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**Abstract**

The historically unprecedented pace of internationalising sport industry and transnational movement of athletic talent in the last 20 years has heightened the need for developing new competencies in research and daily practice of sport psychology professionals. While academic literature in cultural sport psychology and praxis has been increasing, sport professionals and local organisations seem to give scant time and resources to stay abreast of complex social changes in transnational industry and to the development of cultural competencies. Stemming from the continuing need for qualified athletic personnel to support transitioning athletes and to achieve intercultural effectiveness in daily practices, our objectives in this position statement are to critically review and analyse the growing scholarship pertinent to various forms of transnational mobility and acculturation of athletic migrants, and subsequently provide recommendations for further use in research and applied contexts.

*Keywords:* migrant athletes, transnational mobility, cultural transition, critical acculturation, integration

## 1 **ISSP Position Stand: Transnationalism, Mobility, and Acculturation in and through** 2 **Sport**

3 A growing number of sport participants migrate within and between nations for a variety of  
4 reasons, such as athletic career development, sport tourism, and international assignments.

5 During 2013, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) estimated that 214 million  
6 individuals were considered to be migrants, which is one in every 33 persons worldwide. Over  
7 the past 20 years, migration scholars have increasingly studied migrant *transnationalism*

8 facilitating a paradigm shift towards understanding migration as constituted in the course of  
9 migrants' movement and border-crossing social networks. Although definitions of

10 transnationalism vary, they emphasize the connections and mobile practices that migrants

11 establish between countries; the social, cultural, economic and political exchanges that bring

12 about changes in societies of origin and destination; and the construction of belonging and

13 identities transcending the national space (e.g., Glick-Schiller et al., 1992; Portes et al., 1999;

14 Smith & Guarnizo, 2006; Thorpe, 2014; Vertovec, 2004). Indeed, the rapid development of

15 communication, transport, and economic interconnectivity through globalisation has made it

16 easier to maintain the connections to two or more places. The importance of border-crossing

17 social networks for establishing mobility has been widely recognised as by means of networks,

18 migrants learn and inform each other about jobs, paperwork, where to go, best ways to get there,

19 how to find places to live, and so on (Thorpe, 2010; Vertovec, 2004). The relative ease of

20 mobility in terms of money and time is also changing the patterns of migration: relocation can be

21 short- or long-term, temporary or permanent, or consist of a series of settlements which may or

22 may not include return migration to the point of origin. Hugo (2012) has argued that the decision

23 to settle permanently is often influenced by economic reasoning and the difficulty associated

1 with frequent border crossings. Hence, *mobility* often refers to short-term or intermittent  
2 movement while *migration*, although admittedly complex and multifaceted, has a connotation of  
3 permanency or long-term stay (Koser & Salt, 1997).

4        Psychological research on the acculturation and adaptation experience of migrants is a  
5 well-established area of study and has also made inroads into sport psychology. Broadly,  
6 *acculturation* has been defined as the process of cultural and psychological change in practices,  
7 values, and identities occurring as a result of continuous first-hand contact between individuals  
8 of differing cultural groups (Berry, 2005; Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga, & Szapocznik, 2010).  
9 Within the extant research athletic migrants can be distinguished on at least three dimensions—  
10 mobility, permanence, and voluntariness (Berry & Sam, 1997). On the mobility dimension,  
11 athlete migrants who have relocated from one country to a second one may be distinguished  
12 from ‘sedentary’ members of local indigenous and ethnic groups participating in sport activities  
13 of the dominant culture. In terms of permanence, sport migrants who have permanent settler  
14 intent are likely to differ from those who resettle temporarily in a country in which they work,  
15 such as transnational professionals. Voluntariness of migration is also an important component  
16 of intercultural engagement and adaptation to life in a new culture. Highly skilled transnational  
17 migrants are required to travel for training camps and competitions to enhance or sustain their  
18 athletic careers, and therefore may quite literally construct their lives across international borders.  
19 Their experiences are hardly comparable to those of refugees fleeing violence, political  
20 prosecution, or war. Hence, it is important to situate the psychological aspects of acculturation  
21 within wider socio-political contexts in which cultural transitions are embedded, such as mobility  
22 and immigration policies between the origin and destination as well as power relations between  
23 the two and their impacts on athletic migrants.

1        Whilist scholarly interest in acculturation has been rising due to a notable increase in  
2 migrants in various professional spheres around the world (IOM, 2013; Schwartz et al., 2010),  
3 adaptation or acculturation pathways of athletic migrants from a critical or transnational  
4 framework is the newly burgeoning discourse in sport psychology, in which acculturation is  
5 viewed as constructed across a broad range of social, cultural and political contexts in the  
6 cultural transition process. Within this Position Stand of the International Society of Sport  
7 Psychology (ISSP), we advocate for developing intellectual mobility to navigate within rapidly  
8 changing sociocultural landscapes and to produce knowledge that works for the benefit of  
9 destinations/receiving communities, origins, and athletic migrants.

