

Acculturation and psychological adaptation of immigrants in Greece: A challenge or a threat?

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Presentation outline

- Why study immigrants? Questions of relevance
- The case of immigration in Greece
- Overview of research projects
- Theoretical frameworks
- Study I: Acculturation and adaptation of adult immigrants
- Study II: Resilience of immigrant youth in the school context
- Study III: Psychological and ethnic identity of immigrant youth
- Implications and conclusions

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Questions of relevance in the psychological study of immigration

- Theoretical relevance

- Immigration as a naturally occurring experiment where psychological theories can be tested and further elaborated.
- Immigration as an applied field which calls for interdisciplinary cooperation among social scientists.

- Social relevance

- Contribution of psychologists in dealing with important social problems.
- Two levels: societal (e.g., interventions) and institutional (e.g. policies).

Questions of relevance in the psychological study of immigration

- How do immigrants deal with the challenges of intercultural contact? Are there specific strategies they develop in response to acculturative stress?
- How well do immigrants adapt to the new ecological and socio-cultural milieu? Which factors account for the quality of their adaptation?
- What is the relationship between acculturation (the “how” question) and adaptation (the “how well” question)?
- How are members of the receiving society affected in the context of immigration? How do they perceive themselves (e.g. their ethnic identity) and the outgroups (e.g., discrimination, multicultural ideology).

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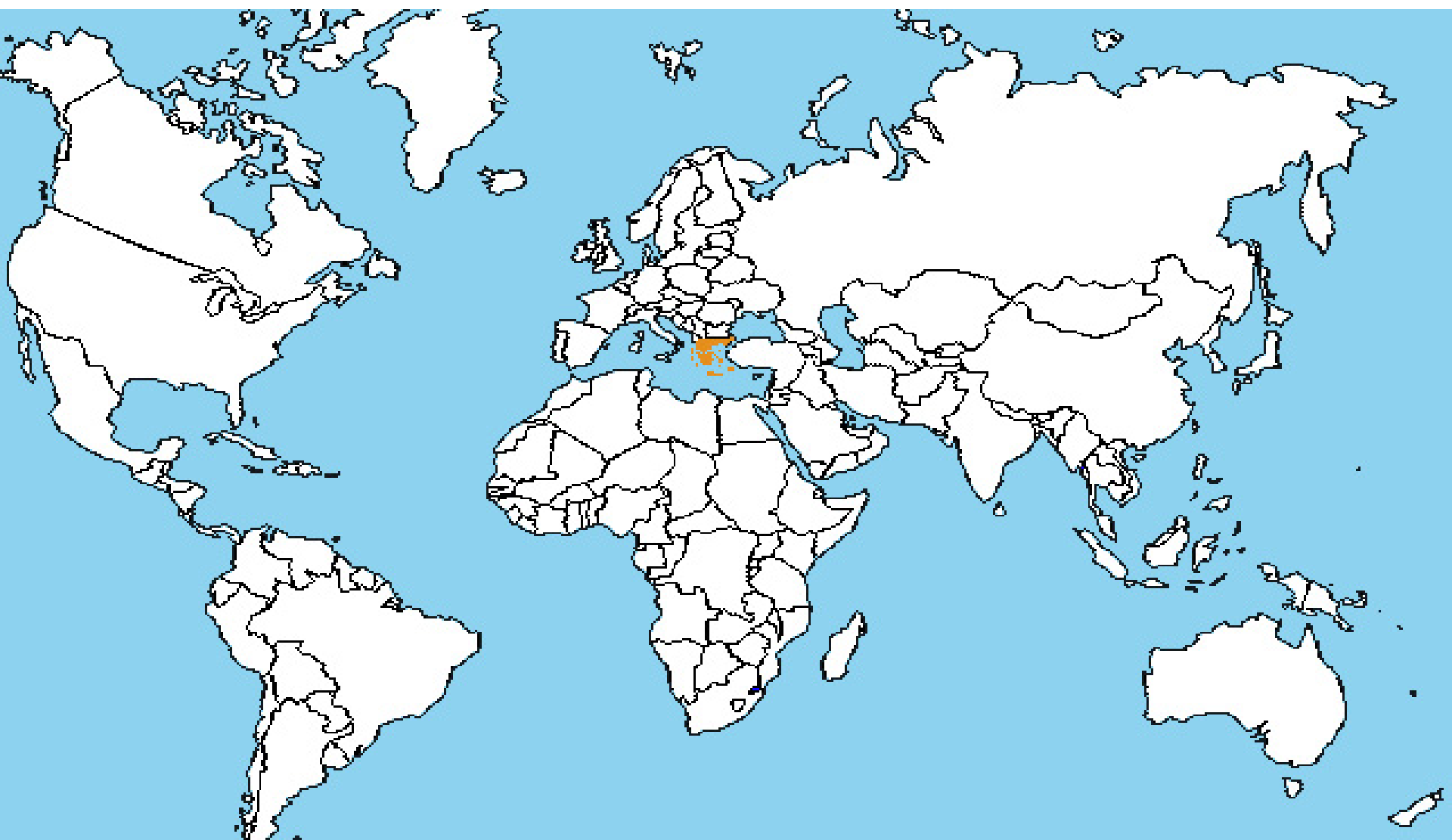
Immigration in Greece

- Transition from the emigration to immigration experience since the early '90s.
- The number of immigrants quintupled within 10 years, between 1991-2001.
- Officially, the proportion of immigrants reached 7% of the total population in the 2001 census (estimated now to excel 9% or 1,000,000). Non-documented immigrants are not included.
- More than 120,000 immigrant children and adolescents are enrolled in Greek schools.
- Recently (2010), legalization and citizenship has become easier esp. for second generation immigrants.

