

# Social desirability and perceived discrimination: A study of immigrant youth in Greek public schools

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# \* *Athena Studies of Resilient Adaptation*

This study is part of the ongoing Athena Studies of Resilient Adaptation (AStRA), a collaborative project<sup>1</sup> focused on immigrant youth.

<sup>1</sup> A collaboration between the *Department of Psychology of the University of Athens, Greece*, the *Institute of Child Development of the University of Minnesota, USA*, and *Humbolt University, Germany*

# \* Purpose of this study

- \* To explore the relationship between perceived discrimination and social desirability.



# \*What is social desirability?

- \*Social desirability is a need for, a motive or a tendency to seek approval or to avoid disapproval (Crowne, 1979; Crowne & Marlowe, 1964; Paulhus 1986; Schwartz et al., 1997).
- \*Even in the case that social desirability is a response style, it still reveals substantial personality characteristics (Schwartz et al., 1997; Mesmer-Magnus, Viswesvaran, Deshpande, & Joseph, 2006).

# \*Two factors in social desirability

- \* **Self deception** refers to the positive view (even if inflated) that individuals have of themselves;
- \* **Impression management** refers to the conscious effort by individuals to dissimulate and alter the opinions that others have of them (Paulhus & Reid, 1991; Mesmer-Magnus, Viswesvaran, Deshpande, & Joseph, 2006).
- \* Both factors have been shown to correlate with self-esteem (Jordan, et al., 2003).

# \*What is perceived discrimination?

Perceived discrimination refers to the awareness of being discriminated against, by groups and/or individuals, with subsequent threat of disparagement of one's social identity.

One perceives discrimination

- \* Against the self, because of one's ethnic group membership
- \* Against the ethnic group

# \* Perceived discrimination & immigrant youth

- \* Immigrant adolescents tend to perceive less discrimination against the self, when they have either a bicultural, or a host-national orientation (Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006; Berry & Sabatier, 2010).
- \* However, where ethnic identity is concerned, the results are conflicting (e.g. McCoy & Major, 2003; Liebkind, Jasinskaja-Lahti, & Solheim, 2004; Sabatier, 2008).
- \* Furthermore, the perception of the self as the target of discrimination is associated with lower self esteem  
e.g. Motti-Stefanidi, Berry, Chrysochoou, Sam, & Phinney, 2012;  
Liebkind, Jasinskaya-Lathi, & Solheim, 2004



# \* Perceived discrimination & Social desirability

- \* In self-reports of perceived discrimination, social desirability may inhibit participants from reporting discrimination to present a positive view of themselves to the researcher (Tanaka et al. 1998), or internal pressures to deny their experiences may be at work, in order to maintain a stable sense of self (Grossman & Liang, 2008).



# \* Perceived discrimination & Social desirability

- \* Furthermore, as Kaiser & Miller (2003) have shown, individuals that attribute rejection to discrimination -even if the discrimination is overt and blatant- are perceived as troublemakers, with the subsequent interpersonal and self-presentational costs.

