DOMINANT GROUP MEMBERS TALK ABOUT THE ACCULTURATION OF IMMIGRANTS IN GREECE: WHO IS IN CHARGE OF THE ACCULTURATION PROCESS?

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Abstract: Acculturation research has mainly focused on the adaptation of immigrant population to host societies. Within this line of research it is increasingly acknowledged that the host society can shape to a large extent the acculturation options of immigrants. The present study focuses on to the way a sample of Greek participants (N = 38) from the city of Thessaloniki construct the acculturation process of immigrants. Following a discourse analytic perspective it is argued that the main acculturation model based on Berry's theory has failed to take under consideration important aspects of how the dominant group views the adaptation of immigrants.

Key words: Acculturation, Assimilation, Affirmative action, Migration, Prejudice

INTRODUCTION

Intercultural contact has become an important topic in psychology in the last decades due to the increased contact between people from different cultural groups in the various societies (Berry, 1997). Although any form of intercultural contact has been included in research and theory, the main focus has been on migration since the incorporation of immigrant populations to the host societies has become an important issue for the Western societies. Acculturation psychology was developed, although the term came originally from anthropology, in order to account for the psychological changes people undergo in the process of intercultural contact (see Sam, 2006 for an account of the historical development of the term). Even though research has pivoted around the changes and attitudes immigrants hold about their contact with the host

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culture, the role of the host society is now largely acknowledged and has become the topic of research.

This article critically examines some of the main trends in acculturation psychology in view of data from a Greek sample, scrutinizing the way majority members talk about the acculturation of immigrants in the Greek society. More specifically it addresses the questions of which groups (i.e., members of the host society or only the immigrant groups) are expected to adapt to the new multicultural context, what are the different elements that immigrants are expected to adopt and also who is considered to be in charge of the acculturation of the immigrant populations.

Acculturation models

The aim of the following section is to summarize the main points of the acculturation models that are based on Berry's (1997) seminal model of acculturation. This section pays attention to the different acculturation strategies that groups may follow within a multicultural context and which groups are expected to adapt to the new multicultural situation.

One of the most prominent models of acculturation has been developed by Berry who argued that groups and individuals may hold different attitudes towards their acculturation and may demonstrate different sets of behaviors (Berry, 1997, 2001, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2008). He argued that acculturation is a process of mutual adaptation when two or more different cultural groups get into contact. According to Berry, two dimensions are important when describing how different cultural groups relate to each other. The first one is the extent to which the group that enters a host society wishes to maintain its cultural heritage. The second dimension refers to the extent to which migrants want to have contact with members of the host society. The positions groups or individuals occupy on these two dimensions reveal four different strategies that immigrants may follow in their process of acculturation. When immigrants do not want to maintain their cultural heritage but at the same time wish to have contact with the host society, this strategy is defined as assimilation. In this case the cultural group "dissolves" into the host society. In the case when immigrants wish to maintain their cultural heritage and at the same time wish to have limited contact with the host society the strategy adopted is separation. When the immigrant group wishes to abolish its cultural heritage and to have limited contact with the host society the strategy is termed marginalisation. Finally, when the group wishes to maintain its cultural heritage and to have contact with the host society then the strategy is defined as integration. This later strategy is considered to be the more "progressive" with the less negative outcomes both for the host society and immigrants alike.

Of course, as Berry acknowledges (1997, 2008), things are not always so straightforward. The strategy that an immigrant group may adopt will also depend upon the options that are made available by the host society. In this way Berry recognizes the important role played by the host society in the acculturation of immigrants. He recognizes that through the policies adopted and implemented the host society can shape to a great extent the acculturation process. Therefore he introduced four strategies that the host society may adopt towards the acculturation of immigrant populations. Again the same two dimensions apply for the attitudes and behaviors that the host society may expect from the immigrant population to adopt in the process of acculturation. When the host society does not favor the maintenance of the cultural heritage of the immigrants but wishes to interact with them then the "melting pot" policy is adopted, where immigrant identities converge with the identity of the host society[1]. When separation is forced on the immigrant population, who is not forced to abandon its cultural heritage, then it is termed "segregation". In the case that the dominant group marginalizes the immigrant population then we have "exclusion". Finally, when the host society acknowledges the fact that it comprises culturally different groups, allows the expression of their cultural heritage and also allows them to participate in the social being then this strategy is termed "multiculturalism".

