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ETHNIC IDENTITY: PERCEPTIONS OF GREEK STUDENTS

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Abstract. The purpose of this paper is to investigate aspects of the ethnic identity of native adolescent students. More specifically, we focused on the ethnic identity of native students and the degree of differentiation of their ethnic identity and its correlation with the important factors of the social and cultural environment. The sample consisted of 327 students in the municipality of Chios. The island of Chios was chosen as an external border of the European Union (EU) and just because Chios and the islands of the North Aegean have generally become gateways and residence for refugees and migrants. The Phinney questionnaire (1992) was used as the basis for this research. The results of the survey have revealed that the formation of an ethnic identity implies both a acculturation and an attempt to harmonize conflicting cultural elements and securing the students' psychological balance, at a time of fluid reality.

Keywords: Ethnic identity; Greek educational system, students

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Introduction

The structure of the post-modern era in the light of globalization is characterized by social inequalities, the tendency to privatize social benefits (Giddens, 2009) and rapid changes (Giddens, 2001). In this fluid reality (Bauman, 2004), the creation of identity in the contemporary post-modern era is a complex, dynamic and multi-faceted process (Gewirtz & Cribb, 2011).

In this post-modern environment, identity is seen as a social construction (Hogg, & Abrams, 1988: 2) and is made with processes of building and maintaining internal continuity in changing circumstances (Tajfel, & Turner, 1979). At the same time, ethnic identity, as all concepts that are negotiated through social discourse as social constructions, are subject to the mediation of the power of the privileged, which can present their own identity to and impose their discourse on the rest of the social groups through symbolic violence (Foucault, 1972).

Ethnic identity has an increasing interest, due to new waves of migration across the world. This has happened because ethnic identity only makes sense in cases where two or more cultural groups come into contact and coexist for a long time. In homogeneous societies the study of ethnic identity is considered to be unnecessary (Phinney, 1990). Ethnic identity is the social and emotional expression of the individual's inclusion in a socio-cultural group - the nation (Woolf, 1999, p. 59), having common language, religion, customs, traditions, history (Alcoff, & Mendieta, 2003. Gotovos, 2002, p. 52). Smith (1991, p. 14) associates ethnic identity both with common spatial, economic, historical and cultural references and common obligations and rights. What makes ethnic identity different from other social identities is its historical dimension (Hall, 1997, p. 183).

Ethnic identity, as a symbolic construct, internalizes, objectifies and externalizes social representations that a given ethnic group has for itself and "others", which are legitimized with references to the common origin (Fragoudaki, & Dragona, 1997, p. 14-15). Ethnic identity is constructed primarily through discourse in the society and it can be influenced by factors like policy, family, school (Ali et al., 2014). Also, it can be enhanced with cultural elements (rituals and ritualistic behaviours, etc.), whereas the use of linguistic idiolects and dialects is used as a symbol of ethnic identity (Hall, 1997, p. 184). Ethnic identity is linked with the value the individual places in the nation s/he belongs to and the self-esteem s/he derives from it (Smith, & Jarkko, 1998). The construction of ethnic identity concerns not only the dominant group but also minorities who build their ethnic identity in order to resist to the dominant group (Kubota, & Lin, 2009, p. 5).

Ethnic identity is approached as a set of discourses or arguments that aim to construct the identification of the "self" as part of a ethnic or culture group (Dimitrova et al., 2015), comparing and contrasting it with ethnic "others", separating "we", from "others", while understanding the coexistence of different peoples and homelands

(Konstantinidou, 1999; Roymans, 2004). The emphasis on comparison with the “other” is given to the differences rather than to the similarities (Avdela, 1997). Historical and socio-cultural characteristics are the main points of reference to differentiate “we” from “others” (Triandafyllidou, 1998, p. 492), emphasizing homogeneity and historical continuity of the ethnic group (Avdela, 1997, p. 33), comparing “we” with “others” with the aim to dominate.

Ethnic identity is associated with mental well-being, self-esteem, self-esteem, depression, school performance and the use of substances (Berzonsky, 2003; Phinney et al., 2001; Smith & Silva, 2011).

