

Acculturation through sport: Different contexts different meanings.

## Abstract

Research on the role of sport as a social integrative agent for migrants has provided equivocal results. The purpose of this study was to investigate the relation between **ethnic – cultural identity** and sport environmental factors. Young migrant male athletes from two different societal and sport contexts were studied: migrants from Eastern European countries living in Greece ( $n = 60$ ) and from Latin America living in Spain ( $n = 60$ ). Participants completed measures of ethnic and cultural identity, task oriented motivational climate, and autonomy supportive coaching behaviour. Analysis of variance revealed that Eastern European inhabitants of Greece scored higher on fringe and assimilation, and lower on lack of interaction compared to Latin American inhabitants of Spain. In addition, for the former group, a mastery motivational climate and autonomy supportive coaching predicted an **integrative identity**, whereas for the latter group the motivational environment did not predict acculturation patterns. The results suggest that sport may serve different acculturation purposes, thus explaining to a degree the lack of consistent results regarding the integrative role of sport. The study provides preliminary support for the importance of the sport motivational environment for the facilitation of integration.

*Keywords:* ethnic and cultural identity, social integration, motivational environment, multicultural groups

### Acculturation through sport: Different contexts different meanings

The multicultural character of contemporary European societies, resulting from globalization and migration, has become a new reality that creates challenges at both national and international levels. Within this context, the integration of migrant citizens is fundamental for the social and economic well-being of countries. Sport participation has been recognized as a socializing agent (Delaney & Madigan, 2009), forming, to an extent, the experiences of the people involved and **potentially** leading to various positive social benefits by promoting moral and social values (Rudd, 2005; Sport England, 1999). In addition, participation in sport activities offers opportunities for socialization and co-operation (Wuest & Lombardo, 1994), thus furthering the development of personal abilities like cooperation and fair-play (Eitzen, 2012; Shields & Bredemeier, 1995). Finally, sports are often characterized as an environment offering equal opportunities and promoting racial equality (Green & Hardman, 2000), reinforcing migrants' positive formation of their **identities** and promoting the process of social integration (Donnelly & Coakley, 2002).

Policies developed worldwide tend to be based upon the abovementioned propositions. The European Commission's White Paper on Sport (2007), for example, highlights the importance of sport for economic and social cohesion. It further states that sport could play a critical role in the integration of migrants thus supporting inter-cultural dialogue and exchange. However, studies focusing on the integration of migrants through sport are limited, and their findings often inconsistent.

On the one hand, some research findings have supported the facilitating role of sport. Ito, Nogawa, Kitamura, and Walker (2011) reported that participating in judo helped Brazilian children in Japan to improve their language skills, respect Japanese customs, and

make Japanese friends, thus helping them develop interaction with the larger group. Similarly, findings from two studies with migrant students in the USA (Lee, 2005) and Israel (Rosenberg, Feijgin, & Talmor, 2003), showed that sport participation helped students improve their interactions with members of the dominant culture, receive social support, and integrate more easily. Moreover, studies have supported the dual role of sport in facilitating cultural interactions and maintaining cultural background. Stodolska and Alexandris (2004), in a study with Korean and Polish migrants in the USA, found that through sport activities participants had the chance both to communicate with members of the dominant culture and to socialize with members of their own community, thus facilitating their integration. Muller, VanZoonen, and De Roode (2008) reported that members of ethnic teams participating in a multicultural football (soccer) competition saw their participation in the tournament as an opportunity to enhance social cohesion within their own **communities**, to improve interethnic relations, and to establish identification within the local national community. Finally, Allen, Drane, Byon, and Mohn (2010), in a study with international students from American universities, reported that sport participation served both cultural functions: maintenance of one's own culture and cultural interaction.

