

**“ONE FOR ALL, ALL FOR WHOM?”:
THE ROLE OF ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS IDENTITY AMONG BASKETBALL
PLAYERS IN NORTH MACEDONIA**

By

Arin Agich

Submitted to
Central European University
Nationalism Studies Program

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

Supervisors: Professor Luca Váradi
Professor Nadia Al-Bagdadi

Budapest, Hungary

2019

Abstract

The present thesis examines and compares the attitudes of Macedonian players coming from ethnically homogeneous and heterogeneous basketball teams towards Albanian players in Skopje, North Macedonia. In my study, I depart from the concepts of social identity (with a focus on ethnic and religious identity), prejudice, intersectionality and contact. These concepts are necessary to understand the role of belonging to a social category on prejudice in the context of team sports. In answering the research questions of the thesis, I conduct focus groups with the participants of the National League and National Team players of North Macedonia. In order to analyze the data collected from the field, I use the method of thematic analysis where I examine and compare the discourses of the players. The results reveal that the social identity among the Macedonian national team players overcame the ethnic and religious identity of the Albanian players within the team. Hence, when comparing the Macedonian players coming from homogeneous and heterogeneous teams, no differences were found in attitudes towards the Albanian players. Therefore, direct contact does not indicate prejudice reduction among Macedonian players. In addition, no intersectionality in prejudice is found due to higher negative inclinations towards the ethnic identity of the Albanian players i.e. their religious belonging does not affect the attitudes of Macedonian players.

Keywords: social identity, ethnic and religious identity, prejudice, contact, basketball

Acknowledgment

I first and foremost want to express my very profound gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Luca Váradi for her patience, invaluable advices and continuous encouragement throughout the process of thesis writing. Without her trust in my work, this thesis would not have been the same.

I also want to express my gratitude to Professor Nadia Al-Bagdadi for her supervision, support and though-provoking suggestions that helped me add an additional and valuable dimension to the thesis.

I want to thank my academic writing instructors Zsuzsanna Toth and Eszter Timar for their patience and time devoted in revising my thesis. I also want to thank Taraf Abu Hamdan for proofreading and reviewing my thesis as well as for her constructive feedback.

I would also like to thank the teams and the coaches for their help during my fieldwork in Skopje. Especially the basketball players and the fans for their participation in my focus groups.

I should direct my warmest thanks to my parents, Evrim and Rukie, for always being there for me. Also, to my sister, Erlin for believing in me and for motivating me to pursue my dreams.

I am beyond grateful to my teammates from TFSE for their immense amount of support and for sharing this journey with me. Thank you for giving me back the joy of playing basketball.

I would also like to seize the opportunity to thank my colleagues from Nationalism Studies for making the past two years unforgettable. Especially to Lucy Szemetova for accompanying me during the late-night writing marathons, for endless brainstorming sessions and for her loving care during times of crisis.

Lastly, I would like to thank Dragana Urumovska for being an invaluable source of support and for inspiring me to work on this topic. Thank you for being with me throughout this emotional roller-coaster and for making Budapest feel like home.

Table of Contents

<i>Abstract</i>	<i>ii</i>
<i>Acknowledgment</i>	<i>iii</i>
<i>List of Tables</i>	<i>vi</i>
<i>List of Figures</i>	<i>vii</i>
<i>Introduction</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Chapter 1. Theoretical Framework</i>	<i>5</i>
1.1. Social Identity Theory and Sports	<i>5</i>
1.2. Ethnic and Religious Identity within Sports	<i>6</i>
1.3. What is Prejudice?	<i>8</i>
1.4. Intersectionality	<i>10</i>
1.5. Prejudice Reduction and Contact Hypothesis	<i>11</i>
1.5.1. Extended Contact – The Role of Fans	<i>14</i>
<i>Chapter 2. Context</i>	<i>17</i>
2.1. Ethnic and Religious Climate	<i>17</i>
2.1.1. Segregation: “The Other Side of the River”	<i>19</i>
2.2. Basketball in North Macedonia: Teams, Players and Fans	<i>22</i>
2.3. Research Questions	<i>24</i>
<i>Chapter 3. Methodology</i>	<i>26</i>
3.1. Case Selection	<i>26</i>
3.2. Data Collection and Research Method	<i>28</i>
3.3. Research Sample	<i>28</i>
3.4. Limitations	<i>31</i>
3.4. Focus Groups in Practice	<i>32</i>
3.5. Data Reliability	<i>33</i>
3.6. Topic Guide	<i>33</i>
3.6.1. Questions for the Homogeneous Team Players	<i>34</i>
3.6.2. Questions for the National Team Players	<i>36</i>
3.6.3. Questions for the Fans	<i>37</i>
3.7. Analytic Method	<i>38</i>
<i>Chapter 4. Analysis</i>	<i>41</i>

4.1. “Our Team is a Special One!”	41
4.2. Who gets to be a Macedonian?: “ <i>Alexander Macedonian is our King</i> ”	43
4.3. The Contact: Civilized Albanian vs. Aggressive Albanian.....	47
4.4. The Basketball Court as a Battlefield: Enemies on the Court, Friends outside the Court	50
4.6. The Fans	56
4.6.1. “We are a Family”	57
4.6.2. Who gets to be a Macedonian?: Through the Eyes of the Fans	58
4.6.3. Nationalistic Songs: “ <i>It lights up the fire in our souls</i> ”	59
4.5.4. The Albanian Players and Extended Contact.....	60
<i>Conclusion</i>	66
<i>Appendices</i>	68
Appendix 1: Consent Form	68
Appendix 2: Topic Guide and Questions	69
<i>Bibliography</i>	71

List of Tables

Table 1. Focus Group Structure30

Table 2. Topic Guide and Questions for the Players.....36

Table 3. Topic Guide and Questions for the Players.....37

Table 4. Topic Guide and Questions for the Fans38

List of Figures

Figure 1. Map of Skopje (Source: www.vidiani.com , 2019)	21
Figure 2. Entrance of Albanian Teams Gym and Entrance of Macedonian Team Gym (Source: Google Maps, 2019).....	31
Figure 3. Diagram: The players' transition from national league to national teams.	24
Figure 4. Macedonian National Team Jersey	46

Introduction

One for all, all for one is a common motto among basketball players, but in reality, is this the case? Whether competitive team sports foster inclusivity and reduce prejudice is a widely discussed topic. To contribute to this scholarly debate, this thesis investigates the role of ethnic and religious identity on basketball players' perceptions and attitudes towards the *other* in the case of North Macedonia.

In 1998 two historians, Mike Cronin and David Mayall, published a collection of studies on sports and identity titled *Sporting Nationalism: Identity, Ethnicity and Assimilation* pointing out the importance of sports in identity construction and the perception of individuals for the world around us. They argue that the fact of sports being present in our everyday lives requires the same academic and systematic investigation as any other field.¹ The introductory chapter of their book begins with a quote by one of the most famous golf players in the world, Tiger Woods, on the role of identity in sports:

This statement is to explain my heritage. The media has portrayed me as African-American, sometimes Asian. In fact, I am both... The critical point is that ethnic background should not make a difference. Now, with your co-operation, I hope I can just be a golfer and a human being.²

Woods' statement brought up a debate among academics in the field of social sciences and made them explore and challenge the notion that ethnic and religious belonging plays no significant role in sports. Henceforth, many studies examined and showed that, in fact, ethnic and religious

¹ Mike Cronin and David Mayall, *Sporting Nationalisms: Identity, Ethnicity, Immigration, and Assimilation* (F. Cass, 1998).

² *Ibid.*

background, just as gender and race, play an important role within a given sport and may even lead to prejudice and discrimination.³

Due to their ethnic and religious tensions, many post-Yugoslav countries have been examined through the lens of prejudice within the framework used to study their sports. However, no such research has been conducted in the Republic of North Macedonia. Taking into consideration the segregated society in the Macedonian context, it is important to examine the role of sports in prejudice reduction between ethnic and religious groups. Therefore, this thesis examines whether contact among players in a heterogeneous environment reduces prejudice even within a competitive sport setting. To that end, the study focuses on Macedonian and Albanian basketball players who play for Macedonian National Team yet traditionally belong to ethnically and religiously homogeneous basketball clubs. This study builds on Gordon Allport's Intergroup Contact Theory which suggests that contact among different groups can reduce prejudice and intergroup conflict.⁴ Additionally, according to Allport, for a successful implementation of his hypothesis four sets of conditions must be applied: equal status, cooperation, common goal, and support by authorities. A study conducted in 2014 by Bruening and his colleagues found that applying contact theory under all its set conditions during a sports management class lead to a decrease in prejudice among college athletes.⁵ However, taking into account the highly competitive nature of the game of basketball, the following questions come to mind: what happens if players with different ethnic and religious backgrounds but a shared goal have contact in a competitive environment? Furthermore, since if

³ (Adair 1998, Hay 1999, Nelson 1997).

⁴ John F. Dovidio, Peter Glick, and Laurie A. Rudman, *On the Nature of Prejudice: Fifty Years after Allport* (John Wiley & Sons, 2008).

⁵ Jennifer Bruening et al., "Applying Intergroup Contact Theory to the Sport Management Classroom," *Sport Management Education Journal* 8, no. 1 (October 1, 2014): 35–45, <https://doi.org/10.1123/smej.2012-0026>.

players belong to both ethnic and religious minority groups within the country, do they face multilayered prejudice due to their overlapping identities?

This thesis applies a sociological approach and examines the attitudes and perceptions of ethnic Macedonian male basketball players towards ethnic Albanian players in North Macedonia. It is based on field research with seven focus group discussions, six with players and one with fans in addition to participant observation (the players). In order to evaluate the role of contact between players with different ethnic and religious belonging, three of the focus groups are composed of participants from homogeneous (National League) teams, whereas the other three include participants from heterogeneous National Team players. During fieldwork, in order to evaluate the role of contact, I ask how the participants perceive players with different ethnic and religious identity than their own. After which, I examine the differing responses and attitudes, and I compare the discourse from the different focus groups.

This introduction is followed by Chapter 2, which presents the theoretical framework of the thesis where I discuss the role of social identity within team sports, by specifically examining the notions of ethnic and religious identity. Secondly, I review the theories and studies concerned with prejudice and contact hypothesis in sports where I argue that even though these phenomena have been studied in different ways, few have considered the highly competitive nature of sports and its effect on prejudice and prejudice reduction. Therein lies the contributions of this research to the study of ethnicity, religion, and sport.

After the theoretical framework, I then introduce the North Macedonian context and Macedonian basketball dynamics. After giving a short historical overview of the ethnic and religious tensions, I discuss the official and unofficial segregation and exclusion within society. Towards the end of the chapter I describe the Macedonian Basketball Federation and system within it in order to elaborate on the dynamics among the teams and players. I conclude the chapter by providing maps

of the segregated city of Skopje and diagrams of the basketball teams and their differences. Furthermore, here I present the main research questions of this thesis.

Chapter three describes the methodology applied during my fieldwork, followed by detailed explanation of the case selection and the research sample including a representation of all my focus group discussions and their composition.

The fourth chapter covers the qualitative analysis where I present and examine the data collected from the field. As previously mentioned, this is done by comparing the discourse provided by focus group participants, including direct quotes which have been transcribed and translated. The chapter is divided into themes (subcategories) that were derived from the focus group discussions. These themes are: team dynamics, being a Macedonian, competitiveness, the Albanian players, religious holidays and fasting, and finally, playing with Albanian players. I conclude each subcategory by introducing the similarities and differences among the focus groups and integrate the provided data with the theories discussed in the theoretical framework chapter. The chapter ends by bringing together all the findings from each theme, along with a discussion on the limitations.

Finally, the thesis concludes with a discussion of the larger implications of the study's findings.

Chapter 1. Theoretical Framework

This chapter presents the theoretical framework of the thesis. In order to understand the attitudes of the players, first I review the relevant literature on the role of social identity through the lens of sports, followed by the concept of ethnic and religious identity in team sports. In the second part of the chapter, I identify the notions of prejudice and intersectionality. Last, I discuss the role of contact on prejudice reduction specifically focusing on the competitive nature of team sports.

1.1. Social Identity Theory and Sports

The playing fields of sports, due to their achievement context, are perceived as places that gives the opportunity to the players to express various feelings and attitudes both toward the team members and also the members of opposing teams.⁶ However, taking into account the highly competitive nature of sports these feelings and attitudes may vary from positive to negative. Looking through the Social Identity Theory, Tajfel argues that the reason behind negative feelings and attitudes towards the *other* comes from the sense of belonging and membership to a given group, including basketball teams.⁷ Speaking from the perspective of sport groups, authors argue that social identity is the basis of sport teams.⁸ Additionally, Tajfel and Turner, in their study on intergroup behavior, note that there are three sets of processes that influence intergroup differentiation: social categorization, social identification, and social comparison. In other words, people, in this case basketball players, tend to divide the world into *us* versus *them* based on the process of social categorization.⁹ Furthermore, the social identification within sport teams it is

⁶ Mickael Campo, Diane M. Mackie, and Xavier Sanchez, “Emotions in Group Sports: A Narrative Review From a Social Identity Perspective,” *Frontiers in Psychology* 10 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.00666>.

⁷ Henri Tajfel, “Social Identity and Intergroup Behaviour,” *Information (International Social Science Council)* 13, no. 2 (April 1, 1974): 65–93, <https://doi.org/10.1177/053901847401300204>.

⁸ Tim Rees et al., “A Social Identity Approach to Sport Psychology: Principles, Practice, and Prospects,” *Sports Medicine* 45, no. 8 (August 1, 2015): 1083–96, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40279-015-0345-4>.

⁹ Henri Tajfel, “Social Identity and Intergroup Behaviour,” *Information (International Social Science Council)* 13, no. 2 (April 1, 1974): 65–93, <https://doi.org/10.1177/053901847401300204>.

argued to be made through sports specific elements that gives the players the opportunity to explicitly and even visually to strengthen their group membership and identification by comparing it to the other teams and its members, i.e. social groups.¹⁰ The theory further proposes that people strive to maintain a positive social identity that can be achieved through such comparisons between the groups.¹¹ Furthermore, applying this to the social identification and group membership within the field of sports, William and Brown conducted a study with 369 members of different sport teams and found that individuals' personal feelings of distinctiveness and meaning were derived from team membership.¹² Additionally, a shared belief in group distinctiveness significantly predicted group identification, which led to higher tendencies of being prejudiced towards the outgroup.

1.2. Ethnic and Religious Identity within Sports

Within academia, the role of sports on human behavior and perception has been extensively researched to the point that now people are informed enough to understand its importance within a given society. Even though I acknowledge the vast literature on the topic, I argue that there is still need for further inquiry on the role of sports in shaping societies, which should not be overlooked, especially since as societies evolve, the role of sports within them also transforms. This is also true in relation to the influence of sports on identity. In 1998, Mike Cronin and David Mayall published a collection of studies on sports and identity, pointing out the importance of sports in the process of constructing various identities, such as ethnic and religious, and the perceptions of the world

¹⁰ Tim Rees et al., "A Social Identity Approach to Sport Psychology: Principles, Practice, and Prospects," *Sports Medicine* 45, no. 8 (August 1, 2015): 1083–96, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40279-015-0345-4>.

¹¹ Henri Tajfel, "Social Identity and Intergroup Behaviour," *Information (International Social Science Council)* 13, no. 2 (April 1, 1974): 65–93, <https://doi.org/10.1177/053901847401300204>.

