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Acculturation, Identity and Wellbeing among Ethnocultural Youth

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Abstract

- **Acculturation is the process of cultural and psychological change that results from the prolonged contact between groups and individuals of different cultures.**

- **Much acculturation takes place in culturally-diverse societies that have emerged following colonization and immigration.**

- **There are three important acculturation issues that need consideration:**
    1. *how* **do individuals of different cultures engage each other;**
    2. *how well* **do they adapt to their intercultural situation; and**
    3. **are there** *relationships* **between** *how* **individuals acculturate and** *how well* **they adapt.**

Abstract (cont.)

- **Core concepts in dealing with these questions are *acculturation strategies* and *cultural identities (how)* and psychological and social *wellbeing (how well*).**

- **The search for relationships between answers to these two questions may allow the promotion of ways of acculturating that lead to greater wellbeing.**

- **Evidence from research with immigrant adults and youth who are settled in many societies reveals that there is indeed a 'best practice' for achieving wellbeing: those who engage both their heritage cultures and identities, as well as participate in the daily life of the larger society, have higher levels of wellbeing that those who engage with only one or the other, or with neither culture.**

Outline

1. Acculturation: Definition and Features
2. Goals of Acculturation Research
3. Acculturation: Positive and Negative
4. Variations in Acculturation:
     - Acculturation Strategies: How?
     - Adaptation. How well?
5. Protective and Risk Factors
6. Empirical Research: Illustration
7. Conclusions and Implications

1. Acculturation

- Acculturation is the process of **cultural** and **psychological change** following contact between cultural groups and their individual members.

- It takes place in **both** groups and **all** individuals in contact.

- Although one group is usually dominant over the others, successful outcomes require **mutual accommodation among all groups and individuals** living together in the diverse society**.**
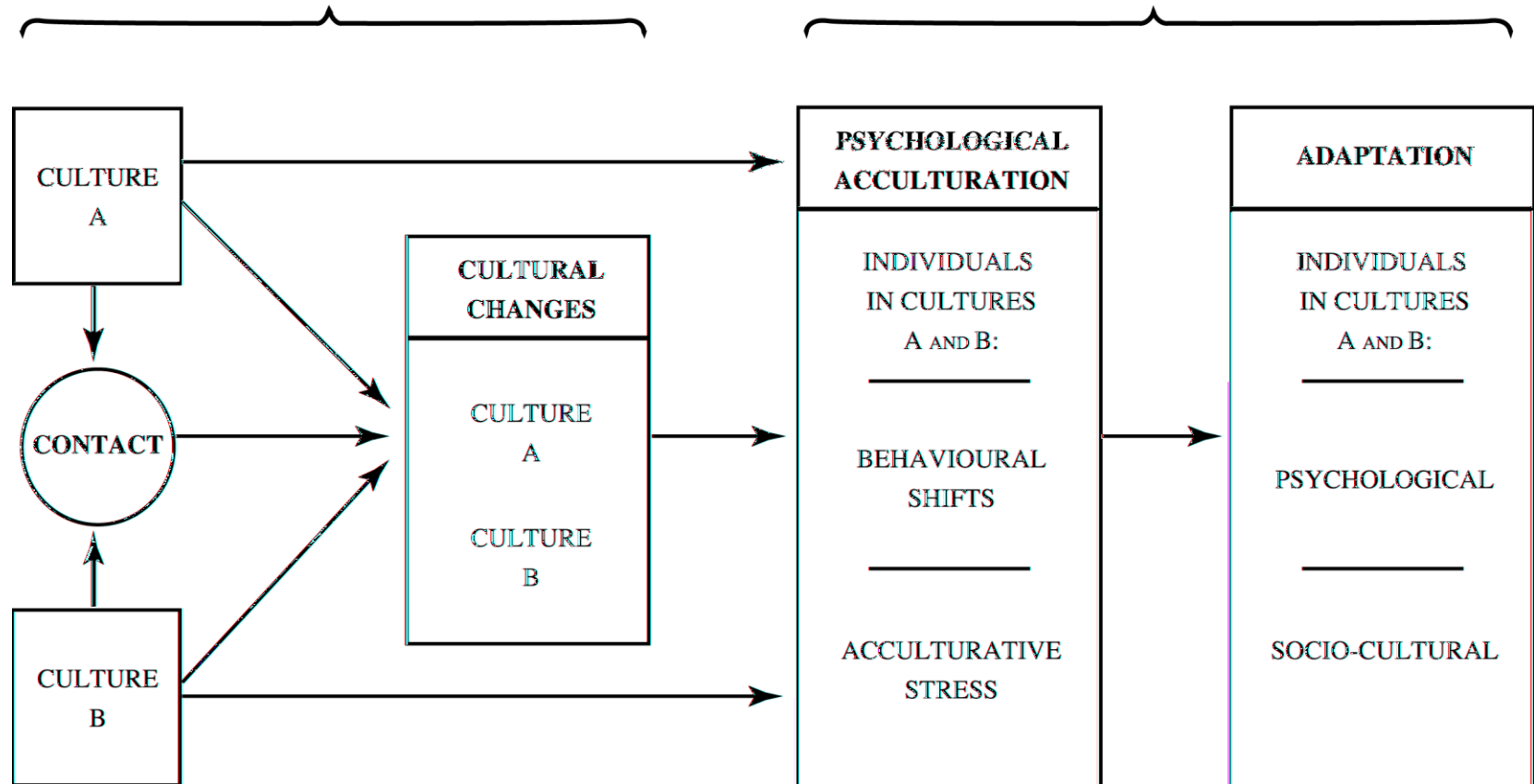
1. Acculturation

- At the cultural level, there are three phenomena that need to be examined:

    - features of the groups prior to their contact,

    - the nature of their intercultural relationships,

    - the cultural changes following their contact.

- At the psychological level, there are also three phenomena:

    - behavioural changes (in daily repertoire, identity),

    - stress reactions (acculturative stress),

    - adaptations (psychological and sociocultural).

