



Empowering youth sport and acculturation: Examining the hosts' perspective in Greek adolescents



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ABSTRACT

Objectives: Research on the role of sport as a context for the acculturation of young migrants has mainly focused on migrant populations. Considering that acculturation is a two-way process involving both the migrant and the host populations, research investigating the perspective of the hosts will enhance our understanding of the acculturation process. The purpose of the present study was to explore acculturation attitudes and perceptions of adolescents from the host population as a function of sport participation. Furthermore, for those adolescents participating in sport, the role of the sport motivational climate and its relation to acculturation attitudes was investigated.

Design and Method: A cross-sectional quantitative design was adopted. Participants were 626 (316 girls) Greek, high school students (13.88 ± 1.01 years of age). Among them, 271 (92 girls) were athletes competing in individual and team sports. While all participants completed measures of acculturation attitudes, the athletes additionally completed measures of motivational climate, basic need satisfaction, and controlling coaching behavior.

Results: Athletes scored higher than non-athletes on attitudes towards multicultural contact. Analysis of structural models revealed that a motivational climate characterized by a mastery climate, supportive of the needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, was positively linked to attitudes favoring migrants' maintenance of their culture and development of interaction with the host culture, whereas a motivational climate characterized by a performance climate and controlling coaching behavior was negatively linked to such attitudes.

Conclusion: These findings provide useful insights concerning the perspectives of the host population regarding migrants' acculturation and the role motivational climate play in promoting integration.

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1. Introduction

Within the field of sport psychology there has been a growing interest in the social mission of sport (Schinke & Hanrahan, 2012). This mission has been described as processes and actions aiming at improving the lives of individuals and groups in relation to various contexts, such as health and well-being, youth development, and intercultural exchange (Schinke, Stambulova, Lidor, Papaioannou, & Ryba, 2015). Within this area, an important focus has been placed on the socio-cultural aspects of sport and specifically on acculturation processes. The development of cultural competencies is among the priorities identified by the International Society of Sport Psychology (ISSP Position Stand; Ryba, Stambulova, Si, & Schinke, 2013) and it is recommended that sport and exercise psychology

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professionals focus more on cultural awareness (ISSP Position Stand: Ryba, Schinke, Stambulova, & Elbe, 2017).

The recent cultural sport psychology literature has mainly focused on two different research perspectives. One perspective spotlights the experiences of (elite) athletes who migrate to pursue or develop their sport career. Studies have, for example, highlighted the athletes' experiences in the acculturation process like upsets, problems, their coping strategies and the adaptations that take place (Blodgett & Schinke, 2015; Ryba, Ronkainen, & Selanne, 2015; Schinke, Blodgett, McGannon, & Ge, 2016). This literature has also been recently accommodated within a new framework, the cultural praxis of athletes' careers (Stambulova & Ryba, 2014). These studies, which predominantly apply a qualitative methodology, have promoted the study of athletes as multidimensional identities within and outside the athletic context, but also address the influence of the receiving culture on migrating athletes' development. A second line of research places more focus on the sport context rather than the individual athlete and investigates the role of sport as an acculturation agent within a sport for all rather than a competitive sport context. This second perspective explores the potential of sport as a context wherein effective acculturation can take place, and examines the dynamics of cultural interaction within sport for the promotion of social integration (e.g., Allen, Drane, Byon, & Mohn, 2010; Stodolska & Alexandris, 2004). Although the two perspectives have different foci they share ideas and grounds surrounding the understanding that acculturation is a dynamic process reflecting cultural and psychological change following intercultural contact (Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits, 1936). In addition, both perspectives share the common assumption that the interaction between migrating and host individuals is of great importance in order to understand the acculturation process. The present investigation adopts the acculturative role of sport perspective and focuses on the sport context rather than the individual athlete. This focus allows us to address the sport context as a means for acculturation which has been identified as an issue of particular importance for the functioning of contemporary societies.

