

Personal and ethnic identity of immigrant youth in relation to their level of psychological adaptation

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Rationale of the study

- Overarching goal: To understand the personal and ethnic aspects of identity formation in immigrant adolescents and how these processes are related to their level of psychological adaptation.
- Expected outcomes: to provide evidence that will serve in designing empirically based interventions in the school context; contribute to institutional immigration policies and to the public discourse on relevant issues in Greece.

Immigration in Greece

- Transition from the emigration to immigration experience since the early '90s.
- The number of immigrants quintupled within 10 years, between 1991-2001.
- Officially, the proportion of immigrants reached 7% of the total population in the 2001 census (estimated now to overcome 10%).
- About 100.000 immigrant children and adolescents are enrolled in Greek schools.
- Recently (2010), legalization and citizenship has become easier esp. for second generation immigrants.

Immigrant adolescents

- Immigrant youth face the “double challenge” of development and acculturation.
- Important developmental goals: academic achievement, social competence with peers, conduct (Masten & Motti-Stefanidi, 2008).
- Important acculturation tasks: deal with immigration-related risk (e.g., economic hardship, lack of supportive networks, language barriers), navigate between two cultures embedded in a larger societal context (Berry, 2006; Berry et al., 2006).

Identity of immigrant youth as a double challenge

- Develop a clear sense of self that will help them pursue future goals and facilitate their long-term professional and social adaptation.
- Form a bicultural or integrated identity by combining ethnic and national identities (Phinney et al., 2001). This can be achieved by maintaining cultural heritage while adopting the values and norms of the host culture (Berry et al., 2006).
- Accomplishment of the above developmental and acculturative tasks is related to psychological well-being; on the other hand, failure undermines adaptation since it may have cascading effects on immigrant youth (Masten et al., 2006).

Personal identity

- One's sense of identity is determined largely by choices made regarding certain personal and social traits.
- Extending Erikson's work, Marcia (1966, 1980) suggested that the adolescent developmental stage consists of the degree to which one has explored and committed to an identity in a variety of life domains, e.g., vocation, religion, gender roles, relational choices.
 - ✓ Two identity dimensions: exploration (E); commitment (C)
 - ✓ Four identity statuses: diffusion (−E, −C); foreclosure (−E, +C); moratorium (+E, −C); achievement (+E, +C)

Ethnic identity

- Understanding of ethnic identity derives from three conceptual frameworks: Erikson's identity development (Erikson, 1968), social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), and the models of acculturation (Berry, 1980, 2006).
- From a social psychological perspective, ethnic identity includes components such as self-categorization, behavioral involvement, commitment, exploration, ingroup attitudes, ethnic values, and salience of group membership (Ashmore et al., 2004).
- From a developmental perspective, three stages of ethnic identity have been identified: pre-exploration, exploration, commitment (Phinney, 1989).

Research questions and hypotheses

- What are the processes of identity formation of immigrant youth?
 - ✓ Personal identity: probably not different from native peers.
 - ✓ Ethnic identity: probably higher scores for immigrants than for native Greeks (Roberts et al., 1999).
 - ✓ Ethnic identification: expected shift of second generation youth towards the Greek culture (Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2008).
- How identity processes relate to psychological adaptation?
 - ✓ It is hypothesized that both personal and ethnic identity will contribute independently to positive adaptation (e.g., Berry et al., 2006; Roberts et al., 1999).
 - ✓ Explore direct and mediating effects of ethnic identity.

Participants

N = 683 adolescents living in 14 areas all over the country

Immigrant status **235** Albanian origin (out of 317 immigrants)
448 native Greek

Generation status **143** first generation (length of stay: M=10.7 yrs)
92 second generation (born in Greece)

School grade **390** 3rd Junior High School (age: M=14.9 yrs)
293 2nd Senior High School (age: M=16.9 yrs)

