Risk, Resources and Academic Resilience in Albanian Immigrant and Native Greek Adolescents

Vassilis Pavlopoulos, Frosso Motti-Stefanidi
University of Athens, Greece

Jelena Obradović, Ann S. Masten
University of Minnesota, U.S.A

🖱 vpavlop@psych.uoa.gr

13th European Conference on Personality
Athens, Greece, July 22-26, 2006

Athena Studies of Resilient Adaptation

- The **Athena Studies of Resilient Adaptation (AStRA)**: A collaborative project between the Department of Psychology, University of Athens, Greece, and the Institute of Child Development, University of Minnesota, USA, focused on immigrant youth.

- This project is supported by a grant to the second author, which is co-funded by the European Social Fund and National Resources (EPEAEK II-PYTHAGORAS) and, partially, by the Special Account for Research Grants of the University of Athens.

The Greek Study of Immigrant Resilient Adolescents

- The emphasis in our study of immigrant adolescents is on risk examined in a resilience framework, which draws attention to positive outcomes.

- Resilience is defined as a phenomenon reflecting relatively positive adaptation despite experiences of significant adversity or trauma.

Resilience:
Two Distinct Dimensions

Resilience is a superordinate construct subsuming two distinct dimensions:

- Significant risk or adversity to overcome, and

- positive adaptation – the person is "doing okay".

(Luthar, 2006; Masten, 2001)

Risk Factors

- Risk is defined in terms of its contribution to negative or undesirable outcomes.

- Immigration is considered such a risk factor since immigrants have to:

  ⇨ Move from their country of birth and settle in another country, and

  ⇨ live in the host country as a minority.

(Ward, Bochner & Furnham, 2001)

Risk factors tend to co-occur

- Immigrants often also have to face the challenges of poverty (Luthar, 2006)...

- …as well as other risk factors related to adverse economic circumstances, but not the same as SES, e.g. single parenthood, stressful life events (Sameroff, Gutman & Peck, 2003).

Competence

- "Competence refers to a pattern of effective performance in the environment, evaluated from the perspective of development in ecological and cultural context."

  (Masten, Burt & Coatsworth, 2006)

⇨ Peer relationships, academic performance, self-esteem, emotional mood, (absence of) problem behavior are some markers of competence.

Protective Factors

- One of the central objectives of resilience researchers is to identify protective factors that might *modify* in a positive direction the negative effects of adverse life circumstances.

- Different characteristics of and experiences in *families and communities* as well as different *child attributes* have been shown to be able to modify in a positive direction the effects of high risk life circumstances.

(Garmezy, 1993; Luthar,2006)

The present study

- It has been shown that Albanian immigrant adolescents attending Greek public schools have serious academic difficulties (Motti-Stefanidi et al., under review).

- However, some Albanian students seem to do well.

- The purpose of this study was to examine individual and family factors that may account for these differences in the academic achievement of Albanian immigrant adolescents.

Importance of the study

- Academic achievement opens the door to higher education as well as to better job opportunities.

- Academic failure may contribute to antisocial behavior or emotional problems in adolescents (Masten, Burt & Coatsworth, 2006).

- The identification of the factors that promote academic achievement in Albanian adolescents will lead to the development of appropriate prevention programs.

Participants

N   300 high-school adolescents

Ethnicity   227 native Greek
                      73 immigrant Albanian

Gender   128 boys

                 172 girls

Age (years)   Mean = 13.0, Std.Dev. = 0.8
                 min = 12.0, max = 14.6

Albanian adolescents

- Economic immigrants.

- All born in Albania (1st generation).

- Some are of Albanian origin while others are of Greek origin (Northern Epirus)…

- …but it is difficult to separate the two groups.

Competence and Adversity Measures

Academic Competence

- **School Grades** (mean of 5 subjects)

Adversity

- **Negative Life Events** (sum of 11 items, adapted from Fthenakis & Minsel, 2002)

- **Socioeconomic Status** (sum of 4 items, i.e. family status, density of residence, occupation of father and mother)

- **Immigrant Status**

Resource Measures: Individual attributes

- **Self-Efficacy**
  (Bandura et al., 1996; 55 items, $\alpha = .93$)

- **Locus of Control**
  (Nowicki & Strickland, 1973; 40 items, $\alpha = .69$)

Resource Measures: Family Factors

- **Parental Involvement** (one item rated on a 4-point scale)

- **Family Support** (Besevegis, 2001; 5 items, α = .89)

- **Father Education** (ordinal, 5 levels)

- **Mother Education** (ordinal, 5 levels)

Results I

- Testing for mean differences in the **competence**, **adversity**, and **resource variables** (DVs) as a function of **immigrant status** (Native Greek vs. Albanian) and **gender** (IVs).

