

# Exploring the Longitudinal Interplay between Acculturation Orientations and Cultural Identity of Immigrant Youth: Stability, Causality or Reciprocity?

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# Abstract

According to the mainstream two-dimensional models of acculturation, ethnic involvement and national involvement are viewed as relatively independent processes. However, this assumption has rarely been directly examined, even less so longitudinally. Similarly, the empirical findings on the relationship between acculturation orientations and cultural identity are inconclusive, as in most cases the research design does not allow for testing of causal effects. This study benefits from a longitudinal data set in order to explore the mutual relationships of (a) ethnic involvement with national involvement, on the one hand, and (b) acculturation orientations with cultural identity, on the other, in a three-wave sample of 799 immigrant adolescents from Albania (50%), the former Soviet Union (20%), and other origin (30%) living in Greece between 2013-2015 (77% second generation, 54% boys, mean age = 12.8 years at T1). The theoretical background draws upon cross-cultural, developmental, and social-psychological models, which have been used most frequently in parallel rather than combined. Two sets of competing hypotheses were formed; these involved the causal paths from ethnic involvement to national involvement and vice versa (H1a-H1b), and the causal paths from acculturation orientations to cultural identity and vice versa (H2a-H2b). Measures included ethnic and national acculturation orientations (Nguyen & Von Eye, 2002), ethnic and national identity (Phinney & Ong, 2007, adapted). A series of path analyses revealed more complex relationships among the above variables than mere causality, as follows: The relationship between ethnic and national identity was characterized by longitudinal stability, with no substantial covariance or prediction between the two constructs. A sequential reciprocity effect was found in the relationship between ethnic and national acculturation, i.e., T1 ethnic involvement negatively predicted T2 national involvement which, in turn, negatively predicted T3 ethnic involvement. In what concerns the relationship between acculturation orientations and cultural identity, consistent causal effects of ethnic involvement on ethnic identification were found across T1-T2 and T2-T3, while a reciprocal pattern was evident in the relationship between national involvement and national identification (they mutually predicted each other across T1-T2 and T2-T3). The theoretical and practical (policy) implications of these findings are discussed in the light of salient contextual factors, mainly deriving from the multifaceted (economic and refugee) ongoing crisis in Greece.

# Acknowledgment

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**European Union**  
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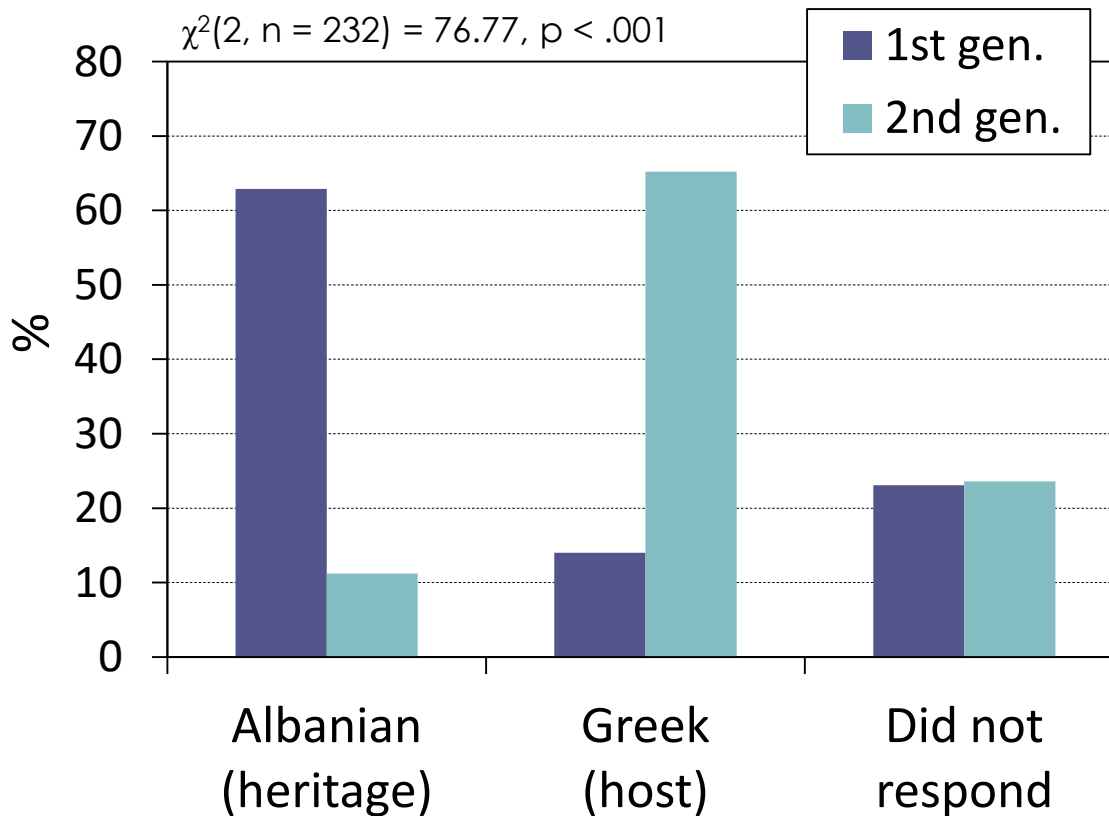