10        Given the complexity of synthesizing theory and research on the forms of mobilities and  
11 types of adaptation pathways, we selectively review the literature to structure this position paper  
12 in the following way. Firstly, we analyse the recent research findings pertinent to cultural  
13 transition and acculturation of transnational athletes. In section two, our emphasis is on the short-  
14 term mobility periods of professional and elite amateur athletes and mobile practice of sport  
15 psychology professionals. As pointed earlier, there is no one universally adaptive pathway  
16 through the cultural transition and the relationships with the destination members are constitutive  
17 in transitioning athletes' experiences. In section three, therefore, we summarise emerging studies  
18 on the ways in which elite athletic environments may facilitate migrating athletes' acculturation  
19 and the integrative role of sport for all in multicultural societies. We conclude with nine  
20 postulates.

### 21                            **Migrant Athletes in Cultural Transitions**

22        In a globalised mobile society, acculturation is a continuous process occurring in culture-  
23 contact settings among culturally diverse groups (Berry, 2005). The intercultural exchanges

1 between migrant athletes and destination communities may take the form of ideas, information,  
2 values and practices. Sport scientists studied the cultural transitions and adaptation experiences  
3 of indigenous athletes (e.g., Blodgett & Schinke, 2015; Blodgett, Schinke, Coholic, Enosse,  
4 Peltier, & Pheasant, 2014; Campbell & Sonn, 2009), immigrated athletes (e.g., Schinke, Blodgett,  
5 McGannon, & Ge, 2016a; Schinke, McGannon, Battochio, & Wells, 2013), and transnational  
6 migrant athletes (e.g., Richardson, Littlewood, Nesti, & Benstead, 2012; Ryba, Stambulova, &  
7 Ronkainen, 2016; Ryba, Stambulova, Ronkainen, Bundgaard, & Selänne, 2015a). Inductive  
8 examinations of experiences of living through different cultural transitions among diverse  
9 migrant groups yielded a fuller understanding of complex acculturation processes as being  
10 socially constructed and dynamically produced within matrices of power relations.

11         Acknowledging the fact that geographic mobility has become a crucial aspect of career  
12 development in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Ryba and Stambulova (2013) proposed a term transnational  
13 athletes, defined as mobile individuals who construct their careers across borders and whose  
14 athletic and non-athletic development is constituted by transnational practices. Recent  
15 acculturation research of migrant athletes has been conducted from a career development and  
16 transitions perspective and largely situated within critical and transnational scholarship. From a  
17 critical psychological perspective (see Bhatia & Ram, 2009; Chirkov, 2009), acculturation is  
18 open-ended and ongoing, executed in cognitive movements between different cultural  
19 standpoints, and consequently difficult to predict and regulate. Positioning their work in critical  
20 acculturation, several studies by Schinke and his colleagues exemplified fluidity of acculturation  
21 pathways within various social contexts. For example, the studied immigrant athletes and  
22 coaches (Schinke et al., 2013, 2016a, 2016b), and aboriginal athletes in a Euro-Canadian cultural  
23 context (Blodgett et al., 2014; Blodgett & Schinke, 2015) who relocated to advance their careers

1 and life options, reported the need to navigate between cultural norms of the original home and  
2 destination communities in a continuous process of negotiating meanings and their subject  
3 positions. The complexity of acculturation trajectories was forefronted by showing how some  
4 migrants confronted racism, exclusion, and damaging stereotypes while simultaneously feeling  
5 disconnected from their ethnic communities as well as experienced marginalisation, identity  
6 crisis, and acculturative stress upon their return to their community of origin. Using critical  
7 qualitative methodologies, it was possible to represent acculturation fluidities through  
8 progresses, relapses, and narrative movements between distinct, sometimes contradictory,  
9 accounts. A major practical contribution from this line of research includes positioning migrant  
10 athletes' acculturation as adaptive or maladaptive dependent on whether it is construed as shared  
11 (i.e., two-way) or shouldered (one-way) effort (we address this in more details in the following  
12 sections).

13 Another systematic study of athletic migrants has been conducted from a transnational  
14 framework to locate multiple and concurrent life transitions, occurring in such contexts as sport,  
15 education and family, within transnational networks and specific localities (Ronkainen, Harrison,  
16 Shuman, & Ryba, 2016; Ryba, Ronkainen, & Selänne, 2015b; Ryba et al., 2015a, 2016).

17 An overarching aim of this research strand was to understand the processes activated in cultural  
18 transition that produce psychosocial development through work, sport, and relationships in  
19 shifting cultural patterns of meaning. Because transnational athletes' patterns of migration  
20 encompass multiple cross-border mobilities, including travels to and from the origin, they may  
21 undergo cyclical acculturation that is likely to be qualitatively different from the acculturation  
22 process of ethnic migrants moving within their country of origin or settled immigrants. Through  
23 analysis of transnational migrants' life stories, the analytic insights derived by Schinke and his

1 colleagues into complexities and fluidities of acculturation processes were reiterated and also  
2 extended to show relationships to contextual psychological functioning.