  ⇨ Two-way analyses of variance.

Means of academic competence and adversity as a function of immigrant status and gender

	Immigrant Status		Gender	
	GR	ALB	Boys	Girls
	M	*M*	*M*	*M*
Competence				
School Grades	**14.6****	**12.0****	**12.6****	**14.0****
Adversity				
Life Events	2.7	2.9	2.9	2.7
SES	**0.5****	**1.6****	1.0	1.1

* p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001

Means of psychosocial resources as a function of immigrant status and gender

Resources	Immigrant Status		Gender	
	GR	ALB	Boys	Girls
	M	*M*	*M*	*M*
Self-Efficacy	**5.4****	**5.1****	**5.2***	**5.4***
Locus of Control	11.5	12.2	12.1	11.7
Par. Involvement	**2.9*****	**2.0*****	2.4	2.4
Family Support	1.8	1.6	1.7	1.8
Father Education	3.4	3.4	3.3	3.4
Mother Education	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4

* p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001

Results II

- Exploring the nature of the relationships between the **competence**, **adversity**, and **resource variables**.

  ⇨ Pearson Correlations.

Pearson correlations of psychosocial resources, adversity, and academic competence

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.
1.Grade in School	1.00								
2.Self-Efficacy	-.23***	1.00							
3.Locus of Control	.00	-.31***	1.00						
4.Par. Involvement	-.18***	.19***	-.11	1.00					
5.Family Support	-.05	.36***	-.31***	.12*	1.00				
6.Father Education	.01	.10	-.09	.22***	.04	1.00			
7.Mother Education	.00	.08	-.09	.18**	.03	.49***	1.00		
8.SES	.05	-.21***	.11	-.37***	-.11*	-.16**	-.11	1.00	
9.Life Events	.04	-.29***	.26***	-.17**	-.15**	-.12*	-.06	.17**	1.00
10.School Grades	-.12*	.40***	-.26***	.36***	.18***	.23***	.18**	-.42***	-.26***

$* p < .05$; $** p < .01$; $*** p < .001$

Results III

Hierarchical Regressions for the prediction of Academic Competence from Resources and Adversity

▪ In order to test whether the individual and family resources and the adversity indices significantly predicted school grades, a series of hierarchical regressions were conducted, as follows:

⇨ **Step 1:** gender; **Step 2:** grade in school; **Step 3:** resource variable; **Step 4:** SES, life events; **Step 5:** immigrant status; **Step 6:** interaction of resource by immigrant status.

Hierarchical regression for the prediction of academic competence from self-efficacy and adversity

	ΔR^2	β entry	β final
1. Gender	.05***	.21***	.20***
2. Grade in School	.02*	-.13*	-.09
3. **Self-Efficacy**	.11***	.35***	.24***
4. SES	.13***	-.34***	-.24***
Life Events		-.12*	-.13*
5. Immigrant Status	.02**	-.17**	-.17**
6. **Self-Efficacy** X Immigrant Status	.00	-.01	-.01
Total R^2	.33		

* p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001

Hierarchical regression for the prediction of academic competence from locus of control and adversity

	ΔR^2	β entry	β final
1. Gender	.05***	.21***	.20***
2. Grade in School	.02*	-.13*	-.09
3. **Locus of Control**	.06***	-.24***	-.16**
4. SES	.16***	-.37***	-.27***
Life Events		-.14**	-.15**
5. Immigrant Status	.02**	-.18**	-.17**
6. **Locus of Control** X Immigrant Status	.00	-.01	-.01
Total R^2	.31		

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Hierarchical regression for the prediction of academic competence from parental involvement and adversity

	ΔR^2	β entry	β final
1. Gender	.05***	.21***	.20***
2. Grade in School	.02*	-.13*	-.09
3. **Parental Involvement**	.12***	.35***	.14*
4. SES		-.31***	-.24***
Life Events	.12***	-.16**	-.17***
5. Immigrant Status	.01**	-.14*	-.10
6. **Parental Involvement** X Immigrant Status	.00	.09	.09
Total R^2	.31		