Immigration in Greece

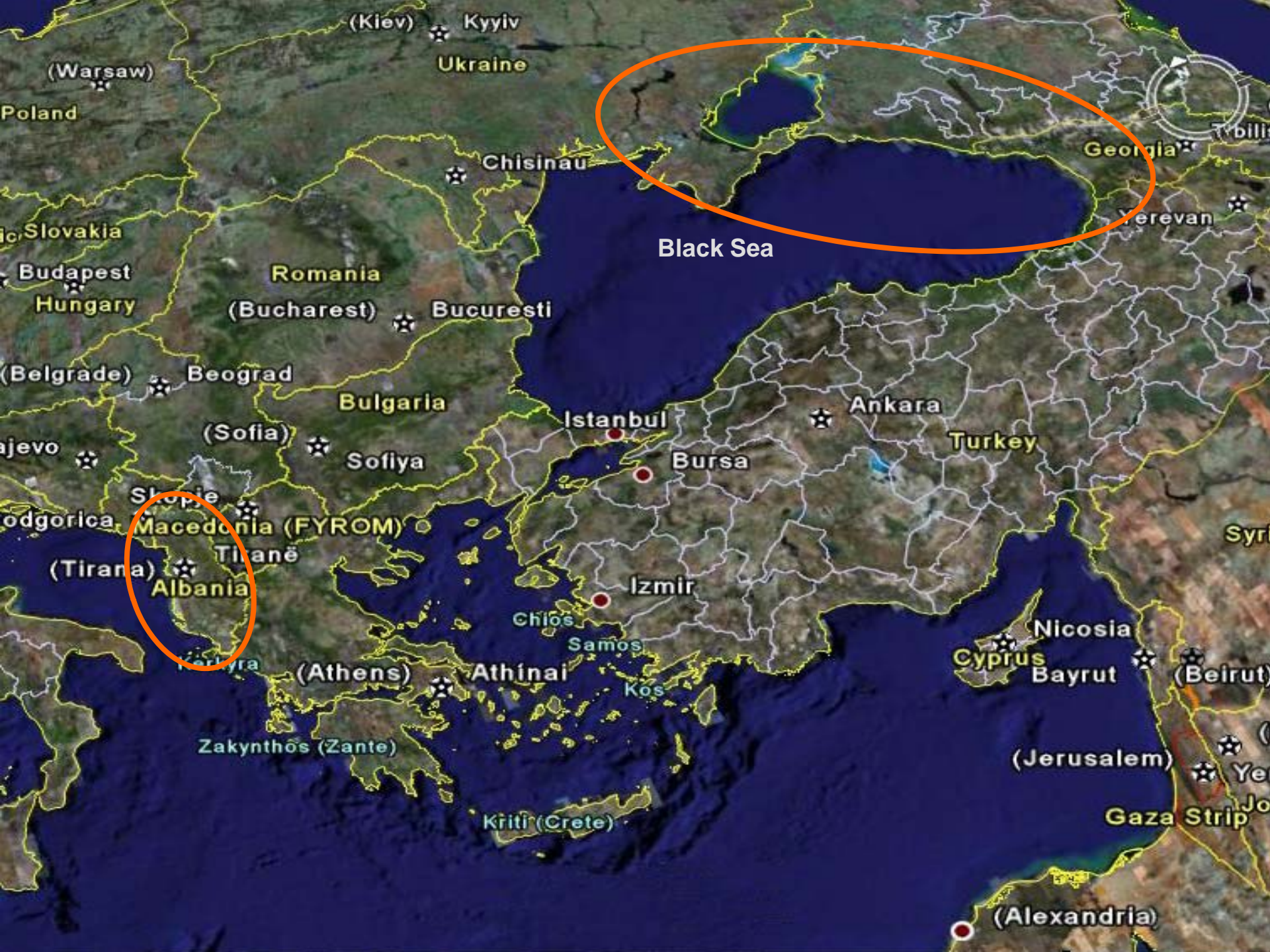
- Immigrants reside in areas all over the country. They usually occupy positions of low status (e.g., workers in constructions and agriculture).
- The percentage of immigrant students drops significantly from primary to secondary education.
- About 60% of native Greeks reported that immigration is harmful (Public Issue, 2010). Greece had the second most negative profile in the EU in evaluating immigration (Eurobarometer, 2008).
- Measures are taken by the state in several domains; however, there is not a clear and cohesive immigration policy.

Greece in the world atlas



Two immigrant groups of special interest

Albanian immigrants	Pontian remigrants
Ethnic Albanians (few of Greek origin)	Immigrants of Greek origin from Former Soviet Union
Former communist regime, moved in the '90s	Former communist regime, moved in the '90s
Economic immigrants, voluntary minority (Ogbu, 2003)	Officially treated as remigrants and given full citizen status
They speak Albanian; religion not important	Speak Pontian Greek (and Russian); Greek Orthodox
Spread around the country (over 60% of immigrant population)	They often settle together in enclaves (about 160,000)



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Research teams

- The Athena Studies of Resilient Adaptation (AStRA) is an international collaboration between the University of Athens (Prof. Frosso Motti-Stefanidi, coordinator), the University of Minnesota (Prof. Ann Masten, Dr. Jelena Obradovic, now assist. Prof. at Stanford University) and Humboldt University Berlin (Prof. Jens Assendorpf).
- The Center for Cross-Cultural Psychology of the University of Athens (Vassilis Pavlopoulos), in collaboration with the Hellenic Migration Policy Institute (vice-president: Prof. Elias Besevegis, also Head of the Dept. of Psychology).

Acknowledgment

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2^ο Επιχειρησιακό Πρόγραμμα
Εκπαίδευσης και Αρχικής
Επαγγελματικής Κατάρτισης



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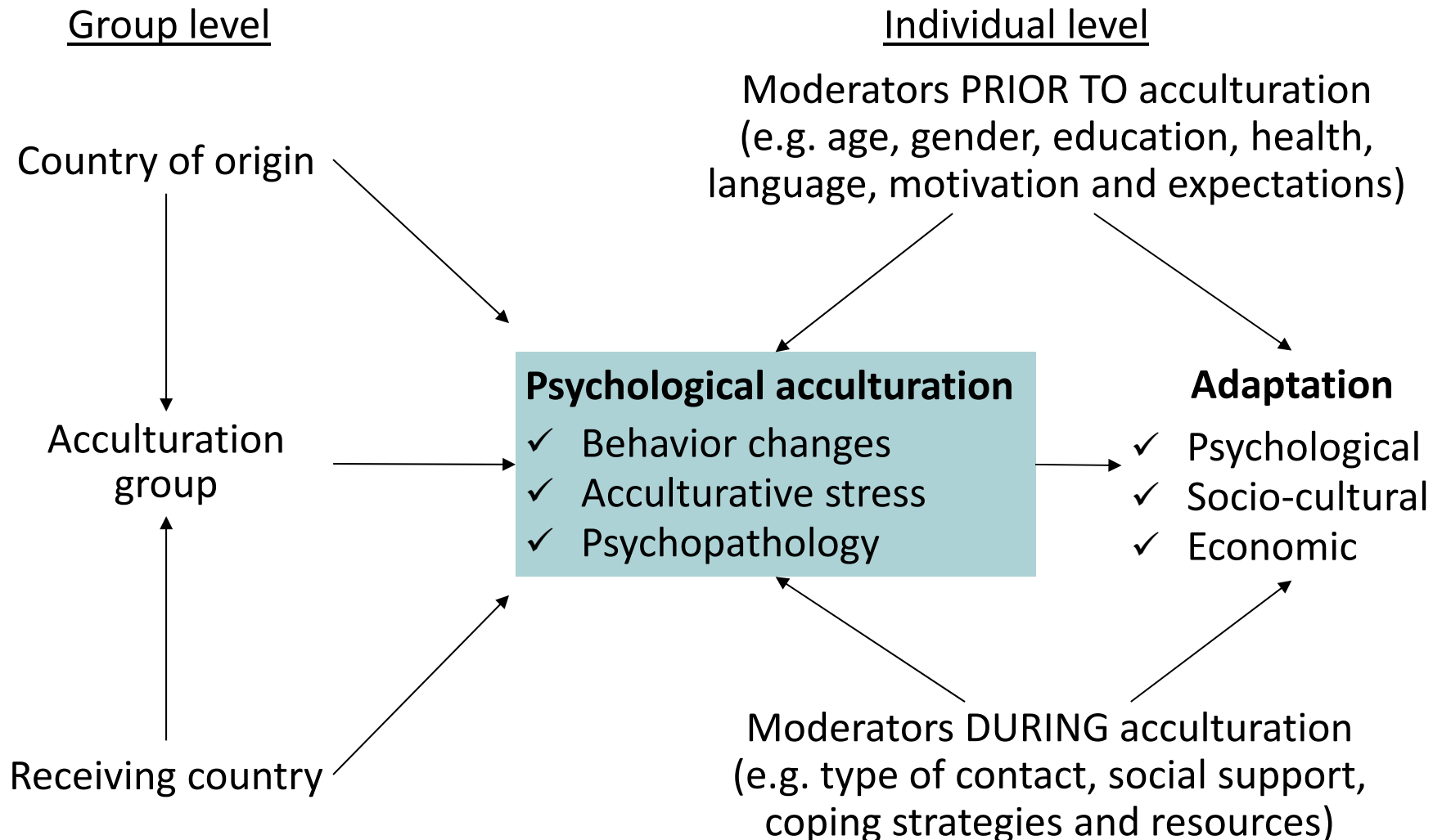
Defining acculturation and adaptation

- **Acculturation.** The phenomena which result when groups of individuals from different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups (Redfield et al., 1936).
- **Adaptation.** The short- and long-term changes (affective, behavioral and cognitive) that derive from the acculturative processes. These are usually summarized in two domains, i.e. sociocultural and psychological (Ward et al., 2001).
- The study of acculturative processes is necessary in order to better understand the findings from research on immigration, which are often contradictory (Baubock et al., 1996).