1. Acculturation: Cultural and Psychological

CULTURAL/GROUP LEVEL   **PSYCHOLOGICAL/INDIVIDUAL LEVEL**

2. Goals of Acculturation Research

The goals of acculturation research are:

- to understand the various phenomena of acculturation and adaptation,

- to examine *how* individuals and groups acculturate,

- to examine *how well* individuals and groups adapt

- to search for relationships between *how* and *how well,* in order to discover if there is a *best practice,*

- to apply these findings to the betterment and wellbeing of immigrant and ethnocultural individuals and groups.

2. Goals of Acculturation Research

These same goals apply equally to all members of the societies of settlement.

Without an understanding of how they are impacted by immigration and acculturation, there can be no improvement in the wellbeing for immigrant and ethnocultural groups when their social, economic and political environments remain negative.

3. Acculturation: Positive and Negative

- **Much early research on acculturation provided 'evidence' that the experiences were generally negative, and led to poor outcomes.**
- **This 'evidence' was often published by those who provided services to persons and groups who were in difficulty following immigration.**
- **Psychiatrists, social workers and other clinicians rarely made observations on persons who made satisfactory acculturative transitions.**

3. Acculturation: Positive and Negative

- **As more community surveys were carried out, using general samples of acculturating populations, a more balanced picture emerged.**

- **In some studies, acculturating individuals achieved equal or even better levels of wellbeing than those already settled in the larger society.**

4. Variations in Acculturation

- **It is now well established that acculturation takes place in many ways, and has highly variable outcomes.**

- **These variations appear in regard to *how* people acculturate and *how well* they adapt.**

- **These variations appear to be related to a number of factors that exist prior to migration, and to factors that arise following migration as a result of intercultural contact.**

- **Some of these factors can be considered as *protective*, and some as *risk factors*.**

4. Acculturation Strategies: The *How* Question

- **Groups and individuals in acculturating groups hold differing views about *how* to relate to each other and how to change.**

- **These views concern two underlying issues:**
  1.Maintenance of heritage cultural and identity in order to sustain cultural communities,
  2. Participation with other groups in the life of the national society.

- **Their intersection produces four *acculturation strategies* used by groups in contact**

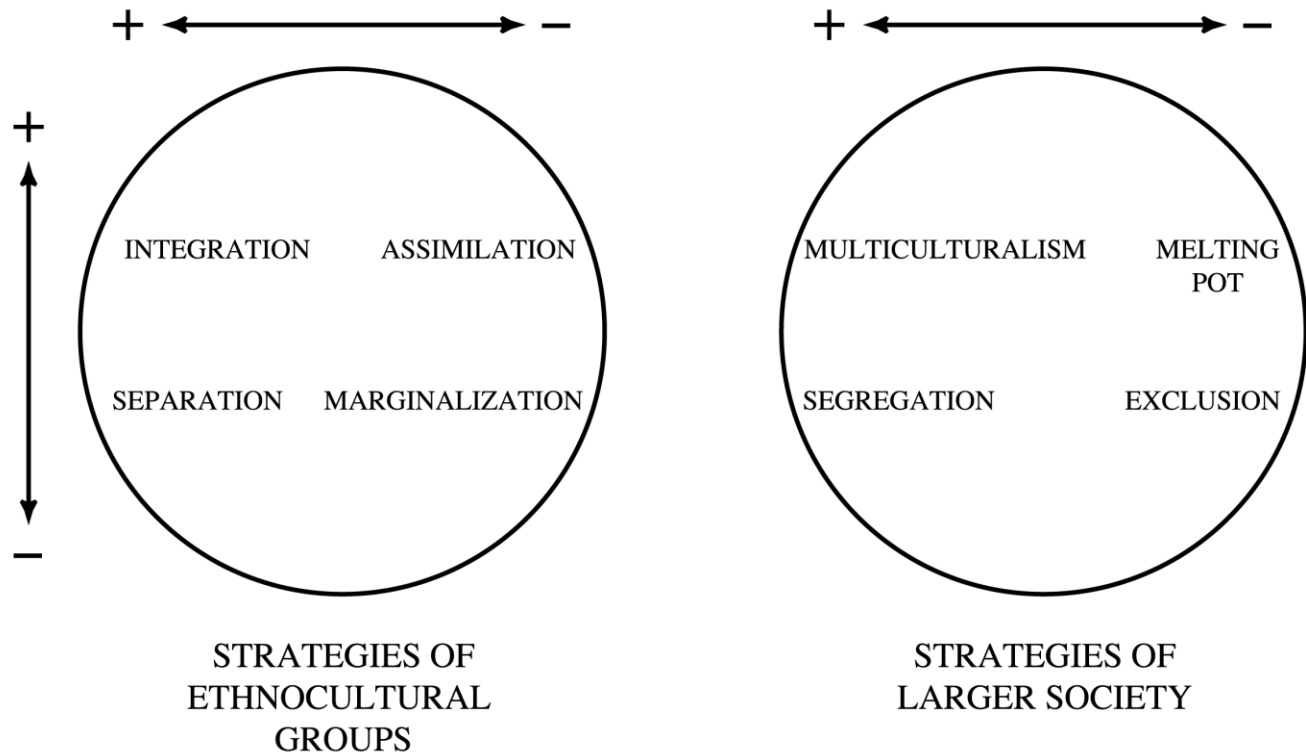- **These strategies represent the *how* issue mentioned earlier.**

4. Acculturation Strategies: Framework

ISSUE 1:

MAINTENANCE OF HERITAGE CULTURE AND IDENTITY

ISSUE 2:

RELATIONSHIPS
SOUGHT
AMONG
GROUPS

+ ←——————→ −

	INTEGRATION	ASSIMILATION
	SEPARATION	MARGINALIZATION

STRATEGIES OF
ETHNOCULTURAL
GROUPS

+ ←——————→ −

	MULTICULTURALISM	MELTING POT
	SEGREGATION	EXCLUSION

STRATEGIES OF
LARGER SOCIETY

4. Acculturation Strategies: Some Findings

- **In most research, integration is found to be the preferred strategy.**

- **In some research with indigenous peoples and sojourners, separation is preferred.**

- **In a few studies with refugees, assimilation is preferred.**

- **In no studies is marginalisation preferred.**

4. Adaptation and Wellbeing: The *How Well* Question

- **Two forms of adaptation to acculturation are usually defined and distinguished in the research literature:**
  - **- Psychological and**
  - **- Sociocultural**

- **These two forms of adaptation are conceptually distinct but empirically related.**

4. Psychological Adaptation and Wellbeing

Psychological adaptation refers to internal phenomena. It is characterised by 'feeling well' about oneself. Such psychological health is usually considered to be a prerequisite for a successful life.

