



Adaptation of immigrant
middle school students:
The role of perceived
discrimination against the
self and against the group,
and of acculturation

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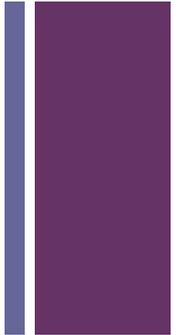
+ Funding

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+ Purpose of this study



- To explore the relationship between **two different aspects of perceived discrimination**, discrimination against the self and against the group, and **three acculturation resources (host national & ethnic orientation, and sense of belonging)** on four different **adaptation outcomes**

+ What is perceived discrimination?

Perceived discrimination refers to the awareness of being discriminated against, by groups and/or individuals

One perceives discrimination

- ❑ Against the self, because of one's ethnic group membership
- ❑ Against the ethnic group
- Perceiving high group discrimination isn't necessarily translated into perceiving high personal discrimination.
- Students with positive personal attributes and fewer stressors in their lives, tend to report less perceived discrimination against the self than students who do not have such characteristics

Perceived discrimination as a risk factor for adaptation

- The perception of discrimination is associated with **lower academic achievement, more behavior problems, more emotional symptoms, and lower self-esteem**

Zeiders, Umaña-Taylor, & Derlan, 2013
Cogburn, Chavous, & Griffin, 2011
Huynh & Fuligni, 2010
Paradies, 2006



Acculturation & ethnic identity



- **Acculturation** refers to changes that result from contact with two distinct cultures (values, practices); it focuses on the pressure of the larger society; it may result in different styles of adaptation, i.e. orientation towards the ethnic or the host national culture.
- **Ethnic identity** refers to identification with one's ancestral group; it focuses on the pressure to maintain cultural heritage; it can be seen as part of social identity, but also has developmental aspects.



The role of acculturation and ethnic identity in adaptation



- Host national acculturation is associated with better socio-cultural adaptation, and ethnic acculturation with better psychological adaptation
- Having a strong, positive ethnic identity seems to buffer or mitigate any negative effects associated with perceiving discrimination