Gender **327** boys
356 girls

Measures of identity and acculturation

- **Ego Identity Process Questionnaire** (Balisteri et al., 1995)
 - ✓ Identity commitment (16 items, $\alpha=.70$)
 - ✓ Identity exploration (16 items, $\alpha=.58$)
- **Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure–R** (Phinney & Ong, 2007)
 - ✓ Ethnic identity commitment (3 items, $\alpha=.89$)
 - ✓ Ethnic identity exploration (3 items, $\alpha=.88$)
 - ✓ Ethnic self identification (open-ended question)
- **Vancouver Index of Acculturation** (Ryder et al., 2000, adapted)
 - ✓ Ethnic (Albanian) orientation (10 items, $\alpha=.89$)
 - ✓ Host-national (Greek) orientation (10 items, $\alpha=.89$)

Measures of psychological adaptation

- **Self-Esteem Scale** (Rosenberg, 1965)
 - ✓ 10 items, $\alpha=.72$
- **Oxford Happiness Questionnaire** (Hills & Argyle, 2002)
 - ✓ 29 items, $\alpha=.86$
- **Satisfaction with Life Scale** (Diener et al., 1985)
 - ✓ 5 items, $\alpha=.81$
- **Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire** (Goodman, 1997)
 - ✓ 25 items, $\alpha=.68$

Results I

- Exploring personal and ethnic identity of immigrant youth: relationships with acculturation and demographic variables.

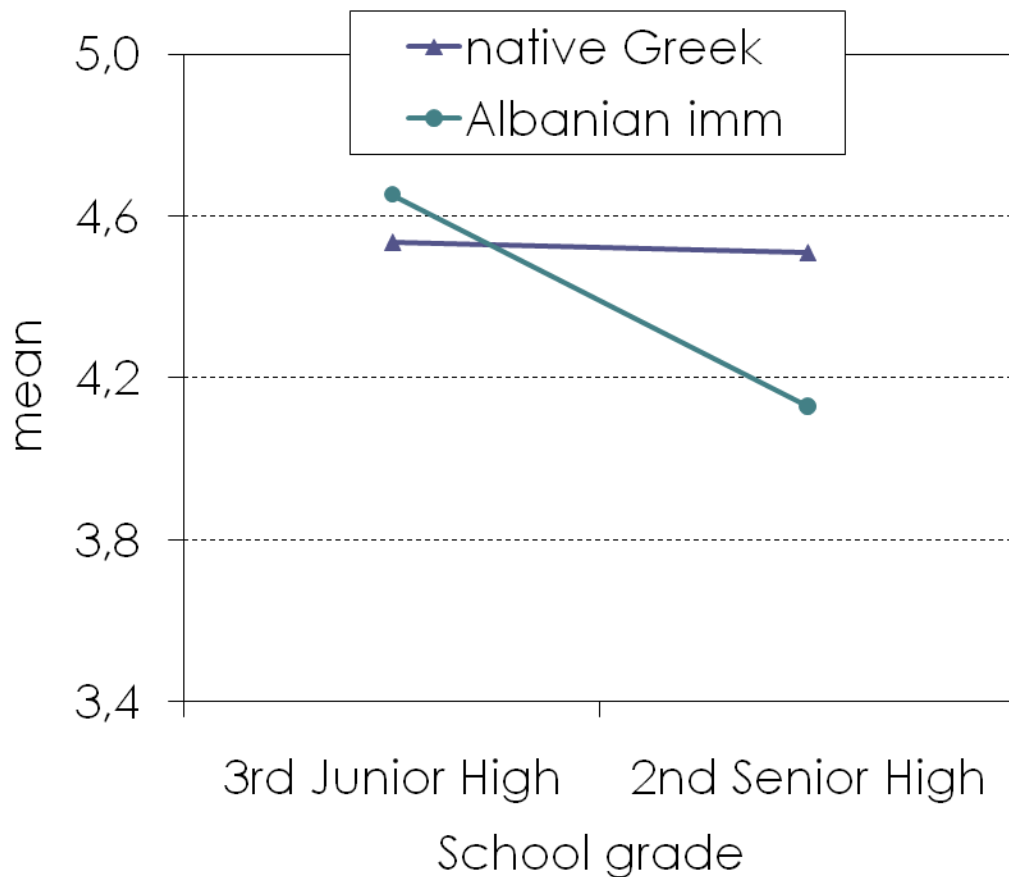
Dimensions of personal identity: summary of findings

- Personal identity did not vary as a function of:
 - ✓ immigrant status
 - ✓ immigrant generation (country of birth)
 - ✓ gender
 - ✓ school grade
- Identity commitment was higher than exploration ($p < .001$) in all groups under study.
- The two identity dimensions did not correlate significantly with each other ($r=.02$).