Three perspectives in the study of acculturation (Ward et al., 2001)

- **The stress and coping approach.** Considers cross-cultural transition as a series of stress-provoking life events that draw on adjustive resources and require coping responses.
- **The culture learning approach.** Views cultural competence as a process of acquiring the specific behavioral and social skills that are necessary to negotiate the new cultural milieu.
- **The social identification theories approach.** Draws on the literature of social identity and intergroup relations. It points to the importance of attitudes, values, expectations and attributions in intercultural encounters.

A theoretical framework for the study of acculturation and adaptation (Berry, 1997, 2006)



Acculturation strategies of immigrants (Berry, 1997, 2006)

Maintenance of heritage culture and identity

+

-

Relationships sought
among groups

+

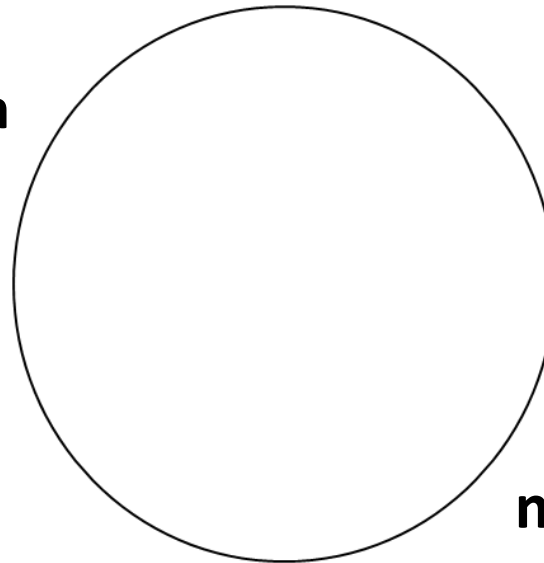
**integration/
multiculturalism**

**assimilation/
melting pot**

-

**separation/
segregation**

**marginalization/
exclusion**



The risk and resilience framework

- **Resilience** is a process of relatively positive adaptation despite experiences of significant risk (Luthar, 2006; Masten, 2001).
- **Risk** (e.g., immigration, poverty, stressful life events) is defined in terms of its contribution to undesirable outcomes.
 - Problem: risk factors tend to co-occur (difficult to disentangle).
- **Competence** refers to a pattern of effective performance in the environment, evaluated from the perspective of development in ecological and cultural context (Masten et al., 2006).
- Research aims to identify **protective factors** which may modify in a positive direction the negative effects of adversity.
 - Distinguish between *protective* and *promotive* factors.

The developmental perspective

- Immigrant youth in particular face the “double challenge” of development and acculturation.
- Important developmental goals: academic achievement, social competence with peers, conduct (Masten & Motti-Stefanidi, 2008).
- Important acculturation tasks: deal with immigration-related risk (e.g., economic hardship, lack of supportive networks, language barriers), navigate between two cultures embedded in a larger societal context (Berry, 2006; Berry et al., 2006).

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Besevegis, E., & Pavlopoulos, V. (2008). Acculturation patterns and adaptation of immigrants in Greece. In M. Finklestein & K. Dent-Brown (Eds.), *Psychosocial stress in immigrants and members of minority groups as a factor of terrorist behavior* (NATO Science for Peace and Security Series, E: Human and Societal Dynamics, vol. 40, pp. 23-34). Amsterdam: IOS Press.

Pavlopoulos, V., & Besevegis, E. (2009, September). *Acculturation patterns of immigrants in relation to their level of adaptation*. Paper presented at the 14th International Metropolis Conference, Copenhagen, Denmark.

Research questions

- What strategies are adopted by immigrants in order to deal with the multiple challenges of acculturation?
- What is the level of socio-economic and psychological adaptation of immigrants?
- What is the relationship between acculturation strategies and immigrant adaptation?

Demographic characteristics of participants

Country of origin	N	Age (Mn)	Female (%)	Years in GR (Mn)	Education (Mn/7-point)
Albania	277	35.2	39.4	9.4	3.6
Balkan countries	89	38.0	69.7	6.2	3.8
Former USSR and Eastern Europe	108	36.3	66.7	7.0	4.4
Arab/Muslim	50	36.5	14.0	10.4	3.8
Sub-Saharan Africa	46	24.5	2.2	1.7	2.6
Latin America	20	43.6	57.1	14.6	4.3
Asia	7	30.1	10.0	5.0	4.1
Western countries	4	33.5	50.0	14.0	5.8
Total	601	35.0	43.1	7.9	3.8

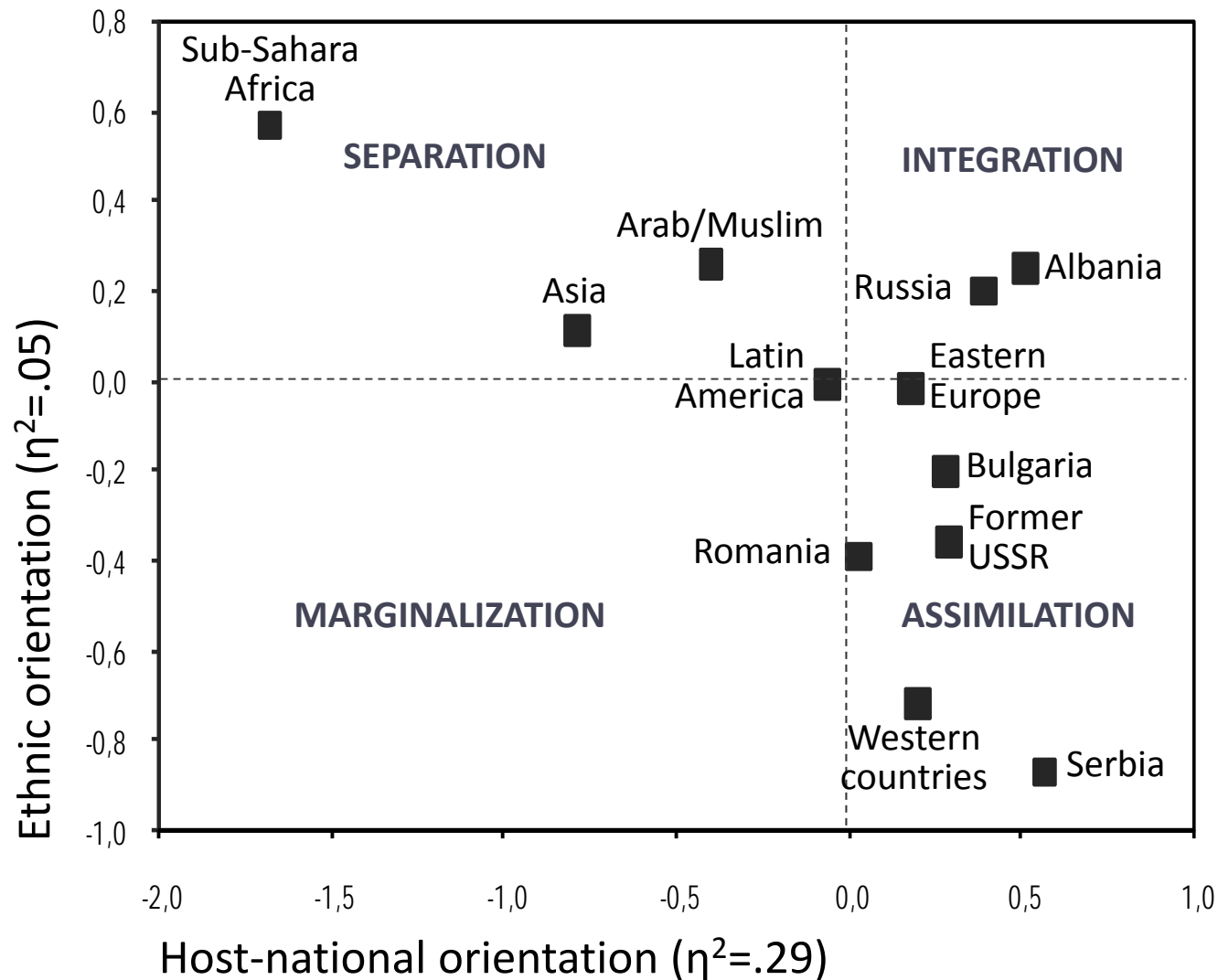
Measures: Variables before and during immigration