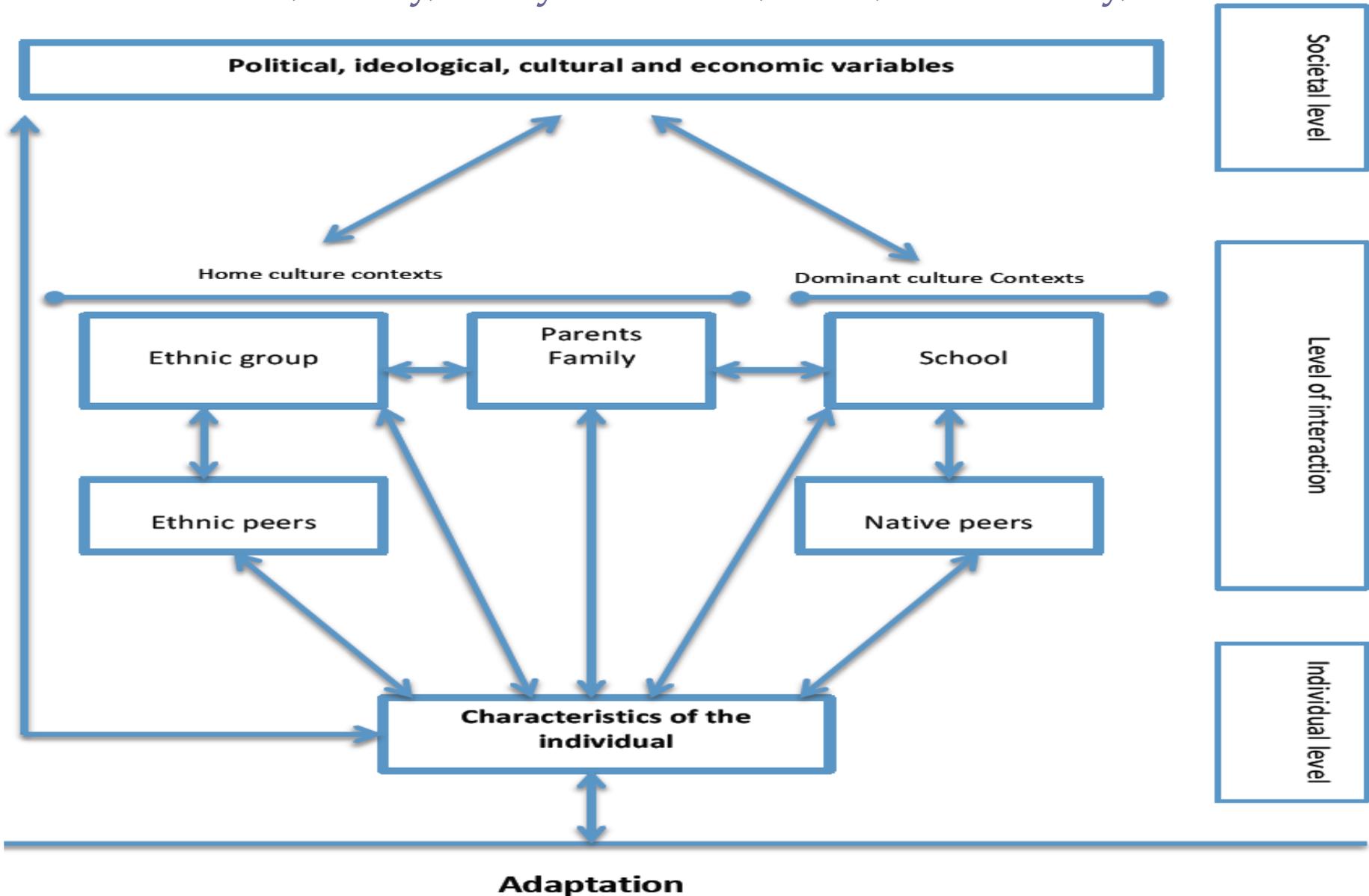
Brown and Chu, 2012

Motti-Stefanidi, Pavlopoulos, Obradovic, & Masten, 2008

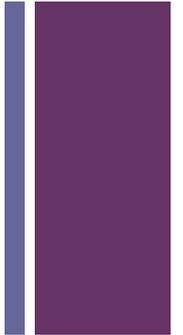
Rivas-Drake, Hughes, & Way, 2008

+ Immigrant youth adaptation

Motti-Stefanidi, Berry, Chrysochoou, Sam, & Phinney, 2012



+ Main research questions



- Are the aspects of perceived discrimination risk factors for immigrant adolescents' adaptation?
- Are the dimensions of acculturation promotive and/or protective factors for immigrant adolescents' adaptation?

+ Participants

Boys	149 (55%)
Girls	122 (45%)
1 st gen	219 (80.8%)
2 nd gen	52 (19.2%)
Age	<i>M</i> 13.06 <i>SD</i> .85

- Children of economic immigrants.
- Live dispersed among lower and middle class Greeks in center of the city of Athens.
- They are the minority in their classrooms (20-30% Albanians in classrooms).



Measures

Adaptation: Developmental tasks

- **GPA:** Mean score of 5 subjects (possible range from 0 to 20)
- **Positive conduct:**
5 item questionnaire (Cronbach $\alpha = .90$)

Eg. “hangs out with troublemakers”, “disrupts during class”
(Likert scale 1= not at all, 5=a lot)





Measures

Adaptation: Sense of well-being

- Emotional symptoms: SDQ subscale (Goodman, 1997).

5 items, Cronbach $\alpha = .64$

(Likert scale 0= not at all true, 1=somewhat true και 2=true)

- Self-esteem scale (Rosenberg, 1965)

10 items, Cronbach $\alpha = .77$

(Likert scale 1=completely disagree, 5=completely agree)



+ Measures

Risk factors

■ Perceived discrimination against the group:

(Phinney et al., 1998; Verkuyten, 1998)

2 items (Cronbach $\alpha = .60$) eg. “How often do you feel that children from Albania are treated unfairly or negatively because of their ethnic background?”; “How often do you feel that your classmates tease or hassle children from Albania”.

■ Perceived discrimination against the self:

(Phinney et al., 1998; Verkuyten, 1998)

2 items (Cronbach $\alpha = .86$) eg. “How often do you feel that you are treated unfairly or negatively because of your ethnic background?”; “How often do you feel that Greeks reject you because of your ethnic background “

(Likert scale 1 =Almost never, 5 =very often)

+ Measures

Resources

■ Acculturation orientation

(Nguyen & Von Eye, 2002)

- 11 items on ethnic orientation (Cronbach $\alpha = .90$)
- 11 items on host national orientation (Cronbach $\alpha = .89$).
(Likert scale, 1 =almost never, 5 =almost always)

■ Sense of belonging

7 items from Phinney's (1992) MEIM (Cronbach $\alpha = .83$).

