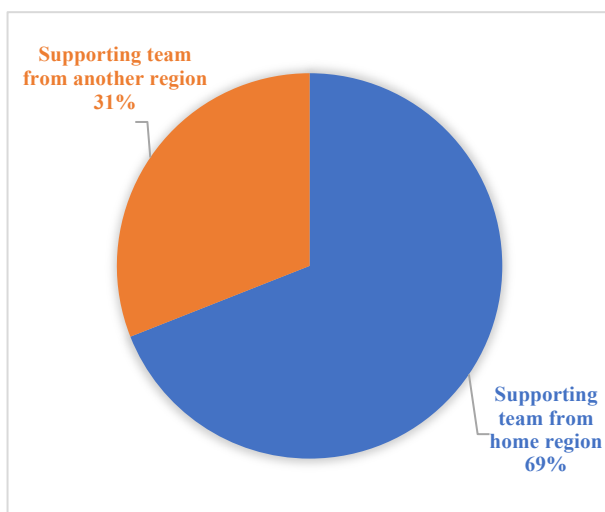


Figure 2. Showing difference in club team support

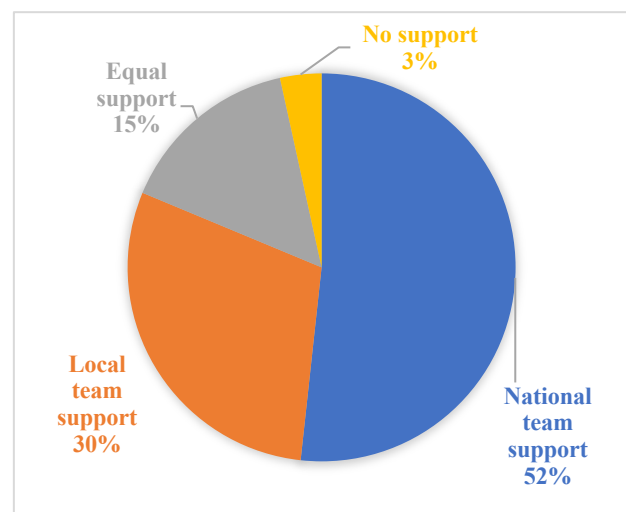


Figure 3. National versus local club support

Longer answers also confirmed attachment to a local club (or place) and aversion towards others: *“La storia della Juventus vede tanti scandali. Vergogna italiana”* (The history of Juventus sees a lot of scandals. A shame for Italy). Some expressed stronger support to their club over the national team, due to emotional and personal links: *“Più tifoso del Napoli. Al cuor non si comanda...”* (I am greater fan of Naples. You cannot control the heart). *“Bologna. Perché la sento mia fin da bambino”* (Bologna. Because I feel it is mine since I was young).

While consistent sentiments of belonging to local teams supported seeing Italy as divided, the results from the questionnaire also sustained the argument that football can be a unifying tool.

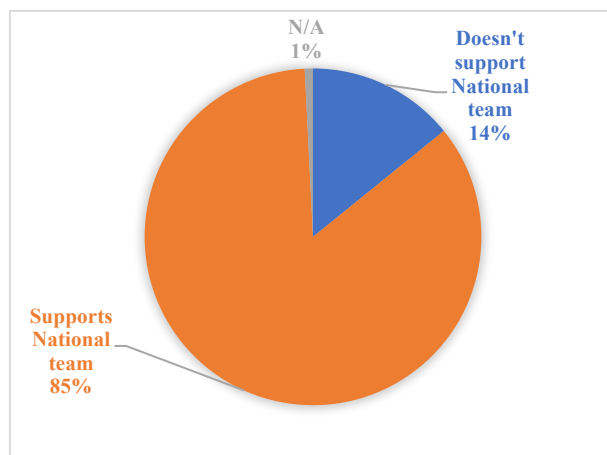


Figure 4. Showing support for the national team

52% supported the Italian national team over a club (Figure 3). When asked if they supported the national team in general, 85% replied yes (Figure 4); and out of the 44% respondents who declared themselves not to be football fans, 33% nevertheless stated that they supported the national team – that is 75% of “non-fans” became fans of the national team (Figures 5 and 6). When discussing their strongest footballing moment, 66% of respondents linked it to a performance of the Italian national team in international tournaments (the World Cup win of 2006 warranting 30% of the answers; and the one in 1982, 20%) (Figure 7). Results which indicated that national footballing successes become memorable for many and that Italy in international competitions is given overwhelming support, helped conclude that Italian people form and demonstrate attachment to a united nation through the performances of the national

football team. To build on these assessments, the motives given in the questionnaire for following the national team were unpacked.

Some respondents stated that they supported the national team (over a local club) due to identification, belonging and representation with Italy; others felt proud and patriotic, especially when Italy played well. “*Rappresentante della nazione alle competizioni internazionali*” (Represents the nation in international competitions); “*Momento di identificazione e appartenenza*” (Identification and belonging moment); “*orgoglio patriottico*” (*patriotic pride*). Statistically, 51% stated they felt a 5, “very proud”, on a scale of 1 to 5, when Italy won international titles (a further 26% marked 4, just under “very proud”).

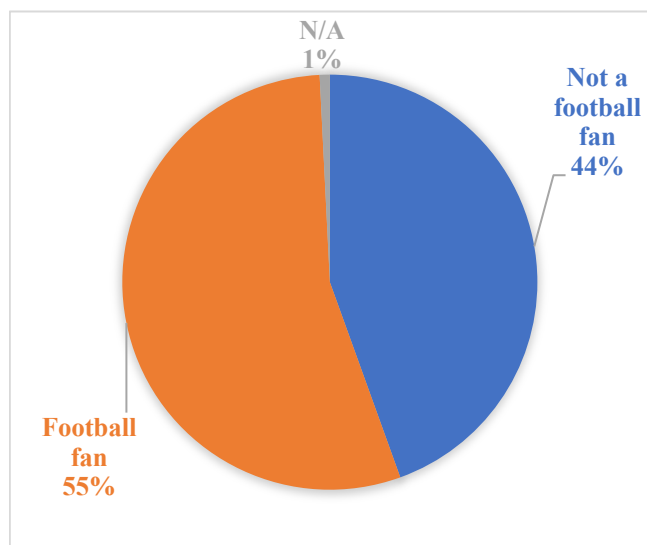


Figure 5. Football fans versus non-fans

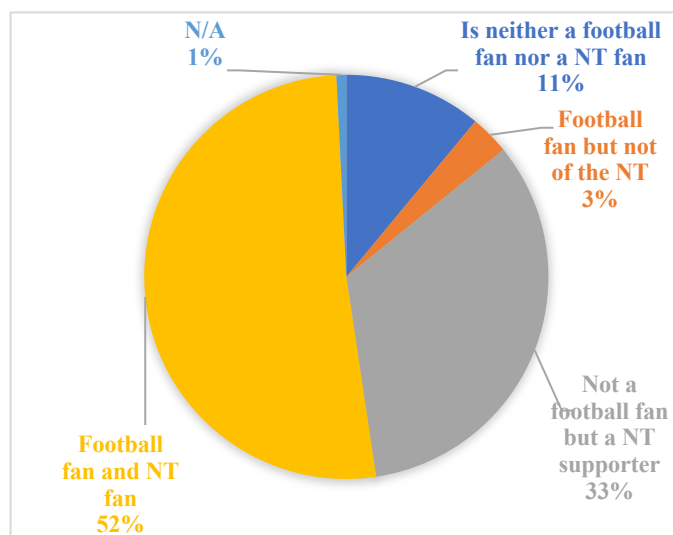


Figure 6. Does supporting the national team make some football fans?

When questioned regarding their identification with a nation when the national (football) team won matches, 56% marked either a 5 or a 4 (5 being strong identification and 4 again just after it). Throughout the long-hand answers which justified the support or following of Italian football; words associated with positive identification (*identità/ identifico*) were counted 21 times, and positive representation (*rappresentanza*) through football 38 times. Terms linked with

patriotism (*patriottico/ patriottismo*) 29 times; pride (*orgoglio/ orgoglioso*) 62 times. Unity (*unità/ unire*) 50 times (in theory nearly one in five respondents used it at least once); belonging (*appartenenza*) 40 times. Words linked with communality (*comune/ comunità*), 11 times, collectiveness (*collettività/ collettivo/a*) 5, togetherness (*insieme*), 9. It is important to remember that not every participant answered every open question, and not all questions dealt with identity issues (though some responses called back to Italian identity even unsolicited).

Results showed how football matches and teams can trigger willing representation, feelings of belonging and patriotism - criteria previously deemed instrumental in the construction of a nation and the association of citizens with it (Anderson 2006: 141; Gellner 1983: 7; 141-42). This supported seeing football as a way to unify a nation (Italy), from the attachment of its people and widespread support for the national team.

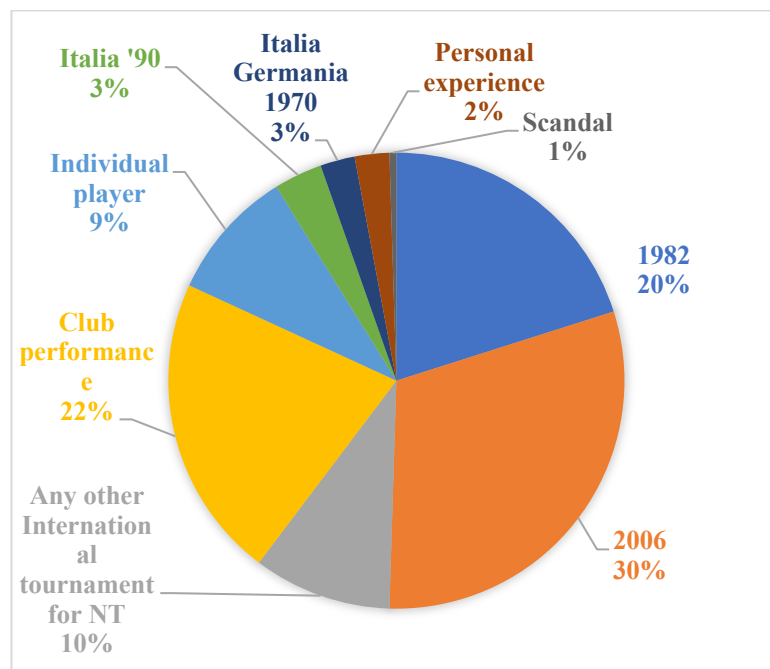


Figure 7. Strongest footballing memories, as declared by participants

V.1.2 Emotion and Memory

The excitement and support generated by the Italian national team was evident throughout the questionnaire. In particular, participants felt belonging and attachment upon Italian footballing success and its celebrations. Celebrating allowed some to rejoice with other Italians, and feel

connected as part of a wider group, (even if abroad): “*Quando abbiamo vinto ultimo mondiale: la percezione era di appartenere ad un unico grande popolo in festa e i campanilismi e rivalità locali venivano temporaneamente sospesi*” (When we won the last world cup: the perception was to belong to one great people celebrating and “campanilisms” and local rivalries were momentarily suspended). “*Ultima vittoria ai mondiali, gente in delirio in strada a festeggiare insieme*” (Last World Cup win, people were ecstatic in the street, celebrating together).

