Acculturation of immigrants in Greece: Indications for mutual accommodation

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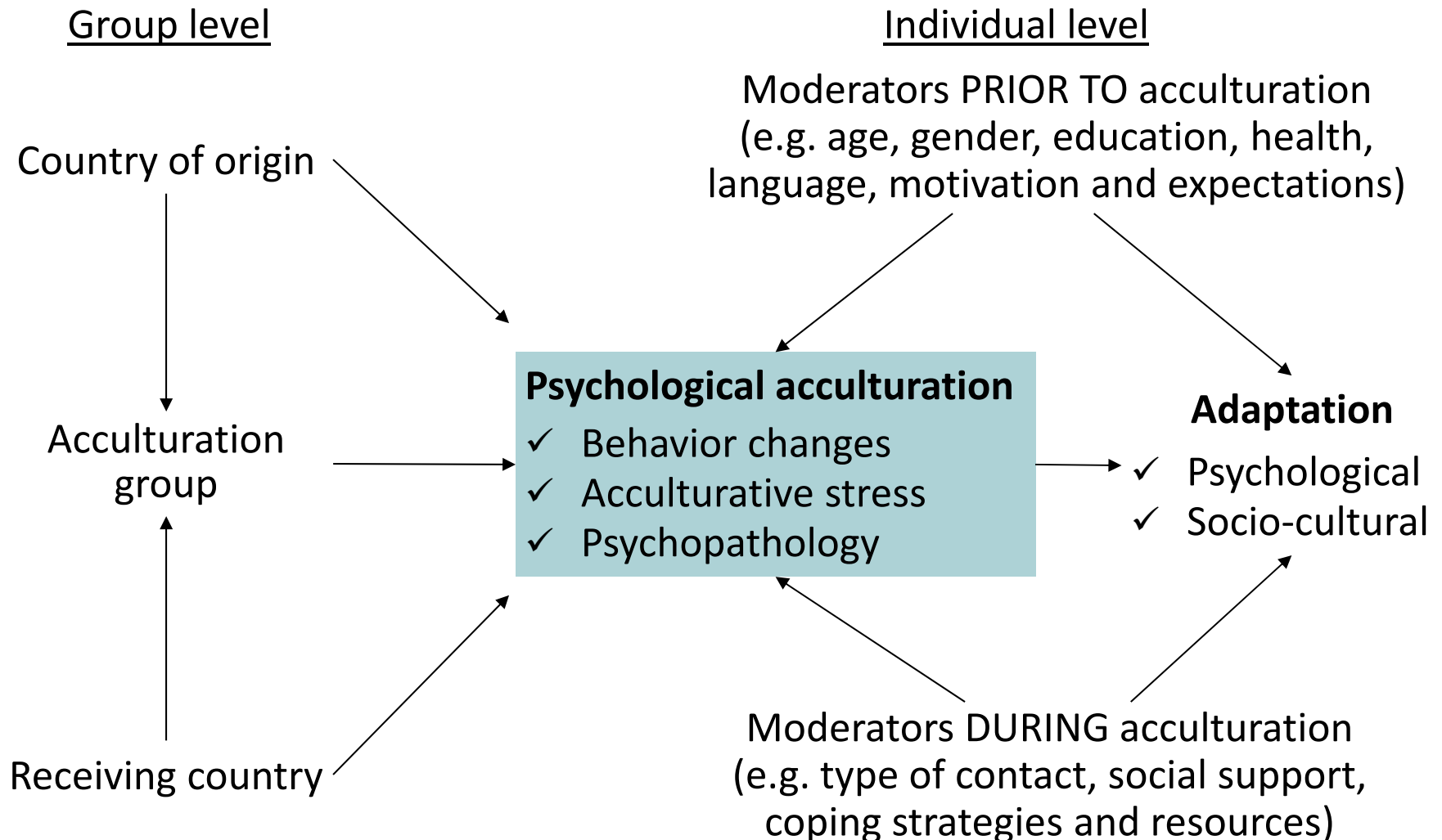*University of Western Macedonia, Greece*

