Chapter 3

Acculturation Patterns and Adaptation of Immigrants in Greece

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Abstract. The purpose of the present study was to explore the acculturation patterns of immigrants in Greece in relation to their economic and psychological adaptation. The following research questions were examined: How do immigrants adapt to the host culture? How do they deal with the multiple pressures and challenges of "culture shock"? What is the relationship between acculturation strategies and the quality of adjustment? The sample consisted of 601 immigrants (43% women) from 35 nationalities who resided in urban and rural areas in the host country (mean length of stay: 8 years). Results indicated that levels of adaptation varied according to the cultural distance hypothesis, with immigrants from Europe and the Balkans doing better than immigrants from sub-Sahara African and Islamic countries. Most immigrants chose to integrate (46%); 21% assimilated; 25% were separated; and 8% reported an individualistic profile. Acculturation strategies were related to the quality of adaptation, i.e. integration and assimilation yielded the most positive outcomes and separation the most negative. Length of stay in the host country had an indirect effect on adaptation through the acculturation variables. Implications of findings for policy making are discussed.

Keywords. Acculturation, adaptation, immigration

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Introduction

Population movements within or across nations, societies or cultures have been as old as the history of human kind. In the light of advances in communication pathways and the tendency towards globalization, immigration represents a major challenge for many societies as well as a controversial issue involving legal, economic, demographic, educational, social and psychological aspects, to name but a few.

In the psychological literature, the term "acculturation" has been used to summarize the phenomena which are related to immigration and intercultural contact in plural societies ([1]; see also [2], for an in-depth review). Early conceptualizations considered acculturation as a unidimensional, bipolar dimension in which the individuals are confronted with the opposing pressures of their ethnic group towards cultural maintenance, on the one hand, and of the host society towards assimilation, on the other. Recent research, however, has shown that ethnic involvement and host-national involvement tap two separate, relatively independent dimensions in the course of acculturation. The latter is viewed as a developmental process as well as an intergroup – rather than an interpersonal one [3]. Adaptation refers to the sociocultural and psychological (attitude and behavior) changes that result from acculturation. It is argued that the study of the acculturative processes is necessary in order to better

understand findings from research on immigration, which are often inconclusive or even contradictory [4].

In a 1918-2003 review, Rudmin (2003) [5] describes more than 100 taxonomies of acculturation constructs. A widely used framework is provided by Berry [1, 6]. This includes country level as well as psychological variables. Psychosocial mediators or moderators of adaptation are traced among factors that existed before immigration (e.g., structural elements of the country of origin or sociodemographic characteristics of individuals) and among factors that emerge during acculturation (e.g., length of stay in the host country, group stereotypes, perceived discrimination). In this process, two questions are of specific interest for immigrants: (a) how important is it to maintain heritage culture and identity? and (b) how important is it to maintain contact with larger society? The combined answers to the above questions result in four acculturation strategies, namely integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization. From the perspective of the larger society, these correspond to multiculturalism, melting pot, segregation, and exclusion, respectively.

The purpose of the present chapter goes beyond a detailed description of Berry's model of acculturation. It is sufficient to note here that, despite various reservations (see for example the commentaries on Berry's target article in Applied Psychology: An International Review [1]) and proposed modifications (e.g., [7]), Berry's bidimensional model has been influential, inspiring a large number of studies. There is now enough evidence that acculturation patterns are related to adaptation. For example, the best outcomes have been widely reported for integration and the worst for marginalization while assimilation and separation strategies are usually placed at an intermediate level [1, 6]. The study of the complex interactions of acculturation with context variables, such as cultural diversity, types of constituent groups, attitudes, and government policies, is a real challenge in current psychological research on immigration.

The present study

Greece has been sending immigrants all over the world for the most part of the past century. This situation started to change in the early 1970s when some of these emigrants for various reasons came back to their homeland. In the late 1980s a large number of immigrants, mainly from Albania but also from other neighbouring countries of former communist regimes, entered the country. This transition from an emigration to an immigration experience is evident in the number of immigrants, which quintupled in the 1990s [8]. According to the national census of 2001, immigrants account for 7% of the total population, but the proportion of undocumented immigrants is calculated to be of similar size [9]. Moreover, about 100,000 immigrant children and adolescents are enrolled in Greek schools [10]. These numbers do not include Pontian remigrants of Greek origin from the former Soviet Union, who are given full citizenship status and are estimated to number about 160,000 [11].