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## Setting the scene: Ethnic self-identification as a function of generation status of immigrant youth



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

# Interpretation/Exploitation of an empirical finding

- What is the meaning (and possible use) for the host national identity shift of immigrant youth?
  - A product of the acculturation process, probably indicating assimilation tendencies in the Greek society...
  - ...or an argument to deny naturalization of second generation immigrants: *“Why should we entitle them citizenship if some of them do not feel Greek?”*
- Beyond its underlying prejudice, the second interpretation views social and political participation as a consequence –rather than an antecedent– of ethnic identity formation.
  - So, what is the causal path between ethnic identity and cultural involvement of immigrant youth?

# Pathways to ethnic identity of immigrant youth

- **Developmental.** Forming a clear sense of identity in adolescence is related to long-term personal and social adaptation (Masten & Motti-Stefanidi, 2008).
  - **Social-psychological.** Cultural identity involves processes such as self-categorization, engagement, ingroup attitudes, ethnic values, and salience of group membership (Ashmore et al., 2004).
  - **Acculturation.** Bicultural or integrated identity combines ethnic and national components (Phinney et al., 2001). This is achieved by maintaining cultural heritage while adopting the values and norms of the host culture (Berry et al., 2006).
- ☞ The above pathways are hard to disentangle.

# Cultural identity and acculturation

- Although used together in several projects, the dynamic interplay of identity with acculturation has rarely been directly explored. Some confusion even arises when the two concepts are used interchangeably.
  - A significant relation of ethnic identity with ethnic orientation, on one hand, and of national identity with national orientation, on the other, has been reported (Dimitrova et al., 2013).
  - Ethnic and national components were combined in bicultural developmental profiles (Matsunaga et al., 2010).
  - However, ethnic identity and acculturation may be related to differential outcomes, which attests to their conceptual distinction.

# The present study: Research questions

- How do acculturation and cultural identity of immigrant youth develop over time?
  - Are ethnic and national components compatible, as suggested in the bicultural/integration models of acculturation, or are they mutually exclusive?
- What is the longitudinal interplay of acculturation with identity? Do causal effects exist and, if so, in which direction?
  - From cultural involvement to identity? (*Developmental*)
  - From identity to cultural involvement? (*Social Psychological*)
  - Different paths for ethnic and national orientation? (*Acculturation*)