¹² William E. Thomas et al., "Social Identification in Sports Teams: The Role of Personal, Social, and Collective Identity Motives," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 43, no. 4 (April 2017): 508–23, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167216689051>.

around us.¹³ They also suggest that since sports are present in some form or another in our everyday lives, therefore, the topic of sports and society requires as much academic research as any other field, this includes examination of its role on identity.¹⁴ Hence, many studies have analyzed and showed that ethnic and religious identity play an important role in shaping attitudes and leads to prejudice and discrimination within a given sport. For instance, Elling and Knoppers look into the processes of inclusion/exclusion in sports with respect to ethnicity among 1025 adolescents. They found that young adults are influenced by the dominant gender and ethnic groups.¹⁵ The data show that ethnic minority members (both male and female) have a fear of being labeled in certain ways, i.e. females were concerned with being perceived as too masculine, and males as being too aggressive because of their ethnic identity.¹⁶ Besides ethnic belonging, many athletes face prejudice and are discriminated against by the authorities within the team (coaches, managers, etc.) or by players due to their religious backgrounds. A recent example of this is the public backlash faced by the prominent German national football team player Mesut Ozil after posting a picture with Turkey's president Recep Tayyip Erdogan.¹⁷ The post drew attention to his religious identity and with it prejudiced comments and instances of violence targeting the player occurred within the public.¹⁸ In response to this, Ozil made a statement that he is labeled as a Muslim by the public if he loses the game and as a German when he scores for the team.¹⁹

¹³ Mike Cronin and David Mayall, *Sporting Nationalisms: Identity, Ethnicity, Immigration, and Assimilation* (F. Cass, 1998).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Agnes Elling and Annelies Knoppers, "Sport, Gender and Ethnicity: Practises of Symbolic Inclusion/Exclusion," *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 34, no. 3 (June 2005): 257–68, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-005-4311-6>.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ "Mesut Özil: Is It Because I'm a Muslim?," accessed May 19, 2019, <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/europe/mesut-%C3%B6zil-is-it-because-i-m-a-muslim-1.3576281>.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ "Mesut Özil Reminds Us Why Minorities Have More than One Identity | Afua Hirsch | Opinion | The Guardian," accessed May 20, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/jul/25/mesut-ozil-minorities-identity-germany-football-turkish-heritage>.

The above-mentioned studies and example show that even within sports, athletes belonging to a certain ethnic and religious group may result in negative attitudes and perceptions towards the outgroup. Such attitudes have been described and examined through the notion of prejudice, which is discussed in more detail in the following subchapter.

1.3. What is Prejudice?

One of the most influential and classical explanation of this phenomenon was given by the prominent sociologist Gordon Allport in his book *The Nature of Prejudice*. According to Allport, prejudice is “an antipathy based upon a faulty and inflexible generalization that may be directed towards a group as a whole or toward an individual because he is a member of that group”.²⁰ Many scholars have challenged, contributed and modified this definition according to their research. For instance, Samson puts it in a slightly different way by suggesting that prejudice involves an unjustified and negative attitude towards the other because of their belonging to a certain social category.²¹ That is, the social categories used for this study are ethnic and religious.

Yet, as Brown argues, all these definitions give prejudice a negative connotation, while according to him, it is logical that prejudice can have both negative and positive forms.²² Another perspective that he addresses is the notion suggested by other authors that an attitude or belief is ‘faulty’ or ‘false’. However, Brown argues that such words would imply that we can in some way establish the ‘correctness’ of beliefs’, which he finds highly problematic.²³ In addition to the truthfulness of a certain belief and behavior towards an individual or a group, Brown argues that it all comes down to perceptions, i.e. what is to be believed as true for a certain member/group might

²⁰ Gordon Willard Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice* (Addison-Wesley Pub. Co., 1954).

²¹ Rupert Brown, *Prejudice: Its Social Psychology* (John Wiley & Sons, 2011).

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

not be true for the other.²⁴ In order to properly explore prejudice, the literature suggests looking into all of its components: cognitive (information concerning members from the outgroup), affective (feelings linked towards the members of the other group) and behavioral (actions taken when in contact with the member from the outgroup).²⁵

The literature on sports and prejudice almost exclusively concentrates on visible acts of prejudice, i.e. discrimination. Thus, little attention is given to what actually happens prior to these discriminatory acts or what the beliefs/feelings leading to such acts are. For example, Kilvington examines the exclusion of British Asians from English professional football. He builds his argument around the impact institutional discrimination on British Asian players signing professional contracts has. His analysis shows that only 8 out of 4000 professional players are British Asians.²⁶ By analyzing oral testimonies, he demonstrates that coaches and scouts have a tendency to stereotype and racialize these players.²⁷ However, he does not emphasize what leads to such actions. In my study, I will be focusing to the cognitive and affective components of prejudice. To be able to look to the behavioral element of prejudice, in the context of basketball, the coaches' attitudes needs to be examined. However, due to my personal involvement in Macedonian basketball there is a risk of coaches' responses to be affected and influence the objectivity of the study. Furthermore, throughout my study, I refer to *prejudice* as a negative *attitude* and *feeling* towards an individual belonging to a different social group than one's own due to the reason of belonging to that particular group. Hence, the question remains, what are the actions and factors that lead to members of certain social categories to be devalued and discriminated

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Howard J. Ehrlich, *The Social Psychology of Prejudice: A Systematic Theoretical Review and Propositional Inventory of the American Social Psychological Study of Prejudice*, (Oxford, England: John Wiley & Sons, 1973).

²⁶ Daniel Kilvington, "British Asians, Covert Racism and Exclusion in English Professional Football," *Culture Unbound: Journal of Current Cultural Research* 5, no. 4 (December 12, 2013): 587–606, <https://doi.org/10.3384/cu.2000.1525.135587>.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

against in sports due to their ‘different’ backgrounds? Furthermore, through the lens of prejudice, how are athletes with overlapping social categories such as ethnicity and religion perceived as members of the outgroup? The following section looks into such cases through the theory of intersectionality.

1.4. Intersectionality

In 1989, Kimberle Crenshaw, an expert on critical race theory developed the theory of intersectionality. She studies how overlapping social identities, specifically minority identities, are prone to multiple layers of prejudice.²⁸ In her prominent work *Demarginalizing the Intersection*, she argues that individuals belonging to overlapping social categories such as ethnicity, religion, gender, and race are subject to multilayered prejudice due to their background.²⁹ Even though her main focus is on race and gender utilizing feminist theories, her work has been used to delineate intersectionality in other contexts such as gender and ethnic identity in sport. For example, Trygve Broch, tries to explain the connection between ethnic belonging and gender by arguing that one does not go without the other.³⁰ He explains this by implying that ethnic identity and gender are formed by universal notions of nationalism and patriarchy, therefore the perceptions towards these individuals are also intersecting. As a result of this, male athletes belonging to a certain ethnic identity can be subject to multiple prejudices.

Another example of multilayered prejudice due to intersecting identities can be seen in issues related to religious identity and gender. To illustrate this point, during the 2011 Olympic

²⁸ Kimberle Crenshaw, “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics,” *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1989, no. 1 (December 7, 2015), <https://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/uclf/vol1989/iss1/8>.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Trygve B. Broch, “Intersections of Gender and National Identity in Sport: A Cultural Sociological Overview,” *Sociology Compass* 10, no. 7 (2016): 567–79, <https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12385>.

qualifying match the Iranian women's soccer team were forced to leave the field due to their headscarves.³¹ This event highlights a situation in which multilayered prejudice is apparent due to the fact that the athletes are Muslim women. There are several more studies and occurrences that exemplify the phenomenon of intersectionality. However, there is a gap in the literature, whereby only limited number of existing studies discuss this phenomenon in combination with ethnic and religious identity within the context of prejudice in sports. Therefore, taking into account the multiethnic and multiconfessional social fabric of North Macedonia, in the forthcoming chapters I will engage in the discussion on whether players with different ethnic and religious identity are subject to multilayered prejudice.

However, to balance this out, alternative if not opposing theories which may complement or complicate one another must also be considered. Whereas intersectionality theory suggests increasing the likelihood of prejudice, there are other theories which suggest curtailing it.

1.5. Prejudice Reduction and Contact Hypothesis

After looking into the meaning and development of prejudice, many researchers devoted their time to examining how and on what bases prejudice can be reduced between groups. One of the most analyzed prejudice reducing tools is contact among members of differing social categories, in this case, ethnic and religious. Following his definition on prejudice, Gordon Allport in *The Nature of Prejudice* pays special attention to the role of contact on prejudice reduction. He argues that contact (also known as Intergroup Contact Hypothesis) between two conflicting groups will lead to successful prejudice reduction.³² In Chapter 16 of his book (*The Effect of Contact*), Allport suggests

³¹ Shireen Ahmed, "When Women Were Forced to Choose between Faith and Football | Shireen Ahmed," *The Guardian*, April 28, 2018, sec. Football, <https://www.theguardian.com/football/blog/2018/apr/28/women-faith-football-hijab-fifa-ban>.

³² Gordon Willard Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice* (Addison-Wesley Pub. Co., 1954).

that the effect of contact can be successful under certain conditions.³³ These conditions are equal status, common goals, institutional support, and perception of similarity between the two groups.³⁴ Building on Allport's hypothesis, researchers have since extended, tested, and complemented his work. For instance, the decategorization model proposed by Brewer and Miller, suggests to minimize the use of category labels and to interact on individual bases in order to reduce prejudice.³⁵ In addition, a recategorization model was proposed that indicates the importance of changing the words 'us' and 'them' with a more inclusive 'we' category.³⁶ This model specifically comes to mind during the formation of the national sport teams with players gathered from different teams that sometimes can lead to having athletes with different ethnic backgrounds within the same team.

Among other authors, Pettigrew and Tropp's contribution to the contact theory also plays a vital role in challenging and developing the hypothesis. In their study, the authors present a meta-analytic test of intergroup contact theory using 515 studies. The meta-analysis shows that the contact successfully reduces prejudice.³⁷ In addition to other contributions to the theory, the authors challenge the proposed elements by Allport for successful implementation of the contact as a prejudice reduction tool. Their studies find that the Allport's conditions are not essential for prejudice reduction. Consequently, they suggest that future research should focus on the negative factors that prevent intergroup contact from decreasing prejudice.³⁸ However, in cases (such as fighting for a position within a basketball team) where negative factors, like competitiveness, cannot be downplayed, how should contact be implemented and conceptualized?

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Gordon Willard Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice* (Addison-Wesley Pub. Co., 1954).

³⁶ Gordon Willard Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice* (Addison-Wesley Pub. Co., 1954).

³⁷ Thomas F. Pettigrew and Linda R. Tropp, "A Meta-Analytic Test of Intergroup Contact Theory.," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 90, no. 5 (2006): 751–83, <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.90.5.751>.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

In post-conflict societies, many NGO's such as Peace Player, Football for Peace, Generations for Peace and others use sports as a peace-building tool.³⁹ This is due to the fun nature and game-related exercises that different types of sports offer. But most importantly, it brings together members of the conflicting groups, often around a common goal or event, which results in having contact. For instance, Welty and his colleagues examined the impact that participation in a sport-for-peace event has on prejudice reduction. The study was conducted in two parts: in the first part, 136 participants completed questionnaires before and after attending the event, whereas in the second part the authors conducted focus groups with 27 participants to better understand how the event impacted their previous perceptions of the other and their prejudices. The results of the study show that the event had a positive impact on the participants and resulted in prejudice reduction.⁴⁰ Another study conducted by Nico Schulenkorf investigates the role of a sport event in contributing to reconciliation and inclusive social change between disparate communities in ethnically divided Sri Lanka.⁴¹ His findings show that sport event can reduce prejudice while also allowing for the creation of inclusive identities, if designed strategically.⁴² However, sport-for-peace events, as Schulenkorf argues, are carefully designed and many requirements are taken into consideration, especially related to decreasing the competitiveness of the games within the event. According to Coakley, the competitive environment that sport events generally produce is one of the main components that can strengthen prejudice and stereotypical conceptions among social groups.⁴³

³⁹“Peacebuilding Tools,” *Generations For Peace* (blog), accessed March 3, 2019, <https://www.generationsforpeace.org/en/how-we-work/peace-building-tools/>.

⁴⁰ Jon Welty Peachey et al., “The Influence of a Sport-for-Peace Event on Prejudice and Change Agent Self-Efficacy,” *Journal of Sport Management* 29, no. 3 (May 2015): 229–44, <https://doi.org/10.1123/jsm.2013-0251>.

⁴¹ Nico Schulenkorf, “Sport Events and Ethnic Reconciliation: Attempting to Create Social Change between Sinhalese, Tamil and Muslim Sportspeople in War-Torn Sri Lanka,” *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 45, no. 3 (September 2010): 273–94, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1012690210366789>.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Agnes Elling and Annelies Knoppers, “Sport, Gender and Ethnicity: Practises of Symbolic Inclusion/Exclusion,” *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 34, no. 3 (June 2005): 257–68, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-005-4311-6>.

Therefore, keeping in mind the competitive nature of basketball games, both within and between teams, whether contact among players from conflicting social groups have a positive impact on prejudice reduction or not remains largely unknown but relevant.

1.5.1. Extended Contact – The Role of Fans

Being in the center of attention, there is no doubt that the athletes, their performances and behaviors play an integral role in the sporting world. However, fans of different sport teams have been a topic of interest for many scholars. Taking into account the structure of the sport society, one can argue that fans have affected the dynamics of the sporting events in many ways.

Brown argues that fans are driven to see their team win by making a social categorization a pathway toward hostility of the other team.⁴⁴ Also, a study conducted by Fink and Parker, shows that the fans feel *oneness* with the team as though they are a member of the sport organization in a wider sense. In addition to this, the authors claim that fans are more likely to identify with a team that represents the attributes which they assign to their own self-image.⁴⁵ Looking at the fans as a social category, many authors show that the fans' behaviors indicate an ingroup bias, which is known as the inclination to view one's own group more positively.⁴⁶ For instance, Wann and his colleagues examined sport fans' impressions of players on the team they support using a videotaped basketball game and asked fans to comment on a certain player's performance afterwards. The results show that the fans were biased against players with backgrounds different from their own and devalued

⁴⁴ Rupert Brown, "Social Identity Theory: Past Achievements, Current Problems and Future Challenges," *European Journal of Social Psychology* 30, no. 6 (2000): 745–78, [https://doi.org/10.1002/1099-0992\(200011/12\)30:6<745::AID-EJSP24>3.0.CO;2-O](https://doi.org/10.1002/1099-0992(200011/12)30:6<745::AID-EJSP24>3.0.CO;2-O).

⁴⁵ Janet S. Fink et al., "Off-Field Behavior of Athletes and Team Identification: Using Social Identity Theory and Balance Theory to Explain Fan Reactions," *Journal of Sport Management* 23, no. 2 (March 2009): 142–55, <https://doi.org/10.1123/jsm.23.2.142>.

⁴⁶ Henri Tajfel, "Social Identity and Intergroup Behaviour," *Information (International Social Science Council)* 13, no. 2 (April 1, 1974): 65–93, <https://doi.org/10.1177/053901847401300204>.

these players.⁴⁷ It is acknowledged that such ingroup biases are seen among fans by categorizing the *others* using ingroup/outgroup⁴⁸ terms based on team affiliation which affects the behavior both of the players and fans.⁴⁹ Hence, it can be seen that in the sporting world, the behavior of fans and players is correlated. However, keeping in mind that fans are not in direct contact with the players, raises the question on what can positively affect fans' bias and perceptions of the 'other'?

To provide an answer to this question, Wright and his colleagues proposed an extension to the contact hypothesis known as the extended contact effect. The central argument of this hypothesis is that "ingroup members having a close relationship with an outgroup member can lead to more positive intergroup attitudes".⁵⁰ Sport sociologists, Gomez and Huici, also try to answer to this question by examining the role of direct and indirect contact through an empirical study including 120 basketball fans from 12 different basketball teams in Madrid. In their study, fans were asked to compare members of their basketball teams with members of an outgroup e.g. an opposing team with equal status. The participants were assigned randomly to two groups, either no contact or indirect contact supported by an authoritative figure (coach) who provided positive equalizing feedback conditions. The survey and interview results showed that the authoritative figure played an important role in secondhand intergroup contact and gave a positive impact on the fans and their perception of the outgroup members.⁵¹ As mentioned, during their study, the authors included an authority figure that provided the participants with positive information regarding the members of

⁴⁷ Daniel L. Wann et al., "The Impact of Team Identification on Biased Predictions of Player Performance," *The Psychological Record* 56, no. 1 (January 2006): 55–66, <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF03395537>.

⁴⁸ Ingroup is a social group to which a person identifies as being a member, whereas outgroup is the contrary.

⁴⁹ Sarah E Gaither and Samuel R Sommers, "Honk If You like Minorities: Vuvuzela Attitudes Predict Outgroup Liking," *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 48, no. 1 (February 2013): 54–65, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1012690211429219>.