Abstract

Acculturation is defined as a dynamic process of mutual accommodation between immigrants and the native population in the receiving society (Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits, 1936). Although there is an accumulated body of research on acculturation strategies of immigrants, little empirical evidence has been provided concerning mutual accommodation in context. This study presents data from multiple informants in order to explore acculturation of immigrants in Greece as a process of mutual accommodation. Sample consists of 937 primary and secondary education students (166 immigrants from Albania, 322 immigrants from the former USSR, 449 native Greek), 753 parents (151 from Albania, 94 from the former USSR, 417 native Greek) and 86 teachers residing in 4 different areas across the country. Acculturation processes were measured using Nguyen & Von Eye's (2002) scale as well as the revised Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (Phinney & Ong, 2007). Intercultural attitudes and contact scales were based on items drawn from the MIRIPS project, coordinated by John Berry (http://cacr.victoria.ac.nz/projects/research-projects/mirips). Indications for mutual accommodation in context were identified as follows: (a) national orientation of immigrants was higher in areas where lower levels of perceived discrimination were reported; (b) separation and marginalization of immigrants were more prominent strategies in areas where natives reported lower levels of intercultural contact; and (c) acculturation strategies of immigrant youth correlated positively with the respective strategies of their parents. In addition, a discrepancy between general multicultural attitudes and assimilation attitudes in the school context was found among teachers. The implications of the above findings for research and policy will be discussed.

Definition of constructs

- **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).

Theoretical framework for studying acculturation (Berry, 1997, 2006)

Group level

Individual level

Country of origin

Moderators PRIOR TO acculturation (e.g. age, gender, education, health, language, motivation and expectations)

Acculturation group

Psychological acculturation
✓ Behavior changes
✓ Acculturative stress
✓ Psychopathology

Adaptation
✓ Psychological
✓ Socio-cultural

Receiving country

Moderators DURING acculturation (e.g. type of contact, social support, coping strategies and resources)

Acculturation strategies from the side of immigrants and of the receiving society (Berry, 1997, 2006)

Maintenance of heritage culture and identity

$+$ $-$

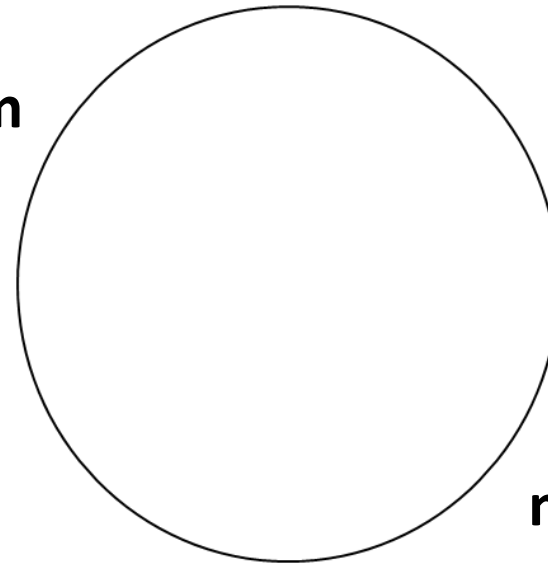Relationships sought among groups

$+$ **integration/ multiculturalism**   **assimilation/ melting pot**

$-$ **separation/ segregation**   **marginalization/ exclusion**

Mutual accommodation

- Intercultural contact inevitably results in some sort of mutual accommodation, i.e., changes that both immigrants and natives need to make at the individual and group levels in order to live together in relative harmony (Berry, 2006).

- Concordant acculturation profiles between immigrants and the host community are assumed to result in consensual relational outcomes. These are further enhanced by state policies of pluralism and civic ideology (Bourhis et al., 1997).

- The interplay between psychological properties of immigrants and the sociocultural context is also acknowledged in the cultural fit hypothesis (Ward & Chang, 1997).

Factors related to mutual accommodation

- In line with the **contact** hypothesis (Allport, 1954), direct social interaction between immigrants and natives reduces hostility and prejudice (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006), though under specific conditions.

- **Multicultural attitudes and ideology** promote integration strategies, as opposed to separation, and reduce levels of perceived threat (Liu, 2007).

- **Perceived discrimination** is associated with increased stress and less willingness to adopt host culture identity (Ward et al., 2001). Negative outcomes are buffered by active host support networks (Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., 2006).

Immigrants in Greece

- Transition from the emigration to immigration experience since the early '90s. The number of immigrants quintupled within 10 years (1991-2001), now reaching 10% of the population.

- More than 120,000 immigrant children and adolescents are enrolled in Greek schools. This number drops significantly in the transition from primary to secondary education.

- About 60% of native Greeks viewed immigration as harmful (Public Issue, 2008). Greece had the second most negative profile in the EU in evaluating immigration (Eurobarometer, 2010).

- Recently (2010), citizenship has become easier, esp. for second generation immigrants.