On the other hand, some studies have challenged the idea that sport does, actually, promote integration. Krouwel, Boostra, Duyvendak, and Veldboer (2006) reported that participation in soccer may highlight cultural differences and sharpen ethnic controversy. In particular, they found that in matches between homogeneous teams of different ethnic origins in the Netherlands, tension escalated both amongst members of autochthonous teams (using, mostly, verbal violence) and amongst members of the minority teams (using,

mostly, physical violence). Controversial results have also been reported by Walseth (2008) in female athletes with a migrant background in Norway. More precisely, most participants reported that sport helped them improve their social networks and overcome racial differences; however, some admitted that they often felt marginalized and that they failed to develop friendships with their teammates, especially due to cultural differences. Similarly, Doherty and Taylor (2007) found that sport helped high school students from various ethnic backgrounds living in Canada socialize and interact with Canadians; nevertheless, students also admitted experiencing social discrimination due to language barriers and origin-related prejudice.

Acculturation is defined as the process of cultural and psychological change that follows intercultural contact (Berry, 2003). Overall, the literature suggests that sport may facilitate the acculturation processes by strengthening the bonds among members of ethnic groups or by enhancing interaction between members of different cultural groups, but may also highlight cultural differences, and foster ethnic controversy. Hatzigeorgiadis, Morela, Elbe, Kouli, and Sanchez (2013), in a review of the limited relevant literature available to date, identified that most research lacked a clear theoretical foundation, especially in relation to the conceptualization of integration and the instruments utilised. Furthermore, they identified that the majority of the studies employed qualitative methods. Although qualitative methods give an insight into the personal experiences of sport participants, they lack the power to make inferences about larger groups. Finally, the authors pointed out that previous research had not addressed factors related to the societal context and the sport environment that may be connected to the outcomes, either positive or negative, of sport participation. A study addressing the role of the sport environment in relation to

acculturation was conducted by Morela, Hatzigeorgiadis, Kouli, Elbe, and Sanchez (2013); they examined the links between cohesion and acculturation strategies. Their findings indicated that cohesion was linked to an integrative profile through negative associations with interaction avoidance and feelings of fringe, thus encouraging further research on the role of the sport environment (Morela et al., 2013).

Following on the above propositions, the purpose of the present study was to investigate, based on Berry's (1980; Berry & Sam, 2013) integration-multiculturalism framework, the potential role of sport environment factors in the integrative profiles of young, male sport participants. ~~Berry's framework on integration-multiculturalism was used as a theoretical foundation (Berry, 1980; Berry & Sam, 2013).~~ This approach claims that, to achieve integration, it is necessary that non-dominant, ethno-cultural groups both maintain their original culture and interact actively with other groups. Non-dominant cultural groups need to maintain some degree of cultural integrity, while at the same time participating as integral parts of the larger social network.

Based on Berry and colleagues' framework on migrants' acculturation (Berry, Kim, Power, Young, & Bujaki, 1989), Ting-Toomey et al. (2000) developed an ethnic-cultural identity salience conceptual model. ~~They described ethnic identity as a set of attitudes, emotions and conceptions individuals have towards their own ethnic identity. Cultural identity reflects the respective attributes towards the dominant culture of the country they are living in.~~ Ting-Toomey et al.'s (2000) conceptual model incorporates the constructs of ethnic identity and cultural identity salience, both which contain two dimensions. The two dimensions of ethnic identity are a sense of belonging to a group and feelings of fringe. Belonging, which is indicative of high ethnic identity and refers to the sense of ethnic

recognition, reveals the extent to which a person feels attached to his/her ethnic group. The dimension of fringe reflects low ethnic identity, and refers to the feelings of confusion a person has concerning his/her ethnic identity. The two dimensions of cultural identity are assimilation and lack of interaction. The dimension of assimilation reflects a strong cultural identity and refers to seeking identification with individuals from the dominant culture. Lack of interaction reflects low cultural identity and refers to the absence of interest in interacting with members of different groups. Depending on ethnic and cultural identity salience, individuals evaluate their group and **the culture in which people live**, and may be more or less involved in ethnic or cultural practices (see Ting-Toomey et al., 2000). The multiculturalism-integration approach provides a useful framework for investigating the role of sport in psychological aspects related to acculturation.

