

Sport, immigration and multiculturalism: a conceptual analysis

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1. Introduction

One of the greatest challenges facing European societies at the beginning of the 21st Century is immigration. The movement of people around Europe and the arrival of new people to Europe has accelerated and intensified since the 1990s, increasing the cultural diversity of many countries. At the end of 2003, 11m people had arrived in the European Union from South America, Morocco and the sub-Saharan region, Eastern Europe and Turkey.

In Spain, for example, immigrants (people living in Spain with valid residency permits but without Spanish nationality) reached nearly 1.65m in 2003. While this constituted less than 4% of the total population in comparison to France's 8% or Germany's 7.3%, the number and variety of immigrants have increased. One year later the total number of immigrants had risen to just over 2m (4.75%) of the population. Of these 2m immigrants 67% arrived from countries outside of the European Union (Secretaria de Estado de Inmigración y Emigración 2005).

Immigration was not, however, distributed evenly across Spanish regions, with Catalonia being home to 23.4% of the total number of immigrants in Spain, followed closely by Madrid (20.9%) and then Andalusia (11.3%) (Observatorio Permanente de la Inmigración 2005). The number of immigrants in Barcelona reached 230,942 (14.6% of the city's population) in January 2005, well above the national average and up from 4.9% in 2001. The origin of the major immigrant groups reflects the diversity of cultures arriving in the Catalan capital:

Barcelona Major immigrant groups, 2004/05	
Country	No. living in Barcelona
Ecuador	31,828
Peru	15,037
Morocco	14,508
Colombia	13,935
Argentina	12,439
Pakistan	11,997
Italy	11,678
China	9,524
Source: Ajuntament de Barcelona 2005	

The rate of arrival of certain groups such as the Chinese has accelerated rapidly in the past four years. In 2001 2,460 Chinese people lived in Barcelona, by 2005 that number had more than doubled to 9,524. In addition, the fact that these figures do not include 'illegal' immigrants who remain uncouncted, not only in Barcelona, but also in Spain and many other countries in Europe. By definition, these people '*sin papeles*' (without papers) live at the absolute margin of society.

As a result of these movements, immigration has become a high profile political issue, producing multiple policy responses from parties across the political spectrum. These policy responses have increasingly begun to include sport as a vehicle for the integration of immigrant groups, although research into sport and immigration still remains limited, with some recent notable exceptions (e.g. Arnaud 2002; Juniu 2000; Lleixá et al. 2002; Lleixá & Soler 2004; Mosely et al. 1997; PMP & ISLP 2004; Stodolska & Alexandris

2004). This is perhaps due to the scale of immigrant arrivals, many of which are uncontrolled, producing a reactionary response from policy makers.

This paper aims to explore the key concepts that comprise the social policy discourse related to immigration and how these relate to sports provision. The potential role for sport in the integration of immigrants will be considered, as well as the risks of sports as a potentially divisive force, particularly in terms of racism.

This discussion leads to the consideration of the need for intercultural dialogue through sport in order to contribute to the achievement of the sustainable integration of immigrant groups. In order to achieve this goal, research is called for into the needs of immigrant groups as a key phase in the development of sports policy.

2. Inclusion and exclusion

Several concepts have emerged that enable a fuller understanding of the processes of change that have occurred in western societies as a result of the arrival of immigrant groups. People find themselves sharing public spaces and services with people from increasingly diverse cultures. While this presents opportunities in terms of cultural enrichment, risks of misunderstanding and conflict also exist.

Therefore, concepts such as assimilation, acculturation, multiculturalism, cultural diversity, pluriculturalism, interculturalism and integration form part of wider theoretical perspectives, are subject to interpretation and often used interchangeably. An attempt will be made here to briefly clarify these concepts and consider their application to sports provision.