Research purpose and hypotheses

- Take advantage of the multiple-informant design of the study to explore indications of mutual accommodation in what concerns acculturation of immigrants and members of the host society. Relevant evidence will be sought:
  - ☞ across living contexts (places of residence), and
  - ☞ across age-groups (students *vs*. parents) and generations (first *vs*. second) of immigrants.

- It is hypothesized that acculturation strategies will reflect inter-group relations, as they are captured in intercultural contact and perceived discrimination (horizontal effects).

- Furthermore, vertical acculturation may be traced in parent-adolescent relations and across generation statuses.

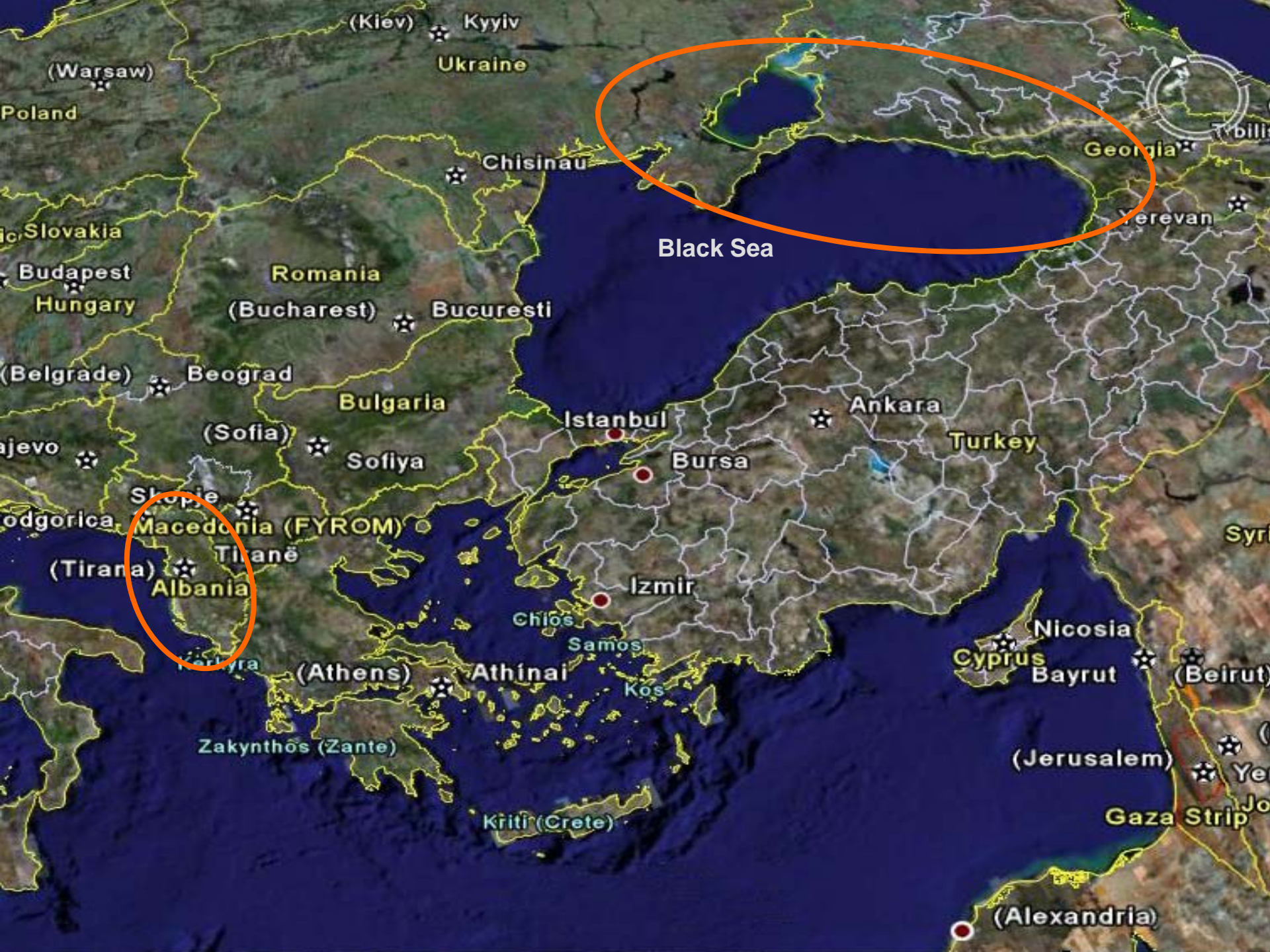# Demographic profile of participants (N=1097 students and 753 parents)

