SPORT AND INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT: Exploring Research Synergy

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SPORT AND INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT: Exploring Research Synergy

Abstract

The objective of this article is to indicate how international business (IB) research can

benefit from using sport as a research context. We present the rationale for studying

organizational phenomena within sport, with a focus on benefits specific to IB research,

and present examples wherein sport is used to study organizational phenomena relevant

to IB. Among the examples we present, we focus on the influence of identity integration

on performance of multinational teams, the influence of international experience on

performance of multinational teams, and the influence of cultural differences on emotions

in organizations. We conclude with suggestions for future research.

Keywords: multinational teams, multiculturalism, cross-cultural management, emotion,
sport

1. INTRODUCTION

On February 10th, 2015, an English enterprise signed exclusive contracts with two independent partners to distribute its product in the United Kingdom and Ireland. The combined value of these two deals amounted to over $7 billion USD (Gibson 2015). A year later, the same enterprise signed another contract, this time for global distribution rights, for $4.17b billion USD (Sweney 2017). While the revenue generated from these two contracts might be less than that of corporations on the Fortune Global 500 list, it is more than the gross domestic products of Malta or Nicaragua. Interestingly, the enterprise has witnessed 24 consecutive years of sales growth. More importantly from an international business (IB) perspective, over 120 million consumers from more than 210 countries and territories consume its product at least once a week (Sweney 2017), and most are regulars, consuming on a weekly basis. The enterprise described here is the English Premier League (EPL), one of the most popular and financially successful sport organizations on the planet.

The EPL is by no means the only sport organization generating significant revenue. Over the last three decades or so, sport has become a formidable global industry. In the U.S., the National Football League generated over $13 billion USD in the 2016 season (Belzer 2016), while the Major League Baseball revenues during 2016 are estimated at almost $10 billion USD (Brown 2016). The International Olympic Committee (IOC 2016) assessed its revenues from the 2016 Summer Olympics at $5.7

billion USD. FIFA, the international governing body of association football, estimated the World Cup 2014 revenues to be around $4.6 billion (FIFA 2019). It is worth noting that the revenue reported above refers to direct league income, *not* including economic benefits to host nations and cities.

Undoubtedly, sport is a big business. Professional sport is also becoming increasingly international and multicultural, both in terms of active (athletes) and passive (spectators) participants. The last summer Olympics, in 2016, involved over 11,000 athletes from 207 countries competing for medals and global fame, as the games were watched by over 9 million spectators attending the games in Rio de Janeiro and over 900 million TV viewers (IOC 2016). Two years later, The FIFA World Cup final between France and Croatia in Moscow was watched by over 78,000 in the stadium, 12 million TV viewers in the US alone, and over a billion people worldwide. The 2019 Champions League final in Madrid was broadcast to over 200 countries and watched by over 300 million viewers. Moreover, the Champions League final, between two English teams Tottenham and Liverpool was contested by players from 18 nationalities, led by managers from Spain and Germany, while the game was officiated by Slovenian, Dutch, and German referees. In the English Premier League 2018-2019 season non-English international players constituted over 63 percent of all players, representing 65 different nationalities.

Even traditionally American sports are becoming increasingly international. While players from only three nations participated in the 2019 Super Bowl (the game itself was watched by more than 50 million people *outside* the United States), 76 players representing 28 nationalities played in the 2018-2019 National Football League (NFL) season. The 2018 baseball World Series involved players from nine countries (21 nationalities were represented in the regular season; non-US players foreigners constituted 29% of all players). The 2018-2019 National Basketball Association season involved 108 players from 42 countries (NBA 2018). The NBA playoffs were broadcast to 215 countries in 47 languages. Table 1 presents statistics related to the internationalization and commercialization of sport. Undoubtedly, sport is an *international business*.

TABLE 1 GOES ABOUT HERE

The purpose of this article is to investigate how research within the context of sport can contribute to our understanding of management and organizations in the IB domain. Our analysis of manuscripts published 2000-2019 in IB and management journals[1] reveals that the IB scholarly community has not paid much attention to sport.

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[1] *Journal of International Business Studies*, *Journal of World Business, Journal of International Management, Thunderbird International Business Review, Global Strategy Journal*, *MIR: Management International Review*, *European Journal of International Management,* and *International Business Review*

3

The only three studies we identified were published recently in *Global Strategy Journal* (Peeters et al. 2019), *International Business Review* (Szymanski et al. 2019), and *Thunderbird International Business Review* (van Bakel and Salzbrenner 2019). In contrast, sport has been used as a research context in publications such as *Strategic Management Journal* (e.g. Holcomb et al. 2009; Aime et al. 2010), *Academy of Management Journal* (e.g. Grohsjean et al. 2016, Berman et al. 2002, Cotton et al. 2011), *Administrative Science Quarterly* (e.g. Staw and Hoang 1995), *Organization Science* (e.g. Wolfe and Putler 2002) and the *Journal of Management Inquiry* (e.g. Wolfe et al. 2005).

The sport context provides advantages for conducting organizational, including IB research. As we will show below, studying organizational phenomena within sport provides researchers with advantages infrequently found in non-sport domains and thus allows researchers to answer research questions that are not easily examined in other contexts.

We follow the example of Wolfe and colleagues (2005) who proposed using sport as a lens to study organizational phenomena. They argued that sport provides unique opportunities to address topics such as stakeholder management, team performance, and organizational identification. We build on their logic and demonstrate how the increasing internationalization of professional sport, combined with previously discussed methodological advantages, allows researchers to study IB-related phenomena such as

4

diversity and identity integration, international experience and performance, and cross-cultural differences in emotional reactions.

To achieve the paper's objective, we first present a general overview of the rationale for studying organizational phenomena within sport. With this as background, we address the rationale for studying IB phenomena within sport and then present three examples of IB phenomena that can be investigated within the domain of sport. Having indicated how IB research can benefit by using sport as a research context, we conclude with potential future research directions.