It is assessed by lack of psychological problems (anxiety, depression, psychosomatic symptoms), and the presence of self-esteem and wellbeing.

4. Sociocultural Adaptation and Wellbeing

Sociocultural adaptation refers to the degree to which individuals are competent in carrying out their daily lives in their new social and cultural contexts (eg., in school, at work, in social engagements).

It is characterised by 'doing well' in life achievements.

It is assessed by success at school or work, lack of behaviour problems (eg., truancy, petty theft, drug use), and competence in daily activities.

4. Variations in Acculturation Strategies and Adaptation

- **A key issue is whether there are any systematic relationships between answers to the *how* and *how well* questions.**

- **In an overview of this issue, Berry (1997) asserted that:**

  "Psychological acculturation is influenced by many individual-level factors. In particular, the integrationist or bi-cultural acculturation strategy appears to be a consistent predictor of more positive outcomes than the three alternatives of assimilation, separation or marginalisation. "

4. Variations in Acculturation Strategies and Adapttion

- A recent meta-analysis by Nguyen & Benet- Martinez has shown that this relationship is indeed in evidence

- In over 80 studies (with over 23,000 participants) integration ('biculturalism' in her terms) was positively associated with positive adaptation ('adjustment' in her terms).

5. Protective Factors

Protective factors include:
- following the integration (and to some extent the separation) strategy;
- residing for a longer period of time in the society of settlement;
- having social support in the two communities;
- having social capital(education,networks)
- public policy and attitudes supporting immigration and multiculturalism.

5. Risk Factors

Risk factors include:

- the experience of discrimination;

- following the marginalisation strategy;

- experiencing identity problems;

- having a large cultural distance between groups in contact.

- low social capital (social support, education, wealth).

6. Empirical Example: Study of Immigrant Youth

- Book*: Immigrant youth in cultural transition: Acculturation, identity and adaptation across national contexts. LEA, 2006.*

- Article in *Applied Psychology* (2006).

Both by John Berry, Jean Phinney, David Sam and Paul Vedder.

6. International Comparative Study of Ethnocultural Youth

- 13 SOCIETIES OF SETTLEMENT:
  (5 Settler,8 Recent)
- 32 IMMIGRANT GROUPS
- Immigrant youth N =5366
  (aged 13 -18; 65.3% 2nd generation)
- Immigrant parents N =2302
- National youth N = 2631
- National parents N = 863

# Question 1. How do immigrant youth acculturate ?

- Used 13 intercultural variables:
- Acculturation attitudes (IASM)
- Cultural identities (ethnic, national)
- Language use (ethnic, national)
- Social relationships (ethnic, national)
- Family relationship values (obligations, rights)

# Question 1. How do immigrant youth acculturate?

Cluster analysis of these 13 variables yielded four acculturation profiles:

- Integration: 36.4% (oriented to both cults.)

- Separation: 22.5 % (oriented to heritage)

- Assimilation:18.7 % (oriented to national)
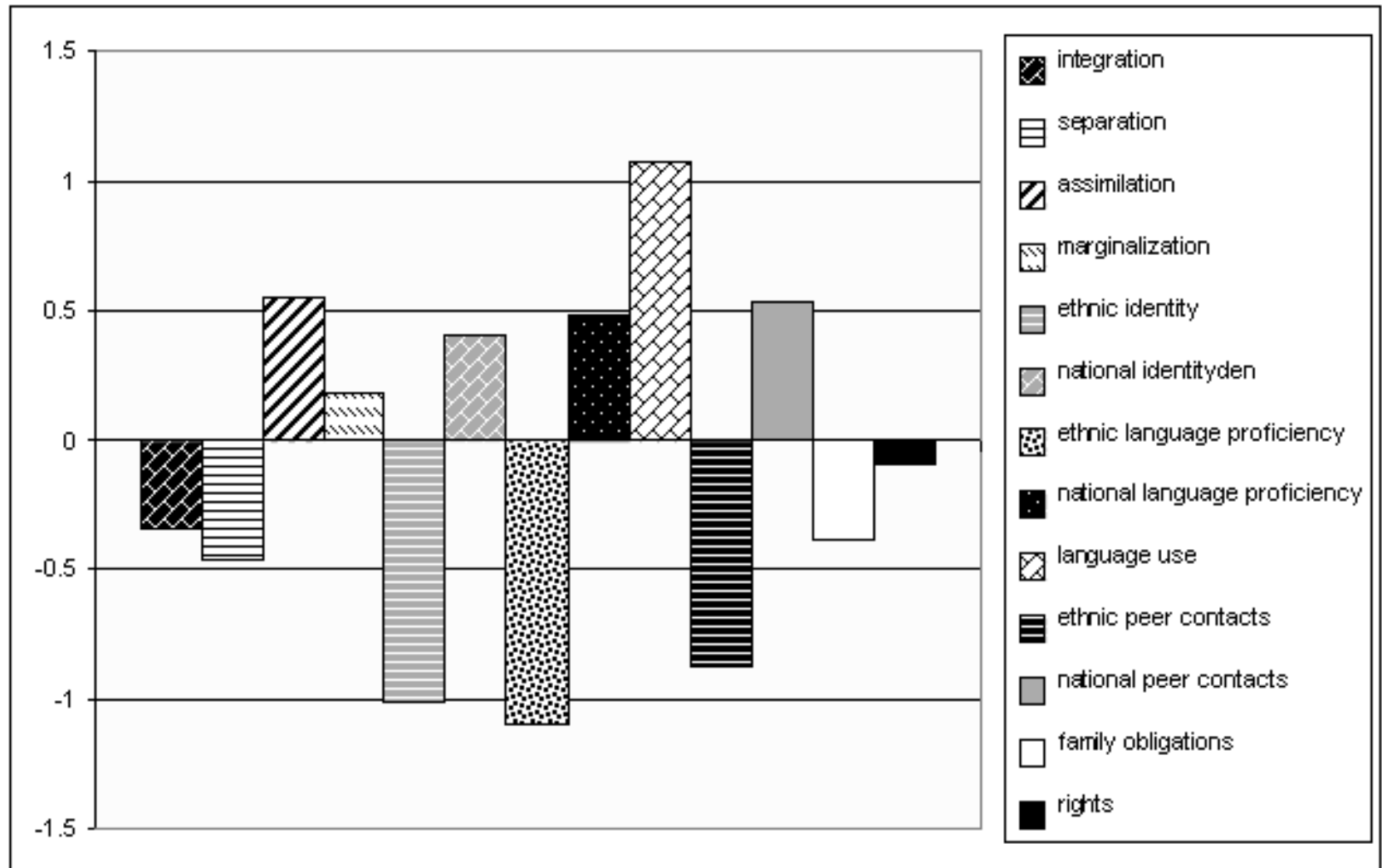
- Marginalisation: 22.4%(oriented to neither)