- **Country of origin**

  Students   449 Greece; 166 Albania; 322 former USSR; 92 other

  Parents   417 Greece; 151 Albania;   94 former USSR; 91 other

Participating immigrant groups

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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(N=1097 students and 753 parents)

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- **Immigrant generation status**
  Students   190 first generation; 314 second generation

- **Sex**
  Students   504 male; 510 female
  Parents   199 male; 554 female

- **Place of residence**
  Students   322 Athens; 431 Salonika; 180 Volos; 164 Rethymno
  Parents   65 Athens; 456 Salonika; 125 Volos; 107 Rethymno

Geographic distribution of residence

Measures

Immigrant students and parents

- **Acculturation Scale** (Nguyen & Von Eye, 2002)
  - ☞ Ethnic orientation (11 items, α_{YOUTH}=.90, $\alpha_{PARENTS}$=.88)
  - ☞ National orientation (11 items, α_{YOUTH}=.90 $\alpha_{PARENTS}$=.86)
- **Ethnic Identity** (MEIM-R; Phinney & Ong, 2007)
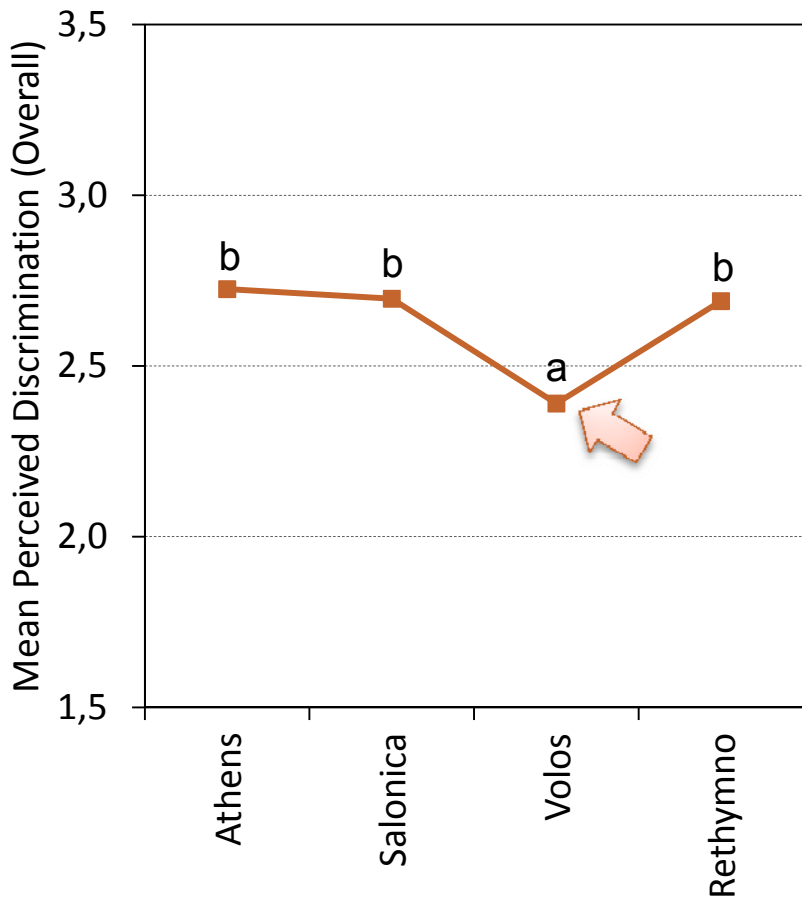 - ☞ Cultural identification (open-ended item)