⁵⁰ Stephen C Wright et al., "The Extended Contact Effect: Knowledge of Cross-Group Friendships and Prejudice," n.d., 18.

⁵¹ Ángel Gómez and Carmen Huici, "Vicarious Intergroup Contact and the Role of Authorities in Prejudice Reduction," *The Spanish Journal of Psychology* 11, no. 01 (May 2008): 103–14, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1138741600004169>.

the basketball team. However, in a real-life sport events, this is not usually the case, since there is no authority figure to give any feedback to the fans regarding the players, especially for the ones on the opposing team. Therefore, it is unclear whether if in reality, extended contact would have a positive effect on fans' perceptions of the outgroup (players with a different ethnic background within the same team)?

Chapter 2. Context

The purpose of this chapter is to give an overview of the larger context to the ethnic and religious segregation in sports in North Macedonia. In the first part of the chapter, in order to better understand the exclusion within the society, I give a short historical overview of the ethnic and religious tensions in the country. Secondly, I describe the ethnic and religious structure of Skopje - namely, the official structures within the educational system, the unofficial segregations between the neighborhoods of the city, the locations of the religious institutions and finally, the locations of the sports teams and their gyms. Finally, I explain the dynamics of the National Basketball League and European championships together with the structure of the teams and their characteristics and differences.

2.1. Ethnic and Religious Climate

The Republic of North Macedonia is home to various ethnic and religious minorities. More specifically, according to the last census conducted in 2002, Macedonians constitute 65% of the population whereas Albanians, the largest minority, account for 25% of the total population.⁵² Other ethnic groups living within the country are Turks, Roma, Bosniaks, and Serbs making up 7% of the total.⁵³ These ethnic groups are often defined by the distinct languages they use, as well as their cultural traditions and religions which they practice. Furthermore, Orthodox Christians (mostly Macedonians) which make up 65%, are the largest religious group, whereas Muslims (mainly Albanians, Turkish and Roma) constitute 32% and the remaining 3% is made up of other groups, including Roman Catholics, Protestants, and Jews.⁵⁴

⁵² "Republic of Macedonia - State Statistical Office," June 21, 2004, https://web.archive.org/web/20040621055714/http://www.stat.gov.mk/english/glavna_eng.asp?br=18.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

North Macedonia gained its independence in 1991 following Yugoslavia's dissolution. Even though it was one of the few republics to exit the conflict peacefully, the consequences of the events in that period lead to a high number of refugees and internally displaced people.⁵⁵ Hence, the newly independent country was forced to deal with an unexpected change to its population, which included an increase in its diversity. Inter-ethnic and religious tensions reached a boiling in early 2001 when an ethnic conflict between Albanian militants and Macedonian security forces broke out, bringing North Macedonia to the verge of a civil war, and resulting in further ethnic and religious polarization.⁵⁶ The international community, both the European Union and North Atlantic Treaty Organization, intervened with the Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA) thereby diffusing the crisis. OFA is seen as a key element in rebuilding mutual trust among the different communities, however, its implications are highly debatable within political arenas.

While historically, tensions based on ethnicity are more common in North Macedonia, there were also conflicts with religious premises. One notable event that received widespread attention from the public occurred in 2011 when the government announced the construction of a church on the Skopje fortress also known as *Kale*.⁵⁷ The fortress is located in a municipality where the majority of residents are Muslim. Following the announcement, protesters took over the designated area to protest the government's decision which resulted in six civilians injuries and two injured policemen.⁵⁸ Authorities from Muslim political parties (mainly Albanian and Turkish) demanded a cessation of constructing any religious object "that did not reflect the overall heritage of the

⁵⁵ "The Ohrid Agreement and Its Implementation - Macedonia - ESI," accessed May 7, 2019, <https://www.esiweb.org/index.php?lang=en&id=563>.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ "Macedonia: Violent Inter-Ethnic Incident on Skopje Fortress · Global Voices," *Global Voices* (blog), February 15, 2011, <https://globalvoices.org/2011/02/15/macedonia-violent-inter-ethnic-incident-on-skopje-fortress/>. The word Kale comes from the Turkish language meaning fortress.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

area.”⁵⁹ The idea to build the church on the above-mentioned area was abandoned, however, the event is perceived as a provocation towards the religious minorities in the country.

This short historical overview of ethnic and religious tensions provides few examples, among many, that influence the inter-ethnic and religious relations within the Macedonian society.

According to both national and international researchers, the current state of the inter-ethnic and religious relations in North Macedonia is perceived as unstable because it is burdened by prejudices and stereotypes rather than mutual understanding and cooperation.⁶⁰ One of the many reasons for the unsuccessful integration is believed to be the public space division within the groups which is discussed in more detail in the following section.

2.1.1. Segregation: “The Other Side of the River”

Most of the above-mentioned ethnic and religious minority groups live segregated from the majority of the population. This is reflected by a large number of ethnic and religious minorities attending schools which teach in their own language, living in segregated neighborhoods without ever needing to use the Macedonian language, and even participating ethnically homogeneous sports clubs. On a more daily basis, many belonging to these minority groups read different newspapers, watch different TV programs in their own languages, and even listen to different radio stations.⁶¹ Another important division is based on language. While most of the Albanian population in the country speak Macedonian to a degree, many of the Macedonians do not speak and use the

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Agon Demjaha, “The State of Inter-ethnic Relations in Macedonia after 16 Years of the Ohrid Agreement,” *SEEU Review* 12, no. 2 (December 20, 2017): 8–31, <https://doi.org/10.1515/seeur-2017-0016>.

⁶¹ Ophélie Véron, “Deconstructing the Divided City - Identity, Power and Space in Skopje (PhD Thesis),” accessed May 18, 2019, https://www.academia.edu/13952133/Deconstructing_the_Divided_City_-_Identity_Power_and_Space_in_Skopje_PhD_thesis.

Albanian language.⁶² As a result of this and other factors, social cohesion is very low within the country.

From the perspective of public space, the city of Skopje especially is perceived to be segregated by ethnic and religious lines and is divided in two by the river Vardar (see figure 1). The eastern bank of the river consists of municipalities with a predominantly Muslim population⁶³ such as Cair, Gazi Baba, Sever, and Topansko, whereas municipalities on the western bank of the river are predominantly Orthodox Christian residents. The choice to look into Skopje among other cities is relevant because National Team players, as well as most of the Albanian teams are based there. The ethnic and religious composition of the city is Macedonians (Orthodox Christians) 66% whereas Albanians (Muslims) 20%.⁶⁴ Also, within the city, schools and sport gyms on either side of the river are largely homogeneous schools and correspond to the specific ethnic and religious backgrounds on that side. In addition to this, the names of the gym differ in accordance with the ethnic background of the team. For example, the gym of the Albanian teams is named after a prominent Albanian athlete Shaban Trstena, whereas the gym of the Macedonian teams (specifically the ones with whose players I conducted the focus groups) is named after the ex-president of North Macedonia – Boris Trajkovski, also known as the VIP⁶⁵ Arena (see figure 2.). It could be argued that this minimizes the contact between the players of different ethnic and religious groups while also strengthening the ethnic boundaries among them. Relevant to the role of contact (Chapter 1.5.) in the context of North Macedonia, a study conducted in 2018 found that

⁶²“Macedonia Passes Albanian Language Law,” *Balkan Insight* (blog), January 11, 2018, <https://balkaninsight.com/2018/01/11/macedonia-passes-albanian-language-law-01-11-2018/>.

⁶³ Des O’Rawe and Mark Phelan, *Post-Conflict Performance, Film and Visual Arts: Cities of Memory* (Springer, 2016).

⁶⁴ “State Statistical Office - Regional Accounts,” accessed May 28, 2019, http://www.stat.gov.mk/OblastOpsto_en.aspx?id=12.

⁶⁵ An additional name was added due to sponsorship.

prejudice did not decrease among participants with different ethnic and religious backgrounds attending the same educational facilities.⁶⁶ However, there are no studies regarding this phenomenon in the context of competitive sports. Hence, the following subchapter discusses the dynamics and the structure of Macedonian basketball in detail.

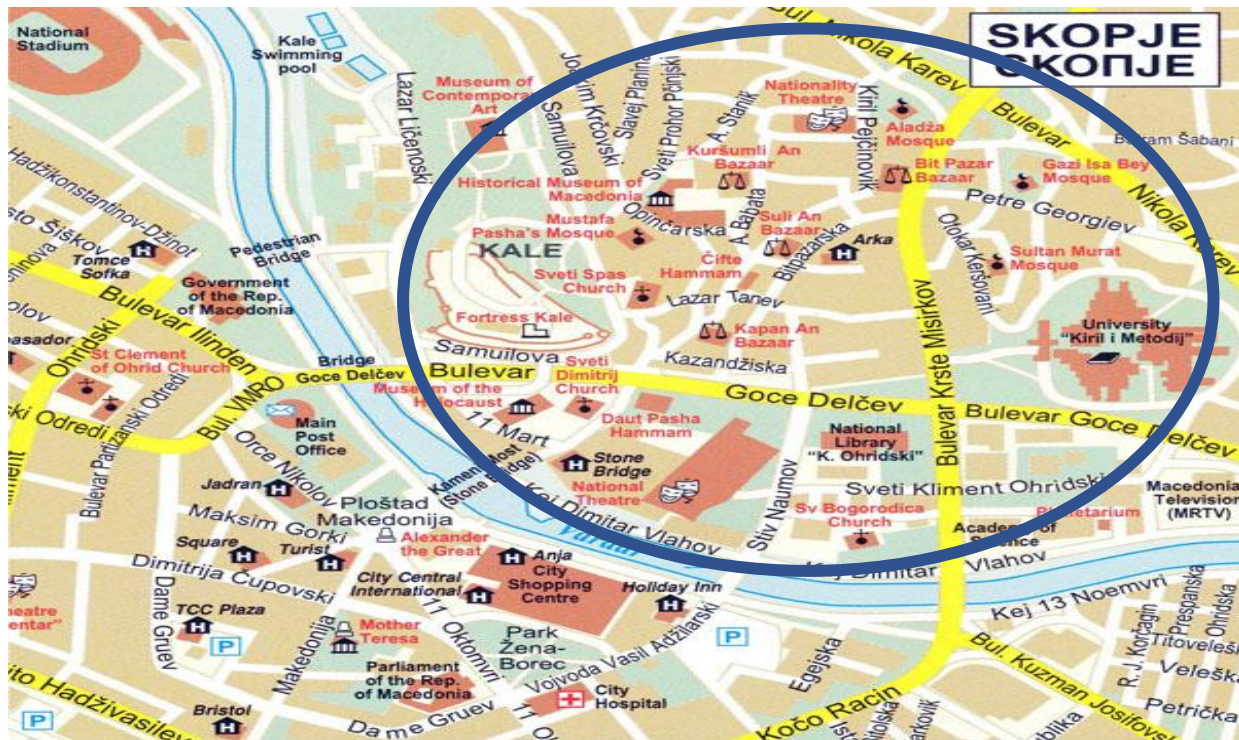


Figure 1. Map of Skopje⁶⁷ (Source: www.vidiani.com, 2019)

⁶⁶ Urumovska, Dragana. "It is in Their Blood to Fight": Ethnic Prejudices among Young Macedonians," Master's Thesis, Central European University, 2018.

⁶⁷ The marked area on figure 1 is the eastern bank of the river with predominantly Muslim residents.

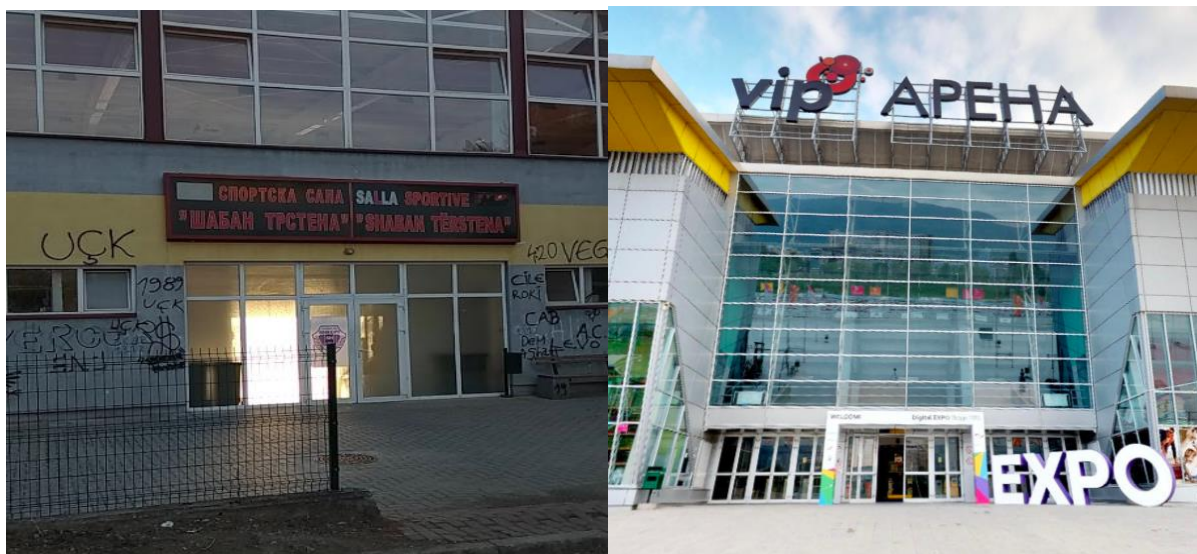


Figure 2. The entrance of Albanian⁶⁸ Team Gym (left) and Macedonian Team Gym (right) (Source: Google Maps)

2.2. Basketball in North Macedonia: Teams, Players and Fans

The most followed and famous sports in North Macedonia are football, handball, and basketball. As with many European countries, football is considered a premier sport. However, basketball has been gaining more and more attention. In 2011 the Men's Basketball National Team participated in the European Championship Games hosted by Lithuania, where for the first time in history, the team finished in fourth place out of twenty-five European countries.⁶⁹ This historic moment was greatly celebrated and received enormous media coverage. Upon the team's return to the country, they were met by 5000 fans at the airport followed with additional 90000 supporters all the way to the city center, welcoming the "heroes of sports" back to their homeland.⁷⁰ Afterward, awareness on basketball as a sport and the team increased within the country. During my fieldwork, many of the players who I talked to connect their reason for playing basketball to this particular event.

⁶⁸ The UCK sign on the entrance of Shaban Trstena gym stands for the Liberation Army who fought during the 2001 inter-ethnic war.

⁶⁹ "Sport in Macedonia," accessed April 26, 2019, <https://www.topendsports.com/world/countries/macedonia.htm>.

⁷⁰ "Спектакуларен пречек на кошаркарите," Радио Слободна Европа, accessed April 26, 2019, <https://www.slobodnaevropa.mk/a/24333122.html>. [Spectacular Welcoming Event for the Basketball Players]

Each and every sport in North Macedonia has its own federation that is responsible for the operation of the league and teams within. The teams under the Basketball Federation of North Macedonia (BFNM) are divided into categories such as sex and age, which is believed to allow fairness during games and among the players. Within these categories, there are twelve to fifteen clubs depending on the number of players who register on an annual basis. Even though there are no rules related to ethnic division within these clubs, the teams with Albanian names (Shkupi, Lirija, and Cair) happen to have players only with Albanian names and surnames⁷¹ whereas the Macedonian teams have only Macedonian players.⁷² Generally, a single basketball team is composed of: a coach, assistant coach (optional), a team doctor, and twelve players.⁷³ Throughout the basketball season, all of the teams compete among each other within their own (sex and age) categories – this is known as the Macedonian National League. In the end of the season (in June), twelve players are chosen out of all the teams to be part of the Macedonian National Team and compete in the European Championship⁷⁴ against other countries. The players are selected, by the assigned national team coach and the president of the basketball federation, based on their performance throughout the whole year while playing in the Macedonian National League⁷⁵. The names of the players are publicly announced on the official webpage of the Basketball Federation of North Macedonia. As a result of this, recategorization (Chapter 1.5.) occurs where Macedonian and Albanian players come together for a shared goal – to represent the Macedonian National Team and win the European Championship. Figure 3 visualizes the above-mentioned process:

⁷¹ It is due to this fact that the players are perceived as Albanians, regardless of how they identify themselves.