(Likert scale, 1 =completely disagree, 4=completely agree)

Motti-Stefanidi, Pavlopoulos, Obradović, & Masten, 2008



Measures

Control variables

- Sex
- Immigrant generation
- Socio-economic adversity
Composite score with possible range from 0 to 4





+ Results & Discussion

+ Hierarchical regressions

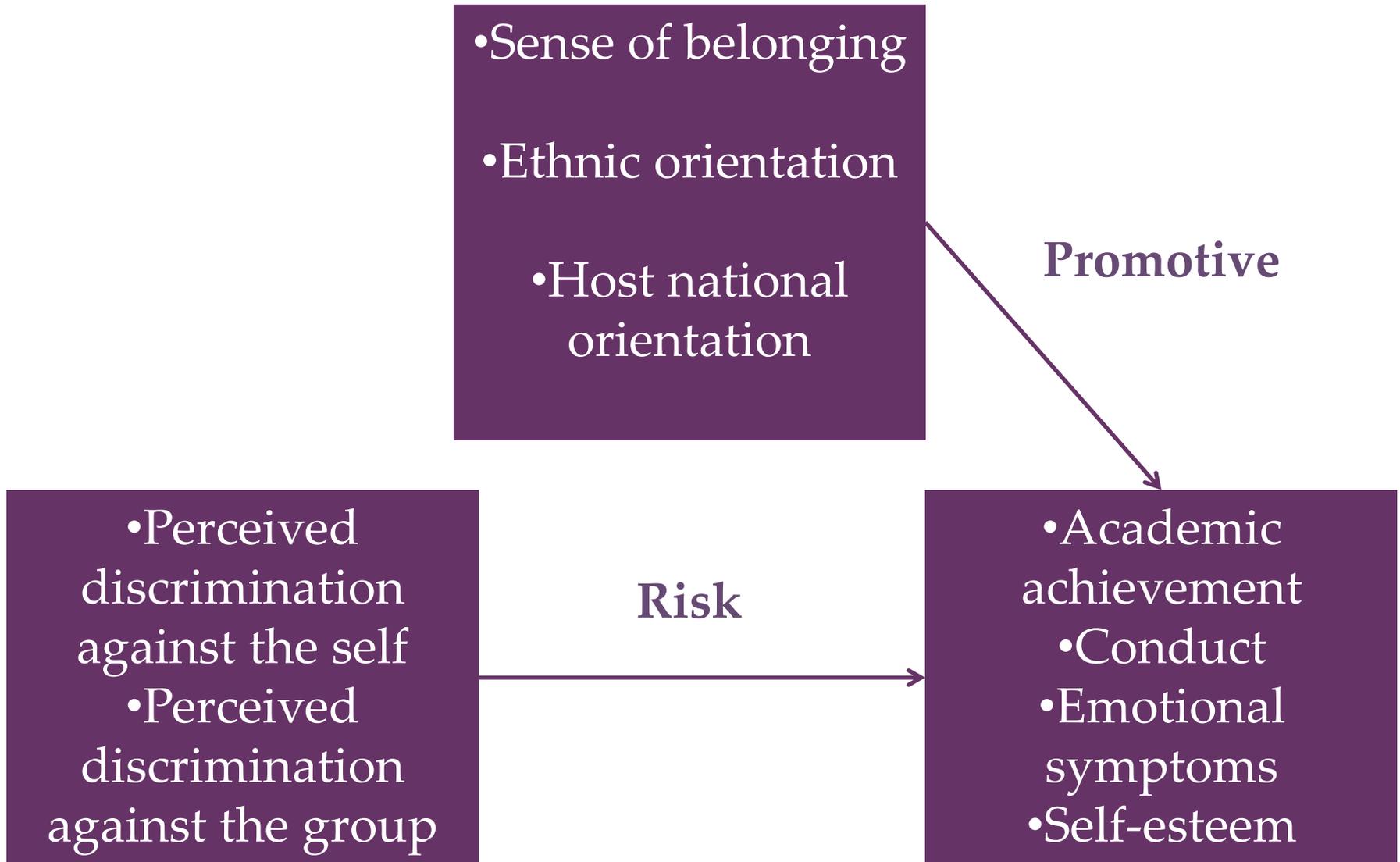
Perceived discrimination as a risk factor for adaptation