## Participants

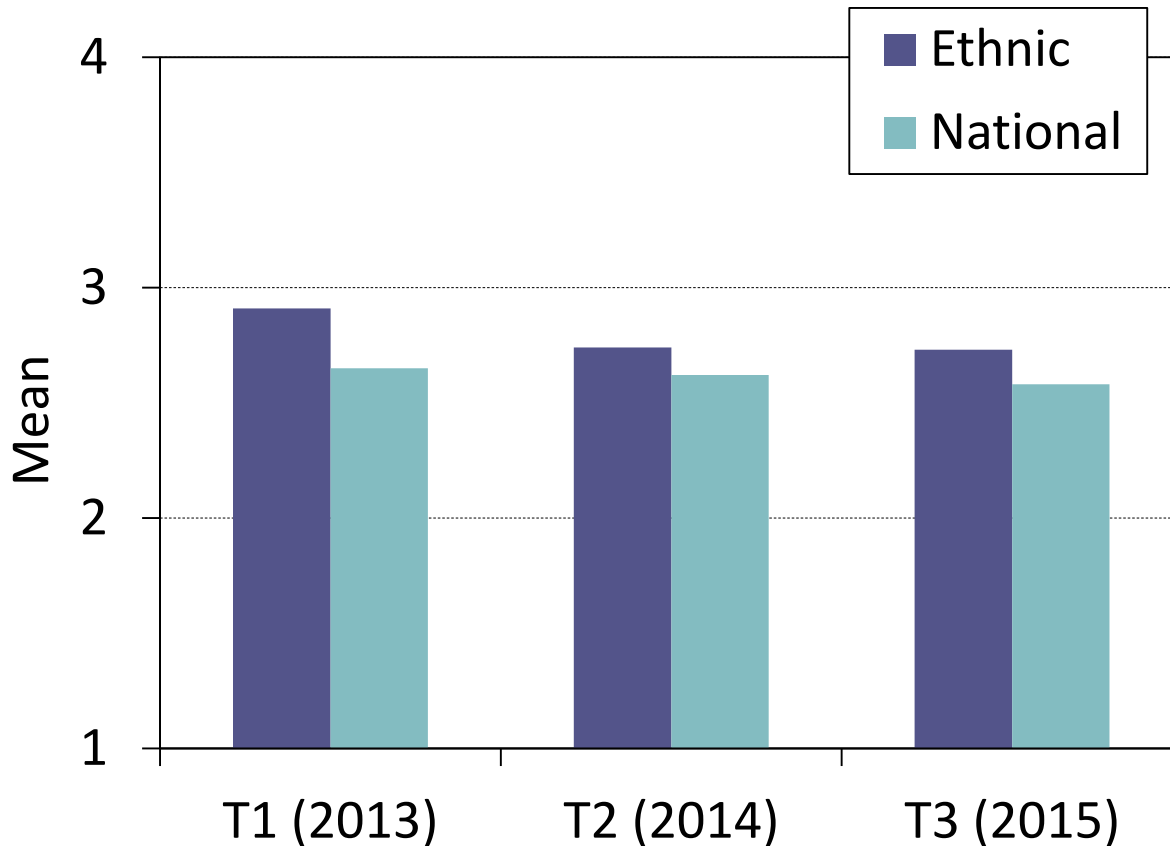
		<i>f</i>	%
Country of origin	Albania	402	50.3
	Former Soviet Union	159	19.9
	Other	238	29.8
Generation status	First generation	178	22.3
	Second generation	621	77.7
Sex	Boys	428	53.6
	Girls	371	46.4
<b>Total</b>	<b><i>N</i></b>	<b>799</b>	
	Mean age at T1 ( <i>SD</i> )		12.78 (.75)

- 3 waves of data collection: 2013 (T1), 2014 (T2), and 2015 (T3)