In fact, 53% of participants stated that they had felt football’s unifying power during matches or celebrations of victory for the national team in international competitions (World Cup, Euros) (Appendix 3). The remaining responses covered a variety of topics, without specific mentions to the national team or a certain victory; whereas 53% was composed from answers which referred to national team victories, the euphoria and collectiveness brought by watching them play. Happy emotions were often expressed upon footballing success: *felice* (happy) occurred 38 times, *content/a* (content) 37, *allegro/a* (cheerful) 5, *divertire* (entertain) 7; *emozione* (emotion) was counted 21 times and *passione* (passion), 26. The emotional reactions of participants at football matches confirmed the studies done on football’s ability to elicit emotions (Sekot 2009; Collins 2016; Mutz and Wahnschaffe 2016). This also justified why it had been used in historical programs of national identification (Gori: 1999; Sandoval-Garcia 2005; Podoler 2008; Foot 2016), and thus its possibility to be used as such again.

As well as emotions, some participants felt that football stirred memories. Some of these linked back to the same event (World Cup win), or were personal, involving family: “*Quando sono andata allo stadio con mio padre per la prima volta*” (When I went to the stadium with my father for the first time). Responses which specifically referred to the two World Cup wins in 2006 and 1982 made up 50% of the football memories which were recounted; and nearly 20% of the times participants stated they had felt the unifying power of football (Figure 6; Appendix 3). Overall “2006” was mentioned 98 times throughout the responses (regarding the World Cup win and the scandal of *Calciopoli*); and “1982”, 52 times – the prevalence of 2006 arguably deriving from the more recent nature of the event. The frequent mention of these events enabled them to be seen as part of shared collective imagination, thus constituting ‘cultural messages’, as Anderson defined them (2006: 4-7), which individuals needed to share to feel united as a nation.

These numbers hence flagged the significance which successful World Cups can have in Italy, and the unifying and identificatory impact for its people.

V.1.3 Society and media

Questionnaire responses also served as evidence for a general awareness of football's influence in life and society. Answers to whether football had a significant effect on participants' lives ranged from working in the world of football "*Ci lavoro*" (I work in it - football), playing the sport recreationally "*Gioco a calcio, faccio il fantacalcio*" (I play football and fantasy football) and family involvement "*La mia famiglia (TUTTA) è super appassionata di calcio*" (My whole family are big football fans). Across the questionnaire, the (omni)presence of football in popular and mediatic talk in Italy was also deemed to boost its social stronghold. "*Si parla solo di calcio in Italia*" (In Italy we only talk about football); "*Si parla molto del calcio in TV*" (We talk a lot about football on television). Another frequent response was that football overtakes other sports, important events or people. "*L'importanza che gli viene attribuita sovrasta altri sport egualmente validi*" (The importance given to it – football – overshadows other equally valid sports). "*I calciatori in Italia vengono pagati con milioni di euro e medici e infermieri invece prendono uno stipendio molto inferiore al ruolo che svolgono*" (Football players in Italy are paid with millions of euros and doctors and nurses instead are given a smaller stipend for their work).

44% of respondents felt football dominated in Italy on an economic, political, social and sporting level, with 29% choosing just economic control, 12% social and 11% sporting. Only 1% disagreed with the prompt asking them to choose one of these categories - implying they did not see football as predominant in these sectors (Figure 8). Economic control and the wealth of the footballing world (with players' salaries, exchanges and sponsors) was often deemed a reason for problematic situations and scandals; and for turning the game into a worldwide monetary competition. "*Calcio scommesse. Dove ci sono interessi economici arriva il malaffare*" (Match fixing. Where there are economic interest there are wrongdoings); "*Il più recente è stato quello della Superlega. Penso che sia l'ennesima dimostrazione del fatto che i calciatori, stimolati dalle loro squadre, giochino più per i soldi che per la passione dello sport*" (The most recent one - scandal – was the Superleague. I think it's the latest demonstration of the fact that football players, urged by their teams, play more for money than for sporting passion).

Supporting this was how players were seen as overpaid (5 on a scale of 1 to 5) by 79% of respondents (with a further 11% voting 4); and 64% deemed football players as highly undeserving of their elevated status (1 or 2 on a scale of 1 to 5). 73% voted either 5 or 4, where 5 meant an excessive involvement of media such as newspapers and socials in the football world; and 84% marked either 5 or 4 where 5 signified the predominance of digital channels in the footballing world, for monetary purposes (and 1 meant a marginal presence). Reasons for these declarations included how the business generated by television and advertisements had resulted in the control of broadcasting by television networks, which in turn amplified mediatic platforms (television, news and socials) given to the sport and players, furthering their popularity. *“Le pay tv sono un esempio, ormai se si vuole vedere lo sport bisogna pagare abbonamenti”* (Paid television is an example, nowadays if you want to see sports you need to pay); *“La quantità di sponsor, pubblicità etc. chiaramente suggerisce la voglia di generare profitto da partite di calcio”* (The amount of sponsors, commercials etc. clearly shows the desire to draw profit from football matches).

Explanations given in the questionnaire resounded with studies which had connected television, advertisements and funding in the football world to popular demand (Matteucci 2012; Martelli 2014). *“I media investono in spettacoli molto seguiti lo trovo coerente”* (I find it understandable that the media invest in shows which are greatly followed); *“Trovo che quasi sempre l’offerta corrisponda alla domanda”* (I find that almost always the offer corresponds to the question) – on the strong presence of television in the football world). Identifying the predominance of football, as a sport, but also as a means to generate profit, thanks to mediatic and popular interest; supported the view of football as socially entangled and reflective.

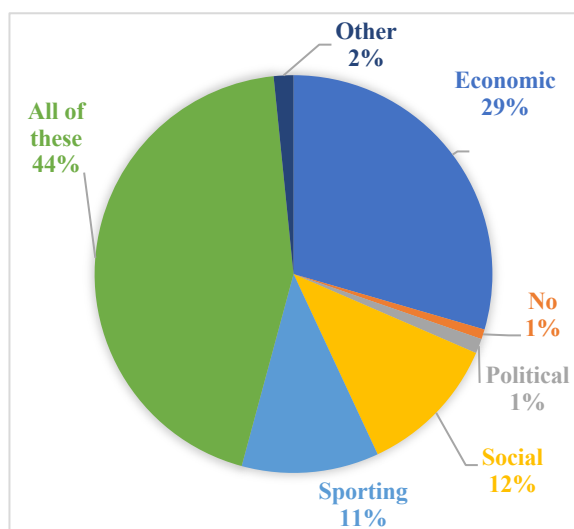


Figure 8. Aspects of footballing omnipotence in Italy

This observation was strengthened by another prominent theme across the responses; that football can constitute a cohesive Italian culture. *“Tutto gira intorno al calcio in Italia...chi non è appassionato rischia di rimanere escluso... è la nostra cultura”* (Everything revolves around football in Italy... non-fans risk being left out... it is our culture). *“In una società con così pochi valori, dove contano più i beni materiali di estremo consumismo cosa mai potrebbe aggregare maggiormente le persone? un ambito culturale o uno stadio?”* (In a society with so few values, where consumer goods are the most valuable what more could unite the people? Cultural instances or a stadium?) – implying a stadium satisfies as culture, since Italians lack one. The capacity football has to convey culture and explain society was further justified by how, when responding to questions on issues of gender, violence, racism, homophobia and fanaticism, answers often pointed out that, whilst football may have been the emotional vessel for negative outbursts; events only occurred because discriminatory views are institutionally imbedded.

Participants felt that racist attacks in football: *“Rispecchiano la grettezza della società”* (Reflect society’s narrow-mindedness); and were *“Vergognosi e frutto di una subcultura violenta e divisa”* (Shameful and the fruit of a violent and divisive subculture). On football players not often coming out as part of the LGBTQ+ community, participants stated that: *“l’odio per il “diverso” fa ancora, purtroppo, parte della cultura popolare”* (hatred for the “other” is still, unfortunately, part of popular culture; *“Ci sono pregiudizi dal momento che è visto come uno*

sport prettamente maschile e mascolinico” (there are prejudices since it – football - is seen mainly as a male and masculine sport). On ultras’ violence: *“Credo che alcuni utilizzino lo sport per sfogare rabbie personali”* (I think that some use sport to vent personal rage); *“Per i gruppi violenti, il calcio offre una scusa per esercitare le proprie azioni. Se non ci fosse il calcio, ne troverebbero un’ altra.”* (For violent groups, football offers an excuse to act. Without football they would find another). There is no greater example of this currently than the racist abuse received by the England players who missed their penalties in the 2021 Euro final. Supporters resorted to timely tactics of “othering” and discrimination, re-enforcing certain boundaries, because they needed someone to blame for their upset. This recalled other times exclusionary and abusive attitudes were expressed throughout football history – such as with Italian *oriundi* – and demonstrated the effect of football beyond the playing field.

In the case of gender issues, 74% of participants felt female football was treated very differently, 5, on a scale of 1 to 5, from men’s (with 14% voting 4 just below it). Disparity in status was justified from how women’s football was less spoken about, sponsored or televised than its male equivalent: *“Il calcio femminile non è trasmesso, né conosciuto tanto quanto il maschile”* (Female football is not shown, not known as much as the male version). *“I compensi economici, la visibilità mediatica, gli investimenti nel settore”* (economic bonuses, mediatic visibility, investments in the sector) were also seen to constitute differences. *“Il ritardo nel riconoscimento dello status professionistico”* - delay in recognising its professionalism (another reason for disparity), was deemed to be because football is still predominantly seen as a male sport, especially in male-oriented Italian society. *“Il calcio femminile è sottovalutato in Italia, molto probabilmente per un fattore di “misoginia”* (le donne non possono fare sport maschili).” (Women’s football is under-rated Italy, most likely due to “misogyny”, women cannot do male sports). Thus, respondents identified how misogynistic mentalities in the footballing world reflect and perpetuate gendered and sexist tendencies present in society.