	BEFORE immigration	DURING immigration (acculturation)
Demographic	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Ethnicity✓ Gender✓ Education level	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Length of stay in Greece✓ Place of residence
Psychosocial	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Motivation for immigration✓ Voluntary/forced immigration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Ethnic relations✓ Use of native language✓ Host-national relations✓ Use of host language

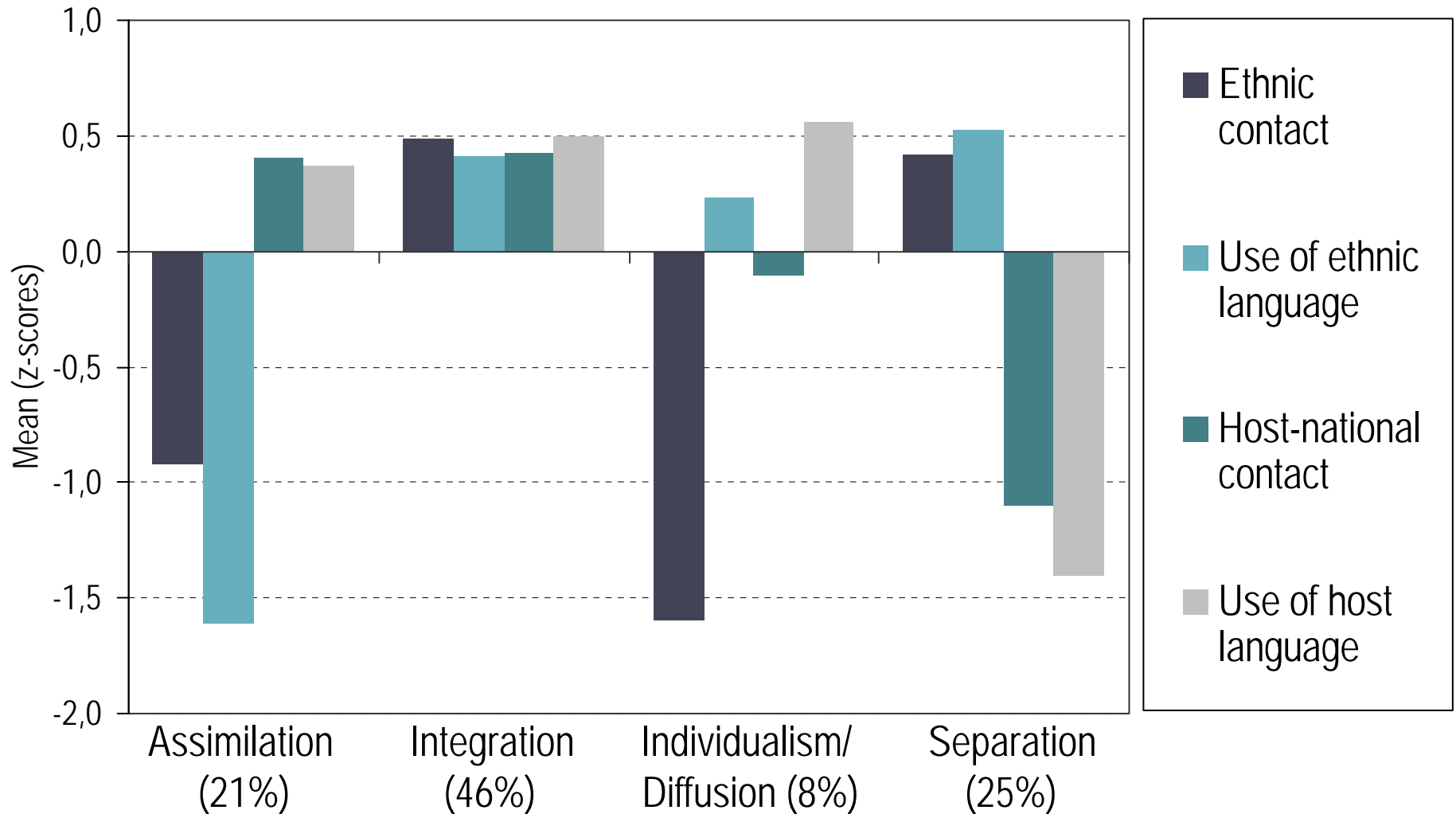
Measures: Adaptation indices

Socio-economic	Psychological
✓ Occupational status	✓ Gained skills
✓ Steady job at present	✓ Lost skills (-)
✓ Monthly savings	✓ Provide family support
✓ Economic benefits	✓ Personal development
✓ Professional development	✓ More opportunities
✓ Improve financial status	✓ Isolated from family (-)
✓ Improve occupational status	✓ Lost social networks (-)
	✓ Racism (-)
	✓ Health problems (-)
	✓ Fulfilled expectations

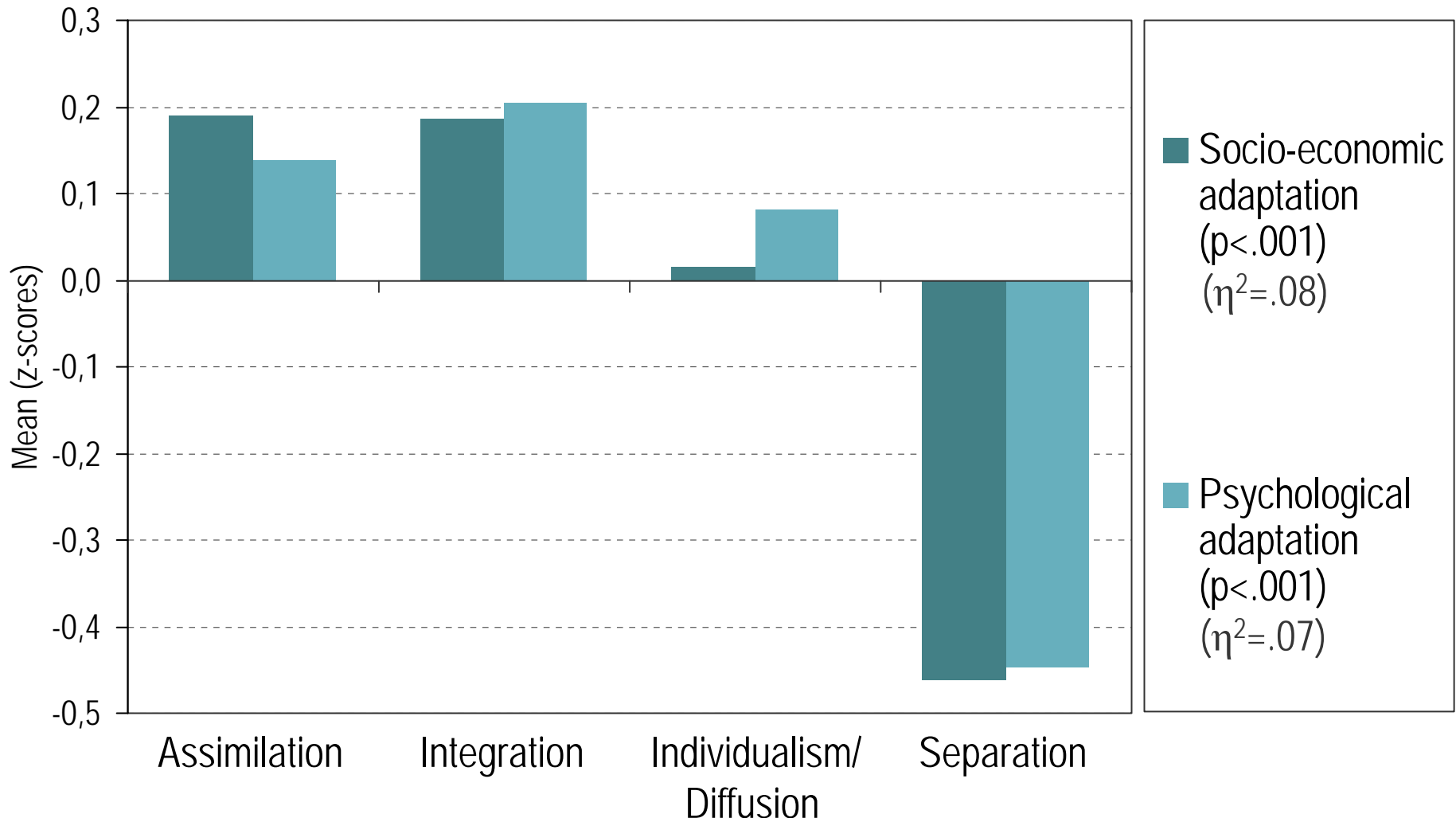
Position of immigrant groups in relation to ethnic and host-national orientation