Dimensions of ethnic identity: summary of findings

- Ethnic identity exploration and commitment did not vary as a function of:
 - ✓ immigrant status
 - ✓ gender
- Younger adolescents (3rd Junior High) reported higher level of ethnic identity commitment than older ones (2nd Senior High) ($p = .004$)...
- ...however, the above relationship was true for immigrant youth, rather than for native Greeks ($p < .002$).

Interaction of school grade by immigrant status on ethnic identity commitment



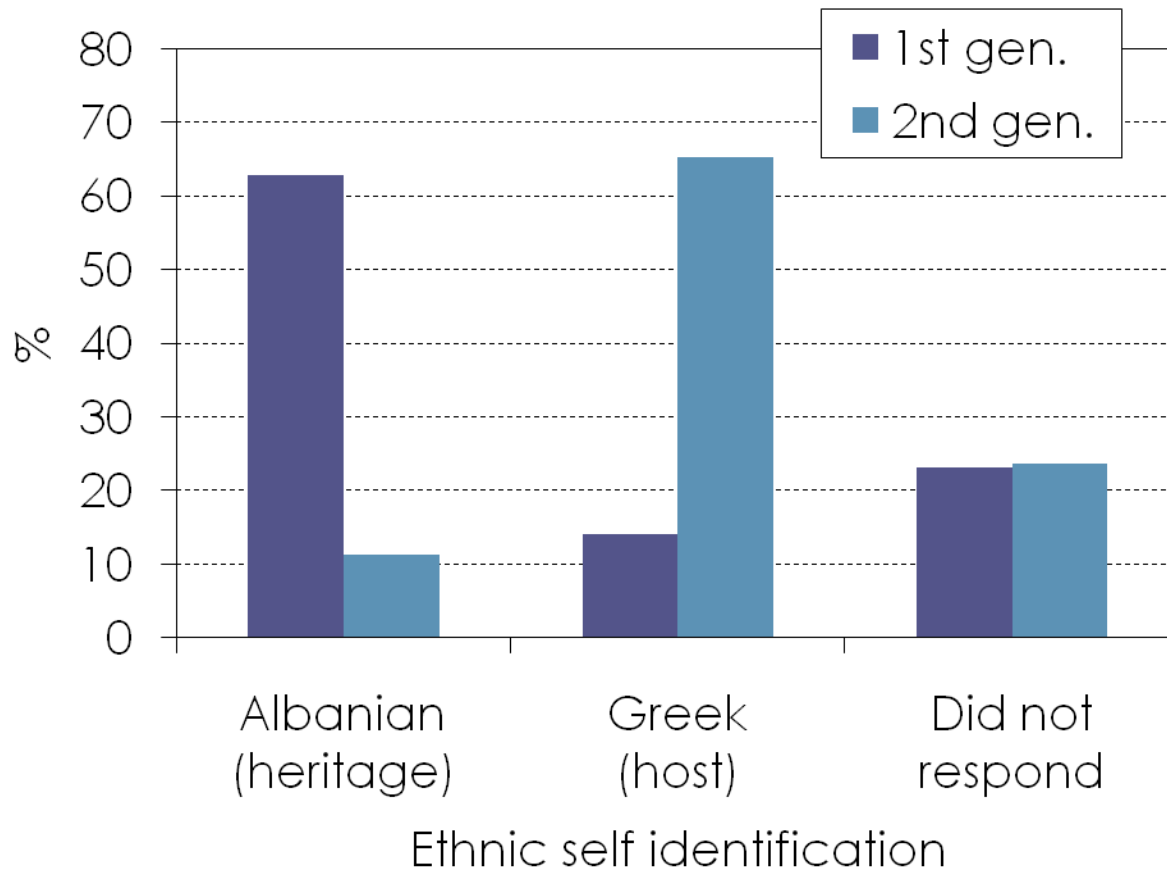
Levels of ethnic identity commitment remain stable across ages for native Greek youth, while they drop in older ages for their Albanian immigrant peers.