### **The Societal Context**

The societal context within which social interaction takes place is a critical factor in the integration process. Individuals with different demographic characteristics, such as gender, race, and ethnicity face different challenges. In addition, the cultural environment of the host society, such as its history in receiving migrants (Bourhis, Moise, Perreault, & Senecal, 1997), as well as the cultural match between the hosts' and migrants' cultures, can both strongly influence the integration process (e.g., Van Osch & Breugelmans, 2012). Thus, the integrative role of sport may differ from group to group depending on both the individual differences and the cultural match. Accordingly, the characteristics and the composition of the integrative agent – the sport team – should be influential. As identified in the literature, individuals may participate in sport teams composed of members of their own ethnic group either to maintain or strengthen their ethnic identity, or to participate in

sport teams with individuals from the dominant and/or other cultures to pursue interaction and eventually integration (Lee, 2005; Stodolska & Alexandris, 2004).

In this study, two different cases were examined: (a) migrants from a less socially established group (Eastern Europe migrants to Greece) participating in mixed teams consisting predominantly of individuals from the host country, and (b) migrants from a more socially established group (Latin Americans in Spain) participating in pure migrant (Latin American) teams. On the one hand, Greece began receiving a large influx of migrants from Central and Eastern Europe following the collapse of communist regimes since the beginning of the 1990s. Currently, the largest groups of migrants in Greece originate from the former USSR and Albania, with approximately 10% of the total Greek population being migrants (Aspridis & Petrelli, 2011). Despite the measures taken to address the effects of migration in schools, migrants are pressured to assimilate, with none of the measures that have been implemented encouraging the maintenance of one's ethnic identity; thus, migrants often struggle to achieve fruitful integration (Paleologou & Evangelou, 2003). In Greece, migrants have the opportunity to play in mixed teams. Pure migrant sport teams do not exist. **This means that if migrants want to play they need to join pre-existing clubs of which none only contain migrants.** On the other hand, Spain has recently become one of the countries with the highest immigration rate in Europe, with migrants totalling 14.1% of its population (Aja, Arango, & Oliver, 2012). Most of the non-European migrants originate from Latin America (41%); Spain has become in recent years the foremost destination of Latin American migration to Europe (Pellegrino, 2004). Importantly, it is widely acknowledged that Latin Americans have achieved high levels of social integration in Spain, mostly due to linguistic and cultural similarities (Escribano, de



Lera, Bujan, & Marmora, 2003). In Spain, migrants can either choose to join predominantly Spanish sport teams or pure migrant sport teams. However, the majority of migrants choose to join pure migrant teams. Examining these contrasting sport team compositions will help enhance our understanding of the role of sport participation in the acculturation process.

### **Sport Environment**

Sport has been pointed out to be a suitable context for facilitating the acculturation process, however, as identified by Hatzigeorgiadis et al. (2013) sport participation per se does not seem to suffice towards the goal of integration. Thus, exploring factors within the sport environment will help identify the appropriate conditions within which integration can be cultivated.

One aspect of the sport context that has been shown to influence socio-moral outcomes is the motivational environment (Kavussanu, Roberts & Ntoumanis, 2002), which can be

either performance or mastery oriented; (Ames, 1992; Duda, 2001). A performance climate can be created, for example, by rewarding only the best athletes and valuing normative ability, whereas a mastery climate may be created by, for instance, focusing on skill development, valuing effort, and rewarding participants for effort and improvement (Ames, 1992). Miller, Roberts, and Ommundsen (2004) showed that perceptions of task-involving coaching climate were related to higher levels of sportspersonship. Kavussanu (2006) documented that a mastery climate was also inversely associated with antisocial behaviour in athletes who had been playing on the team for a number of seasons. Related to the purpose of this study, Kouli and Papaioannou (2009) showed that in a physical education context, task orientation and a class climate based on fostering learning were

positively related to integrative strategies. It may therefore be inferred that a task-involving (learning oriented) environment that facilitates cooperation and respect can promote mutual understanding and acceptance of the values and customs of other cultures.

