

Acculturation Processes and Competence of Immigrant Youth of Different Ethnic Minority Groups

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Key issues in the adaptation of immigrant adolescents

- **Acculturation:** Refers to changes that result from contact with two distinct cultures. Focuses on the pressure of the larger society. May result in different styles of adaptation, i.e. acculturation strategies.
- **Ethnic identity:** Refers to identification with one's ethnic group. Focuses on the pressure to maintain cultural heritage. Can be seen as part of social identity. Has also developmental aspects.
- **Competence:** Refers to the quality of adjustment of adolescents. Depends on the way they resolve the challenges of their developmental stage, as set by societal and cultural factors.

Acculturation strategies (Berry, 1990, 1997)

Ethnocultural groups Larger society		Heritage culture identification	
		YES	NO
Host culture identification	YES	Integration Multiculturalism	Assimilation Melting pot
	NO	Separation Segregation	Marginalization Exclusion

- 👍 Integration (and assimilation, to a lesser extent): in general, the mostly preferred and most adaptive strategies.
- 👎 Marginalization (and separation): links with psychological maladjustment and psychosomatic problems.

Stages of ethnic identity acquisition (Phinney, 1990)

Unexamined identity	Lack of interest in ethnicity (<i>Difusion</i>) Views of self based on others (<i>Foreclosure</i>)
Identity search	Involvement in exploring to understand meaning of ethnicity for oneself
Achieved identity	Clear sense of one's own ethnicity

- ☞ Positive psychological outcomes are associated with the achievement of ethnic identity.
- ☞ However, the centrality and content of ethnic identity may vary across ethnic groups due to historical factors.

Research questions and hypotheses

- Explore the effects of **acculturation strategy** and **ethnic identity** (IVs) on **competence** of immigrant adolescents:
 - ⇒ **Main effects** of IVs are expected, i.e. integration and identity achievement are hypothesized to be related with best outcomes in terms of adolescents' competence,
 - ⇒ **HOWEVER**, if acculturation processes have a varying impact on adolescents of different origin, then **interaction** of IVs **by ethnicity** is expected to be **MORE** informative than main effects.

Participants

- $N = 450$ immigrant adolescents
- 49.3% boys
50.7% girls
- 50.9% Pontic remigrants
30.2% Albanian immigrants
18.9% second generation immigrants
- 27.1% High School 1st (mean age = 12.8 yrs)
31.1% High School 2nd (mean age = 13.9 yrs)
41.8% High School 3rd (mean age = 14.9 yrs)

Measures of competence

- **School** competence:

- ⇒ School grades (mean of 5 subjects)

- ⇒ Hours of absence from school (from school records)

- ⇒ Teachers' ratings on:

- (a) academic competence (7 items, $\alpha = .88$),

- (b) non-disruptive behavior (3 items, $\alpha = .89$), and

- (c) agreeableness (3 items, $\alpha = .78$).

- **Peer** competence:

- ⇒ A sociometric measure on popularity

- (% of peer nominations relevant to the class size)

Measures of acculturation and ethnic identity

- **Acculturation** strategies (based on Berry, 1980)
 - ⇒ Integration “*I am both [cntry_origin] and Greek*” (34.2%)
 - ⇒ Assimilation “*I am Greek first and then [cntry_origin]*” (38.4%)
 - ⇒ Separation “*I am [cntry_origin] first and then Greek*” (20.4%)
 - ⇒ Marginalization “*I am neither Greek nor [cntry_origin]*” (7.0%)
- Multigroup **Ethnic Identity** Measure (Phinney, 1992)
 - 12 items ($\alpha = .82$); 3 stages of ethnic identity formation:
 - ⇒ Unexamined ethnic identity (33.4%)
 - ⇒ Ethnic identity search (34.6%)
 - ⇒ Achieved ethnic identity (32.0%)

Main effect of acculturation strategy (ANOVA results)