Marcia (1966) distinguished four statuses in identity formation. Statuses are formed by the degree of presence or absence of the investigation and commitment of individuals regarding identity. The investigation of national identity is a developmental, cognitive process, which involves the individual seeking information and learning about his ethnic group, while commitment is an emotional, behavioral process, where the individual has positive feelings towards the ethnic group and feels that he belongs to her. The correlation of the above two factors forms the four statuses: Identity achievement is characterized by high exploration and commitment to ethnic identity, Identity diffusion is characterized by low exploration and commitment to ethnic identity, Moratorium is characterized by high exploration and low commitment to ethnic identity and Foreclosure is characterized by low exploration and high commitment to ethnic identity (Abubakar et al., 2014; Marcia, 1966; 1980; Syed et al., 2013).

Greek education system and ethnic identity

Greek ethnic identity has been linked with common origins, the cultural heritage and religion (Triantafyllidou, 1998: 490), continuity, homogeneity, superiority, patriotism and bravery (Avdela, 1997). The ethnic identity of the Greeks has been formed within the context of the interaction of ethnic and European elements, the ideological priority of “Greek-Christianity” and within the sense that Greece stands in the border between the West and the East. Ethnic consciousness is directly related to the long-standing Greek spirit that requires preservation and homogeneity (Kalyvas, 2015), while Greek identity is characterized as “closed” or “inflexible” (Stratoudaki, 2005), having a defensive form which has infused all school books (Vamvakidou et al., 2010).

The Greeks, like the rest of the Europeans, identify their ethnic identity with them being citizens, thus making it difficult to exercise the social rights of those who differ in terms of language, religion and culture (Dodos, 1999). Everything that differs from the specific and defined framework of the Greek ethnic identity is perceived as “other” which is transformed into a minority (Tsoukalas, 1998). According to the survey of the General Secretariat for Youth (2005), Greek youth, in their majority (64.3%), feel “very” or “quite” proud of their identity. The vast majority of young people (75.1%)

refer to ancient Greek culture and folk tradition as the most important players in the building of ethnic consciousness, while rejecting the “European” identity. The same results are also found in the research by Dixon, Hawkins, Torres and Kimaram (2019). It also appears that young people largely reject the European identity (General Secretariat for Youth, 2005). According to a study by Stratoudaki (2005), the majority of students felt proud of their ethnicity, with family, friends, democracy and religion being the most important values. Religion plays an important role in the Greek ethnic identity (Dixon et al., 2019). According to research findings, one of four students can be described as “ethnocentric”. At the same time, social institutions such as family, school, friends and the media contribute to the formation of ethnic identity, often having opposing orientations, which emerge through stereotypes and prejudices. Research in the Greek bibliography highlights these opposing attitudes (Kavounidis et al., 2008; Tsiganou, 2010; VPRC, 2007).

Within this context, although the public discourse by the members of formal education policy is inspired by respect for diversity, Greek education is characterized by the emergence of ethnic stereotypes, in reality; when implemented, Greek Education is characterized from the emergence of ethnic stereotypes, the cultivation of an ethnocentric education and the establishment of a ethnic consciousness (Frangoudaki, & Dragona, 1997; Golia et al., 2007). The normative and institutional frameworks of reference of Greek education - which includes state education policy, the various supervised agencies and organizations (e.g. Institutes of Educational Policy or IEP in Greek) that produce and exercise application control - have elements of general multicultural education. However, although new curricula have been impregnated with concepts such as cross-section issues and respect for diversity, and the analysis of multicultural Greek society involves mutual understanding and tolerance (Nikolaou, 2011), teaching practice in schools promotes ethnic education through the use of symbols and emotionally meaningful concepts that prioritize cultures that come into contact and highlight power relations inherent in the Greek social space (Simopoulos, 2014). Teachers influenced by education and training perpetuate attitudes and practices of ethnic segregation (Azizi-Kalantzi et al., 2011).

Although the Greek educational system adopts several of the principles of a progressive intercultural pedagogy, it cannot shake off school ethnocentric practices by supporting an “abstract” educational practice and a mono-cultural model of identity construction (Zografou, 2003). Thus, the teaching of history and religious subjects symbolizes through the historical memory and ethical forms of religion the ethno-centered concept of “We” and “Others”, acting as a chrono-topic interconnection of the ethnic group and its superiority to “others” (Avdela, 1997; Flouris, & Kalogiannakis, 1996). Ethnic differences are consolidated, and an ethnocentric identity is being built (Papaikonomou, 2014, p. 67).