One central dimension that can contribute to establishing a positive motivational environment in different sport settings is coaches' delivery style. Coaches can influence athletes' experiences and self-perceptions through the broader motivational environment they create in the sport context, but also through their direct interactions with their athletes. In the context of sport clubs, the behaviour and interpersonal style coaches have been found to play a major role in shaping not only athletes' performances but also the psychological experiences they derive from their participation (Smoll & Smith, 2002; Vallerand & Losier, 1999). A behaviour that has been identified as influencing athletes' experiences positively is the autonomy-supportive coaching style. Autonomy-supportive coaches encourage athletes' self-initiated strivings and create conditions for athletes to experience a sense of volition, choice, and self-endorsement. Autonomy-supportive coaching includes practices such as providing choices for athletes, acknowledging the athlete's feelings and perspectives, providing opportunities for athletes to show initiative and to act independently, and providing non-controlling feedback. At the same time, coaches with an autonomy-supportive style avoid controlling behaviours such as negative criticism, controlling statements, and tangible rewards for interesting tasks (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003).

Autonomy-supportive interpersonal and social contexts have been shown to satisfy athletes' basic psychological needs. According to Deci and Ryan (2000), these needs are competence, autonomy, and relatedness. Coatsworth and Conroy (2009) showed that an

autonomy-supportive coaching style can lead to positive identity development in young swimmers. Gagné (2003) asserted that an autonomy-supportive leader would orient individuals toward paying more attention to others; hence, individuals are more likely to engage in pro-social behaviours and less likely to engage in antisocial behaviours. Hodge and Lonsdale's (2011) findings in the sport context indicated that an autonomy-supportive coaching style showed negative relationships with antisocial behaviour toward teammates and opponents, and was positively related to pro-social behaviour toward teammates. It may therefore be suggested that, in an autonomy-supportive environment, athletes from a different cultural background will feel more accepted and comfortable expressing their perspectives, thus maintaining their own ethnic identities, and in turn seek interaction with individuals from the host culture, thus furthering integration.

To summarise, sport seems to be an appropriate context in which to unite people of different races, colours, backgrounds and nationalities; to eliminate prejudices; and to reduce the danger of social alienation for minority groups. Despite its intuitive appeal, little empirical evidence exists to fully support such theories. Therefore, the purpose of the present study was to examine the relation between the integrative profile of young migrant athletes and sport environmental factors within an ethnic-cultural identity framework. To that end, we examined the ethnic and cultural identity profiles of young migrant athletes as a function of societal context and sport motivational environment. Two different European-based contexts were targeted in terms of composition and societal characteristics: (a) one involving migrants from a socially well-established group with similar ethnic and cultural background to that of the host population playing on teams of migrants only (Latin Americans in Spain), and (b) one involving migrants from a socially less-established group

playing on teams predominantly consisting of individuals from the dominant, and considerably different, culture (Eastern Europeans in Greece). The role of the motivational environment, and in particular the role of motivational climate and autonomy support, was considered for each of the two samples. Based on the relevant literature it was hypothesised that (a) the two populations would differ in terms of ethnic and cultural identity, and that (b) mastery climate and autonomy supportive coaching style would predict an integrative profile for young migrant athletes.

## Method

### Participants and Procedures

Participants in the study were 120 male adolescent migrant athletes (mean age  $15.88 \pm 1.17$  years), born outside the country of residence (mean residence in the country  $7.29 \pm 3.87$  years) who participated in team sports (mean experience  $4.12 \pm 1.92$  years) at local level. The sample from Spain included Latin American adolescents playing on a total of three different basketball and football teams containing Latin Americans only ( $n = 60$ ; migrants in pure migrant teams). The sample from Greece included adolescents from former Eastern European countries playing on 17 different basketball and football teams comprised predominantly of Greek players and small numbers (maximum 20%) of migrants ( $n = 60$ ; migrants in mixed teams). The three largest ethnic groups in the sample from Spain originated from Ecuador (51.6%), Peru (13.3%), and Guatemala (13.3%). The three largest ethnic groups in the sample from Greece were Russian (38.3%), Albanian (36.6%), and Georgian (16.6%).