The wider discourse within which the immigration debate can be placed is social inclusion and exclusion. As with concepts such as poverty, there are no widely accepted definitions of social inclusion or exclusion. The original use of the term 'social exclusion' has been attributed to the former French minister, René Lenoir in the mid-1970s, and has become part of a largely European-based discourse (Collins & Kay 2003).

The UK government's Social Exclusion Unit defined social exclusion as what happens when people or places suffer from a series of problems such as unemployment, discrimination, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime, ill health and family breakdown. When these factors combine a 'vicious cycle' can be created (Collins et al. 1999).

Therefore, social exclusion is a multi-dimensional process that involves a combination of factors that affect certain groups at the margins of mainstream society, such as the homeless, the elderly, youth at risk, mentally and physically disabled people, single parents, ethnic minorities (especially immigrants and asylum seekers). Where concentrations of socially excluded people exist, entire neighbourhoods can be excluded, such as inner-city areas or peripheral social housing projects.

While factors combine to form part of this process, poverty is located at the heart of social exclusion. Poverty can be seen as both a cause and outcome of social exclusion, and has been directly linked to low quality housing, crime and ill health. When considering sports participation, poverty can be a major barrier, in terms of paying entrance fees to facilities (many of which now require customers to make payments from bank accounts, which immigrants may not be able to open) and necessary equipment (Kennett 2002).

In an attempt to break this 'viscous circle', governments at local, regional and national levels have implemented policy initiatives on education, crime prevention and control, creating employment opportunities, providing healthcare, as part of welfare provision. Sport has formed part of welfare provision in many European states for decades, with facilities and programmes being provided for the following purposes (Collins et al. 1999):

- Education and the promotion of positive values associated with sport e.g. teamwork, commitment, fair play.
- Health promotion e.g. reducing absenteeism and public health costs, tackling obesity.
- Empowerment of certain groups e.g. women, ethnic minorities, disabled people.
- Providing opportunities for social interaction and community building e.g. developing a sense of communal identity, bringing people together and encouraging understanding between groups.
- Crime prevention e.g. providing sports opportunities to occupy youth at risk from involvement in crime, sports as a vehicle for the rehabilitation of offenders (e.g. Arnaud's study of immigrant groups' leisure behaviour in Birmingham and Lyon).
- Economic development e.g. developing sports facilities as catalysts for economic regeneration and job creation.

From this perspective, sports participation has the potential to include marginalised groups and enable the accumulation of social capital.

3. Citizenship

Citizenship focuses on the rights and responsibilities of individuals in civil society and the accumulation of social capital. Sport has, in many European societies, become a universal welfare right through public provision and the promotion of facilities and activities for all. For many people sport is an integral part of their lives and is central in the construction and communication of their identity. Therefore, in order to achieve full citizenship, the opportunity to participate in sport is a necessary component, albeit a lower priority than meeting essential needs such as nutrition, housing, health, education and fundamental civil rights.

The accumulation of rights is often a major challenge for immigrants who struggle with the fundamental legal right to be in the host country, the right to social services, the right to employment etc. Sport provides the opportunity to exercise a right that does not have to be officially granted by bureaucracies or public administrations and can be engaged in relatively freely. The organisation of sports opportunities by immigrants is also an opportunity for self-determination and control that may well be lacking in other areas of their lives.

Following this interpretation of citizenship, the right to sports participation should logically be combined with the responsibility to participate. While the concept of forcing people to participate is neither feasible nor desirable, the implication is that the opportunities provided should be taken by those with an active interest in sports. Community sports events, for example, can only produce the desired benefits of socialising, building community spirit and so on, if people participate in some way.

When individuals hold the complete set of rights and fulfil their corresponding set of responsibilities, in principle, some form of basic, universal equality between citizens is established that would form the foundations of a functioning society. By exercising their rights and fulfilling their responsibilities citizens should be integrated into their societies.

