

Acculturation Orientations in relation to Economic Hardship and Perceived Discrimination: A Longitudinal Study of Immigrant Adolescents in Greece of Recession

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Paper presented at the *9th Biennial Congress of the International Academy for Intercultural Research*, Bergen, Norway, June 28–July 2, 2015

Abstract

The effect of acculturation orientation on the development and adaptation of immigrant children and adolescents is a well-established finding in the acculturation literature. Less common is research attempting to understand the acculturation processes in relation to socio-economic parameters extending beyond the individual level of analysis. In this presentation, the role of economic hardship in the family is being studied, in relation to two critical dimensions of social-psychological interest in the course of adaptation of immigrant youth, namely national orientation and perceived discrimination. Implementing a longitudinal design (two repeated measurements in the academic years 2012-13 and 2013-14) in the context of the Athena Studies of Resilient Adaptation research project allowed for detection of causal relations through comparative analysis of alternative structural equation models. The sample consisted of 757 immigrant adolescents in Greece (364 from Albania, 128 from the former Soviet Union, 155 from other countries and 110 of mixed ethnic background; 78% second-generation; 54% boys). Participants were enrolled in the 1st grade of High School during the academic year 2012-13 (mean age: 12.7 years) in 14 schools from the wider Athens metropolitan area. Measures included, among others, the impact of the economic crisis in the family (Lempers, Clark-Lempers, & Simons, 1989), acculturation orientation (Nguyen & Von Eye, 2002) and perceived discrimination against the self (Motti-Stefanidi & Asendorpf, 2012). At the cross-sectional level of analysis, we found that economic distress of the family was positively associated with perceived discrimination which, in turn, negatively predicted orientation of immigrant youth towards members of the host (Greek) society. At the longitudinal level, T1 perceived discrimination was associated with higher economic downgrade and lower national orientation at T2. These findings indicate that the model of reciprocity (compared to the alternative models of stability, causality, and reverse causality) is more appropriate in order to understand longitudinal relations of acculturation processes of immigrant youth with economic hardship in the course of recession. Moreover, they highlight the role of perceived discrimination and call for interventions and policies in order to enhance immigrant integration and social cohesion

Acknowledgment

The programme “Positive adaptation of immigrant and native adolescents in the course of recession: Resilience and vulnerability processes” was co-financed by Greece and the European Union (European Social Fund, NSRF 2007-2013; operational programme “Education and Lifelong Learning”; action “Aristeia II”; principal investigator: Prof. Frosso Motti-Stefanidi).



European Union
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Greece in recession

- Unemployment skyrocketed to 26.6% in the general population and 52% among youth under 25 years (1st trimester 2015).
- Poverty reached 23.1% in the general population (26.5% among children), considered among the worst rates internationally (Τσέλλου, Καζάκος, Ρηγίνος, & Λιαργκόβας, 2014).
- Physical and mental health indices, e.g., infant mortality, instances of HIV infection, depression, and suicide attempts, show a steady increase (Kentikelenis et al., 2014).
- Education funds have witnessed a cut of 47% on average between 2009-2016. Greece is in the list of top 10 countries worldwide in what concerns emigration of highly skilled youth (World Bank, 2011).

Economic crisis and perceived discrimination as a ‘double threat’ for intergroup relations in plural societies

- Economic crisis and perceived discrimination are examined in the context of three key hypotheses for intergroup relations in plural societies (see MIRIPS; Berry, 1984, 2014):
 - The multiculturalism hypothesis
 - The contact hypothesis
 - The integration hypothesis

Economic crisis and perceived discrimination as a ‘double threat’ for intergroup relations in plural societies: The multiculturalism hypothesis

- If individuals feel secure in their place in society (with respect to their cultural identity and economic situation), they will be more accepting of those who differ from themselves.
 - In times of economic and social crisis, discrimination against immigrants can be viewed as a reaction against the ‘realistic threat’ of recession and the ‘symbolic threat’ of ethnic identity diffusion, as suggested by social psychological theories (e.g., ITT; Stephan et al., 1999).

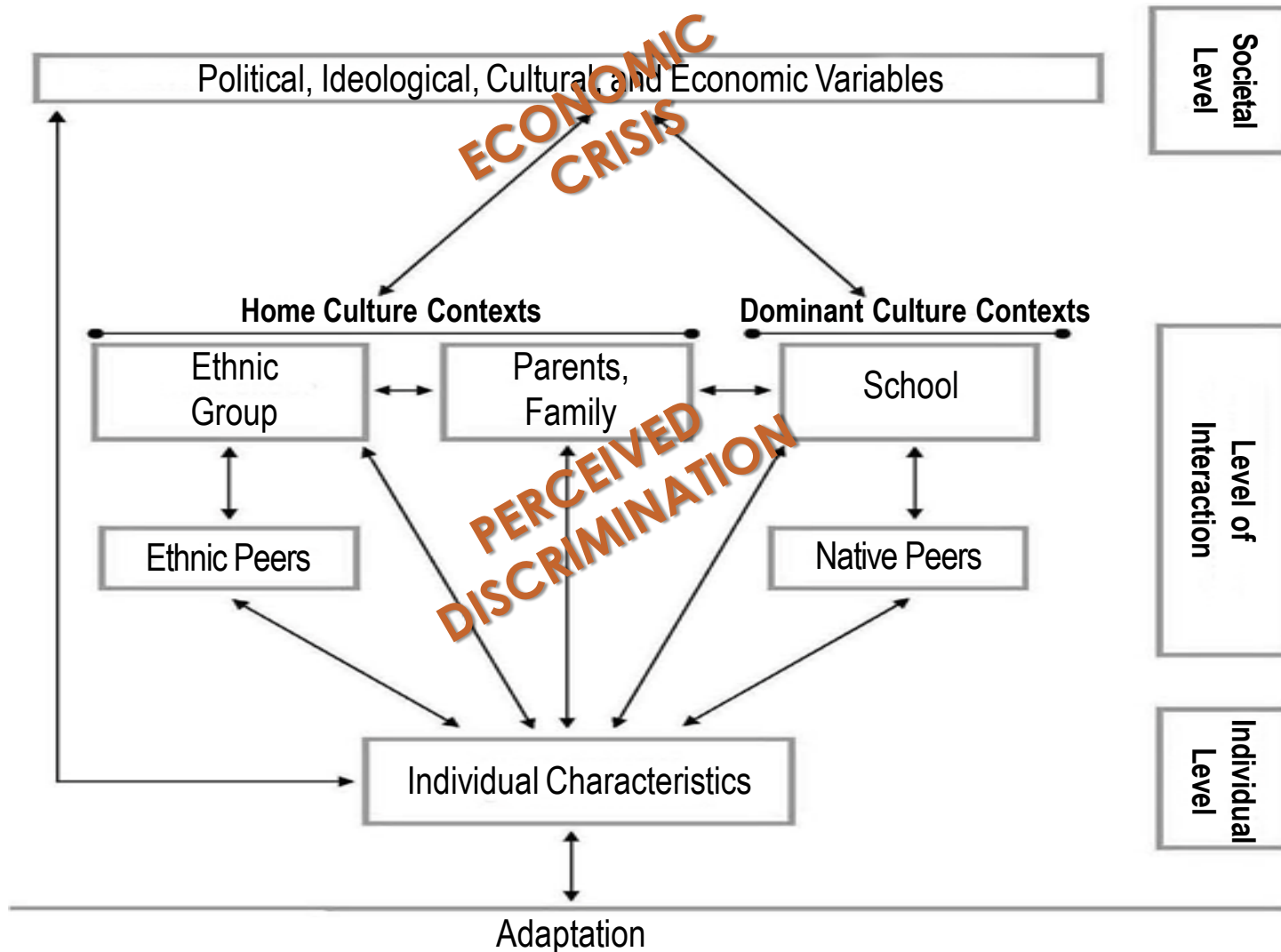
Economic crisis and perceived discrimination as a ‘double threat’ for intergroup relations in plural societies: The contact hypothesis