Before data collection began in both samples, information was obtained with regard to the participation of migrants in sport clubs in the wider areas of Thessaloniki (second largest

city in Greece) and Seville (fourth largest city in Spain). Clubs were then visited, managers were informed about the purpose of the study and asked to facilitate access to their club members, and their parents/guardians in the case of children aged 16 and under, and to invite them to participate in the study. Participants over the age of 16 signed informed consent forms, whereas for those under the age of 16, parental consent was obtained.

Athletes who agreed to participate in the study completed questionnaires individually, and under the supervision of the researcher before the start of training sessions. In Greece all instruments were distributed in Greek and in Spain in Spanish. Spanish is the first language for most migrants living in Spain. Greek is not the first language for most of the migrants living in Greece. The present researcher encouraged participants to ask for help if they had difficulties understanding the questions. Completion of the questionnaire pack took about 15 minutes. The study was approved by the two institutions' research ethics committees, one for the data collection in Spain (NAME INSTITUTION BLIND) and one for the data collection in Greece (NAME INSTITUTION BLIND).

### **Instruments**

**Ethnic-cultural identity salience.** Participants completed the Ethnic/Cultural Identity Salience Questionnaire as adapted by Kouli and Papaioannou (2009) for high school students. The instrument assesses two dimensions of ethnic identity: ethnic belonging (5 items, e.g., "The cultural traditions of my ethnic group represent who I am") and feelings of fringe (6 items, e.g., "Sometimes I feel bad that I belong to the ethnic group I do"), and two dimensions of cultural identity, assimilation (6 items, e.g., "It is important for me to identify more closely with the general Greek/Spanish culture") and lack of desire to interact with members of other ethnic groups (7 items, e.g., "I avoid friendships with

people from other ethnic groups”). Responses to each item were rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

**Motivational climate.** The Motivational Climate Scale for Youth Sport (Smith, Cumming, & Smoll, 2008) measures two dimensions of motivational climate (task and ego oriented) in the youth sport domain. For this study only the six statements linked to a task climate (e.g. “Coach said that all of us were important to the team’s success”) were utilized because ego climate was not hypothesized to have a facilitative effect on integration. Athletes were asked to rate the statements on a 1 (*not at all true*) to 5 (*very true*) Likert-type scale.

**Autonomy-supportive coaching.** The short version of the Sport Climate Questionnaire (Deci, 2001) assesses athletes’ perceptions of the autonomy-supportive behaviours exhibited by their coaches. Athletes were asked about the extent to which they agreed with each of the six items of the scale (e.g., “I feel that my coach provides me choices and options”; “My coach conveys confidence in my ability to do well at athletics”; “I feel understood by my coach”). Response options ranged from 1(*strongly disagree*) to 7(*strongly agree*), with higher scores indicating a more autonomy-supportive coaching style.

All instruments were translated using the back-translation method (Brislin, 1970), tested in a pilot study, and showed satisfactory factor structure in the translated versions (Hatzigeorgiadis, Elbe, Sanchez, Ries, Pappous, & Kouli, 2011). In particular, confirmatory factor analysis provided acceptable fit for the Ethnic-Cultural identity scale (Spanish sample: CFI .91; Greek sample: CFI .95), the Motivational Climate Scale for Youth Sport (Spanish sample: CFI .92; Greek sample: CFI .93), and the Sport Climate Questionnaire-short (Spanish sample: CFI .93; Greek sample: CFI .94).

## Results

Descriptive statistics and Cronbach's alpha coefficients for all variables for the two subsamples are presented in Table 1, and the correlations between all variables appear in Table 2. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients showed acceptable internal consistency for all variables relating to the sport climate variables in both samples. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the ethnic and cultural identity salience questionnaire showed satisfactory to good values for all four subscales in the Greek sample. The Spanish sample showed less than optimal reliability coefficients for two of the four subscales, namely ethnic belonging and lack of interaction; however, both values still lay above .60 (see Table 1) which in certain conditions (e.g. small item number, meaningful content coverage) can be deemed acceptable (Schmitt, 1996).