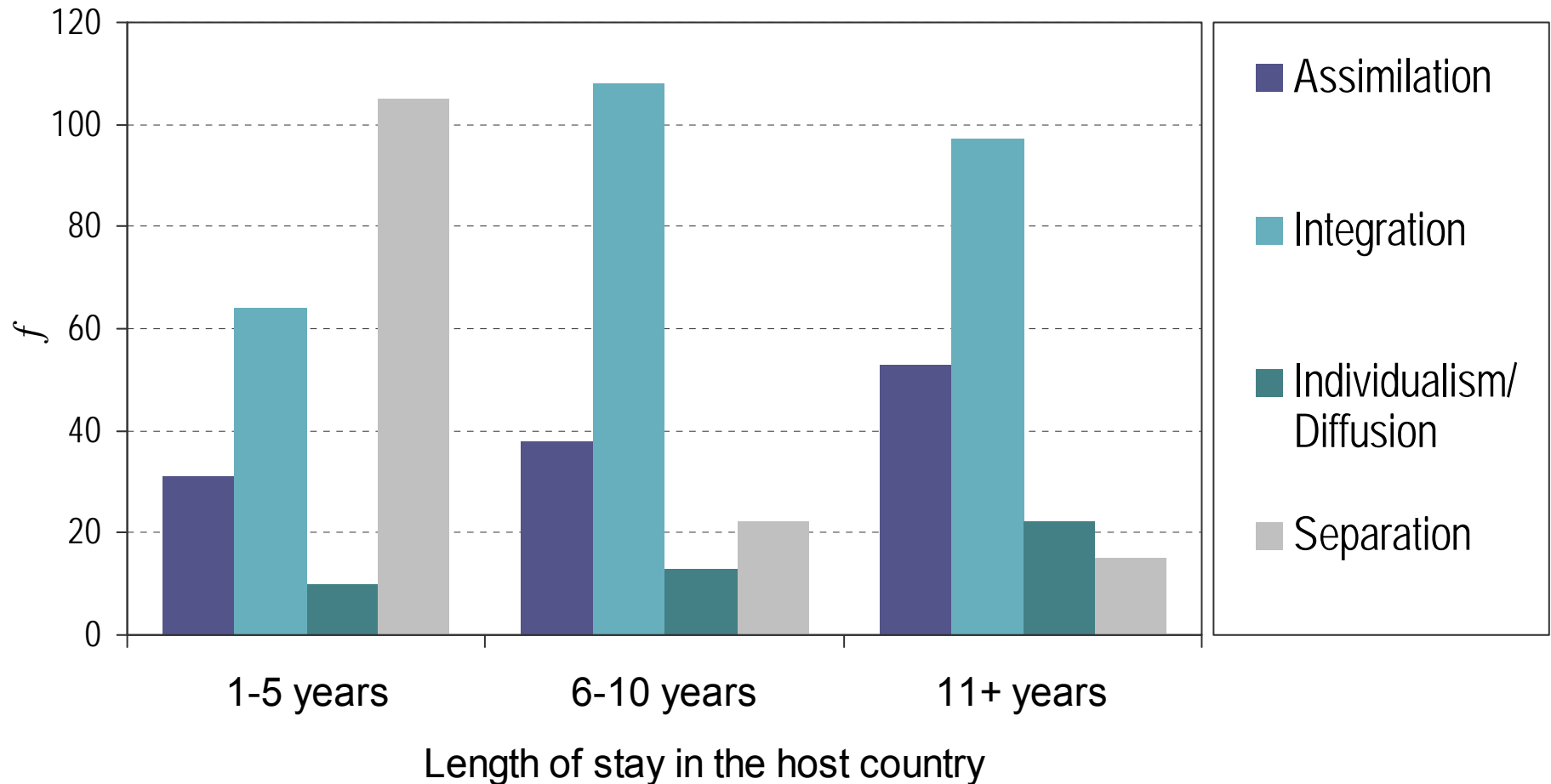
Clusters of immigrants in relation to acculturation variables



Socio-economic and psychological adaptation as a function of acculturation strategies

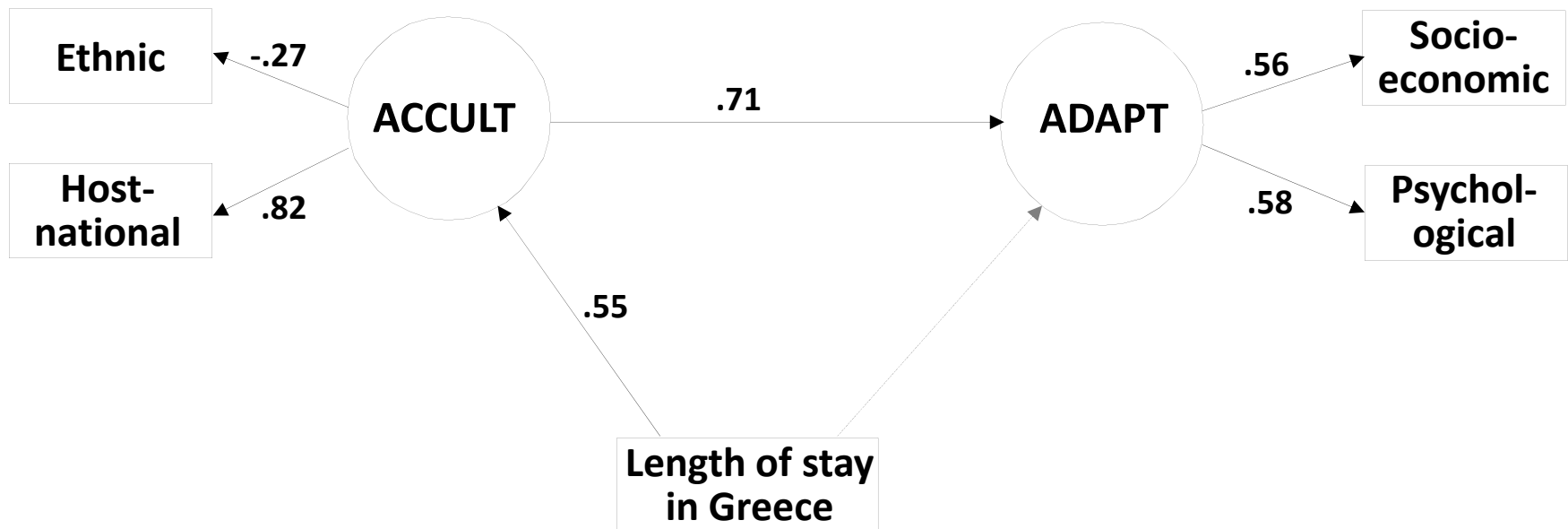


Acculturation strategies as a function of length of stay in the host country



$\chi^2(6, N=577)=121.76, p<.001$

Structural equation model specifying relations between acculturation, adaptation, and length of stay in the host country



$\chi^2(4, N=601)=7.07, p=.132; CFI=0,99; RMSEA=0,036$

Summary of findings

- Three factors to account for immigrant adaptation: ethnic origin, length of stay in the host country, and acculturation strategy.
- Integration and Assimilation led to similar levels of adaptation, the most positive among immigrants...
- ...while separation yielded the most negative outcomes.
- Diffused profile: closer to Individualism (Bourhis et al., 1997) rather than to Marginalization (Berry, 1997).
- Length of stay in the host country is related to adaptation only through the mediating effect of acculturation processes.