Native parents

- **Intercultural contact** (Motti-Stefanidi & Pavlopoulos)
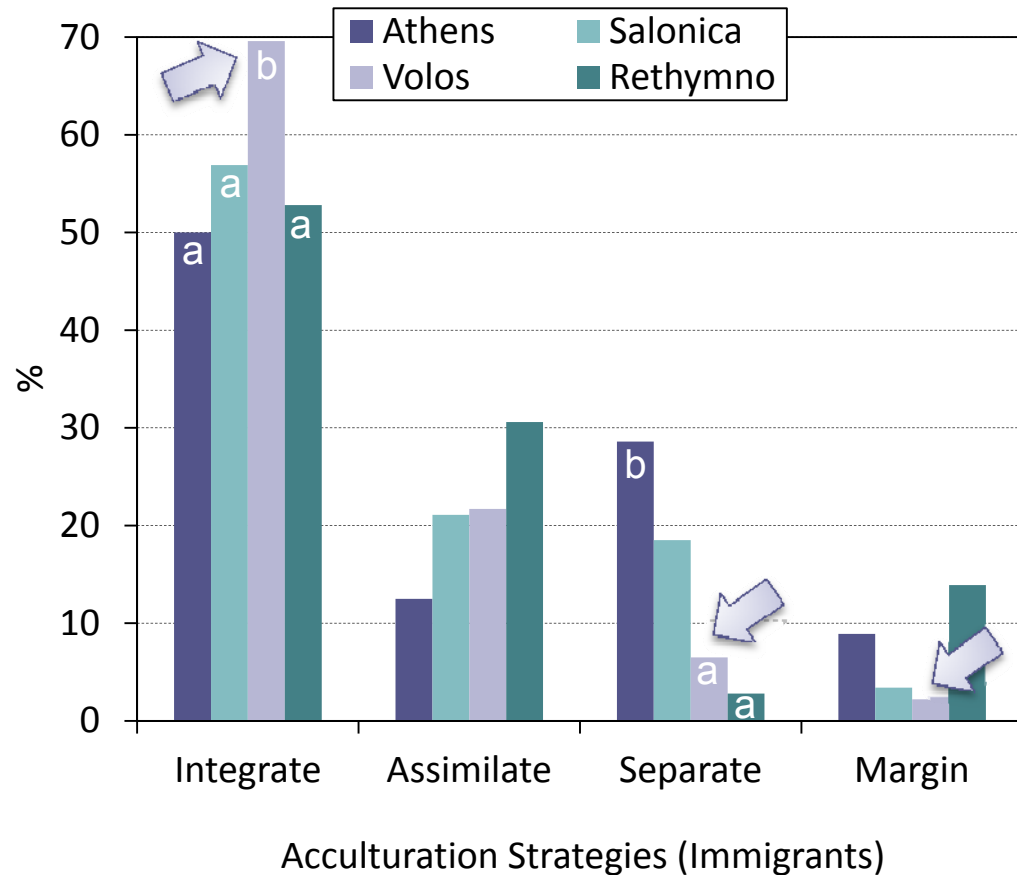 - ☞ 3 items, α=.78

Immigrant and native students

- **Perceived Discrimination** (Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2008)
  - ☞ 3 items, α=.66