The purpose of this paper is to investigate aspects of native students' ethnic identity. More specifically, there are explored: (1) the ethnic identity of native students, based mainly on two components (the "commitment" and "exploration" of ethnic identity) and its correlation with the important others of the social environment and the preservation of cultural elements.

Method

Sample

The reference population in this survey is the total population of students who attend the 6th grade of elementary schools and the 1st and 2nd grade of Junior high schools of the municipality of Chios. The island of Chios was chosen: (a) because the islands of the North Aegean are external border of the European Union (EU); (b) because there have been socio-economic and educational inequalities resulted from its insularity and its geographical discontinuity; and c) just because Chios and the islands of the North Aegean have generally become gateways and residence for refugees and migrants.

For the selection of sampling, stratified sampling was applied. In population of 1536 students, based on stratified sampling, we addressed 106 students. Of 106 students 52 was from the 1st grade (49.1%) and 54 from the 2nd grade (50.9%) of Junior High Schools. 51 (48.1%) was boys and 55 (51.93%) girls. As far as the level of their parents' education is concerned, the following should be noted that regarding parents education level (lower, medium, higher), 43 (40.6%) fathers had low education level, 26 (24.5%) had medium education level and 37 (34.9%) had higher education level. Also, as far as their mother's education level is concerned, 29 (27.4%) mothers had low education level, 36 (34%) had medium education level and 41 (38.7%) had higher education level.

Research instrument

As a research instrument we used a two part questionnaire. The first included the Phinney questionnaire (1992, 1993). The Phinney questionnaire has used in researches in Greek education and had shown a good reliability and factor structure (Motti-Stefanidi, Pavlopoulos, Obradovic, & Masten, 2008; Mastrotheodoros et al., 2012: 509). The Phinney questionnaire (1992) (Multi-ethnic Ethnic Identity Measure or MEIM) consists of 13 questions. The MEIM was created to measure the process of developing an ethnic identity in adolescents (12 years of age and up). It has been used in many studies and has consistently shown good reliability ($\alpha > 0.80$) across a wide range of ethnic groups and ages. The questionnaire can be best thought of as comprising two factors: (a) ethnic identity exploration (a process-oriented and a developmental cognitive component), which includes five questions (Cronbach α : 0.60.8) and (b) Identity Commitment (an affective and attitudinal component), which includes seven questions (Cronbach α : 0.74.1) (Motti-Stefanidi & Asendorpf, 2012; 2004; Roberts et

al., 1999), Respondents rated the items on a 4-point Likert-type scale ranging from “totally disagree” to “totally agree” (Motti-Stefanidi & Asendorpf, 2012; Roberts *et al.*, 1999) In the second part we used two questions of sense of belonging that are not part of the MEIM scale (“I feel good that I have this cultural background” and “I like using elements and information from my country of origin”) and one question about social network support but can be used in combination with it so that the attitudes of students and their families about the educational system and the school environment can be explored.

A pilot survey was previously conducted on 30 students in order to identify any shortcomings and misinterpretations.

Findings

In order for the two core components of the questionnaire (Exploration and Commitment of Identity) to be investigated, 13 questionnaire questions, corresponding to each component, were grouped according to Phinney’s paradigm factorial analysis model (1992). The indicator of internal consistency of Cronbach’s alpha for the factor of “Exploration” was 0.79 and for the factor of “Commitment” was 0.80.

Table 1

Means, standard deviations and quadrants of ethnic identity dimensions

		Exploration	Commitment
Mean		3,7509	3,5202
Median		3,8000	3,5714
Std. Deviation		,56488	,51269
Percentiles	25	3,2000	3,1429
	50	3,8000	3,5714
	75	4,2000	3,8571

From the observation of averages, medians and quadrants from Table 1 we can state that: a) Most students of our sample are in the process of exploring their identity, while they tend to commit themselves to their ethnic identity; b) there is a percentage of at least 25% of native students in the process of exploration and commitment; and (c) 25% of native students who are ambivalent about exploring and committing to their ethnic identity.

Having combined the two factors of ethnic identity (i.e. Exploration and Commitment) and used Clusters Analysis, we classified individuals into a subset of clusters according to individuals’ identity status that was done by Marcia (1966).