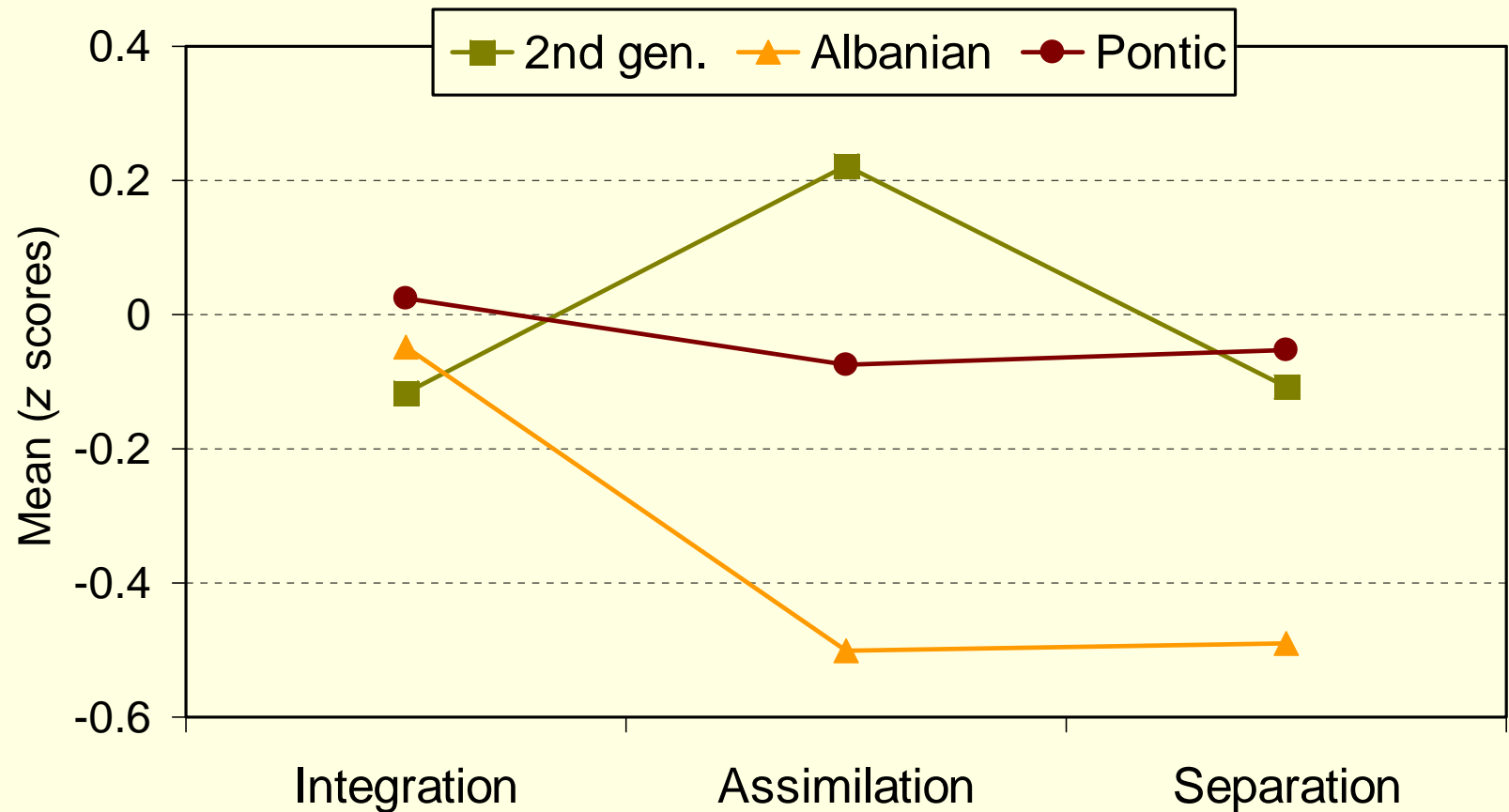
- On **school competence**:

$F(2, 305) = .42, p = .653$, non significant

- On **peer competence**:

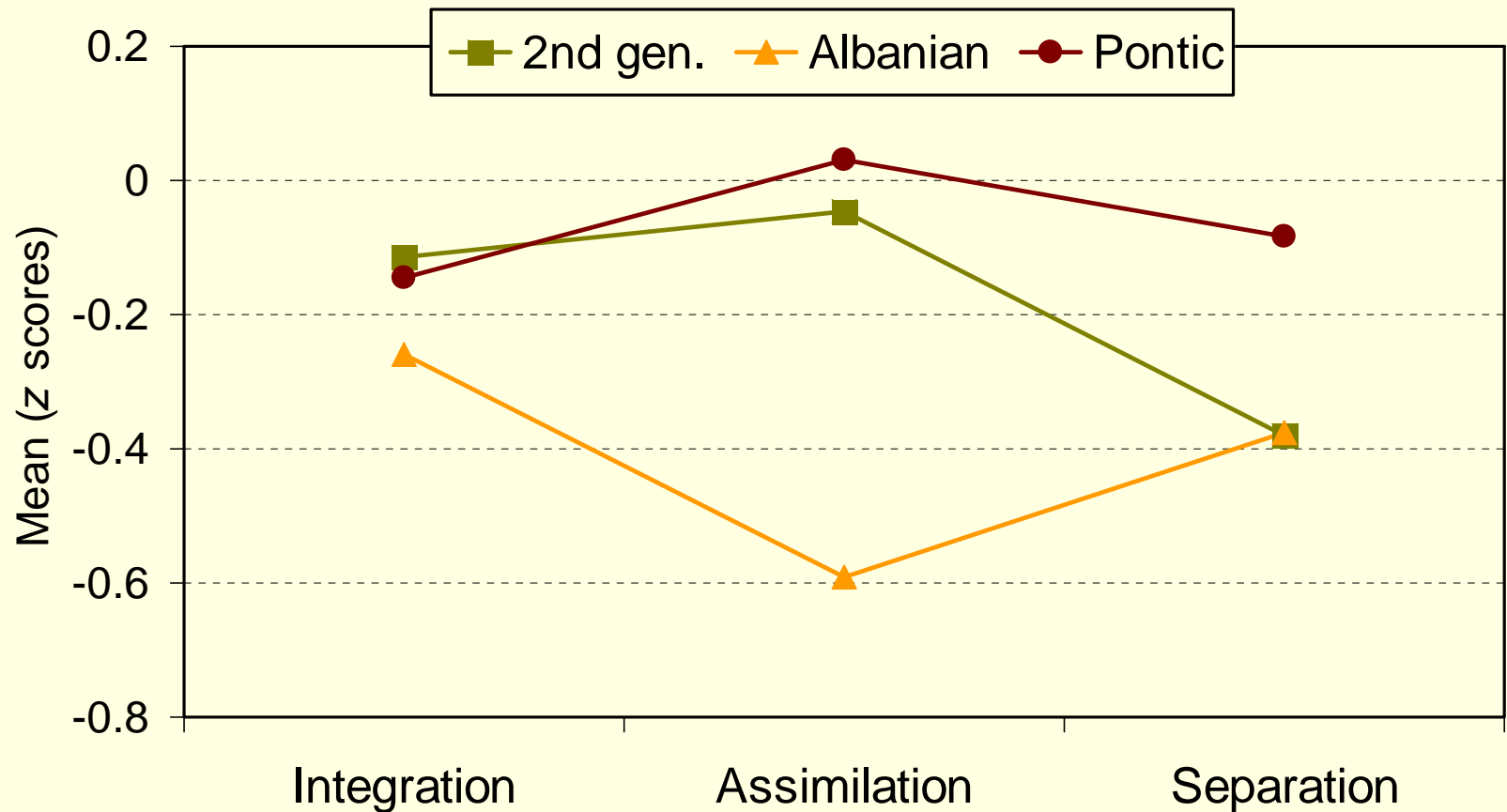
$F(2, 317) = .22, p = .807$, non significant

Interaction of acculturation strategy by ethnicity on school competence



$F(6, 305) = 2.80, p = .012$

Interaction of acculturation strategy by ethnicity on **peer** competence



$F(6, 317) = 2.32, p < .033$

Main effect of ethnic identity (ANOVA results)