V.2 Solidifying a national identity, with the narrative of a victorious national team.

To further the argument that football represented the cultural means which need to be shared to create a solid narrative of Italian identity, this section addresses the narratives regarding the Italian national team’s progress and victory at the 2021 European football championship,

conveyed through multimedia content (news coverage and social media reactions). A thematic approach persists throughout, to see whether this data follows themes of national identity construction and those drawn out from the questionnaire.

V.2.1 Mediatic prevalence

The opinions expressed in the questionnaire raised awareness of football's mediatic dominion: 84% of respondents felt a predominant level of involvement (5 or 4, on a scale of 1 to 5) of digital channels for profit; and 75% of respondents thought the media's role was exaggerated (5 or 4, on a scale of 1 to 5). Television, social media campaigns and engagement, celebrity interaction and newspaper coverage of the tournament all confirmed statistics regarding the importance given to football in Italy. The final reported record numbers of viewers, with over 20 million spectators between *Rai* and *Sky* and an 83.58% television share, not including crowds who watched or celebrated outside (FIGC). The *Sogno Azzurro* post-victory documentary was watched by over four million viewers, with a 21.2% share (FIGC).

Social media analysis also showed how football permeates advertising in Italy: official sponsors of the Italian national football team, such as *Poste Italiane*, *LIDL* supermarket, *Fonzies* confectionary, not only had television adverts, but also shared Instagram posts encouraging their followers to join them in unanimously supporting the national team. By expressing solidarity, national pride and association with the team, companies propelled football into daily life and associated it with the Italian people. On the 1st of June 2021, national broadcaster *Rai* held a special show, *Notte Azzurra*, where Coach Mancini presented his players to national audiences. This program has become a tradition – Antonio Conte did the same for his squad in 2016 – confirming how, in the global world of football, players are given a public platform, as figureheads for the Italian nation and people. Their encouragement and praise on national television imparts great responsibility, as they are called to be fitting representatives and play not just for themselves, but for their country; to make every Italian person proud and happy.

V.2.2 Telling the story: historical references and narrative creation

In news coverages, the failed qualification for the 2018 World Cup (for the first time in sixty years), was still foregrounded as the “Apocalypse” of national football. In response, the present

narrative was constructed around a team of well-behaved and victorious athletes, representing the nation, who had escaped this past; and so could incite pride, positive association and identification with Italy (*CdS*, *GdS*). Mancini's coaching was credited, but importantly, the team's strength was attributed to the friendship and unity of the players - which Mancini had fostered and promoted. An investigation across the players' social media and press testimonials confirmed the natural and inclusive atmosphere amongst them, playing pranks on each other and living well together. A most prominent example was how player Matteo Pessina kept a "diary" through Instagram posts, recounting the strong emotions he had felt playing on a united national team.

The docu-series *Sogno Azzurro* (RaiPlay 2021) presented the Italian football team and their work on a national scale. It was produced by Italian national television broadcaster, *Rai*, and aired before the competition. It recounted the regeneration of the national team from the "disaster" of the missed World Cup, depicting a cohesive group of friends who wanted to play well to make Italians happy again, and focused on how Mancini had been the only one to believe in Italy enough to restore it. It referred to real life events: memorable footballing moments and inevitably, the recent Covid-19 pandemic. In the documentary, Italian audiences were encouraged to once again cheer on and associate with the team; rebuilding morale after the World Cup humiliation. The unity and strength of this group, and of football, were also linked to the recovery and happiness of the Italian people, post-pandemic. The players were conscious of Italy's suffering, and hoped to play well to grant the Italian public a return to joy, excitement and normality; as they showed in their visit to Bergamo – a city drastically hit by the pandemic . Italy's win led to the production of another documentary, with the same name, giving the "backstage" of the recent tournament.

Foot had deemed Italy's 1982 World Cup win to have been special, providing unprecedented celebrations, as well as relief and unity for a country troubled by footballing scandal and terrorism, thanks to links between *Risorgimento* ideas of brotherhood and resurgence, and the 1982 team (2016: 341-58). Strong associations between the 1982 World Cup-winning squad and the present team, by media and commentators, can thus be seen to have been used to emphasize how the latter also channelled positive values of collective strength, cohesion and organization,

as its predecessors had. Supporting these parallels was how the Euro 2021 final took place on the 11th July, as the 1982 final had; which led the 1982 squad to write a letter of encouragement to the 2021 team, claiming they “saw themselves in them” (Sky Sport 11/07/2021). The present situation further recalled the turmoil in 1982, from Italy’s footballing failures to the country-wide pandemic distress. Historical parallels confirmed how Italy has and continues to use football successes to boost national morale (fallen for reasons unrelated to football), and signify a resurrection of the nation. Foot had highlighted that in 1982, the political figure of Sandro Pertini heightened the feeling of national success and pride (2016: 351-55). As a result, Foot might have appreciated the popular comparison of President Sergio Mattarella with Sandro Pertini. Mattarella attended the final on the 11th July 2021 at Wembley, and his cheer after Leonardo Bonucci’s equalising goal was undeniable, captured and repropagated thanks to television and social media. Coach Roberto Mancini also thanked Mattarella for being a team supporter. Whilst Mattarella may not have had the same intentions as Pertini, he too became part of this victory – a moment of happiness for Italians everywhere.

V.2.3 Links between football and society

The players and Mancini were always keen to perpetuate syntonies between the team and the nation: in interviews or social media posts, many declared that their drive and enthusiasm derived from wanting to grant the Italians joy and entertainment. At the start of the tournament (10/06), Mancini dedicated an Instagram post to the Italian people, seeing sport as essential during Italy’s struggles, for granting positive emotions and unifying the people, thus urged Italians to unite in support of the team. Conscious of the representation the team provided for the nation, he declared their desire to honour Italy and provide a momentary escape from the pandemic. Importantly, Mancini, many of the players, and Sky Sport commentator Fabio Caressa, dedicated the victory to all the Italians who had suffered, but could now rejoice again. In celebratory Instagram posts, team members thanked the public, and encouraged them to collectively celebrate the victory, because it belonged to every Italian. Demonstrating their sentiments was Bonucci’s determination to drive the celebration bus through the streets of Rome, regardless of pandemic regulations. The underlying themes in these posts concerned unity (of the team and of the country), pride, resilience, re-emergence and joy after difficulties, mutual love, brother (and sister) hood; and positive identification with Italy thanks to the victory.

Emphasising the role football is seen to have in broader Italian society were the team's receptions by Italian Premier Mario Draghi and President Sergio Mattarella. Mattarella praised the players for making him proud, since he had received compliments from abroad. Him and Draghi both showed awareness of the social and identificatory significance of the event, acknowledging how positive national representation abroad had made everyone (themselves included) prouder to be Italian, and uplifted national spirits. Draghi also highlighted how, with sport as a "social elevator" for communities, the victory would have social momentum and benefits; inspiring young people to take up sports and providing the funds for them to advance. Similarly, football was shown to possibly have a positive effect on a country's economy, since Italy's PIL (*Prodotto Interno Lordo* – gross domestic product) was predicted to grow thanks to the victory, as it had in 2006 (Sabella: 2021). The productive spotlight acquired by Italy also meant a probable increase of commerce for Italian products, both from inside and outside Italy (Sabella: 2021). Further evidence of social and sporting gains from this success were statements by Italian football federation (FIGC) president, Gabriele Gravina; who identified the impulse for social and economic restart granted to Italy by the European championship win. He deemed it a chance for shared economic welfare, which would make Italy more reputable and enable the building of new sporting infrastructure (FIGC 2021). He thanked the football team, as well as the support of Italian sponsors, for promoting unity, and emotionally involving the public; who should unanimously partake in the victory (FIGC 2021).

V.2.4 Social media analysis

The evolution of media, and their percolation into society (Quan-Haase and Sloan 2017: 1-5), have enabled associations such as FIGC (Italian Football Federation) and CONI (Italian Olympic Committee) to set up their own social media channels. FIGC has Instagram pages for all of its squads, *Azzurri* (@azzurri) for the male senior team, and a YouTube channel, *Vivo Azzurro*. Over the course of Euro 2021, they promoted campaigns and athletes, also depicting the team as representing themes of unity, friendship and restoration, for the people to associate with. FIGC ran three main social media campaigns, on Instagram, Facebook, YouTube and Twitter: *'L'Azzurro ci unisce, La forza del Gruppo... Rinascimento Azzurro'* (Azzurro unites us, the strength of the Group... Azzurro Renaissance) (2021). #RinascimentoAzzurro was on posts

which depicted the players and staff of the national team, their skills and achievements, against the backdrop of famous Italian Renaissance works. By promoting footballing success, linked to other sources of cultural pride for Italy, this campaign reminded Italians and the world of Italy's greatness in many fields, and showed how easily football can become representative of Italian culture. FIGC found a positive and increased engagement with their campaigns and followership of their media channels throughout the European championship,¹ with *Rinascimento Azzurro* as the most successful (2021). It had 32 million views and over 4 million engagements overall; Michelangelo's Last Judgement as the background for the celebration of the final gained 18 million impressions and 1.5 million interactions on Instagram, as well as 106 thousand likes and 44 thousand retweets on Twitter. In the questionnaire 92% of participants had felt that football had the power to rouse emotions and unite a people; 77% had felt either a 4 or a 5, where 5 was very proud when Italy won international football competitions; and 56% marked 4 or 5 declaring strong feelings of identification for Italy when the national football team won. The use of terminologies such *Unisce, Forza del Gruppo* and *Rinascimento* by the national football federation's official media channels demonstrated thematic congruence with these questionnaire results; as well as news content and scholarship, strengthening the argument that the national team represents these values across Italy.