$$F(1, 642) = 6.81, p = .009$$

Self labeling of immigrant adolescents

- Ethnic self identification:
 - ✓ 43.1% with country of origin (Albania)
 - ✓ 33.6% with host country (Greece)
 - ✓ 23.3% did not respond
- Significant relationships of ethnic self identification were found with:
 - ✓ generation status (country of birth)
 - ✓ ethnic identity commitment
 - ✓ host-national (Greek) orientation

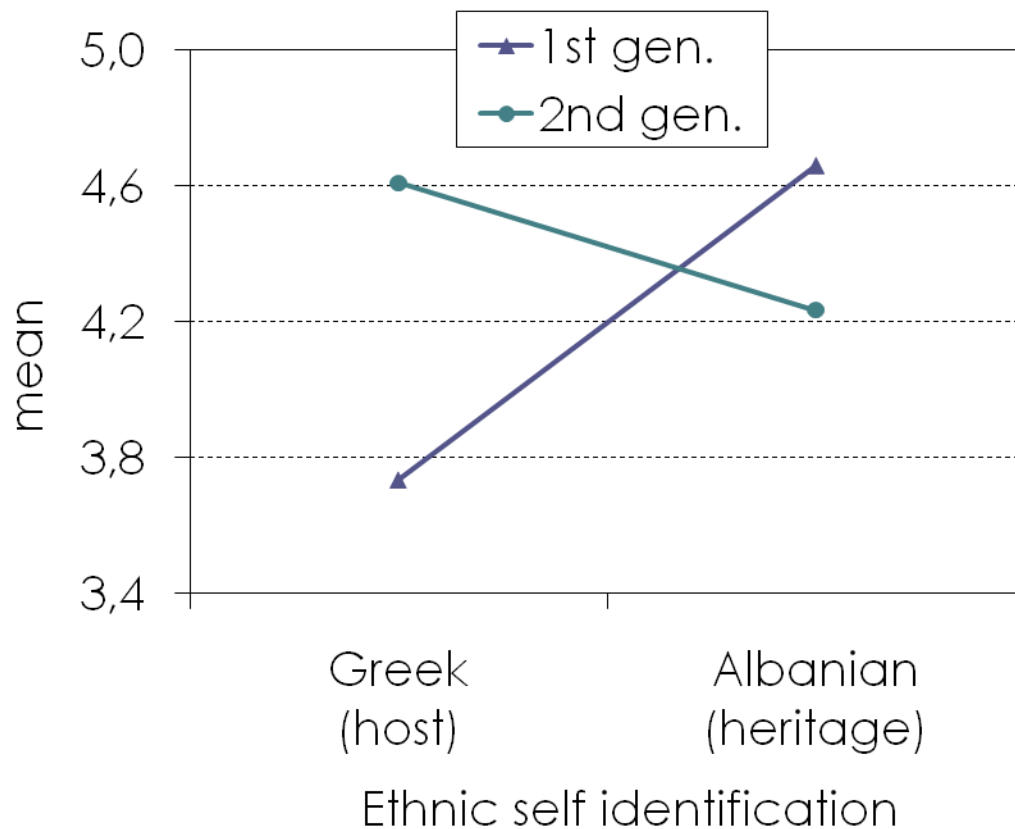
Ethnic self identification as a function of generation status of immigrant adolescents



A remarkable shift of ethnic self identification towards the host culture is noted from first to second generation of Albanian immigrant youth.