2. SPORT AND ORGANIZATIONAL STUDIES

Studying organizational phenomena within sport provides researchers with advantages infrequently found in non-sport domains. Specifically, the frequency and regularity of athletic events, the transparency of changes in strategies and human resources, and clarity of outcomes, result in unique opportunities to observe, measure, and compare variables and relationships of interest over time (Wolfe et al. 2005). Further, many relevant variables which can be measured with accuracy are available in sport. This provides two substantial benefits to the researcher—(i) it minimizes the need to test hypotheses using proxies, and (ii) it provides publicly available datasets encompassing many relevant dependent, independent, and control variables. In addition, such data advantages facilitate addressing a major obstacle in the development of IB research—replicability (Aguinis et al. 2017). While replicability in IB has been challenging due to

limited access to researchers' datasets, using sport as a context eliminates this concern to a great extent, as much relevant data is publicly available. Further, the relatively controlled field environments within sport provide methodological advantages often not found in more conventional IB field research settings.

Unlike many non-sport domains where the conventions and constraints that structure human interaction vary greatly across nations, the rules, regulations, and strategies of any particular sport are generally consistent across nations and cultures. This allows IB scholars to examine research questions while controlling for confounding factors that might be difficult to control for in other contexts. Further, sport is an arena where, as in IB, organizations face increasingly competitive environments wherein they need to perform in highly demanding circumstances as they compete "on the edge" (Eisenhardt and Brown 1998; Wolfe et al. 2005).

Sport has thus been an effective setting within which to conduct organizational research. Indeed, organizational scholars have studied a range of phenomena in the context of sport; including: congruence among strategy, human resources, and performance (Wright et al. 1995); interpersonal networks that lead to extraordinary performance (Cotton et al. 2011); the influence of tacit knowledge on sustainable competitive advantage (Berman et al. 2002); attributions of success and failure on performance (Hallahan et al. 1997); the resource-based view of the firm (Sirmon et al. 2008), and determinants of perceptions of rivalry (Kilduff et al. 2010).

6

It is noteworthy that sport has been accepted as a valid research context in other fields of social sciences as well. For instance, it has been used to study a broad range of economics phenomena such as the effects of migration (e.g., Allan and Moffat 2014; Berlinschi, Schokkaert, and Swinnen 2013), technology (e.g., Yamamura 2009) and knowledge transfer (e.g., Goodall, Kahn, and Oswald 2011), and global economic development convergence (e.g., Krause and Szymanski 2019; Szymanski 2014).

In addition, sport management scholars have studied IB-related phenomena. Our analysis of manuscripts published in five top sport management journals reveals numerous studies related to global and international management research questions at all levels of analysis. For instance, at the individual level Jun and Lee (2012) examined how identities of cross-national athletes are crafted; at the team level, cultural diversity (e.g., Spaaij 2013) and authentic leadership in multicultural teams (Takos, Murray, and O'Boyle 2018) were examined. Lee, Ahn, and Lee (2016) studied the country-of-origin effects, and Kulczycki and Koenigstorfer (2016) looked at local vs. international corporate social responsibiliy initiatives effects at the organizational level. At the country, industry, and global level, De Bosscher and colleagues (2016) examined issues related to pace of convergence and national policies, while Meletakos and colleagues (2016) looked at the effects of international talent migration. While these studies were oriented primarily to sport management rather than IB scholars, they demonstrate the potential for leveraging sport as a context for mainstream IB research.

7

Sport as a research context not only offers methodological advantages, but economics and sport management scholars have shown that it can be used to study relevant IB phenomena. In what follows, we build on this argument and present why and how using sport as research context can fuel IB research.

2.1. Sport and international organizational studies

As argued in the preceeding section, studying organizational phenomena within sport provides a number of research advantages, which we elaborate as follows:
(a) frequent and regularly scheduled events – the vast majority of professional sport leagues and competitions follow predetermined schedules, which remain fairly consistent each year. For instance, in American Major League Baseball (MLB), each team plays 162 games per season. The English Premier League season consists of 380 games (each team playing 38 games and competing against each opponent twice). In many leagues such as MLB or NHL, the team roster is relatively stable, hence a direct comparison of season to season team performance is possible.
(b) transparency of organizational changes – while the back office of most professional teams remains often undisclosed, the team preseason rosters and match lineups are officially reported, thus allowing researchers to analyze organizational and personnel changes.
(c) clarity of outcomes – compared to traditional business organizations where measuring performance might be subjective depending on the objectives of owners and other

8

stakeholders, in sport the game result is a matter of official record, thus enabling a direct comparison of two teams' performance (Peeters et al. 2019; Krause and Szymanski 2019).

(d) relevant variables measured with accuracy – as explained above, the realm of sport is characterized by meticulous record taking pertaining to performance analyses, statistics, historical records, and the like, which provides researchers with objective, measurable data. For example, detailed MLB (baseball) records go as far back as 1870. Interestingly enough, available data does not end at game results, but also includes individual player statistics. Furthermore, the public availability of robust data contributes to addressing the replicability challenge found in IB research.

(e) sport organizations compete "on the edge" as they, like organizations in other industries, face increasingly competitive environments. A hyper-dynamic, high-tempo competitive environment is characteristic for the sport context, where strategies and tactics often rapidly "shift and evolve in ways that surprise and counfound the competition" (Eisenhardt and Brown 1998: 787).

(f) rules and regulations of particular sports are consistent across nations thus providing relatively controlled field environments. Unlike many non-sport domains where "rules of the game" (i.e., cultural norms and organizational conventions and constraints that shape how firms compete) may vary greatly across nations, the rules, and regulations of particular sports are generally consistent across nations, thus allowing IB scholars to

9

examine research questions while controlling for confounding factors that can be difficult to control for in other research contexts. While there are some subtle differences among national sport federations and governing bodies which may impact competitiveness of local teams or the entire league (for example, local personal income tax levels for athletes, or limitations on the number of foreigners on a team roster), regular international events take place (such as the Olympic games or the World Cup) where all athletes must adhere to exactly the same rules and regulations.

