

# Immigration: racism and greece

[Sociology](#), [Racism](#)



## Introduction

Nowadays, it has been observed in several countries that immigrant students do not have an equivalent school performance with their native classmates (Pisa, 2003). This essay is concerning the different school performance of the immigrant and Pontic Greeks students in Greece. The first section of this essay is about the immigration to Greece, and it explores the reasons of the increasing immigration to Greece, the second explores the attitudes of Greeks towards immigration, whereas the next section highlights the racism and xenophobia in Greece's society.

Section four is about the ethnocentric school curriculum in this country, whereas, the next section is about, the differences of the socioeconomic status and cultural capital towards these two groups of immigrants. Finally, the next two sections are about the intercultural education in Greece and its problems. Immigration to Greece Before we go into the procedure of analysis of our topic it is obvious that we should explore the fact of immigration to Greece.

The first decades after World War II, a lot of Greeks left their country and they immigrated in many countries such as USA, Canada, Germany and Australia which were more economically developed, because the rates of unemployment and poverty in Greece were extremely high (Katsikas & Politou, 2005), however, Greece nowadays has become a country where many immigrants from different countries arrive, hoping that Greece will offer them the opportunities to have a better life (Triantafyllidou & Veikou, 2002).

The Mediterranean countries have become a magnet for many immigrants replacing the traditional immigration countries like Germany and France (Brenner & Fertig, 2006). Moreover, immigrants in Greece exceeds the needs of the Greek industry, and Greece has the highest proportion of immigrants between the European Union countries (Siar, 2008). Greece has become the centre of immigration since 1980, when many Greeks who have immigrated to other countries returned back, moreover, in 1985 many repatriated Greeks returned back from the U. S. S. R and Albania, finally, the last two decades many economic immigrants from many developing countries from the Eastern Europe, Asia, and Africa came to Greece (Katsikas & Politou, 2005). A research which was conducted by Eurostat in 2006 has shown that in Greece there are 884. 000 immigrants and the majority of them came from Albania, the 62% of immigrants in Greece are Albanians (Siar, 2008).

However, there are a lot of people from many countries such as Pakistan, India, Georgia, Ukraine, Romania, Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Egypt (Siar, 2008). Moreover, the last decades a lot of ethnic Greeks returned to Greece such as Pontic Greeks and Greek Albanians and also there are a lot Greek citizens who returned to Greece from countries such as Cyprus and Turkey (Fakiolas & King, 1996).

Furthermore, we should mention that many irregular immigrants especially from Asian countries, live in Greece, and their number becomes every year more and more increased, this happens because they try to enter to Greece through Aegean sea, which is very difficult to be controlled, due to the fact that there is a line of seashore which is 18, 400 km and a vast amount of

islands which are near to Turkish coasts, thus, it is quite easy from them to enter to Greece (Siar, 2008).

In addition, nowadays, in Greece, there is an increasing number of asylum seekers, who try to enter to the most industrialised European countries, the majority of them comes from countries like Iraq, Pakistan, and Afganistan, unfortunately, Greek state, does not usually recognize them, and only few applications get a positive response (Siar, 2008). Moreover, it is quite useful to explore the reasons that Greece attracts many immigrants. First of all, the majority of European countries have stricter immigration policy than Greece, as a result, a lot of people immigrate to Greece (Leghari, 2009).

As we have mentioned before, Greece has many islands and a vast coastline, moreover, it has a lot of mountains, it is obvious that Greece's borders are very difficult to be secured, as a consequence, many irregular immigrants enter the country (Leghari, 2009). Greece, is situated, between the developed and developing countries, as a result, many people from the developing countries immigrate to Greece because their countries very usually face a lot of conflicts and changes (Leghari, 2009).

The fall of Communism in many countries made people to leave their countries, the immigration of Pontic Greeks, it was a result of the fall of Communism in U. S. S. R (Triantafyllidou & Veikou, 2002). Another important reason which promotes immigration to Greece is the fact that the last decades there was an economic development (Leghari, 2009). Moreover, there was a decline in Greece's population and as a result, there was a need of labour force (Leghari, 2009).

In addition, we should mention that there is a lack of workers in the construction sector because Greeks do not want to do these kind of jobs (Leghari, 2009). As a result, the majority of immigrants in Greece do these kind of jobs, according to, the Greek Ministry of Interior the 32% of immigrants work in the construction sector (Siar, 2008). Finally, the fact that Greece's economy, is characterized by an informal sector gives the opportunity to many irregular immigrants to work in this sector (Leghari, 2009).

It is obvious that all of these reasons promote immigration, however, it will be quite useful to explore the attitude of public opinion and Greek policy towards immigrants in Greece, because this, will help us, to shed light on the differences in school performance between Pontic Greeks and immigrant students, the next section of this research is about the attitude of Greek policy and public opinion towards immigrants. Attitude of Greek Policy and Public Opinion Towards Immigrants

First of all, we should mention that although, in Greece there are a lot of immigrants there is no any effective immigration policy (Triantafyllidou & Veikou, 2002). The first decades of immigration to Greece, it was quite obvious that there was no such policy because there were no indications of the extent of this phenomenon, however, until now, there are not effective policies, as a result, we are able to assume that maybe Greek politicians and also society, believe that mass immigration will have an effect on Greek's homogeneity (Triantafyllidou & Veikou, 2002).

