Chapter 3
The Process of Acculturation and Transition for Adulthood in Young Brazilian Soccer Players in a Digital Age

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ABSTRACT
High mobility of Brazilian athletes has increased significantly due to the globalization of soccer. It is very common to observe young athletes moving from their hometowns to a different place as a demand of the profession/career. During this process, youth face the process of acculturation, known as the transition to a different culture as a job demand (to play soccer) and feeling confused about his/her cultural identity. In addition, these young athletes assume responsibilities of adults in a period of development - adolescence and the transition to adulthood - characterized by the identity consolidation. The process of identity of football players is emphasized since the early childhood. The aim of this chapter is to discuss the process of acculturation in young Brazilian soccer athletes elucidating related aspects and the development of identity, concerning its cultural dimension surrounded by information and communication technologies of a digital age.

INTRODUCTION
The objective of this chapter is to discuss the acculturation process and identity construction of Brazilian teenage athletes and their transition to adulthood, while considering the cultural dimensions that influence universal aspects of this process. The world’s globalization, in part, is influenced by information and communication technologies. This globalization has provoked changes in adolescence and adulthood. The process which the individual goes through - moving to a new place culturally different from his own DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-1856-3.ch003
- impacts performance, identity, and mental health. The contextual aspects that influence the process of acculturation and identity as well as the discussion of this subject in the area of sports psychology are theoretical and practical challenges for psychologists and other professionals who work with Brazilian soccer athletes. This process can be facilitated by communication and information technologies. The possibility of being in frequent contact with people from the individual’s country of birth may make it more difficult to adapt to the transition to living in a new country.

**BACKGROUND**

**The Soccer Player Formation in Brazil**

Soccer, besides being a sport, is one of the great cultural institutions. It can influence and consolidate national identities. Becoming a soccer athlete in Brazil consists of increasingly refining techniques, due to the strained competition in this sport. Among the components of the athletes’ training are physical contexts or formation centers, living accommodations, training environment, and changing rooms.

The organizational principles of a soccer player are hinged from the economic investment, clubs’ and companies’ political interests, and the preparation for games and professional exercises. These are adjusted according to the availability and the requirements of the club. This process is managed by experts, former players, physical education teachers, and agency networks that represent athletes.

Becoming a soccer player is a highly competitive processes and physically and emotionally stressful. There are approximately 5000 hours of investments on physical training, distributed over the course of about ten years, directed to the body, in tightly disciplined routines that are both exhausting and commonly monotonous. Training athletes are teens, ages from 10 to 20 years, and many came from vulnerable environments and from different Brazilian regions and countries. Coaches, family, media, clubs, and fans have high expectations of these youths, which makes them vulnerable to stress (Afif, 1997). These athletes face, from a very early age, the pressure to become players and having their professional identity shaped from the perspectives/expectations of adults (e.g., relatives, entrepreneurs, leaders, technicians), before they even have their own sense of self.

The career of these athletes starts and sometimes ends in the formation center. In the formation center, athletes can remain until they are 20 years old. The next step, if they are selected, is to be a professional soccer player. If the athlete does not reach the requirements/criteria needed to advance, the athlete will have to search for another alternative. Many of these athletes that cannot advance in their career leave behind their chances at a soccer career. Formation centers are specialized in learning the fundamentals of soccer. These centers are focused on improving the physical, technical, tactical, and psychological skills of athletes during their career development. Athletes’ access to these locations is not mandatory, which is why the strict compliance with the training and the residence rules is necessary. To have a soccer career, athletes’ motivation is important. Once integrated in the sport’s club, the youth needs to devote himself or herself to the intensive workouts and routines. The youth will eventually abdicate from other forms of social interaction, friendship, entertainment, and family (Damo, 2007, 2014). Some Brazilian soccer athletes devalue school and academic development.

Young athletes from different Brazilian regions and countries bring their customs, values, and habits to the soccer clubs. The adaptation to a different culture can generate culture shock. The athletes face new customs in training and in daily life. Accepting and understanding the new culture is important because