# Measures

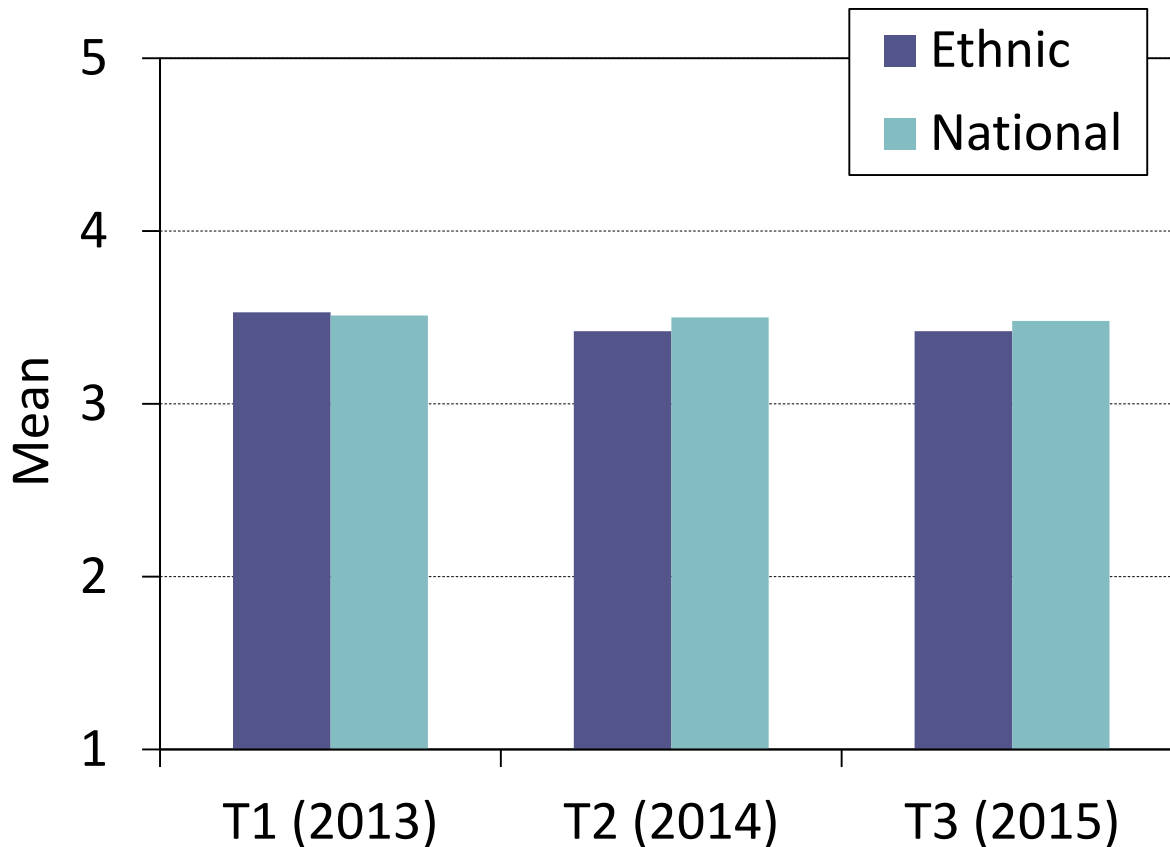
- **Acculturation Scale** (Nguyen & Von Eye, 2002; adapted)
  - ☞ Ethnic acculturation (11 items, mean  $\alpha = .89$ )
  - ☞ National acculturation (11 items, mean  $\alpha = .88$ )
    - e.g., *“Most of my close friends are from [my country of origin / Greece]”*
    - “I’d like to follow the lifestyle of [my country of origin / Greece]”*
- **Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure** (Phinney & Ong, 2007)
  - ☞ Ethnic identification (6 items, mean  $\alpha = .88$ )
  - ☞ National identification (6 items, mean  $\alpha = .85$ ; adapted)
    - e.g., *“I have a strong sense of belonging to [my own ethnic group / the Greek culture]”*
    - “ I have often talked to other people in order to learn more about [my ethnic group / the Greek culture]”*

# Cultural identification of immigrant youth



Ethnic identification declines significantly from T1 to T2, while national identification remains more or less stable across time. Overall, ethnic identification is higher than national identification within time points.

# Acculturation orientations of immigrant youth



Ethnic acculturation shows a small but significant decrease from T1 to T2, while national acculturation remains unchanged across time. National acculturation slightly higher than ethnic acculturation within T2 and T3.