Step 1	Perceived discrimination against the group
Step 2	Control variables (sex, immigrant generation, ses adversity)
Step 3	Perceived discrimination against the self

Acculturation as promotive and/or protective factor

Step 1	Perceived discrimination against the group
Step 2	Control variables (sex, immigrant generation, ses adversity)
Step 3	Acculturation indices, separately
Step 4	Perceived discrimination against the self
Step 5	Acculturation indices, separately × Perceived discrimination against the self

Risk and promotive factors: main effects



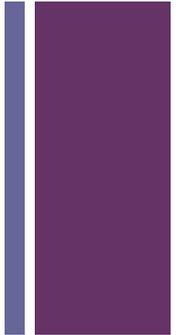
Hierarchical regression for the prediction of adaptation indices from perceived discrimination against the self

	Academic achievement	Positive conduct	Emotional symptoms	Self-esteem
	<i>B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>B</i>
Perceived group discrimination	.03	-.04	.01	-.01
Sex	.21***	.45***	.34***	-.15*
SES adversity	-.10*	-.07	.01	.06
Imm. generation	.18**	.07	-.03	-.07
Perceived discrimination against the self	-.18**	-.10	.29***	-.36***
Adjusted R ²	.13	.18	.20	.13
F	10.28**	2.53	25.96***	30.00***
df	1, 264	1, 264	1, 264	1, 264

Note: *** p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05

+ Summary of results

- **Perceived discrimination against the self** is a risk factor for three outcomes: academic achievement, emotional symptoms and self-esteem.
- Perceived discrimination against the group is **not** a risk factor for any outcome
- Perceived discrimination has detrimental effects on most adaptation indices; this holds even in the presence of the resources



Hierarchical regression for the prediction of positive conduct from perceived discrimination against the self and sense of belonging

	Step 3	Step 4
	<i>B</i>	<i>B</i>
Perceived group discrimination	-.03	-.04
Sex	.46***	.45***
SES adversity	-.06	-.07
Imm. generation	.06	.07
Sense of belonging	.11*	.10
Perceived discrimination against the self		-.10
Adjusted R ²		.18
F		2.22
df		1, 264

Note: *** p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05

Hierarchical regression for the prediction of positive conduct from perceived discrimination against the self and sense of belonging

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df		1, 264

Note: *** p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05

Hierarchical regression for the prediction of positive conduct from perceived discrimination against the self and ethnic acculturation

	Step 3	Step 4
	<i>B</i>	<i>B</i>
Perceived group discrimination	-.03	-.04
Sex	.46***	.43***
SES adversity	-.06	-.06
Imm. generation	.06	.06
Ethnic acculturation	-.13*	.12
Perceived discrimination against the self		-.10
Adjusted R ²		.18
F		1.94
df		1, 264

Note: *** p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05

Hierarchical regression for the prediction positive conduct from perceived discrimination against the self and ethnic acculturation

	Step 3	Step 4
	<i>B</i>	<i>B</i>
Perceived group discrimination	-.03	-.04
Sex	.46***	.43***
SES adversity	-.06	-.06
Imm. generation	.06	.06
Ethnic acculturation	-.13*	.12
Perceived discrimination against the self		-.10
Adjusted R ²		.18
F		1.94
df		1, 264

Note: *** p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05

Hierarchical regression for the prediction of self-esteem from perceived discrimination against the self and host national acculturation

	Step 3	Step 4
	<i>B</i>	<i>B</i>
Perceived group discrimination	-.16**	-.01
Sex	-.12	-.17*
SES adversity	.06	-.07
Imm. generation	-.06	-.12
Host national acculturation	.21**	.14
Perceived discrimination against the self		-.33***
Adjusted R ²		.14
F		23.87
df		1, 264

Note: *** p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05

Hierarchical regression for the prediction of self-esteem from perceived discrimination against the self and host national acculturation

	Step 3	Step 4
	<i>B</i>	<i>B</i>
Perceived group discrimination	-.16**	-.01
Sex	-.12	-.17*
SES adversity	.06	-.07
Imm. generation	-.06	-.12
Host national acculturation	.21**	.14
Perceived discrimination against the self		-.33***
Adjusted R ²		.14
F		23.87
df		1, 264