- Individuals will be more accepting of outgroup members if they engage in direct contact with them, provided that contact is voluntary, groups are of equal status, and they share common norms and goals (Allport, 1954; Brown & Hewstone, 2005).
 - The economic crisis shapes individual worldviews of society as dangerous and unpredictable, which increase preference for hierarchy and domination over lower status groups (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999) or generate feelings of relative deprivation through unfavorable social comparisons (Walker & Smith, 2002).

Economic crisis and perceived discrimination as a ‘double threat’ for intergroup relations in plural societies: The integration hypothesis

- Bicultural engagement in both one’s heritage culture and the larger society is beneficial for psychological and sociocultural adaptation of immigrants (Berry, 1997, 2006).
 - On the other hand, identification with one’s ethnic group and disidentification from the national outgroup aims to protect self-esteem in situations perceived as discriminatory (see, for example, the Rejection-Disidentification Model; Jasinskaja-Lahti, Liebkind, & Solheim, 2009).

An integrative framework for the study of immigrant youth adaptation in context (Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2012)



The present study: Research questions

- What are the acculturation orientations of immigrant youth in Greece of recession? How do they relate longitudinally to their ethnic ingroup and to their national peers?
- How are acculturation orientations of immigrant youth formed in relation to the economic hardship of their families, on one hand, and the discrimination that they perceive, on the other? What are the longitudinal patterns of these associations?

Participants (14 High Schools, $N=764$)

		T1	T2	T1+T2
Country of origin	Albania	315	315	263
	Former Soviet Union	116	117	102
	Other	139	107	90
	Mixed	96	100	86
Country of birth	Country of origin	150	121	104
	Greece	516	518	437
Sex	Boys	353	343	284
	Girls	313	296	257
Total	<i>N</i>	666	639	541
	Mean age	12.7	13.7	

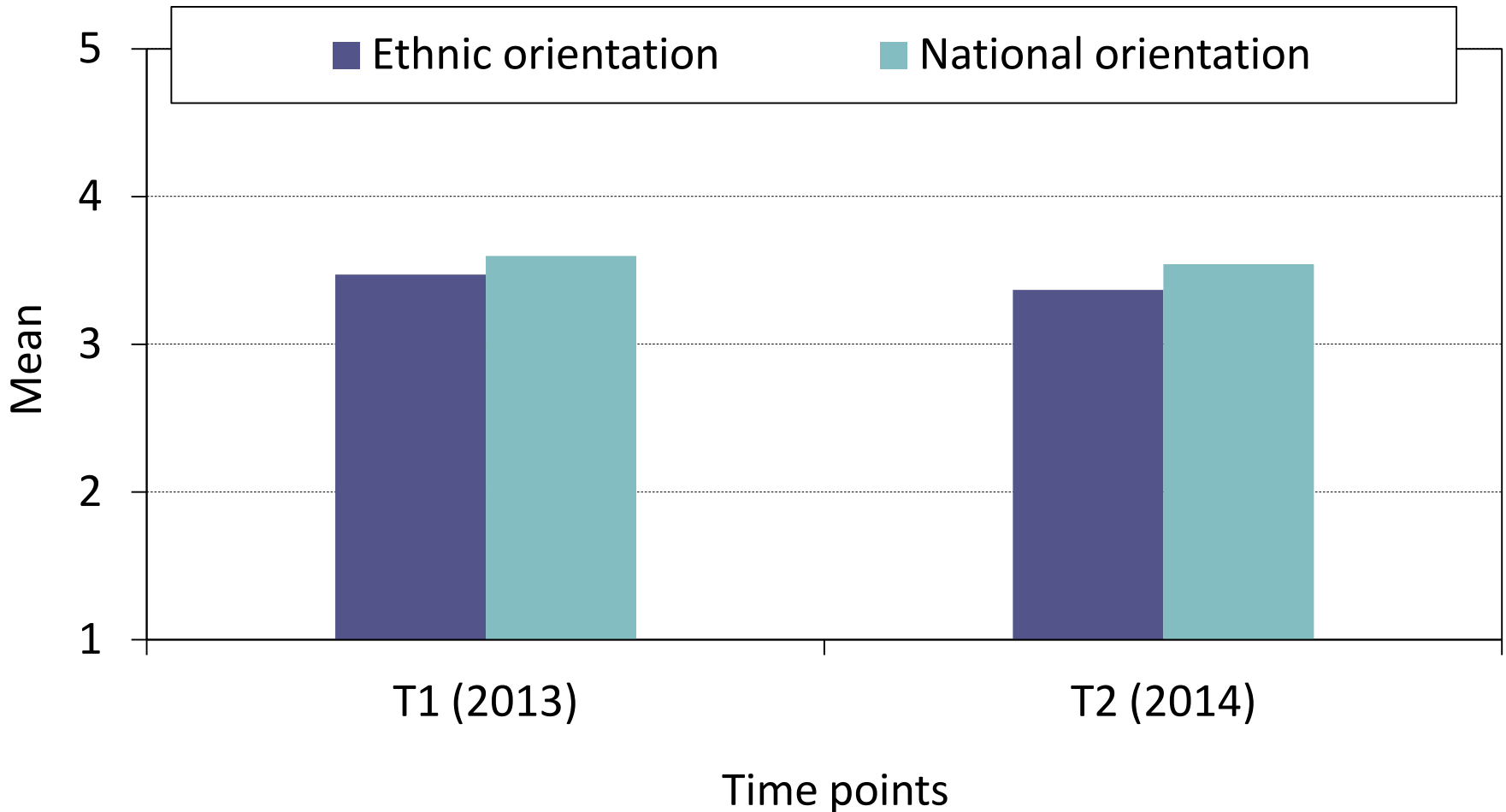
Participants (14 High Schools, 64% of students)