Observing the *Cluster Centers indices* (Table 1) that are produced by cluster analysis, we find that the four “clusters” created have the following characteristics: (a) The first “cluster” (Identity achievement) is characterized by high exploration and

commitment to his/her (i.e. the student's) ethnic identity. (b) On the contrary, the second "cluster" (Identity diffusion) is characterized by low exploration and commitment to his/her identity. (c) The third "cluster" (Moratorium) is characterized by high exploration and low commitment to the student's and student's ethnic identity, whereas (d) the fourth "cluster" (Foreclosure) is characterized by low exploration and high commitment to his/her ethnic identity. Classification of students in groups was made as follows: Identity achievement: 135 people (41.3%), Identity diffusion: 35 individuals (10.7%), Moratorium: 131 individuals (40.1%) and Foreclosure: 26 individuals (8.0%). Most individuals in the sample are in the process of the Moratorium and Identity achievement.

Table 2

Indices of Cluster Centers

Dimensions of ethnic identity	Cluster			
	Identity achievement	Identity diffusion	Moratorium	Foreclosure
Identity search	4.80	2.40	4.00	2.20
Identity commitment	4.86	2.29	3.00	4.29

The four groups differ in statistical significance [$\chi^2(3) = 13,711, p = 0.003$], highlighting the diversity of the forms of individuals' ethnic identity.

Table 3

Identity * I feel good that I come from this country and I have this cultural background

Ethnic identity	I feel good that I come from this country and I have this cultural background					Total
	I strongly disagree	I disagree	Neither I agree nor I disagree	I agree	I strongly agree	
Identity Achievement	0 (.0%)	0 (.0%)	5 (3.7%)	26 (19.3%)	104 (77.0%)	135 (100.0%)
Identity Diffusion	1 (2.9%)	2 (5.7%)	12 (34.3%)	8 (22.9%)	12 (34.3%)	35 (100.0%)
Moratorium	0 (.0%)	0 (.0%)	19 (14.5%)	46 (35.1%)	66 (50.4%)	131 (100.0%)
Foreclosure	1 (3.8%)	3 (11.5%)	4 (15.4%)	9 (34.6%)	9 (34.6%)	26 (100.0%)
Total	.6%)	5 (1.5%)	40 (12.2%)	89 (27.2%)	191 (58.4%)	327 (100.0%)

Then, the correlations of identity forms (Identity achievement, Foreclosure, Moratorium, Identity diffusion) of the Greek students with their answers to the question “*I feel good that I come from this country and I have this cultural background*” were examined. From the analysis of the results it was found that there is a statistically significant correlation [$\chi^2(12) = 79.162, p = 0.000$]. We can say that various identities are related to the understanding of individuals’ sentiments in relation to their origin and cultural background (Table 2). More specifically, it is observed that people with “Identity diffusion” oscillate at 34.3%, something that is not expressed by any other group of this size, and they are the least satisfied with their origin from other forms of identity. In addition, all individuals with an almost “Identity achievement” emphasize their satisfaction with their origin and cultural background. All other groups in relation to their identity ranging between the two extremes of satisfaction that are defined by previous identity groups and individuals with “Moratorium” tend to be most content.

Table 4

Identity * I like using elements of my country of origin

Ethnic identity	I like using elements of my country of origin					Total
	I strongly disagree	I disagree	Neither I agree nor I disagree	I agree	I strongly agree	
Identity Achievement	0 (.0%)	0 (.0%)	2 (1.5%)	43 (31.9%)	90 (66.7%)	135 (100.0%)
Identity Diffusion	1 (2.9%)	3 (8.6%)	8 (22.9%)	12 (34.3%)	11 (31.4%)	35 (100.0%)
Moratorium	1 (.8%)	2 (1.5%)	13 (9.9%)	41 (31.3%)	74 (56.5%)	131 (100.0%)
Foreclosure	1 (3.8%)	0 (.0%)	4 (15.4%)	9 (34.6%)	12 (46.2%)	26 (100.0%)
Total	3 (.9%)	5 (1.5%)	27 (8.3%)	105 (32.1%)	187 (57.2%)	327 (100.0%)