In this research, social networks such as Instagram, YouTube and TikTok were consistently monitored. The prominence of TikTok as a platform was confirmed by its official sponsorship of the tournament and the *Euro 2020* TikTok account, which posted engaging video highlights. On TikTok, hashtags which widely related to the tournament and to Italy, held numerous views: #EURO2020 17.2 billion – led by the official *Euro 2020* page; #nazionaleitaliana 88.1 million; #azzurri 561.8 million; #ForzaAzzurri 443.8 million; #europei 251.7 million; #GrazieItalia 195.1 million. On the official *Euro 2020* TikTok page, a video of Italy lifting the cup had 10.1 million interactions and 1.7 million likes; a video of Bonucci's saying "It's coming to Rome" 6.9 million interactions and 1.3 million likes. On Instagram, #azzurri, #euro2020 and #nazionale featured in 604 thousand, 2.1 million and 296 thousand posts respectively. High numbers represented wide

¹ FIGC media followership increase: Instagram - 2 million; Facebook - reached 5.2 million, Twitter - reached 838k (Italian), 732k (English) ; YouTube – reached: 385k. Two videos reached over 1 million views.

public engagement with the tournament, and increased even in the space of a few days [data measured after the tournament ended, on 20/07/2021 and 23/07/2021].

Giving importance to fans in determining the mediatic reception of a sport (Martelli 2014) means that Italian audiences would have needed to believe in and foster the portrayal of the team as something which could unify and represent the nation. This explains why the public was encouraged to support the team and why the strength of the team's story could in fact be measured by public reactions. In a highly-mediated, technological climate, social media enabled more supporters to record their reactions of joy, disappointment and celebration on public forums, and players to grow their persona on a global stage, but be scrutinised in return (Salmon 2017: 177; Litchfield et al. 2018: 155-56). It also meant audiences could easily show which moments they deemed important, by reproducing them for effect. *Memes*, which represented and propagated cultural values, were a way to do this (Shifman: 2014), since those featuring the Italian players depicted not just their sporting abilities, but also attributes deemed to convey their "Italian-ness". On ESPNFC's TikTok page, a video of the Italian players shaking their hands captioned "Tell me you're Italian without telling me you're Italian" had 1.4 million views - emphasizing the world-wide stereotype that Italians talk with their hands. This is an example of how the players' behaviour was deemed indicative of the wider population; and Italians seeing these memes could choose whether to identify with them or not, by interacting with them.

V.2.5 A story needs protagonists: the importance of the hero

Whilst Mancini and co. stressed that the strength of the group helped them; social media investigations revealed that the public was still drawn to individuals. Hashtags relating to the players featured on thousands of posts on Instagram: #chiellini 188 thousand; #insigne 217 thousand; #immobile 255 thousand. On TikTok, similar hashtags were used thousands and even hundreds of millions of times: #federicochiesa 271.6 million; #donnarumma 384.0 million; #chiellini 271.8 million (some videos of Chiellini's foul on Bukayo Saka in the England-Italy final had over 1 million likes) (Appendix 4). Lorenzo Insigne's goal against Belgium, posted on the official *Euro 2020* TikTok page, had 1.4 million interactions and over 272 thousand likes. The tag #otiraggir (*O Tir A Gir* is what his goal is called in Neapolitan, meaning "The kick which spins around") was used 11.6 million times. Language also demonstrated how much his

goal impacted the Italian public: *tiraggio* was added as a neologism in Italian dictionary *Treccani* (2021), with specific credit to Insigne. Similarly, *Treccani* also inserted *bonucciata*, as a neologism, referring to actions by Leonardo Bonucci (2021). The engagement around these hashtags grew even in the span of a few days: #spinazzola increased by 3 million uses, #nicolobarella and #barella 10 million, #federicochiesa over 20 million – and as such they are predicted to grow further. Another significant statistic, and a useful comparison with the Italian team for the importance given to singular players, was how the hashtags #eriksen and #christianeriksen had 656.5 million and 146.7 million uses respectively. Danish player Christian Eriksen collapsed in Denmark's first game and had to be rushed to hospital, generating a wave of support which was reflected by media responses.

For Italy, in the 2021 European Championship, the injured Leonardo Spinazzola best showed how an individual (and a hero) is needed in narratives, even sporting ones, and can be a powerful hook for popular following. His injury mid-tournament was symbolically important: his skills on the pitch were missed by commentators, and a new chorus was born for him - ‘*Oleee Ole Ole Oleee Spinaa Spinaa*’. It motivated his team-mates and after Italy beat Spain in the semi-final, they dedicated their win to him, with Insigne wearing Spinazzola's shirt. He was an iconic presence in the final, supporting the team and being the first to be presented with a medal – always on crutches - which even President Mattarella singled him out for. Spinazzola became the kind of athlete prepared to suffer and give his all for a team (Sekot 2009: 43-45), a football hero on whom a narrative focused (Tadié 2012: 1776-79) and a patriot, willing to sacrifice himself for his country (Anderson 2006: 141). Spinazzola's injury helped construct an invigorating narrative for the team, making success more noble, when achieved fighting for an absent team-mate. The interest and love given by the public to someone who, whilst striving to do his best for Italy, had seriously hurt himself was also demonstrated by mediatic interactions. Spinazzola's Instagram profile grew 102% percent – the most out of all the players of the National team, reaching 1 million followers; and he was dedicated a post called “the Hero's Audacity” as part of the #*RinascimentoAzzurro* campaign, juxtaposed with Michelangelo's David (Instagram 2021).

V.2.6 The unifying significance and symbolisms of celebrations

The media focused on nationwide celebrations: the message which resounded from the street parties was of an Italy which could celebrate as one, thanks to the football team. The team were first page news, seen to have “united Italy”, as they triggered these celebrations, which overcame standard regional divides (*CdS* 13/07/2021). Commentators reported how Paolo Rossi had brought people back to the streets in 1982, after difficult times, and how the players of this Euro championship had done the same thing. In the context of the pandemic, the emphasis was precisely on how, after horrific times spent inside, Italy could celebrate and hug again, thanks to the football result - overtaking fear and irrespective of restrictions. Unity was re-enforced in celebrations, when the *Azzurri* were not the only ones being congratulated: Mattarella and Draghi also received Matteo Berrettini – the first Italian tennis-player in history to take part in a Wimbledon final. Draghi further invited the Under 23 Italian Athletics team. In their speeches, athletes of different sports (captain Giorgio Chiellini and Berrettini) expressed the solidarity and unity they had felt from mutual sporting successes. They used the expression *fratelli* (brothers), with significant references to the Italian national anthem (“Fratelli d’Italia” is the first line), symbolic unifier for those who sing it (Anderson 2006: 145).

Foot had deemed Nando Martellini’s commentary instrumental in creating the narrative of the 1982 World Cup and fomenting celebrations (2016: 353). Fabio Caressa and Beppe Bergomi, the excited and emotional commentators of Italy’s triumph in 2006, could be paralleled to Martellini for demonstrating genuine support and enthusiasm. Some of their expressions are widely remembered, such as “Andiamo a Berlino Beppe” (We’re going to Berlin, Beppe - after Italy’s semi-final win against Germany in 2006), and have increased their popularity. In the most recent tournament, Caressa and Bergomi expressed not only excitement, but also foregrounded the gravity of the tournament, as a return to normality and happiness after the lockdowns, by playing in stadiums. As Chiellini picked up the cup, Caressa asked him to lift it for all the Italians who had suffered in the pandemic (YouTube 2021).

In 2021, celebrations confirmed and held on to the ritualistic elements Foot had described for 1982: driving around in cars, waving the flag, flooding the streets (2016: 353-54). Some songs were re-used because they represented a past victory, as the *po-oo-po-po-po-po-oo-po-oo* chant

from 2006 did. Anderson had identified the importance of a national anthem as a piece of culture all members of a nation share and sing together to feel part of a bigger group (2006: 145). Similarly, the players demonstrated how shared culture, conveyed through images or songs, can unite group of people. In *Sogno Azzurro*, they were shown to bond by singing as a group. They continued to sing together throughout the tournament (as seen on their own social media or in interviews), especially after their wins. To celebrate their victories, they often sang *Un'estate italiana* (Gianna Nannini and Edoardo Bennato), the official 1990 World Cup song, which sent a powerful message of retribution for 1990. However, the Neapolitan song *Ma quala dieta* (Luca Il Sole di Notte) was dubbed the “unofficial anthem”. The post-tournament docu-film showed how everyone adopted it after the Neapolitan players first played it. Although at first seemingly trivial, further interpretation appreciated this song’s significance, since its use showed how the national team can represent a united Italy, by positively sharing culture and being a unit, irrespective of regional belonging. This countered Forgione’s theories of an Italy divided in football, as in daily life (2017). Testimony to the popularity of these songs was how 62.6 thousand TikTok videos were made using *Un'estate italiana* and how the hashtag #maqualadieta received 7.5 million views. As was the case in 2006, and 1982, the tournament had symbolic celebrations, and the songs sung by the national team were part of these; since fans imitated the players’ examples. Therefore, where Anderson had his national anthem, Italians had on the one hand, the national anthem, but also choruses of *Un'estate italiana*, *Ma quala dieta*, *Po-po-po* and *Olee Spinaa*, to celebrate together. In this way, the tournament created a microcosm of cultural artefacts, first showcased by the players, then adopted by the media and the public, to construct the idea of Italy as a nation, momentarily reflected by the national team.

VI. Conclusion

Unity, belonging, representation and identification were all seen as necessary conditions for the creation of a nation state which citizens believed in and wanted to be a part of; along with such great love, patriotism and pride in a country that you would die for it (Anderson 2006: 141). The conclusions drawn from Anderson were that a universally known national language is paramount for the constitution of a successfully cohesive ‘imagined community’ (2006: 6), because it allows ideas and stories to be communicated across a people. Gellner added to the work of Anderson, by stressing how uniform culture for citizens, shared through language, also consolidates national identity (1983: 139-41). Scholars thus argued that the ability to create and communicate shared ideas, stories, values and messages, thanks to homogenous language and culture, are key for fomenting popular desire to belong to a national community, as well as national unity and identity.

The history of the Italian language and character showed how, since its origins, Italy has been disjointed and unable to form shared cultures and ideologies; missing a shared language to express these with. Patriarca critiqued the unstable and imagined nature of “Italian-ness”, which could change for specific purposes (2010), recalling Guarracino and the lack of a united, solid identity and character amongst Italians (2012). Similarly, de Mauro felt that a central Italian culture was missing even with Italian unification, due to enduring localisms, and intrinsic territorial and linguistic divisions (2017).