		T1	T2	T1+T2
Country of origin	Albania	47.3	49.3	48.6
	Former Soviet Union	17.4	18.3	18.9
	Other	20.9	16.7	16.6
	Mixed	14.4	15.6	15.9
Country of birth	Country of origin	22.5	18.9	19.2
	Greece	77.5	66.8	66.4
Sex	Boys	53.0	53.7	52.5
	Girls	47.0	46.3	47.5
Total	<i>N</i>	63.5	62.3	61.4
	Mean age	12.7	13.7	

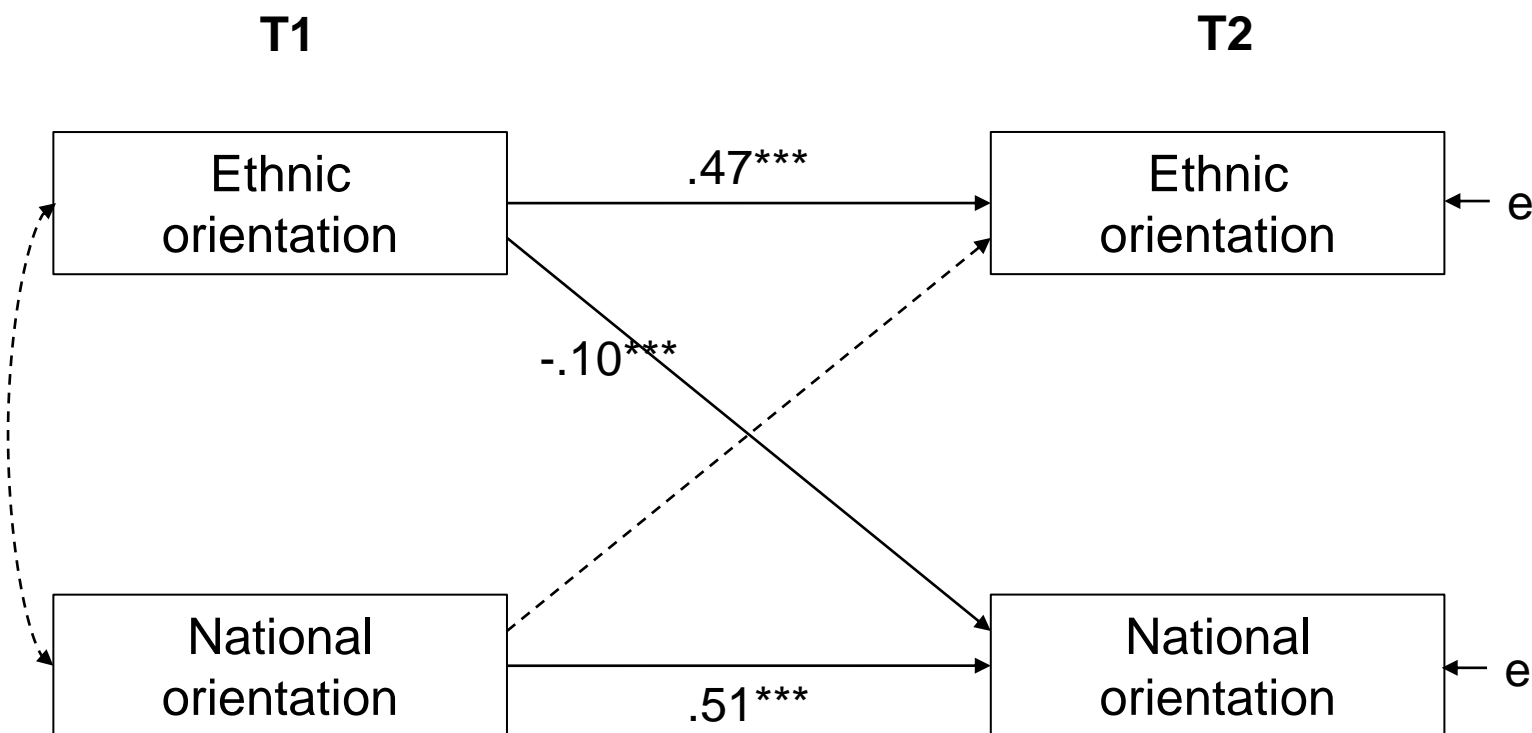
Measures

- **Acculturation Scale** (Nguyen & Von Eye, 2002)
 - ☞ National orientation (11 items, 5-point Likert, $\alpha = .88$)
 - ☞ Ethnic orientation (11 items, 5-point Likert, $\alpha = .89$)
 - “Most of my close friends are...”*
 - “I’d like to follow the lifestyle of...”*
- **Perceived Discrimination** (AStRA; Pavlopoulos et al., 2006; 4 items, 5-point Likert, $\alpha = .82$)
 - “You are being treated unfairly because of your ethnic origin”*
- **Economic Hardship** (EHQ; Lempers, Clark-Lempers, & Simons, 1989; 10 items, 4-point Likert, $\alpha = .80$)
 - “Your family has cut expenses devoted to entertainment”*