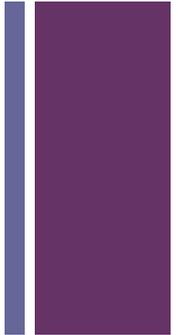
Note: *** p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05

+ Perceived discrimination against the self as a risk factor for adaptation

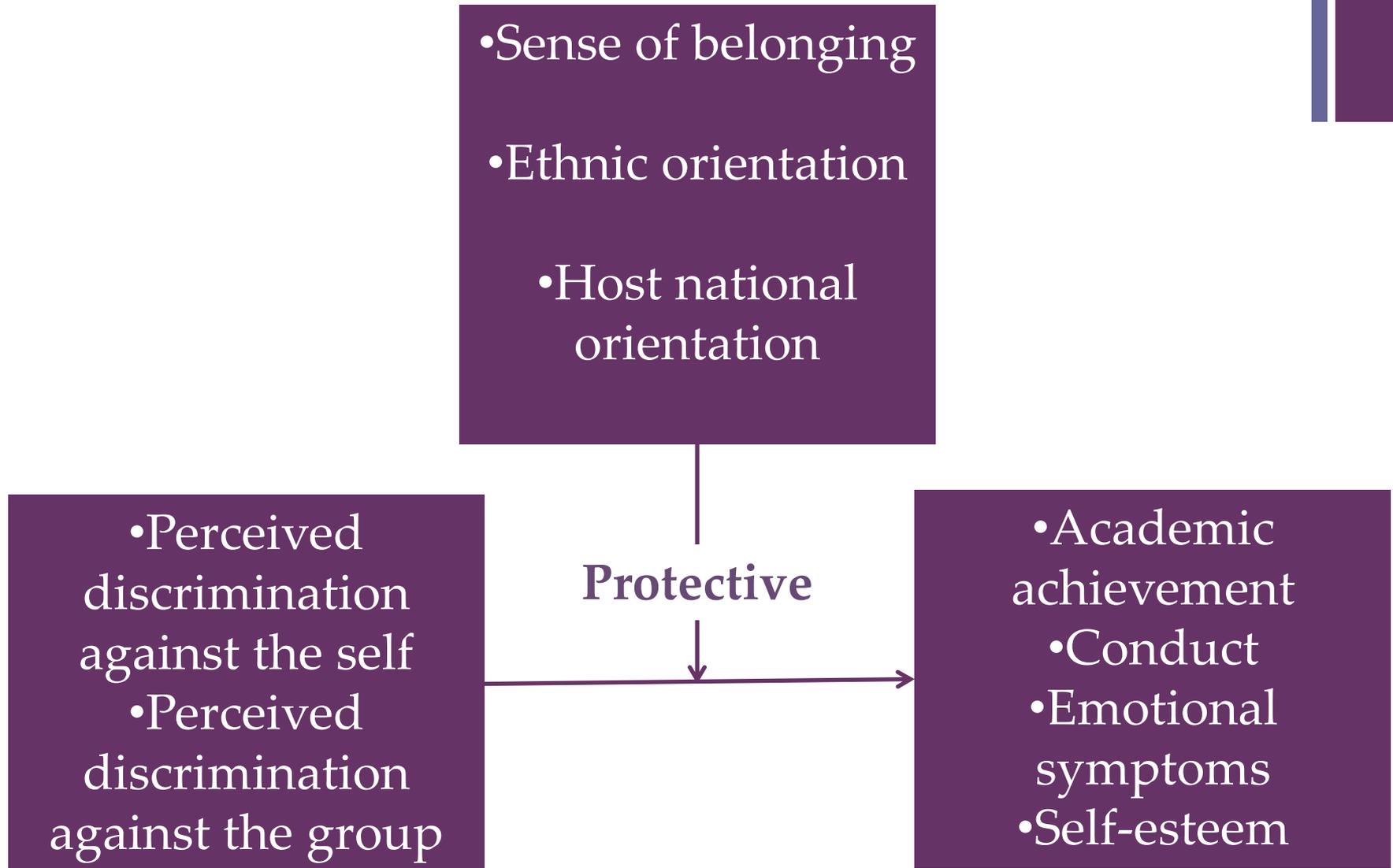
- The pervasive effect of perceived discrimination on different aspects of adaptation may be related to the relatively low percentages of minority adolescents in the classrooms.
- Albanian adolescents may lack the supportive network among their classmates and teachers, that would help them share, understand, and cope with the effects of discrimination