The four acculturation strategies proposed by Berry are widely accepted within acculturation psychology and maintained in later theories as well (e.g., Bourhis, Moise, Perreault, & Senecal, 1997; Navas, García, Sánchez, Rojas, Pumares, & Fernández, 2005; Piontkowski, Rohmann, & Florack, 2002; Zagefka & Brown, 2002). Many researchers tried to elaborate on Berry's model taking as a starting point something that Berry himself came to acknowledge: the fact that the acculturation strategies followed by immigrants will be affected by the acculturation strategies of the host society. As a result, these theories examine the acculturation strategies of immigrants in conjunction with the acculturation strategies and attitudes of the host societies. Bourhis and his colleagues (Bourhis et al., 1997; Bourhis, Montaruli, El-Geledi, Harvey, & Barrette, 2010; see also Zagefka & Brown, 2002) proposed the Interactive Acculturation Model that places emphasis on the ideologies supported by the state institutions that, according to the authors, play a fundamental role in the acculturation strategies preferred both by immigrants and members of the dominant group in the host society. This theory also reformulated the second dimension of Berry's model relating to the question of contact between immigrants and host society members to whether immigrants value the adoption of the host society culture. This also leads to

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[1] When the host society builds up the pressure on the immigrants in order to assimilate then according to Berry the "melting pot" turns into a "pressure cooker" (Berry, 2001, 2006)

four different acculturation strategies or attitudes that match the four acculturation strategies suggested by Berry. Nevertheless, in their reformulation of the initial model Bourhis and his colleagues termed "marginalisation" as "anomie". They also identified a new strategy which fits the "anomie" box which they labelled "individualism" and refers to the wish of both immigrants and members of the host society to treat immigrants as individuals and not as members of a specific cultural group.

Bourhis and colleagues (Bourhis et al., 1997) suggested that the outcome of the acculturation process will depend upon the relative "fit" between the strategies adopted by the immigrants and the strategies favored by members of the host society. Three different levels of "fit" were suggested: "Consensual", "problematic" and "conflictual". The worst acculturation outcome takes place when host society members deny any contact with immigrants and when immigrants want to maintain their cultural heritage but deny contact with the host population. In these cases the fit is characterised as "conflictual". Consensus in achieved only when both groups choose assimilation or integration as strategies of acculturation. All other combinations of acculturation strategies lead to "problematic" situations. Consensual situations are linked to less prejudice and less stress for both groups while the opposite happens in "problematic" or "conflictual" situations. Of course, as the founders of the model stress, the model examines the subjective perception of the acculturation strategy immigrants or members of the host society hold. Occasionally, there might be a mismatch in regard to the perception of the preferred strategy the different groups may favor (van Oudenhoven, Prins, & Buunk, 1998).

In a similar vein Piontkowski and her colleagues (Piontkowski et al., 2002; Rohmann, Florack, & Piontkowski, 2006; Rohmann, Piontkowski, & Randenborgh, 2008) introduced the Concordance Model of Acculturation. The authors maintained the four acculturation strategies suggested by Berry and also accepted the Bourhis position that the acculturation outcome will depend upon whether the acculturation strategy adopted by immigrants coincides with the one members of the host society favour. However, in their model Piontkowski and colleagues also examine the acculturation strategies that each group perceives that the other favors. Again as in the Interactive Acculturation Model depending on whether the perceived acculturation strategies coincide, the outcome of intercultural contact will be harmonious, problematic or conflictual. What's more Piontkowski and her colleagues introduced some psychological variables as predictors of the acculturation attitudes of both dominant and immigrant groups, such as in-group bias, in-group out-group similarity, perceived cultural enrichment, and permeability of group boundaries. Again emphasis is laid on the interaction between the acculturation attitudes of the dominant and the immigrant group.

Another model of acculturation that starts with the four acculturation strategies introduced by Berry is the Relative Acculturation Extended Model (Navas et al., 2005; Navas, Rojas, García, & Pumares, 2007). This model incorporates the advances of the previous models and adds some important factors in the acculturation process. The two most important factors according to Navas and colleagues is the differentiation between attitudes and strategies, which is actually a differentiation between the ideal acculturation strategy a group prefers and the real or actual acculturation strategy that a certain group may follow due to constraints by intergroup reality. The second is that this model does not suggest that there is a single acculturation attitude for all areas of the social domain. In different aspects of social life groups may actually have different acculturation attitudes and follow different acculturation strategies. A group of immigrants, for example, may wish to assimilate at work but follow the separation strategy at their social life (see also Arends-Tóth & van de Vijver, 2003).

Despite the different perspectives of the aforementioned models they all share a number of common factors that are important for the present argument. First of all they pay particular attention to the acculturation attitudes and strategies that members of the host society prefer. They recognize that members of the host society can shape to a large extent the acculturation attitudes and strategies of the immigrants arguing that the acculturation attitude will be the result of the interaction between two groups. However, the above theories take for granted that some kind of adaptation will take place in both groups and therefore they do not consider the possibility that certain groups may not consider that they need to adapt to the new situation. Second, the basic argument postulated by Berry with the four acculturation strategies remains the same to a large extent in all the reformulations of the model. Finally, most researchers (although they may not explicitly admit it) argue that integration is the most successful acculturation strategy with the best results for both immigrants and members of the host society. In Canada, for example, it was found that people of the dominant group who scored high in multiculturalism scales, also demonstrated high degrees of tolerance (Berry & Kallin, 1995). In Australia, members of the dominant group who held negative attitudes towards Muslims viewed multiculturalism and diversity less positively (Dandy & Pe-Pua, 2010).