This study is part of a larger project of the World Bank and it was assigned to the University of Athens through the Hellenic Migration Policy Institute (www.imepo.gr). Its purpose was to examine adaptation in relation to acculturation patterns of immigrants, thus addressing an issue not adequately covered in the Greek psychological literature. Previous research has focused on immigrants of the diaspora returning to Greece (e.g., [12, 13]). Also, a number of recent studies examined the levels of competence in immigrant children (e.g., [14]) and adolescents (e.g.[15]) but not in adult immigrants, as it was done in the present study. So, our research questions and the respective hypotheses were formatted as follows:

(a) What is the level of adaptation of immigrants in Greece? Data collected for this study allowed for the examination of two domains of adaptation, i.e., socio-economic and psychological. Since there was no control group of native Greeks, this question was examined across ethnic groups of participants. Levels of adaptation were expected to vary in accordance to the cultural distance between countries of origin and the Greek society [16].

(b) What strategies are adopted by immigrants in order to deal with the multiple challenges of acculturation? Variable-focused (correlations) as well as person-focused techniques (cluster analysis) were used to answer this question. Based on theoretical and empirical grounds, integration was expected to be the most popular strategy. However, assimilation or even separation may be quite frequent, either because of the assimilative policies of the Greek state [16] or due to negative attitudes towards immigrants [17].

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(c) What is the relationship between acculturation strategies and immigrant adaptation? In general, integration and even assimilation were expected to yield the most positive outcomes [1, 6]. A similar (positive) trend was expected between adaptation and length of stay in the host country [18]. These relationships were explored through variable-focused (correlational) analyses. A structural equation model that specifies relations between acculturation and adaptation was also tested.

Method

Participants

A total of 601 immigrants coming from 35 countries took part in the study. Their mean age was 35 years and their mean length of residence in Greece was approximately 8 years. They lived in 7 different areas, both in the mainland (56% in the greater Athens metropolitan area) and on the islands, thus covering an ecologically valid dispersion throughout the country. Women represented 43% of the whole sample. Immigrants' mean education level was slightly above the middle of a 7-point scale ranging from 1="incomplete Primary" to 7="post-graduate degree." Participants were approached through their ethnic associations in different parts of Greece, in State immigration offices, through non government organizations, or after personal contact.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of participants.

Country of Origin	N	Female	Age (yrs)	Length of Stay (yrs)	Education Level
		%	Mean	Mean	Mean
Albania	277	39.4	35.2	9.4	3.6
Former USSR and Eastern Europe	108	66.7	36.3	7.0	4.4
Balkan countries	89	69.7	38.0	6.2	3.8
Islamic countries	50	14.0	36.5	10.4	3.8
Sub-Sahara African countries	46	2.2	24.5	1.7	2.6
Asia	20	10.0	30.1	5.0	4.1
Latin America and the Philippines	7	57.1	43.6	14.6	4.3
Western countries	4	50.0	33.5	14.0	5.8
Total	601	43.1	35.0	7.9	3.8

Note. Education level was measured on a 7-point scale, from 1="incomplete Primary" to 7="post-graduate".

The basic demographic characteristics of participants are presented in Table 1. In this table, countries of origin were grouped into 8 clusters on the basis of geographical and cultural proximity. Almost half of the sample (46%) were from Albania; 15% came from other Balkan countries, mainly Bulgaria, but also Romania, Serbia, and FYROM; 18% came from the former Soviet Union or eastern Europe; 8% were from Islamic countries (Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Iran or Pakistan); 8% were sub-Sahara African (e.g., from Congo, Ethiopia, and Nigeria); 3% were from Asia (China, Sri-Lanka, Bangladesh); 1% were from Latin America (Brazil, Argentina, Venezuela) and the Philippines; finally, 4 individuals were from western countries (USA, Germany, Sweden). These proportions roughly represent the corresponding distribution of ethnic origin of immigrants in Greece [8].