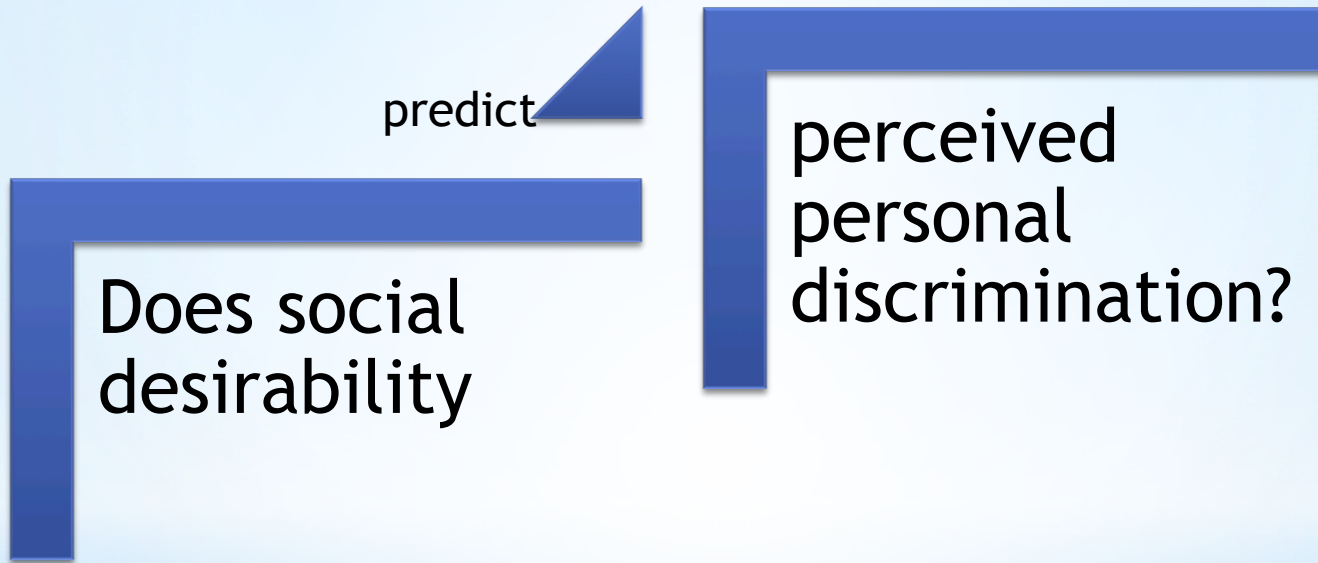
# \* Relevant findings

- \* Research on asking sensitive questions in surveys reveals that to the extent that respondents perceive questions regarding discrimination to be socially unacceptable or undesirable, they are likely to underreport those experiences (Tourangeau & Yan, 2007).
- \* Social desirability is negatively correlated with perception of discrimination (Krieger, et al., 2005). However, Verkuyten (1998) finds no relation between perceived discrimination and social desirability.

# \*Research questions

1. Does Social Desirability predict Perceived Discrimination against the self?
2. Does Social Desirability predict Perceived Discrimination against the self, over and above acculturation indices?
3. Does Social Desirability predict Perceived Discrimination against the self, over and above self esteem?