+ Acculturation dimensions as resources for adaptation

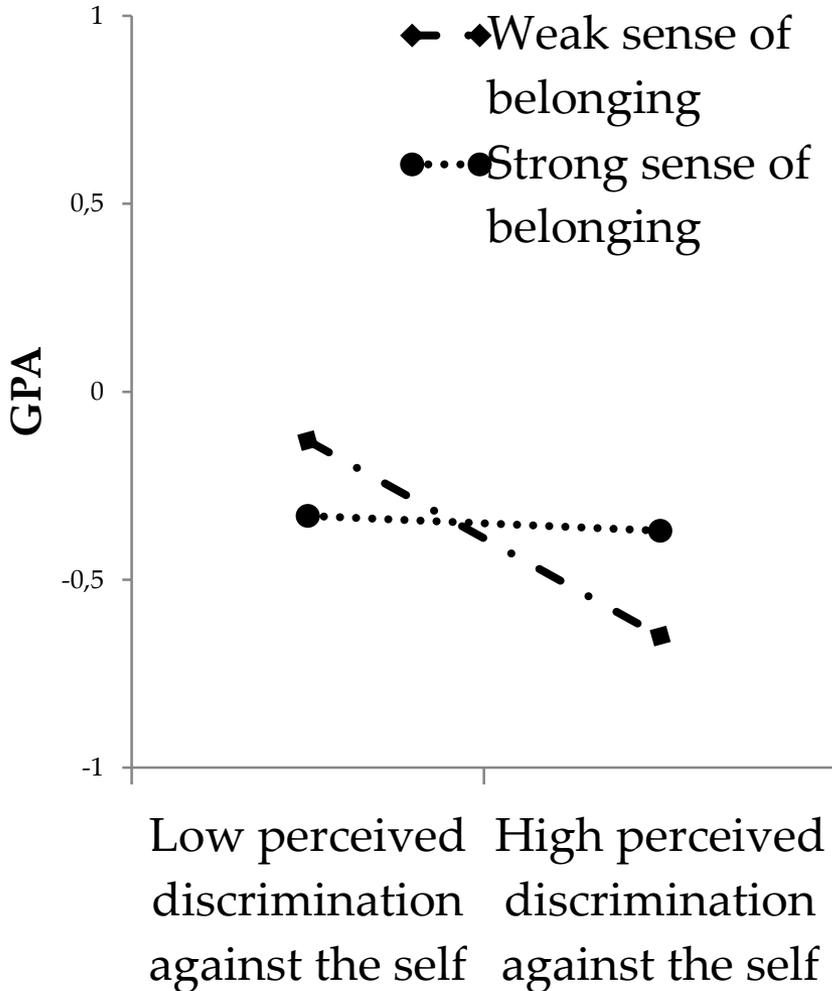
- The effects of the acculturation dimensions replicate previous findings (eg. Brown and Chu, 2012; Motti-Stefanidi, Pavlopoulos, Obradovic, & Masten, 2008; Rivas-Drake, Hughes, & Way, 2008; Berry, et al., 2006)
- However, it seems that discrimination against the self is a stronger predictor than any of the acculturation dimensions for adaptation.