### **Demographic Differences**

A one-way MANOVA was calculated to test for differences on age, years of residency, years of participation in sport clubs, and years in the team, between participants from the two countries. The analyses yielded a significant multivariate effect,  $F(4, 115) = 67.87, p < .01, \eta^2 = .70$ . Examination of the univariate statistics showed that the effect was significant for age,  $F(1, 119) = 5.64, p < .05, \eta^2 = .05$ , with participants from Spain being older than participants from Greece; years of residency,  $F(1, 119) = 219.46, p < .01, \eta^2 = .65$ , with participants from Greece residing for more years in the country than participants from Spain; and years in the team,  $F(1, 119) = 5.34, p < .05, \eta^2 = .04$ , with participants from Spain being in the current team for more years than participants from Greece. Mean scores for these demographic variables are presented in Table 1.

### **Differences in Ethnic/Cultural Identity**

One-way MANCOVA was subsequently calculated to test for differences between the two subsamples on the dimensions of ethnic and cultural identity, with age, years of residence, and years in team as covariates. The analysis revealed a significant multivariate effect for country,  $F(4, 112) = 14.91, p < .01, \eta^2 = .35$ , whereas none of the covariates was significant. Examination of the univariate statistics showed that the country effect was significant for fringe,  $F(1, 119) = 32.12, p < .01, \eta^2 = .22$ , assimilation,  $F(1, 119) = 4.65, p < .05, \eta^2 = .04$ , and lack of interaction,  $F(1, 119) = 6.17, p < .05, \eta^2 = .05$ , but not for ethnic belonging,  $F(1, 119) = 1.20, p = .28$ . The mean scores for the ethnic and cultural identity dimensions are presented in Table 1. The sample of Eastern European participants living in Greece and playing in mixed teams scored higher on fringe and assimilation, and lower on lack of interaction, compared to the sample of Latin American participants from Spain playing on pure migrant teams.

### Regression Analyses

Separate regression analyses were performed for each subsample to test the degree to which autonomy-support and mastery climate in sport teams could predict the dimensions of ethnic-cultural identity. For the sample of Latin Americans living in Spain, the analyses revealed that none of the variables significantly predicted the ethnic and cultural identity dimensions: for belonging  $F(2, 57) = 0.13, p = .88$ , for fringe  $F(2, 57) = 0.43, p = .65$ , for assimilation  $F(2, 57) = 1.27, p = .29$ , and for lack of interaction  $F(2, 57) = 0.04, p = .96$ .

For the sample of Eastern Europeans living in Greece, the analyses revealed: (a) a significant prediction for ethnic belonging,  $F(2, 57) = 4.39, p < .05, R^2 = .13$ , with autonomy making a significant unique contribution to the prediction ( $\beta = .40, p < .01$ ); (b) a



significant prediction for fringe,  $F(2, 57) = 4.40, p < .01, R^2 = .13$ , with autonomy making a significant unique contribution to the prediction ( $\beta = -.39, p < .01$ ), (c) a significant prediction for lack of interaction,  $F(2, 57) = 4.80, p < .01, R^2 = .14$ , with task climate making a significant unique contribution to the prediction ( $\beta = -.40, p < .01$ ), and (d) a non-significant effect for assimilation,  $F(2, 57) = 0.01, p = .98$ .

### Discussion

The present study examined the acculturative role of sport participation for young migrant athletes from an ethnic-cultural identity perspective within two different societal contexts and team compositions. The ethnic and cultural identity salience of young Eastern European migrants living in Greece and playing on mixed teams (predominantly consisting of Greek players), and young Latin American migrants living in Spain and playing on pure Latin American teams, were compared and examined as a function of the teams motivational environments.