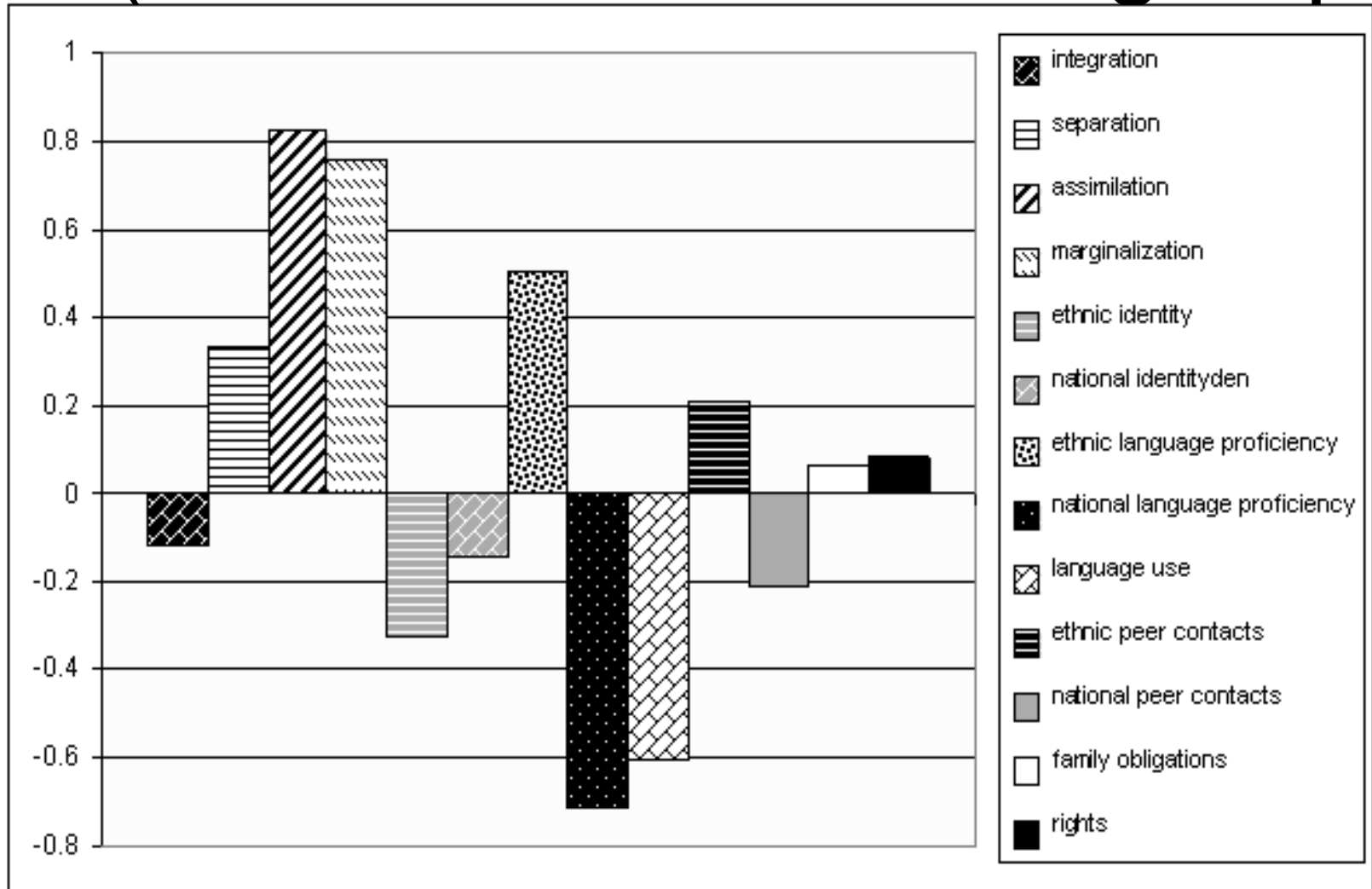# Integration Profile
(Orientation to both groups)
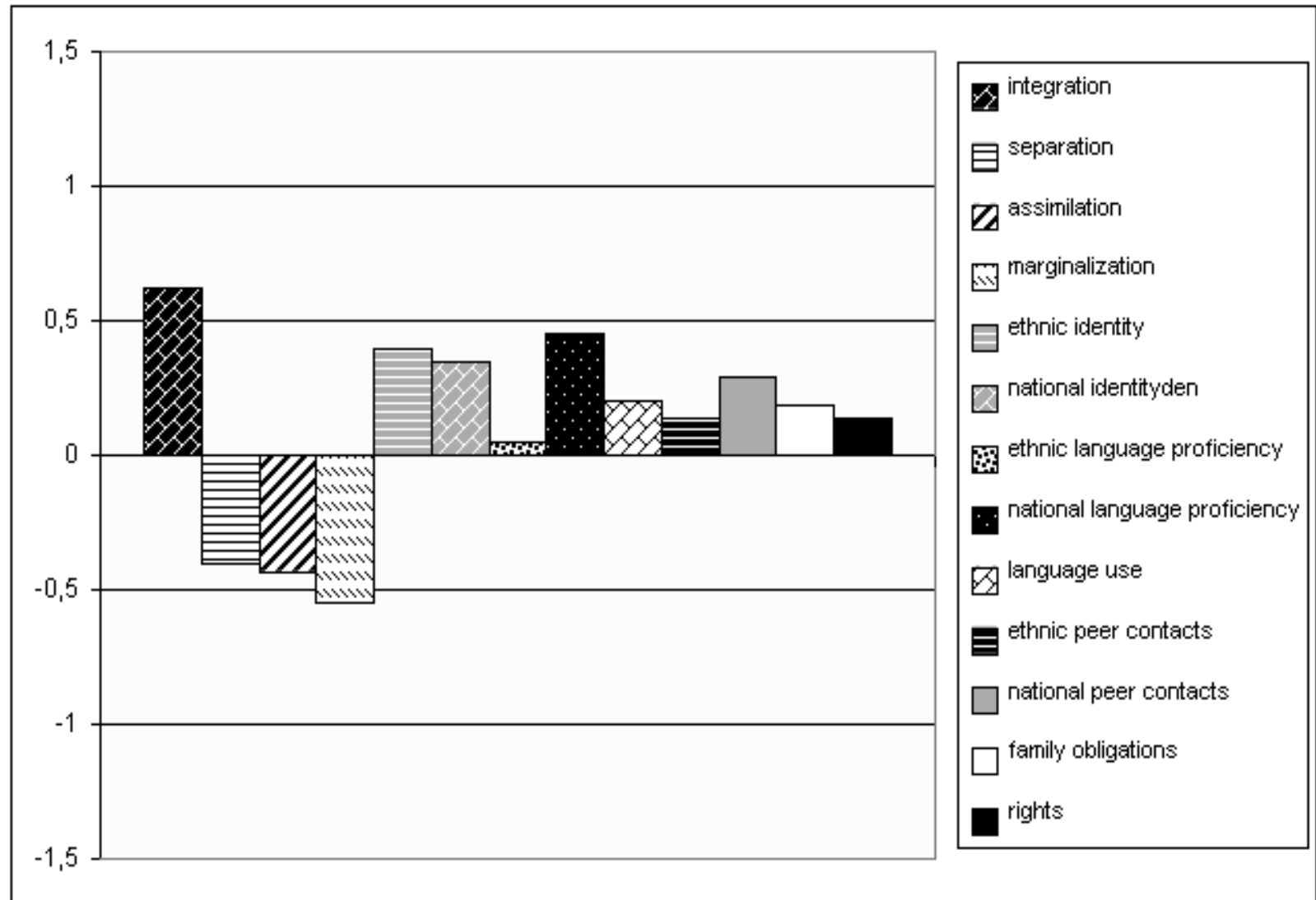