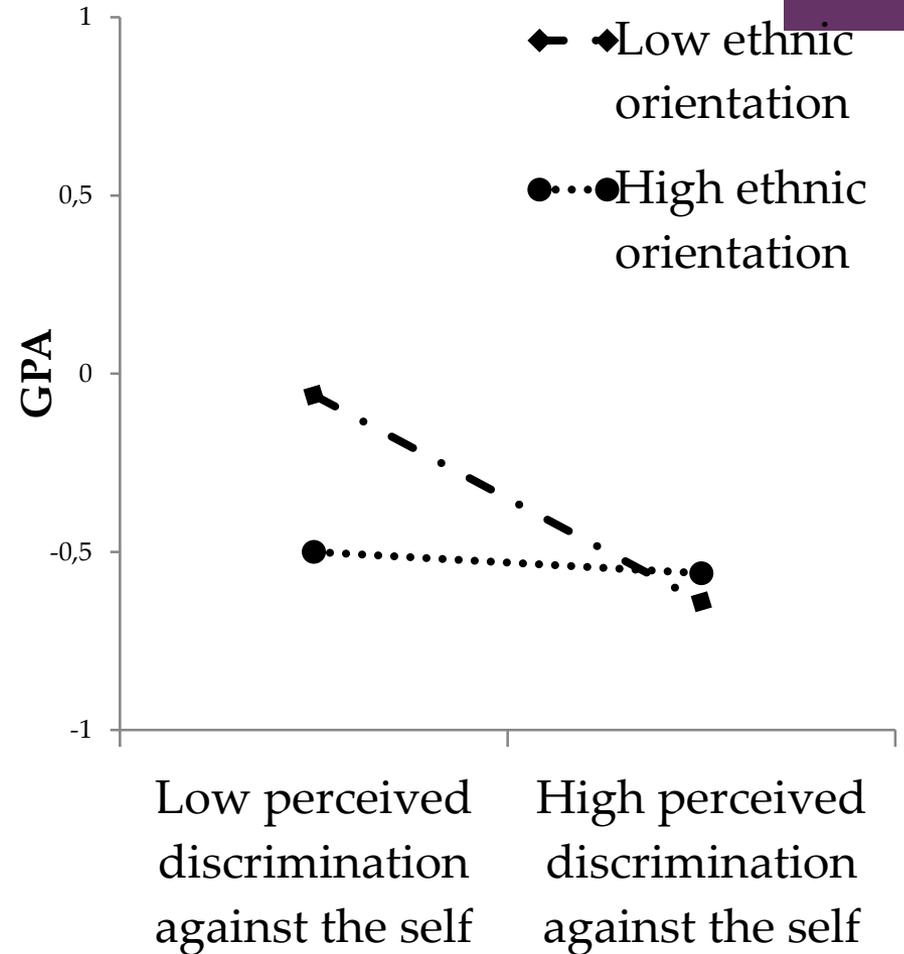
+ Protective factors: interactions



+ Academic achievement



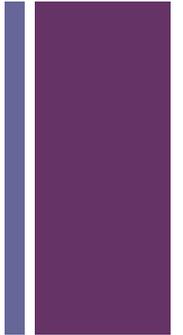
[F (1, 263)=7.80, $\Delta R^2=.02$, p=.03]



[F (1, 263)=6.51, $\Delta R^2=.02$, p=.04]