The great diversity in the demographic profile across ethnic groups should be noted. For example, women represent about two thirds of the Balkan immigrants while almost all sub-

Sahara African participants are men. The latter are evidently the youngest group; they also have the lowest level of education and the shortest length of stay in Greece. The Latin Americans have the highest mean age and length of stay. Western and eastern Europeans are the most educated. This variation reflects an ecological reality but, on the other hand, it hinders attempts to disentangle important demographic factors that may account for the similarities and differences across ethnic groups of immigrants. This point will be further addressed in the Discussion section.

Measures and Procedure

Data collection was done through structured interviews by means of a questionnaire for the coding of answers of the respondents. Questions, which were in the most part defined by the World Bank research project, referred to demographic information, immigration motives, decision making regarding immigration, the participants' economic, professional and social status before and after immigration, as well as various aspects related to the everyday immigration experience, e.g., evaluation of pros and cons of immigration, plans for personal and professional development. Selected pieces of the above information, which were relevant to the aims of the present study, were coded into two domains of adaptation, namely socio-economic and psychological, on the basis of the acculturation literature and previous research (e.g [19, 3].

Economic aspects of immigration are considered to be part of sociocultural adaptation that involves the ability of the individuals to deal with daily issues in the host country. Examples of this facet in the questionnaire were: "my economic condition has improved since I moved in this country", "what is your occupational status? [work vs. unemployed]", and "do you plan to get your own job in the future?". Psychological adaptation refers to perceived levels of psychological functioning as well as to subjective and physical well-being. Representative items of this aspect in this study were: "are you satisfied with your life in this country, as compared to your initial expectations?", "I have more freedom and opportunities in this country than in my country of origin", and "I am isolated from my family members".

Questions were coded into dichotomous variables (1="yes or agree", 0="no or disagree"). Positive responses to items with negative content (e.g., decline in occupational status, loss of skills) were given a negative sign (-1). Answers for each domain were then summed up to form the two adaptation indices.

An additional set of questions referred to the frequency of contact with compatriots and the Greeks, as well as to the frequency of use of native and the Greek language. Responses to the above questions were intended to tap the two dimensions of acculturation, i.e., ethnic and host-national involvement [1, 6]. Ratings were given on a 5-point scale, from 1="hardly ever" to 5="almost always".

All interviews were taken on a personal basis. Greek, English, Albanian, and Russian versions of the questionnaires were available for those immigrants who preferred to write down the answers in one of the above languages.

Results

Levels of immigrant adaptation

The information provided by means of the questionnaire of the World Bank was assigned into two domains of immigrant adaptation, namely socio-economic and psychological, as described in the Method section.

The socio-economic adaptation index consisted of the following items (percentages in parentheses correspond to positive responses): occupational status: work vs. unemployment (78%); monthly savings of at least €50 (62%); current work status: permanent vs. part time (61%); improvement of financial status after immigration (53%); plans for professional development (49%); general improvement of economic condition (41%); improvement of occupational status (23%); decline in occupational status (15%); and decline in financial status (13%).

The psychological adaptation index comprised the following items: acquired new skills (82%); level of satisfaction as compared to level of expectations (63%); ability to provide

family support (37%); lost skills (34%); immigration viewed as personal development (29%); isolated from family members (27%); lost networks of social support (25%); enhanced freedom and opportunities (22%); perceived discrimination (16%); and general health problems (4%).