Perceived discrimination (overall) and acculturation strategies (immigrant youth) by place of residence
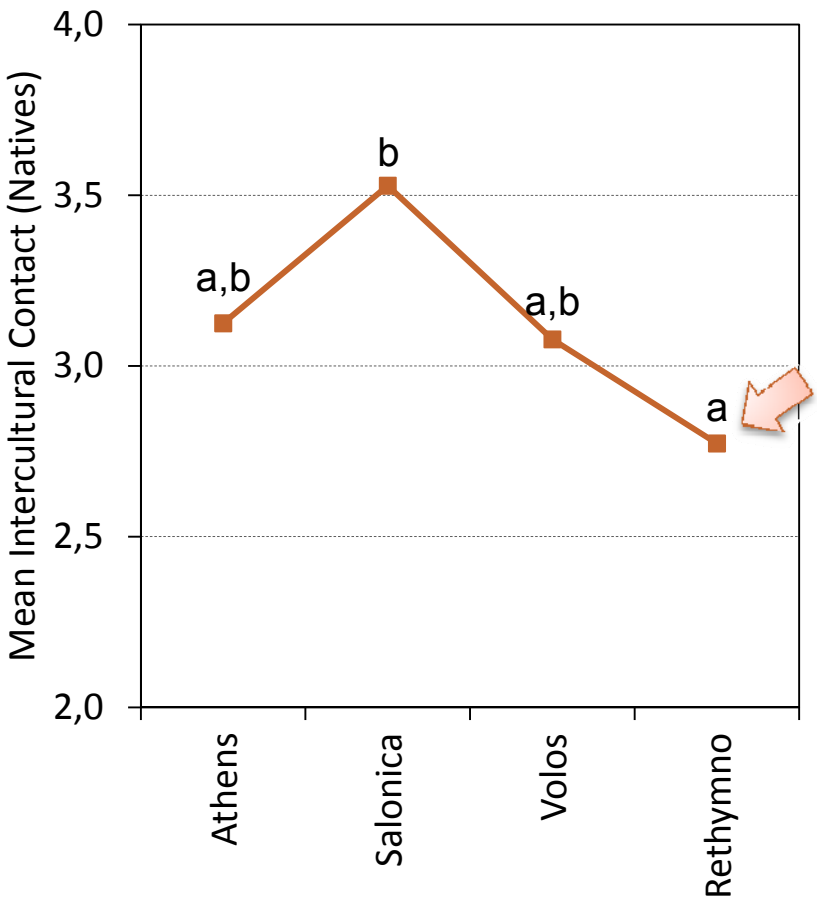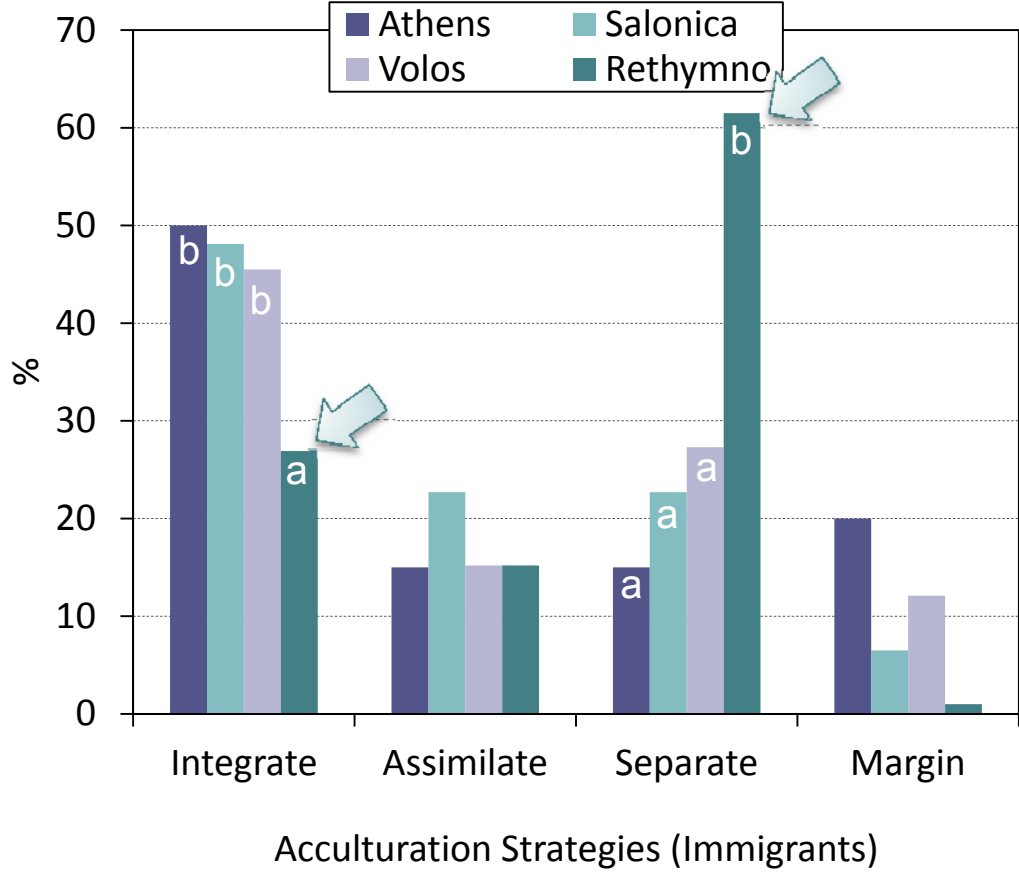

