



Faculty of Science



Ethnic and cultural identity in young athletes across Europe: Individual differences.

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Aim of the Presentation

How are

- Age
- Gender
- Participation in team vs. individual sports
- Competitive level

related to ethnic and cultural identity?

And, are there cross-cultural differences?



Current Research

- Hardly any sport psychological studies available investigating these variables
- Boys scored higher on one aspect of ethnic identity (lack of interaction) than girls (Kouli & Papaioannou, 2009)
- Minority females participate less actively in organized sports than minority males and majority females (De Knop et al., 1995)



Why could differences be assumed?

The older athletes get the more xenophobic they might get?

Participating in sports at an international level entails more encounters with individuals from other cultures.

Team sports are often utilized to enhance cohesion in groups.



Age & Prejudice: A psychological perspective

- Hardly any studies on prejudice in adolescents
- Most studies about prejudice and discrimination focus on children (aged 4-12) because children tend to focus on physical attributes like skin color (Aboud, 1988).
- It is hypothesized that with increasing age and cognitive maturity stereotyping decreases as children focus more on the individual
- Hoover and Fishbein (1999) show stable race prejudice through adolescence but an increase in college students.



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Gender & Prejudice

- Male adolescents show more racism than female adolescents (Baker & Fishbein, 1996; Fishbein, 1996).
- It is argued that males have more at stake and have the role of protecting the dominant culture.



Team vs. Individual Sport

- Previous studies have indicated that the need for individuals to work collaboratively will encourage (or necessitate) the development of skills like
 - a. trust (Priest, 1998)
 - b. empathy (Moore, 2002),
 - c. personal responsibility (Hellison, 2003)
 - d. and **cooperation** (Miller et al., 1997)
- Teams might offer youths a stronger feeling of belonging and identification



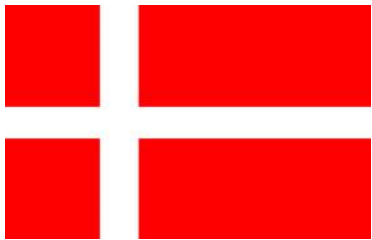
Competitive level





- The higher the level of involvement the more contact with individuals from a different cultural background?



Sample

- Only athletes (very selective sample as participation in sports underlies socio-economic barriers)
- Age 12-19
- Countries: Denmark, Germany, Greece, and Spain



	Mean age	% female	% non-dominant	% team sport	% local level
Denmark (n=118) 	15,4 (1,9)	54%	9%	68%	41%
Germany (n=251) 	15,3 (1,7)	66%	5%	59%	32%
Greece (n=244) 	15,5 (1,4)	21%	28%	82%	76%
Spain (n=355) 	15,0 (1,8)	12%	27%	78%	89%

Questionnaire & Scales

(Kouli & Papaioannou, 2009)