The process of acculturation, has always been considered to be of fundamental importance for both intergroup relations and migrants' adaptation to the society of settlement, and has attracted significant research attention (see special issues by Berry & Sam, 2013; Leong & Liu, 2013; Van Oudenhoven, Ward, & Masgoret, 2006). The potential of sport to contribute positively to a range of social issues is widely acknowledged (Bloyce & Smith, 2010; Schinke & Hanrahan, 2012), and this has generated a growing policy interest to encourage the use of sport as a vehicle to promote social integration and intercultural dialogue (Schinke et al., 2015). Nevertheless, a review of the relevant literature (Hatzigeorgiadis, Morela, Elbe, Kouli, & Sanchez, 2013) has revealed contradictory findings. On the one hand, research has identified potential benefits of sport participation for minority groups, such as cultural adaptation and effective coping with acculturation stress (Stack & Iwasaki, 2009), and the development of social networks with host majority members (Guerin, Diiriye, Corrigan, & Guerin, 2003). On the other hand, it has been argued that sport may be a field in which discrimination may evolve (Doherty & Taylor, 2007; Schinke et al., 2015), and that the potential bridging effect of sport is almost fully countered by the tensions arising from outside sport (Krouwel, Boostra, Duyvendak, & Veldboer, 2006). Hatzigeorgiadis, Morela, Elbe, and Sanchez (2013) review concluded that sport participation per se may not be sufficient to facilitate fruitful acculturation and that research should explore the features of the sport environment that may help towards reaching the goals of integration. In addition, the review identified that only a small number of studies were based on solid theoretical frameworks, stressing the need for

theoretically driven research (Hatzigeorgiadis et al., 2013).

1.1. Theoretical framework and relevant research

Berry's (1997); Berry & Sam (2013) acculturation model provides a suitable framework for the study of migrants' acculturation. The model suggests that there are two independent dimensions underlying the acculturation process, based on the distinction between orientations towards one's own group and those towards other groups. These are cultural maintenance, and cultural contact and participation. Cultural maintenance refers to the conservation of one's ethnic heritage and cultural traditions, while cultural contact and participation refer to the interaction and exchange of experiences between members of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

The prevalence of these orientations determines the strategies that members of both the migrant and the host populations adopt (Berry, 2008). Among the migrant groups, these preferences are described as acculturation strategies, and have been identified as *integration*, reflecting high orientations towards both maintenance and contact (identification with both cultures); *assimilation*, reflecting high orientations towards cultural contact and low towards cultural maintenance, (identification mostly with the host culture); *separation*, reflecting high orientation towards cultural maintenance and low orientations towards cultural contact (identification mostly with one's own heritage culture); and *marginalization*, reflecting low orientations for both cultural maintenance and contact (low identification with both cultures). Among the members of the host society the preferences are described as acculturation expectations and have been respectively identified as multiculturalism, in which cultural diversity maintenance and equitable participation are an accepted feature of the host community society (corresponding with integration); melting pot, in which host members are resistant to migrants' cultural maintenance and wish for their absorption in the host community (corresponding with assimilation); segregation, when host members accept migrants' cultural maintenance but at the same time feel that interaction should be avoided (corresponding with separation); and exclusion, when host members deny migrants' cultural maintenance as well as their integration into the host society (corresponding with marginalization) (Berry, 2010). The bidimensional model of acculturation was further extended by Bourhis, Moise, Perreault, and Senecal (1997) who highlighted the importance of the fit between the goals of the two populations, and suggested that acculturation orientations of the host population can influence the orientations adopted by migrants (Bourhis, Montreuil, Barrette, & Montaruli, 2009, pp. 39–61). Bourhis et al. (1997) described the interactive acculturative model, which emphasizes the role of the host majority members' expected acculturation orientations towards migrant groups.

1.2. The role of the sporting environment

Adopting the framework developed by Berry, two studies have explored aspects of the sport environment in relation to ethnic and cultural identity in migrants. In these studies ethnic identity was conceptualized as a composite of preferences migrants hold to preserve their ethnicity, whereas cultural identity refers to their preference to be involved with the larger society (Ting-Toomey et al., 2000). Morela, Hatzigeorgiadis, Kouli, Elbe, and Sanchez (2013) investigated young migrant athletes in Greece, who participated in sport teams comprising mostly members of the host culture. They found that team cohesion could negatively predict feelings of fringe and lack of interaction with members of the host culture. A similar study by Elbe et al. (2016) found that the

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