As is the case with industry in general, sport is becoming increasingly international, thus providing a context which lends itself to studying IB phenomena. Moreover, sport permits a variety of organizational phenomena to be studied at various levels of analysis. As will be expanded upon below, many sports teams are composed of individuals from various countries playing for different teams—this is true for football (soccer), baseball, hockey, and basketball wherein the international makeup of teams has increased dramatically over recent years. This development provides opportunities to study individual, team/organizational, as well as cultural level phenomena. Moreover, sport leagues have become "international" as, for example, each professional North American league (NBA, NFL, MLB, NHL) now play games overseas and major sport federations (e.g., Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), International Olympic Committee (IOC)) are international at their core.

Sport is also a rich context in which to study multilevel phenomena as sport federations, leagues and teams are organizations that compose nested hierarchies. Moreover, organizations at each of these levels face various pressures to adapt (Wolfe et al. 2005). For example, following a series of clear and obvious errors at the World Cup and in major European professional competitions, the association football international governing body, FIFA, decided to introduce the video assistant referee (VAR) system. This new system, which was introduced due to the bottom-up supporters' pressure, was then imposed on national federations (Pitt-Brooke 2017). The change forced all involved parties to adapt as players had to accept interruptions in the game, broadcasters had to find new ways of explaining the VAR application to their viewers, and national federations had to hire new and retrain old referees. Further, the system was not introduced in all competitions at once, hence some teams had to participate in the same season in international tournaments where VAR was used and national competitions where it was yet to be introduced. Global organizations operate in culturally and institutionally diverse environments. The context of sport, particularly that of international sport federations and leagues, provides a novel setting for examining a seminal line of multi-level IB research addressing how global organizations balance countervailing environmental pressures for both local (team) responsiveness and global (league, federation) integration and coordination.

11

3. SPORT AND INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS STUDIES: THREE EXAMPLES

There are a number of extant lines of inquiry in the IB domain, which can benefit from analysis within a sport context. In this section, we discuss three such examples; namely, the influence of identity integration on multinational team processes and outcomes, the role of individuals' international experience on performance in multinational teams, and the role of cultural differences in shaping emotions in organizations. These examples are not meant to exhaust phenomena relevant to IB that can be studied within sport. Rather they are meant to be indicative of a wide range of IB issues that can be so addressed.

Our first two examples—the influence of identity integration and of individuals' international experience on performance in multinational teams—build on extant research of the effects of national diversity on organizational output. We thus provide a brief discussion of this relevant research. National diversity of a team's players and/or organization's employees can be a double-edged sword in influencing organizational performance. There is good reason to believe that having higher levels of national diversity will be beneficial to team performance. Because people from different nations can have different world-views, values, and experiences, multinational teams are better able to integrate an array of unique and useful knowledge, ideas, and perspectives, facilitating team performance. Further, a team's ability to recruit globally rather than locally facilitates finding excellent human resources.

However, there is also reason to believe that high levels of national diversity may contribute to communication challenges, misunderstandings, and relationship conflict (Bassett-Jones 2005; De Dreu and Weingart 2003; Haas and Nuesch 2012). Team conflict that stems from national diversity can lead to decrements in team performance (Allmendinger and Hackman 1995). Further, negative stereotypes of people from different countries can lead to devaluation of the skill sets, experiences, and knowledge brought in by people from nations that are different from one's own, further undermining communication and relational dynamics (Caldwell and O'Reilly 2003; Harrison et al. 1998; Hogg et al. 2004).

Challenges associated with multinational teams can be exacerbated in sport, where team coordination and tacit knowledge among players are especially important determinants of team performance, and where individuals and teams often must perform "on the edge" in highly demanding circumstances (Eisenhardt and Brown 1998; Berman et al. 2002; Montanari et al. 2008). Further, national and/or cultural differences are often accentuated in sport. For example, studies of attributions for social events found that cultural biases were exaggerated in sport compared to non-sport contexts (Hallahan et al. 1997; Lee et al. 1996). To the extent that cultural differences are magnified in sport, managing multinational sport teams can be especially challenging.

Given the growth in multinationalism of sport teams, understanding how national differences can be bridged is an important topic in sport, as in IB more generally. For

example, the percentage of foreign-born players in Major League Soccer (MLS) in the

U.S. increased from 28% to 48% from 1996 to 2017. Since the league's inception in

1996, MLS players have come from over 100 nations (MLS 2017). The multinational

nature of soccer is apparent not only in the U.S. In 2017, for example, foreign players

played approximately 62% of all minutes in the English Premier League (ESPN 2017).

Multinational teams, thus, are a reality in sport, and managing related dynamics is rapidly

becoming a critical factor for team performance.

Empirical examinations of the effects of national diversity on organizational

outcomes are difficult, in large part due to data limitations (Kahane et al. 2013). Such

studies necessitate data on the nationalities of all workers, each worker's skills and output

as well as the collective output of the organization, with all other factors of production

being held constant. As discussed above, such data exist in the realm of sport. For

example, like MLS and the English Premier League, there are publicly available data on

the proportion of foreign players in the National Hockey League (NHL). There are also

data on what countries the foreign players come from, and thus researchers know the

exact mix of cultures and languages in each NHL team. The interdependent nature of

hockey results in on-ice teammate interaction being especially important. Data such as

that referred to just above, thus, can be used to examine the effects of multiculturalism on

team coordination (Kahane et al. 2013).

14

Indeed, Kahane et al. (2013) consider NHL teams as global firms whose employees originate from a variety of different countries. The more disparate the skill sets of team members, the greater the benefits of diversity—if there is a task-skill-set fit. One would expect gains to NHL teams from employing an internationally diverse workforce by broadening the labor market and, perhaps more importantly, European players may have skills that are somewhat disparate from North American players. As argued by many observers, European NHL players have, on average, higher levels of basic hockey skills (e.g., stick-handing, passing), while North American players have a comparative advantage in the physical, body-checking, elements of the game. Supporting this idea, Kahane et al. (2013) found substantial differences between North American and European players' skill sets.