3         In an effort to understand time in on-going psychological experience of cultural transition  
4 embedded in the sociocultural domain of the daily life, Ryba and her colleagues (2016) studied  
5 biographical narratives of transnational athletes from various countries who migrated to or from  
6 the Nordic region. It was found that while acculturation pathways were storied in unique ways,  
7 the transition process was facilitated by means of (a) social repositioning in trans-local networks,  
8 (b) negotiation of cultural practices, and (c) reconstruction of meanings. The authors positioned  
9 the transitioning athletes' experiences in critical acculturation literature to succinctly summarise  
10 the cultural transition process as an emergent account of the relationship between the social  
11 context in specific localities and an athletic migrant's development needs. The proposed  
12 temporal model of cultural transition consists of three phases: pre-transition, acute acculturation,  
13 and sociocultural adaptation. The two latter phases occur post relocation from the origin and  
14 each transitional phase presents developmental tasks that shape acculturation trajectories. The  
15 authors emphasised that although psychological processes are time dependent, subjective time is  
16 non-linear and intertwined with the patterns of migration. Taking into consideration that  
17 transition is a psychological process, achieving optimal functioning in a novel environment is its  
18 main goal. Therefore, while acculturation processes may become a lifelong endeavour catalyzed  
19 with each encounter of unfamiliar cultural practices (Chirkov, 2009), cultural transition has its  
20 symbolic end when a transnational migrant establishes the meaningful relationship between self  
21 and society at the destination transpiring across social structures.

22

### **Mobile Practice**



1           The term mobile practice spans consulting when a sport psychology professional and/or  
2 athlete are traveling from one country to a second country. Though little is understood about  
3 what mobile practice encompasses and how it is experienced, there is emerging evidence that  
4 this process can be challenging, though also conducive to performance when navigated  
5 effectively. Within this section we focus on three examples of mobile practice. Two of these  
6 focus on the sport psychology consultant traveling with the athlete and coach, where all depart  
7 one country and engage in acculturation: (a) acute acculturation for training purposes, and (b)  
8 acute acculturation for competition. There is also a third type of acculturation where only the  
9 sport psychology consultant is mobile. We refer to this third example as (c) practitioner  
10 acculturation to the receiving clients.

### 11 **Acute Acculturation for Training Purposes**

12           One version of mobile practice applies when athletes travel to augment their skills through  
13 training opportunities (Ryba, Haapanen, Mosek, & Ng, 2012). Developing and elite level athletes  
14 commonly seek this sort of travel as part of their career development. The travel is used to  
15 expose the performer to better training standards, unfamiliar training methodologies, and also to  
16 mentally toughen the athlete in advance of travel for competition. When the athlete travels for  
17 training purposes, this person undergoes what Ryba et al. regarded as acute cultural adaptation,  
18 or what might be referred to as acute acculturation. The psychological adaptation involved with  
19 this change process is short-lived, though no less significant and jarring than when an athlete  
20 and/or consultant travel for lengthier periods of time. Ryba et al. examined the travel experiences  
21 of Finnish elite level swimmers engaged in acute acculturation for training purposes. When  
22 working with athletes in this milieu, the expectation is on the traveling athlete to adapt to the  
23 demands, expectations, and cultural nuances of the unfamiliar training environment. Though a

1 more engaging form of contextual acculturation could be gained when peer athletes and the  
2 coaches from the receiving country share in the acculturation process by learning from and  
3 making adjustments with the visiting athlete (see Schinke & McGannon, 2014a), the traveling  
4 athlete is a temporary guest. The athlete is expected to fit in and comply with the structures and  
5 processes of the training context and learn how to elevate skills by engaging in astute  
6 observation and participation with providers in the receiving sport context. To support athletes  
7 seeking out this experience, the role of the sport psychology consultant is to reinforce the  
8 objectives that catalyzed the travel (i.e. to learn from the environment and not to expect or  
9 impose any demands or changes on the sport environment). What the consultant can also offer in  
10 this environment, is some information to the receiving coaching staff of the athlete's typical  
11 training practices, and from this information sharing, the coach and sport psychologist can work  
12 together with the athlete to foresee any possible challenges and then develop pathways to  
13 effective learning and short-term integration.

#### 14 **Acute Acculturation for Competition**

15 Athletes and consultants also travel out of country acutely in elite and professional sport to  
16 compete. National team athletes and their staff travel each year to qualifying competitions, that  
17 lead to continental and major games tournaments, culminating in Olympics and world  
18 championship events (Schinke, Stambulova, Trepanier, & Oghene, 2015). The concept of acute  
19 acculturation, then, extends to short time spans where psychological adjustment must be  
20 efficient, for the athlete to compete at best. Often, this sort of acute acculturation must happen  
21 within days, to no more than one or two weeks. For example, as Schinke and colleagues  
22 recognized, the Olympic athlete lands with staff in the hosting country, clears customs and  
23 immigration, and then often travels directly to the major games village. The major games village

1 life for traveling athletes includes village staff often speaking an unfamiliar language and  
2 working in, perhaps, slow or inefficient ways that can prove frustrating to the athlete. Travel  
3 schedules to the venue are also different, as is the unfamiliar treatment of the athlete by hosting  
4 volunteers at the competition site, and the behaviours exhibited by the audience as the athlete  
5 enters to perform. Preparation for this type of acute acculturation should begin to happen before  
6 the athlete departs the home country for the event, sometimes several months, to several years in  
7 advance (Canadian Olympic Committee, 2016). This preparatory stage corresponds to the pre-  
8 transition stage in Ryba et al's (2016) Cultural Transition Model. Visiting the tournament  
9 website can serve as one strategy of acute acculturation for competition that fosters  
10 familiarization. In addition, major games staffing, such as in the case of a national Olympic  
11 committee, also tend to share critical information that contributes to early understanding  
12 (Canadian Olympic Committee, 2009). Information sharing includes living conditions in the  
13 event village, the challenges with transportation, what to expect in security lines, pre-competition  
14 training conditions, how to travel safely when outside of the training, competition, and village  
15 venues, and also tournament site conditions. These logistical examples are important for the  
16 sport psychology consultant to understand, so that this person might then facilitate the  
17 understanding of the athlete and where appropriate, the coach, contributing to perceived control  
18 (Terry & Si, 2015). The remaining acute acculturation is then undertaken onsite, where the sport  
19 psychology consultant assists the coaching staff and athlete in quick – agile responses to  
20 unforeseen circumstances and momentary contextual demands, such as poor rooming conditions  
21 and transportation scheduling (Wylleman & Johnson, 2012). Conversely, inflexible behaviours,  
22 such as a lack of understanding or an unwillingness to modify one's services on the part of the  
23 consultant and those providing services to the athlete results in performance decline.