⁷² “Македонска кошаркарска федерација,” accessed April 26, 2019, <http://mkf.mk>.

⁷³ Many teams usually have more than twelve players on practices, however, the official number of players during games cannot be higher than that.

⁷⁴ The European Championship games are played during the summer in different host countries.

⁷⁵ So far, no Albanian coaches have been assigned to lead any of the national teams in basketball. “Македонска кошаркарска федерација,” accessed April 26, 2019, <http://mkf.mk>.

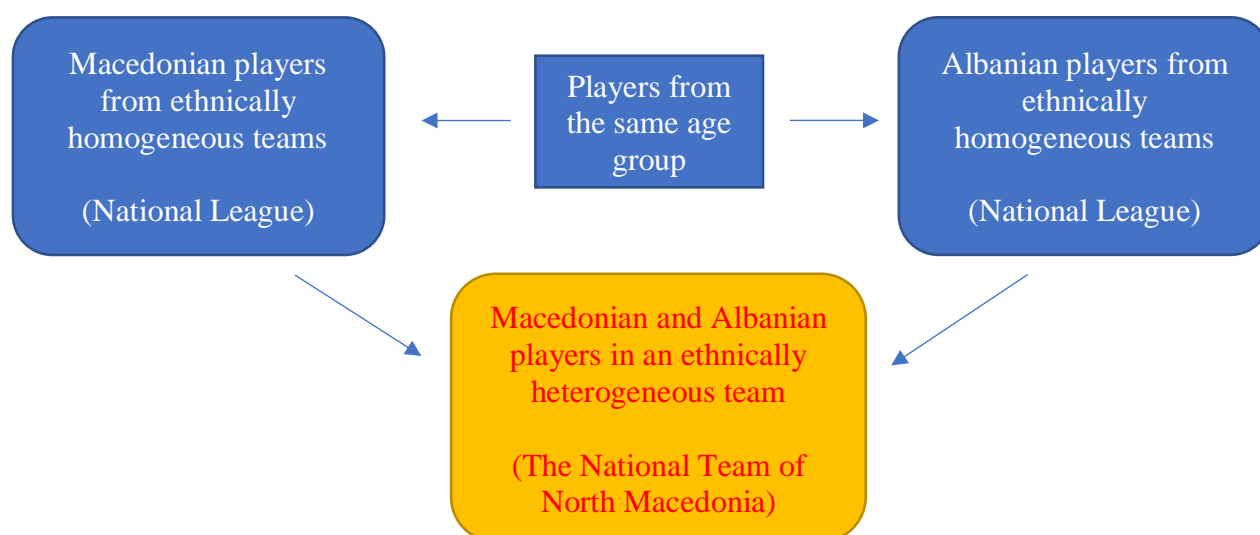


Figure 3. Diagram: The players' transition from national league to national teams.

Additionally, each team is supported in different ways by external parties. First, various (national or private) sponsors support the team financially (both before and during the championship) and second, fans motivate the team during the games through different cheering techniques e.g. songs, slogans, posters, drums, etc. Throughout the basketball season, fans support certain basketball clubs within the Macedonian National League, and later on, they come together to support the National Team during the European Championship.

2.3. Research Questions

Considering the different debates, studies, and contributions discussed in Chapter 1, taken together, the highly segregated society in North Macedonia mentioned above, the parameters of the thesis are divided among a series of questions aiming to contribute to the understanding of ethnic and religious prejudice. Hence, the questions that lead my analysis and research are the following:

- How does the competitive environment within basketball teams affect the level of prejudice of ethnic Macedonians towards Albanians within National Team?
- Are there differences in perceptions among basketball players who are in the National Team and the ones who are not?
- Is there intersectionality in prejudice towards players with both different ethnic and religious identity? Does it manifest strongly? If so, why?
- How and why extended contact affect the level of prejudice among the fans of the National Team?

Because of the diverse ethnic and religious background in a highly segregated society as in North Macedonia, specifically in Skopje, I believe it is important to study the effects of sports on prejudice through bringing together individuals with different ethnic and religious identities. Also, the role of social identity in shaping players' attitudes towards the others. It is also important to note, due to the lack in previous scholarly work on this topic in North Macedonia and in order to first understand the attitudes of the ethnic majority, this study focuses on the perspective of the majority ethnic group only. Therefore, my thesis works towards bridging this gap. However, further research can build on the findings of this study and consider the minority perspective within the country.

Chapter 3. Methodology

This chapter provides an explanation of the research design and methodology. First, I start by validating the choice of the case study. Then, I explain the process of data collection and the applied research method. Finally, this chapter concludes with a detailed elaboration of the topic guide used for analysis.

Due to a lack of primary sources and empirical research on the topics of prejudice and Contact Hypothesis in the context of North Macedonia, this research is exploratory in its nature and therefore, I have applied qualitative methods to answer the research questions of the thesis. Qualitative methods have the ability “to study participants’ knowledge and practices”⁷⁶ that differ according to their subjective perspectives and social backgrounds and allows for data to be analyzed from different perspectives while including the reflections of the researcher as part of the process.⁷⁷ Therefore, this methodology allows a deeper exploration of the topic and research questions.

3.1. Case Selection

For the purpose of the thesis, the perceptions of players within male basketball teams with different ethnic and religious compositions have been compared (Chapter 2.2.). That is, homogeneous teams, with twelve ethnic Macedonian players and heterogeneous teams with a mix of ethnic Macedonian and Albanian players. In this case, the ethnically mixed teams are the national teams where the players are invited together from different teams during the summer to represent the country in the European Championship Games organized in different host countries. However, the ethnic

⁷⁶ “An Introduction to Qualitative Research,” SAGE Publications Inc, March 15, 2019, <https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/an-introduction-to-qualitative-research/book240398>.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

composition of the focus groups (explained in the following sections) is homogeneous i.e. with ethnic majority members only. The literature on ethnic composition of focus groups suggests that participants feel more comfortable in homogenous rather than heterogeneous groups.⁷⁸ This similarity increases the chances of having a more free-flowing conversation than in heterogeneous groups due to the fact that the participants feel more confident to speak up.

As previously mentioned, the teams within the Basketball Federation of North Macedonia are divided according to sex and age. As a result of the exclusion⁷⁹ of female Albanian basketball players in the Macedonian national team and personal involvement in the female basketball community, the chosen teams for the purpose of this thesis are composed of male players. Lastly, the participants of this study are within the adolescents age category and between the ages of 16 and 18 (see table 1 in Chapter 3.3.). The age range of this category may differ from country to country, however, in the Macedonian context it implies individuals 15 to 30 years old.⁸⁰ Even though the literature on prejudice development mainly focuses on children's attitudes⁸¹, there are studies that look into this phenomenon in adolescence. It is believed that during adolescence, prejudice towards the outgroup is crystalized and formed⁸², whereby the reasons behind it could be better understood for this age category. In the context of athletes, and in this case basketball players, studies show that at this age they are thought to become a team player, which strengthens their sense of social

⁷⁸ Nan Greenwood, Theresa Ellmers, and Jess Holley, "The Influence of Ethnic Group Composition on Focus Group Discussions," *BMC Medical Research Methodology* 14 (September 20, 2014), <https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2288-14-107>.

⁷⁹ What I mean by exclusion in this context is that even though there is no scholarly evidence for such claims, due to personal experience the following factors may play a role: societal pressure to not participate in sports, lower quality due to a low number of participants and discrimination due to ethnic background. To be able to prove such factors, further research is required.

⁸⁰ "Триаголник | Како Да Се Разбере Младинската Работа Во Заедницата," accessed May 21, 2019, <http://www.triagolnik.org.mk/en/kako-da-se-razbere-mladinskata-rabota-vo-zaednitsata/>. [How to Understand Youth Work within the Community]

⁸¹ Aboud 1988, Aboud 1993, Aboud and Amato 2001.

⁸² "Risk Factors for Ethnic Prejudice During Early Adolescence.: Global Search," accessed May 21, 2019, <http://eds.b.ebscohost.com/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=4&sid=41001750-f121-404f-a717-2fc318b92331%40sessionmgr101>.

identity.⁸³ Focusing on this age category enables us to also understand whether social identity has an impact on prejudice. Another important reason to choose this age category, is that it is the only category which includes Albanian players, allowing for an examination on the role of contact possible, otherwise, there is no guarantee that players have contact with Albanian team members in other age categories.

3.2. Data Collection and Research Method

Primary data was collected based on focus groups with team players and fans conducted during fieldwork conducted in Skopje. Focus groups are relevant to this study as they help in “investigating what participants think by also uncovering why participants think as they do”,⁸⁴ therefore, this research method was the most suitable for studying the players’ perceptions. In addition, considering that basketball is a team sport with strong group dynamics, focus groups with the team members provide a familiar setting which is more comfortable for discussions of sensitive topics, such as ethnic and religious identities. Also, the focus groups allow the participants to explain to the others what the reasons behind their opinions are, and even challenge their views⁸⁵, while fostering an atmosphere of discussion and sharing.

3.3. Research Sample

I conducted six focus groups with basketball players, namely, three groups with ethnic Macedonian players coming from homogeneous teams (National League) and three with ethnic Macedonian players from heterogeneous teams (the National Team), chosen randomly from the Basketball

⁸³ Kelly A. Brown, Dilip R. Patel, and Daphne Darmawan, “Participation in Sports in Relation to Adolescent Growth and Development,” *Translational Pediatrics* 6, no. 3 (July 2017): 150–59, <https://doi.org/10.21037/tp.2017.04.03>.

⁸⁴ Dawn Burton, *Research Training for Social Scientists* (6 Bonhill Street, London England EC2A 4PU United Kingdom: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2000), <https://doi.org/10.4135/9780857028051>.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

Federation's website. After contacting most of the teams on the website's list (via phone call or social media), one of the teams agreed to participate in my research – Partizan Vodno Suns.⁸⁶ The team is affiliated with a well-known basketball academy in North Macedonia and competes in all age categories, providing access to all of the required age categories for this research. Additionally, I got in touch with the current National Team coach of the U16 team (mostly 16 years old players) who, after reviewing the topics to be discussed, approved the participation of their members in the research. However, after my arrival in Skopje, the National Team players withdrew their participation from the focus groups without further explanation. Luckily, I was able to get in touch with coaches from their current teams, given that they play in these teams during the season, and secured the participation of the players through three different teams in total (MZT Skopje, Vardar, and Partizan). In most cases, many of the national team players came from the same teams, and ultimately, I was able to conduct three focus groups with five players in three different teams and gyms. These specific National Team players had been together for two consecutive summers prior to the focus group discussions.⁸⁷ In addition, I conducted one focus group with five male fans of the national team. Table 1 presents the essential information about the focus groups' participants and their structure:

⁸⁶ “Македонска кошаркарска федерација,” accessed April 23, 2019, <http://mkf.mk>.

⁸⁷ For the national team structure and dynamics please see Chapter 2.2.

Table 1. Focus Group Structure**1. National League Teams (Homogeneous⁸⁸)**

#	Ethnic Structure of Participants	Religious Background	Length of the Discussion	Number of Participants	Code	Age
Focus Group 1	Homogeneous	Christian Orthodox	38 min.	5	H1	16
Focus Group 2	Homogeneous	Christian Orthodox	42 min.	5	H2	16-17
Focus Group 3	Homogeneous	Christian Orthodox	35 min.	5	H3	17-18

2. National Team Players (Mixed⁸⁹)

#	Ethnic Structure of Participants	Religious Background	Length of the Discussion	Number of Participants	Code	Age
Focus Group 4	Homogeneous	Christian Orthodox	36 min.	5	NT1	17
Focus Group 5	Homogeneous	Christian Orthodox	34 min.	5	NT2	16-18
Focus Group 6	Homogeneous	Christian Orthodox	41 min.	5	NT3	17

3. Fans (Homogeneous)

#	Ethnic Structure	Religious Background	Length of the Discussion	Number of Participants	Code	Age
Focus Group 7	Homogeneous	Christian Orthodox	65 min.	5	FH1	20-25

Players either volunteered to participate or were randomly chosen by their coach. Moreover, since half of the players were underage, I sent consent forms (see Appendix 1) to their coaches prior to my arrival in Skopje, which were signed by the parents and collected by the coach. The focus group discussions were conducted in the gyms of the teams before or after team practice sessions. Each focus group consisted of five players. Focus group discussions were in Macedonian and were audio recorded, and later transcribed and anonymized. The only information included in the thesis is the age, the ethnic and the religious background of the whole focus group. The transcribed parts

⁸⁸ The teams consist of ethnic Macedonian players only.

⁸⁹ The teams consist of ethnic Macedonian and ethnic Albanian players.

of the focus group discussions were the relevant translated⁹⁰ quotes that are used to explain the topics which derive from the analysis.

3.4. Limitations

To be able to test the role of contact between two groups (Macedonian and Albanian players) the literature suggests that members of the sample group should be the same.⁹¹ In this case, that would mean conducting a focus group with the National Team players before and after the European Championship games would help to identify the differences in their attitudes towards the Albanian players with higher relevancy. However, as previously mentioned (Chapter 2.2.), the National Team players gather during the summer. Therefore, due to time limitations, conducting focus groups with the same players was not possible. Nevertheless, the qualitative assessment of the gathered data from the homogeneous team players provide an understanding of general attitudes and perceptions of the ethnic Macedonian players prior the contact.

The age category for this study for player is between 16 and 18 years for reasons discussed in the previous section (see table 1). However, the fan focus group also included participants aged 20 to 25 years. Given that fans were chosen randomly through a snowball sampling method⁹², there was little control over the age group the participants belonged to. As a consequence, their point of view may differ from the fans' belonging to the same age category as the players.

⁹⁰ The translations are made by the author.

⁹¹ "Snowball sampling may be defined as a technique for gathering research subjects through the identification of an initial subject who is used to provide the names of other actors." Michael Lewis-Beck, Alan Bryman, and Tim Futing Liao, *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Social Science Research Methods* (2455 Teller Road, Thousand Oaks California 91320 United States of America: Sage Publications, Inc., 2004), <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412950589>.

⁹² Allport (1956), Brown (1986), Pettigrew and Tropp (2006).

3.4. Focus Groups in Practice

All of the focus groups were conducted within the period of two weeks. Since the National Team players were attending a tournament in Belgrade, the first focus groups that I conducted were with the players from the homogeneous teams. Focus groups with the national team players and the fans were conducted during the second week.

At the beginning of each and every group, the participants were introduced to the topic, the general rules and the voluntary nature of the discussion. During introductions the participants were asked, among other questions⁹³, to name the schools they are attending. As previously mentioned, (see chapter 2.1.1.), there are homogeneous and mixed schools in Skopje. Hence, for the purpose of this thesis, it was important that the participants of the homogeneous teams did not have contact with Albanians on a daily basis, by attending mixed schools, since this might have had an important impact on their attitudes towards them. All the participants were attending homogeneous schools.

As for group dynamics, the participants were motivated to openly share their points of view towards the topics discussed. In general, all of the players were contributing equally to the discussion, except in H1 and NT3, where in these group there were three active and talkative members while the remaining members were less active. Each focus group lasted approximately 40 to 45 minutes. During the first part of the discussion, all participants were asked to answer the same question in sequence. As a consequence, the players ended up giving the same or similar answers.⁹⁴ However, there were moments where the members would express dissimilar opinions, in some cases even challenge each other. This happened especially during the discussion on Albanian teams and players.

⁹³ For the full list of the questions, please see appendix 2.

⁹⁴ E.g. On my question “why did you start playing basketball?” everyone would answer the same: because of my friends or because I wanted to be active.