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Motti-Stefanidi, F., Pavlopoulos, V., Obradović, J., & Masten, A. (2008). Acculturation and adaptation of immigrant adolescents in Greek urban schools. *International Journal of Psychology*, 43(1), 45-58.

Motti-Stefanidi, F., Pavlopoulos, V., Obradović, J., Dalla, M., Takis, N., Papathanasiou, A., & Masten, A. (2008). Immigration as a risk factor for adolescent adaptation in Greek urban schools. *European Journal of Developmental Psychology*, 5(2), 235-261.

Pavlopoulos, V., & Motti-Stefanidi, F. (2008, July). Acculturation and adaptation of immigrant adolescents in Greece: Preliminary findings of a 3-year study. Paper presented at the *19th International Congress of the International Association for Cross-Cultural Psychology*, Bremen, Germany.

Cross-sectional study (2003): Overarching goals

- Examine whether immigrant status is a risk factor for school competence and emotional adjustment of immigrant adolescents (over and above other sources of adversity).
 - Disentangle immigrant status from SES.
- Identify acculturation factors relevant to the level of sociocultural and psychological adaptation of immigrant youth in the school context.

Participants

N = 950 adolescents enrolled in the 1st grade of 4 high schools in the wider Athens metropolitan area

Immigrant status

- 136** Albanian immigrants
- 229** Pontian remigrants of Greek origin
- 585** native Greek

Gender

- 472** boys
- 478** girls

! Separate analyses were conducted for “Albanian” schools and “Pontian” schools

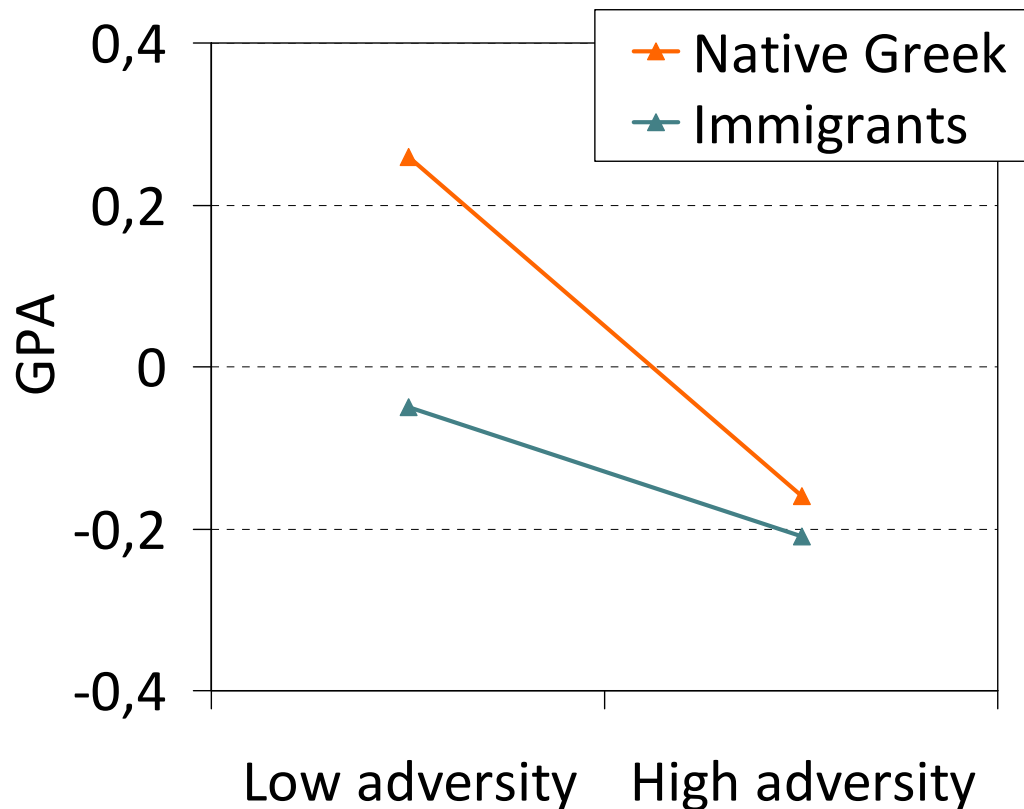
Summary of measures

- **Adversity.** Immigrant status; Life Events (Fthenakis & Minsel, 2002); SES risk (composite of family status, occupational status and living conditions).
- **Acculturation.** Ethnic and host-national orientation (Nguyen & von Eye, 2002); ethnic identity (MEIM; Phinney, 1992)
- **Sociocultural adaptation in the school context.** GPA; absenteeism; classroom behavior rated by teachers (Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2008); peer popularity (sociometric).
- **Psychological adaptation.** Emotional symptoms (SDQ; Goodman, 2007); state anxiety (STAIC; Spielberger et al., 1973); self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1965).

Summary of findings

- Immigrant adolescents reported significantly higher level of SES adversity than native Greeks. In addition, Pontians reported higher number of negative life events.
- In general, immigrant youth scored lower than their native peers on sociocultural adaptation in the school context (e.g., GPA, absenteeism, teacher ratings) but NOT on psychological adjustment.
- Even after controlling for other adversity, immigrant status continued to be a risk factor for several outcomes (e.g., GPA and peer popularity of Albanians, absenteeism of Pontians).

Prediction of GPA of native Greek and immigrant adolescents as a function of adversity



Immigrant youth seems to face a double barrier, relevant to ethnicity and SES. On the other hand, social adversity is a risk factor for all adolescents, independent of their immigrant status.

Summary of findings

- In what concerns *acculturation*, ethnic orientation was related to psychological adaptation (i.e., fewer emotional symptoms, higher self-esteem), while host-national orientation predicted socio-cultural adaptation in the school context (i.e., higher GPA, lower absenteeism, higher conscientiousness, less disruptive behavior), and higher self-esteem.
- In what concerns *ethnic identity*, sense of belonging was positively related to adaptation (i.e., higher GPA, more emotional symptoms, higher self-esteem), while identity search was negatively related to adaptation (i.e., more emotional symptoms, lower self-esteem).

Longitudinal study (2005-2007): Overarching goals

- How do acculturation processes of immigrant adolescents evolve *over time*?
- How does adaptation of immigrant adolescents in two socialization contexts (school, family) evolve *over time*?
- What individual, family, and acculturation factors are related to positive adaptation of immigrant adolescents *over time*?
 - ☞ Focus on school adjustment (normal attendance vs. school failure/drop-out).