Socio-economic adaptation had a mean score of 3.0 (SD=1.9) with a valid range from -2 to 7. The mean of psychological adaptation was 1.7 (SD=1.4) with a valid range between -3 and 5. These two scores of adaptation domains are not directly comparable since they derive from different measuring scales. So, their transformed z-scores were used in further analyses.
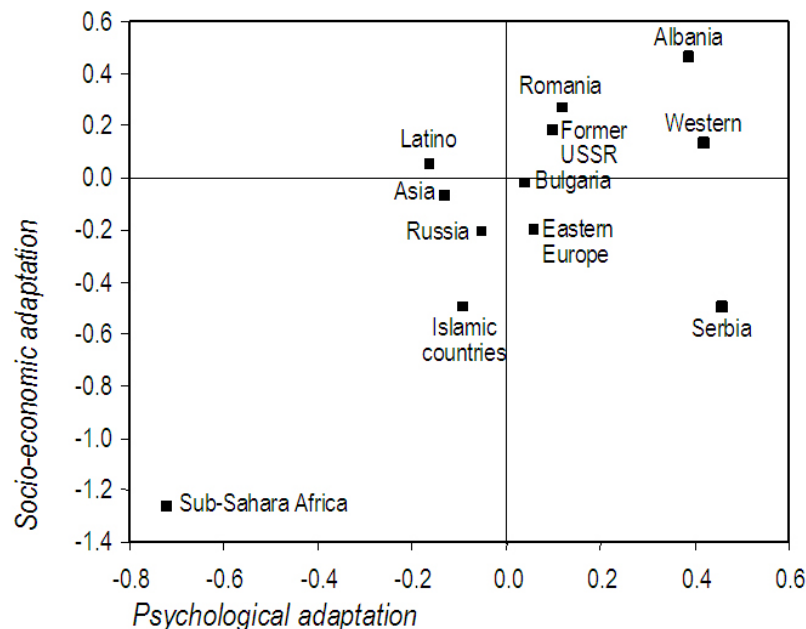

Figure 1. Position of immigrant groups on the socio-economic and psychological domain of adaptation

The position of ethnic groups of immigrants on the socio-economic and psychological adaptation indices is displayed on Figure 1. In this figure the positive correlation between the two domains of adaptation is evident[2], i.e., higher levels of socio-economic adaptation are related to higher levels of psychological adaptation. Individuals from Albania, Romania, western countries, and former USSR had the highest scores. The Serbian group did better in the psychological rather than in the socio-economic domain. The position of Asian, Latino, and Russian immigrants was slightly below the grand mean. Sub-Sahara Africans and, to a lesser extent, participants from Islamic countries clearly had the worst adaptation outcomes of all ethnic groups under study.

This picture was confirmed in direct statistical comparisons[3]: immigrants from sub-Sahara Africa, Islamic countries, and Serbia scored the lowest on socio-economic adaptation; moreover, sub-Sahara Africans had the lowest means on psychological adaptation, followed by immigrants from Islamic, Asian and Latin American countries, even after controlling for length of stay in the host country.

Acculturation strategies

Acculturation was measured on the basis of answers to four items rated on a 5-point scale (see Method): frequency of contact with ethnic group, frequency of contact with the larger (Greek) society, frequency of use of ethnic language, and frequency of use of the Greek language[4]. The

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[2] The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient between socio-economic and psychological adaptation indices equals to .33 (p<.001).

[3] Two one-way analyses of variance were conducted with each of the two adaptation indices as dependent variable and with country of origin as independent factor. Results were significant for socio-economic adaptation, $F_{(7, 592)}=15.32$, p<.001, and for psychological adaptation, $F_{(7, 592)}=2.41$, p=.019. Means were adjusted using length of stay in the host country as a covariate. Post-hoc Bonferroni test was used for multiple comparisons between pairs of means.

[4] Participants reported higher contact with their compatriots (M=3.77, SD=1.22) than with members of the Greek society (M=3.51, SD=1.30), t(595)=3.63, p<.001. They also tended to use their ethnic language (M=4.18, SD=0.94) more frequently than the Greek language (M=3.77, SD=1.27), t(595)=5.62, p<.001. Note, however, that all respective means are above the middle of the 5-point measuring scale, which generally indicates frequent contacts and language use of both countries of origin and settlement.

transformed z-scores of the ethnic contact and language use and of host-national contact and language use were then aggregated to provide two dimensions of acculturation, i.e., ethnic orientation and host-national orientation, respectively. These two scores were found to have a significant negative correlation[5]. This suggests that immigrants with a stronger involvement towards the Greek society tended to be less involved with their own ethnic culture.

Figure 2 shows the positions of ethnic groups of immigrants on the two dimensions of acculturation. Participants from Russia and Eastern Europe scored high on both dimensions, which indicates an integrative approach. Immigrants from Balkan countries generally tended to assimilate, i.e., they had high scores on host-national orientation and low scores on ethnic orientation. Immigrants from sub-Sahara African, Islamic, and Asian countries fell into the separation section, with high scores on ethnic orientation and low scores on host-national orientation. Latinos were placed in the middle point of the two dimensions. It is noteworthy that no ethnic group fell into the marginalization section by exhibiting low scores on both ethnic and host-national orientation.