Then, the correlations of identity dimensions (Identity achievement, Foreclosure, Moratorium, Identity diffusion) of the Greek students with their answers to the question “*I like using elements of my country of origin*” were investigated. From the analysis of the results, there was a statistically significant correlation [$\chi^2(12) = 44.414, p = 0.000$]. We can say that various identities are related to the use of data from the cultural background of their country (Table 3). More particularly, it is observed that people with the “Identity diffusion” oscillate at 22.9%, which is not expressed by any other group of this size. Furthermore, all people with an “Identity achievement” emphasize their almost complete satisfaction with their origin and cultural background. In addition, individuals with “Foreclosure” do not tend to use their country’s elements in the same way as the rest of the groups, whereas the students who “agree” in this respect have the

lowest rate. All other groups in relation to their identity range between the two ends of satisfaction defined by the previous identity groups.

Table 5

Identity * Gender

Ethnic identity	Gender		Total
	Boy	Girl	
Identity achievement	69 (51.1%)	66 (48.9%)	135 (100.0%)
Identity diffusion	13 (37.1%)	22 (62.9%)	35 (100.0%)
Moratorium	65 (49.6%)	66 (50.4%)	131 (100.0%)
Foreclosure	22 (84.6%)	4 (15.4%)	26 (100.0%)
Total	169 (51.7%)	158 (48.3%)	327 (100.0%)

The individuals' gender appears to be statistically significant [$\chi^2(3) = 14.496, p = 0.002$] with identity forms (Identity achievement, Foreclosure, Moratorium, Identity diffusion) of the Greek students (Table 4). It is noted that: (1) most boys have an "Identity achievement" or "Moratorium"; (2) Most girls have an "Identity achievement" or a "Moratorium"; (3) boys with "Foreclosure" identity are more than girls; and (4) girls with "Identity in diffusion" are more than boys.

Table 6

Identity * Support networks

Ethnic identity	Support networks			Total
	Teachers	Friends	Extended family	
Identity achievement	2 (1.5%)	17 (12.6%)	116 (85.9%)	135 (100.0%)
Identity diffusion	1 (2.9%)	12 (34.3%)	22 (62.9%)	35 (100.0%)
Moratorium	0 (.0%)	27 (20.6%)	104 (79.4%)	131 (100.0%)
Foreclosure	0 (.0%)	7 (26.9%)	19 (73.1%)	26 (100.0%)
Total	3 (.9%)	63 (19.3%)	261 (79.8%)	327 (100.0%)

As far as the support networks are concerned, they differentiate statistically identity forms [$\chi^2(6) = 13.520, p = 0.035$]. Thus, with regard to supportive networks, research individuals: (1) integrate them in the extended family regardless of their identity; (2) they say that friends play an important role, especially for students with "Identity achievement" and "Moratorium"; (3) they state that students with an "Identity achievement" and "Moratorium" are more reliant on the extended family than other identity forms; (4) whereas teachers do not seem to affect various identity forms to a

significant extent. There is a greater correlation with individuals with “Identity achievement” than other groups.

Discussion

Ethnic identity is a dynamic and complex construction that includes common cultural, linguistic, religious characteristics that give the individual a sense of belonging. The socializing role of the school in constructing Greek ethnic identity, as well as the capacity to negotiate the construction of ethnic identity (Nikolaou, 2011; Simopoulos, 2014), make it possible for the students of the island of Chios to construct their identity by differentiating it (Identity achievement, Moratorium, Identity diffusion, Foreclosure) according to their individual, social and cultural resources. The differentiation in identity forms held by students also demonstrates the importance children place on ethnic identity over time (Barret, 2000). Supportive networks (parents, teachers, and friends) appear to be related to construction of identity (Azizi-Kalantzi *et al.*, 2011). These important others seem to play an extremely important role in forming and dynamically transforming their identity (Adams *et al.*, 2001; Ali *et al.*, 2014). The family is associated with the identity of the new social subjects of our research regardless of identity, whereas friends have more influence on students with “Identity achievement” and “Moratorium”. Teachers do not seem to have a strong impact on different forms of identity. The review of identity is interconnected with the socio-cultural environment (or milieu) and its mediation on the basis of its individual elements of diversification (Bourdieu, 1994; Tsaousis, 1997). Strategies of placing themselves in a form of ethnic identity refer to this context, thus displaying limits and exclusions. Greek students socialize in a social setting where the symbolic violence of dominant or mainstream ideas reinforces the establishment of diachronic social representations for the characteristics of the ethnic group. Constructed forms of power exercise control and impose their standards (Foucault, 1972). This process results in Greek students displaying the majority of their Identity achievement. Thus, boys and girls in their majority appear to have formed a specific identity (Identity achievement, Foreclosure). The symbolic capital that emerges from both the educational system and the pressure and control that the family exerts on consolidating values, ideas and perceptions (Bourdieu, 1994; Whitty, 2007), that are related to the ethnic identity of the Greeks shapes the social integration framework of most students. Common origins, cultural heritage and religion for the Greek students are the dominant factors in shaping their ethnic identity (Fragoudaki, & Dragona, 1997; Triantafyllidou, 1998; Zografou, 2003). Students with Identity achievement and Foreclosure are at a later stage in their identity creation, have crystallized their attitude towards various cultural elements of their environment, and their views are characterized by greater stability.