Researchers have also found that members of Italian dominant group who scored high in prejudice had a strong preference for the strategy of assimilation, while those low in prejudice were more likely to accept integration as a strategy for immigrants' adaptation (Kosic, Mannetti, & Sam, 2005). Zick, Wagner, van Dick, and Petzel (2001) reviewed several surveys in Germany that illustrate the close connection between acculturation attitudes and prejudice. The closer to integration the majority attitudes were the more positive their attitudes towards minority group members. In general a

line of research on acculturation considers, firstly, integration to be the most "adaptive" strategy which is also the most preferred (Pfafferott & Brown, 2006; see van Oudenhoven, Ward, & Masgoret, 2006 for a review); secondly, that there is a positive link between the strategy of assimilation and prejudice, and thirdly, integration is positively linked to tolerance.

A critical perspective on the acculturation phenomenon

Although Berry's theory and the models based on that theory made a substantial contribution to the development of acculturation psychology, they have also been criticized on several grounds. It is often argued that the acculturation process is presented as a static procedure where the groups involved choose a specific acculturation strategy and stick to that without usually changing it over time. Researchers claim that this is not always the case. Historical and social forces often change the acculturation options people can follow, making acculturation a procedure that should not be taken for granted but a process of moving back and forth. For example, middle-class members of South-Asian communities that took their acculturation status for granted as being integrated to the American society, faced a dramatic change after 9/11 where they frequently found that their non-white appearance made them a target of racism (Bhatia & Ram, 2009). As a result researchers argue that acculturation is an ongoing process rather than an end-point.

In addition it is argued that the notion of "culture" and the different meanings it acquires are often overlooked in acculturation theory and research (Chirkov, 2009; Cresswell, 2009). Chirkov claims that acculturation research following the deductive-nomological and quantitative approach has failed to pay attention to the way people share, negotiate and change social norms, rules and meanings that constitute the core of culture. To pay attention to these aspects of acculturation a different approach is needed, one that allows the examination of people's meanings and how these meanings are negotiated in everyday interaction. Such an approach is favored by discourse analysis that pays attention to the way people negotiate meaning and to the performative aspects of verbal interaction (Edwards, 1997; Edwards & Potter, 1992; Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Potter, 1996b). Discourse analysis focuses on how people construct their social world and their cultural milieu in their talk. The way culture is negotiated in Greece has been demonstrated in Greece by Bozatzis (1999, 2009) who examined how the ambivalent cultural position of Greece between East and West informs the cultural identities of Greek social actors who negotiate their identities between these two poles.

The present work examined the way Greek people construct the acculturation

process of immigrants in Greece in the context of an interview on the changes immigration brought to local communities in Greece. More specifically, the study focused on the way participants negotiate different ways of acculturation and which specific elements of the Greek culture Greek social actors expect from immigrants to adopt. Furthermore, the way participants orient towards immigrants' rights and affirmative action was examined especially in conjunction to the acculturation strategies speakers seem to favor. Taking under consideration the discursive critique to the acculturation research presented above we would expect that participants would cut across the different attitudes/strategies suggested by Berrys' model since variability is an intrinsic characteristic of peoples' discourse (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). This possibly means that participants may support different acculturation strategies in different rhetorical contexts. It is argued that a discursive approach towards the acculturation process can help us to re-evaluate the clear-cut criteria of acculturation strategies, to highlight the different factors that may play an important role in the acculturation process and also to demonstrate a more complex picture between prejudice and affirmative action.

METHOD

The context of the study

Greece was for the greatest part of the 20th century an immigrant-sending country. The situation changed due to the collapse of the Communist regimes in Easter Europe that led large parts of the population to migrate to the West. Immigration to Greece started to increase during the past twenty years. According to estimates from the Hellenic Migration Policy Institute the number of immigrants in Greece is approximately 1,15 million people, representing the 10,3% of the overall population in Greece (Baldwin-Edwards, 2004). The majority of the immigrants come from the neighboring Albania (56%) where the collapse of the communist regime in the early 1990s left an economic and political chaos. The second biggest immigration flow is from the former Soviet Republics, which is estimated around 350.000 people. These people are considered to be of Pontic descend and thus of Greek ethnic origin. As a result they were treated as repatriates and were granted more benefits in relation to other immigrants (Kokkinos, 1991).

The acculturation of immigrants became an important issue for policy makers and lay people alike. Their adaptation to the Greek society occasionally met resistance by the dominant population and the most characteristic incident was the objec-

tion of some Greek people to allow immigrant children to bear the Greek flag during the school marches that take place on national ceremonies (Tzanelli, 2006). Moreover, the Eurobarometer showed that the majority of Greek people believe that the presence of immigrants does not enrich cultural life in Greece while eight out of ten believe that the presence of immigrants is a source of insecurity (Eurobarometer, Spring 2009). The Greek government attempted to regularize undocumented immigrants signing two presidential decrees in 1997 and 2001. In addition, one of the first measures of the newly elected government in Greece in 2009 was to pass a new law in March 2010 awarding Greek citizenship to second generation immigrants although it adopted stricter criteria compared to the initial draft. This new law proved quite controversial and the political parties of the right in particular opposed it fiercely, while the Council of State issued a decision claiming that parts of the new law contradict the Greek constitution (Anagnostou, 2011). This research intended to examine the way Greek people construct the changes immigration brought to local communities in Thessaloniki and also the way they construct Greek and immigrant identities.