# \*Research question 1:

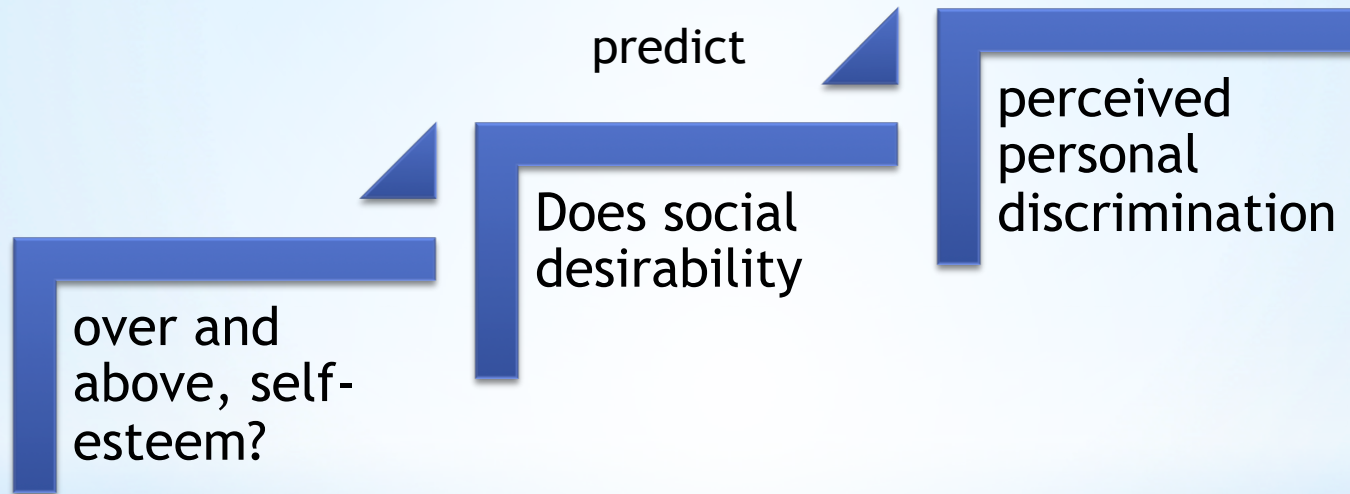


# \*Research question 2:





# \*Research question 3:



# \*Participants

## Immigrant students of Albanian descent (N= 196)

Sex	56.1% Boys 43.9 % Girls
Immigrant Generation	79.1% 1 <sup>st</sup> 20.9% 2 <sup>nd</sup>
Age	12.9 y.o. (SD=.7)

# \* Measure of perceived personal discrimination

based on Phinney et al. (1998) and Verkuyten (1998)

## \* Perceived discrimination against the self

4 items;  $\alpha = .85$

“How often do you feel treated unfairly in your school because of your ethnic origin?”

“How often do you feel welcome in the Greek society?”

# \* Measure of Social Desirability

\*The Strahan & Gerbasi (1972) Social Desirability Scale (adapted from Marlowe & Crowne, 1960)

10 items;  $a = .52$

“I never felt the need to react towards my parents”

“I don't dislike anyone”

# \* Measures of acculturation

**Acculturation Scale** (adapted from Nguyen & von Eye, 2002)

1. Involvement in the host, Greek culture (11 items,  $\alpha = .89$ ,)
2. Involvement in the ethnic, Albanian culture (11 items,  $\alpha = .89$ )

**Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM)**  
(Phinney, 1992)

3. Sense of belonging (7 items,  $\alpha = .76$ )

“I am happy that I am a member of the group I belong to”



# \* Measure of self-esteem

- \* **Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale:**  
10 item scale ( $\alpha = .82$ )

# \* Control Variables

\* **Perceived discrimination against the group**  
based on Phinney et al. (1998) and Verkuyten (1998)

(3 items;  $a = .75$ )

“How often do you feel that your schoolmates tease children from Albania?”

\* **Gender**

\* **Immigrant generation**

\* **Sociodemographic Adversity**

Family status (single parent families), educational level of parents (minimal education), occupational status of parents (unskilled occupation or unemployed), density of residence

# \*Correlations

1. Gender	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
2. Immigrant gen.	.053								
3. Sociodemographic adversity	-.022	-.087							
4. Group discr.	.080	.064	.012						
5. Personal discr.	-.104	-.030	.021	.522 <sup>**</sup>					
6. Social desirability	-.086	.010	.059	-.156 <sup>*</sup>	-.223 <sup>**</sup>				
7. Acc. host-national	.191 <sup>**</sup>	.301 <sup>**</sup>	-.119	-.074	-.296 <sup>**</sup>	.188 <sup>**</sup>			
8. Acc. ethnic	-.185 <sup>**</sup>	-.224 <sup>**</sup>	.131 <sup>*</sup>	.052	.154 <sup>*</sup>	-.032	-.365 <sup>**</sup>		
9. Sense of belonging	-.011	-.062	.027	.060	.241 <sup>*</sup>	-.108	-.173	.339 <sup>**</sup>	
10. Self-esteem	-.137 <sup>*</sup>	-.071	.076	-.208 <sup>**</sup>	-.389 <sup>**</sup>	.225 <sup>**</sup>	.168 <sup>*</sup>	.054	-.022

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\* Does social desirability predict  
perceived personal  
discrimination?

# \*Results I

What is the contribution of social desirability in the prediction of perceived personal discrimination?