An examination of differences in ethnic and cultural identity between the two samples showed that the sample from Greece compared to the sample from Spain, scored considerably higher on feelings of fringe, but also on assimilation, and lower on lack of interaction. The societal context and the **team composition** may be a plausible explanation for these findings. Latin Americans in Spain are a larger and better established group than **are** Eastern European in Greece. As argued by Escribano, de Lera, Bujan, and Marmora (2003), linguistic identity, cultural proximity, historical bonds, and religious similarities, as well as the high levels of educational attainment achieved by a large number of Latin American migrants in Spain, have helped them feel at home within Spanish society, but have also contributed to the generally favourable perception of Latin American migrants by

the host country. The existence of teams consisting exclusively of Latin Americans would further support this notion. Consequently, they show a robust ethnic identity, whilst feeling adequately assimilated, and do not need to strive further for integration. Because the present evidence does not allow causality inferences, it may be that these young migrants participate in pure ethnic teams to strengthen their bonds with people from the same background, or that they participate in ethnic teams because they value cultural maintenance which is already high.

Migrants in Greece cannot choose to play on pure migrant teams as in Spain, because these do not exist. Therefore we can only speculate about any social reasons for choosing to participate in organised sport. According to the existing literature, migrants may seek interaction through sport participation. Given the societal context this could be a plausible explanation. In contrast to Latin-Americans in Spain, migrants from former Eastern European countries in Greece, despite their large numbers, are not yet established, and have to go through serious cultural shifts and identity negotiation as a result of their migration (Kokkali, 2011). Additionally, Greek schools, as Mouzelis (1998) has pointed out, do not cultivate critical dialogue and the exchange of ideas between members of different cultures, which further hinders the integration of migrant students into Greek society. The issue of the languages is of major importance, especially for children, as they receive education in a different language than the one spoken at home. Considering this and comparing them to the sample from Spain, the Greek sample scored higher on fringe and lower on lack of interaction. Hence, if one attempts a social integrative interpretation of the findings, the sport context may offer them opportunities to interact with the dominant culture and a setting to cultivate integration.

Referring to the second research question on the role of the motivational environment, it was revealed that for the sample from Greece, autonomy support and task motivational climate were linked to an adaptive integrative profile. Task oriented motivational climate was inversely related to lack of interaction, thus associated with an integrative feature of cultural identity. The findings resemble those from Kouli and Papaioannou's (2009) study on motivational climates in the physical education context. These findings can be linked to, or partially explained through, findings from studies supporting the socio-moral correlates of task motivational climate, which have been associated with cooperation (Papaioannou & MacDonald, 1993); adaptive social relationships with others; and help-seeking, help-giving, and trusting behaviour between friends (Karabenick & Neuman, 2006; Levy-Tossman, Kaplan, & Assor, 2006), as well as with moral reasoning and development (Kavussanu, Roberts, & Ntoumanis, 2002).

Moreover, autonomy support was related to ethnic belonging and inversely related to feelings of fringe, thus to an adaptive ethnic identity profile. This finding could be explained by autonomy supportive coaching style acknowledging athletes' feelings and attitudes, and being related to pro-social behaviour towards teammates, and inversely related to controlling behaviours such as criticism and controlling attempts (Hodge & Lonsdale, 2011; Mageau & Vallerand, 2003). Additionally, this coaching style has been shown to lead to the development of a positive identity (Coatsworth & Conroy, 2009). From our findings it can be assumed that young migrants feel comfortable about their heritages and ethnic identities in such pro-social, supportive sport environments.