As argued above, along with potential benefits, multinational teams incur integration costs—as players have different cultures and languages. Related communication costs can be considerable if team performance requires interdependence among team members, as it does in hockey. Jaromir Jagr, a star NHL player from the Czech Republic, has been quoted as saying "If you want Europeans on your team, you're better to have six from one country (rather) than one (each) from six countries. You know each other's styles. You can talk easily to each other" (2006 *Sports Illustrated*). In short, too much diversity can easily increase integration costs, mitigating benefits and leading to performance decrements. It seems that coaches and general managers have recognized

the importance of multilingual communication and address it actively. For instance, Derek Jeter, the CEO of the Miami Marlins baseball team, created mandatory Spanish courses for all team members. The goal here was not only to improve intrateam communication but also to improve communication with the team's external stakeholders such as fans and journalists (Wagner 2019). Similarly, the Philadelphia 76ers NBA team introduced culture-sharing sessions to embrace their organizational diversity (Arnovitz 2018).

Indeed, extant research on the relationship between the national diversity of sports teams and team performance is mixed. As argued above, Kahane et al. (2013) found that NHL teams with more European players experience performance benefits. Further, Kahane et al. (2013) suggest that gains from diversity may be greatest when the foreign component of a team has, within itself, a higher degree of homogeneity. In contrast, Haas and Nuesch (2012) found that the national diversity of soccer teams is negatively related to team performance in Germany's Bundesliga. Boyden and Lee (2012) found similar outcomes in North America's MLS. Boyden and Lee, however, did find that national diversity positively predicted performance of particular teams, suggesting that some teams may be better equipped to harness the benefits of diversity.

While results from the sport management domain concerning the contribution of diversity to team performance are very relevant to IB research, we call for further consideration of how to counter the costs, and leverage the benefits, of the "double-edged

16

sword" of multi-national teams (MNTs). In what follows, we suggest that it is not only the international "makeup" of a MNT (i.e., the number of international team members and the nations they are from) that determines how team diversity benefits performance, but also individual level constructs (such as the identity integration and international experience of both international and "local" team members) that are important determinants of performance.

3.1. Example 1 – identity integration and team performance

How individuals with different national identities are managed in sport provides an important perspective on how MNTs can counter the costs, and leverage the benefits, of internationalism's "double-edged sword". One common approach to minimize friction in diverse teams is to promote a superordinate identity that emphasizes unity and reduces the salience of differences between national subgroups (van Knippenberg and Haslam 2003). For example, rather than thinking of themselves based on cultural backgrounds or nationalities, team members can all think of themselves primarily as members of the larger team to which they all belong (Kane et al. 2005). Indeed, one might assume that downplaying differences and developing a unified superordinate team identity will be optimal in multinational teams. However, recent literature on identity integration suggests that emphasizing *separate and different* identities while fostering compatibility among cultural/national identities will increase the performance of MNTs.

In today's global world, it is increasingly common for individuals to have

multiple national identities and backgrounds (Fitzsimmons 2013). Research has found that multicultural individuals differ in "identity integration", or perceptions of compatibility between the different cultural groups to which they belong (Cheng and Lee 2009). People who are high identity integrators do not find it problematic to identify strongly with more multinational groups. In contrast, low identity integrators feel caught between their different identities and prefer to keep them separate (Benet-Martínez and Haritatos 2005). Drawing on this research, we argue that accepting, and moreover celebrating, distinct cultural and national identities within a multinational team will improve team performance in the long run, because team members will better access multiple and disparate nationally-defined perspectives and knowledge (Szymanski et al. 2019; Szymanski & Ipek 2020). We present three pathways to explain this relationship.

First, because individuals who have high identity integration perceive their multiple identities as compatible, they are more likely to *simultaneously* understand and embrace disparate perspectives related to different cultures (Cheng et al. 2008). In turn, individuals with high identity integration can facilitate communication and collaboration between subgroups within a multinational team. Individuals with high identity integration can serve as "ambassadors" to bridge different knowledge sets and perspectives, help others see cross-national compatibilities, and provide a model for monocultural individuals concerning how to interpret and analyze events in a "multinational" manner. Second, in multinational teams, exposure to multiple cultural perspectives can engender

psychological processes essential to higher levels of identity integration, such as *identification* with multiple cultural groups, and perceptions of *compatibilities* between cultural identities (Berry 1990). Third, the potential for national diversity as a leverage to increase team performance hinges on the team's ability to retain the distinct cultural identities of each team member. Teams that reinforce a single identity send the message that knowledge, expertise, routines, and networks associated with team members' unique national backgrounds are irrelevant, or have negative effect, on the team. Suppressing identities of national subgroups, thus, inhibits members from voicing their cultural perspectives, and in turn undermines the underlying rationale for the benefits of multiculturalism.

We suggest, therefore, that managers should consider not only the national mix of a team (Kahane et al. 2013), but also team members' levels of identity integration. In short, the relationship between a team's multinational makeup and performance is moderated by identity integration of team members. Specifically, when team members have higher levels of identity integration—that is, they identify with multiple national identities, and when they perceive these identities to be compatible rather than in conflict—both individual and team performance will increase, and national diversity of the team will positively predict team performance. In contrast, when group members have lower levels of identity integration, national diversity of the team will be negatively related to team performance.