However, economic, legal, social and cultural barriers exist to citizenship. In a consumer based society the ability to earn and spend is central: without the former, the latter is difficult (Coatler 1990). The pressure from families, peer groups, advertisers, the media and other sources to consume is often intense in societies where social status is measured through material symbols. Not being able to afford to go to the 'right' places or buy the 'right' clothes or have the 'latest' technology, may produce the sensation of exclusion. Even people with the ability to spend may be excluded for social and cultural reasons, perhaps because they are from another culture, have a different colour skin, practice a different religion, talk in a different language, are the 'wrong' gender, have different sexual preferences, are too old or young. The variables which we can employ to differentiate and exclude people are multiple.

Immigrant groups are often faced with a complex mix of these barriers to full citizenship and as a result are socially excluded. Depending on the country of origin and individual circumstances, immigrants are often poor (a central factor that compounds all others), live in low quality housing, are unemployed, and often do not have legal status and therefore cannot access social services that might help their plight. As a result they often suffer from bad health (physical and psychological), may be at more risk of turning to crime, of being homeless etc. In addition, those arriving from different ethnic backgrounds may be subject to racism. Therefore, certain immigrant groups exist at the very margins of society and can be seen in many cases as the most excluded of the excluded.

4. Assimilation, acculturation and cultural diversity

Recent debate on immigration within cultural policy focuses on the dichotomy facing public administration. To what extent can or should policies aim to assimilate or integrate immigrant groups, and to what extent should these policies respect and maintain the cultural identities of immigrants? (PMP & ISLP 2004).

Stodolska & Alexandris (2004) adopted the segmented assimilation framework developed by Portes & Zhou (1993) when analysing immigration-related changes in the recreational sport participation of Korean and Polish immigrants to the US and the role recreation played in the adaptation process.

Until the late 1960s the assimilation theory dominated, implying that all immigrant groups should conform to host cultural values and customs. Portes & Zhou's (1993) critique of the assimilation model was based on the interpretation of US society as pluralistic, comprising different sub-cultures and ethnic identities

rather than a uniform mainstream society. In addition, the possibility of struggle existed where rather than being absorbed into the mainstream, immigrant groups resist in an effort to maintain their cultural identities.

Portes & Zhou (1993) identified assimilation as a complex, segmented process which varied within as well as between ethnic groups involving acculturation, assimilation and preservation of immigrants' home cultures.

Acculturation is introduced as the process whereby immigrants adopt mainstream values and expectations but are not necessarily accepted by (or assimilated to) the host society. In terms of sports participation, acculturation involves immigrant groups giving up their traditional sports, which are substituted with the dominant sports in mainstream society.

A distinction is made between acculturation to dominant mainstream values, and the assimilation of immigrant groups to the values of the poorest, most deprived groups or 'underclass'. This process involves the rejection of mainstream values and the adoption of values that are often associated with other immigrant groups. Stodolska & Alexandris (2004) found that Polish and Korean immigrants assimilated to their respective ethnic groups, playing the sports that the Poles and Korean played in the US.

A third process involves the preservation of ethnic values and the promotion of ethnic group solidarity by immigrants. Waters (1994) identified this process as 'linear ethnicity', involving resistance to the mainstream and other cultural values, whilst maintaining and acquiring cultural capital from the immigrant's home culture. Sport is a particularly important means through which cultural identities can be maintained. The preservation of traditional sports by immigrant groups has occurred throughout recent history and has been fundamental to the globalisation of modern sports. Mosley et al. (1997), for example, researched the practice of traditional sports by Australian immigrants groups such as Gaelic sports and martial arts.

Portes & Zhou (1993) stated that the type of segmented assimilation experienced varied within and between ethnic groups according to a variety of other factors such as age, gender, original (home society) and actual (immigrant) social status (and the difference between the two), individual personality characteristics etc.

Moreover, it would appear possible that through sports participation an immigrant could experience a mix of acculturation and the maintenance of ethnic identity, becoming part of the mainstream or other sub-cultural groups, whilst preserving their cultural values from their homelands.