Site of research

The research took place in Thessaloniki, the second biggest city in Greece, with a population of approximately one million people. Thessaloniki is situated in the north of the country. It is estimated that immigrants comprise the 7% of the population of the city. The majority has settled at the Western neighborhoods where property prices are much lower in relation to Eastern parts of town. As a result there is more contact between the Greek dominant group and immigrants in Western Thessaloniki than other parts of the city.

Participants

Participants were 38 people (20 female, 18 male) of Greek ethnic background who were permanent residents of Greece. People of Greek ethnic descent who repatriated from other countries (ex- Soviet Republics or Albania) were excluded from the analysis. Overall 36 interviews were conducted since on two occasions participants were interviewed in pairs. Twenty participants were from Eastern Thessaloniki and 18 from the Western neighborhoods. Participants' age ranged from 22 to 64 years and the average age was 41 years. The socio-economic background of the participants varied but the majority were middle class. At the time of interviews most participants had permanent jobs, five were unemployed and one was a university stu-

dent. Some of the participants were personal acquaintances of the researchers, while others were selected for being involved in their local communities either as members of cultural clubs, or as members of the municipal services. Further snow-balling techniques were used.

Procedure

Data was collected using open-ended semi-structured interviews that were presented as a discussion on the changes that took place in Greece the last 15-20 years. In case participants referred to changes due to immigration they were then specifically asked about this issue, that is, about the changes they had observed in their neighborhood, personal contact they may have with immigrants and the changes immigration brought to the Greek society at large. The issue of changes in the local communities was spontaneously mentioned more by participants of Western Thessaloniki who had more contact with immigrants. When respondents mentioned the issue of adaptation of immigrants to the Greek society they were asked questions regarding the process of their acculturation such as "how do you think their adaptation will proceed" or "what do you think will happen in the future" in order to elaborate on this issue.

Participants from Eastern Thessaloniki on many occasions had to be explicitly questioned on the immigrants' adaptation due to the fact that immigration did not seem to be an important issue in their neighborhood, although there were not noticeable differences in the interpretative repertoires used and the rhetorical strategies employed. The length of the interviews was from 10 to 60 minutes and the average length was 32 minutes.

Coding of data and analysis

Transcription focused mainly on content and most of the paralinguistic elements such as pauses, overlaps and changes in intonation were omitted. The data were then coded according to the common themes participants used. All themes that referred to the adaptation of immigrants were coded according to the manifest content of the data (Boyatzis, 1998). At this stage the coding was quite inclusive, including all instances in which participants referred to the adaptation of immigrants to the Greek society. Within these themes there was an attempt to distinguish the interpretative repertoires participants used in order to account for the adaptation of the immigrants in the Greek society (Potter & Litton, 1985; Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Wetherell & Potter, 1992). Interpretative repertoires are culturally-shared widespread systems of terms that are used in order to construct, characterize and

evaluate actions, events and other phenomena. Often they are organized around certain metaphors or figures of speech. This was the first approach to discourse analysis that was used in order to analyze the data. The second approach was discursive psychology (Edwards & Potter, 1992; Potter, 1996b). Discursive psychology draws attention on the ways participants construct their accounts as factual using different rhetorical devices in order to convince their audience. The analysis also attempted to examine the rhetorical devices participants used so as to construct the facticity of their accounts.

The issue of the acculturation of the immigrants was a prominent theme that appeared in most of the interviews. The aim of the analysis was to demonstrate the different constructions of immigrants' acculturation that participants used in their talk. Emphasis was placed on participants' own orientations and the issues they raised in relation to the acculturation of immigrants. These data were then juxtaposed to the established knowledge of acculturation theory and research as mentioned in the previous section. This kind of analysis allows the examination of the different acculturation strategies not as a theoretical given but as discursive resource that participants mobilize in the course of verbal interaction and thus we can scrutinize the way participants themselves understand and construct the meaning of acculturation. Additionally, this analysis allows the examination of the rhetorical context within which the different acculturation strategies are articulated. This enables a better understanding of the different ways in which the process of acculturation is conceived. It is expected that participants will use different and in some cases contradictory interpretative repertoires regarding immigrants' adaptation to the Greek society.

The following extracts were selected as exemplars of the main acculturation categories used by participants. The extracts highlight the way participants orient towards the acculturation of immigrants and the basic themes they used. In particular they focus (a) on which groups are supposed to adapt to the new intercultural situation, (b) what kind of new cultural elements are supposed to adopt, and (c) what is the role of the institutions of civic society and affirmative action in the adaptation of immigrants.