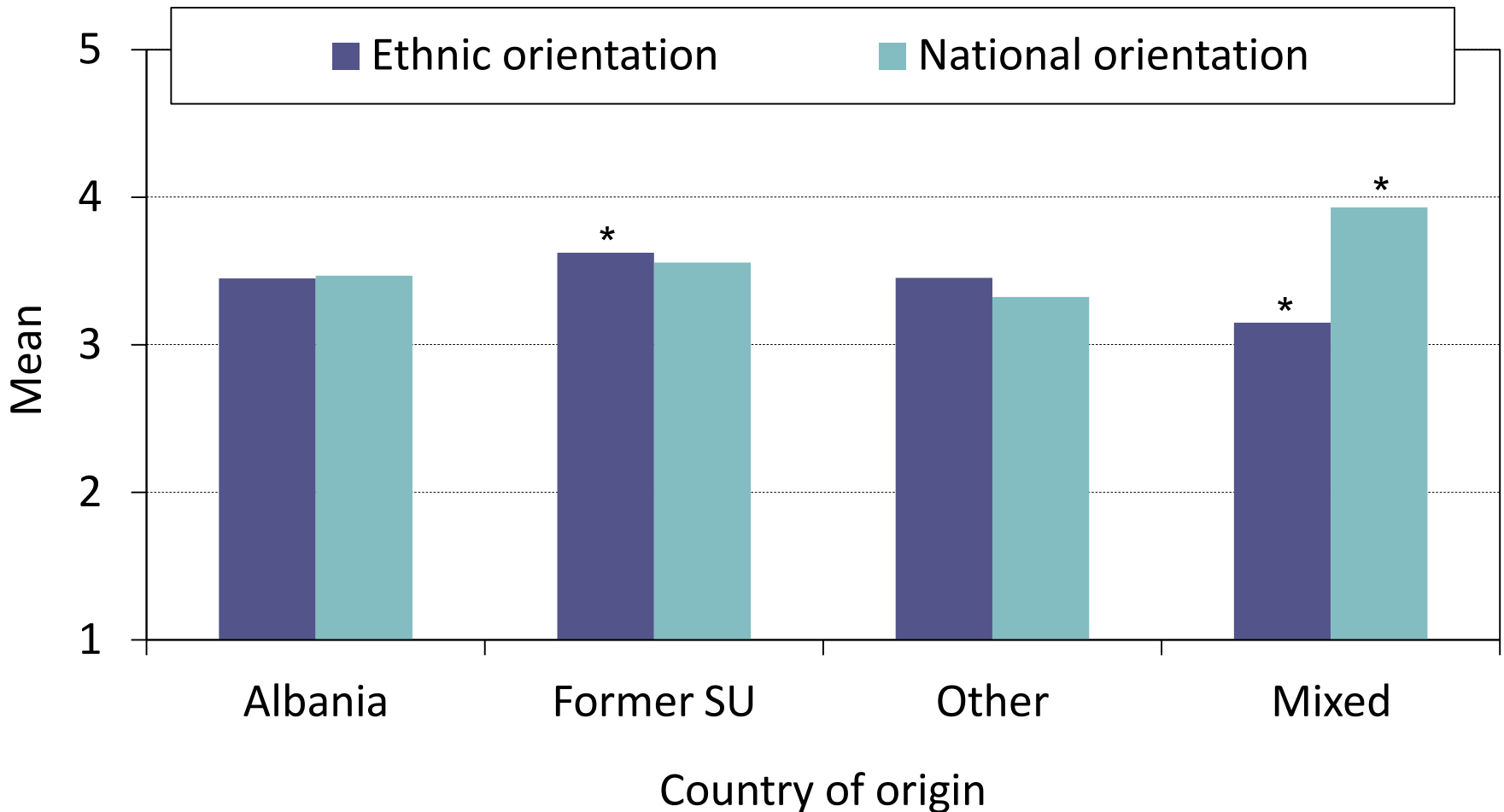
1. Acculturation orientations of immigrant youth across time



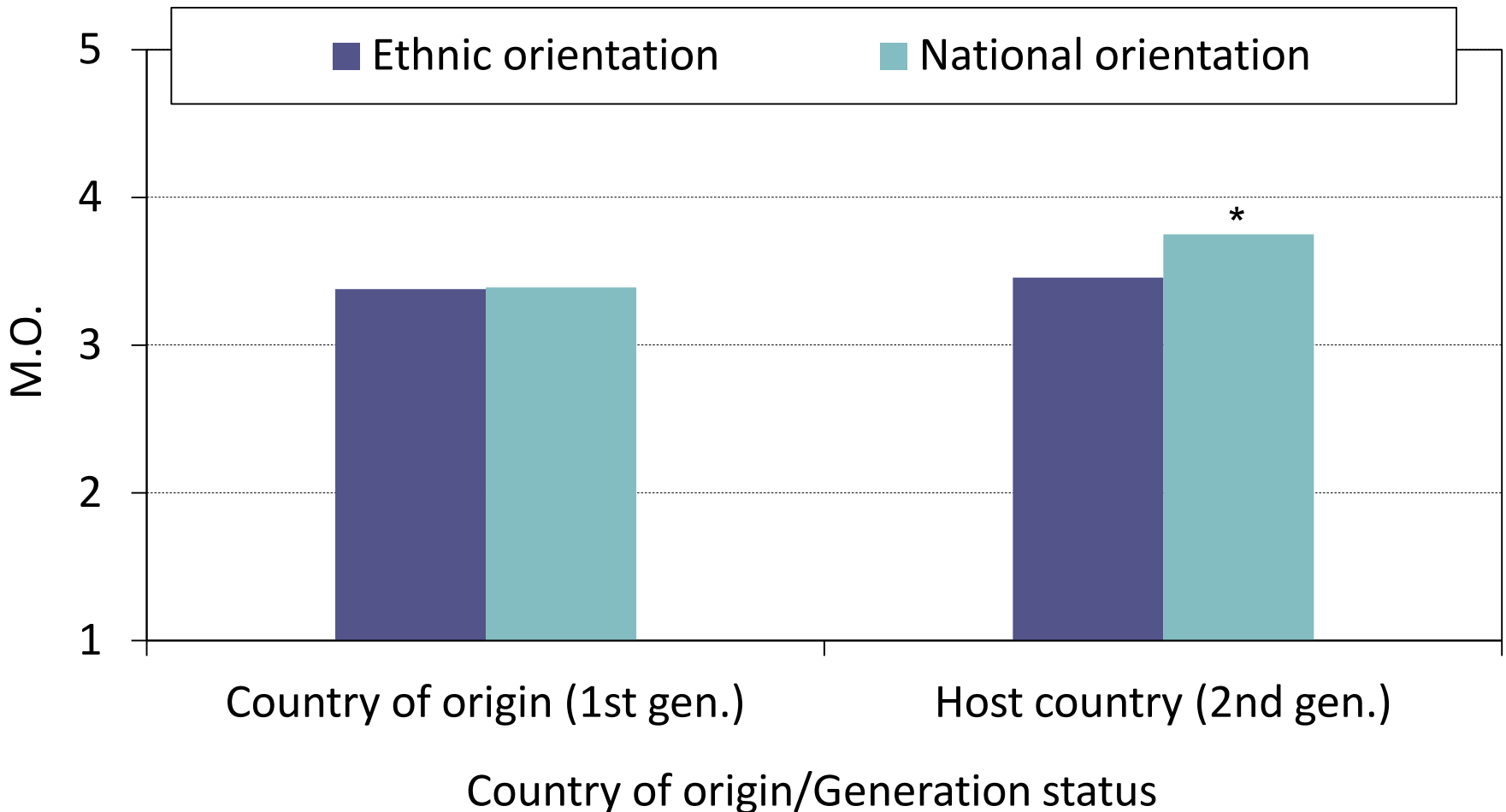
Longitudinal association of acculturation orientations of immigrant youth