Overall, ~~and attempting to combine the findings,~~ it could be argued that for the sample of young migrants from a less established cultural group, who might seek contact

and opportunities to interact actively, the motivational environment, which is an important feature of the team philosophy, can play a significant role. The results support previous findings from Morela et al. (2013) who identified links between team cohesion and integrative profiles in a similar sample, thus suggesting that appropriate team structures can facilitate integration. In contrast, for the sample of young migrants from a well-established cultural group the role of sport, and consequently that of the sport environment, may be limited because they have a **relatively** stable identity, which they sought to further enhance or maintain.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

The main limitation of the present study may be related to the sample. First, the overall size of the sample may seem small. However, the sample size was determined by the specific and restrictive inclusion criteria adopted to test our hypothesis: target population aged 13-18, born outside the country of residence, practicing a sport in a registered sport club. In addition, the inclusion of males only, participating only in team sports may be viewed as a limitation. However, the fact that only males were recruited for the study was due to the lack of females satisfying the study criteria, which is in line with previous findings regarding the underrepresentation of females, especially for ethnic minority women and migrants in organized sport activities (De Knop, Van Puymbroeck, Theeboom, & Van Engeland, 1995; Elling & Claringbound, 2005). Ultimately, while the sample criteria were, certainly, selective, it is such homogeneity that enhances our confidence in the present findings.

Another limitation relates to the correlational nature of our study, which does not allow for causal inferences. The influence of the motivational environment on ethnic–

cultural identity can be postulated through the respective motivational theories; however, from a methodological perspective it is equally possible that migrants with more integrative profiles participate in sport, or that sport cultivates integrative profiles. To test for causal inferences, longitudinal designs and intervention studies testing the integrative power of sport programmes are also warranted. Based on the present findings, future research could test whether establishing a motivational climate that fosters learning, cooperation, and mastery through personal improvement, and supports autonomy (e.g. Smith, Smoll, & Cumming, 2009) facilitates the development of adaptive ethnic-cultural identity profiles. An example of such a longitudinal investigation is Dankers, Elbe, Sanchez, Otten, and Van Yperen's (2015) study on the effects of a mastery motivational climate intervention on students' psychological integration in multicultural Danish physical education classes. Future research should also consider the role of other factors related to the sport environment such as team dynamics, relationships, communication, and leadership factors.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to gain further insight into the integrative role sport participation might play in migrant adolescents participating in organized sport, as a function of the societal context, team structure, and motivational environment. Previous findings examining whether sport participation can play an integrative role in our society have been ambiguous (Hatzigeorgiadis et al., 2013). The present study provides valuable evidence suggesting that contact through sport in appropriate motivational environments may be linked to desired social integrative outcomes for young migrants. We believe that the topic of this paper addresses an issue that should be among the priorities on both political and economic agendas. This paper is, to the best of our knowledge, among the first

to investigate migrant sport club members using quantitative methodology and a sound theoretical foundation. We are confident that the present findings will encourage research studying other sport environmental factors and participants' characteristics to fully understand and exploit the potentially positive role of sport for the integration of young migrants.

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Table 1

*Descriptive statistics and Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the two samples.*

		Spanish sample			Greek sample		
		M	SD	<i>alpha</i>	M	SD	<i>alpha</i>
Demographic variables							
	Age	16.13	1.17		15.63	1.13	
	Years of residency in the country	4.18	2.30		10.40	2.29	
	Years in sport clubs	3.83	1.66		4.41	2.10	
	Years in present team	2.86	1.62		2.23	1.36	
Ethnic/cultural identity							
	Ethnic belonging	2.95	.82	.63	2.76	.76	.89
	Fringe	1.72	.67	.76	3.13	.52	.76
	Assimilation	2.99	.75	.64	3.83	.66	.84
	Lack of interaction	1.81	.68	.74	1.62	.34	.92
Task oriented climate		4.23	.68	.74	4.24	.58	.89
Autonomy Support		5.24	1.34	.90	4.23	1.33	.94



Table 2

*Correlations between motivational environment and ethnic-cultural identity for the two samples.*

	Spanish sample		Greek sample	
	Task oriented climate	Autonomy support	Task oriented climate	Autonomy support
Ethnic belonging	.05	-.03	.01	.34**
Fringe	-.02	.11	-.09	-.36**
Assimilation	.21	.04	-.01	.02
Lack of interaction	.04	.01	-.38**	-.10

\* $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$