Participants (8 high schools in Athens, N=790)

	T1 (2005)	T2 (2006)	T3 (2007)	T1-T3
Albanian	182	179	163	131
Pontian	158	164	133	133
Native Greek	362	362	338	318
1st generation	198	197	170	142
2nd generation	142	146	126	122
Boys	369	371	332	296
Girls	333	334	312	286
Total	702	705	634	582

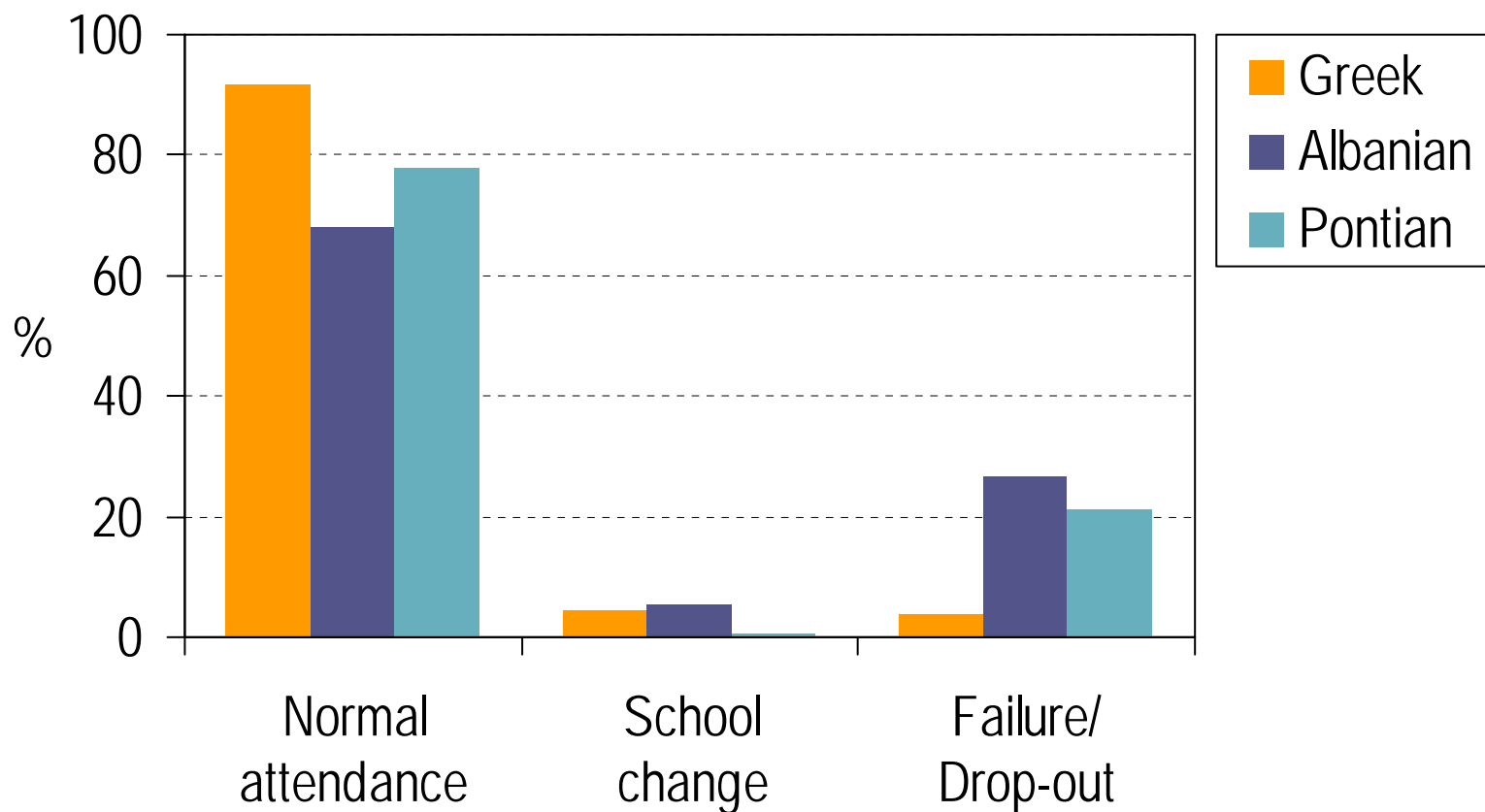
Summary of measures

- **Acculturation.** Ethnic orientation, host-national orientation (Nguyen & von Eye, 2002)
- **Adaptation.** GPA, absenteeism, peer popularity (sociometric), parent-adolescent conflicts (Motti-Stefanidi et al., in prep.)

Summary of findings

- Adaptation of immigrant youth as a two-fold process:
 - ☞ Developmental: similar *change profiles across time* were found for native and immigrants in what concerns school adjustment and family conflicts.
 - ☞ Acculturation: *group mean comparisons* revealed lower school adjustment and lower level of family functioning of immigrants, compared to their native peers.
 - ☞ Contrary to expectations, ethnic orientation of immigrant youth slightly increased over time while their national orientation did not increase (asymmetrical intergroup relations?).

School outcomes of native Greek, Albanian and Pontian adolescents within a 3-year period



$\chi^2(4, n=651)=64.15, p<.001$

Summary: T1 factors related to T3 school outcomes of native and immigrant youth

	Positive (protective)	Negative (risk)
SCHOOL	GPA Peer popularity	School absences (immigrants only)
FAMILY		Family conflicts
CULTURAL	2nd generation immigrants National orientation	Immigration Ethnic orientation

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Pavlopoulos, V., Besevegis, E., & Georganti, A. (2010, May). *Personal and ethnic identity of immigrant youth in relation to their level of psychological adaptation*. Paper presented at the 12th Biennial Conference of the European Association for Research on Adolescence, Vilnius, Lithuania.

Overarching goals

- Study the processes of psychological and ethnic identity formation of immigrant youth.
- Examine how identity processes relate to psychological adaptation.

Participants

N = 683 adolescents living in 14 areas all over the country

Immigrant status **235** Albanian origin (out of 317 immigrants)
448 native Greek

Generation status **143** first generation (length of stay: M=10.7 yrs)
92 second generation (born in Greece)

School grade **390** 3rd Junior High School (age: M=14.9 yrs)
293 2nd Senior High School (age: M=16.9 yrs)