RESULTS

Acculturation as an obligation for the immigrants

Before the following extract the participant was commenting on the situation in schools where many students of a non-Greek ethnic background attend school and

the issues their presence has raised. At this point the researcher posed the following question.

Extract 1

> *Interviewer:* Hm, eh, at a local level what changes did their arrival bring here? At Western Thessaloniki?
>
> *Respondent:* I cannot say that it has brought any particular changes but... or at least I haven't noticed anything.
>
> *Interviewer:* You said that... they bring a different mentality... can you explain what you mean? How... What are these characteristics?
>
> *Respondent:* Ehh, to me it is important when you immigrate to some other country to respect the mentality, not to follow it, but to respect it at least.
>
> *Interviewer:* Hm.
>
> *Respondent:* the way of thinking of the people you meet there.
>
> *Interviewer:* Hm.
>
> *Respondent:* Not to cause any trouble, not to talk back, ehm, to make sure that you give your children the appropriate education, so that they feel, it does not mean that they will forget their ethnicity, but to feel Greek, let's say, for example, since they live in Greece, in general, to respect and appreciate some things.
>
> *Interviewer:* And they don't do that?
>
> *Respondent:* No, most of them don't.
>
> *Interviewer:* Eh..
>
> *Respondent:* The only thing they care about is what benefits they will get from the state. Eh... They look after those to the last bit... I mean even the smallest benefit they will find a way to look for it and claim it. But they only care about claims. Themselves as individuals, I don't think... they do anything in order to contribute to development.
>
> (Woman, 34, secretary, Western Thessaloniki).

In this extract the participant argues that the presence of immigrants has not brought many changes in her neighborhood. Since she had referred to the different mentality of the immigrants in a previous section of the interview, the researcher asked her about the characteristics of this mentality. Rather than replying in terms of group stereotypes, or cultural habits, she orients to the immigrants' relation with the Greek mentality, juxtaposing how immigrants ought to behave to the way immigrants act in Greece. Respecting the mentality of the host country is constructed (with the use of the rhetorical device of vagueness, Edwards & Potter, 1992) as an obligation all

immigrants have when they enter the host society. Nevertheless, they are not presented as obliged either to follow or to abandon their ethnicity. Although it is argued that they should feel Greek it remains unqualified to which respects they should feel Greek. It is stressed though what is the "appropriate" contact of an immigrant: not to talk back, not to cause trouble, and to provide education to their children. This "ideal" behavior of the immigrants is contrasted to the actual behavior of the immigrants: on the one hand they only care about the benefits and on the other they do not contribute to the country's development.

Three important points have to be stressed in this extract. First of all, the only group that needs to alter its behavior and to adapt to the new social context is the immigrants. The role of the Greek dominant group is neither scrutinized nor is it suggested that it also has to adapt to this new situation. In the beginning of the extract even the possibility that the arrival of the immigrants brought any changes to the local communities is denied. The role of the dominant group seems to be the setting of the golden standard to which immigrants have to adapt. Second, immigrants are not presented as obliged to adopt the Greek mentality but just to "respect" it. What's more the interviewee argues that adapting to the Greek mentality does not mean to forget their cultural background. At the same time, however, immigrants are criticized for claiming benefits. Finally, immigrants are castigated for not contributing to the development of Greece. This hints that occasionally also financial criteria may be important for dominant group members' perception of the adaptation of the immigrant groups.

Studies presented in the beginning of the article have found a strong link between assimilation and prejudice. In the extract presented above the participant seemed to be in favor of integration while at the same time she criticized immigrants for not contributing to the development of the country and for claiming benefits, a common theme in the Symbolic Racism literature (Henry & Sears, 2002; Kinders & Sears, 1981; Sears & Henry, 2003), which argues that racism nowadays is not expressed in terms of racial inferiority but in terms of violation by members of ethnic groups of widely accepted norms (such as individualism and the protestant work ethos) that the majority group holds. One of the main manifestations of Symbolic Racism is the belief of majority members that minority members are very demanding regarding their rights and that they want unwarranted benefits.

In the next extract the respondent argues that the immigrants ought to "convince" the dominant group of their intentions to integrate, according to her own wording. Before the following extract the respondent was arguing that she would prefer to hire a Greek person rather than an immigrant because immigrants send a large part of their earnings back to their home countries.

Extract 2

> *Interviewer:* There are some people...
> *Respondent:* There are some people]
> *Interviewer:*   [who want to settle down]
> *Respondent:*   [Yes there are those who want to settle
>   OK but they have to prove that they will settle and they will stay here in Greece,
>   isn't that so?
> *Interviewer:* In order to proceed]
> *Respondent:*   [Of course in order to gradually start their integration. I
>   mean, it is more their issue. It is not our issue. I mean, they have to convince us that
>   they are really thinking of integrating to the Greek social and polit... eh... cultural
>   element of... of... of each]
> *Interviewer:*   [You mean they should adopt...
> *Respondent:* Yes, they should, I mean, say "You know I have learnt Greek, I got a job,
>   my kid went to school, she did, here, I have my wife here, my parents are
>   somewhere else, but I intend to bring them here, but if they don't want that they
>   will stay there, I will visit them and I will come back".
> *Interviewer:* So, you think that {   }it is just a matter of language?
> *Respondent:*   {eh, yes}   No it is not. It is a matter of
>   education in general. It is mainly an issue of education. It is mainly an issue of
>   education. Because, when the child grows up here even if she is a foreigner,
>   Greek... I mean she will think Greek, she will be educated in Greek, when she has
>   indeed the intention to stay in Greece.
>
>   (Woman, 55 lawyer, Eastern Thessaloniki).