1 Underpinning this particular acculturation process is the necessity for the sport psychology  
2 consultant, coach, and athlete, to adapt efficiently in a process Schinke et al. (2013) referred to as  
3 shouldered acculturation.

#### 4 **Practitioner Acculturation to the Receiving Clients**

5 A third format of mobile practice is encountered when a practitioner travels to a receiving  
6 country for a short period of time to provide services to athletes and staff. Peter Terry (2009)  
7 provided his experiences working with athletes from the United Arab Emirates as a mobile  
8 practitioner. He shared his strategies to overcome the resistance of engagement by national team  
9 athletes in one sport discipline – shooting. Terry attempted to convey the importance of work  
10 ethic to athletes, who seemingly were less committed to mental preparation than he hoped. There  
11 were competing religious demands that seemed to block the necessary time commitment needed  
12 for learning mental skills. His solution was to seek the support of a sheikh and then align the  
13 importance of work ethic with his clients' religious values. Terry's example is only one instance  
14 situated in a broader field where consultants travel extensively across national borders to share  
15 their expertise (for a second example, please see Galloway, 2009). The theme that resurfaces  
16 with Terry and Galloway is that the sport psychology consultant can undergo an acculturation  
17 change unilaterally. When this becomes the case, the focus on mobility extends beyond this  
18 position stand. However, the possibility might also exist for acculturation undertaken by the  
19 receiving sport culture. This "shared" engagement reveals a version of change that is experienced  
20 by newcomer athletes and those working with them post-relocation, such as peer athletes,  
21 coaches, and sport science support (Schinke et al., 2013). Terry opened up the possibility of the  
22 shooting team's training environment needing change and was supported in this process by  
23 someone who opened up the environment to shared acculturation. However, not all receiving

1 environments change immediately. There might be cases where initially, much of the onus is  
2 placed on the sport psychology consultant to acculturate to the athlete's and coach's training  
3 practices. The agility then resides, at least at first, with the mobile practitioner to learn about the  
4 existing cultural context and to understand one's own methodological and cultural practices, and  
5 then knowing these, begin to modify training demands, communication style, proxemics, and  
6 broader practices that might need to become more or less formal than the practitioner is  
7 accustomed to (see Ryba, 2009; Schinke, McGannon, Parham, & Lane, 2012).

### 8 **The Acculturating Environment**

9 This section about the "acculturating environment" focuses on the efforts and intentions of  
10 the receiving culture in relation to newcomers. Within this immensely important discussion, we  
11 focus on how it is that receiving training contexts act and react as they come into contact with  
12 transnational athletes. Little is known about this topic, though from what is becoming apparent,  
13 there are variations in how newcomers are received (Ryba et al., 2015a; Schinke et al., 2013).  
14 These variations either centralize or marginalize aspects of newcomers' identities. Hence,  
15 understanding the role of the acculturating environment, and whether there is a form of  
16 acculturation engaged in by the receiving environment can further clarify whether and how each  
17 training context serves to integrate transnational athletes, and to what effect. Welcoming  
18 practices, then, can reveal unanswered questions in research and practice relating to newcomer  
19 athlete retention that seem to resurface from elite amateur (e.g., Schinke et al., 2016) through  
20 professional (e.g., Brandao & Vieira, 2013) sport levels. Moreover, an exploration into  
21 welcoming practices can help answer why there is (or is not) prolonged engagement by  
22 newcomers, how to augment such experiences, and as such, how to engineer rich cross-broader  
23 opportunities for athletic and personal development, culminating in peak performance.

## 1 **Elite Athletic Environments**

2        Much of what has been understood to this point in the merging of sport psychology and  
3 acculturation of elite sport environments has been focused on newcomer athlete and support  
4 staff, and not host communities and training contexts. From the vantage of the receiving  
5 environment as understood outside of sport, relationships with newcomers can be harmonious,  
6 problematic, or conflictual, contingent on the cultural orientations of both groups (Bourhis,  
7 Montreuil, Barrette, & Montaruli, 2009). Anecdotal stories (Kontos, 2009; Schinke, Yukelson,  
8 Bartolacci, Battochio, & Johnstone, 2011) and empirical research (Ryba et al., 2016; Schinke et  
9 al., 2013) have been focused on newcomers for the very reason that these traveling performers  
10 are entering into training contexts where there are pre-established sub-cultures (Schinke &  
11 McGannon, 2014b). The unstated messaging in some cases is that when newcomer athletes enter  
12 into unfamiliar sport environments post-travel, they are expected to learn the cultural nuances of  
13 receiving training environments and then relatively quickly, take on these norms, or risk being  
14 marginalized by peers and coaches (Yukelson, 2010). A strong and silent push is exerted on  
15 newcomers to become part of a pre-existing group, where clothing, terminology, and  
16 socialization practices such as the consumption of alcohol, can be parts of what might be  
17 navigated, post-relocation (Yukelson). What follows for the newcomers might then be a masking  
18 of parts of their identities that could have revealed critical information about understandings of  
19 race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender roles, educational background, socio-economic class,  
20 national identity, and how these tie to motivational engagement or disengagement (Schinke &  
21 McGannon, 2015).