Separation Profile
(Orientation to ethnic group)
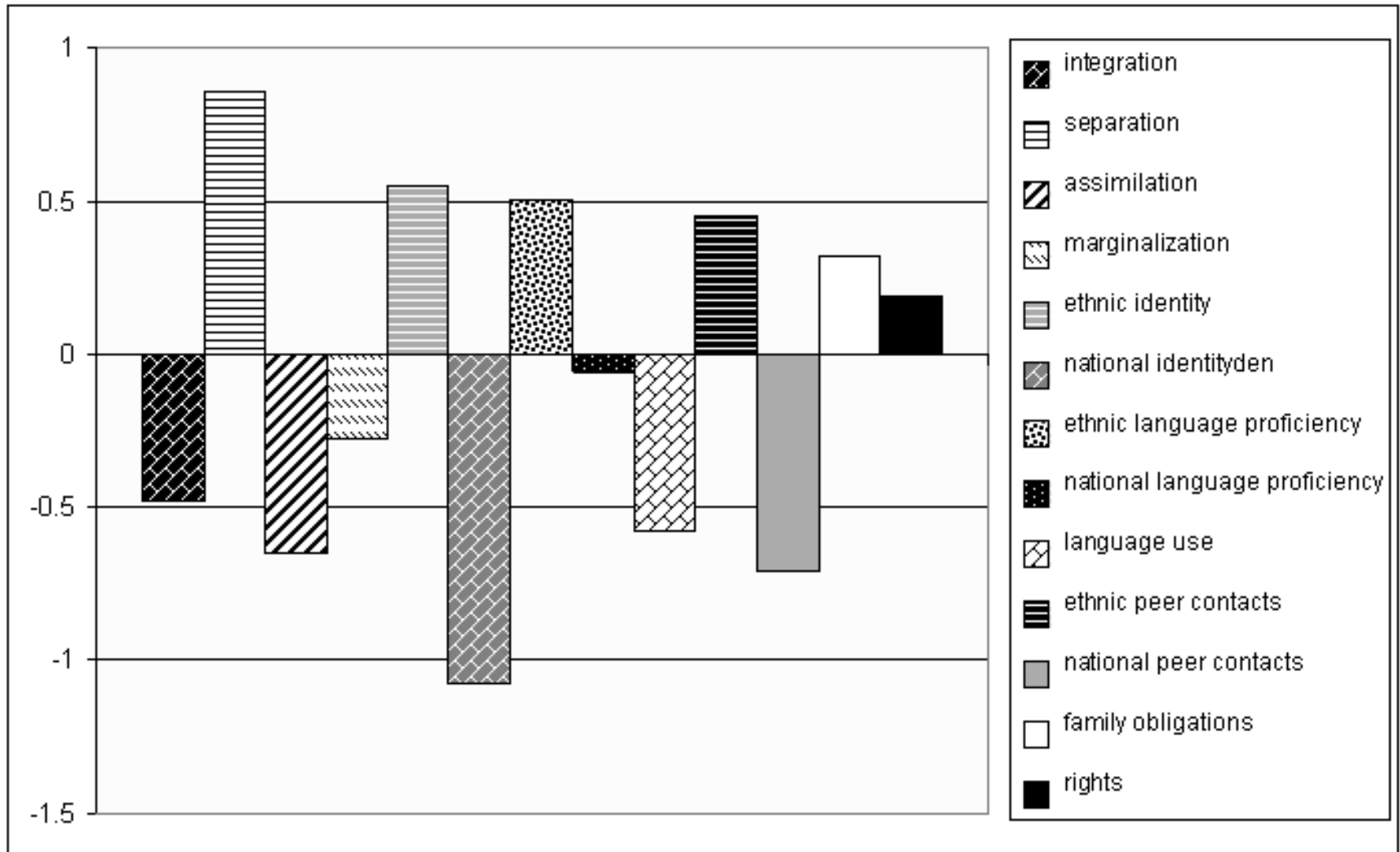
Assimilation Profile
(Orientation to national society)