In this extract again the intentions of the immigrants are presented as accountable. The integration of the immigrants to the host society is constructed as an obligation they have. The agency for the adaptation to the Greek society is attributed exclusively to the immigrants and the role of the Greek dominant group to the integration of immigrants is not addressed at all. The way immigrants should integrate to the Greek society is given via direct speech (Wooffitt, 1992). Their integration to the Greek society depends primarily upon their intention to stay in Greece permanently. If immigrants stay permanently in Greece they will be educated within the Greek educational system and they will adopt a Greek way of thinking. This argument is based on the assumption that most of the immigrants will not stay permanently in Greece but they want to earn some money to send back home, or to take out of the country when they repatriate. For these immigrants integration does not seem to be

an option. Again the financial criteria appear to be prioritized upon cultural criteria for the integration of immigrants. Although the participant uses the term "integration" in the interview segment, she seems to favor the assimilation of immigrants to the host society since through the Greek education they will adopt the Greek mentality. Of course since assimilation through education applies only to immigrants' children the participant seems to suggest different acculturation strategies to different generations of immigrants: integration for the first generation of immigrants and assimilation for the second generation, which attends Greek schools.

In the above extracts adopting the Greek culture was not presented as an option that immigrants may follow according to their own will but as an obligation they hold towards the host society. In both extracts adopting the Greek culture was presented as an "ideal" situation contrasted to the present state of immigrants.

The provision of benefits and welfare schemes as a means to promote assimilation

However, not all participants condemned benefits and affirmative action for immigrants. For some participants these were the means that could lead to the assimilation of immigrants. In the following extract the respondent argues that the Greek culture has the potential to absorb immigrants. Before this segment the respondent was commenting on the housing of the immigrants and the different family relations they have compared to the Greek people.

Extract 3

> *Interviewer:* What kind of changes do you think that this could bring?
> *Respondent:* The new... the refugees that come and stay here? What kind of changes...
> I believe that the changes are relative. I mean, it depends on how mature is a
> country. And the question now is whether our country is mature in order to absorb
> these people. Isn't that so? It has to do fist of all with what she (Greece) can offer
> them. Apart from the financial issues of the first generation of immigrants, there is
> more, I mean such as education, the absorption by our culture, eh, whether our
> culture is attractive for these people. Eh, I would say that... the Greeks have a very
> strong culture. Not the new-Greeks that much because the influences from the
> Europeans and mainly the Americans are very strong. But I think that the Greek
> element is very strong and it has a way to show to these people that came over here
> that we, more or less, stand out for some reasons. These reasons might be our
> language, isn't that so, our religion, our morals... things that change in time and

> they start, it is normal, to transform but I think that the basic principles and values remain the same.
>
> (Male, 37, private sector employee, Eastern Thessaloniki).

The respondent reformulates the question posed by the interviewer regarding the changes that migration could bring to Greece. Whether Greece can accept the immigrants is a matter of how mature is the country to do so. Greek people are responsible to present their culture in an appealing way in order to make immigrants assimilate. In contrast to the previous extracts where immigrants were presented as responsible for their integration to the Greek society, in this extract the responsibility falls to the hands of the Greek people and the Greek state who have to help immigrants not only in terms of benefits but also in terms of education and culture. If they manage to present their culture as attractive the immigrants will assimilate. This is presented as an almost automatic procedure where the immigrants themselves do not have an option. The Greek culture is presented as a strong culture that stands out and has the ability to absorb populations of other cultures that come over. A distinction is made between the Modern Greek culture that has influences from abroad, and the "authentic" Greek culture that stands out due to its language, religion and morals. Although it is acknowledged that there is change over time it is considered that the basic elements of Greekness remain the same.

It is interesting to note that in this extract there is an implicit denial of any changes that the immigrants have brought to the Greek society. The basic argument is that if Greek culture is presented in an attractive way it will automatically lead to the assimilation of immigrants. In this way the agency of immigrants to the acculturation process is denied.