In addition, as a member of a group, the person acquires emotional and ideological bonds with the group to which s/he belongs and participates in (Tajfel, 1972: 292),

defines himself or herself within it and embraces the stereotypical rules of this group (Barrett, 2000; Turner, 1981). Students with Identity diffusion and Moratorium are in a transition process where they try to combine different cultural narratives, values and commitments, defining their attitudes and moods in relation to them. That is why their correlation with their feelings about their country of origin has fluctuations. This process is also part of students' ability to reflect on their identity. In relation to the boys, girls appear to be in a "Moratorium" state or Identity diffusion. Girls make their choices not only through more choices, as shown in the interethnic literature (Warikoo, 2005), but also in a post-modern environment, that of globalization and information society (Vertovec, 2001), whereas traditional values of the Greek society have a significant influence on the decisions they take on their identity.

In conclusion, the sequence of different strategies for constructing ethnic identity (Identity achievement, Identity diffusion, Moratorium, Foreclosure) by the students is related to acculturated osmosis of the Modern Greek reality of the school framework. Nevertheless, it is also a result of harmonizing conflicting cultural elements and securing students' psychological balance to a large extent (Phinney *et al.*, 2001). Furthermore, the fluid reality of the modern globalized environment, where everyday life is constituted and reconstituted under the negotiations between social subjects, the reflexive process even for students with an Identity achievement or Foreclosure may be inevitable, thus demonstrating the dynamic part of the construction of ethnic identity. Greek education in its daily practice is necessary to highlight the principles of interculturalism and to establish a transforming pedagogy, by shaping a functional ethnic identity by students.

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ЕТНІЧНА ІДЕНТИЧНІСТЬ: ПЕРЦЕПЦІЯ ГРЕЦЬКИХ СТУДЕНТІВ

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Анотація. Структура постмодерної ери у світлі глобалізації характеризується соціальною нерівністю, тенденцією привласнення соціальних вигод та швидкоплинними змінами. У цій мінливій реальності створення ідентичності в сучасну постмодерну епоху є складним, динамічним і багатогранним процесом.

У постмодерному середовищі ідентичність розглядається як соціальна конструкція і складається з процесів побудови та підтримки внутрішньої наступності в мінливих обставинах. У той же час етнічна ідентичність, як і всі концепції, що обговорюються через соціальний дискурс як соціальні конструкції, підлягає посередницькій владі привілейованих, які можуть представити свою власну ідентичність та нав'язати свій дискурс решті соціальних групи через символічне насильство.

Метою даної роботи є дослідження виражених аспектів етнічної ідентичності корінних учнів-підлітків. Більш конкретно, ми зупинились на етнічній ідентичності корінних студентів та ступені диференціації їхньої етнічної ідентичності та її співвідношенні з важливими факторами соціального та культурного середовища.

Вибірка складалася з 327 учнів муніципалітету Хіос. Острів Хіос був обраний зовнішнім кордоном Європейського Союзу (ЄС) і саме тому, що Хіос та острови Північних Егейських островів загалом стали воротами та місцем проживання для біженців та мігрантів. За основу цього дослідження був покладений опитувальник Фінні (1992). Результати опитування показали, що формування етнічної ідентичності передбачає як акультурацію, так і спробу гармонізувати суперечливі культурні елементи та забезпечити психологічну рівновагу студентів у часи плинної реальності.

Ключові слова: етнічна ідентичність; грецька освітня система; студенти.