Although these relationships between identity integration and team performance have been posited, the relationships have not been extensively studied (Cheng et al. 2008). Sport is an ideal context to examine these propositions. Imagine a soccer player from an Eastern country playing for a soccer team in a Western country. This player will likely have had unique training experiences or had been exposed to different competitive situations than teammates from Western countries. Will this experience related to his being from an Eastern country be used to enhance the performance of his current team? If the soccer team has team members that have low levels of identity integration, they are likely to advise the Eastern soccer player to downplay his/her Eastern identity and focus on the superordinate team identity. In this situation, culturally unique knowledge, skills, and capabilities that may contribute to the team's performance will be suppressed. In contrast, when team members have high levels of identity integration, they are more likely to access, voice, and apply multiple nation-specific understandings and capabilities and to encourage others to do so. In those situations, diversity is more likely to be positively related to team performance.

These propositions can be fruitfully examined in sport. In MLS, for example, multiple, publicly-available data indices are available to assess team national diversity as well as individual and team performance (Boyden and Lee 2012; Haas and Nuesch 2012). Measuring related individual and team variables in non-sport domains requires complex and in-depth data collection. While a data set of team members' identity integration is not

20

readily available, this variable can be measured with a short, 8-item self-report survey that can be easily administered with limited, short-term, access to team members (Benet-Martínez and Haritatos 2005). Aside from quantitative survey and secondary data, the public nature of sport as exemplified in social and other media provide access to data that would not be as available or abundant in more conventional organizational contexts. For example, sport figures often comment publicly on their satisfaction, or dissatisfaction, with their teams, teammates, coaches and managers. Likewise, in reflecting on their personal successes/failures and/or team victories/defeats, athletes often publicly comment on salient aspects of their identity (referencing their culture or home country, religion, family, etc.) via social and other media. Although these types of data are certainly not equivalent to primary survey data that might precisely tap identity-related constructs, they may nonetheless serve as proxies for some constructs, or be used to develop rich qualitative datasets that could provide insight into identity-related issues of the type discussed here. Enhanced understanding of identity integration and the relationship between national diversity and performance in sport teams will, no doubt, have implications for work teams in non-sport domains.

3.2. Example 2 – multinational experience and team performance

A second perspective concerning how MNTs can counter the costs, and leverage the benefits, of multi-nationalism involves addressing team members' international experience. Relatively little is known about the influence of individuals' international

experience on MNTs' performance (Earley and Gibson 2002; Gong 2003). Hambrick, Davison, Snell, and Snow (1998) suggest that multinational diversity presents particular challenges for MNTs engaged in tasks they define as "coordinative." In these tasks, "reliable, fluid interaction" (Hambrick et al. 1998, p. 199) is especially important, but such processes are made more difficult by cultural differences in values, cognitive framework, demeanor, and language. These authors imply that experience in navigating such differences will help reduce said challenges. To the extent that individuals on a team have worked with individuals from other countries, they will possess tacit knowledge, cultural intelligence, and emergent leadership skills that can facilitate team interactions in a global context (Lisak and Alon 2014). Indeed, there is some support for the idea that MNTs whose members have interaction experiences in multiple cultures perform better (Ang et al. 2007; Earley and Ang 2003; Leung et al. 2008; Szymanski et al. 2019; Szymanski & Ipek 2020).

These findings are related to studies examining the effect of employee mobility on the performance of both mobile employees and incumbent employees (e.g., Campbell and Saxton 2012; Groysberg et al. 2008; Huckman and Pisano 2006). The latter studies support the idea that, after joining a new organization, individual performance is highly sensitive to acculturation into the new group. Other recent research indicates that team receptivity to newcomers has positive consequences for long term team performance (Rink et al. 2013). Extending such insights concerning performance after mobility events,

we suggest that both the diversity of the incumbent organization and extent of prior international experience of incoming and incumbent employees will counter adverse effects and accentuate positive effects of introducing an international employee.

Given the NHL's large number of players from different countries and the coordinative nature of players' tasks, it is an ideal setting to test propositions concerning relationships among MNT employee international experience and performance (Kahane et al. 2013). The rich data available on individuals' backgrounds and on individual and organizational performance allow the examination of how in-bound mobility of international and domestic players affects the performance of incoming and incumbent individuals and of teams.

Such research can have important implications for the MNT literature. Researchers who have examined MNT staffing choices mainly focus on individual nationality traits rather than individual's past international experiences (Gong 2003). This underestimates the importance of past experiences embedded in individuals. Individuals with the same nationality can encompass great variance in terms of their past international experiences and thus could have different influences in a multinational setting. As a consequence, when assembling effective MNTs, managers should not only pay attention to nationalities of team members but also to the breadth and depth of potential team members' past international experiences. Importantly, sport provides an excellent context in which to investigate such important IB matters.

3.3. Example 3—cross-cultural differences in emotions and team performance

The topic of emotion management, or understanding individual's emotional reactions to organizational events, is highly relevant for IB researchers and practitioners. Emotions affect important outcomes for organizations, as they "help direct attention, prompt and inhibit particular behavioral tendencies, and allow employees to coordinate their efforts" (Sanchez-Burks and Huy 2009, p. 23). As such, emotions "have important consequences for a firm's actions and outcomes," and the organizational capability for emotion management--"the organizational ability to recognize, monitor, discriminate, and attend to emotions of employees" (Huy 2012, p. 244) can be a potent source of competitive advantage.

Individuals tend to exhibit strong emotional reactions to a range of organizational events, such as outsourcing, mergers and acquisitions, joint ventures, and strategic alliances (Huy 2012). However, because emotional reactions are likely to vary by culture (Russell 1991), an organizational "event is unlikely to affect all work units in the same way, … emotions might be diverse if work units have distinctive values and interests" (Huy 2012, p. 243). This is especially pertinent for an international firm, where employees working in different countries or with different cultural origins can exhibit very different emotions based on the same event (e.g., Eapen 2012; Lee et al. 2006). As we describe next, approaches to create and manage emotions at sporting events differ considerably across nations. We argue that investigating such differences in sport can

24

contribute to understanding emotional reactions to organizational events in other non-sport settings.