3.5. Data Reliability

Concerning the reliability of the information shared by the players, I felt that participants were being honest and transparent. I introduced myself to the participants as a student from Macedonia who is conducting a study on intergroup relations in basketball teams. I also made sure to communicate that I was a basketball player which seemed to make participating players feel more comfortable in sharing their experiences and using certain terminology which would have required additional explanation to a non-player. Also, being fluent in Macedonian, despite my diverse ethnic background, and having a Slavic surname was an advantage: the players were more open to talk about non-Macedonian players assuming no one in the room came from a different ethnic group. None of the participants asked me any personal questions. However, being a female researcher might have affected their general behavior and the choice of words especially while commenting on Albanian players. In three focus groups, at least one of the participants would warn the others by indicating that “gentlemen do not behave in such ways when there is a female in the room”.⁹⁵

3.6. Topic Guide

The topic guide was constructed in accordance with the theoretical framework of the thesis by structuring questions according to the discussed notions (Chapter 1.). I made sure to include straightforward, unbiased, simple, and open-ended questions in order not to overwhelm participants.⁹⁶ Also, while taking the past ethnic and religious tensions (Chapter 2.) between these groups into account, I used the context of basketball to ask more indirect questions in order to not give away the goal of the research. I divided the questions into three categories: ice breaker-engagement, exploratory, and exit questions. Since I did not have access to the teams before

⁹⁵ H1, NTH2, NTH3.

⁹⁶ Jane Ritchie et al., *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers* (SAGE, 2013).

arriving in Skopje, I was unable to pilot the questions in advance. However, conducting the first focus group, I made minor changes for the following group discussions. Given the informal nature of the focus groups, I did not always follow the questions in the same order as the first, and sometimes included additional unplanned questions. In order to avoid direct questions in regard to sensitive topics such as ethnic identity, I provided external material that participants could comment on. The material was a short excerpt from a Macedonian sport anthem⁹⁷ for which the participants were asked to share their opinion on the lyrics after listening to it together. The lyrics of the excerpt are “Let the world know for us, the Macedonians, one sun of Alexander shines within our soul”.⁹⁸ The logic behind choosing this specific song was because of its nationalistic connotations which are subtle and not too provocative, as opposed to others which may make the participants uncomfortable and suspicious.

It is important to note that National Team players were asked additional questions because of the different dynamics within the team. The same applies to the fans. Therefore, in order to provide a clearer picture, the topic guide is divided into three subcategories. In order to better understand the connection between the themes covered during the focus groups discussion and the questions asked, I provide a table of themes and questions at the end of each subchapter⁹⁹ (see table 2, 3 and 4) for each group.

3.6.1. Questions for the Homogeneous Team Players

The first cluster of questions was the same for all player focus groups – both homogenous and heterogeneous teams. These questions revolved around their basketball careers and the reasons

⁹⁷ Македонија навива за вас [Macedonia cheers for you] by Tose Proeski.

⁹⁸ “Toše Proeski - Makedonija Naviva Za Vas (Македонија Навива За Вас) Lyrics + English Translation (Version #2),” accessed May 22, 2019, <https://lyricstranslate.com/en/makedonija-naviva-za-vas-macedonia-cheers-you.html>.

⁹⁹ The questions provided in the tables are only the explanatory questions since the ice-breaker and exit questions were the same for all of the focus groups. For the full set of questions please see Appendix 2.

behind wanting to be part of a team sport rather than an individual one. Additionally, I asked participants to specify what makes their specific (national) team special and if there are any pre-game rituals that were assumed to bring them luck before entering the basketball court. This allowed me to assess the importance of being part of a team that the players believed to be a special group. Also, to be able to evaluate the competitiveness within the team, I asked questions regarding their perceptions of not being part of the active five players on the court. This asserted the importance of the Contact Hypothesis' requirement of not being in a competitive environment in order for the contact to work in prejudice reduction.

The second set of questions (see table 2.) focused on teams and players with different ethnic backgrounds in order to understand their perceptions towards the players with ethnicities different than their own. After specifying who these players are, the discussion focused on the differences of team members' ethnic affiliations. Since these discussions are the main focus of the thesis, I asked follow-up questions which provided the participants the chance to elaborate their views and even challenge others in the group.

In the final part of the exploratory questions section, participants were asked to share their opinion on attending games and practices during religious holidays. The players' answers helped me uncover the intersectionality between ethnic and religious identity. The last set of questions related to basketball fans, their role within the team, and the importance of sharing the same team with the players. The answers indicated the presence of a shared social identity between fans and players. The last aspect of the discussion was on the sport anthem and how the players perceived the lyrics. Before concluding the discussion, I asked the participants if there was anything they would like to add. In most cases, the players shared personal problems which did not have empirical relevance for the aims of this study.

Table 2. Topic Guide and Questions for the Players

Topic Guide for Homogeneous Team Players					
Main Topic	Team Dynamics and Rituals	Being a Macedonian	Competitiveness	Albanian Players	Religious Holidays/Fasting
Questions	<p>What makes your team special? What do you like about your team?</p> <p>Do you have a pregame ritual that you do before every game?</p>	<p>Questions regarding the lyrics of the song “Macedonia is Rooting for You”:</p> <p>Who are “us Macedonians”?</p> <p>What does the “sun of Alexander the Great” implies?</p>	<p>What are you thinking about when you get benched in a game?</p>	<p>Are there players from other ethnicities in your league?</p> <p>Who are they? What do you think about the Albanian players? (Follow up question)</p>	<p>Should the games be canceled on religious holidays?</p> <p>What is your opinion on players fasting?</p>

3.6.2. Questions for the National Team Players

The introductory and exit questions for the focus groups with National Team players were the same as for the other groups. However, the exploratory questions, in this case, were more focused on the National Team. One significant difference between the players of the National Team and the National Team is that they sing the national anthem before each and every official game during the European Championships. Another difference is that jerseys they wear are always in the colors of the country and have the national flag in front, whereas their surname and jersey number are on their back. Hence, the first set of questions were related to singing the anthem, the meaning of "carrying" the flag on the jersey, and the pressure of being a National Team player.

Also, as part of the exploratory questions (see table 3.) I asked the participants to describe the players with different ethnic backgrounds that participate in the Macedonian National League and also in the National Team. The aim of this question is to identify the different perceptions towards Albanian players in comparison with those given by players from the homogeneous teams. I also asked follow-up questions to probe further on this topic. To be able to understand the religious perspective, the same questions on religious holidays and fasting during championships were asked. Lastly, we discussed the relationship with the fans and their opinion on the sport anthem.

Table 3. Topic Guide and Questions for the Players

Topic Guide for Heterogeneous Team Players					
Main Topic	Team Dynamics and Rituals	Being a Macedonian	Competitiveness	Albanian Players in the National Team	Religious Holidays/Fasting
Questions	<p>Do you have a pregame ritual that you do before every game?</p> <p>Do you sing the national anthem? How does that make you feel?</p>	<p>Questions regarding the lyrics of the song “Macedonia is Rooting for You”:</p> <p>Who are “us Macedonians”?</p> <p>What does the “sun of Alexander the Great” implies?</p> <p>How do you feel for having the flag on your jersey?</p>	<p>What are you thinking about when you get benched in a game?</p>	<p>Are there players from other ethnic groups in the national team?</p> <p>What do you think about Albanian players representing the country in the European games?</p>	<p>Should the games be canceled on religious holidays?</p> <p>What is your opinion on players fasting?</p>

3.6.3. Questions for the Fans

The main focus of group discussion with the fans was on the meaning and importance of being a fan and the reasons behind it (see table 4). Additionally, many of the questions were related to the

way they organize themselves, their relations with the players, and the slogans/songs they sing during the games. Since most of their songs contain nationalistic texts, it helped me guide the discussion towards Albanian players. I also asked fans to comment on the specific sport anthem I had previously used in the player focus groups.

Table 4. Topic Guide and Questions for the Fans

Topic Guide for the Fans				
Main Topic	Being a Fan	Songs and Slogans	Being a Macedonian	Albanian Players
Questions	How and why did you decide to become a fan and support the national team?	<p>Do you come up with the songs on your own?</p> <p>How do you select the songs?</p> <p>What is your opinion on the fee for singing nationalistic songs?</p>	<p>Questions regarding the lyrics of the song “Macedonia is Rooting for You”:</p> <p>Who are “us Macedonians”?</p> <p>What does the “sun of Alexander the Great” implies?</p>	<p>Do you know if there are players from different ethnicities in the national team?</p> <p>What do you think about these players?</p>

3.7. Analytic Method

Thematic analysis was used as the method of analysis in this study. Thematic analysis is used by researchers to gain insight and knowledge from the data gathered during the field work. This is done by determining specific themes derived from the data that helps to conduct a more detailed

research which will lead to answering the research questions of the study.¹⁰⁰ Additionally, this method is highly inductive i.e. the themes are not predetermined by the researchers.¹⁰¹ Therefore, the advantage of applying this method for analyzing the data from the field is its flexibility and functionality allowing for an in-depth examination of participants attitudes and opinions. Using thematic analysis I was able to identify, analyze and capture the patterns within the data provided by the participants of all focus groups.¹⁰² Additionally, the method has the added advantage of allowing the researcher to "interpret various aspects of the research topic".¹⁰³ While transcribing and translating the applicable quotes from the previously audio-recorded focus group discussions, I divided the discussion into relevant themes in order to find answers to the research questions. Under each theme, the answers, attitudes, and opinions of homogeneous team players are compared with those of heterogeneous team players. Finally, I conclude each thematic subcategory within the chapter with the general findings acquired through the analysis of the focus group discussions.

While structuring the themes of the collected data, I first distinguished the players' attitudes towards their own team, which was followed by their feelings towards the competitive nature of the game. From here, I covered various descriptions of their own ethnic and religious identity. Finally, I guided them to discuss their attitudes towards Albanian teams and players, the results of this discussion was distinguished from and compared to discussions on the same topic from players who are part of teams with different ethnic structure. In addition, when presenting the findings of my field research I include direct quotes from the players as an illustration of a certain phenomenon and sometimes when additional explanation about the context is required. A detailed elaboration

¹⁰⁰ Design Research Techniques. "Thematic Analysis | Design Research Techniques," accessed May 27, 2019, <http://designresearchtechniques.com/casestudies/thematic-analysis/>.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology," *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3 (January 1, 2006): 77–101, <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

of the analysis is presented in the following chapter. After each thematic subcategory within the analysis chapter, I summarize the general findings deriving from the comparison of homogeneous and heterogeneous basketball team players.

Chapter 4. Analysis

As previously mentioned, the gathered data from the focus groups are presented and analyzed in this chapter. The aim of the following analysis is to provide answers to the research questions of the thesis which are: How does the competitive environment within basketball teams affect the level of prejudice of ethnic Macedonians towards Albanians within the National Team?; Are there differences in perceptions among basketball players who are in the national team and the ones who are not?; Is there intersectionality in prejudice towards players with both different ethnic and religious identity? Is it manifested strongly? If so, why? And finally, how and why extended contact affect the level of prejudice among the fans of the National Team?

Finally, the last part of the chapter provides the summary of the findings and limitations of the research.

4.1. “Our Team is a Special One!”

In order to observe the attitudes and perceptions of the players towards the *other*, first I analyze the importance of being part of a certain basketball team to the participants. Furthermore, I examine which features they utilize to differentiate their group from the others. Accordingly, first, the National League team players were asked to explain what does make their team special:

H1: *“We try to make our team special by coming up with cool handshakes between the players.”*

H1: *“The friendships within the team makes our team very special. We are like brothers. We hang out during, before and after the practices/games. In other teams they are only teammates.”*

Besides the handshakes and their strong bond, other features such as having the same hair style, wearing same basketball socks/shoes, and having special warm-up exercises¹⁰⁴ were mentioned.

¹⁰⁴ Before the games, the teams have 30 minutes to warm up by using their half of the court. They usually practice shoots, lay ups and specific stretching techniques.

Another important feature that was frequently mentioned among the participants was the color of their jerseys. The colors of the homogeneous teams who participated in the focus groups were black/white¹⁰⁵, black/blue and blue/white. These colors were perceived as their unique way of identification, on and off the court. In addition, teams with pink colored jerseys were perceived as being girly¹⁰⁶ whereas in the participants' team, according to them, that was not the case.

The national team players had additional components in the context of Macedonian National Team. The most common one was the national anthem:

NT1: *“By singing the national anthem out loud we prove to the other team that we are ready to fight and win no matter what. It motivates all of us. Hugging each other and singing together is always an amazing moment.”*

NT2: *“The way we sing the anthem makes us special, I think. We show that we are ready to play and win. The louder the better.”*

While discussing the national anthem, the participants in all of the focus groups talked about the importance of singing the national anthem *as loud as possible*. They shared that the public and other teams applaud them for being the only team in the European Championship games who sang the words of the national anthem in such way. On a more visual level, the players made a distinction between their National Team and the others by indicating that they drew an additional Macedonian flag on their right arms that made them feel *braver and stronger*¹⁰⁷. Additionally, after the audience was mentioned, the players were asked about the importance of having fans to support them during the games. The participants from all the focus groups agreed that having fans in the gym was essential for them:

NT1: *The fans are like the sixth player of the team. Five of us fight on the court and they fight with us off the court by singing songs, by applauding all our scores and by simply being there. It's like a big family, fighting for our country at the European games.”*

¹⁰⁵ Each team needs to have two colors in order to be able to change them depending whether they play on a home court or guest court.

¹⁰⁶ H1, H3.

¹⁰⁷ NT2, NT3.

NT2: *Of course, it's important to have them there with us. They are part of the same team. It's much harder when we play in an empty gym, or a gym filled with the fans from the opponent team. We are together in this.*

The above-mentioned elements (handshake, jersey colors, singing national anthem, etc.) contributes to the transition from *me* to *we* in the context of sports. Through these indicators it can be stated that the participants personal feelings of distinctiveness derived from their team membership (Chapter 1.5.). Looking through the group processes of intergroup differentiations (Chapter 1.5. pg. 5), the participants also showcased social comparison by implying that they were *louder, braver* and *stronger* than the other teams.

The players rely on ingroup enhancement which, according to the literature, might lead to higher tendencies of being prejudiced towards the outgroup (Chapter 1.5. pg.6). In addition to the elements of distinctiveness that derived from the discourses of the participants, we can also look into the role of ethnic and religious identity on strengthening the boundaries between the ingroup and the outgroup. Hence, the following section looks into such characteristics in connection to the Macedonian identity.

4.2. Who gets to be a Macedonian?: “*Alexander Macedonian is our King*”

After discussing the team specific rituals and habits, and in order to understand the perceptions of the players towards their own ethnic group, participants were asked questions regarding being Macedonians. However, due to matters of sensitivity, when speaking about such topics it is important that the participants are not fully aware of the intentions of the research. Therefore, the topic was approached using a very well-known sport anthem *Macedonia Cheers for You*. The participants from all focus groups were asked to carefully listen to the excerpt of the song that was later on discussed through specific questions. The lyrics of the selected part of the song was “Let

the world know for us, the Macedonians, one sun of Alexander shines within our soul”.¹⁰⁸

Accordingly, the participants were asked to describe who are *the Macedonians* mentioned in the song and what does *one sun of Alexander* mean to them. The first reaction to these questions by players from the National League teams were linked to citizenship and passports:

H1: *“If you are born in Macedonia, you are a Macedonian basically.”*

H1: (As a response to the previous answer): *“The ones who are born here, and the ones who have passports, those are the requirements to be a Macedonian.”*

H2: *“The citizenship tells if you are a Macedonian or not. If USA would offer me their citizenship I would never accept.”*

H3: *“All the citizens of Macedonia are Macedonians. Also, the people who live outside of Macedonia and have passports. Just like you (pointing towards me), you study in Hungary, but you are not Hungarian, you are Macedonian.”*

After participants confidently linked the citizenship and passports to being a Macedonian, I asked if that makes the minorities in the country Macedonians too, since they also have the same citizenship. The players seemed confused and felt uncomfortable by the idea of hearing the word minorities and Macedonian citizenship together. In this regard one of the participants commented:

H3: *“I am not very sure if the ethnicity matters in this case, they are also born here, so it makes them Macedonians automatically.”*

Even though no specific minority groups were mentioned, one of the players continued:

H3: *“If we play against an Albanian team for example, these songs are not necessary. It can simply be an English song rather than nationalist songs. Alexander Macedonian is ours, and not part of their history. It will not make sense.”*

The others supported their teammate from the context of Alexander and the symbol of the sun:

H3: *“The sun of Alexander is our history. Aleksandar was a Macedonian and the sun was his symbol.”*

¹⁰⁸ “Toše Proeski - Makedonija Naviva Za Vas (Македонија Навива За Вас) Lyrics + English Translation (Version #2),” accessed May 22, 2019, <https://lyricstranslate.com/en/makedonija-naviva-za-vas-macedonia-cheers-you.html>.