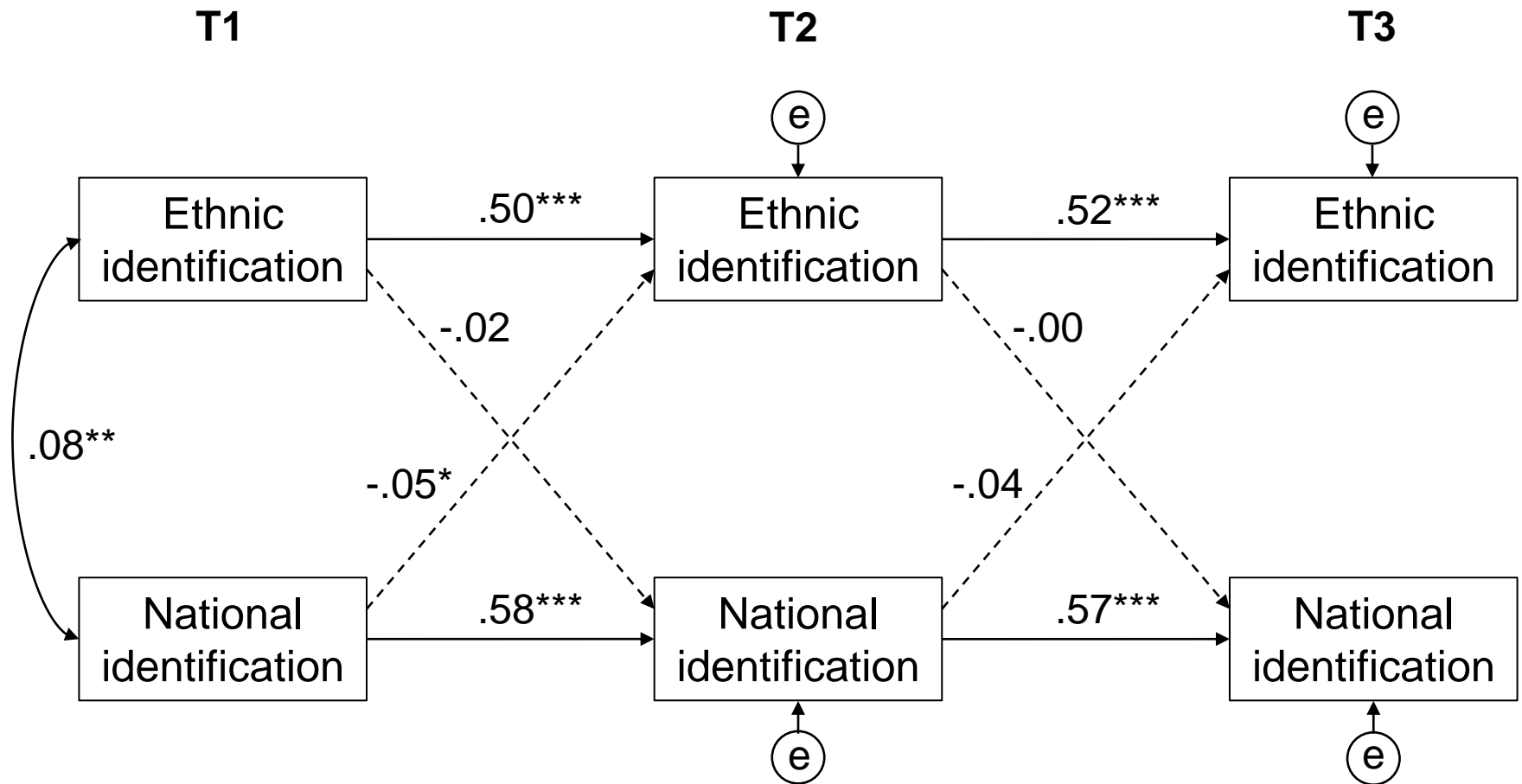
## Between group differences

- ✓ Second generation significantly higher than first generation in national identification ( $p < .001$ ) and in national acculturation ( $p < .001$ ).
- ✓ Boys significantly higher than girls in ethnic identification ( $p = .003$ ) and in ethnic acculturation ( $p = .002$ ).
- ✓ Girls significantly higher than boys in national acculturation ( $p < .001$ ).
- ☞ Effect sizes higher for immigrant generation ( $\eta^2 = .03-.06$ ) than for gender ( $\eta^2 = .01-.02$ ).