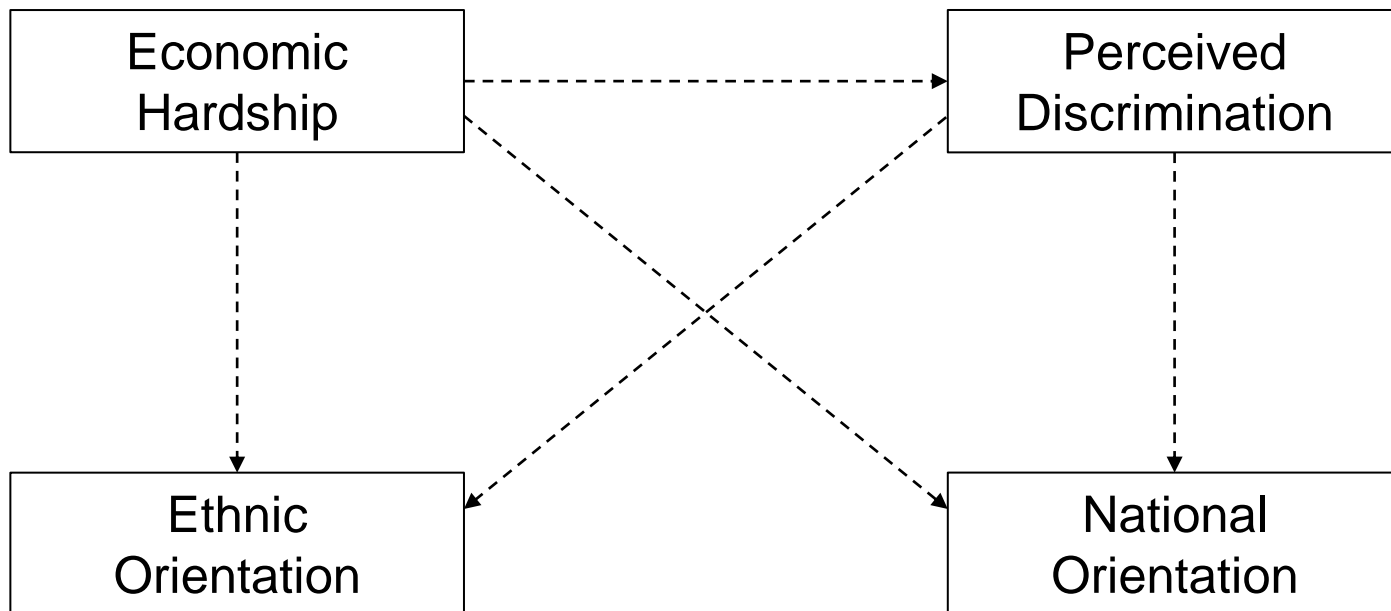
Acculturation orientations of immigrant youth by country of origin



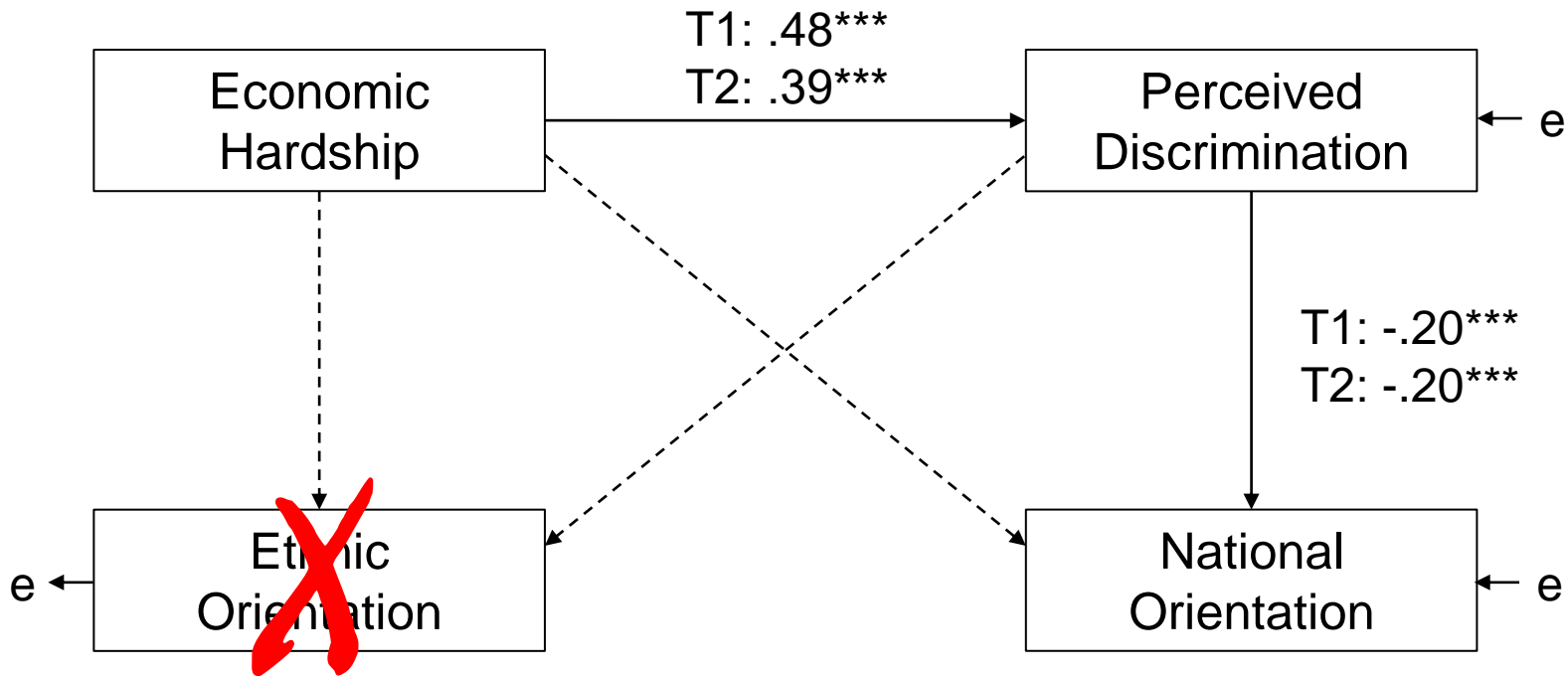
Acculturation orientations of immigrant youth by country of birth/generation status