Cultural Identity

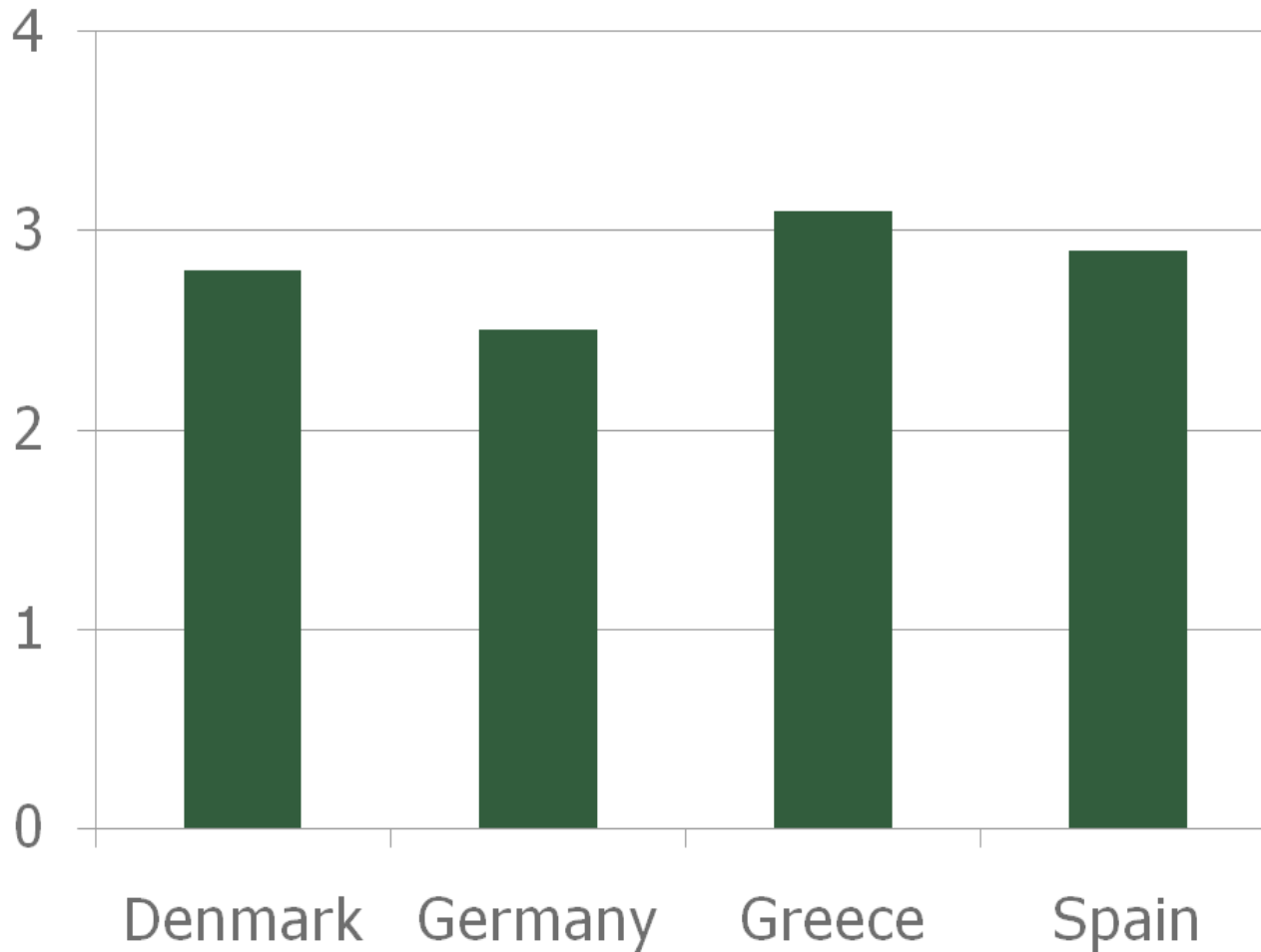
- **ethnic belonging** “The values of my ethnic groups determine my life”
- **feelings of fringe** “I often feel bad that I belong to the ethnic group I do”

Ethnic Identity

- **assimilation** “I usually go by the values of the overall Greek/Spanish/German/Danish culture”
- **lack of interaction** “I avoid activities with individuals from other ethnic group(s)”