Media - television, newspapers and socials - were seen to adapt to the wide public interest in sport, and to utilize it for profit; making them an intrinsic part of its modern development. Studies identified football as an emblem of globalisation and local identification; a mechanism for confirming and understanding social constructs (gender) and national belonging; and a context which involves people in the pursuit of an emotional release and communal solidarity. Tadié saw football as a way to create stories with actors (players, audiences), contexts (national, international football and competitions) and shared experiences (2012). This enabled it to be defined as much more than a game, and a way to understand issues beyond the world of sport, such as Italian identity.

Supported by this literary analysis, the argument was constructed around the fact that football can grant national identification. Questionnaire results confirmed that sports promote national belonging from attachment and involvement with a team. Footballing memories and emotions described by respondents were hence seen to represent the ‘cultural artefacts’ Anderson found paramount for crafting the shared narratives which united a nation as an ‘imagined community’ (2006: 4). Participants were also aware that football can reflect other social issues and thoughts, including sexism and discrimination.

The impact football has on the Italian nation was demonstrated from how the promotion of the national team and its success in the most recent European tournament became a significant way to help restore morale in Italy. News coverage, players and government members stressed the significance of the win. After the tragic one and a half years spent in the pandemic, this was not only a sporting success, but a way to give hope and happiness to Italians; making them proud to be Italian once more and promising better things to come. Italian football’s mediatic spotlight and narratives of nation-wide strength, unity and resurgence, created by the national football team, prompted celebrations, as had been done in the past (Foot 2016). Football’s power in social contexts enabled it to rally people together, represent and construct the Italian nation, even if otherwise contested or under threat. In this way successful representation of Italy by the national team became a powerful tool of Italian joy, identification and unification.

During the 2021 Olympic games, Italian athletes reused choruses (*Un’estate italiana, Po-po-po*) and expressions “It’s coming Rome” from the tournament, to express their own success on their social media or in interviews. This reflected how the victorious feeling from football was conveyed to other sports, becoming a symbol and motivation to excel in sport (and in life) for Italians. However, only football successes were able to gather Italian people together in the streets, celebrating and rejoicing as one; this kind of celebration was not manifested even for Italy’s gold medals at the Olympics. This confirmed football’s stronghold as *the* Italian sport, generating unity, emotions and collective identification, thus constructing the Italian nation.

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VIII. Appendix

Appendix 1: List of figures

Figure 1. Table showing the regional belonging expressed by participants

Figure 2. Showing difference in club team support

Figure 3. National versus local club support

Figure 4. Showing support for national team

Figure 5. Football fans versus non-fans

Figure 6. Does supporting the national team make some football fans?

Figure 7. Strongest footballing memories, as declared by participants

Figure 8. Aspects of footballing omnipotence in Italy

Appendix 2: Questionnaire

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScDHto2acqz_RzDtq7pUPyWAvOT632btUSFrEKV_hJmLWIUdg/viewform?usp=sf_link>

Through this questionnaire, and the results drawn, the purpose of this research is to explore and gain further understanding of the personal effect football has on different people who identify as Italian, and feelings of identity or belonging. The researcher's final MPhil dissertation will feature and analyse the results from this questionnaire. This document, with the results, will be seen by the dissertation supervisor, an external examiner and the department of Identities and Cultures of Europe at Trinity College Dublin. All data is collected anonymously and will be handled with care and confidentiality. The data will be used solely for the purpose of this research for my MPhil dissertation in Identities and Cultures of Europe at Trinity College Dublin.

Consent Statement: I am 18 years or older and am competent to provide consent. I have read, or had read to me, the information about this research and this consent statement. I understand the description of the research that is being provided to me. I understand that my data will be used for scientific purposes and I have no objection that my data is published in scientific publications in a way that does not reveal my identity. I understand that if I make illicit activities known, these will be reported to appropriate authorities. I understand that my responses will be electronically recorded for the purpose of the research. I understand that I may stop answering the questionnaire at any time, and that I may at any time, even subsequent to my participation have such answers destroyed (except in situations in which the authorities must be notified such as above). I understand that, subject to the constraints above, no recordings will be replayed in any public forum or made available to any audience other than the current researchers/research team. I understand that I may refuse to answer any question and that I may withdraw at any time without penalty. I understand that my participation is fully anonymous and that no personal details about me will be recorded. I freely and voluntarily agree to be part of this research study,

though without prejudice to my legal and ethical rights. I have received a copy of this agreement and give my consent to answering this questionnaire: I consent to taking part in this questionnaire – box to tick.

Age: 18-25; 26-35; 36-45; 46-55; 56-65; 66-75; 76+

Gender: Male; Female; Prefer not to say

Do you identify with an ethnic minority? Yes/No/Prefer not to say

Nationality): Italian; Other

Regional provenance: _____

Do you follow football? Yes/No

Do you support the Italian National football team? Yes/No

Do you sing the National Anthem before a match by the National football team? Yes/No

Do you support a local team? Yes/No

If yes, which one? _____

Do you consider yourself more a local or national team supporter? And why? _____

When (and if) you cheer on your team, do you express yourself in particular ways? Yes/No

If yes, could you describe the ways in which you express yourself? [eg: Go Italy, dialect slang etc.]: _____

Do you feel that football has an effect on your life? Yes/No; If yes, in what way?: _____

How do you feel when your team loses or wins ? Explain, if possible: _____

From 1 to 5 how do you feel when The Italian National Team wins in International Tournaments - eg. World Cup? 1 = Very indifferent, 5 = Very proud; Explain, if possible: _____

From 1 to 5 how do you feel when The Italian National Team loses in International Tournaments - eg. World Cup? 1 = Very disappointed, 5 = Still very proud; Explain, if possible: _____

If applicable, your strongest/best memory of a footballing moment: _____

Do you think football has power in stirring emotions and gathering a people?): Yes/No; If yes, could you give an example of when and how you felt this power?) _____

From 1 to 5, how much do you identify with a team when it wins? 1 = Very little, 5 = a lot, If possible, give a reason: _____

From 1 to 5, how much do you identify with your nation team when your National team wins? 1 = Very little, 5 = a lot, If possible, give a reason: _____

Have you ever watched a match of the National Team abroad? Yes/No; If yes, from 1 to 5, can you define if you felt more or less Italian? 1 = Very little, 5 = a lot; If yes, can you describe how you felt: _____

Do you think football overly dominates in Italy on an economic, political, sporting or social level? Economic / Political / Sporting / Social / All of the above / Other; Why? And what would you change? _____

From 1 to 5, do you think that the media's role [newspapers, socials – Facebook, Instagram] in Football is indifferent (1) or exaggerated (5)? Can you offer examples and/or motivation for your choice?: _____

From 1 to 5, do you feel that the presence, for monetary gain, of digital and analog etc. channels towards this very popular sport, and originally, the poorest, is marginal (1) or predominant (5)? Can you offer examples and/or motivation for your choice? _____

From 1 to 5, do you think that male and female football are treated equally (1) or very differently (5)? Can you offer examples and/or motivation for your choice?: _____

From 1 (very little) to 5 (a lot), do you think that professional football would still be counted as a sport? Can you offer examples and/or motivation for your choice?: _____

From 1 to 5, do you think that modern footballers are paid the right/appropriate amount (1) or too much (5)? Can you offer examples and/or motivation for your choice?: _____

From 1 [not really] to 5 [well-earned] do you think that modern football players deserve their status of cult figures? Can you offer examples and/or motivation for your choice? _____

From 1 to 5, do you think that the role of ultras is appropriate (1) or too violent involved (5)? What would you change regarding their behaviour? _____

From 1 to 5, do you think that referees in modern football have a marginal/inessential role (1) or decisive/ important (5)? Can you offer examples and/or motivation for your choice?: _____

What do you think of the frequent racist attacks during football matches? _____

Some sportspeople come out, many don't? What do you think of this? Can you offer an explanation? _____

Do you have memories of footballing scandals? Which ones? And can you comment

22/08/2021

Football & Italian Identity questionnaire

Football & Italian Identity questionnaire

Attraverso questo questionario e i risultati tratti, lo scopo della seguente ricerca è di esplorare e ottenere una maggiore consapevolezza di come il calcio ha un effetto personale su diversi individui che si identificano come "Italiani/e", e i loro sentimenti di identità e appartenenza.

I risultati della ricerca verranno analizzati e riportati nella tesi finale di MPhil del ricercatore. Questo documento e i risultati saranno visti solo dal ricercatore, relatore, un esaminatore esterno e il dipartimento di 'Identities and Cultures of Europe' al Trinity College Dublin.

Tutti i dati sono raccolti in modo anonimo e saranno trattati con accordi di riservatezza e confidenzialità. I dati saranno usati solo per questo progetto e trattati come parte della mia tesi di MPhil in 'Identities and Cultures of Europe' al Trinity College Dublin.

1. Dichiarazione di Consenso: Confermo di avere più di 18 anni e sono in grado di dare il mio consenso. Ho letto o mi sono state lette, le informazioni su questa ricerca e questa dichiarazione di consenso. Ho compreso la descrizione della ricerca che mi è stata data. Comprendo che tutti i miei dati saranno usati per scopi scientifici e pubblicazioni in un modo che non rivelerà la mia identità. Comprendo che se dichiaro attività illecite, queste saranno portate alle giuste autorità. Comprendo che le mie risposte saranno registrate elettronicamente per lo scopo della ricerca. Comprendo che posso interrompere il questionario in qualsiasi momento, e anche dopo la mia partecipazione posso chiedere che i dati vengano distrutti (a parte le situazioni in cui verranno contattate le autorità, come descritto prima). Comprendo che, dato i requisiti descritti, i dati non saranno riprodotti o divulgati in alcun forum pubblico o ad alcun pubblico a parte il ricercatore/la squadra di ricerca. Comprendo che posso rifiutare di rispondere a qualsiasi domanda e che posso interrompere in qualsiasi momento. Comprendo che la mia partecipazione è completamente anonima e che nessun dato personale su di me sarà conservato. Acconsento liberamente e volontariamente a partecipare a questa ricerca, senza pregiudizio sui miei diritti legali e etici. Ho letto questo accordo e do il mio consenso a rispondere a questo questionario:

Mark only one oval.

☐ Acconsento di partecipare a questo questionario

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1qR015uMy_9Hw0Bjx1p0zAu0kM-jETkU-Aggs8E/edit

22/08/2021

Football & Italian Identity questionnaire

6. Provenienza regionale

7. Segue il calcio?

Mark only one oval.

☐ Sì

☐ No

8. Tifa per la Nazionale di Calcio Italiana?

Mark only one oval.