$$\chi^2(2, n = 232) = 76.77, p < .001$$

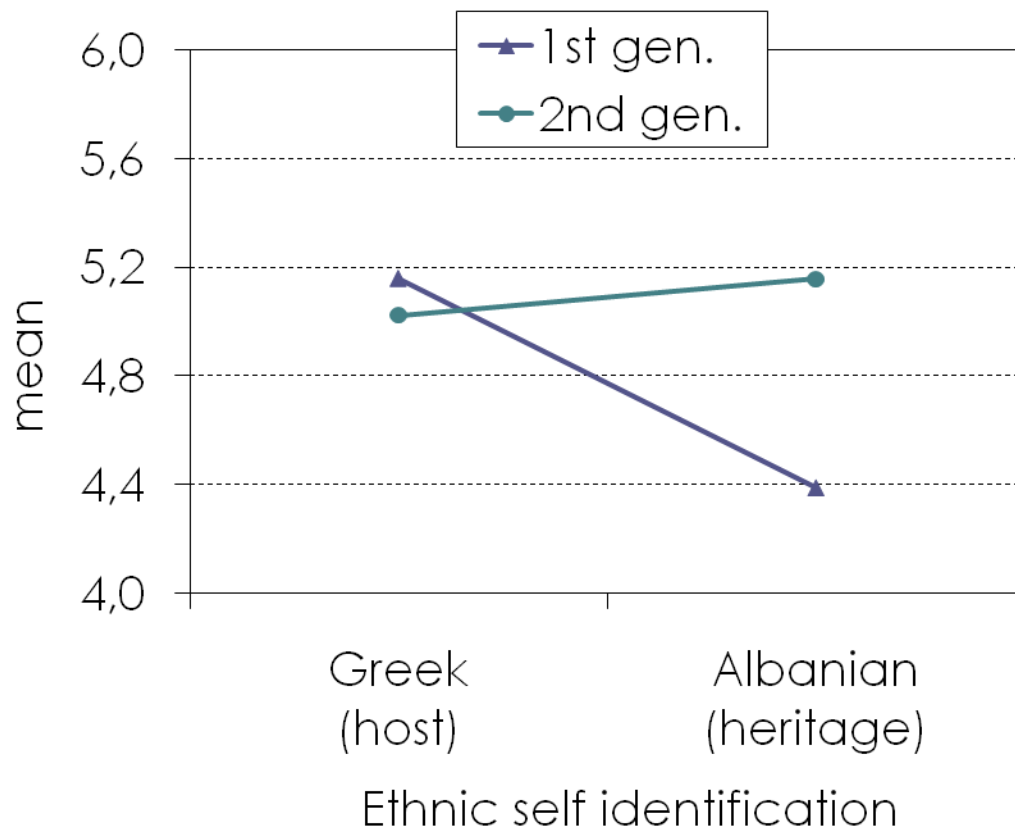
Interaction of ethnic self identification by immigrant generation on ethnic identity commitment



Commitment of ethnic identity is stronger when identification with an ethnic group is in line with country of birth of immigrant youth.

$$F(1, 173) = 7.88, p = .006$$

Interaction of ethnic self identification by immigrant generation on host-national orientation



Orientation towards the host (Greek) culture is higher for immigrant youth with Greek self identification and for 2nd generation.

$$F(1, 127) = 4.66, p = .033$$

Results II

- Exploring the relationships between identity and psychological adaptation of immigrant youth.

Dimensions of psychological adaptation: summary of findings

- Self-esteem, perceived happiness and psychological symptoms did not vary as a function of:
 - ✓ immigrant status
 - ✓ immigrant generation (country of birth)
 - ✓ gender
 - ✓ school grade
- Self-esteem correlated strongly with perceived happiness ($r=.65$).
- Psychological symptoms correlated negatively with self-esteem ($r = -.38$) and perceived happiness ($r=-.56$).

Hierarchical multiple regression models for the prediction of psychological adaptation

Total sample	Immigrants only
1) gender, age	1) gender, age
2) immigrant status	2) immigrant generation
3) personal identity	3) personal identity
	4) ethnic self identification
4) ethnic identity	5) ethnic identity
	6) acculturation orientation
5) immigrant status X ethnic identity	7) ethnic identification X ethnic identity

DV's: self-esteem, perceived happiness, psychological symptoms

Significant predictors of psychological adaptation (total sample)

Self-esteem (Total R ² = .11)	Happiness (Total R ² = .14)	Psych. symptoms (Total R ² = .09)
		age ($\beta = +.08^*$)
EIPQ commitment ($\beta = +.23^{***}$)	EIPQ commitment ($\beta = +.21^{***}$)	EIPQ commitment ($\beta = -.10^*$)
	EIPQ exploration ($\beta = -.14^{***}$)	EIPQ exploration ($\beta = +.21^{***}$)
MEIM commitment ($\beta = +.13^{***}$)	MEIM commitment ($\beta = +.13^{**}$)	
	MEIM exploration ($\beta = +.12^*$)	MEIM exploration ($\beta = -.10^*$)