- ⇒ Step 1: Perceived Discrimination against the Group
- ⇒ Step 2: Sex, Immigrant generation, Sociodemographic adversity
- ⇒ Step 3: Social Desirability



# Hierarchical regression for the prediction of perceived personal discrimination from perceived group discrimination, demographics, and social desirability

Predictors at step 3

B

Perc. Discrimination against the Group

.44\*\*\*

Sex

-.31\*\*

Immigrant generation

-.07

Sociodemographic adversity

.01

**Social Desirability**

**-.07\*\***

Total R<sup>2</sup>

.30\*\*

Note \*\*p<.01, \*\*\* p<.001.

**\* Does social desirability  
predict perceived  
personal discrimination,  
over and above  
acculturation indices?**

# \*Results II

What is the contribution of social desirability in the prediction of perceived personal discrimination?

- ⇒ Step 1: Perceived Discrimination against the Group
- ⇒ Step 2: Sex, Immigrant generation, Sociodemographic adversity
- ⇒ Step 3: Acculturation ethnic, acculturation national, and sense of belonging, separately
- ⇒ Step 4: Social Desirability

# Hierarchical regression for the prediction of perceived personal discrimination from perceived group discrimination, demographics, acculturation host national, and social desirability

Predictors at step 4	B
Perceived Discrimination against the Group	.43***
Sex	-.19
Immigrant generation	.12
Sociodemographic adversity	-.04
Acculturation host national	-.27***
Social Desirability	-.05
Total R <sup>2</sup>	.35

Note: \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

# Hierarchical regression for the prediction of perceived personal discrimination from perceived group discrimination, demographics, acculturation ethnic and social desirability

Predictors at step 4	B
Perceived Discrimination against the Group	.44***
Sex	-.27**
Immigrant generation	-.00
Sociodemographic adversity	-.01
Acculturation ethnic	.10
<b>Social Desirability</b>	<b>-.07**</b>
Total R <sup>2</sup>	.31**

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



# Hierarchical regression for the prediction of perceived personal discrimination from perceived group discrimination, demographics, sense of belonging, and social desirability

Predictors at step 4	B
Perceived Discrimination against the Group	.44***
Sex	-.31**
Immigrant generation	-.08
Sociodemographic adversity	.00
Sense of belonging	-.10
<b>Social Desirability</b>	<b>-.07**</b>
Total R <sup>2</sup>	.30**

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

\* Does social desirability predict perceived personal discrimination, over and above self-esteem?

# \*Results III

What is the contribution of social desirability in the prediction of perceived personal discrimination?