22        Indigenous (Blodgett & Schinke, 2015; Campbell & Sonn, 2013) and immigrant (e.g.,  
23 Schinke et al., 2016a) athletes alike have conveyed that acculturation must be reciprocal,

1 accomplished through middle grounds with the receiving culture. Shared acculturation is  
2 mitigated by negotiation and reflexivity, so that sport participants and their staff are able to  
3 situate themselves within each multicultural context, contributing to or impeding inclusiveness  
4 (Ryba, 2009; Schinke, McGannon, Parham, & Lane, 2012). Assuming that a sharing of  
5 engagement follows within a sport context, an enriched training and competition experience can  
6 ensue for all concerned, contributing to more openings for expression on and off the field  
7 (Schinke & McGannon, 2014a). The counterpoint to shared acculturation is an organization  
8 where it becomes risky for the newcomer to engage in any form of identity disclosure, where  
9 such openings could lead to ostracizing, isolation, and de-selection (e.g., Schinke, Michel et al.,  
10 2006). Let us consider why it is that two of every three Brazilian professional football players  
11 (see Brandao & Vieira, 2013) and many a professional baseball player (Kontos, 2009) return  
12 home within one year of their initial relocation out of country. Too little is being done to  
13 formalize structures and practices that would facilitate receiving environments effectively  
14 opening themselves to their newcomers.

15       There appear to be early signs of shared acculturation on the part of a few receiving sport  
16 organizations. Battochio and colleagues (2013) found that in a few Major League Baseball and  
17 National Hockey League franchises, there were overtures in terms of the integration of national  
18 dishes in the clubhouse before games, in addition to informal buddy systems, where newcomer  
19 athletes could be paired with more established teammates from their home country. These early  
20 attempts are pragmatic, spurred by the realization that in professional baseball and ice hockey  
21 recruitment is important, but that athlete retention is equally critical. There is presently only  
22 occasional evidence of retention strategies being found in professional sport organizations, and  
23 these do not seem to reveal engaged, nor immersed exchanges of cultural customs throughout

1 sport franchises. For example, each organization might engage in mutual sharing activities (see  
2 Holt & Dunn, 2006) where variations in cultural identity are explored and celebrated. On the  
3 other hand, there is growing recognition that without efforts toward cultural inclusiveness,  
4 organizations in elite sport will limit themselves to athletes from one country of origin, even  
5 when there is physical access in a country to a fertile pool of newcomer athletes. Should such  
6 teams opt to select transnational athletes, the question of retention will be left to the inner  
7 resilience of the newcomer.

### 8 **Integrative Role of Sport for All**

9 To date, research on the integrative role of sport in multicultural societies has been limited,  
10 and findings seem equivocal. A number of studies have supported that sport can facilitate the  
11 relationships between groups (cultural interaction; e.g., Rosenberg, Feijgin, & Talmor, 2003);  
12 others indicate that sport is linked to both cultural interaction and cultural maintenance (e.g.,  
13 Stodolska & Alexandris, 2004). Finally, some findings suggest that sport may highlight cultural  
14 differences, and even sharpen ethnic controversy and evoke tensions (e.g., Krouwel, Boostra,  
15 Duyvendak, & Veldboer, 2006). For a review please see Hatzigeorgiadis, Morela, Elbe, Kouli  
16 and Sanchez (2013).

17 Hence, sport participation per se does not necessarily promote integration, but rather can be  
18 used as a context for bringing together individuals with different ethno-cultural backgrounds in a  
19 multicultural environment that can promote integration and multiculturalism. As identified by  
20 Shields and Bredemeier (2007), sport participation may induce desired socio-moral outcomes,  
21 but this depends on the environment within which sport takes place. The existence of equivocal  
22 findings seems to further support this contention and stresses the need for identifying the factors  
23 of the sport environment that may regulate the integrative power of sport participation. Studies



1 exploring these factors do not necessarily support that sport is an appropriate context for  
2 promoting integration; rather, they suggest how the sport environment should be developed to  
3 encompass an integrative role.