The players identified the Macedonian identity by reflecting on what *belong to them* and not to the *others* e.g. the passports, the territory, the symbols.

When it comes to the national team players their ethnic belonging was not linked to citizenship nor having a certain passport were mentioned. Instead they described it as a certain feeling by additionally connecting it to culture, traditions, and symbols:

NT1: *“Anyone who feels as a Macedonia is a Macedonian. In that way, those people will find themselves easily in this song.”*

Within the context of *feeling Macedonian*, the ethnic groups were mentioned immediately without follow-up questions:

NT1: *“The other ethnic groups may also be Macedonians only if they respect our culture and traditions.”*

NT1: *“No matter the ethnic group, it is important that they are Macedonians. To feel Macedonian.”*

The discussion regarding the ethnic groups went in the similar direction with the other focus group participants as well:

NT3: *“The second part of the song is kind of confusing. The sun of Alexander is not the symbol of all the ethnic groups. So maybe “us Macedonians” excludes the others. I am confused.”*

NT3: *“Alexander Macedonian ruled half of the world. Probably the Albanians were also covered. It might be their history and hero too. You never know.”*

NT3: *The fact that they put him (Alexander) in a sport anthem motivates us even more when we listen to it. Especially during warm ups. The sun was the symbol of Alexander. It is important since it is also on our flag.”*

Since the sun and the flag were mentioned very frequently, I mentioned the national team jersey (see figure 4.) and the fact that their surnames are on their back but the flag on the left side of their chests. They connected the location of the flag to being close to their hearts, arguing that is a great honor to carry it with them on the basketball court whereas the surnames are not as important while

fighting for the country. Additionally, they connected the color yellow to the previously mentioned *sun of Alexander*:

NT1: *“We also make sure to put our hand over our hearts, where the flag is located on our jerseys too. It is a very special feeling.”*

NT1: *“I cannot even put those feelings in words. I do not know how to describe it. It is an honor, a pride. Having the Macedonian flag on your jersey, there is nothing better than that.”*

The above-mentioned attributes in the discourses of the participants shows that ethnic identities can be shapes and expressed through sports (Chapter 1.2.). Through such expressions, the players indicate ethnic boundaries that helps them distinguish ethnic groups.



Figure 4. Macedonian National Team Jersey¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ The illustration was designed by Ilir Halimi for the purpose of this thesis.

4.3. The Contact: Civilized Albanian vs. Aggressive Albanian

The analyses in this section concern the attitudes and perceptions of the Macedonian players regarding the Albanian players in North Macedonia. First, I analyze the perceptions of homogeneous team players. Second, the perceptions of National Team players towards Albanian players outside of the National Team and last, towards the Albanian players within the National Team. To my first questions whether there are teams and players from different ethnic groups within the leagues they are competing with, the participants of the homogeneous teams mentioned Spanish, Italian, and Croatian players later on followed by Bosniaks, Turkish and lastly, Albanians. On a team level however, everyone immediately referred to Albanian teams such as Cair, Lirija and Shkupi (Chapter 2.2.). This was followed up with the question on whether there are any differences when they play against Macedonian and Albanian teams. The players in all of the focus groups impatiently jumped to share their opinions:

H1: *“Of course, there is a difference! You know them, they are raised in Cair¹¹⁰. They always push us during the games. Very aggressive players.”*

H1: *“It is simply their mentality. There is nothing you can do about it. They always hit us when we play against them. They literally don’t care if they will injure us.”*

H1: *“They do not have the basic skills for playing basketball, it is like they play karate instead.”*

The first reaction to playing against Albanian teams relates to their way of playing, mainly described as being too aggressive. This was linked to the *mentality* and *culture* of the Albanian players. Besides, most of the participants expressed certain feelings such as anxiety and fear, especially while attending the games in the gyms located in Cair:

H3: *“I don’t like them. They are very rude. It makes me very anxious. Some sort of negative adrenaline. I just want to go, win the game, and leave home.”*

¹¹⁰ One of the neighborhoods with predominantly Albanian residents (see Chapter 2.1.1.)

After many participants discussed the nature of the game and their feelings towards the Albanians, one of the participants in the first homogeneous focus group raised his hand by asking if he can give a clarification to all of this, where he proposed the following explanation:

H1: *“Let’s first make one thing clear, there are two types of them. There are Albanians who want to cause problems and some of them actually try to solve this problem. The first type of Albanians is, as you know, we call them “someone from the mountain”. Not an urban and kind person. But mainly, they are from the first type.”*

The other participants agreed and some elaborated in a similar way arguing that there is a clear distinction among Albanians. In order to see the effects of contact, the same discussion was led with the participants from homogeneous teams too.

The National Team players had similar attitudes towards the players outside of the national team. First, they commented on their physical game, this time linking it to *their violent history*¹¹¹ and the territories they live in. Second, they shared their feelings of being scared and anxious each time they play against them. Last, in addition to the comments regarding the Albanian players, the participants also described Albanian fans as *scary and violent*.¹¹²

After discussing the Albanian team and players, the participants were asked to share their thoughts on Albanian players representing the National Team. The following quotes serve as an illustration of the discussion:

NT2: *“We have one Albanian player in the team. But he never represents himself as an Albanian rather as a Macedonian. And that is how it should be. He plays from Macedonian national team and not Albanian.”*

NT2: *“He is part of us, there is no difference between him and us.”*

NT2: *“Sometimes he knows to say something inappropriate as an Albanian, but we do not mind. We accepted him; he is part of us.”*

NT1: *“In their case (the Albanian players in the national team) are very nice guys, just like us. You can barely tell the difference.”*

¹¹¹ NT1

¹¹² NT2, NT3

NT1: *"I am a good friend with him. I am not bothered by the fact that he is an Albanian. After a while, I did not even perceive him that he is from the others."*

NT3: *"However, it is enough to have one or two Albanian players. The Macedonians should have an advantage. It is like they did not get picked for Albania so now they get to play for us. That is not fair."*

In comparison with the attitudes towards the Albanian players within the National League, the participants had more positive attitudes towards the ones in the national team. However, they made a clear distinction between those players mainly by arguing that they *share the same values* and are *just like them*. This shows that the recategorization process (Chapter 1.5.) reduces the level of prejudice towards the members of the same team i.e. National Team. Furthermore, since their attitudes changed only toward certain individuals this means that the contact does not work on a general level. In addition, while talking about the Albanians in the National Team, the participants made it clear that the Macedonians should always have an advantage and that Albanians *can be allowed to play* only when necessary and in limited numbers. This can be explained through the Social Dominance Theory which argues that there are “hierarchically organized sets of group distinctions that emerge as a function of historically and contextually evolved power and status differences between socially constructed groups”¹¹³. In this case, taking into consideration the historical context (Chapter 2.1.) between these ethnic groups, the players’ attitudes were shaped due to group distinctions as a result of past tensions.

¹¹³ Jim Sidanius et al., “Social Dominance Theory: Explorations in the Psychology of Oppression,” The Cambridge Handbook of the Psychology of Prejudice, October 2016, <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316161579.008>.

4.4. The Basketball Court as a Battlefield: Enemies on the Court, Friends outside the Court

In order to understand the role that the competitive nature of basketball plays on the perceptions towards the *other*, the focus group participants were asked to comment generally on the environment and atmosphere of their practices and games. This was tackled using the topic of being benched during games by their coach and fighting to be part of the starting five during practices (chapter 1.4.).

H1: *“I had to wait for my teammate to get injured to get my turn to play.*

H2: *“I follow closely my teammate with whom I share my position trying to figure out what were my mistakes if I played before him. If I was not part of the starting 5, I check the mistakes of my teammate and I try not to repeat them. If I will be better than him, I will get to play longer.”*

H3: *“While being seated I think that I can definitely play better from my teammate who is at that moment on the court.*

Since there are no Albanian players in the homogeneous teams, I asked the participants whether there would be any difference if an Albanian player is on the court while they are on the bench. All the participants instantly argued that in this case what is important is their individual development, therefore, the ethnic identity of the players was not as important as it was if they were playing against them or with them (pg. 47):

H1: *“At our age, the individual development and progress is very important. And this can be achieved only if we play more. It is a daily struggle. Every practice, every game is important for us. I don’t care if a Macedonian or Albanian is on the court, as long as that leaves me on the bench.”*

Similar attitudes were recognized among the National Team players towards the competitive nature of the game. Arguing that it is a *battle field* and that the friends off the court transform into *enemies on the court*¹¹⁴. Since the competitive nature was perceived in the same way by all the participants

¹¹⁴ NT1, NT3

in three of the focus groups, participants were asked the question on Albanian players playing before or more than them in the National Team, to which a few of the players shared their thoughts:

NT1: *We already talked about them taking part in the national team for which we said it's okay. But when it comes to who will get more minutes on the court, it should be a Macedonian player. It's the national team of Macedonia after all!"*

After I reminded them of their arguments (pg. 44) that Albanians with Macedonian citizenships were also perceived as Macedonians, in that case, I asked them to elaborate on why Albanian players should play less minutes during the games:

NT1: *Okay, I will give an example: imagine, there is a game between Macedonia and Hungary¹¹⁵, the players go out on the court and on the back of their jerseys you read surnames such as Ibraimi and Sulejmani¹¹⁶. The audience will get confused thinking is this Macedonian or Albanian national team?"*

The example was met with a laughter by all the participants in the room and was approved without further comments by the others in the focus group.

Players from all focus groups acknowledged the competitive nature of the game. However, the players from the homogeneous teams did now show negative attitudes towards the idea of Albanian players having an advantage on court, rather for any individual, regardless of their ethnic or religious belonging. The most important factor for them was their personal and individual development as a player. On the other hand, the National (heterogeneous) Team players made a distinction by indicating that they do not support the idea of Albanian players spending more time on the court during the games. This was due to the belief that Macedonian players should be treated as a priority when representing the Macedonian National Team. Looking at this case through the Intergroup Contact Hypothesis lens (chapter 1.5.), eliminating competitive environment¹¹⁷ might

¹¹⁵ In many discussions Hungary was a reference point due to the information given in the beginning of the focus groups that I study in Budapest.

¹¹⁶ These are very common Albanian surnames.

¹¹⁷ Gordon Willard Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice* (Addison-Wesley Pub. Co., 1954).

not affect the role of contact between conflicting groups (in the case of homogeneous players) due to individualistic interests. On the other side, in the case of National Team players, the competitive nature of the game loses its importance since the players made a clear statement that Macedonian players are expected to have an advantage over other players. Hence, due to the ethnic belonging of the Albanian players, they are not perceived as threats when it comes to taking over the positions of the Macedonian players.

4.5. Religious Prejudice: “*I Assume the Albanians are Muslims*”

Another theme through which prejudice is analyzed uses the lens of religion. As previously mentioned in the methodology chapter of the thesis, the Macedonian players throughout the discussion identified themselves as Christian Orthodox, whereas the Albanians are perceived as Muslims. In order to examine the presence of religious prejudice the discussion with the focus group participants was led through using the topics of religious holidays and fasting. In this section I also look into the notion of intersectionality between ethnic and religious prejudice towards the Albanian players. As in the previous sections, I first present and analyze the collected data from the homogeneous team players followed by the discourses of the national team players. Lastly, I compare and track down similarities and differences among these groups and conclude the subchapter by relying on the theories discussed in chapter 1.

The discussion began after the players were asked to share their opinions on canceling the games during religious holidays. It is important to note that no specific religious holidays were mentioned prior the discussion in order to not guide the discussion towards certain ethnic and religious groups. Their answers on postponing games during religious holidays were:

H1: *"If it is not our religious holiday, I do not see a logical reason why games would get canceled. The Muslims can stay home, and we can play against the teams from our religion."*

H1: *"For example, if we go to play in the USA, they would not cancel the games because it is our religious holiday. In that case, why should we cancel our games for some religion that belongs to the others."*

The players from the first group made a clear distinction between their own religion and the other's. When speaking of other religions, the participants linked the discussion to Muslims, since they were aware of Muslims being the second largest religious group in the country. After the words "Muslims" was mentioned the next participant continued:

H1: *"For Bayram, the Albanians teams maybe do not attend the games. I have no idea. I do not follow all of the religions, just my own."*

Even though the Albanian teams and players were not mentioned in this context, the players made a clear connection between Muslims and Albanians. In relation to this, a participant from the third focus group commented in the same context:

H3: *"If we play against those, others, from Cair¹¹⁸. Maybe we can cancel that particular game but nothing more. It does not make sense."*

In addition to the connection of ethnic and religious belongings, as it can be seen from the last quote, the participants also made a territorial reference without naming any ethnic or religious groups. However, when I asked to elaborate on who are the people from Cair, the participants referred to the Albanians.

The same discussion was brought up with the national team players concerning the religious holidays:

¹¹⁸ Cair is one of the neighborhoods with dominantly Albanian (Muslim) residents. For more, please see Chapter 2.1.1.

NT2: *"If we do not play against a Muslim team, why would we cancel the games? It is not our holiday."*

NT2: *"I am not sure about what Bayram and Ramadan are and what are they supposed to do during those days. Anyhow, no games or practices should be canceled."*

NT2: (As a response to the previous comment): *"If it is our religious holiday, since we are a majority, everything should be cancelled so we can be with our families or visit the church."*

NT3: *"If you love your country and if you feel as a Macedonian you should not play for the religious holidays."*

The participants from the National Team had similar reactions to religious holidays by associating them with Muslims, Bayram and Ramadan. However, in addition to this, a participant from the third focus group brought up "feeling as a Macedonian" and "love towards the country" as additional dimensions to the religious perspective. Looking from the context of playing for national team, the participant implied that ethnic belonging should come before a religious one. However, as it can be seen from the NT2 second comment, this applies only for the outgroup members.

During the discussion regarding religious holidays, after the specific Muslim holidays such as Bayram and Ramadan came up, I took the opportunity to link the conversation to players fasting in order to track down more specific discourses towards the Muslim (in this case Albanian) players. Participants were asked if players should fast during Ramadan if it overlaps with games or in the context of national teams, during European Championships:

H1: *"If a player wants to fast, he is an adult, he should be aware of the consequences. I will, of course, let him fast but will not be able to promise if he will play during the next game."*

H3: *"If there is an important game ahead, I would not allow the players to fast. They can choose, either to play basketball or to be religious."*

H2: *“We are kids, we should not fast anyway. But it depends, the Muslims are more religious and if they want, they can fast, it is their choice.”*

As can be seen in all of the responses above the comments on “allowing” or letting players fast are repeated. During the discussion on fasting, the players positioned themselves in an authoritative position and commented whether *they* would allow the players to fast by providing them the option to *choose* between fasting and playing. Moreover, they perceived the Muslims as more religious than the rest. In this case, the team identity was also brought up as a more important element than religion during their argumentation by indicating the importance of the team and the game of basketball.

In regard to fasting, the National Team players had stronger and more negative attitudes by implying to remove players from the team:

NT2: *“If a player wants to fast for Ramadan, the coach should delete him from the player's list. There are plenty of kids who would die to play for Macedonia. He can be easily replaced.”*

NT2: *“Obviously his religion is more important than the national team so I assume he will not be very upset to leave the team too.”*

NT1: *“But we are not as some coaches, we would allow them. Okay, let's say we give them 3 days to fast. That should be enough. Then they can continue with us.”*

This was the dominant attitude among national team players too, who even proposed stronger actions such as replacing or removing Muslim players from the Macedonian national team.

From the perspective of religious prejudice (p.12), the respondents coming from both national league and national teams did not have negative attitudes towards the players due to their religious belonging. Instead, the negative connotations were linked to their ethnic identity. Therefore, it can be argued that since the ethnic identity of the Albanians was perceived as somehow stronger, no intersectionality (p. 13) in prejudices was observed. However, it would be

misleading to completely disregard the role of religious identity in shaping the attitudes of the ingroup towards the outgroup members.