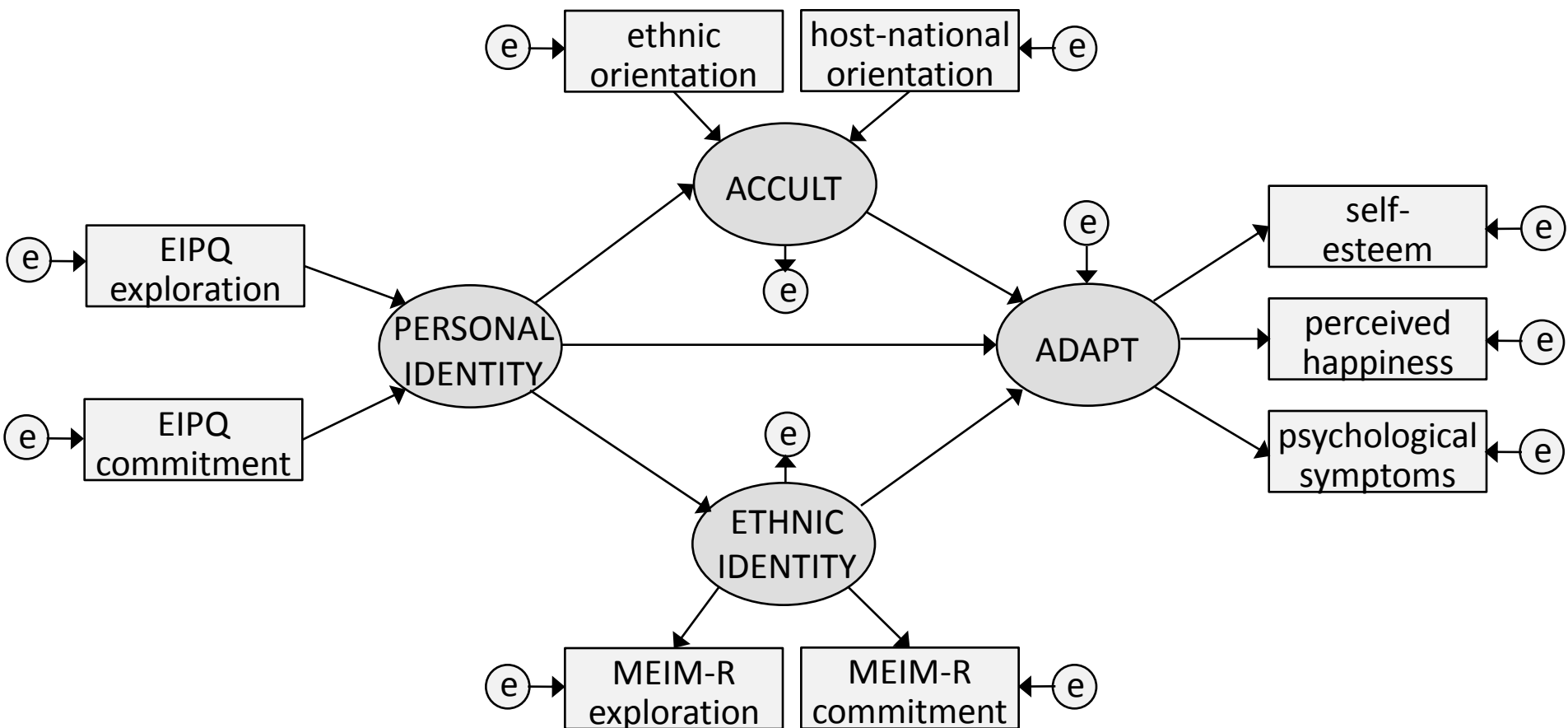
* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Significant predictors of psychological adaptation (immigrants only)