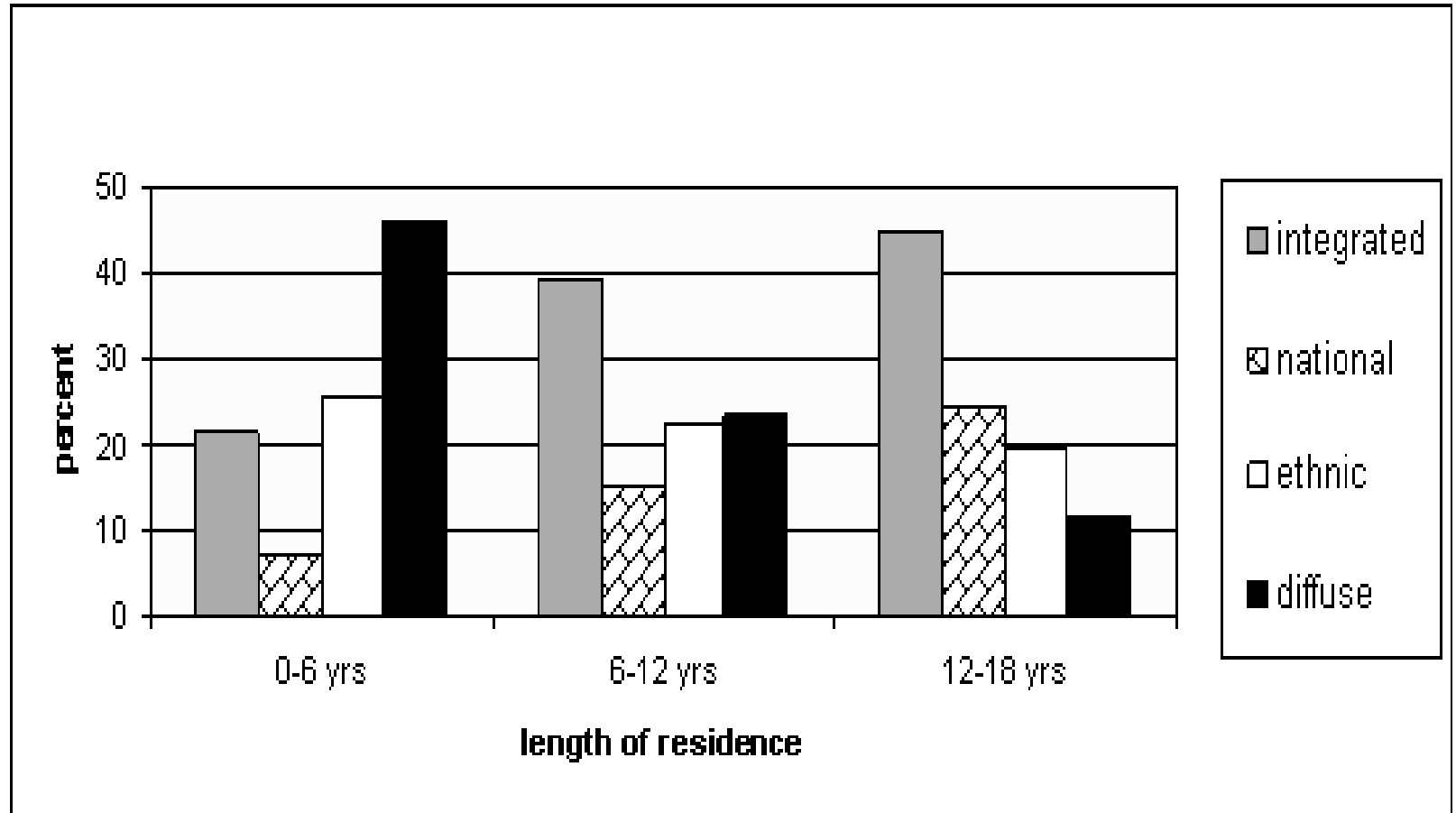# Marginalisation Profile (Orientation to neither group