4         Several studies have applied Berry's (1980, 1997) conceptualization of acculturation when  
5 investigating the integrative role of sport as well as the role that sport environmental factors play  
6 in achieving these outcomes. Berry developed a two-dimensional model of acculturation for  
7 pluralistic societies, based on the principles of cultural maintenance and contact-participation.  
8 This model describes different strategies based on the interaction of (a) individuals' wish to  
9 maintain their cultural identity and (b) their desire to interact with other cultures. According to  
10 this model, integration, which is considered as the most effective acculturation strategy for  
11 migrants, reflects the desire to maintain cultural heritage while at the same time interacting with  
12 the host culture. A high tendency to adopt the host culture and at the same time relinquish one's  
13 cultural background is described as assimilation. Whereas, the opposite, that is avoiding attempts  
14 to interact with the host culture and remaining attached to one's cultural background, is  
15 described as separation. Lastly, low interest in both the host and one's original culture is  
16 described as marginalization. Within this conceptualization, ethnic identity is described as the  
17 importance attached to one's own ethnic background, its values and practices, and reflects the  
18 cultural maintenance dimension of Berry's model, whereas cultural identity is described as the  
19 importance attached to the broader cultural context and reflects the cultural interaction dimension  
20 of Berry's model. According to Berry's framework a strong ethnic identity in combination with a  
21 strong cultural identity, is the ideal combination for the promotion of integration. Contrastingly,  
22 a weak ethnic identity in combination with a weak cultural identity is the less adaptive  
23 interaction for the purposes of social integration.

1 Kouli and Papaioannou (2009) explored the relationship between motivational climate in  
2 Physical Education classes and ethnic-cultural identity among culturally diverse high school  
3 students in Greece. Findings revealed that task orientation and a mastery oriented motivational  
4 climate, which places emphasis on learning and improving skills on the basis of self-referenced  
5 criteria, was related to cultural maintenance and cultural interaction, which have been linked to  
6 integration. Contrastingly, ego orientation and a performance oriented motivational climate,  
7 which places emphasis on outperforming others based on comparative criteria, related to lack of  
8 interaction and feelings of exclusion, which have been linked to marginalization and separation  
9 (Kouli & Papaioannou, 2009). Morela, Hatzigeorgiadis, Kouli, Elbe, and Sanchez (2013)  
10 reported on the relationship between team cohesion and ethnic-cultural identity in young migrant  
11 sport-club athletes (aged 13–18) living, but not born, in Greece. Findings showed that cohesion  
12 negatively predicted feelings of fringe/exclusion and lack of interaction, which suggest that sport  
13 participation, particularly in cohesive teams, can facilitate the development of an adaptive  
14 identity toward the goal of social integration in migrant adolescents.

15 Elbe, Hatzigeorgiadis, Morela, Ries, Kouli and Sanchez (in press) examined the relation  
16 between ethnic –cultural identity and sport environmental factors in two heterogeneous samples  
17 in the sport club context: one from Spain including South American young athletes playing in  
18 teams consisting of South Americans only, and one from Greece including migrants, mostly  
19 from Eastern Europe and the Balkans, participating in mixed teams. Analysis of variance  
20 revealed that Eastern European inhabitants of Greece scored higher on fringe and assimilation,  
21 and lower on lack of interaction compared to Latin American inhabitants of Spain. For the  
22 sample from Greece, findings showed that mastery oriented climate was negatively related to  
23 lack of interaction, whereas autonomy support predicted ethnic belonging. The analysis for the

1 sample from Spain showed that the predictor variables could not significantly explain any of the  
2 ethnic-cultural identity dimensions. The societal context and the team composition may be a  
3 plausible explanation for these findings. It could be argued that for the sample of young migrants  
4 from a less established cultural group (the sample from Greece), who might seek contact and  
5 opportunities to interact actively, the motivational environment can play a significant role to  
6 facilitate integration. Contrastingly, for the sample of young migrants from a well-established  
7 cultural group (the sample from Spain) the role of sport, and consequently that of the sport  
8 environment, may be limited because they have a relatively stable cultural and ethnic identity,  
9 which they might seek to further enhance or maintain.

10 A common thread among the above listed studies is that they all rely on cross-sectional  
11 data, making inferences about cause and effect challenging. Dankers, Otten, Van Yperen,  
12 Sanchez and Elbe (submitted) conducted a longitudinal study investigating a motivational  
13 climate intervention in the multi-cultural PE class context. Results indicate that the intervention  
14 could effectively enhance motivational climate perceptions of both minority and majority 7<sup>th</sup> to  
15 9<sup>th</sup> grade pupils when compared to pupils of control classes. Furthermore, an increase of  
16 perceptions of psychological integration, operationalized as feelings of inclusion in and  
17 identification with the PE class as a result of the change of motivational climate was observed in  
18 pupils of the intervention but not the control classes. Hence, this longitudinal study delivers  
19 further evidence for the relevance of motivational environmental factors for integrative  
20 outcomes.

21 All of the above listed studies have, however, almost exclusively focused on migrant  
22 populations. Considering that acculturation is a two-way process involving the migrant and the  
23 host populations, research investigating the perspective of the hosts is needed in order to

1 understand the acculturation process. The aim of Morela, Hatzigeorgiadis, Elbe, Papaioannou  
2 and Sanchez's (submitted) study therefore was to explore acculturation attitudes of adolescents  
3 from the host population as a function of sport participation, and to investigate the role of the  
4 motivational environment within those participating in sport teams. Participants were Greek,  
5 high school students, among them 271 athletes competing in either individual or team sports.  
6 While all participants completed measures of acculturation attitudes, the athletes additionally  
7 completed measures of motivational climate, basic need satisfaction, and controlling coaching  
8 behavior. Analysis of variance revealed that athletes scored higher than non-athletes on attitudes  
9 towards multicultural contact. Structural equation modelling revealed that a motivational  
10 environment characterized by a mastery oriented climate, supportive of the needs of autonomy,  
11 competence, and relatedness, was positively linked to multiculturalism attitudes, whereas a  
12 motivational environment characterized by a performance oriented climate and controlling  
13 coaching behavior was negatively linked to multiculturalism attitudes.