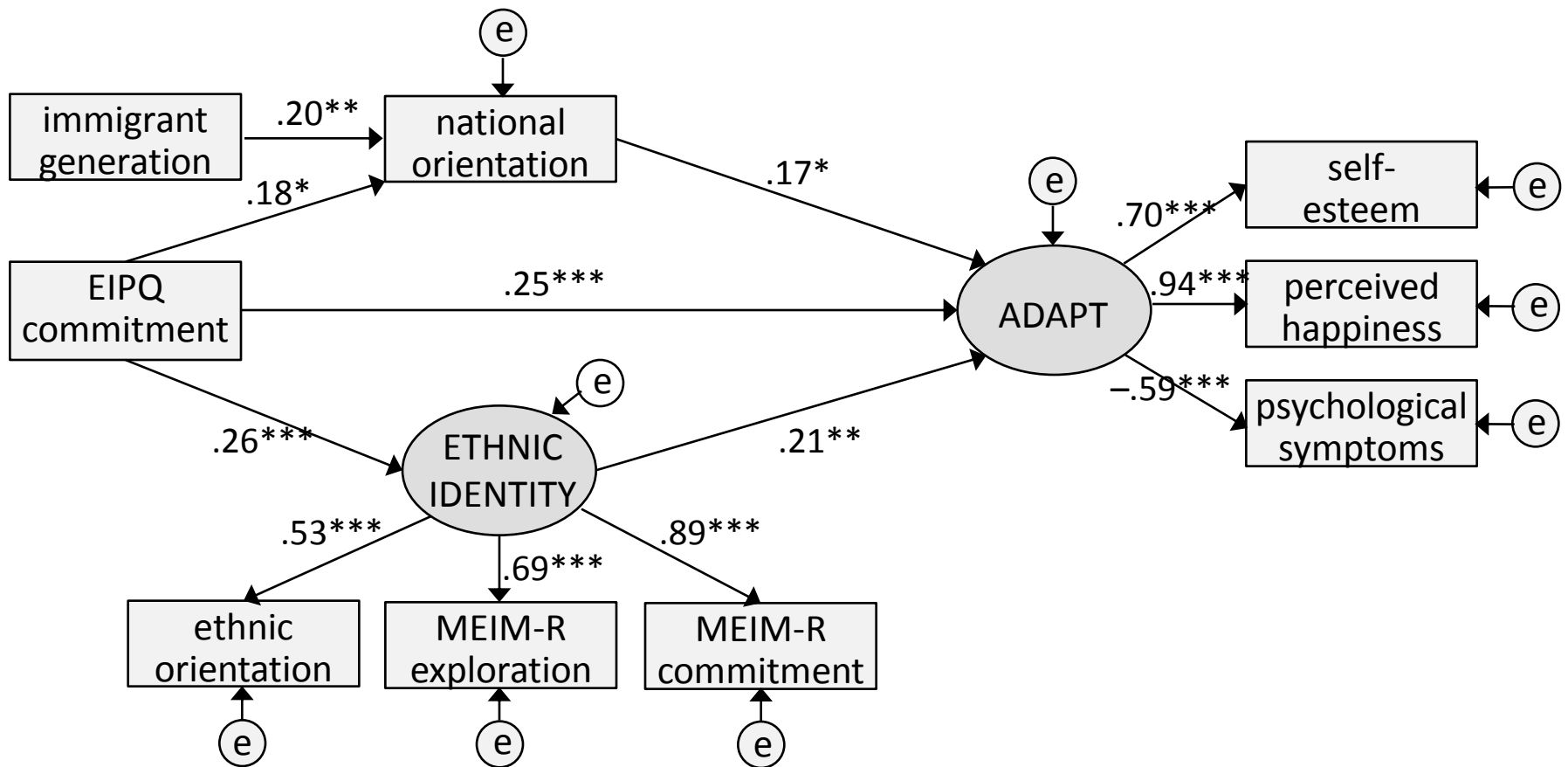
Self-esteem (Total R ² = .24)	Happiness (Total R ² = .18)	Psych. symptoms (Total R ² = .11)
EIPQ commitment ($\beta = +.17^*$)	EIPQ commitment ($\beta = +.23^{**}$)	EIPQ commitment ($\beta = -.17^*$)
		EIPQ exploration ($\beta = +.24^{**}$)
Host-national orientation ($\beta = +.35^{***}$)	Host-national orientation ($\beta = +.20^*$)	