Gender **327** boys
356 girls

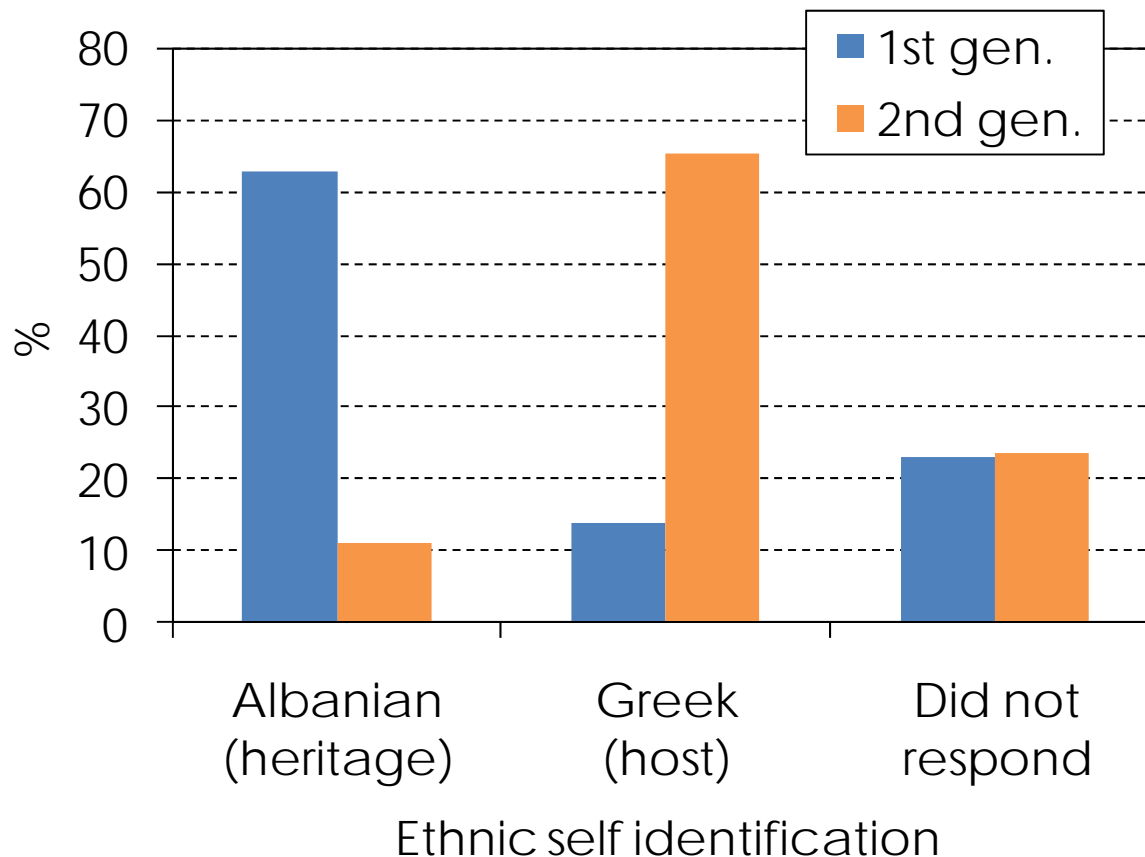
Summary of measures

- **Identity and acculturation.** Ego Identity Process Questionnaire (Balisteri et al., 1995); Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure–R (Phinney & Ong, 2007); Vancouver Index of Acculturation (Ryder et al., 2000, adapted).
- **Psychological adaptation.** Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965); Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener et al., 1985); Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (Hills & Argyle, 2002); Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (Goodman, 1997).

Self labeling of immigrant adolescents

- Ethnic self identification:
 - ✓ 43.1% with country of origin (Albania)
 - ✓ 33.6% with host country (Greece)
 - ✓ 23.3% did not respond
- Significant relationships of ethnic self identification were found with generation status (country of birth).

Ethnic self identification as a function of generation status of immigrant adolescents



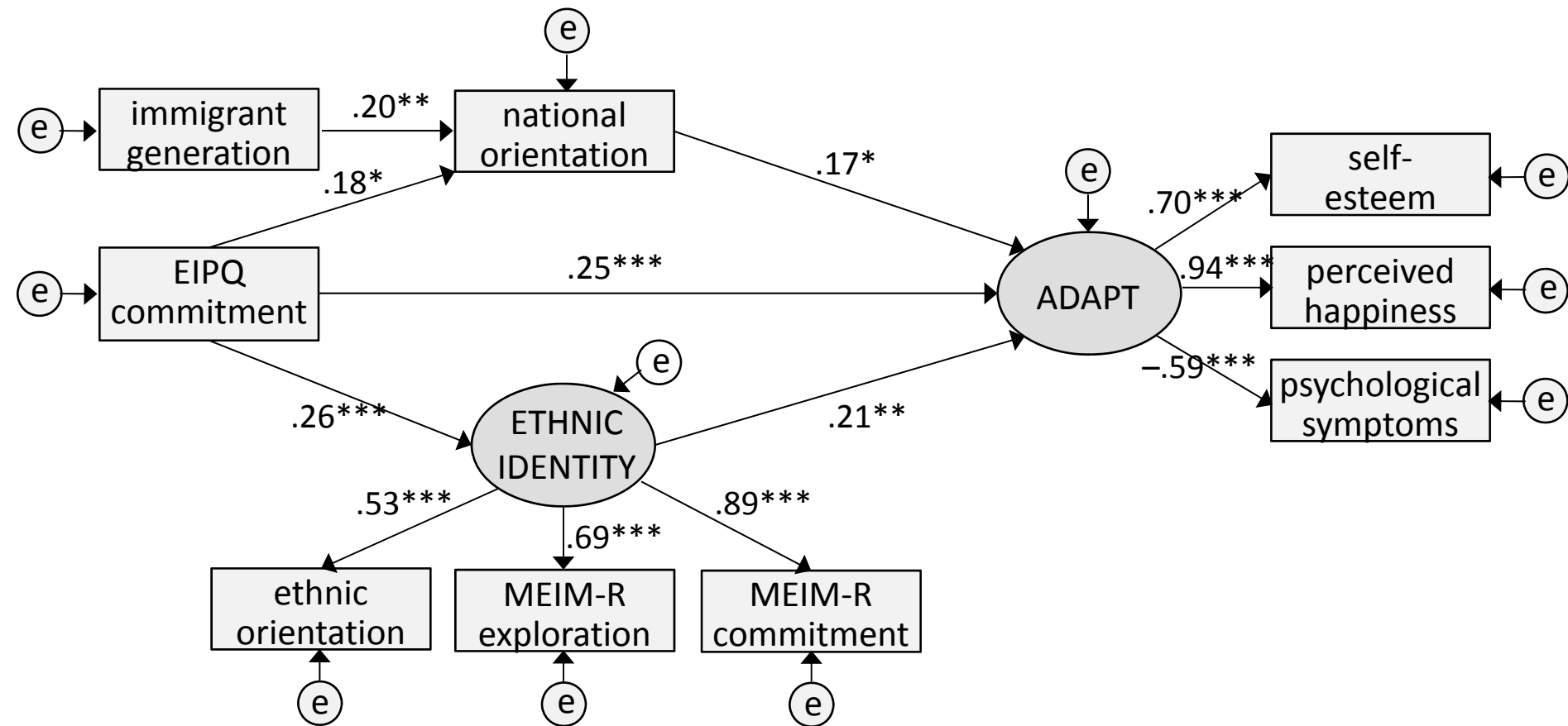
A remarkable shift of ethnic self identification towards the host culture is noted from first to second generation of Albanian immigrant youth.

$$\chi^2(2, n = 232) = 76.77, p < .001$$

Dimensions of psychological adaptation

- Self-esteem, perceived happiness and psychological symptoms did not vary as a function of:
 - ✓ immigrant status
 - ✓ immigrant generation (country of birth)
 - ✓ gender
 - ✓ school grade

Mediation of ethnic identity and acculturation in the relationship between personal identity and psychological adaptation (modified model)



$\chi^2=26.33$, $df=19$, $p=.121$, $CFI=.98$, $RMSEA=.041$

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General discussion

- Emphasis on similarities between immigrant and native youth, rather than on differences (no data available for adults).
 - ☞ Education as a normative socialization agent in the double challenge of development and acculturation (Fuligni, 1997; Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2010).
- Second generation immigrants tend to identify themselves in terms of the host culture. This could be due to assimilation pressures in the school context (Berry, 2006), esp. in Greece (Paleologou, 2004).
 - ☞ However, ethnic identification didn't seem to have a direct impact on psychological adaptation.

General discussion

- Host-national orientation (as compared to ethnic orientation) appears to be a more important determinant of immigrant adaptation, esp. in the sociocultural domain) for both adults and adolescents.
- In addition, ethnic orientation and identification with one's ethnic group significantly contributed to overall positive psychological adaptation of immigrants.
- ☞ In line with other empirical evidence (e.g., Berry et al., 2006; Roberts et al., 1999), the above findings combined suggest that immigration policies should promote integration rather than assimilation.

Limitations and future directions

- Causal models not to be established with cross-sectional studies. Longitudinal designs are more appropriate.
 - ☞ Continuation of the AStRA project with longitudinal data and multilevel analyses (papers in progress).
- Need to define adaptation indices as a point of reference for future research. Also, necessary to take context into account (e.g., attitudes of the receiving society).
 - ☞ Large-scale study in progress with representative national samples of immigrants (N=2000) and natives (N=600).

Limitations and future directions

- Caution is recommended in making inferences about the population since different immigrant groups may vary considerably in terms of demographics and psychological processes.
- Collaboration among researchers of related disciplines.
- Challenging society: interaction with a wider audience (e.g., journalists, state officers, everyday people) can be equally important and misleading.
 - ☞ Misinterpretation or exploitation of research findings in order to serve political or ideological purposes.



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Thank you for your attention!



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