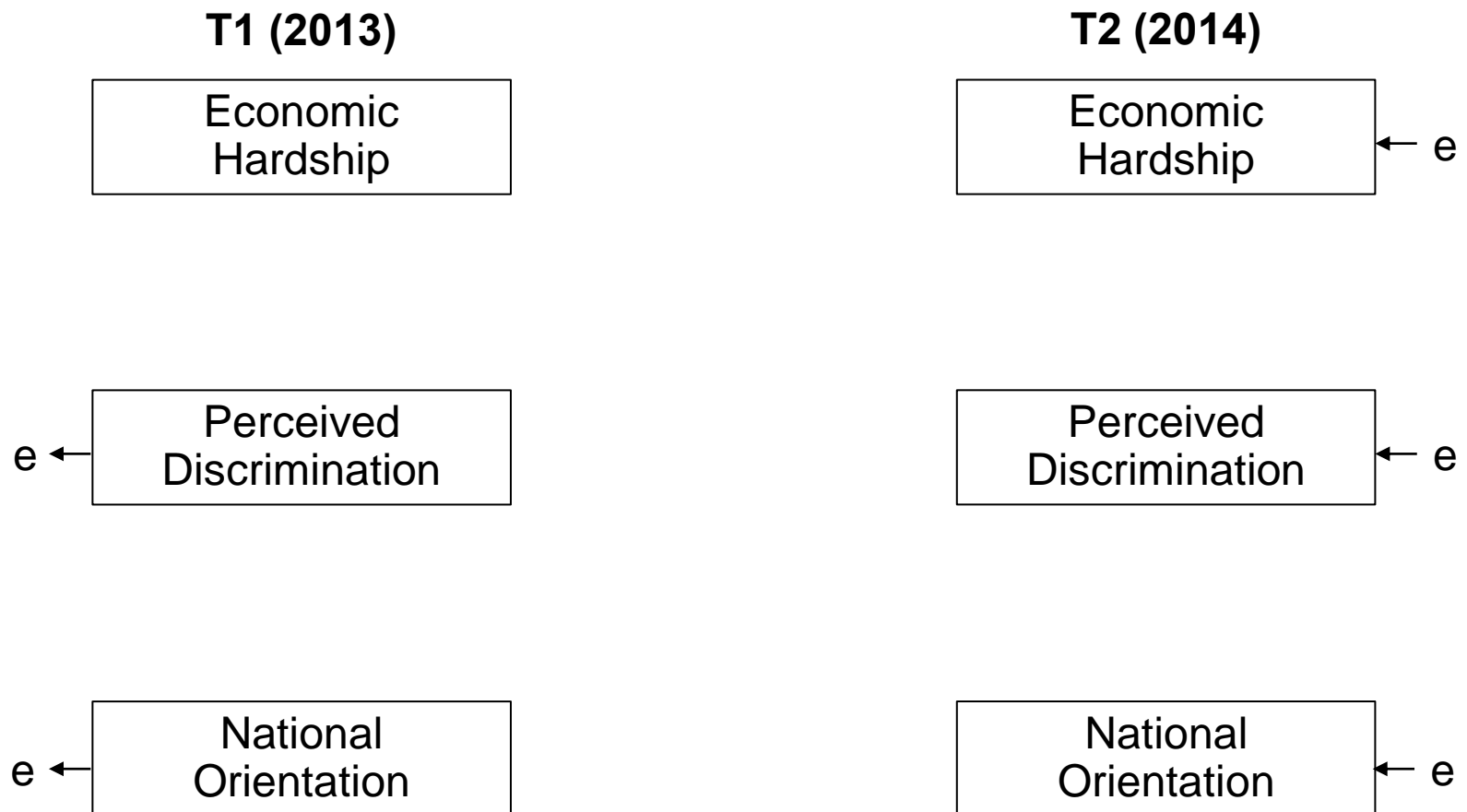
2. Economic hardship, perceived discrimination, and acculturation orientations of immigrant youth: Hypothesized model



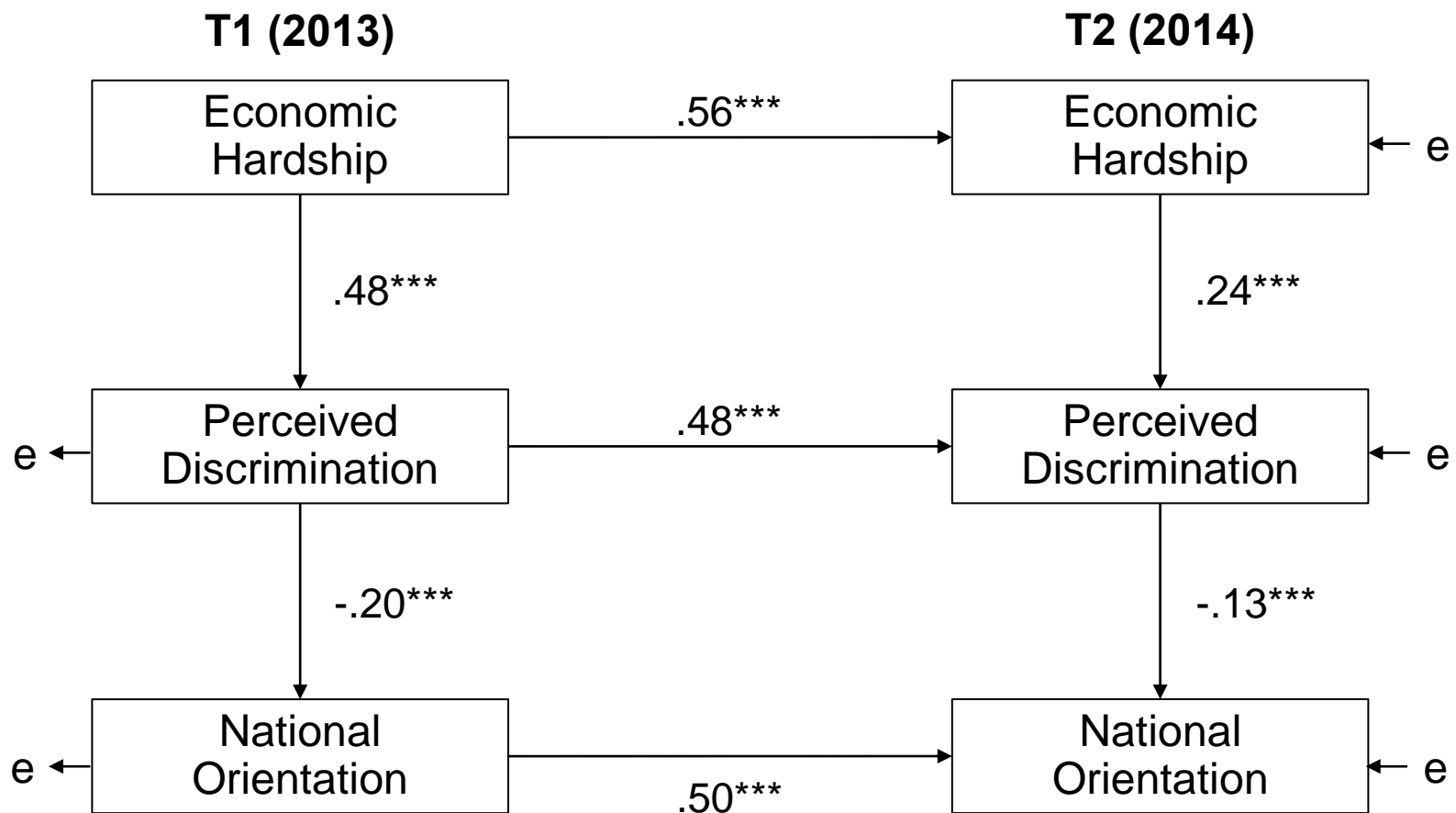
Economic hardship, perceived discrimination, and acculturation orientations of immigrant youth: Empirical model



Longitudinal association of economic hardship, perceived discrimination, and national orientation