Cluster analysis (using Ward's method) of the two dimensions of acculturation for the whole sample largely replicated the above pattern. Four clusters were extracted, the profile of three of them clearly corresponding to Berry's acculturation strategies: assimilation (21% of immigrants), integration (46%), and separation (25%). The fourth cluster (8% of immigrants) combined relatively low scores on ethnic and host-national contact with high scores on ethnic and, especially, host-national language use. Instead of marginalization, this cluster may be indicative of either individualism or diffusion. The naming of this group remained to be clarified in further analyses associating acculturation with adaptation (see Results below and Discussion).
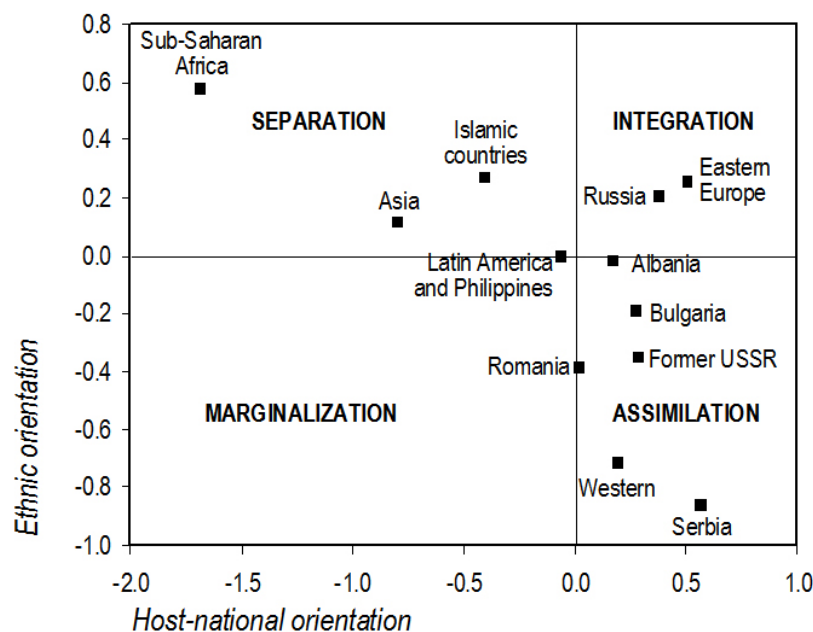

Figure 2. Position of immigrant groups on the ethnic and host-national orientations of acculturation

Length of stay in the host country correlated positively with host-national orientation and negatively, though at a lower degree, with ethnic orientation[6], i.e., the longer participants stayed in Greece, the more involved they tended to be with the Greek society and the less involved with their ethnic culture. In addition, the percentage of integration increased over time (from 31% for 1-5 years of stay to 52% for more than 10 years of stay) while the opposite was true for separation (from 50% for 1-5 years of stay to 8% for more than 10 years of stay)[7].

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[5] The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient between ethnic and host-national orientation was -.22 (p<.001).

[6] The respective correlation coefficients were as follows: length of stay in Greece X host-national orientation: r=.45, p<.001; and length of stay in Greece X ethnic orientation: r=-.13, p=.002.

[7] The chi square test for the association of time spent in the host country (1-5 years, 6-10 years, and more than 10 years) with the four acculturation strategies was significant: $\chi^2(6, n=601)=121.77, p<.001$.

The effect of acculturation strategy on the two adaptation indices was tested, controlling for length of stay in Greece[8]. Results were significant for both socio-economic and psychological adaptation. Post-hoc comparisons revealed that separated immigrants scored significantly lower in the two analyses. The means for the remaining three acculturation strategies did not differ significantly from each other, although integration and assimilation had the highest scores and individualism/diffusion was placed around the grand mean.