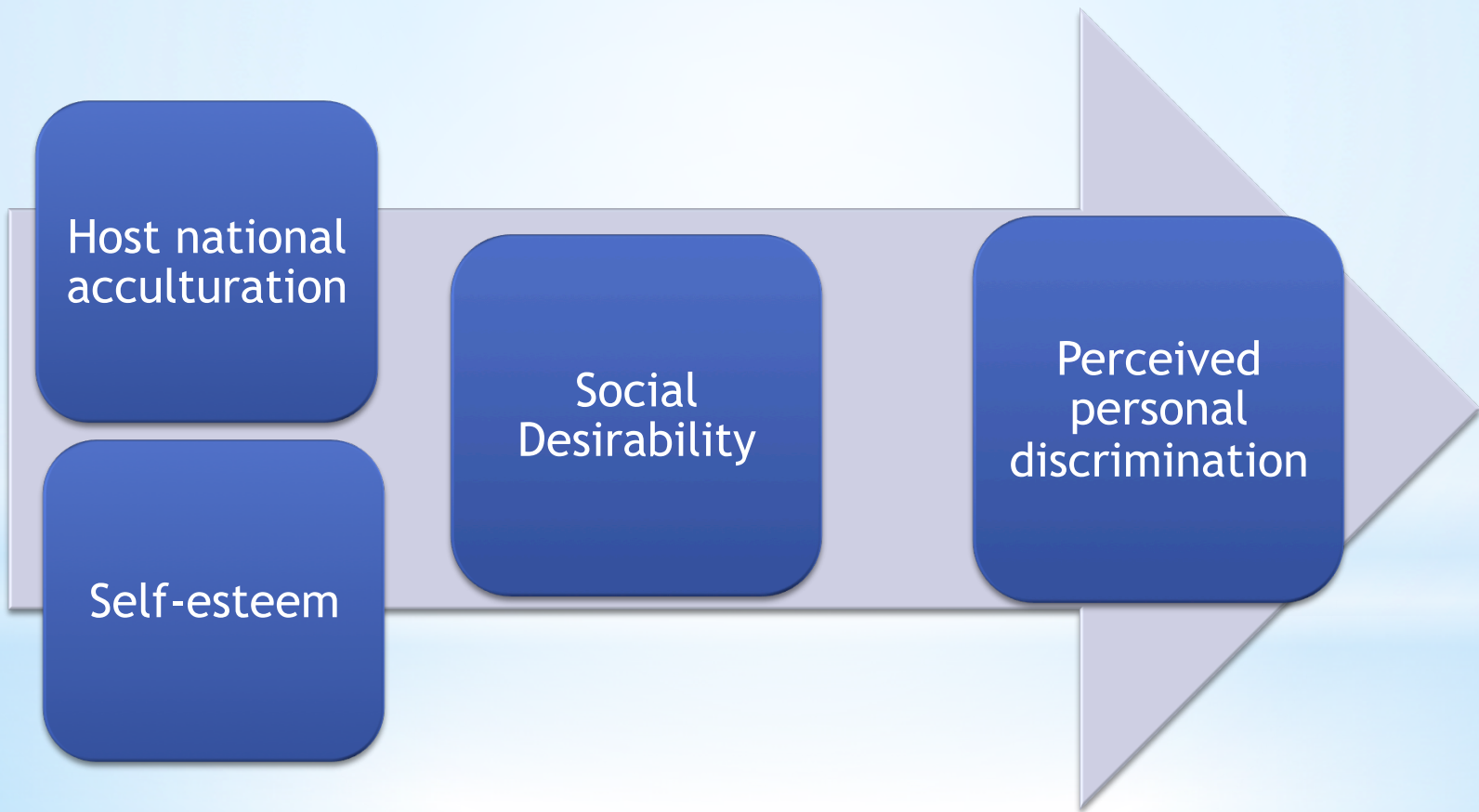
- ⇒ Step 1: Perceived Discrimination against the Group
- ⇒ Step 2: Sex, Immigrant generation, Sociodemographic adversity
- ⇒ Step 3: Self-esteem
- ⇒ Step 4: Social Desirability

# Hierarchical regression for the prediction of perceived personal discrimination from perceived group discrimination, demographics, self-esteem, and social desirability

Predictors at step 4	B
Perceived Discrimination against the Group	.40***
Sex	-.34***
Immigrant generation	-.13
Sociodemographic adversity	.02
Self-esteem	-.40***
Social Desirability	-.04
Total R <sup>2</sup>	.39

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

# \* In short





# \* Discussion

# \* Acculturation & social desirability

- \* Higher host national orientation was expected to be a stronger predictor of less perceived personal discrimination, since social desirability coincides with the dominant-group norms in the host culture (Triandis et al., 1986).
- \* Adolescents with stronger host-national acculturation are likely to perceive less personal discrimination, since in an effort to be accepted they make their behavior as similar as possible to the behavior of the mainstream, therefore becoming less visible and more impervious to facing discrimination (Liebkind & Jansinsaja-Lahti, 2000; Triandis, et al., 1986)

# \* Self-esteem, perceived discrimination & social desirability

- \* High self-esteem individuals have been shown to answer in a social desirable direction (eg. Brown, Dutton, & Cook, 2001). Also less perception of perceived discrimination against the self and higher scores of social desirability are both related to higher self-esteem.
- \* This implies, that self esteem might contain certain impression management functions, in regard to perceived personal discrimination (Crocker & Major, 1989).
- \* It is also possible that adolescents with high self-esteem are confronted with less discrimination, because of the positive characteristics that they possess (Motti & Asendorpf, 2012).

\*Thank you