This line of argumentation seems to be informed by the way Greek historiography has constructed Greek historical continuity through time. The basic argumentative line is that Greek civilization remained untouched by foreign influences even under occupation by different cultures. In these cases the strength of the Greek civilization led to the cultural conquering of the conquerors. The Romans were culturally conquered by Greek culture, the Byzantium which adopted Greek cultural elements is considered a Greek empire, while under Ottoman rule Greek culture remained dormant and was awakened at the time of the Greek revolution. As a result Greek historical continuity is taken for granted and Greek culture as having an innate ability to assimilate "foreign" cultural influences (Βερέμης, 1983. Λιάκος, 1994. Σκοπετέα, 1988. Στάθης, 1994. Τσουκαλάς, 1994). Although this historical argument was constructed at the end of the 19th century, its basic premises are still accepted by large parts of the population (and by some theorists) and constitute the backbone

according to which school history textbooks are written and taught in schools (Λιάκος, 1994. Στάθης, 1994). As a result Greek culture is presented as having an innate ability to absorb foreign influences and cultures and to remain unchanged. The "superiority" of Greek culture will lead to the assimilation of immigrants within the Greek society.

In this extract the desired outcome of the acculturation of immigrants is assimilation to the Greek culture. In contrast though to previous extracts, where the integration to the Greek society necessitates the abandonment of welfare schemes and benefits, here assimilation is based on the provision of these benefits to immigrants. This seems to constitute a different trend compared to what existing research seems to suggest. While the majority of studies show a positive relationship between assimilation and discrimination (e.g., Dandy & Pe-Pua, 2010; Kosic et al., 2005; Zick et al., 2001) in the present data on occasions arguments supporting integration were accompanied by discriminatory statements that maintained that immigrants should not be granted benefits.

Before the following extract the respondent was talking about the settling of the immigrant at his neighborhood claiming that things have not changed much.

Extract 4

Interviewer: What differences do you notice compared to the local people?
Respondent: I do not know, I do not know, I haven't considered it that much. What we see as a picture. What we see as a picture, so what we see as a picture is that they settle where they moved they settled. Secondly, in another area, such as (identifying information omitted) they tend to... old residents leave and they settle. Of course, it is one of our underdeveloped areas, so it is easy to find accommodation and it is cheap. Eh, because of this there are groupings. It is these two areas that come to mind. In other, in all the other areas they integrate and they follow their path... what the rest do. The particularities that relate to their culture and their education are evident there. I mean, if you have noticed, for example the children whose numbers started to increase at the municipal conservatoire or to the dance classes. Although we have a lot of our kids, they tend to increase, they participate. I think that, we are forced to increase the pace and to build infrastructure so that... because the generation that came over has brought young kids, and if we do not achieve this right now, in the near future we will make them just like us.

(Male, 47, school teacher, Western Thessaloniki).

A. Sapountzis

The participant answers the question regarding any noticeable differences between immigrants and local people using a cognitive disclaimer ("I do not know", Hewitt & Stokes, 1975) which may indicate that the discussion touches upon a delicate issue. It is interesting that the participant does not refer to any stereotypical characteristics to account on the observed differences between immigrants and local people. The fact that some of the immigrants settle in a specific area is attributed to financial factors and not to an intention to live separately from the Greek dominant group. In the rest of the areas according to the participant immigrants integrate and they live like the rest of the people. Emphasis is laid on the participation of immigrants' children to common activities with the children of the local population. The need to provide better facilities and services to immigrants is stressed with the aim of making the immigrants "just like us". As in the previous extract welfare for immigrants is linked to their assimilation within the Greek society and the agency of this process lies on the hands of the Greek dominant group.

Active assimilation of immigrants as an accountable behavior

The next extract comes from a later point in the same interview. Before this extract the participant was commenting on the benefits immigrants have as well as the amiable relations between immigrants and local people.

Extract 5

Interviewer: What relations do they have with the municipality here? You said that there are some municipal services]

Respondent: [Yes, Yes they are everywhere.

Interviewer: At the culture clubs. I imagine you can find them at schools.

Respondent: Without a question, there isn't any more any... after all this time it does not matter, neither you can distinguish who is really, if you can judge by name. Because this has also happened, I image you also follow the newspapers, they change names very often. Under these circumstances we cannot know how many of them are real Greeks or Russians who aim at something. It is not our concern, what matters, is that personally I am impressed by the frequency I see them changing names in the papers. So in schools you cannot tell, you have to look at the name of the father or the mother and look]

Interviewer: [You believe they do that because they have some expediency.

Respondent: No, I do not know, I do not know. It might be (inaudible) it is fair.

The respondent makes a reference to the situations in schools that many children of different ethnic backgrounds attend. The participant makes a case that you cannot actually distinguish anymore students of different ethnic backgrounds. The main reason for this is that many immigrants adopt Greek names and it is not easy to distinguish them and only the first name of the parents can indicate their ethnic origin. Nevertheless, the effort of the immigrants to assimilate to the Greek society is presented as something accountable that might hide some expediency ("aim at something"). When the interviewer asks specifically about this issue the respondent seems to interpret the question as an accusation of prejudice arguing that this behavior is acceptable.