Sport is a rich context within which to study emotions in organizations as sport generates powerful emotional reactions among participants and spectators alike (Terry 2003). Emotions, positive and negative, can drive athletic performance and fans' reactions in the stands, thus affecting both team effectiveness in the competition and performance of the entire organization. For example, Spielberger (1991) proposed a distinction between suppressed and expressed anger. While the former may lead in sports to the feelings of hopelessness and cause performance decrements, the latter might be channeled into determination to succeed. Such insights from sport teams will be of benefit for international HRM scholars and practitioners.

When it comes to emotions among the spectators, over recent years the sport experience in North America has become a combination of sport and unrelated, non-sport, elements (e.g., music, cheerleaders, contests, t-shirts flung into the stands). The following statement by Steve Kerr, ex-NBA player and television analyst, provides a description of this development: "It used to be a basketball game; now's it's a circus ... There's all kinds of action … streamers, confetti (and) guys with fireballs. The entertainment overdose puts off hard-core fans. To me it's all about the game. My favorite place … was always the Boston Garden. ... There was a guy who played the

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organ -- and that was it. It was pure basketball. But the game has changed. It's now more about entertainment" (McCarthy 2007).

This development is found primarily in North America. For example, one can attend a soccer match in Europe or Asia, and see nothing but the sport itself, though passion among fans is certainly not missing. Sport, thus, is a fruitful domain to investigate such national contrasts. Specifically, we can address the extent to which planned, or orchestrated, "attractions" (e.g., music, cheerleaders; contests on the score-board) and core elements of the sport itself (e.g., goals/scores, hard checks, good saves/defensive plays) influence fan emotions (e.g., joy, anger, enthusiasm, apathy), and how these emotions are moderated by cultural background.

Emotional reactions to various aspects of sport, of course, change with time, as society's mores change. Steve Kerr mentioned just above, is currently the very successful coach of the NBA, Golden State Warriors**.** He too has changed with the times, adapting to current mores. Reacting recently to Toronto Raptors "superfan", the singer Drake's, efforts to "trash talk" with him and his players, Kerr stated, "I am not worried about that. I kind of think that it is fun. The NBA embraces the pop culture dynamic of the league, the stars and celebrities who are out there" (Nesbitt 2019). We believe, however, that how players and fans react to various aspects of sport is very dependent upon the individual—it is those reactions that we suggest be captured.

As argued earlier, studying organizational phenomena within sport provides researchers with advantages infrequently found in non-sport domains. Using the sport context allows for assessment of emotional reactions without the limitations of laboratory experiments or retrospective survey studies typical of emotional response studies (Matsumoto et al. 2007). More specifically, how the nature of a specific occurrence affects individuals' emotions can be assessed as it occurs in sport. It is also straightforward to distinguish between core, sport related occurrences (i.e., goals/scores, hard checks, good saves/defensive plays), and orchestrated, non-sport, "attractions" (e.g., music, cheerleading, contests, t-shirts flung into the stands). Discrete emotional reactions such as anger, frustration, excitement, and joy, triggered by various occurrences, can be captured in real time using experience sampling methodology and wireless technology (Uy et al. 2010). In addition, individual-level moderating elements such as self-construal can be determined via extant survey instruments (Cross et al. 2000). For instance, researchers can use the mobile-phone based experience sampling methodology (ESM) to capture emotions as they are happening in the real time (Uy, Foo, and Aguinis, 2010). ESM is a data collection tool that requires participants to provide reports of their experiences at multiple times per day over the course of the study period (Beal, 2015; Csikszentmihalyi and Larson, 1987). Using ESM allows researchers to gather data on the extent to which naturally occurring events and "planned attractions" during games influence emotions. The use of electronically facilitated or computerized ESM also has

27

meaningful advantages such as precisely controlled signal timing, objective compliance tracking, and reduced human error in data management (Barrett and Barrett, 2001).

We suggest that orchestrated, non-sport, "attractions" (e.g., music, cheerleading, contests, t-shirts flung into the stands) as well as core, sport related occurrences (i.e., goals/scores, hard checks, good saves/defensive plays) would be somewhat similar across sports. However, researchers, of course would want to adapt these lists, as appropriate across sports. Researchers can also compare and contrast different types of sports, e.g., basketball versus soccer—basketball games have many non-sport/planned attractions, while soccer matches have very few. One can collect data at these sporting events held across different cultures and draw comparisons between different contexts, such as in North America (e.g., U.S.) and in Asia (e.g., China). Further, individual-level data can be collected from individual spectators with different cultural backgrounds. We can thus capture in real time how culture and occurrence type influence fans' emotions, and more broadly contribute to a deeper understanding of the dynamic processes that shape emotions.

We suggest that there are a number of ways in which such research can be related to non-sport contexts, particular those of relevance to IB research. IB scholars have noted that "issues of cultural identity and emotional reactions to other cultural groups in an IB context constitute a significant gap in our research" (Leung et al. 2005, p. 360). Insights from sport research examining cultural differences in emotional reactions to different

types of organizational events can have relevance to matters such as how culturally-heterogeneous audiences experience business events including organizational meetings/presentations in international firms, corporate training and development programs in international firms, international executive education programs, outsourcing, mergers and acquisitions, joint ventures, and global strategic alliances. Like sport, these events encompass both core and orchestrated elements. For example, such events could include core business elements addressing such matters performance, business strategies, policies and procedures, as well as orchestrated, non-business, elements such as social functions intended to boost morale, enthusiasm, and identification.

It is important for firms with a global footprint to understand how emotional reactions to various components of events differ across cultures and what specific person- and situation-factors shape these reactions. Related insights will play an important role in helping global organizations plan events, which often include both core and orchestrated elements, and verify which factors tend to reduce elicitation of negative emotions—or increase elicitation of positive emotions (Huy 2012; Mignonac and Herrbach, 2004).

In sum, as argued earlier, studying organizational phenomena within sport provides unique opportunities to observe, measure, and compare variables and relationships of interest in a relatively controlled, competitive, environment. Table 2 indicates advantages of studying the influence of identity integration and of individuals'

29

international experience on performance in multinational teams as well as the role of cultural differences in shaping emotions in organizations.