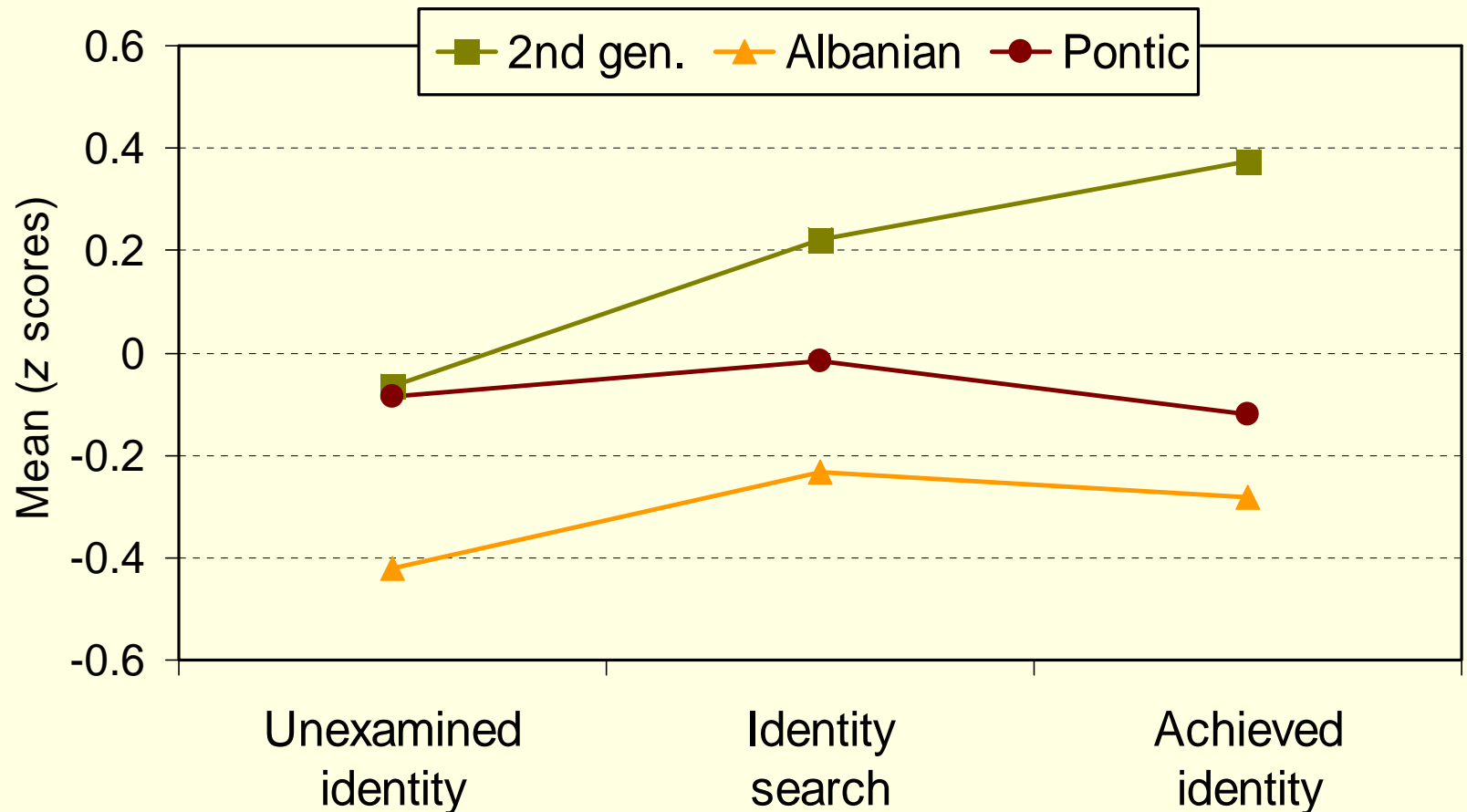
- On **school competence**:

$F(2, 391) = 1.62, p = .199$, non significant

- On **peer competence**:

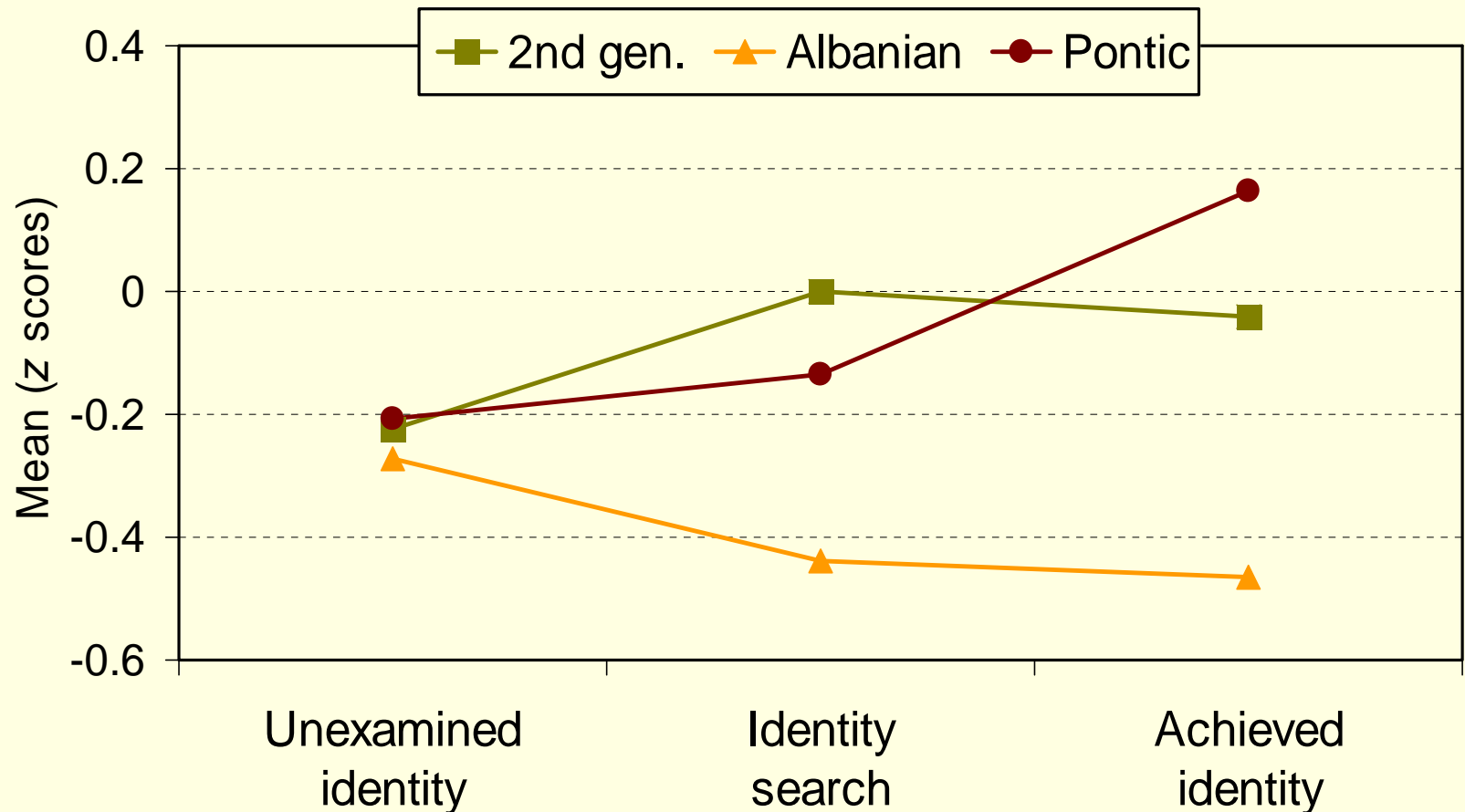
$F(2, 407) = .67, p = .510$, non significant

Interaction of ethnic identity by ethnicity on school competence



$F(6, 391) = 3.24, p < .004$

Interaction of ethnic identity by ethnicity on **peer** competence



$F(6, 407) = 3.31, p < .003$

Conclusions: Acculturation strategies

- The main effect of acculturation strategy on school and peer competence of immigrant adolescents was found to be non significant.
- BUT, all interaction terms of acculturation strategy by ethnicity were significant:
 - ⇒ **integration** was related to an adequate level of competence in a similar way for all ethnic groups,
 - ⇒ **assimilation** was linked to best outcomes for 2nd generation immigrants and to worst for Albanians,
 - ⇒ **separation** proved to be less negative for Pontic remmigrants than it was for other immigrants.

Conclusions: Ethnic identity

- Again, no significant main effect of the stage of ethnic identity acquisition was found.
- BUT, the interaction of ethnic identity by ethnicity on both school and peer competence was significant:
 - ⇒ the stage of identity acquisition was positively related to competence for **2nd generation immigrants**,
 - ⇒ the same was true for **Pontic** remmigrants, but only as far as peer competence was concerned,
 - ⇒ competence levels of **Albanians** did not seem to be affected by their stage of ethnic identity formation.

Limitations and future directions

- No causal relationships can be inferred since this is a cross-sectional study. Longitudinal research needs to be conducted.
- More elaborated measures of acculturation strategies (variable-based *vs.* *category*-based) might yield a clearer picture.
- The mediating / moderating role of acculturation processes on competence of immigrant adolescents can be further explored by taking into account other variables related to immigration (e.g., attitudes of the host society, perceived discrimination, etc.).