☐ Sì

☐ No

9. Canta l'Inno di Mameli prima di una partita di calcio della Nazionale?

Mark only one oval.

☐ Sì

☐ No

10. Tifa per una squadra locale?

Mark only one oval.

☐ Sì

☐ No

11. Se Sì, quale?

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1qR015uMy_9Hw0Bjx1p0zAu0kM-jETkU-Aggs8E/edit

22/08/2021

Football & Italian Identity questionnaire

2. Età

Mark only one oval.

☐ 18-25

☐ 26-35

☐ 36-45

☐ 46-55

☐ 56-65

☐ 66-75

☐ 76+

3. Genere

Mark only one oval.

☐ Maschio

☐ Femmina

☐ Preferisco non dichiarare

4. Si identifica con una minoranza etnica ?

Mark only one oval.

☐ Sì

☐ No

☐ Preferisco non dichiarare

5. Nazionalità

Mark only one oval.

☐ Italiana

☐ Altra

1/14

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1qR015uMy_9Hw0Bjx1p0zAu0kM-jETkU-Aggs8E/edit

22/08/2021

Football & Italian Identity questionnaire

12. Si sente più tifoso della Nazionale o della propria squadra locale? e perché?

13. Quando (e se) tifa, si ritrova ad esultare in modo particolare?

Mark only one oval.

☐ Sì

☐ No

14. Se Sì, potrebbe descrivere dei modi nei quali esulta? (eg: Forza Italia, slang dialettali etc.)

15. Sente che il calcio abbia un effetto sulla sua vita?

Mark only one oval.

☐ Sì

☐ No

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1qR015uMy_9Hw0Bjx1p0zAu0kM-jETkU-Aggs8E/edit

3/14

4/14

22/08/2021

Football & Italian Identity questionnaire

16. Se sì, in quale modo?

17. Come si sente quando la propria squadra perde o vince ? Se possibile, dia una motivazione

18. Da 1 a 5, come si sente quando la Nazionale Italiana di Calcio vince in competizioni internazionali - eg. Coppa del Mondo? 1 = Molto indifferente , 5 = Molto orgoglioso

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Molto indifferente	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Molto orgoglioso

19. Se possibile, dia una motivazione

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1q8Ro15uMy_9Hw0Bjx1pcOzAu0kM-jETkU-Aggs8E/edit

22/08/2021

Football & Italian Identity questionnaire

24. Se Sì, potrebbe dare un esempio di quando e come lei ha percepito questo potere?

25. Da 1 a 5, quanto si identifica con una squadra quando vince? 1 = Pochissimo ; 5 = Moltissimo

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Pochissimo	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Moltissimo

26. Se possibile, dia una motivazione

27. Da 1 a 5, quanto si identifica con la sua nazione quando la Nazionale di calcio vince? 1 = Pochissimo ; 5 = Moltissimo

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Pochissimo	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Moltissimo

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1q8Ro15uMy_9Hw0Bjx1pcOzAu0kM-jETkU-Aggs8E/edit

7/14

22/08/2021

Football & Italian Identity questionnaire

20. Da 1 a 5, come si sente quando la Nazionale Italiana di Calcio perde in competizioni internazionali - eg. Coppa del Mondo? 1 = Molto deluso , 5 = Comunque molto orgoglioso

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Molto deluso	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Molto orgoglioso

21. Se possibile, dia una motivazione

22. La sua più forte/ migliore memoria di un momento calcistico se applicabile:

23. Trova che il calcio abbia potere nel suscitare emozioni e aggregare un popolo?

Mark only one oval.

☐ Sì
☐ No

5/14

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1q8Ro15uMy_9Hw0Bjx1pcOzAu0kM-jETkU-Aggs8E/edit

6/14

22/08/2021

Football & Italian Identity questionnaire

28. Se possibile, dia una motivazione

29. Ha mai guardato una partita della Nazionale di Calcio all'estero?

Mark only one oval.

☐ Sì
☐ No

30. Se Sì, da 1 a 5, può definire se si è sentito più o meno Italiano/a? 1 = Pochissimo ; 5 = Moltissimo

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Pochissimo	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Moltissimo

31. Se Sì, può raccontare le sue sensazioni?

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1q8Ro15uMy_9Hw0Bjx1pcOzAu0kM-jETkU-Aggs8E/edit

8/14

22/08/2021

Football & Italian Identity questionnaire

32. Pensa che il calcio domini troppo in Italia, a livello economico, politico, sportivo o sociale?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Economico
☐ Politico
☐ Sportivo
☐ Sociale
☐ Tutti questi aspetti
☐ Other: _____

33. Perché? e cosa cambierebbe?

34. Da 1 a 5, trova che il ruolo dei media (giornali, social- Facebook, Instagram) nel calcio sia indifferente (1) o esagerato (5)?

Mark only one oval.

- | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Indifferente | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Esagerato | | | | | |

35. Può offrire esempi e/o motivazioni della sua scelta?

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1q8Ro15uMy_9Hw0Bjs1peOzAu0M-jETkhU-Aggs8E/edit

22/08/2021

Football & Italian Identity questionnaire

40. Da 1 (pochissimo) a 5 (molto) quanto pensa che il calcio professionista abbia mantenuto la sua dimensione sportiva?

Mark only one oval.

- | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Pochissimo | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Molto | | | | | |

41. Può offrire esempi e/o motivazioni della sua scelta?

42. Da 1 a 5 pensa che i calciatori moderni vengano pagati in modo giusto/ adeguato (1) o in modo esagerato (5)?

Mark only one oval.

- | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|----------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Giustamente | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Esageratamente | | | | | |

43. Può offrire esempi e/o motivazioni della sua scelta?

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Football & Italian Identity questionnaire

36. TV e Sport: Da 1 a 5 avverte la presenza a fini di lucro di canali digitali e non, in relazione al gioco più popolare e, in origine, più povero del mondo, in modo marginale (1) oppure predominante (5)?

Mark only one oval.

- | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Marginale | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Predominante | | | | | |

37. Può offrire esempi e/o motivazioni della sua scelta?

38. Da 1 a 5 pensa che il calcio maschile e il calcio femminile siano trattati nello stesso modo (1) o in modi molto diversi(5)?

Mark only one oval.

- | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Uguale | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Molto diversamente | | | | | |

39. Può offrire esempi e/o motivazioni della sua scelta?

9/14

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1q8Ro15uMy_9Hw0Bjs1peOzAu0M-jETkhU-Aggs8E/edit

10/14

22/08/2021

Football & Italian Identity questionnaire

44. Da 1 (non veramente) a 5 (molto meritato) pensa che i calciatori moderni meritino il loro status da figure di culto?

Mark only one oval.

- | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|----------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Non veramente | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Molto meritato | | | | | |

45. Può offrire esempi e/o motivazioni della sua scelta?

46. Da 1 a 5 pensa che il ruolo degli ultra' sia appropriato (1) o troppo violento/ coinvolto (5)?

Mark only one oval.

- | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Appropriato | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Troppo violento/ coinvolto | | | | | |

47. Cosa cambierebbe del loro comportamento?

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48. Da 1 a 5 pensa che gli arbitri nel calcio moderno abbiano un ruolo marginale/ inessenziale (1) oppure decisivo/ importante (5)?

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Marginale/ inessenziale ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Decisivo/ importante

49. Può offrire esempi e/o motivazioni della sua scelta?

50. Cosa pensa dei frequenti attacchi razzisti durante le partite di calcio?

51. Alcuni-e sportivi-e fanno coming out, molti no. Cosa ne pensa? Sa dare qualche spiegazione a riguardo?

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1gkUd5uMh_8lhw9a1pHo2vorkM-jETt3t1-AgpeE/edit

1/14

23/08/2021 Football & Italian identity questionnaire

52. Ha ricordi di scandali calcistici? Quali? E può offrire un suo commento?

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Google Forms

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1gkUd5uMh_8lhw9a1pHo2vorkM-jETt3t1-AgpeE/edit

14/14

Appendix 3: Occasions respondents felt the unifying power of football

Belonging	1	
Fanaticism	1	
Playing football	1	
Social effect of football	1	
Stirs emotions	1	
Unity between players	1	
Atmosphere	2	
Showing the flag for the NT	2	
Superleague	2	
Important wins	3	
National pride when win, critical when losing and not the same with other sports	3	
Negative attitude	3	
Shared joy	3	
Celebrations (shared)	5	
Stadium behaviour/ celebrations	5	
Awareness of popularity/ omnipresence of football (expressed in talk/attention etc.)	11	
City celebrating local team victory	14	Of which - City celebrating local team victory (vs pandemic guidelines) =2
World Cup/ European championship mention	14	
Unity between those watching/cheering	17	
World Cup (/Euro) win - unity/celebration/national reinvigoration + representation	32	Of which 2006 = 20 Of which 1982 = 12
World Cup/Euro - united spectatorship + celebrations	40	Of which Pertini's World Cup celebration = 2

Total reactions of collectiveness of celebration when the NT plays or wins at international competitions (World Cup/Euro) = 86 (14+ 32 + 40 = 53%)

Appendix 4: Sitography

Coni (Comitato Olimpico Nazionale Italiano), <https://www.coni.it/it/> [Accessed 27/07/2021]

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Instagram, <https://www.instagram.com/> [Accessed 27/07/2021]

Fonzies Italia @fonziesitalia <<https://www.instagram.com/fonziesitalia/>>

Lidl Italia @lidlitalia <<https://www.instagram.com/lidlitalia/>>

Nazionale Italiana di Calcio @azzurri <<https://www.instagram.com/azzurri/>>

Conferenza stampa di Chiesa - Italia-Spagna 1-1 (4-2 dcr), 07/07/21 @azzurri

<<https://www.instagram.com/p/CRASssjqCJR/>>

L'audacia dell'Eroe – The hero's bravery 09/07/2021

<<https://www.instagram.com/p/CRGkEp9LSmL/>>

Poste Italiane @posteitaliane <<https://www.instagram.com/posteitaliane/>>

Reset Marketing @reset.marketingofficial: 14/07/2021

<https://www.instagram.com/p/CRUCO36py6V/?utm_medium=share_sheet> Grazie a te, abbiamo vinto anche noi! (on Spinazzola)

Roberto Mancini @mrmancini <<https://www.instagram.com/mrmancini10/>>; 10/06/2021

– Letter to the Italians <<https://www.instagram.com/p/CP737BynZWt/>>

NT players: @bonuccileo19 @giorgiochiellini @jorginhofrello @dilorenzo22
 @ciroimmobile17 @pessinamatteo @locamanuel73 @gigiodonna99 @berardi25
 @fedexchiesa @lorinsigneofficial @gallobelotti @nicolo_barella @bryancristante
 @spina_leo @elcastro10 @emersonpalmieri @rafaeltoloi@floremzi @lucavialli
 @marco_verratti92 @alessandrobastoni @giacomo.raspadori @francescoacerbi88
 @fbernardeschi @alex_meret

Hashtags: #spinazzola: 34.5k posts, #spina 62k posts , #leonardospinazzola 3.5k posts;
 #chiesa 1.2 million posts (probably inaccurate regarding the player as there are many posts about the Catholic church under this hashtag as well); #federicochiesa 24.7k posts;

#nicolobarella 12.7 k posts (combined) ; #barella 57.7k posts ; #chiellini 188k
 #giorgiochiellini 25.7k ; #insigne 217k; #lorenzoinsigne 42.5k ; #immobile 255k ;
 #ciroimmobile 47.2k; #donnarumma 139k.