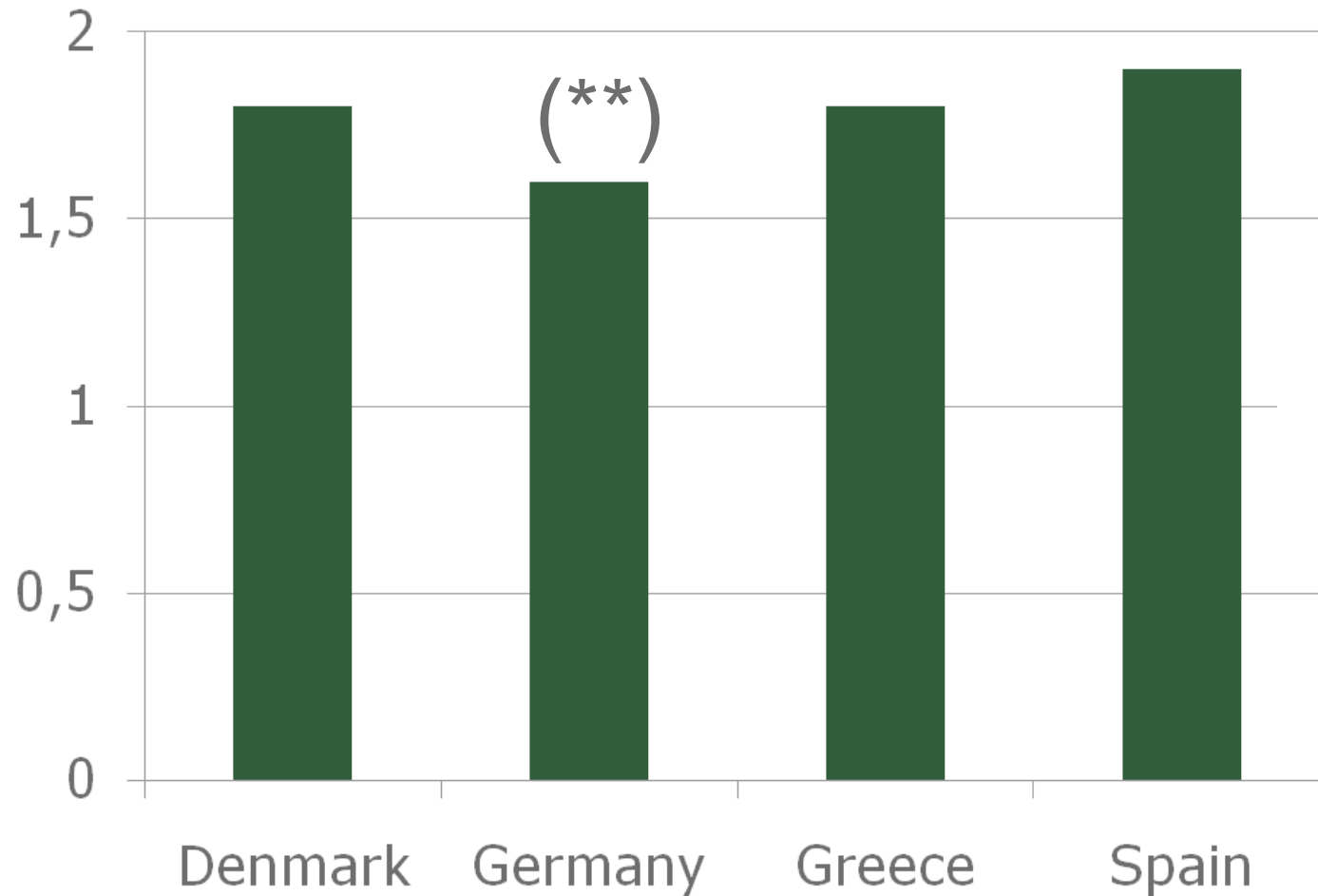
Belonging