A structural equation model was also designed, that specifies relations between acculturation and adaptation. In this model two latent variables were used to account for acculturation and adaptation, respectively. As expected, acculturation was positively related to host-national orientation and negatively related to ethnic orientation. The latent adaptation factor was positively related to the socio-economic as well as to the psychological domain. The path from acculturation to adaptation was also significant. The fit indices for this solution were satisfactory. However, the data seemed to provide best support for the model when length of stay in the host country was included for the prediction of acculturation[9]. The optimal model is presented in Figure 3. An alternative model, with length of stay in the host country predicting adaptation, was rejected because the respective path coefficient was not significant and the fit statistics for this solution were far from acceptable. Thus, length of stay in the host country proved to have an indirect, rather than a direct, effect on adaptation through the mediating role of acculturation.
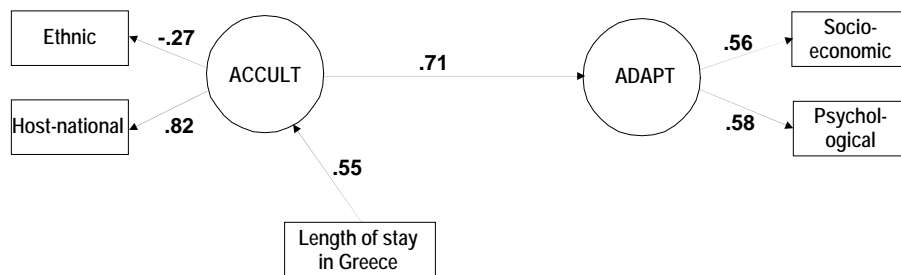

Figure 3. Structural equation model specifying relations between acculturation, adaptation, and length of stay in the host country

Discussion

The present study aimed at exploring adaptation levels, acculturation patterns, and the relationship between acculturation and adaptation of adult immigrants living in Greece. As it was hypothesised, such a relationship was confirmed. Adaptation was found to correlate positively with host-national involvement and negatively with ethnic involvement. Moreover, the acculturative strategies of integration and assimilation had the most favourable outcomes, while separation was related to low levels of adaptation, independent of country of origin and controlling for length of time in the host country. These results are in line with previous research (e.g., [1, 6]) suggesting that psychological processes involved in the course of intercultural contact may mediate the effect of sociodemographic factors on immigrant adaptation.

According to the social identity theory [20], integrated individuals may have access to resources from both their ethnic ingroup as well as the larger society in a way that protects them from self-threatening experiences in social comparisons. Assimilation can also be adaptive since it facilitates contact with the dominant culture [19]. The acculturation strategy of separation, in particular, calls for special attention in this study. Not only it corresponded to 1 in every 4 participants, but it also produced the worst outcomes in what concerns adaptation. It is argued that ethnic orientation can be adaptive during the first phases of living

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[8] Two one-way analyses of variance were conducted with each of the two adaptation indices as dependent variable and acculturation strategy as independent factor. Results were significant for socio-economic adaptation, $F(3, 596)=16.39$, $p<.001$, and for psychological adaptation, $F(3, 596)=14.16$, $p<.001$. Length of stay in the host country was included as a covariate to adjust group means. Post-hoc Bonferroni test was used for multiple comparisons between pairs of means.

[9] The fit indices for the optimal model were as follows: $\chi^2(4, n=601)=7.07$, $p=.132$, CFI=.99, RMSEA=.036.

in a new country [3]; a strong sense of belonging to an ethnic ingroup may buffer the negative effects of acculturative stress and perceived discrimination. In the long run, however, strong attachment to one's compatriots may prove to be maladaptive. Separated immigrants will face difficulties in their attempt to establish contact with members of the host culture and to acquire basic social skills such as learning the host language or getting a job [21]. This point may have serious implications, not only for immigrants but for the host society as well since the implementation of a specific acculturation pattern is a two-way process, rather than a personal decision based on free choices of individuals. A mutual accommodation [22] may be missing in the Greek society, which is required for more adaptive strategies to be attained by immigrants. This stresses the need for interventions and policies towards multicultural orientation, where the larger society will adapt its institutions to take into account the needs of cultural groups and thus enhance intergroup contact.