La Gazzetta dello Sport, <https://www.gazzetta.it/> [Accessed 27/07/2021]

La Gazzetta dello Sport – Archivio Storico,
<http://archiviostorico.gazzetta.it/sitesearch/ArchivioStoricoPay.html>> [Accessed 27/07/2021]

RaiPlay.it 07/06/2021, 08/06/2021, 09/06/2021, 10/06/2021, 15/07/2021, *Sogno Azzurro*:
<https://www.raipaly.it/video/2021/06/Sogno-Azzurro---Prima-Puntata---07062021-c11a0356-7cf9-4341-a1d4-d2672ccf05ac.html>>

RaiSport.it 09/07/2020 <<https://www.raisport.rai.it/video/2020/07/il-cielo-e-azzurro-sopra-perlino-2006-6c31ad8c-9258-42e5-af70-51ba06f320be.html>> *Il cielo è Azzurro sopra Berlino...*

Sky Sport (Italia) < <https://sport.sky.it/>> [Accessed 27/07/2021]

TikTok <<https://tiktok.com/>> [Accessed 27/07/2021]

TikTok hashtags:

20/07/2021: #EURO2020 16.8B views – led by official UEFA EURO 2020 page;
 #nazionaleitaliana 85.2 M views; #azzurri 539.2 M views; #ForzaAzzurri 435.3 M
 views), #europei 245.3 M, #Grazieltalia 183.2 M views #ItaliaInghilterra 240.9 M
 views; #it'sComingHome 1.6B views; #itscomingrome 141.6 M views ; #nicolobarella
 54.8 M views; #barella 257.5 M views; #chebelgiocatore 34.7 M views; #matteopessina
 7.8M views; #federicochiesa 245.1 M views; #robertomancini 17.6 M views;
 #spinazzola 72.2 M views; #eriksen 653.4 M views; #chiellini 267.0 M views (over 1M
 views for some videos of him pulling down Saka – also on ESPN FC)

23/07/2021: #EURO2020 17.2 billion – led by official UEFA EURO 2020 page;
 #nazionaleitaliana 88.1 million; #azzurri 561.8 million; #ForzaAzzurri 443.8 million;
 #europei 251.7 million; #Grazieltalia 195.1 million; #ItaliaInghilterra 248.5 million.
 #nicolobarella 66.7 million; #barella 271.3 million; #chebelgiocatore (a viral video of
 Barella saying “Che bel giogatore” – what a good player) 36.7 million. #matteopessina 9
 million; #pessina 43.8 million; #federicochiesa (271.6 million) ; #chiesa 510.4 million;
 #robertomancini 19.1 million; #mancini #89.3 million; #spinazzola 75.9 million;
 #leonardospinazzola 5.4 million; #donnarumma 384.0 million; #gigiodonnarumma 14.3
 million #chiellini 271.8 million (over 1 million likes for some videos of his foul on
 Bukayo Saka in the England- Italy final – also on ESPN FC) ; #jorginho 208.8 million;
 #locatelli 159.9 million #manuellocatelli 15.5 million, #bonucci 177.9 million,
 #leonardobonucci 8.9 million; #immobile 215.4 million, #ciroimmobile 94.1 million;
 #insigne 390.6 million; #lorenzoinsigne 100.2 million; #verratti 143.6 million;
 #marcoverratti 17.3 million. #eriksen 656.5 million; #christianeriksen 146.7 million.

Twitter, <<https://twitter.com/>> [Accessed 27/07/2021]

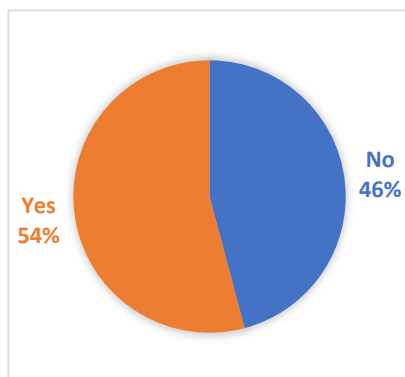
@azzurri (The Italian Football Team's official international Twitter for news and updates from the #Azzurri) <<https://twitter.com/azzurri>>

Vocabolario Treccani <<https://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/>> [Accessed 27/07/2021]

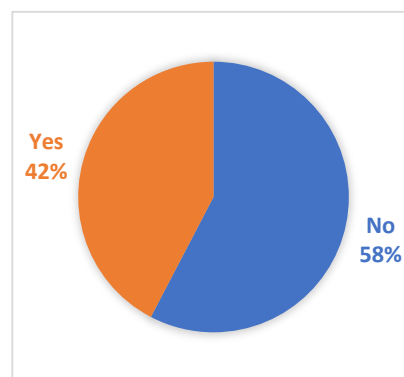
YouTube - <<https://www.youtube.com/>> [Accessed 27/07/2021]

FIGC Vivo Azzurro - Nazionale Italiana Calcio <<https://www.youtube.com/user/FIG>>

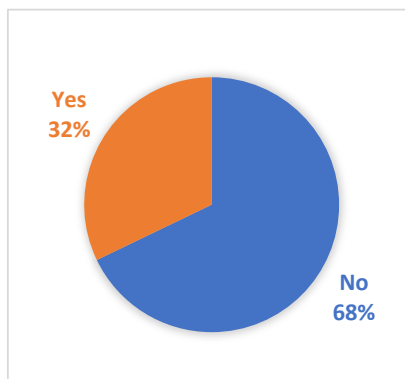
Appendix 5: Remaining Graphs



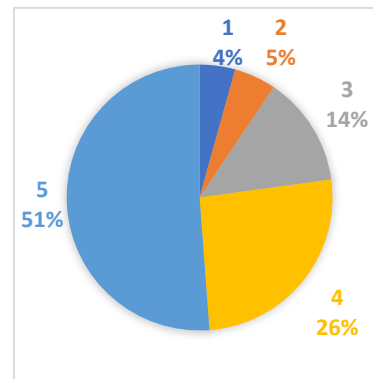
Do you sing the national anthem before a game?



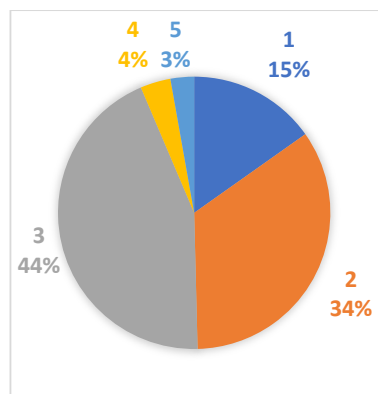
Do you use particular expressions to cheer on a team?



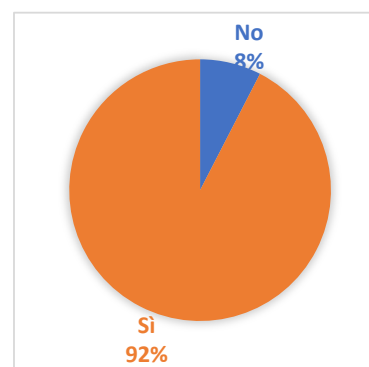
Do you feel like football has an effect on your life?



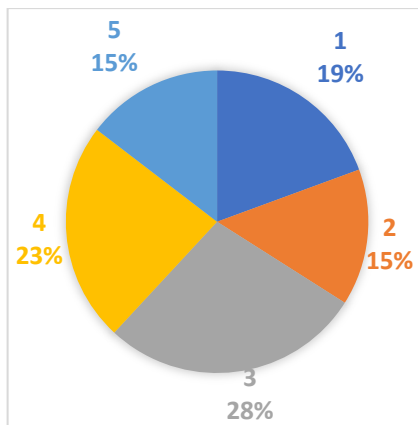
From 1 to 5 how do you feel when The Italian National Team team wins in International Tournaments - eg. World Cup? 1 = Very indifferent, 5 = Very proud



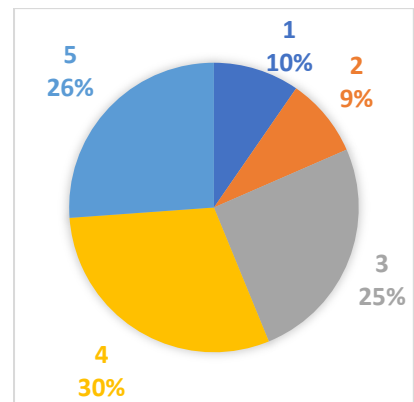
From 1 to 5 how do you feel when The Italian National Team team wins in International Tournaments - eg. World Cup? 1 = Very indifferent, 5 = Very proud



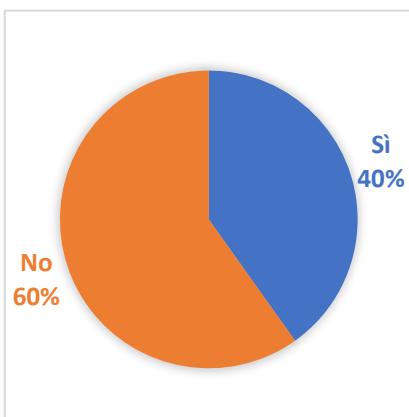
Do you feel that football has the power to stir emotions and unite a people?