Another important similarity among the focus group members was the authoritative approach which emerged throughout the discussion relating to both themes. This can also be examined through the Social Dominance Theory which argues that there are group distinctions and status differences between social groups within a society. In this case, looking into the historical context (Chapter 2.1.) between these ethnic and religious groups, the players' attitudes were shaped due to group distinctions as a result of past ethnic tensions. Furthermore, due to their past conflict memory, the participants put themselves in a higher position in the constructed hierarchy between these groups. This can also be argued as the reasons behind why the intersectionality in ethnic and religious prejudice does not manifest strongly.

Even though similarities can be tracked down between the focus groups when it relates to perceptions of the religious identity of the Albanian players, the players from the national team had somewhat a stronger team identity deriving from the importance of playing for Macedonia, which resulted in more negative attitudes.

4.6. The Fans

In the last part of the analysis, I focus on the National Team's fans. The decision behind extending the sample by including the perspectives of the fans was to test the generalizability of the results from the national team's focus groups (pg. 44). Since the players made a clear connection with the fans by perceiving them as part of the team and emphasizing the importance of their support, it is important to include their attitudes towards the team, especially towards the Albanian players within the national team. The subchapter is divided in three sections: first, I outline the perceptions of the fans towards the national team and its players in order to see if the connection is mutual.

Second, I analyze the fans approach towards the Macedonian identity and last, I examine their attitudes towards the Albanian players within the national team in order to test if extended contact reduces prejudice.

4.6.1. “We are a Family”

As previously mentioned, in order to see the connection with the team to the fans and the importance of being involved with the national team, the participants were asked to explain the reasons behind their attachment to the team and the ways they support the players, the answers were in the following order:

FH: *“The players when they play while we are in the gym, they basically have a sixth player on the court. Without our support, they even lose games sometimes.”*

FH: *“We call ourselves a family. We invest everything we have in this team. We try to support them with all our hearts.”*

FH: *“Sometimes we do not receive enough money so we sell a shirt and scarfs so we can travel together with the team. We want to follow them, wherever they go.”*

FH: *“We are the best fan club. We are loyal, we are supportive, we never give up on the players and the team.”*

In order to explain the importance of having fans’ support and involvement in the team, the word *sixth player* was used both by national team players and the fans. In addition to this, by indicating the challenges they overcome in order to support the team shows their level of investment and the desire to be part of the team and help the players to achieve their goals. The participants also argued that all they want from the players is to *win games and make them proud*. In addition to this, all the focus group participants explained that the reason behind their decision to support the national team was due to the fact that they represent the country. It seemed like a logical reasoning with no further explanation required. There was no other country that they would support beside North Macedonia.

From the social identity (Chapter 1.1.) point of view, same as for the players, the fans attached positive attributes to their fan group e.g. loyal, supportive, the best fan group, etc (FH). With this they were able to identify the differences between them and any other fan group. Additionally, they believed that these elements also made the national team look more special than the ones representing other countries. On a visual level, the participants talked about the importance of the design of the scarfs and the t-shirts which they wear during games. Having the flags and colors of the country was an important indicator of group belonging. As an illustration of this, after the focus group discussion I was offered a t-shirt that said *you are my first and last love, let's go team Macedonia*.¹¹⁹

4.6.2. Who gets to be a Macedonian?: Through the Eyes of the Fans

After the discussion on their role in the team, I examined their perspective on what it means to be a Macedonian. Similar to the players' focus groups, the question on the Macedonian identity was asked using the sport anthem *Macedonia Cheer for You* (Chapter 3.6.). Similarly, they referred to territory and nationalistic feelings. In addition, history and race came up too.

FH: *"The Macedonians that are living in Macedonia and also the diaspora. Regardless of ethnicity, everyone who feels as a Macedonian is a Macedonian."*

FH: *"I think it is only about the Macedonians like us. With culture, with history, with Macedonian surnames and so on. Not the others."*

FH: *"It's a feeling. If you feel it on your chest you will know. You know if you are a Macedonian."*

FH: *"But for some, the song might talk about clean Macedonian race. It depends on how you want to interpret it."*

The fans had similar explanations as the players towards the meaning of being a Macedonian. In addition, the Macedonian surnames were used as indicators. This was similarly argued among the

¹¹⁹ In Macedonian: Ти си љубов прва и последна, напред Македонијо!

national team players in the context of having jerseys with Macedonian surnames on the court (Chapter 4.4., NT1). Lastly, on the comment *clean Macedonian race*, it was connected to a well-known fans song that they sing during games by chanting the words “clean, clean, clean Macedonia” (чиста, чиста, чиста Македонија) regardless of the ethnic composition of the opponent team. The fans claimed that even though they are aware of the meaning and content of such songs, they argued that the sport events give the possibility to express themselves freely. However, this also gives the possibility and grounds for prejudiced attitudes towards the others (Chapter 1.5.1.).

4.6.3. Nationalistic Songs: “*It lights up the fire in our souls*”

While the same anthem was used in both fans and player’ focus groups, a large segment of the discussion focused on the role of the different songs chanted by fans and their meanings. This also helped to open the discussion at first to the topic of Albanians within sports in general and then later on for the Albanian players within the national team. After discussing songs on a more general level and their role within the game, I later led the discussion towards songs with nationalistic content¹²⁰ where the fans shared their opinions on the lyrics and the reasons behind their usage during games:

FH: “*We usually sing the nationalistic songs when the other club contains Albanian players.*”

FH: “*There are certain moments when two Macedonian teams play against each other but yet again we come together with the opponent team’s fans and we sing the songs against the Albanian together. It kind of lights up the fire in our souls. It brings us together in a way.*”

¹²⁰ “Clean Macedonia” by Unknown. “Gas Chamber for The Albanians” by Unknown. “A Good *Shiptar* is a Dead *Shiptar*. ” (The word *Shiptar* has a derogatory meaning towards Albanians). Vasiliki P. Neofotistos, *The Risk of War: Everyday Sociality in the Republic of Macedonia* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012).

Regarding such songs, in 2015 the Basketball Federation of North Macedonia including many other sport organizations came up with fees in order to reduce provocations and violence among the fans.¹²¹ When this was brought up to the discussion the fans had a clear stans on these penalties:

FH: *“The nationalistic songs are not allowed anymore by law. But no one can stop us. We continue to sing; we collect the money and pay the fee.”*

FH: *“We received fees because of our behavior but in reality, they (Albanians) are the ones who always cause harm. However, the Albanians are never punished for their acts. They are always protected.”*

FH: *“The same fees apply to the Albanian fans too, but they are protected by political parties. The country is giving them too many rights, its incredible. No wonder we are losing our country to them.”*

During the discussion, the participants supported each other’s arguments regarding their decision on continuing to sing such songs regardless of the fee. They argued that the songs and slogans with nationalistic content were reminders for themselves and the others (fans and players with any ethnic identity) that there are clear boundaries and differences among the ethnic groups. Regarding the differences, the participants indicated that the Albanian fans are treated better by gaining more rights and being protected by political parties. This shows that through such songs and sporting events the participants had shaped mainly negative attitudes towards the *other* leading to prejudice (Chapter 1.2.).¹²²

4.5.4. The Albanian Players and Extended Contact

In the last subcategory of the analysis regarding the fans, I examine the perceptions of the fans on the Albanian players within the national team. The discussion on the songs helped open the floor

¹²¹ Предвидени глоби за недостојно однесување и насилство на спортски натпревари,” *Правдико* (blog), April 15, 2015, <https://www.pravdiko.mk/predvideni-globi-za-nedostojno-odnesuvane-i-nasilstvo-na-sportski-natprevari/>. | Predicted fines for unworthy behavior and violence in sports competitions|

¹²² Mike Cronin and David Mayall, *Sporting Nationalisms: Identity, Ethnicity, Immigration, and Assimilation* (F. Cass, 1998).

to discuss this issue. Participants were asked to share their opinion on Albanian players representing the country in the European Championships as part of the national team, the following is a sample of the responses:

FH: *“Generally speaking, Albanian players are not usually talented. Not only in the senior’s team but also the youth team. They are not really for basketball. Maybe some other sports such as football so they can just run and not think too much.”*

The players were perceived as being untalented and not smart enough for basketball that is perceived as being more complex. Similar comments were given by the players (Chapter 4.3. H1) where they propose that Albanians should rather play different sports. The reasons behind such comments were elaborated when the discussion was focused on Albanian players who take part in the national team:

FH: *“Usually the Albanian players are provocative players on the court. It’s in their nature. So, if such players join the team then, of course, we will not support them.”*

FH: *“If the player does not have different values then ours, then yes, he should be allowed to represent our country.”*

FH: *“The Macedonian players should have an advantage. Only if there is not enough talent in the Macedonian players, then the Albanians should be invited. Only if necessary.”*

The fans brought up the aggressiveness and provocative attributes in relation to the Albanian players as the participants from the other focus groups (H1, H2, NT2, NT3). Similarly, they connected this to their culture, mentality and *their nature*. In addition, they showed dominant attitudes regarding the national team players arguing that Albanians should be invited only when there are not enough Macedonian players. Hence, this shows that the players are not perceived equally regardless of being in the same team. Furthermore, the possible friendships between Macedonian and Albanian players were perceived on an individual level claiming that this is most

likely because of the individual being *a decent person* (FH). Due to this reason it can be argued that the correlation between extended contact and prejudice is negative. In addition to this, the fans' perceptions towards Albanians in general trumps the reality of extended contact (players playing together), therefore, not affecting their attitudes towards the Albanian players.

4.6 Summary of the Findings

In this subsection I present the main findings of the thematic analysis conducted on field data.

The analysis revealed that social identity prevailed among all the focus group participants regardless of the ethnic and religious composition of the teams they come from. Additionally, the strong affiliation the national team players felt towards the team in general resulted in a decrease in negative attitudes towards the Albanian players within the same team. In other words, the Albanian players were perceived as individuals with the same values as the Macedonian players. This also shows that, that in this particular case, the recategorization (Chapter 1.5.) process was successful in reducing prejudice. However, when comparing the National Team players with National League players both groups had similar negative attitudes towards the Albanian players who did not attend the National Team. This shows that the recategorization process generally does not have a positive impact, instead this impact only relates to certain individuals.

When comparing the attitudes of the players towards Albanian players within the Macedonian basketball society, the analysis also showed that contact in general does not reduce prejudice. Instead, as previously mentioned, the national team players only had positive attitudes towards the Albanian players with whom they had contact. Yet, it is important to note that the comments were given by individuals who considered themselves to be in a socially dominant position. That is, the players believed to have the right to *approve* and *allow* them to be part of the team and to take part in the games. The reasons behind such behavior might be the memory of

conflict, institutionalized ethnic, and religious division within the country, as well the fact that norms necessary to support contact are missing at the societal level. Taking Social Dominance Theory (Chapter 4.5.) into consideration, it can be argued that the players' attitudes stem from their belief that their social category is on a higher position within Macedonian society.

The analysis also unveiled that in the case of Macedonian basketball teams it is not possible to test whether the requirement for a non-competitive environment (Chapter 1.5.) is necessary for a successful implementation of Contact Hypothesis. This is due to the strong individualistic interests, which exist regardless of the ethnic and religious identity of the other players within or outside of the team i.e. the players equally compete with both Macedonian and Albanian players during practices and games. The national team players' perceptions of the idea of Albanian players playing before them were slightly different. However, this was due to their belief that "Macedonians should represent Macedonia" and not because of competitiveness.

This also raises the question on the perspective of having a shared goal, especially within team sports, since the players change their attitudes when they are inactive during a game. It is argued that players striving to win must work together and also rely to each other (Chapter 1.5.) However, in this case, as a result of competitiveness on individual level among the players, the requirement of having a shared goal is seen as problematic. Yet, the fans seem to believe that having a shared goal with the players makes them a part of the team.

The analysis also shows that there is no intersectionality when it comes to religious prejudice. Hence, the negative connotations associated with the players are mainly due to the fact that these players were Albanians, and not because they are Muslims.

Lastly, extended contact on fans does not work, not even towards certain individuals.

4.7. Limitations

This study has few limitations that need to be acknowledged. First, the choice of single-case study has been perceived as a limitation in relation to generalizability of the outcomes from the examined results. However, due to lack of literature on prejudice in North Macedonia, especially in the context of competitive sport (in this case basketball), it is necessary to collect and examine primary data that can be used as a basis for comparison with other cases.¹²³ In addition, single-case studies allow for in-depth observations that may provide new theoretical insights.

Furthermore, due to time and space limitations, this research focused on the perceptions of the ethnic majority only. However, to be able to see the full picture, further research should consider the attitudes of the minorities, in this case the National League and National Team's Albanian players. This will help reveal any similarities or differences between the perceptions of ethnic/religious majority and minorities towards the *other*.

Lastly, this thesis examined two components of prejudice. The first is the cognitive component, i.e. Macedonian players perceiving Albanians as uncivilized (information concerning members from the outgroup) and secondly, the affective component e.g. Macedonian players feeling anxious and afraid from the Albanian players (feelings linked towards the members of the other group). The third component which is behavioral (actions taken when in contact with the member from the outgroup) was not within the focus of this study since there are was either no public cases of such behaviors to be analyzed or no public access to such information. In this context, to better understand the consequences of prejudice, team coaches should be included in the framework. Especially, the ones who take part in the process of choosing the national team players, in order to be able to understand the selection criteria and whether the ethnic and religious

¹²³Katharine Jocher, "The Case Method in Social Research," *Social Forces* 7, no. 2 (1928): 203–11, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2570141>.

background of the players influences their choice. This is especially relevant since in the last 27 years, no Albanian coaches were invited to take part in selection process of the national teams' players in any age category.¹²⁴

¹²⁴ Basketball Federation of North Macedonia. “Кошаркарска Федерација на Република Северна Македонија,” accessed May 27, 2019, <http://mkf.mk>.

Conclusion

The ethnic and religious segregation, due to past tensions, between Macedonians and Albanians in the North Macedonia has pushed these social groups away from each other through many ways. That is, from segregated schools to divided public space, the social cohesion between Macedonians and Albanians has been a highly debatable issue among academics. However, speaking for the field of sports within the country, the role of contact has been neglected. Hence, this thesis looked into the role of contact on perceptions and attitudes of Macedonian basketball players towards Albanians. This was done through focus group discussions that helped me examine and compare the different perceptions of Macedonian players coming from homogeneous (National League) and heterogeneous (National Team) teams. To be able to track down and explain the derived themes and patterns from the discussion, this thesis combined the concepts of social identity, prejudice, intersectionality and Contact Hypothesis.

As already stated in the previous chapter, the analysis revealed that: a). regardless of the ethnic and religious composition of the teams, the correlation between contact and prejudice is negative, b). the strong manifestation of social identity among heterogeneous team players affect their attitudes positively towards the outgroup members as a successful result of the recategorization process, however these feelings are only towards the members within the same team, c). the competitive environment in the game of basketball had different impact on players' attitudes towards the outgroup members indicating reliability issues to Allport's four sets of requirements for successful implementation of Contact Hypothesis, d). no intersectionality was seen due to higher negative inclinations towards the ethnic identity of the outgroup members, and lastly e). the correlation between extended contact and prejudice among fans was negative.

This thesis looked into the perceptions of the ethnic and religious majority members whereas, due to time limitations, the attitudes of the minority social groups were left out. In order to be able to see the full picture it is important to include the minorities' perspective. In this way, we might better understand the dynamics between these groups and find ways to minimize the social distance among them. In addition, looking into these concepts and issues in different cities around the country may indicate different results due to their differing ethnic and religious composition. Throughout the thesis only the cognitive and affective components of prejudice are examined. In order to understand whether such information and feelings have further consequences we should also look to the third element of prejudice which is the behavioral. This should be done by additionally including the coaches and other authoritative members within the team. It would also help to examine the rest of Allport's proposed requirements for successful implementation of Contact Hypothesis (involvement of authority figures). However, even though limited aspects are analyzed and cover, I hope that this study gives the basis and opens the way for filling the above-mentioned gaps in the field of prejudice and sports in North Macedonia and similar divided societies.