Acculturation Profile Membership

Being in a cluster or profile is related to:

1. Length of residence in the new society

2. Discrimination against self and group

Acculturation Profiles
by Length of Residence

Perceived Discrimination

- **Respondents were asked to indicate (in response to 5 questions) whether they had been treated unfairly because of their ethnic group.**

- **Sample items were: "I don't feel accepted by (national) group". And " I have been teased or insulted because of my ethnic background".**

- **Discrimination was the single most important contibutor to not achieving integration, and to being marginalised.**

Perceived Discrimination by Acculturation Strategy
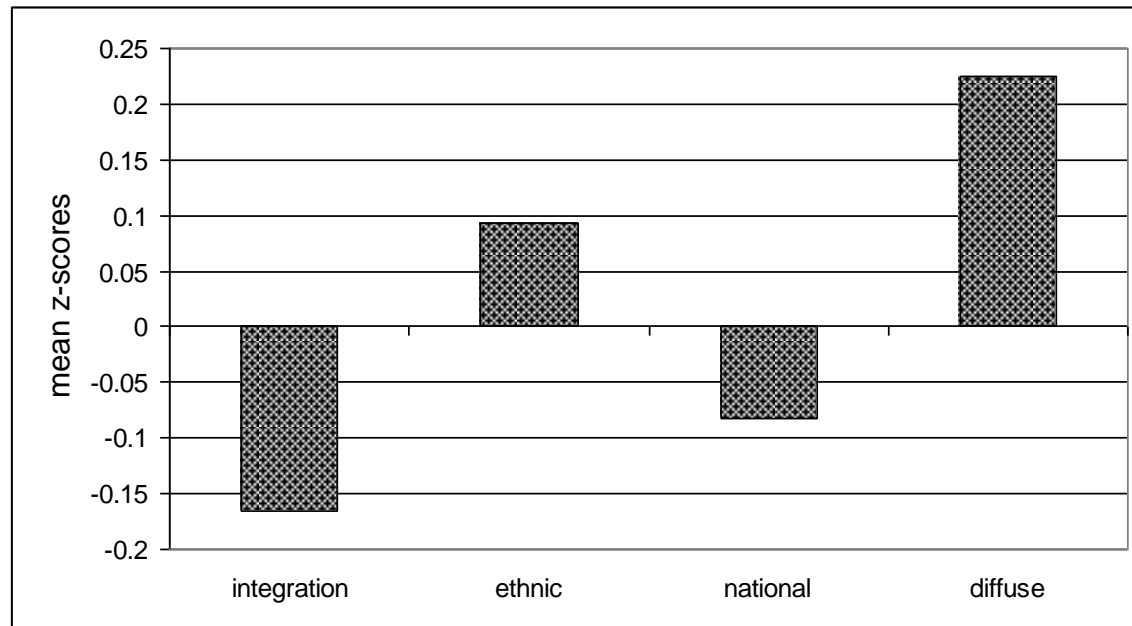
Role of Discrimination

- **In a related analysis (structural equation model), discrimination was the single largest predictor of poor psychological and sociocultural adaptation.**

- **This finding corresponds to the role of discrimination in limiting the integration of immigrant youth, and promoting their marginalisation found in the profile analysis.**

Question 2.
How Well do Immigrant Youth Adapt?

Two forms of adaptation were found in all samples:

1. *Psychological*: Lack of Psychological Problems (anxiety, depression, psychosomatic symptoms), high Self-esteem, Life satisfaction.

2. *Sociocultural*: good School Adjustment, lack of Behaviour Problems (eg., truancy, petty theft).

Immigrant and National Youth Adaptation

- Using the national youth as our comparison group, our results indicated that immigrant youth as a group are just as well adapted and in some cases better adapted than their national peers.

- Immigrant youth reported slightly fewer psychological problems, better school adjustment and fewer behavior problems, although no significant differences were found between immigrants and their national peers in the areas of life satisfaction and self-esteem.

Question 3.Acculturation Strategy and Adaptation

Are there relationships between *how* youth acculturate, and *how well* they adapt psychologically and socioculturally? Yes.

Psychological Adaptation: Integration highest; followed by Separation, then Assimilation; Marginalisation lowest.

Sociocultural Adaptation: Integration highest; followed by Assimilation, then Separation; Marginalisation lowest.