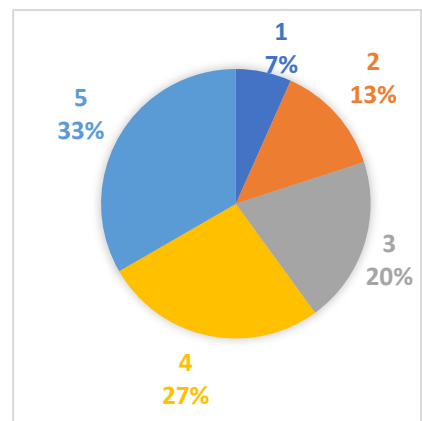
From 1 to 5, how much do you identify with a team when it wins? 1 = Very little, 5 = a lot



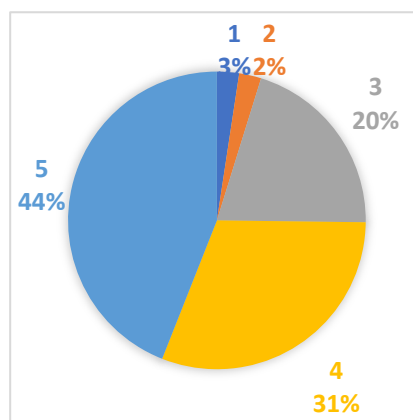
From 1 to 5, how much do you identify with your nation team when your National team wins? 1 = Very little, 5 = a lot



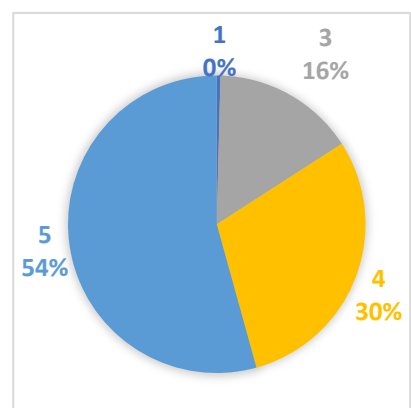
Have you ever watched a match of the National Team abroad?



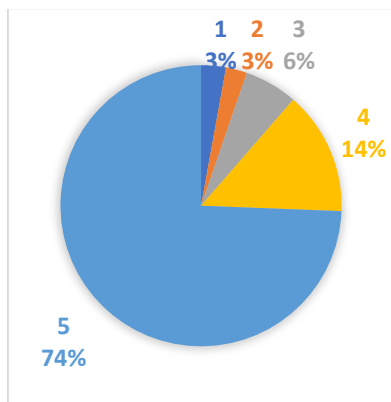
If yes, from 1 to 5, can you define if you felt more or less Italian? 1 = Very little, 5 = a lot



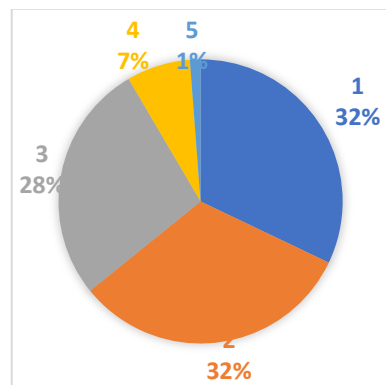
From 1 to 5, do you think that the media's role [newspapers, socials – Facebook, Instagram] in Football is indifferent (1) or exaggerated (5)



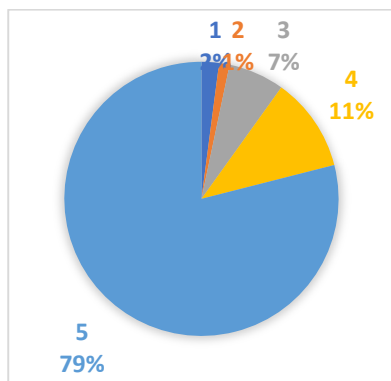
From 1 to 5, do you feel that the presence, for monetary gain, of digital and analog etc. channels towards this very popular sport, and originally, the poorest, is marginal (1) or predominant (5)



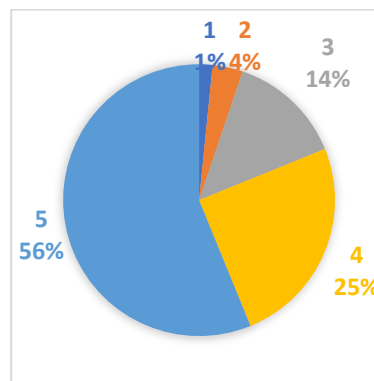
From 1 to 5, do you think that male and female football are treated equally (1) or very differently (5)



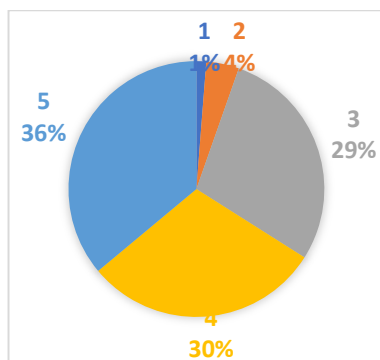
From 1 to 5, do you think that modern footballers are paid the right/appropriate amount (1) or too much (5)?



From 1 [not really] to 5 [well-earned] do you think that modern football players deserve their status of cult figures?



From 1 to 5, do you think that the role of ultras is appropriate (1) or too violent involved (5)?



From 1 to 5, do you think that referees in modern football have a marginal/inessential role (1) or decisive/ important (5)?

Appendix 6: Newspaper titles, covering the European championship

La Gazzetta dello Sport

09/06/2021 - L'Italia chiamò; La Nazionale del bel gioco, un Paese che riparte, il ritorno dei tifosi: c'è voglia di notti magiche (Italy called; The National Team of the beautiful game, a country which is restarting, the return of fans: there's an eagerness for magic nights); Picture: fans wearing tricolore wigs, the team shirt and the flag painted on their cheeks

11/06/2021 (Day of debut) - Siamo tutti Azzurri; Roma abbraccia la Nazionale. Mancini: «Onoriamo la maglia» (All of us are Azzurri; Rome hugs the National Team. Mancini: «Let's honor the shirt»); Picture: the team in the shape of a heart w the flag behind them

12/06/2021 - Ridi Italia – Festa all'Olimpo; Partenza col botto, Turchi travolti (Laugh Italy – Party at the Olympic Stadium; Starting with a bang, the Turkish are bowled over); Picture: Immobile and Insigne over the tricolore

20/06/2021 - Mancini sei tutti noi (Mancini are all of us); Picture Mancini's head surrounded by Italy supporters

30/06/2021 - Frece Tricolori (Frece Tricolori are the planes which show the Italian flag in the sky); Picture: Immobile, Chiesa and Spinazzola with tricolore colours and the frecce tricolori

02/07/2021 – Noi siamo L'Italia; contro il Belgio di Lukaku per tornare grandi (We are Italy; against Lukaku's Belgium to become great again); Picture: whole team in front of the tricolore

07/07/2021 – Fiesta! Italia eroica a Wembley: è finale (Fiesta! Italy heroic at Wembley: it's the final); Picture: team celebrating the semifinal win, with Insigne wearing Spinazzola's shirt

09/07/2021 – Senza Paura; Conte: L'Italia sa fare tutto, siamo i più completi (Without Fear; Conte: Italy knows how to do everything, we are the most complete); Picture: team singing the anthem in front of Kane and Sterling

10/07/2021 – W L'Italia; Berrettini, Nazionale; Wimbledon & Wembley (Go Italy, Berrettini, National Team; Wimbledon & Wembley); Picture: Berrettini on the left over green, white in the middle, Mancini on the right over red

11/07/2021 - Fateli Azzurri; L'Italia sfida l'Inghilterra per il trono Europeo (Make them Light Blue; Italy challenges England for the European throne), Picture: Mancini over throne with Chiesa and Jorginho

12/07/2021 – Troppo Bello; Italia Campione d'Europa (Too Beautiful; Italy European Champion); Picture: team celebrating with the cup, the saved penalty, Vialli and Mancini hugging

13/07/2021 - Il ritorno dei campioni; Italia Piaci un Mondo; Mattarella e Draghi ricevono gli azzurri: «Avete reso più unito il Paese». Poi la parata a Roma tra la folla in delirio. Ora

l'obiettivo è il Mondiale. E dall'estero solo applausi. Caso razzismo in Inghilterra (The return of the champions; Italy the world loves you; Mattarella and Draghi receive the azzurri: «You united the country»). Then the parade in Rome among the frenzied crowd. Now the goal is the World Cup. Only congratulations from abroad. In England, racism case); Picture: party bus in Rome and Mancini with the cup

Corriere della Sera

11/07/2021 – Oggi la finale: tutta l'Italia con gli azzurri per un sogno. E' il giorno della finale. L'11 luglio come 39 anni fa ai Mondiali. Stasera a Wembley Italia e Inghilterra si sfidano per conquistare il trofeo di campione d'Europa. Tutto il Paese con gli azzurri per inseguire un sogno.... La Ripresa Possibile, lo spirito del paese - di Walter Veltroni; Berrettini e poi la nazionale di calcio. Le prestazioni dei nostri atleti ci regalano la possibilità di vivere una gioia. (Mario Sconceri) (Tonight the final: All of Italy with the azzurri for a dream. It's the day of the final. The 11th of July like 39 years ago at the World Cup. Tonight at Wembley Italy and England duel to conquer the European championship trophy. The whole country with the azzurri to chase a dream... the possible reconquest, the spirit of a country – by Walter Veltroni; Berrettini and then the football national team. Our athletes' performances grant us the chance to experience joy); Cover: NT in a huddle (match with Spain)

12/07/2021 – I campioni siamo noi - Epica finale a Wembley. L'Italia va sotto, lotta, recupera. E ai rigori batte l'Inghilterra. La festa nelle piazze (We are the champions – Epic final at Wembley. Italy goes under, fights, comes back. And beats England at penalties. The party in the squares); Picture: the team celebrating

13/07/2021 – «Così avete unito l'Italia» Gli azzurri ricevuti da Mattarella: «Vittoria meritata e armonia». Chiellini, dedica ad Astori. Gli applausi di Draghi: «Grazie a voi siamo al centro d'Europa». Poi il giro in bus per Roma («This is how you united Italy») The azzurri received by Mattarella: «Well earned victory and harmony». Chiellini dedication to Astori. Draghi's congratulations: «Thanks to you we are at the centre of Europe». The bus tour through Rome); Picture: the bus in Rome

Il Foglio 13/07/2021 - Bonucci's goal (2 pages), then the team with Mario Draghi and the cup (2 pages)