Acculturation dimensions as stability – vulnerability factors

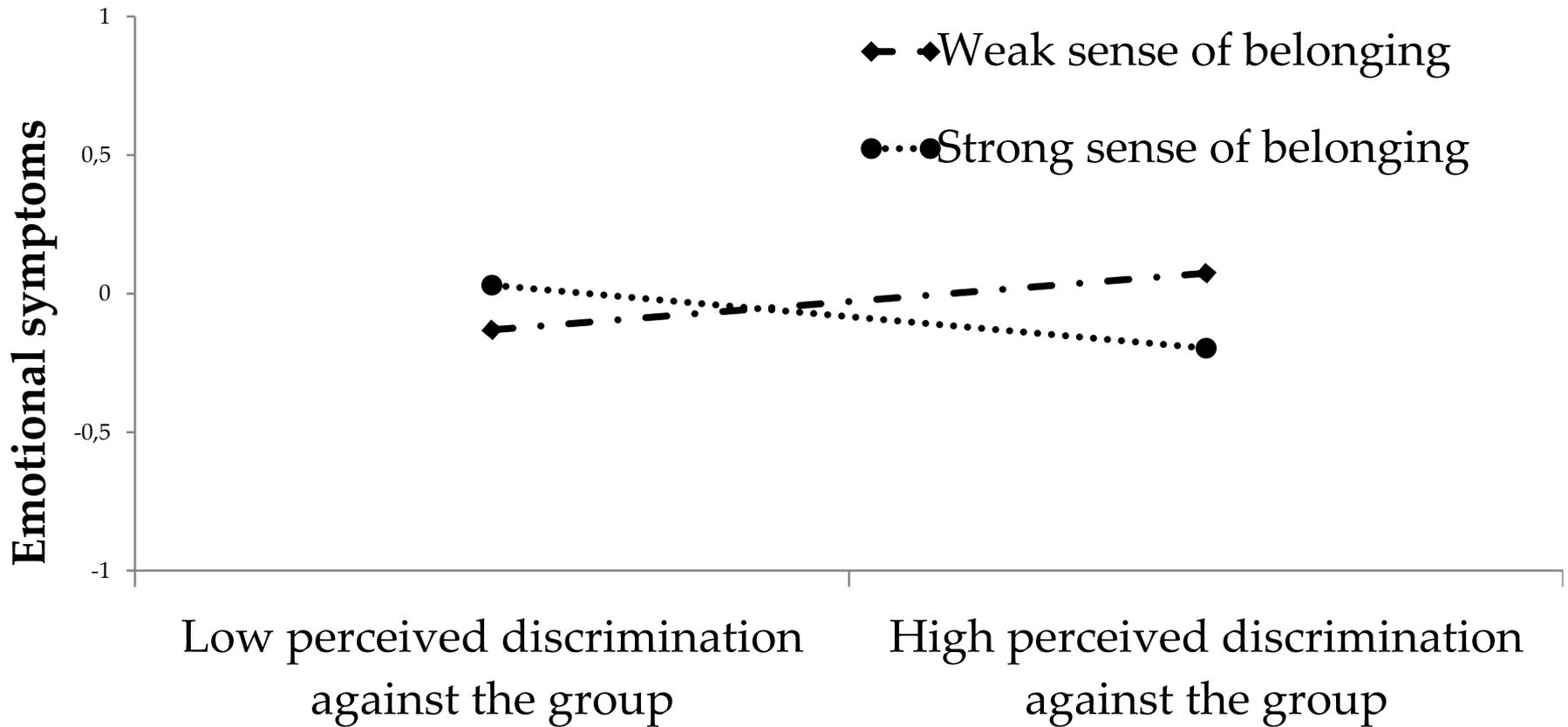
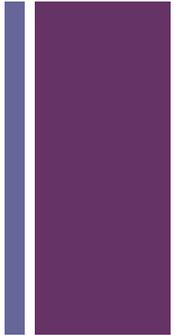


- While sense of belonging doesn't have direct effects in academic achievement, it serves as buffer against the perception of personal discrimination
- Additionally low ethnic orientation seems to be a vulnerability factor for GPA, when adolescents perceive high levels of discrimination against the self

+ School as a dominant culture institution

- A strong sense of belonging in the ethnic group seems to be particularly important for maintaining a positive attitude for school and learning, when perceiving being discriminated against (Brown & Chu, 2012).
- For Albanian adolescents, minorities in their classrooms, a strong sense of belonging seems to buffer the negative effects of perceiving discrimination
- At the same time, low ethnic orientation suggests that adolescents may be more invested in the host country.
- In the face of discrimination, adolescents with low ethnic orientation are more vulnerable, since they may lack support networks.

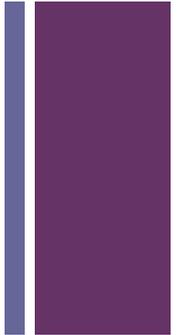
+ Sense of belonging as a protective factor for emotional symptoms



[F(1, 263)=5.27, $\Delta R^2=.02$, p=.05]

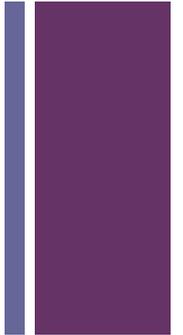
+ Sense of belonging as a protective factor for emotional symptoms

- When adolescents perceive a lot of discrimination against their ethnic group, a strong sense of belonging protects them from reporting more emotional symptoms
- Sense of belonging is connected to ethnic identity achievement, which is a central developmental task in adolescence;
- it requires having bridged the cultural differences, and having resolved the lower status of their ethnic group in society (Phinney, 1990).
- Additionally, a strong sense of belonging is associated with positive views about the ethnic group, that seem to counterbalance discrimination.



+ Take home messages

- **Perceived discrimination against the self** has the most significant –negative- effect on adaptation, compared to the acculturation resources
- **A strong sense of belonging** seems to be the most important protective and stabilizing factor against the perception of discrimination
- **Low ethnic acculturation** seems to be a vulnerability factor for academic achievement, when individuals perceive themselves to be victims of discrimination





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Thank you