5. Multiculturalism, pluriculturalism and interculturalism

Flecha & Puigvert drew on evidence from existing research into physical education and multiculturalism, stating that "education can be one of the mechanisms to improve the situation of groups at risk of marginalisation or suffering social and educational inequalities" (2002, p. 11). Education can improve people's economic potential as well as provide opportunities to learn about other cultures, thus facilitating intercultural understanding.

Flecha & Puigvert (2002) defined the concepts of multiculturalism, pluriculturalism and interculturalism used in Lleixà et al.'s (2002) work *Multiculturalismo y Educación Física* (recently followed up in Lleixà & Soler (2004) *Actividad Física y Deporte en Sociedades Multiculturales*):

- Multiculturalism: where people from diverse cultures share the same territory, potentially resulting in interaction;
- Pluriculturalism: where different cultures exist in the same territory but do not interact, allowing the different collectives to maintain and live with their differences;
- Interculturalism: sharing and interacting with people from cultures different from our own.

While the discourse around the concept of multiculturalism is extensive and it is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss it in depth, multiculturalism in sport exists where people from diverse cultures participate in the same spaces, but not necessarily together. Pluriculturalism in sport occurs when different cultural groups participate in sport separately e.g. immigrant groups play sports from their own countries in isolation from the host population. Interculturalism in sport involves different cultural groups participating together, either in local sports or sports that immigrant groups bring with them. Interculturalism suggests a symmetric model and relative equality between cultural groups, as opposed to a dominant group and a subservient group.

As revealed in the research findings of Stodolska & Alexandris (2004) a mix of pluriculturalism and interculturalism can occur in a multicultural context. This was reflected in the Australian context in the analysis of immigrant groups by Mosely et al. (1997). Each immigrant group was unique in terms of its participation habits. For example, nationalism determined Croatians' involvement in soccer, the Greeks used it to unite their community. Nostalgia and politics mixed together were influential factors in the Irish participation in Gaelic sports. The Italians sought to replicate the close-knit communities from their homeland. Meanwhile the Poles played sports to underpin community based welfare associations.

6. Integration

The concept of social integration has been used frequently in the social policy discourse. Social integration is related to the concept of assimilation, but suggests a more open, two-way interaction where immigrants adopt hosts' cultural values and practices, but also the host culture adapts and changes as part of the process. In this sense, the host culture adopts cultural values and practices from new immigrant groups and vice versa.

In order for integration to be achieved a balance must be struck between the assimilation of immigrants and the respect for the diversity of their cultural identities. This process of mutual adaptation is ongoing as people from the different cultural groups (including the host culture) negotiate and renegotiate their identities (Mosely et al. 1997).

It is possible to link the concepts of interculturalism and integration. The interaction that occurs through intercultural activity, such as playing different sports together, can be seen as the process. The outcome of this process, ideally, is integration.

7. Ethnicity, race and identity

In their discussion of multiculturalism and physical education, Lleixà et al. (2002) make an important distinction between ethnicity and race, two concepts that are often used interchangeably. Ethnicity can be explained as membership in a micro-cultural group on the basis of country of origin, language, cultural traditions, or religion different from the dominant society. Ethnicity is the result of a process; an indication of the way groups are organised in terms of interaction, values, attitudes and lifestyles.

By contrast, race involves the social construction of definitions of physical differences. Race is often tied to stereotypes and preconceptions and the construction of a false image of different groups. Whereas ethnicity changes over time, race remains constant, even with acculturation.

Racism can be seen partly as a result of a lack of education or sensitisation to ethnic differences. The consequences can be fear, misunderstanding, which can breed hate that is often manifested violently. Racism involves an ethnocentric linear interpretation of society, where ethnic groups (viewed as different 'races') are ranked, with 'pure' racial elites at the top and others at the bottom of society.

This perspective involves the separation of ethnic groups, exclusion of groups viewed as inferior and in extreme cases attempts to remove certain groups or worse. The construction of racial stereotypes reduces ethnic differences to often negative and inaccurate generalisations. Reductionism can therefore be viewed as the enemy of integration.