TABLE 2 GOES ABOUT HERE
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4. FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

As argued in depth earlier, there are several advantages of using sport as a context for IB research and we suggest that these advantages can contribute to investigating a number of IB phenomena. The examples we present above are not meant to exhaust such phenomena that can be studied within sport. Rather, they are meant to be indicative of a wide range of IB issues that can be so addressed. In what follows we present IB issues at three levels of analysis that can beneficially be researched using sport. We start with the macro level question of national competitiveness, which remains a pivotal issue in the comparative business systems literature (Cho et al. 2008). At the organizational level, we discuss the question of global innovation, learning, and diffusion of organizational practices. Finally, we offer an example of an individual-level phenomenon, international human resource circulation, which can be studied using sport.

4.1. National competitiveness.

The comparative business systems perspective examines how institutions with complementarities in different national domains interact to form distinctive

30

configurations and competitive advantages in key sectors (e.g., Italian leather goods, German precision manufacturing and engineering, US financial services: Jackson and Deeg 2008). The research objective is to understand the institutional context in which distinctive national capabilities develop. This approach has contributed to a body of knowledge about international diversity in human resource practices and industrial relations (Dore 1973; Ferner et al. 2001), corporate governance (Aguilera and Jackson 2003), and financial and production systems (Friel 2005). More recently, this perspective has been adopted by IB scholars to examine the competitive capabilities of newly emerging economic powers and to better understand the institutional context in which their capabilities develop (e.g., Armanios et al. 2017; Roy and Khokle 2016; Liou et al. 2017).

Using sport as a context, one might extend such theorizing to better understand the notion of national competitiveness. As examples, how are the cultural and institutional configurations and complementarities that lead to the hegemonic national stature of certain sports in some countries (Markovits and Hellerman 2001), such as hockey in Russia, soccer in Brazil, long distance running in Kenya, or cricket in India, similar to, or different from, those that lead to distinctive national competencies in key economic sectors or industries? What might we learn from national competitiveness in the domain of sport that might extend to the context of economic competitiveness? As indicated earlier, sport is a rich context in which to study multilevel phenomena as

national sport federations, leagues and teams are organizations that compose nested hierarchies. What is it about their nested hierarchies that contribute to excellence in certain sports (e.g., hockey in Russia, soccer in Brazil)?

4.2. Global innovation, learning, and diffusion of organizational practices

The question of how organizations develop and exploit firm-specific capabilities across national boundaries is a central question for IB researchers. Evolutionary theory and the knowledge-based view of the firm perceive the MNE as a repository of knowledge, embedded within individuals and organizational routines, that can be combined, transformed, and transferred within the MNE's social network (Kogut and Zander 1993). In this view, the MNE's geographically dispersed operations enhance its ability to learn and innovate via access to different local capabilities, skills and knowledge, which it can leverage and diffuse globally. While cross-border innovation, learning and transfer of organizational practices have been studied extensively in the context of the MNE, sport offers a novel domain for studying these and related phenomena in new and broader contexts. For example, the transfer of innovative practices by MNEs is typically theorized to be an endogenous process whereby the MNE leverages its ownership advantages and combinative capabilities to transfer knowledge assets and capabilities. These capabilities may be developed internally or acquired from alliance partners within its organizational network (Dunning 1995; Kogut and Zander 1993). IB scholars have recognized that the successful transfer of innovations, knowledge

and practices across borders requires an understanding of the societal, organizational and individual contexts in which they are embedded (Kostova 1999), but the bulk of IB research has examined these phenomena primarily at the firm level, e.g., transfers between headquarters and subsidiaries or between alliance partners. Recently, Marano and Kostova (2016) elaborated on the role of institutional complexity in CSR practices development and transfer within MNEs.

The domain of sport provides an opportunity to extend IB theorizing beyond the MNE by examining the global diffusion of knowledge, innovations and practices not only within and between international firms, but also among individuals, teams, leagues, multilateral organizations/institutions, and societies. This is because, as argued earlier, sport is a rich context in which to study multilevel phenomena such as the cross-sport as well as the cross-border diffusion of innovations (e.g. statistical performance analysis, as per sabermetrics in *Moneyball*, (cf. Gerrard 2010)), as well as of sports themselves (e.g., cricket: Kaufman and Patterson 2005).

4.3. International human resource "drain," "gain" and/or "circulation"

Talent mobility has been traditionally viewed in the contexts of (a) expatriation (sending personnel from the head office to foreign operations) and (b) brain gain whereby host countries (primarily industrialized ones) attract top foreign students in their countries to remain and work after graduation thus representing a brain gain to the host country and a brain drain from the country of origin (COO). More recently, with the rise of emerging

markets, an increasing number of ethnic Chinese and Indians are returning to their COO to capitalize on economic growth and opportunities there. This has given rise to the concept of "brain circulation" (Saxenian 2006; Tung 2008).

Competition among nations for the best and brightest employees parallels the competition among nations to recruit coaches and athletes regardless of COO. Examples of talent movement in athletics include Bela Karolyi, the Romanian gymnastics coach who defected to the U.S. to coach U.S. gymnasts; Canadian-born ice dancer, Tanith Belbin, becoming a U.S. citizen to represent the U.S. in the 2006 Winter Olympics; and Chinese-born Liang Chow, a former member of the Chinese gymnastics team who took up U.S. citizenship and coached U.S. Olympics gymnasts. Russia has hired Cathy Priestner-Allinger, an architect of Canada's recent Olympic success, to co-ordinate Russia's Olympic programs. In addition, Russia has fast-tracked citizenship for a number of foreign athletes, including speed skater Ahn Hyun-soo, a triple Olympic champion from South Korea, who now goes by the name Viktor Ahn.