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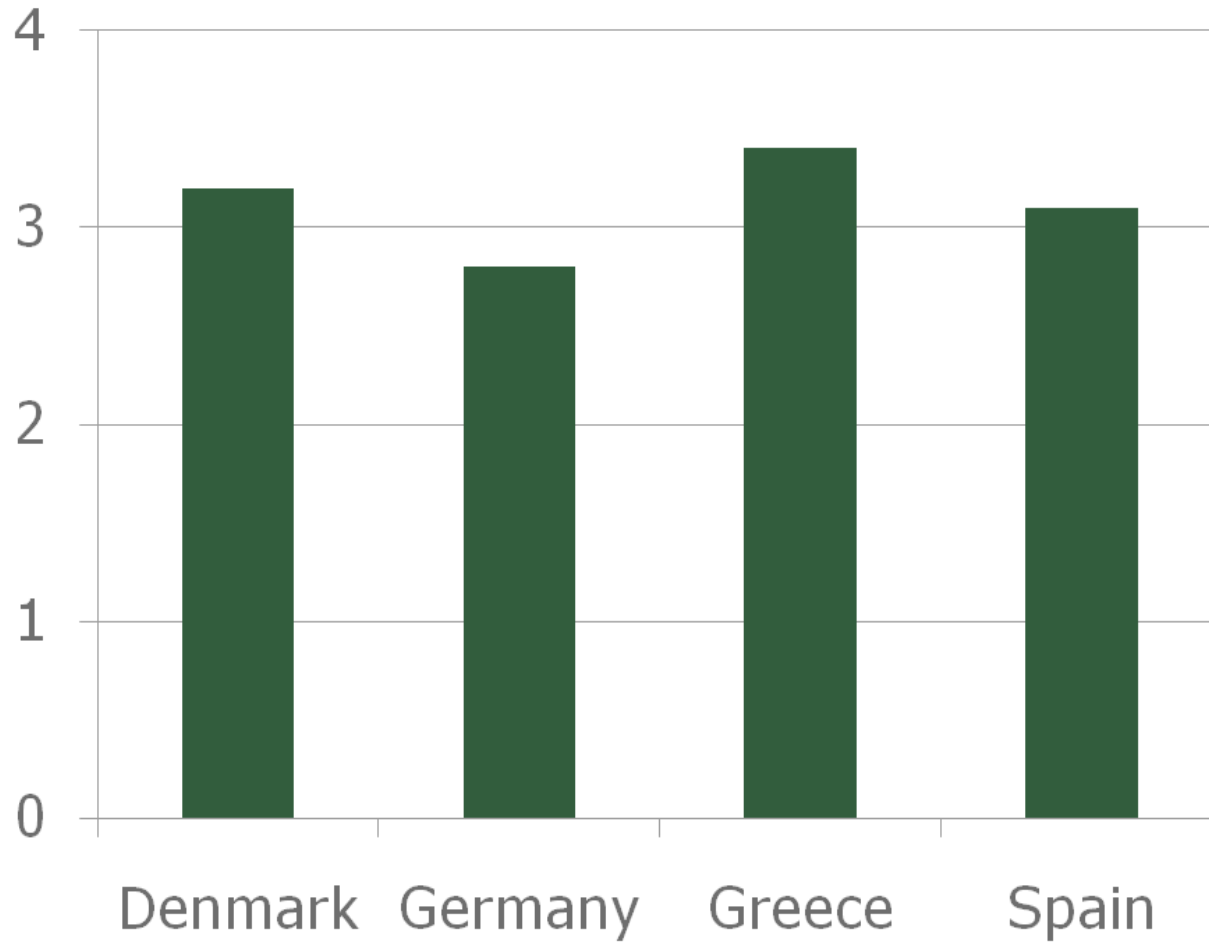
Fringe