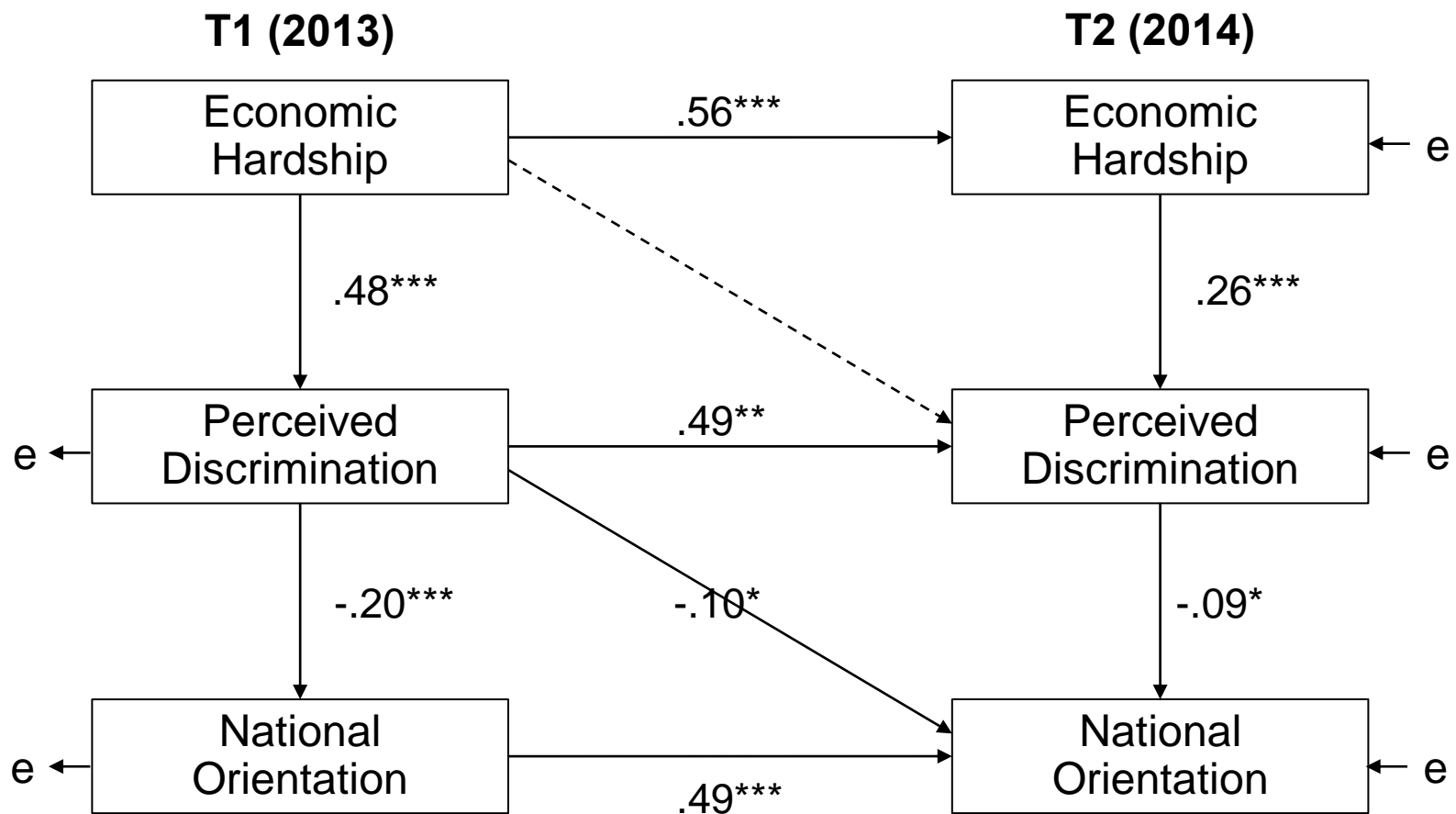
Longitudinal association of economic hardship, perceived discrimination, and national orientation: Stability model



$\chi^2(8) = 13.46, p = .097, \chi^2/df = 1.68, CFI = .994, RMSEA = .030$

$***p < .001$

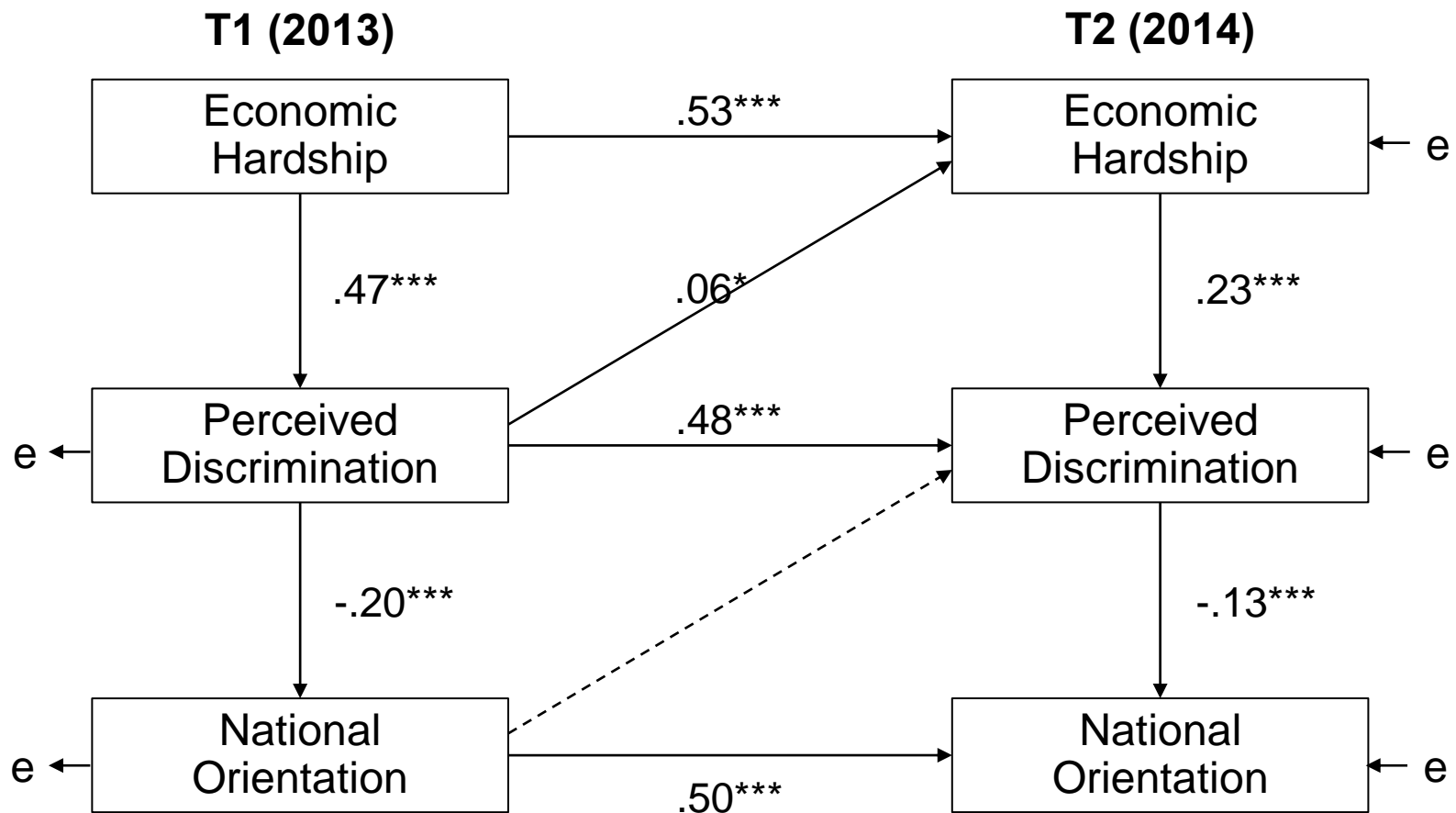
Longitudinal association of economic hardship, perceived discrimination, and national orientation: Causality model