Adaptation by acculturation profiles
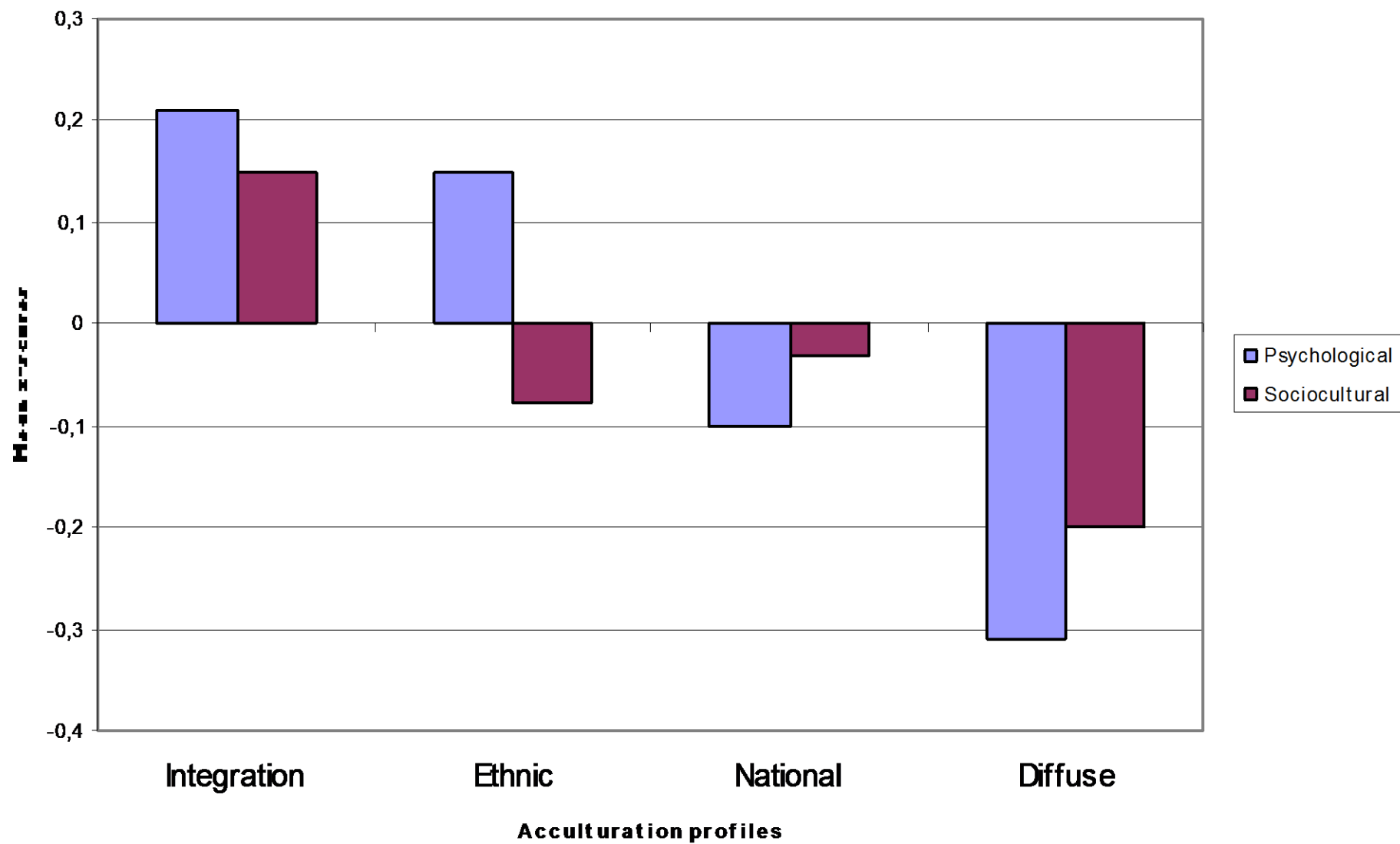
National Contexts

- **In 'settler societies' (eg., Australia, Canada, New Zealand and USA), immigration is recognised as a normal, and necessary way to develop a society. *Selection* and *Management* are the policy options used.**

- **In other societies (including many in Europe), immigration is considered problematic, and in need strong control. *Restriction* and *prevention* are the usual policy options.**

National Contexts

- **One issue confronting acculturation researchers is whether findings from settler societies can be replicated in non-settler societies.**

- **In one study (Sabatier & Berry, EJDP, 2008) comparing immigrant youth in Canada and France, we found that the relationships between acculturation and adaptation were similar, but were attenuated in France.**

- **We considered that the policy of assimilation in France, in contrast to the policy of multiculturalism in Canada, was the likely cause.**

National Contexts

In ICSEY, some variations appeared according to national contexts in:

1. Proportion pursuing I, A, S,M

2. Correlation between ethnic and national identities.

3. National policies

Percent Acculturation Profiles

Settler Societies						Non-Settler				
	I	A	S	M			I	A	S	M
Australia	51	25	9	16		France	46	26	21	7
Canada	50	22	11	16		Germany	30	20	21	29
US	53	17	13	17		Sweden	31	7	40	21

Correlations Between Ethnic and National Identities

Settler Societies		Non-Settler	
Australia	+.18	France	-.13
Canada	+.09	Germany	-.28
NZ	+.32	NL	-.27
US	+.15	Sweden	-.19

But…..UK +.10

ICSEY: National Policies

Cultural Diversity (Multiculturalism) Policy was examined across the 13 societies:

Nine criteria included: the existence of a national public policy promoting diversity and equity, and of programmes and institutions to implement it (Banting & Kymlicka, 2004).

ICSEY: Diversity Policy Impact Across 13 Societies

- High policy diversity → higher integration.

- This also includes both:

    higher orientation to national society,

    higher orientation to own cultural group

- High policy diversity →higher sociocultural adaptation (but, there is no relationship with psychological adaptation).

7. Conclusions and Implications

- **Results of many recent studies of acculturation and adaptation reveal a rather positive outcome for immigrants, in contrast to earlier reports.**
- **Variations in outcomes appear to be related to a number of factors, some of which can be managed by public and private action.**
- **The use of these findings to develop public policies and programmes should be a major focus of current efforts to improve the wellbeing of all acculturating groups and individuals.**

7. Policy Implications

These consistent relationships may permit the development of policies and programme applications to improve the outcomes for all groups in contact:

- **the national society,**

- **public institutions,**

- **ethnocultural groups,**

- **individuals.**

7. Policy Implications for National Society

In the *national society*, public policies of

Multiculturalism, supporting the integration of all individuals and groups, will serve the general good more than any of the other ways of acculturating.

At all cost, the descent into Marginalisation should be avoided.

7. Policy Implications for Public Institutions

- **For *public institutions*, such as those dealing with education, health, and justice should move toward more inclusive multicultural structures and practices.**

- **Changing these institutions requires :**

  - the elimination of ideologies and practices that exclude or diminish acculturating peoples;

  - the insertion of ideologies and practices that include the cultural and psychological qualities that acculturating peoples value.

7. Policy Implications for Ethnocultural Communities

For all *ethnocultural communities*, it is important to provide encouragement and support for both their cultural maintenance and their full and equitable participation in the life of the larger society through multicultural policies.

- **Participation without maintenance promotes Assimilation, and threatens the group's security.**
- **Maintenance without participation promotes Separation, and threatens the dominant group's security.**
- **Engaging in both promotes Integration, and avoids Marginalisation.**

7. Policy Implications for Ethnocultural Individuals

For *individuals,* the general dissemination of information and personal counselling are important in order for acculturating individuals to understand the benefits of engaging both cultures in a balanced way (integration), and avoiding becoming marginalised.