14       The recent studies on the integrative role of sport for all indicate that youth participation in  
15 organized sport may be linked to behaviors favoring adaptive intercultural strategies for both  
16 migrant and host populations thereby promoting integration and multiculturalism. However, it  
17 becomes evident that the coach's behavior and how s/he structures sport environment is decisive  
18 for whether desirable outcomes towards the goal of integration can be achieved. The role of the  
19 sport psychologist can therefore be to educate coaches and sport policy makers on how to create  
20 and promote environments that are conducive for facilitating positive acculturation outcomes.

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### **Conclusion and Postulates**

1 In this paper, we aimed at encouraging sport psychology research and practice related to  
2 athlete migrants. To accomplish this aim we have defined key terms relevant to athletic  
3 migration, provided taxonomies of athletic migrants and acculturation processes, summarized  
4 existing theoretical perspectives and research on athletes' cultural transitions, acculturation, and  
5 acculturating environments complemented by insights from experiences of mobile sport  
6 psychology practitioners. Below we communicate our message to the readers in nine postulates.

- 7 1. Globalization and commercialization of contemporary sport have led to rapidly increasing  
8 transnational mobility of athletes, coaches, and sport psychology practitioners. Narratives  
9 circulating within the international sport culture and emerging cultural sport psychology  
10 research have revealed some obvious benefits but also serious difficulties and costs  
11 experienced by athletic migrants exemplified by performance slumps, identity and mental  
12 health problems, and premature career termination. Therefore, the International Society of  
13 Sport Psychology calls for shared understanding of psychological phenomena related to  
14 transnational mobility in sport, and joint efforts in developing culturally competent athletic  
15 migration research and practice, extending also to mobile practice.
- 16 2. To support a growing interest of sport psychology researchers in studying athletic migration  
17 and to facilitate the studies' further dissemination and application, migration terminology  
18 should be negotiated. Athletes' *mobility* is a term for short-term and temporal cross-border  
19 relocations, while *migration* is referred to long-term relocations either across an international  
20 border or within a State. Both mobility and migration imply athletes' move to new cultural  
21 settings and their voluntary (or less voluntary) engagement into the *cultural transition* and  
22 *acculturation* processes constructed across a range of social, cultural, political, and sport  
23 contexts. *Immigrant athletes* moving to a new country for the purpose of settlement and

1     *aboriginal athletes* relocating from the reserve to the dominant culture should not be mixed  
2     with *transnational athletes* travelling back and forth from their origin, constructing their  
3     careers through across-borders practices and, thus, undergoing cyclic acculturation processes.  
4     All these athletic migrants (although to a different degree) are challenged by the expectation  
5     to negotiate between their *ethnic identity* (i.e., attachment to values and practices of their  
6     origin) and developing *cultural identity* (i.e., openness to learn values and practices of a  
7     broader cultural context, and particularly of a receiving culture).

- 8     3. Cultural sport psychology researchers consider cultural transitions and acculturation from a  
9     *critical psychological perspective* emphasizing challenges of the transitional athletes (e.g.,  
10     new language, unknown food, unusual local traditions in and off sport), and especially  
11     uneven and fluid processes of *acculturation* implying adjustments on emotional, cognitive,  
12     behavioural and identity levels. This research is purely qualitative, often involves  
13     participatory action approach with creative use of participants' narratives and drawings to  
14     discover personal meanings and identity constructions and reconstructions involved in the  
15     acculturation. This research also emphasizes a key role of receiving environments in  
16     facilitating or debilitating acculturation of newcomers. *Shared* (i.e., two-way) *acculturation*  
17     approaches imply active engagement of coaches and teammates from the receiving culture by  
18     being interested in the migrants' cultures and initiating activities for intercultural exchange  
19     and sharing (e.g., peer mentoring, sharing food preferences) to facilitate adaptive  
20     acculturation. This is opposed to *shouldered* (i.e., one-way) *acculturation* approaches  
21     characterized by newcomers left alone and often confronted with racism, exclusion, and  
22     damaging stereotypes from the receiving side. Shouldered acculturation creates higher  
23     acculturative stress in mobile athletes and might lead to maladaptive acculturation (e.g.,

1 identity crisis, depression, and underperformance), returning back home, or the terminating  
2 of athletic careers. Hence, the objective is for practitioners and sport scientists to spur shared  
3 engagement from receiving cultures and newcomers.

4 **4.** *The temporal model of cultural transition* outlines three transition phases (i.e., pre-transition,  
5 acute acculturation, and sociocultural adaptation) with specific developmental tasks or  
6 challenges at each phase. It also proposes three underlying mechanisms permeating the  
7 transition and shaping the pathways it might take: social repositioning in trans-local  
8 networks, negotiation of cultural practices, and reconstruction of meanings. The pre-  
9 transition phase is aimed at preparation for the relocation by means of collecting information  
10 and searching for relevant contacts home and abroad, and it finishes when the athlete  
11 physically arrives at the new place. The two acculturation phases that follow are less linear  
12 and more fluid in terms of when one phase finishes and the next starts. Although the cultural  
13 transition is seen as open-ended, it is often believed to have a symbolic exit characterized by  
14 migrants' optimal functioning in novel environments and their meaningful relationships with  
15 receiving communities. This symbolic ending should be carefully monitored by coaches and  
16 sport psychology consultants to augment integration.