As already mentioned throughout the thesis, sport is used as a peace-building tool in divided societies. By focusing to its undeniable competitive nature in the analysis of this study, I looked whether contact affects prejudice. However, building from this perspective, and keeping in mind the highly segregated society in Skopje and North Macedonia, an additional question comes to mind: does prejudice affect the contact?

Lastly, I hope that *one for all* will be transformed to *all for one* not only in post-conflict societies such as North Macedonia but everywhere around us, meaning: prejudice will be minimized, the cooperation between all the sport members will be strengthened, and sports will be regarded as a field where everyone is perceived and treated equally.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Consent Form



MA Thesis Project for
Fulfillment of Master Program

Budapest, Nádor u. 9, 1051 – <https://www.ceu.edu>

Consent Form for Parents of Basketball Players in the Basketball Club (*The name of the basketball club*)

Dear Parent,

I am conducting a study for my MA thesis at CEU dealing with the question *what is it like to be a basketball player in today's Macedonia?* I am conducting this study in 3 different basketball clubs across the city. Your child was selected by his coach to participate in a short informal group discussion together with 5 other teammates to discuss this topic with me. The focus groups will take place in the gym of *name of the club* and the discussion will last about 45 minutes.

Participation is voluntary and the study is anonymous so no one will be able to identify the children's responses. I would like to ask you to support my study by allowing your child to participate. Your child will not be participating in the group discussion without him willing to do so or/and without you signing this consent form.

His name **will not** be used when the data from this study will be published. The information is confidential and no one else except me will have access to the discussions documented during the group discussion. The only information published in this research will be the age group of the participants.

Should you have any further questions or concerns regarding my research please do not hesitate to contact me or/and my supervisor.

Thank you in advance,
Arin Agich

If you agree for your child to take part in my research, please fill and sign the following statement:

I, _____ [**name of the parent**] _____ parent/guardian of the player _____ [**name of the player**] _____, am approving my child to participate in your research.

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Contact:

Student:

Arin Agich

E-mail: arin.agic@gmail.com

Mobile: +389 70497792

Supervisor:

Luca Varadi

E-mail: varadil@ceu.edu

Appendix 2: Topic Guide and Questions

1. Introductory/Engagement Questions for all Groups:

- Introducing myself to the participants and vice versa – (for the players: name, age and how long they have been part of the team, for the fans: name, age and how long they have been part of the fan club).
- Explaining the concept of a focus group and setting the ground rules.
- Icebreaker: basketball related questions such as: when did you start playing? Why? What is your favorite skill/part of the game? What is the most challenging part to you for the basketball?

2. Exploratory Questions for Players from Regular Teams:

- What makes your team special? What do you like about your team?
- Do you have a pregame ritual that you do before every game?
- What are you thinking when you get benched in a game?
- Are there players from other ethnicities in your league? Who are they?
- What do you think about the Albanian players? (Follow up question)
- Questions regarding the song “Macedonia is Rooting for You”: Who are “us Macedonians”? What does the sun of Alexander the Great mean?
- Should the games be canceled on religious holidays? What is your opinion on players fasting?
- What do you think about the fans that support your team and the songs they sing? (Give an example from a song)

2.1. Exploratory Questions for Players from the National Team:

- Do you have a pregame ritual that you do before every game?;
- Do you sing the national anthem? How does that make you feel?
- What does playing for the national team mean to you?; Who can be a national team player?
- Is there a particular significance to your jersey number?

- What do you think about having your surname on the back of the jersey and the flag on the front?
- Are there players from other ethnic groups in the national team?
- What do you think about Albanian players representing the country in the European games?
- It happens very often that Ramadan is during the European games? Should the players be allowed to fast?
- What do you think about the fans that support your team and the songs they sing?

2.2. Exploratory Questions for the Fans:

- How and why did you decide to become a fan and support the national team?
- How do you plan the order/outline of the slogans?
- Do you come up with the songs on your own? How do you select the songs? (Content)
- Do you know if there are players from different ethnicities in the national team?; What do you think about these players?

3. Exit Questions for all Groups:

- Summarizing the discussion.
- Is there anything you would like to add?

Bibliography

Ahmed, Shireen. "When Women Were Forced to Choose between Faith and Football | Shireen Ahmed." *The Guardian*, April 28, 2018, sec. Football.
<https://www.theguardian.com/football/blog/2018/apr/28/women-faith-football-hijab-fifa-ban>.

Allport, Gordon Willard. *The Nature of Prejudice*. Addison-Wesley Pub. Co., 1954.

Bairner, Alan. "Assessing the Sociology of Sport: On National Identity and Nationalism." *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 50, no. 4–5 (June 2015): 375–79.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1012690214538863>.

Balkan Insight. "Macedonia Passes Albanian Language Law." *Balkan Insight* (blog), January 11, 2018. <https://balkaninsight.com/2018/01/11/macedonia-passes-albanian-language-law-01-11-2018/>.

Barlow, Fiona Kate, Matthew J. Hornsey, Michael Thai, Nikhil K. Sengupta, and Chris G. Sibley. "The Wallpaper Effect: The Contact Hypothesis Fails for Minority Group Members Who Live in Areas with a High Proportion of Majority Group Members." *PLoS ONE* 8, no. 12 (December 11, 2013). <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0082228>.

Basketball Federation of North Macedonia. "Кошаркарска Федерација На Република Северна Македонија." Accessed May 27, 2019. <http://mkf.mk/index.php>.

Braun, Virginia, and Victoria Clarke. "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology." *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3 (January 1, 2006): 77–101.
<https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>.

Broch, Trygve B. "Intersections of Gender and National Identity in Sport: A Cultural Sociological Overview." *Sociology Compass* 10, no. 7 (2016): 567–79. <https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12385>.

Brown, Kelly A., Dilip R. Patel, and Daphne Darmawan. "Participation in Sports in Relation to Adolescent Growth and Development." *Translational Pediatrics* 6, no. 3 (July 2017): 150–59.
<https://doi.org/10.21037/tp.2017.04.03>.

Brown, Rupert. "Social Identity Theory: Past Achievements, Current Problems and Future Challenges." *European Journal of Social Psychology* 30, no. 6 (2000): 745–78.
[https://doi.org/10.1002/1099-0992\(200011/12\)30:6<745::AID-EJSP24>3.0.CO;2-O](https://doi.org/10.1002/1099-0992(200011/12)30:6<745::AID-EJSP24>3.0.CO;2-O).

Brown, Rupert. *Prejudice: Its Social Psychology*. John Wiley & Sons, 2011.

Burton, Dawn. *Research Training for Social Scientists*. 6 Bonhill Street, London England EC2A 4PU United Kingdom: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2000. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9780857028051>.

Codecordia. “Кошаркарска Федерација на Република Северна Македонија.” Accessed May 27, 2019. <http://mkf.mk>.

Codecordia. “Македонска кошаркарска федерација.” Accessed April 23, 2019. <http://mkf.mk>.

Crenshaw, Kimberle. “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics.” *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1989, no. 1 (December 7, 2015). <https://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/uclf/vol1989/iss1/8>.

Cronin, Mike, and David Mayall. *Sporting Nationalisms: Identity, Ethnicity, Immigration and Assimilation*. Routledge, 2005.

Demjaha, Agon. “The State Of Inter-Ethnic Relations In Macedonia After 16 Years Of The Ohrid Agreement.” *SEEU Review* 12, no. 2 (December 20, 2017): 8–31. <https://doi.org/10.1515/seeur-2017-0016>.

Design Research. “Thematic Analysis | Design Research Techniques.” Accessed May 27, 2019. <http://designresearchtechniques.com/casestudies/thematic-analysis/>.

Elling, Agnes, and Annelies Knoppers. “Sport, Gender and Ethnicity: Practises of Symbolic Inclusion/Exclusion.” *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 34, no. 3 (June 2005): 257–68. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-005-4311-6>.

European Stability Initiative. “The Ohrid Agreement and Its Implementation - Macedonia - ESI.” Accessed May 7, 2019. <https://www.esiweb.org/index.php?lang=en&id=563>.

Fink, Janet S., Heidi M. Parker, Martin Brett, and Julie Higgins. “Off-Field Behavior of Athletes and Team Identification: Using Social Identity Theory and Balance Theory to Explain Fan Reactions.” *Journal of Sport Management* 23, no. 2 (March 2009): 142–55. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jsm.23.2.142>.

Flick, Uwe. “An Introduction to Qualitative Research.” SAGE Publications Inc, March 15, 2019. <https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/an-introduction-to-qualitative-research/book240398>.

Gaither, Sarah E, and Samuel R Sommers. "Honk If You like Minorities: Vuvuzela Attitudes Predict Outgroup Liking." *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 48, no. 1 (February 2013): 54–65. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1012690211429219>.

Global Voices. "Macedonia: Violent Inter-Ethnic Incident on Skopje Fortress · Global Voices." *Global Voices* (blog), February 15, 2011. <https://globalvoices.org/2011/02/15/macedonia-violent-inter-ethnic-incident-on-skopje-fortress/>.

Gómez, Ángel, and Carmen Huici. "Vicarious Intergroup Contact and the Role of Authorities in Prejudice Reduction." *The Spanish Journal of Psychology* 11, no. 01 (May 2008): 103–14. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1138741600004169>.

Greenwood, Nan, Theresa Ellmers, and Jess Holley. "The Influence of Ethnic Group Composition on Focus Group Discussions." *BMC Medical Research Methodology* 14 (September 20, 2014). <https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2288-14-107>.

Gustafsson, Johanna. "Single Case Studies vs. Multiple Case Studies: A Comparative Study," n.d., 15.

Irish Times. "Mesut Özil: Is It Because I'm a Muslim?" Accessed May 19, 2019. <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/europe/mesut-%C3%B6zil-is-it-because-i-m-a-muslim-1.3576281>.

Jocher, Katharine. "The Case Method in Social Research." *Social Forces* 7, no. 2 (1928): 203–11. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2570141>.

Kiessner, Jef. "Risk Factors for Ethnic Prejudice During Early Adolescence.: Global Search." Accessed May 21, 2019. <http://eds.b.ebscohost.com/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=4&sid=41001750-f121-404f-a717-2fc318b92331%40sessionmgr101>.

Kilvington, Daniel. "British Asians, Covert Racism and Exclusion in English Professional Football." *Culture Unbound: Journal of Current Cultural Research* 5, no. 4 (December 12, 2013): 587–606. <https://doi.org/10.3384/cu.2000.1525.135587>.

Lavrakas, Paul. "Focus Group - SAGE Research Methods." SAGE Publications. Accessed May 29, 2019. <http://methods.sagepub.com/reference/encyclopedia-of-survey-research-methods/n192.xml>.

Lewis-Beck, Michael, Alan Bryman, and Tim Futing Liao. *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Social Science Research Methods*. 2455 Teller Road, Thousand Oaks California 91320 United States of America: Sage Publications, Inc., 2004. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412950589>.

Lewis, Jane. "Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers." *Choice Reviews Online* 41, no. 03 (November 1, 2003): 41-1319-41-1319. <https://doi.org/10.5860/CHOICE.41-1319>.

Neofotistos, Vasiliki P. *The Risk of War: Everyday Sociality in the Republic of Macedonia*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012.

O'Rawe, Des, and Mark Phelan. *Post-Conflict Performance, Film and Visual Arts: Cities of Memory*. Springer, 2016.

Peachey, Jon Welty, George B. Cunningham, Alexis Lyras, Adam Cohen, and Jennifer Bruening. "The Influence of a Sport-for-Peace Event on Prejudice and Change Agent Self-Efficacy." *Journal of Sport Management* 29, no. 3 (May 2015): 229-44. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jsm.2013-0251>.

Pettigrew, Thomas F. "Intergroup Contact Theory". *Annual Review of Psychology*. 2006:65-85.

Pettigrew, Thomas F., and Linda R. Tropp. "A Meta-Analytic Test of Intergroup Contact Theory." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 90, no. 5 (2006): 751-83. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.90.5.751>.

Pettigrew, Thomas F., and Linda R. Tropp. "Allport's Intergroup Contact Hypothesis: Its History and Influence." In *On the Nature of Prejudice: Fifty Years after Allport*, 262-77. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2005. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470773963.ch16>.

Pettigrew, Thomas F., Oliver Christ, Ulrich Wagner, and Jost Stellmacher. "Direct and Indirect Intergroup Contact Effects on Prejudice: A Normative Interpretation." *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 31, no. 4 (July 1, 2007): 411-25. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2006.11.003>.

Pravidko. "Zakon-Za-Sprechuvane-Na-Nasilstvoto-i-Nedostojnoto-Odnesuvane-Na-Sportskite-Natprevari-Prechisten-Tekst-31-07-2014.Pdf." Accessed May 23, 2019. <https://www.pravidko.mk/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Zakon-za-sprechuvane-na-nasilstvoto-i-nedostojnoto-odnesuvane-na-sportskite-natprevari-prechisten-tekst-31-07-2014.pdf>.

Radio Freedom. "Спектакуларен пречек на кошаркарите." Радио Слободна Европа. Accessed April 26, 2019. <https://www.slobodnaevropa.mk/a/24333122.html>.

Ritchie, Jane, Jane Lewis, Professor of Social Policy Jane Lewis, Carol McNaughton Nicholls, and Rachel Ormston. *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers*. SAGE, 2013.

Schulenkorf, Nico. "Sport Events and Ethnic Reconciliation: Attempting to Create Social Change between Sinhalese, Tamil and Muslim Sportspeople in War-Torn Sri Lanka." *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 45, no. 3 (September 2010): 273–94. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1012690210366789>.

Sidanius, Jim, Sarah Cotterill, Jennifer Sheehy-Skeffington, Nour Kteily, and Héctor Carvacho. "Social Dominance Theory: Explorations in the Psychology of Oppression." *The Cambridge Handbook of the Psychology of Prejudice*, October 2016. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316161579.008>.

Statistical Office. "State Statistical Office – Regional Accounts." Accessed May 28, 2019. http://www.stat.gov.mk/OblastOpsto_en.aspx?id=12.

Tajfel, Henri. "Social Identity and Intergroup Behaviour." *Social Science Information* 13, no. 2 (1974): 65–93.

The Guardian. "Mesut Özil Reminds Us Why Minorities Have More than One Identity | Afua Hirsch | Opinion | The Guardian." Accessed May 20, 2019. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/jul/25/mesut-ozil-minorities-identity-germany-football-turkish-heritage>.

Thomas, William E., Rupert Brown, Matthew J. Easterbrook, Vivian L. Vignoles, Claudia Manzi, Chiara D'Angelo, and Jeremy J. Holt. "Social Identification in Sports Teams: The Role of Personal, Social, and Collective Identity Motives." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 43, no. 4 (April 2017): 508–23. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167216689051>.

Topend Sports. "Sport in Macedonia." Accessed April 26, 2019. <https://www.topendsports.com/world/countries/macedonia.htm>.

Topend Sports. "Sport in Macedonia." Accessed April 26, 2019. <https://www.topendsports.com/world/countries/macedonia.htm>.

Toše Proeski - Makedonija Naviva Za Vas (Македонија Навива За Вас) Lyrics + English Translation (Version #2)." Accessed May 22, 2019. <https://lyricstranslate.com/en/makedonija-naviva-za-vas-macedonia-cheers-you.html>.

Triangle. “Триаголник | Како Да Се Разбере Младинската Работа Во Заедницата.” Accessed May 21, 2019. <http://www.triagolnik.org.mk/en/kako-da-se-razbere-mladinskata-rabota-vo-zaednitsata/>.

Urumovska, Dragana. “‘It is in Their Blood to Fight’: Ethnic Prejudices Among Young Macedonians,” Master’s Thesis. Central European University, 2018.

Véron, Ophélie. “Deconstructing the Divided City - Identity, Power and Space in Skopje (PhD Thesis).” Accessed May 18, 2019. https://www.academia.edu/13952133/Deconstructing_the_Divided_City_-_Identity_Power_and_Space_in_Skopje_PhD_thesis.

Wann, Daniel L., Katrina Koch, Tasha Knoth, David Fox, Hesham Aljubaily, and Christopher D. Lantz. “The Impact of Team Identification on Biased Predictions of Player Performance.” *The Psychological Record* 56, no. 1 (January 2006): 55–66. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF03395537>.