The difference between the two extracts is startling. While in the first one the participant argues that immigrants should become like the Greek population, in the second one he presents the immigrants' attempt to assimilate as accountable. What changes in the two extracts is the agent of acculturation. In the first extract the Greek people are the ones that set the rules for the assimilation of immigrants through the provision of welfare schemes and education, while in the second extract the immigrants themselves are the ones that are in charge of the assimilation process. What seems to be of importance as in the previous extracts is who is in charge of the acculturation process. The dominant Greek group is placed as the de facto group that should be in charge of the acculturation of immigrants.

A second issue that has to be addressed is a methodological one. The two extracts present an antithesis that cannot be easily accounted with the traditional methodology adopted by acculturation research. Most of the research uses attitude scales that cannot easily allow the expression of antithetical statements. Discourse analysts on the other hand claim that variability is a basic feature of people's talk. Since language is action oriented participants' talk will demonstrate variability (Potter & Wetherell, 1987, 1988). This is why occasionally people may appear to argue against their previous statements. The context within which these antithetical statements take place and what participants are attempting to accomplish with their use is the primary focus of the analytic procedure. This may suggest that participants may support different acculturation strategies for immigrants on different occasions.

DISCUSSION

The above analysis attempted to contribute to the discussion of the acculturation of immigrants using a discourse analytic perspective. It focused on the Greek dominant group discourse since research on acculturation recognizes the role the dominant group plays for the acculturation strategies that are available to immigrants.

One of the first issues that became apparent in the data was the issue of the agency of the acculturation process. Berry (2005) argues that acculturation is the mutual cultural adaptation of two or more different groups when they get in contact. In the present data, most of the participants argued that only the immigrants had to adapt in their new social environment. Occasionally, participants denied that the presence of immigrants has brought any changes to the Greek society. In fact they were presented as having a responsibility to adapt and to convince the host society of their intentions. What seemed to be of paramount importance for most of the participants was who would be in charge of the acculturation of the immigrants. It seemed that participants legitimised the supremacy of the dominant group over the way immigrants should adapt to the Greek society. Greek people presented themselves as entitled to decide the acculturation process of the immigrants.

Another important point that echoes the criticism made to acculturation research, claiming that culture is actually absent, is related to what cultural elements the participants expected immigrants to adopt. Chircov (2009) argues that in most of the acculturation research there is no analysis of the shared ideas and norms that form the cultural milieu. In this way ironically acculturation psychology overlooks the cultural elements that constitute the backbone of the acculturation process. In the present data in some instances participants referred to the cultural aspects that immigrants should adopt. Acquisition of the Greek language was probably the most important acculturation target for immigrants, as well as Greek education. However, this was only half the story. For some participants the adaptation of immigrants to the Greek society did not necessarily mean the adoption of Greek cultural elements. Immigrants were also expected to contribute to the financial development of Greece and to use their income within the Greek economy.

This brings up another important issue: What is the expected outcome of acculturation. In most of the data participants suggested that immigrants should be assimilated to the Greek society. It was expected that immigrants would gradually start to resemble members of the host society. What was interesting is that on many occasions this kind of assimilation was seen as a favorable outcome of acculturation that depended on the welfare schemes and benefits granted to immigrants. The more benefits immigrants were granted the more easily they would assimilate and adapt to "our" society. Of course, it has to be stressed that the specificity of the Greek socio-cultural context plays an important role in the expectancies of the intercultural contact. Since in Greek historiography the Greek culture is constructed as a strong culture that has the ability to absorb and assimilate people from different cultural backgrounds and to remain unchanged, the education of immigrants and their exposure to the Greek culture was thought to automatically lead to their assimilation.

On the other hand, occasionally, cultural maintenance was seen as accompanied by the abandonment of welfare schemes for immigrants. It was argued that instead of integrating immigrants just look for benefits.

The above data were acquired using a discourse analytic technique. Although such an approach does not allow the generalisation[2] of results beyond their context this also constitutes its strength, since it allows the in depth examination of how people construct immigrants and their acculturation and how this interacts with the socio-cultural context. Cultural norms and meanings can be examined in verbal interaction and how people account for them and use them in talk. Since the socio-cultural context is ever changing, further research is needed to capture the changing social relations. Especially now that Greece faces an unprecedented economic crisis it would be expected that this puts also immigrants in a very precarious position. Research could focus both on the changes in acculturation and the intergroup relations between immigrants and members of the host society since it is generally predicted that under these conditions intergroup relations deteriorate.

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[2] A note should also be made about the validation and reliability in discourse analytic research. In contrast to other research paradigms, discourse analysis uses its own reliability criteria: coherence refers to the way that analysis makes the discourse to fit together and how discursive structure produces effects and functions (Potter, 1996a; Potter & Wetherell, 1987); participant's orientation means that instead of the researcher imposing her/his own analytic categories on the data she/he uses participants' own understanding of the interaction (Potter, 1996a; Potter & Wetherell, 1987); finally, readers' evaluation is also important. It has two aspects: First of all, readers can evaluate the analytic interpretations through the detailed presentation of raw material. Second, readers are competent interactants themselves indoctrinated in the specific culture and therefore they can evaluate both the analytic interpretations and also more general claims (King, 1996; Potter, 1996a).

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