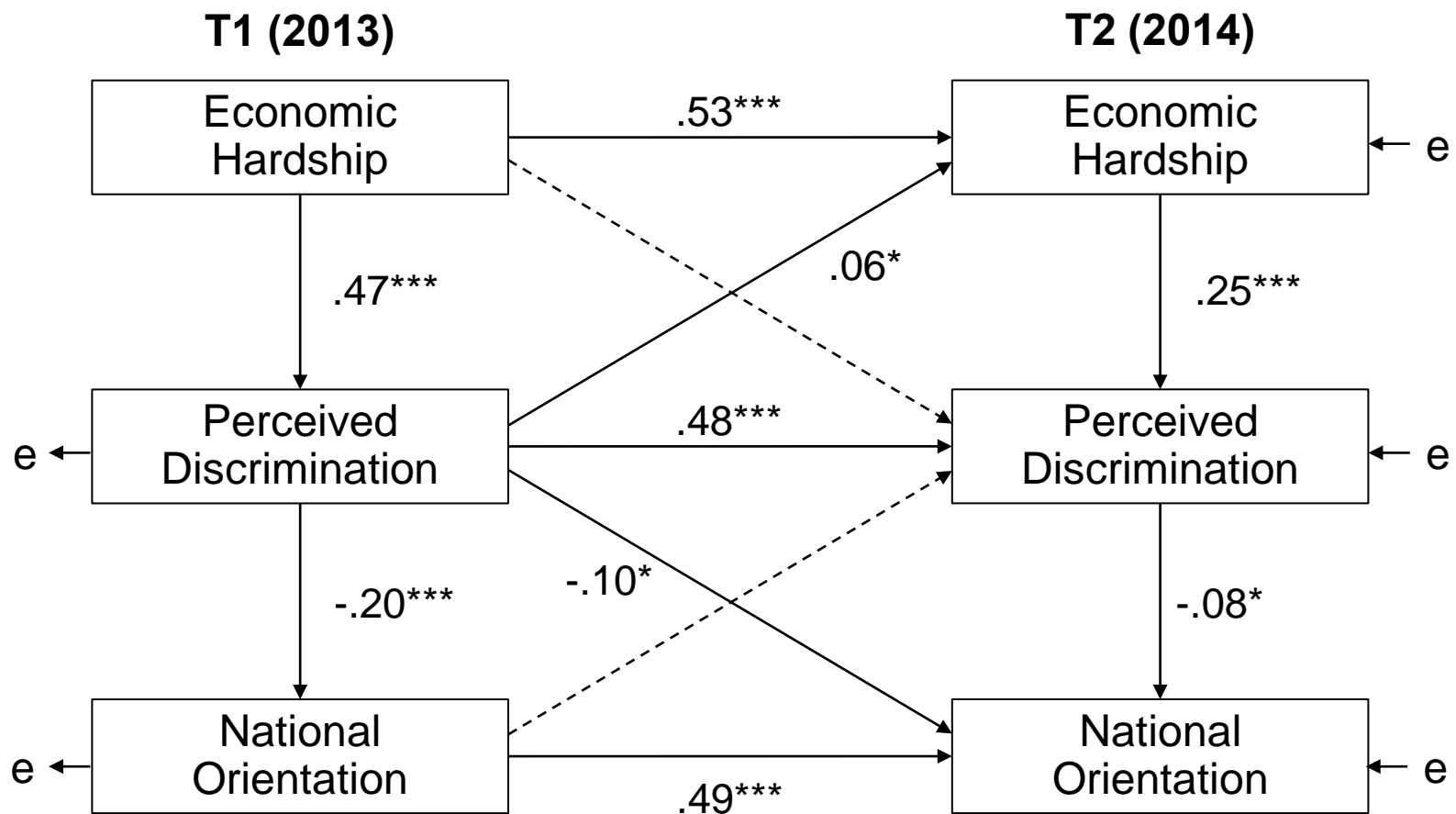
$\chi^2(6) = 8.95, p = .176, \chi^2/df = 1.49, CFI = .995, RMSEA = .025$

* $p < .05$. *** $p < .001$

Longitudinal association of economic hardship, perceived discrimination, and national orientation: Reversed causality model



Longitudinal association of economic hardship, perceived discrimination, and national orientation: Reciprocity model



Conclusions

- The proportion of immigrant students and the profile of their demographic characteristics constitute a new, dynamic reality which any educational policy planning should take into serious consideration.
- The acculturation orientations of immigrant youth appear to be balanced between the ethnic ingroup and the host culture, which is indicative of integration/biculturalism (Berry, 1997, 2006).
- The two acculturation orientations remain relatively stable over time. Ethnic orientation tends to longitudinally predict national orientation, rather than the opposite, probably because it is formed at an earlier developmental stage in the context of family (Pavlopoulos, Besevegis, & Georganti, 2010).

Conclusions

- The 'double challenge' against the devaluation of identity of immigrant youth is related to acculturation, though only in what concerns their national (not ethnic) orientation:
 - The economic hardship of the family undermines national orientation through the role of perceived discrimination...
 - ... which constitutes a 'double negative' predictor for both national orientation as well as for further economic downgrade.
- ☞ Assigning the role of scapegoat to immigrants during the crisis (see GMG & UNESCO, 2009) may lead to discrimination that impairs their future job prospects (Eurobarometer, 2012).

Future directions

- How is ethnic orientation shaped? Need to study correlates of identification with the ethnic ingroup.
- To what extent perceived discrimination corresponds to actual instances of discrimination? Need to study the attitudes of outgroups, i.e., teachers and national peers.
- How is societal and familial economic hardship translated into perceived personal discrimination? Need to study longitudinal mediation and moderation effects.
- What is the role of context in the above relations? Need to take into account the hierarchical structure of data (students nested within schools) with the use of multilevel techniques.

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