Indeed, the sports field is an potential battlefield for nationalists. For certain individuals and groups, nationality forms an important part of their identity. While strong feelings of national identity can bring people together in moments of unity, for example, when a national sports team plays, they can involve extreme demonstrations of ethnocentrism based around perceived national superiority. In these circumstances, nationalism is a barrier to intercultural dialogue and to integration through sport. However, it could also be hypothesised that nationalistic tendencies are evident when immigrants introduce sports from their home countries, which can result in the enrichment of local cultures if organised in an open and non-discriminatory way.

According to Mosely et al. (1997) in certain cases the distinctions between host and immigrant groups can be heightened by cultural contact, including sports. Sport is often, therefore, a site of racial tension and in recent months football has experienced an intensification of racist incidents in certain countries, for example Spain and Italy: the controversy surrounding the Spanish national coach's comments in the build-up to the Spain v England friendly match in November 2004; the racial abuse directed at black English players during the game itself; the monkey chants directed at FC Barcelona's Samuel Eto'o in Zaragoza; the bananas thrown at fellow Cameroonian Carlos Kameni at Atletico Madrid; banners claiming that "Rome

is Fascist” in the Olympic Stadium Rome; Paolo di Canio’s alleged fascist salute to celebrate scoring a goal in the Rome derby.

These incidents have no place in a multicultural model of sport and make the struggle to integrate people from diverse ethnic backgrounds even harder, fuelling division and conflict. By endorsing the actions of groups or individuals who may be role models, may result in their reproduction at the lower levels of sport and by children in the playground.

8. Conclusions

Piastro (2004) called for an increased historical understanding of immigration, stating that multiculturalism, diversity, difference, immigration and the figure of the foreigner are not new phenomena, on the contrary, they are as old as humanity itself. While these concepts have historically formed part of wider globalising processes, the difference in recent times is the intensity with which this is being experienced as human movement around the globe accelerates.

Therefore, previous research undertaken into sport, ethnicity and race must be updated with new studies undertaken at the local level. Immigration is changing the face of Europe, and while experiences from countries such as the US and Australia may be partially relevant, research must take place in the specific cultural contexts in which immigration is occurring. Immigrant groups are arriving from an increasingly diverse range of countries and cultures producing dynamic changes in society that must be explored and understood.

The importance of sport should not be underestimated within these rapid changes, as Mosley et al. stated regarding the Australian context, “the ethnic presence of sport...has served to confront people with the social reality of multiculturalism. Changes in public opinion and outlook have in part been shaped by ethnic involvement in sport.” (1997, p. 293).

In order to reduce the risk of cultural misunderstanding and conflict in sporting contexts and to maximise the opportunities presented by sport for integration, it is essential, therefore, that sports policy makers, facility and programme providers undertake research.

This research should focus on determining the needs of immigrant groups in general and in sporting terms. Essential to this process is to understand where immigrants’ have come and why they are culturally different. Research should also be undertaken into the outcomes of provision in an attempt to determine the degree to which cultural integration occurs, which if possible should be undertaken on a longitudinal basis.

Indeed, research should take into consideration the diverse nature of immigrant groups, not only in terms of country of origin, but also age, whether the immigrants are first or second generation, socio-economic status, and in particular, the issue of gender, sport and immigration.

Apart from sport-specific studies, efforts should be made to include sport as a element of wider studies on social exclusion and citizenship. This would not only provide valuable data for policy makers, it would also raise the profile of sport in social research terms and emphasise its importance in the lives of many immigrants.

Moreover, opportunities should be created to enable the sharing of data and experiences from local, regional and national sports policy makers and providers at the European level.

This basic research should enable the planning and organisation of sporting opportunities *with* rather than *for* immigrant groups. While gathering valuable data, this research process would also create the dialogue necessary for multicultural understanding and hopefully sustainable integration.

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