17 **5.** Existing sport psychology research on *acculturating environments* takes two major lines  
18 focusing on elite athletic environments, and the integrative role of sport for all. The studies  
19 on *elite athletic environments* are mainly qualitative and emphasize that in the receiving  
20 environment newcomers are confronted by pre-existing sub-cultures (e.g., norms and  
21 traditions in practice) and expected to learn and adapt quickly. Migrants' adaptability  
22 depends on the quality of their preparation to the relocation, their motivation and efforts to  
23 adapt, but also on the nature of engagement of the receiving side. A balanced approach to

- 1 working within elite sport contexts is necessary, minding for newcomer and receiving culture  
2 engagement.
- 3 6. The recent studies on the *integrative role of sport for all* are mainly quantitative and focus on  
4 identifying environmental factors that may regulate the integrative power of sport  
5 participation. *The two-dimensional model of acculturation* defines four acculturation  
6 strategies (integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization) as outcomes of the  
7 interactions between *cultural maintenance* (wish to maintain the ethnic identity) and *desire to*  
8 *interact with other cultures* (wish to develop the new cultural identity). *Integration* is seen as  
9 the most desirable strategy characterized by both high maintenance and contact-participation  
10 promoting strong ethnic identity complemented by salient cultural identity. Empirical  
11 research involving physical education and youth sport environments revealed that it is the  
12 environment, in which the activity of migrants takes place, rather than the participation in the  
13 activity/sport per se, which may be the key to promote integration through sport. The studies  
14 also suggested that an empowering motivational environment that emphasizes skill  
15 development and cooperation, where the athletes' basic needs for autonomy, competence and  
16 relatedness are met, could enhance positive interactions across individuals of different ethnic  
17 origins and facilitate the adoption of positive attitudes towards acculturation.
- 18 7. *Mobile practice* is a term for sport psychology services delivered by practitioners in a new  
19 cultural setting that is used when traveling with, or to, athletes in some other country. This  
20 emerging type of practice is expected to expand requiring sport psychology practitioners to  
21 develop cultural reflexivity, knowledge, and competences (see also the ISSP Position Stand  
22 on cultural competences; Ryba et al., 2013) to effectively support athletes in training camps  
23 or competitions abroad and/or clients of other cultural origin in their respective contexts.



- 1 8. Traveling with athletes for a training camp abroad or to an international competition implies  
2 pre- (cultural) transition preparation and facilitating athletes' acute cultural adaptation most  
3 often in a limited time period. The aim of psychological support is athletes' efficient optimal  
4 functioning, performance, and well-being in the unfamiliar cultural setting. For athletes to  
5 benefit from a training camp abroad, it is important to observe, communicate, and learn  
6 trying to adapt to the receiving training environment but also to make it as comfortable as  
7 possible for the newcomer. Practitioners might help by providing in-advance-information,  
8 developing "right" expectations and mindset in athletes, and initiating shared acculturation  
9 process between the hosts and the visitors. When traveling with athletes for important  
10 competitions, a key is well planned preparation for the cultural transition followed by  
11 observing the athlete on-site and helping to deal with adversities. With all forms of mobile  
12 practice, practitioners themselves also go through cultural transitions, and they have to be  
13 aware about this, prepare, and take care of themselves to remain useful resources for athletes  
14 and coaches (see also Elsborg, Diment, & Elbe, 2015).
- 15 9. Based on the analysis of athletic mobility research and practice, the International Society of  
16 Sport Psychology sets up the following challenges for researchers and practitioners: (a) to  
17 further develop a common professional language by discussing and establishing athletic  
18 migration terminology, (b) to promote existing lines of athletic migration research and  
19 analyze sporting contexts to identify acute needs and transform them into new research lines  
20 (e.g., cultural transition and identity crisis, successful and less successful acculturating  
21 environments), (c) to create culturally competent projects grounded in cross-cultural  
22 psychology, cultural psychology, or cultural praxis (see more in Ryba et al., 2013); of special  
23 interest will be *cultural praxis of athletic migration* projects interweaving relevant multiple

1 cultural contexts into theories, research, and applied work, (d) to promote shared  
2 acculturation approaches and culturally safe athletic environments for both locals and visitors  
3 helping athletes express and not hide parts of their identities; to work on prevention of all  
4 forms of racism, discrimination, marginalization, and stigmatization of migrants, (e) to  
5 encourage education on mobile practices and sharing experiences between mobile  
6 practitioners from different countries to better serve local athletes and to support visitors, and  
7 (f) to educate coaches on developing a mastery motivational climate and taking care of  
8 athletes' basic psychological needs, thus, helping them to become cultural leaders promoting  
9 integration through sports. Delivering this message the International Society of Sport  
10 Psychology encourages sport psychology researchers and practitioners worldwide to  
11 consolidate their efforts in the development of a more culturally safe sport and world.

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