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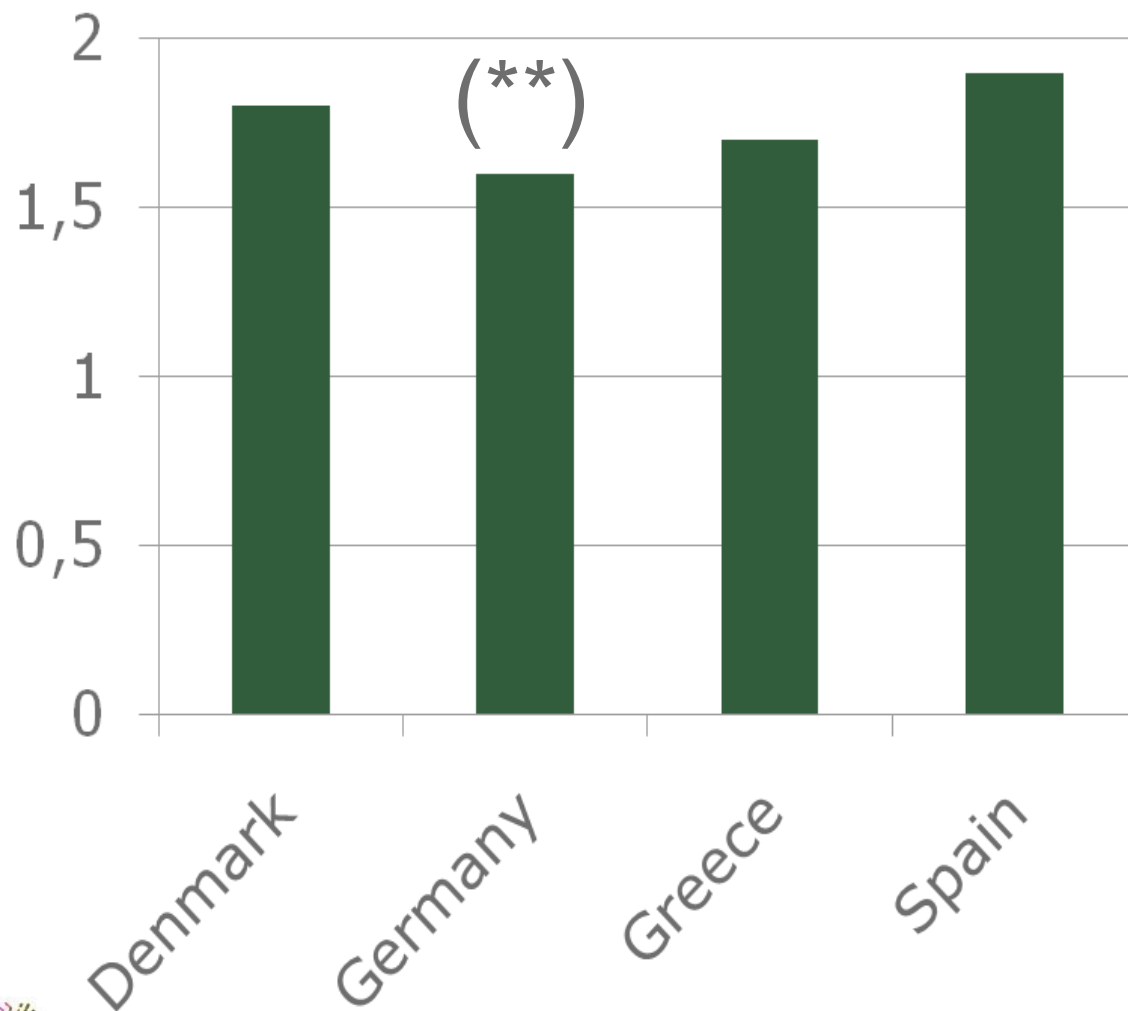
Assimilation



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Lack of interaction



Results: Age

- No significant correlations can be found between age and cultural / ethnic identity
- Exception: Slight negative correlation between age and *fringe* in the Greek dominant sample



Results: Gender

- Some gender differences can be found
- Danish females with a dominant background score higher on *belonging* and *assimilation* than males
- German females with a dominant background score higher on *belonging* than males
- Greek females with a non-dominant background score lower on *fringe* and higher on *assimilation* than non-dominant males



Results: Team vs. individual

- Germans with a dominant background involved in individual sports show higher scores on *fringe* than team sport athletes.
- Spaniards with a dominant cultural background involved in individual sports score higher on *assimilation* than athletes involved in team sports.



Results: Level of competition

- No significant results



Summary

- Significant differences concerning ethnic and cultural identity among the four countries
- Gender differences can be found in three of the four countries
- Furthermore, indications for differences between team and individual sport athletes in Germany and Spain
- Age as well as participation level do not seem to be related to ethnic / cultural identity



Discussion

- Samples are quite heterogenous concerning gender distribution and participation level
- Interventions should target males more than females.
- Cultural differences within Europe need to be addressed when designing interventions.



Future Research

- More homogenous samples concerning cultural background, levels of participation and gender distribution.