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Mediation of ethnic identity and acculturation in the relationship between personal identity and psychological adaptation (hypothesized model)



Mediation of ethnic identity and acculturation in the relationship between personal identity and psychological adaptation (modified model)



$\chi^2=26.33, df=19, p=.121, CFI=.98, RMSEA=.041$

Discussion and conclusions

- Emphasis on similarities between immigrant and native youth, rather than on differences.
 - ☞ Education as a normative socialization agent in the double challenge of development and acculturation (Fuligni, 1997; Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2010).
- Second generation immigrants tended to identify themselves in terms of the host culture.
 - ☞ This could be due to assimilation pressures in the school context (Berry, 2006), esp. in Greece (Paleologou, 2004)...
 - ☞ ...however, it didn't seem to have direct implications for their level of psychological adaptation.

Discussion and conclusions

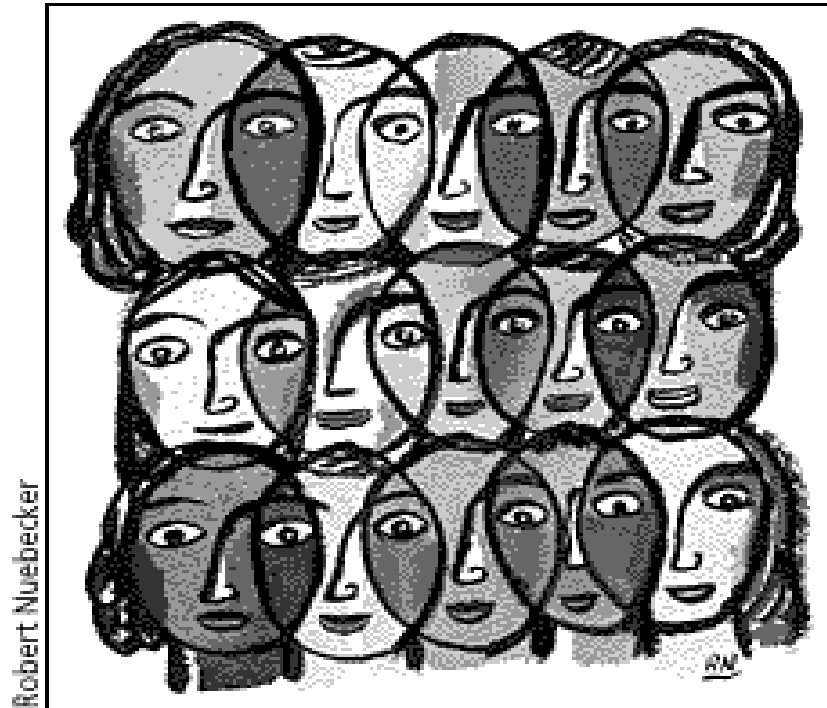
- Contrary to ethnic self identification, ethnic identity dimensions (esp. a strong sense of belonging) contributed to overall positive psychological adaptation of immigrant youth.
- This effect was independent of the acculturation orientation towards the host culture, which also proved to be positively related with psychological adaptation.
- ☞ In line with other empirical evidence (e.g., Berry et al., 2006; Roberts et al., 1999), the above findings combined suggest that immigration policies should promote integration rather than assimilation in the educational system.

Discussion and conclusions

- Differential effects of identity exploration on psychological adaptation were found: negative at the personal level, positive at the ethnic group level (see also Schwartz et al., 2009).
- In addition, personal identity exploration was not related to commitment while ethnic identity exploration correlated strongly with commitment.
 - ☞ As part of social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) ethnic identity exploration can be protective of self-esteem; on the other hand, personal identity exploration may be viewed as a stressful, self-threatening experience.

Limitations and future directions

- Surprisingly little research addresses the interplay between personal, ethnic and national identity (Schwartz et al., 2008). Identification with more than one groups would be enlightening if studied in relation to acculturation strategies.
- Causal models not to be established with a cross-sectional, correlational study. Longitudinal designs are more appropriate.
- Generalization of findings should be made with great caution since the qualitative aspects of ethnic identity of immigrant groups may differ considerably.



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Thank you for your attention!

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