On the other hand, any migratory policies applied in Greece favors some specific groups, such as Pontic Greeks, moreover, Greek citizenship was <https://assignbuster.com/immigration-racism-and-greece/>

granted to them when they arrived in Greece (Triantafyllidou & Veikou, 2002). This happens because Greece is one of the most homogenized societies (Rozakis, 1997), and Greece's homogeneity comes from the fact that Greeks national identity is based on Greece's glorious history and orthodox religion (Triantafyllidou & Veikou, 2002). In line with, Triantafyllidou and Veikou: Greek national identity includes both ethnic and civic features, which are dynamically organized and interact with the changing international context and internal needs of the society" (Triantafyllidou & Veikou, 2002: 195). However, nowadays, there are a lot of social changes in Greece due to the fact of mass immigration, as a result, there is a need Greece's national identity to be reconsidered and redefined to meet the demands of global and national changes (Triantafyllidou & Veikou, 2002).

It is obvious, that this fact led Greeks to believe that immigrants will eliminate their national identity and as a result, they do not have a positive attitude towards immigration. On the other hand, Greeks have a positive attitude towards Pontic Greeks, and they have a better treatment than immigrants from other countries such as Albania, we are able to assume that Pontic Greeks were a privileged group of immigrants, moreover, this positive attitude towards Pontic Greeks is based on media which have a more positive attitude to them than to other immigrants (Voutira, 2004).

This happens because Greeks believe that Pontic Greeks are Greeks with some common habits and they have the same religion as a result, they believe that Pontic Greeks have, like them, national consciousness, however,

they do not examine the fact that some of them do not even speak the Greek (Triantafyllidou & Veikou, 2002).

One of the most important factors of the construction of Greeks national consciousness was the fact that many Orthodox Greeks lived in some other places which some centuries ago were under the control of Greece and made Greeks believe that these lands should be one day controlled by Greece again, helping Greeks Orthodox to be integrated with their homeland, this is, what is called in Greece ' Great Idea'(Triantafyllidou & Veikou, 2002). It is obvious, that these reasons, guide Greeks to have positive attitudes towards Pontic Greeks.

We are able to assume that a better reception is granted to Pontic Greeks when they come to Greece, and their acceptance in Greek society is secured, due to their ' Greekness'(Triantafyllidou & Veikou, 2002), as a result, it is obvious that their Greek roots make it easier to be integrated in Greek society, this better integration of Pontic Greek renders us capable of understanding that Pontic Greek students have more chances to have a better school performance than the other immigrant students.

However, their Greek roots, it is not the only reason which give them the opportunity to have a better school performance, the next section, explores another reason, which promotes their better educational attainment, this reason is the fact that Greece's society is characterized by xenophobic and racist beliefs. Xenophobia and Racism in Greece Immigration helps the receiving countries to develop their economies, however, sometimes in many countries there are negative attitudes against immigrants (Card, Dustmann, & Preston, 2005).

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In Greece, a research which was conducted by Anna Triantafyllidou and Andoni Mikraki has shown that Greeks since 1995 have not xenophobic attitudes against immigrants, moreover, the 31% of Greece's population believed that immigrant's rights should be more extended and only the 4% of the total population had negative attitudes against immigrants (Triantafyllidou & Mikrakis, 1995).

However, the high rates of immigration this decade, has triggered the xenophobic and sometimes racist attitudes in Greek society, people nowadays in Greece believe that immigrants increase the rates of unemployment and criminality and very often these stereotypes are guided by the media, moreover as we have mentioned before, Greek society is a homogenized society and Greeks believe that the mass immigration will have an effect on Greece's homogeneity (Hatziprokopiou, 2005).

On the other hand, it is quite difficult, to give an explanation, to the growth of xenophobia and racism in this country, however, these attitudes become more and more frequent, this is clear, if we consider the institutional racism which is very usual, in the police stations, the majority of policemen in Greece tend to believe that immigrants are criminals (Hatziprokopiou, 2005).

Moreover, racist attitudes, are a daily phenomenon, even in Greek TV series, there are racist attitudes, for instance, they show immigrants in some ways, such as, criminals, prostitutes, or domestic servants, with this way, there is a reproduction of stereotypes and xenophobia (Hatziprokopiou, 2005).

However, these attitudes are very usual, in global history, because when there are a lot of social problems in a society, people try to find a weak social group to blame for these problems (Fenton, 1984), and Greece nowadays

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has a lot of problems, due to the social changes due to immigration (Triantafyllidou & Veikou, 2002), and the economic recession. As a result, there is a growth of racist and xenophobic attitudes. Moreover, these racist beliefs are very common in Greek schools, very often Greek students have negative attitudes towards immigrant students, their perception often is guided by their classmate's country of origin, some specific immigrant groups especially Albanians are faced xenophobic attitudes and stereotypes even in classrooms (Dimakos & Tasiopoulou, 2010).

Of course, we cannot characterize Greek society, as a racist society, because it has been observed, that when there is a contact between Greeks and immigrants, there is a development of interpersonal relationships, and friendships, it is obvious that, that media, social problems and Greece's immigration policy promote the racist attitudes towards immigrants (Hatziprokopiou, 2005). It is obvious, that the reproduction of the racist beliefs and stereotypes have an effect on school performance.

As we have mentioned before, a better reception is granted to Pontic Greeks due to their 'Greekness' (Triantafyllidou & Veikou, 2002), as a result, Pontic Greeks students do not have to face racist stereotypes in education, this issue, help us to understand that they have more chances to have a better school performance than the other immigrant students. Of course, Greece's homogeneity and racist attitudes towards immigrants, are not the only reasons which have an effect on school performance, the next section is about another important reason which guides the differences in school performance, this is the school curriculum.