Sport, thus, can provide a novel lens for IB researchers to examine a range of topics related to the global mobility of human resources. These include expatriation and repatriation (Bolino 2007), use of personal employees networks (Andersson and Sundermeier 2019), global talent management (Allen et al. 2015; Abeuova and Muratbekova-Touron 2019), global careers (van Bakel and Salzbrenner 2019), bicultural

34

individuals and acculturation (Szymanski et al. 2019), and the role of language in IB

(Harzing and Pudelko 2013).

Although sport as an empirical context has several advantages, and comprises a

large global industry worth studying in and of itself, the sport context nonetheless differs

from the types of industries that have typically been studied in the mainstream IB

literature, raising generalizability concerns. Throughout this manuscript, we have tried to

connect the sport context to more traditional ones by pointing out the parallels between

sport organizations and other organizations, particularly MNEs. But, ultimately, the issue

of generalizability is an empirical one, and will require emperical studies of the type

we've suggested herein to assess whether and how insights derived from sport may be

extended to other contexts. More broadly, however, we believe there is significant value

in studying less conventional contexts as they provide the opportunity to extend (or

challenge) existing theory and provide fresh insights. Indeed, a common mantra in

organization scholarship, particularly in IB research, is that "context matters" and several

scholars have called for more research in understudied or unconventional contexts as a

way to catalyze theory development (e.g., Bamberger and Pratt 2010; Hällgren et al.

2018). As these scholars have pointed out, substantial and influential contributions to

theory have often been derived from studies of unconventional and even extreme contexts

(e.g., the Bhopal chemical leak and the Columbia and Challenger space shuttle disasters

are classic examples). Our contention is that insights about IB-related topics can and do

come from all types of organizations and contexts, and that sport provides a potentially fruitful context that has been largely overlooked by IB scholars.

The research directions we suggest have the potential to yield not only theoretical but practical insights as well. As sport itself becomes an increasingly global industry, coaches, managers, athletes, promoters and other key actors in the sport domain will be required to perform in environments characterized by increased cultural and institutional diversity. The research we have proposed in the areas of identity integration, team diversity, emotional responses to events, knowledge diffusion, talent mobility, and national competitiveness can provide not only novel theoretical insights but useful guidance to practitioners in the sport domain. For example, we have highlighted earlier in the paper (see references to Jaromir Jagr and Derek Jeter) how players and managers have recognized the importance of cultural and linguistic diversity and made efforts to embrace and effectively manage it. Further, as professional sport is becoming increasingly international, teams embark on a global search for talent. Similarly, top athletes search for development opportunities and new challenges. International HRM research offers important insights. Van Bakel and Salzbrenner studied athletes' motivation and major challenges for sport expatriates and provided "information on a vulnerable group of expatriates [who] are young in age and under extreme performance pressure" (van Bakel and Salzbrenner 2019: 505). Likewise, as organizations such as the NFL, NBA and EPL move beyond their domestic base and expand their geographic

reach, sport marketers and promoters will be tasked to develop new strategies for reaching wider and more diverse audiences, and competing with global and local rivals. Applying concepts and theories from IB to sport, and adapting them where necessary to the sport context, has the potential to yield practical insights that can help sport practitioners manage the increased complexity that comes with industry globalization.

5. CONCLUSION

We have presented a number of examples of vibrant areas of IB research throughout this paper. Sport offers a novel organizational and institutional domain for studying these and related topics, providing the potential to refine and extend IB theorizing and apply it to a newly emerging international phenomenon—sport. We have provided examples investigating the influence of identity integration on multinational teams; the role of individuals' international experience on performance in multinational teams; the role of cultural differences in shaping emotions in organizations; national competitiveness; human resource mobility; or innovation, learning and diffusion of organizational practices, and we argue that sport provides a number of advantages. It is our hope that these examples stimulate creative thinking about how our understanding of important phenomena in the IB field might be enhanced and extended when viewed through the lens of sport.

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Table 1:
Internationalization and Commercialization of Sport

Competition/Event	Country/Region	Nationalities Represented	International Viewership	Revenue Generated
Olympic Games 2016	Global	205	Worldwide	$5.7bn
FIFA World Cup 2018	Global	32	Worldwide	$4.6nn
UEFA Champions League Final 2019	Europe	21	Worldwide	€2.45bn
Major League Baseball 2018 Season	USA & Canada	21	182 countries	$10bn
National Football League 2018-2019 Season	USA	28	Over 20 countries	$13bn
National Basketball Association 2018-2019 Season	USA & Canada	42	215 countries in 47 languages	$8bn
English Premier League 2018-2019 Season	England	65	Worldwide	$4.17bn

Table 2:
Advantages of Studying IB Topics in Sport

IB ISSUE	RESEARCH QUESTION	DATA ACCESSIBILITY: unique opportunities to observe, measure, access, and compare variables and relationships of interest	CONTEXT: sport provides a competitive environment with relatively controlled conditions as rules and regulations are generally consistent across nations
The influence of identity integration on multinational teams	Does identity integration contribute to multinational team/organizational performance?	IV: extent of player identity integration (survey); CV: (i) player past performance; (ii) number of "foreign" players DV: winning percent	Basketball Soccer Hockey
The role of individuals' international experience on performance in multinational teams	Does international experience contribute to multinational team/organizational performance?	IV: extent of player international experience; CV: (i) player past performance; (ii) number of "foreign" players DV: winning percent	Basketball Soccer Hockey
The role of cultural differences in shaping emotions in organizations	To what extent are emotions created by orchestrated aspects of organizational life and core aspects of organizational life moderated by culture?	IV: (i) core, sport related occurrences (i.e., goals/scores, hard checks, good saves/defensive plays) (ii) orchestrated, non-sport, "attractions" (e.g., music, cheerleading, contests, t-shirts flung into the stands) DV: Discrete emotional reactions (e.g., anger, frustration, joy), captured in real time using experience sampling methodology and wireless technology. MV: such as self-construal can be determined via extant survey instruments.	Basketball Soccer; U.S. China

IV: independent variable; CV: control variable; MV: moderating variable; DV: dependent variable.