$F(3, 987)=3.62, p=.013$

$\chi^2(9, N=538)=38.69, p<.001$

Intercultural contact (native parents) and acculturation strategies (immigrant parents) by place of residence
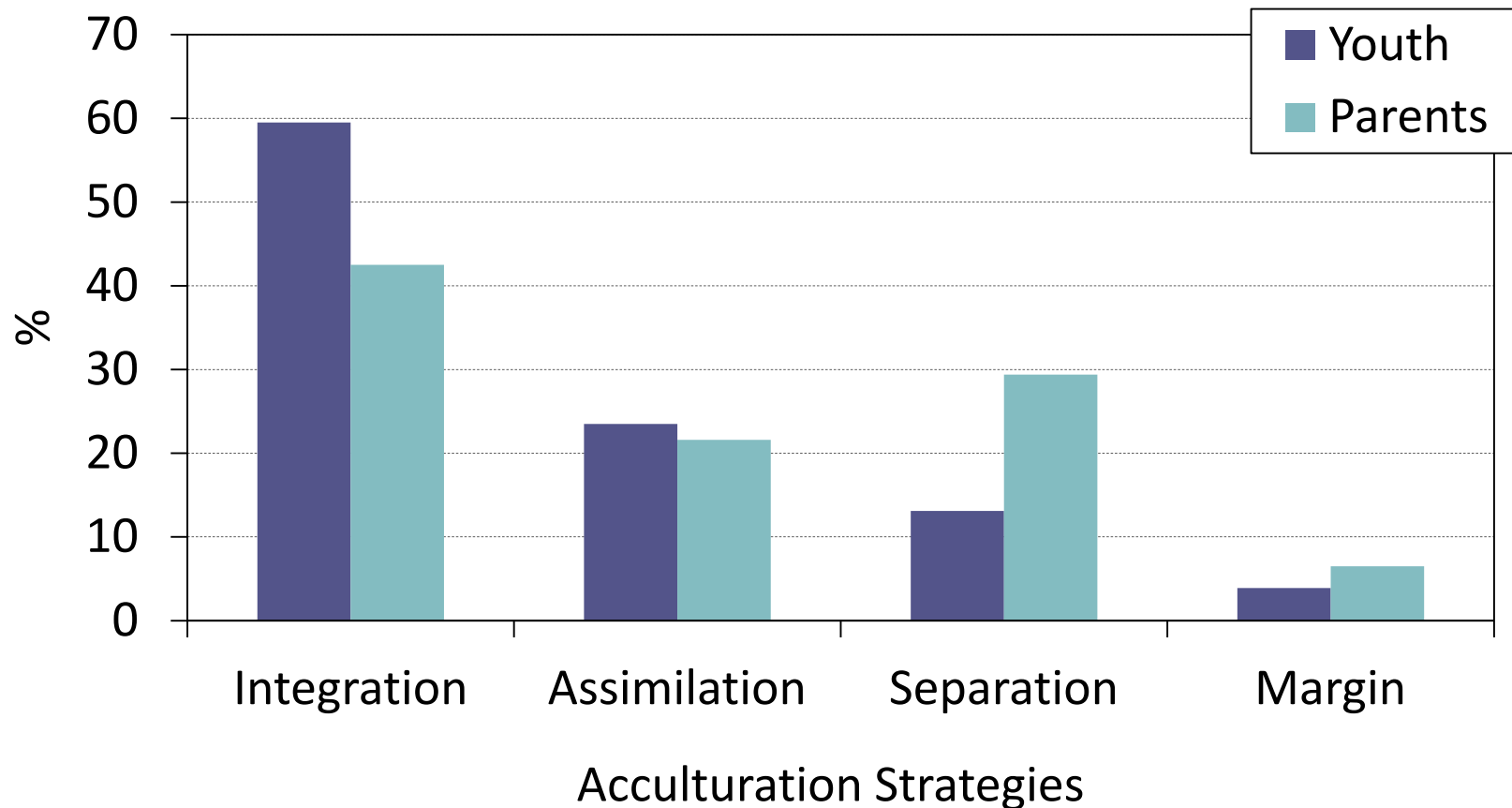