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Hierarchical regression for the prediction of academic competence from family support and adversity

	ΔR^2	β entry	β final
1. Gender	.05***	.21***	.20***
2. Grade in School	.02*	-.13*	-.09
3. **Family Support**	.03**	.16**	.09
4. SES	.18***	-.37***	-.27***
Life Events		-.17***	-.18***
5. Immigrant Status	.02**	-.18**	-.18**
6. **Family Support** X Immigrant Status	.00	-.02	-.02
Total R^2	.29		

* *p* < .05; ** *p* < .01; *** *p* < .001

Hierarchical regression for the prediction of academic competence from father education and adversity

	ΔR^2	β entry	β final
1. Gender	.05***	.21***	.20***
2. Grade in School	.02*	-.13*	-.09
3. **Father Education**	.05***	.22***	.17**
4. SES	.17***	-.36***	-.24***
Life Events		-.16***	-.17***
5. Immigrant Status	.03***	-.20***	-.20***
6. **Father Education** X Immigrant Status	.00	-.01	-.01
Total R^2	.31		

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Hierarchical regression for the prediction of academic competence from mother education and adversity

	ΔR^2	β entry	β final
1. Gender	.05***	.21***	.20***
2. Grade in School	.02*	-.13*	-.09
3. **Mother Education**	.04***	.19***	.16**
4. SES	.18***	-.36***	-.25***
Life Events		-.17***	-.18***
5. Immigrant Status	.02**	-.19***	-.20***
6. **Mother Education** X Immigrant Status	.00	-.03	-.03
Total R^2	.31		

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Summary of hierarchical regressions I

- Academic competence (school grades) was predicted in the last step of these separate hierarchical regressions by:

  ⇨ gender, but not grade in school;

  ⇨ five of the six resources independently (except for family support);

  ⇨ both life events and SES; and

  ⇨ immigrant status (except in the analysis where parental involvement was the resource).

Hierarchical regression for the prediction of academic competence from all psychosocial resources and adversity

- In order to test which of the resources and adversity indices significantly predicted school grades, a hierar-chical regression analysis was conducted with all psychosocial resources together, as follows:

⇨ **Step 1:** gender; **Step 2:** grade in school; **Step 3:** individual resources; **Step 4:** family resources; **Step 5:** SES, life events; **Step 6:** immigrant status.

Hierarchical regression for the prediction of academic competence from all psychosocial resources and adversity

		ΔR^2	β entry
Step 6	Gender	.02**	.16***
	Grade in School		-.03
	Self-Efficacy		.19***
	Locus of Control		-.10*
	Parental Involvement		.13*
	Family Support		-.01
	Father Education		.09
	Mother Education		.07
	SES		-.19**
	Life Events		-.09
	Immigrant Status		**-.15****
	Total R^2	.38	

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Summary of hierarchical regressions II

- Academic competence (school grades) was predicted in the last step by:

    ⇨ Gender;

    ⇨ individual resources: Both Self Efficacy and Locus of Control;

    ⇨ family resources: Parental Involvement only;

    ⇨ SES; and

    ⇨ immigrant status.

Discussion and conclusions

- The results replicate the findings reported in the international resilience literature which show that parenting as well as self efficacy and locus of control are important protective factors for youth at risk.

- Family variables are the most important forces that might modify the effects of high risk because the family is not only the most proximal of children's external environments but it is also the most enduring (Luthar, 2006).

Discussion and conclusions

- Individual attributes that play a major role in resilient adaptation under high risk circumstances, are themselves shaped by forces in the environment (Luthar, 2006).

- In the case of Albanians in Greece, immigrant status predicted school grades over and above resources and psychosocial adversity.

- Other factors related to immigrant status, such as low proficiency in Greek or discrimination, may possibly account for the lower school grades of Albanian adolescents.

Limitations and future directions

- No causal relationships can be inferred with a cross-sectional design. Longitudinal data needed.

- Study of other immigrant groups is necessary in order to identify risk and protective factors which account for the resilience of immigrant adolescents, in general.

- Application of more complex data analyses, so that mediation and/or moderation effects of multiple variables can be tested within an integrative model of resilience.