The present study was based on a widely accepted theoretical framework, such as Berry's model of acculturation. In addition to that, our research design did not impose the use of specific acculturation profiles but allowed for them to emerge empirically. This led to replication of three (out of the four) well-known strategies of Berry's model. Instead of marginalization, a pattern of behaviour was revealed that is characterized by low frequency of contact with both groups and, at the same time, adequate use of both languages. In their interactive model of acculturation, Bourhis and his colleagues (1997) [7] have argued that the dissociation from sense of belonging in a particular group may not inevitably result in a state of cultural alienation; on the contrary, it could be typical of individualistic values. These immigrants wish to achieve personal goals and to do well in the host country. In more recent work on immigrant youth, Berry et al. (2006) [6] have found a diffused pattern, which resembled marginalization and had the worst outcomes in adaptation terms of all acculturation strategies. Evidently, this profile does not match the fourth acculturation cluster in our study since these immigrants were, on average, adapted adequately well. Thus, the term 'individualism' was preferred to 'diffusion' and to 'marginalization' for this group. The above do not suggest that marginalization is not at all existent in our sample; rather, it could be typical of certain individuals, but not of entire groups.

The findings discussed so far were mainly based on person-focused techniques, where groups of immigrants are studied on the basis of their preferred acculturation strategies. Variable-focused analyses, on the other hand, examine relationships of acculturation dimensions (i.e., ethnic and host-national involvement) with various outcomes. This approach yielded results that were somewhat less expected according to our hypotheses and the relevant literature. Orientation towards the Greek culture proved to be a stronger predictor of immigrants' psychological adaptation than ethnic orientation. Previous research has shown that ethnic involvement, rather than host-national involvement, is supposed to have a positive effect on subjective well-being (e.g., [6, 3]). In the structural equation model that we tested, ethnic involvement had a negative, though indirect, effect on adaptation. Moreover, assimilation and integration yielded equally positive outcomes although they differ in the frequency of contacts with compatriots. These results could be attributed to limitations in the measurement of the variables under study, mainly due to the ready-made tool that we employed. Some amount of variation in the operational definitions of acculturation and adaptation is evident across researchers. Alternatively, our findings may derive from the assimilative tendencies existing in Greece at the levels of group attitudes and government policies [23]. In line with the results of this study, recent research has shown that involvement in the host culture, but not ethnic involvement, contributes in the prediction of academic competence of immigrant youth in Greek urban schools [24]. As Chryssochoou (2004) [25] pointed out, acculturation does not take place in a social vacuum, which means that ingroup vs. outgroup pressures on individuals are not symmetrical. This is especially true for countries, like Greece, that have experienced the transition from single-culture society to multiculturalism only recently.

Apart from the acculturation variables, two demographic factors were found to substantially contribute to immigrants' well-being, i.e., country of origin and length of stay in the host culture. The effect of country of origin appears to confirm the cultural distance assumption [26]. Extending the similarity-attraction hypothesis [27] in acculturation research, it suggests that perceived similarities between culture of origin and culture of contact are generally related to higher levels of sociocultural adaptation. In our study this was true for psychological adaptation as well. Triandafyllidou (2000) [16] argues that a hierarchy of "Greekness" is

constructed in the political discourse where the levels of inclusion to or exclusion from one's ingroup are shaped on the basis of qualities such as ethnicity and religion. This may explain why immigrants from European countries and the Balkans displayed high levels of adaptation in our study. On the other hand, individuals of Islamic and Asian origin living in Northern Europe have been found to experience more sociocultural difficulties than immigrant groups that were perceived to be "less distant" [3], as was the case in this study.

Length of stay in Greece revealed an interesting pattern of relationships: it was positively related to integration and negatively related to separation; also, it was related to adaptation but only through the mediating effect of the acculturation variables. These findings can be explained in the light of the contact hypothesis [28] in social psychological research and they have serious implications for policy making. It has been shown that mere contact is not enough to reduce negative stereotypes; instead, certain prerequisites need to be met in order to promote positive group attitudes, such as equal status of participants, conditions of co-operation and clear institutional support for integration policies.

The limitations of this study are in a way inherent to most of the immigration research. They mainly have to do with sampling, variable selection and generalization of findings. First, participants were not randomly selected; it is plausible to claim that undocumented immigrants are confronted with far more adversities [9] but they are also more difficult to reach for practical reasons. Second, the inclusion of additional variables, such as identification to one's ethnic group, levels of acculturative stress or perceived discrimination, might have a differential impact in our findings. Therefore, reasonable caution is necessary in generalizing the above conclusions across ethnic groups, cultural backgrounds, and time sections. The dynamic nature of immigration processes calls for the need to incorporate such contextual variables in the research design as well as in the interpretation of results.

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