F(3, 380)=8.64, p<.001
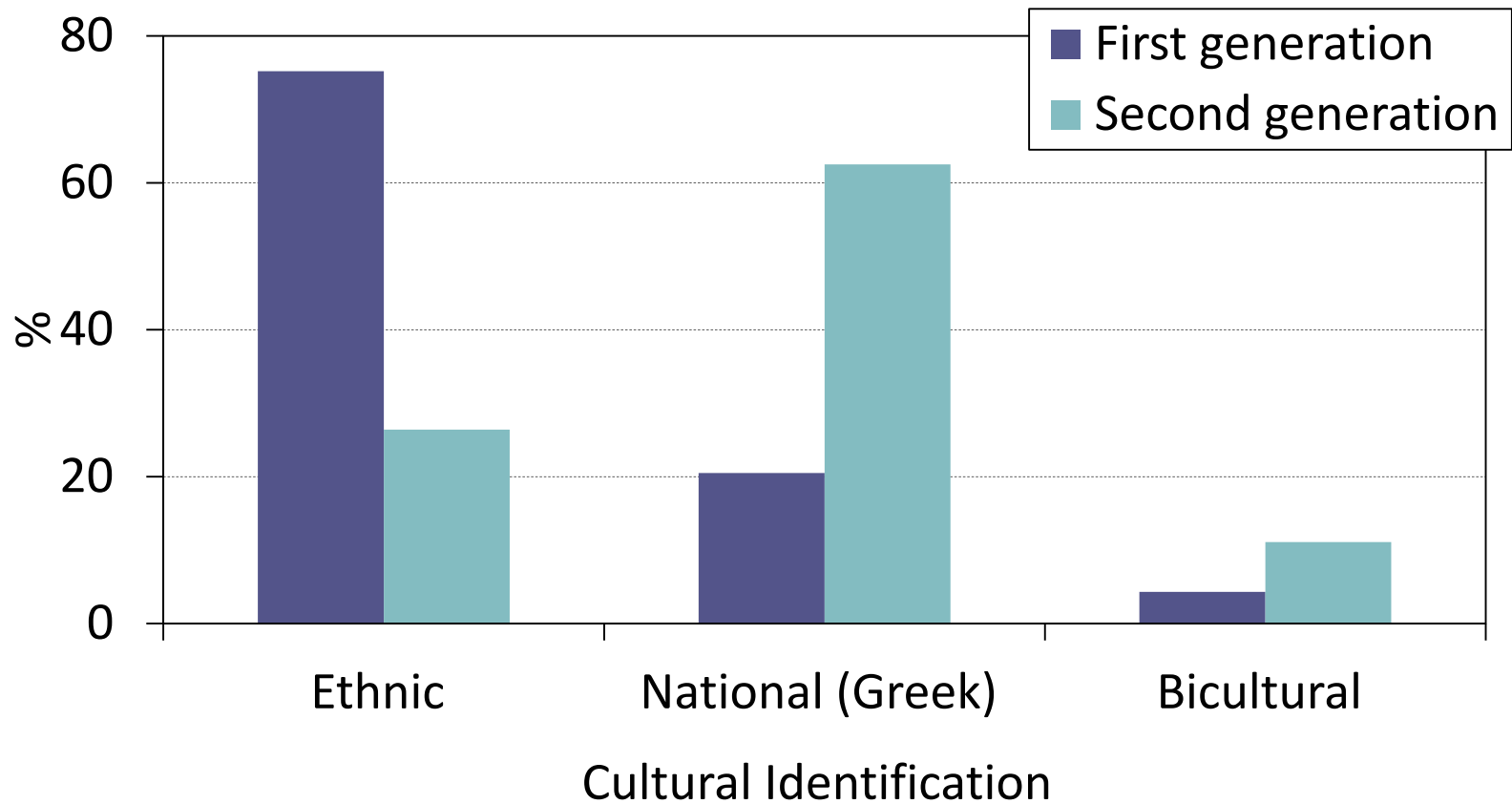
χ²(9, N=295)=26.46, p=.002

Acculturation strategies of immigrant youth compared to their parents

$\chi^2(2, N=153)=22.61, p=.007$

Cultural identification of immigrant youth by generation status

$\chi^2(2, N=457)=101.12, p<.001$

Summary and conclusions

- Four indications of mutual accommodation through horizontal and vertical acculturation processes were traced:

  ☞ Separation was lower and integration was higher for immigrant youth in contexts where levels of **perceived discrimination** were reported to be lower.

  ☞ Separation was higher and integration was lower for immigrant parents in contexts where frequency of **intercultural contact** was reported to be lower.

  ☞ Acculturation strategies of **students** appeared to vary in parallel to those of their **parents**, with a trend towards higher integration and lower separation for students.

  ☞ **Second generation** immigrant youth identified clearly with the host (Greek) culture, whereas the opposite holds true for their **first generation** peers.

Summary and conclusions

- Our findings provide support for Berry's (2006) schema of cultural transmission, i.e., horizontal, vertical, oblique.

- However, the causality of effects is not easy to establish: is it from the host country to immigrant groups, or from parents to their children? Mutual accommodation implies reciprocal relationships:

  ☞ According to the interactive acculturation model (Bourhis et al., 1997) immigrant acculturation orientation may directly influence the attitudes of the host majority.

  ☞ Similarly, children may well influence their parents since they acculturate to the receiving society at a faster rate than do their parents (Birman, 2006).

Future directions

- Our findings are not in accordance to stereotypical views of the Greek society as xenophobic and suggest that the role of context should be taken into closer account.

- Contextual effects to be studied in the light of interdisciplinary models of immigrant youth adaptation (e..g, Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2010).

- Causality explored through longitudinal designs (e.g., Motti-Stefanidi & Asendorpf, 2012; Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2011).

- Multi-group, multiple-informant data suitable for applying multilevel analyses, such as HLM (Nezlek, 2008).

- Empirical evidence on mutual accommodation in multi-cultural societies necessary for developing interventions and policies, which is always an issue of social relevance.

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