# Longitudinal associations of cultural identification and acculturation orientations: Alternative models

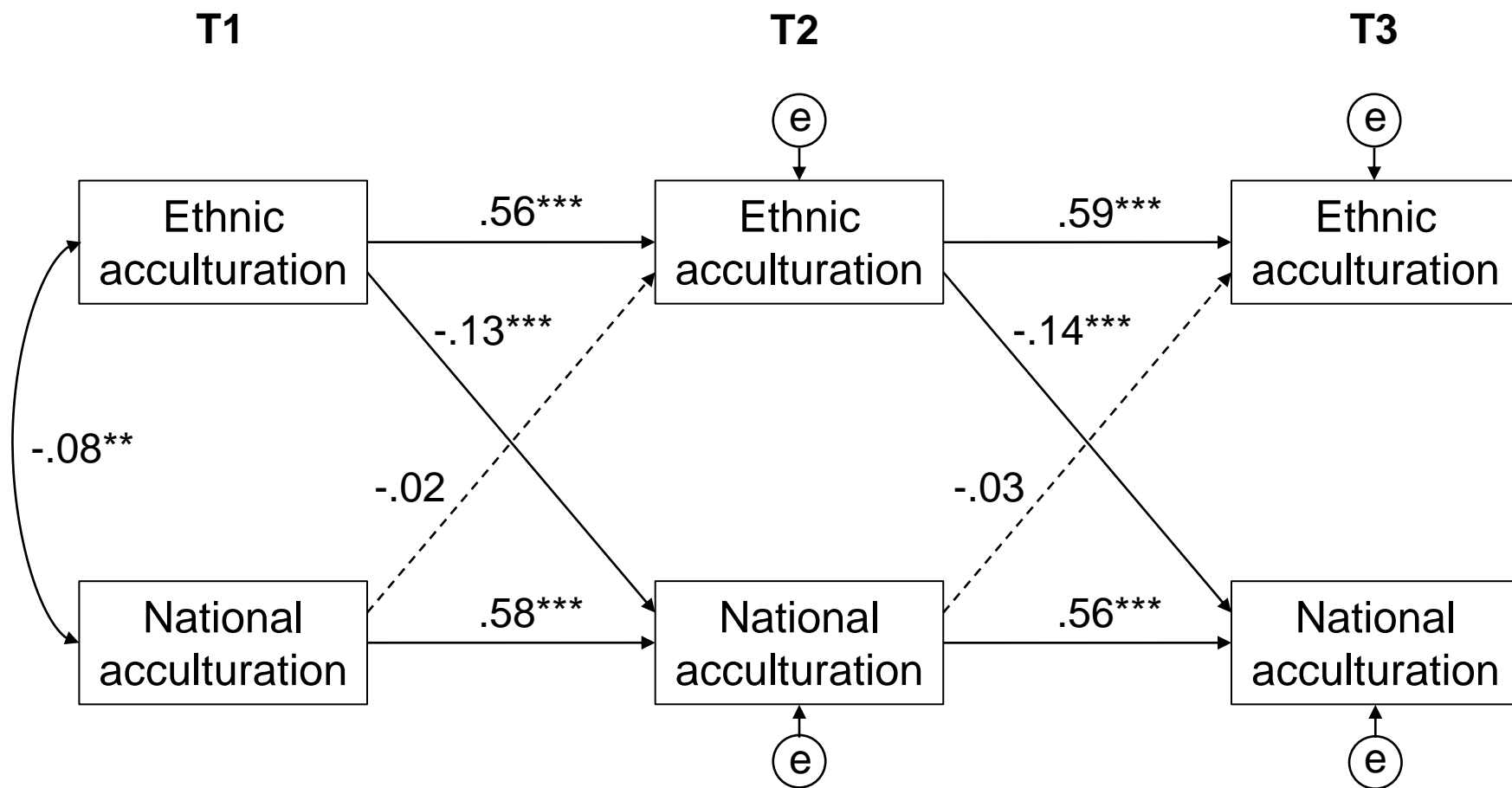
- ✓ **Stability.** Horizontal prediction across time points  
T1 VAR → T2 VAR
- ✓ **Causality.** Vertical prediction across time points  
T1 IV → T2 DV
- ✓ **Reversed causality.** Vertical prediction, reversed direction across time points T1 DV → T2 IV
- ✓ **Reciprocity.** Vertical prediction, changing direction across time points T1 IV → T2 DV, T1 DV → T2 IV

# Longitudinal association of cultural identification of immigrant youth (stability model)



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

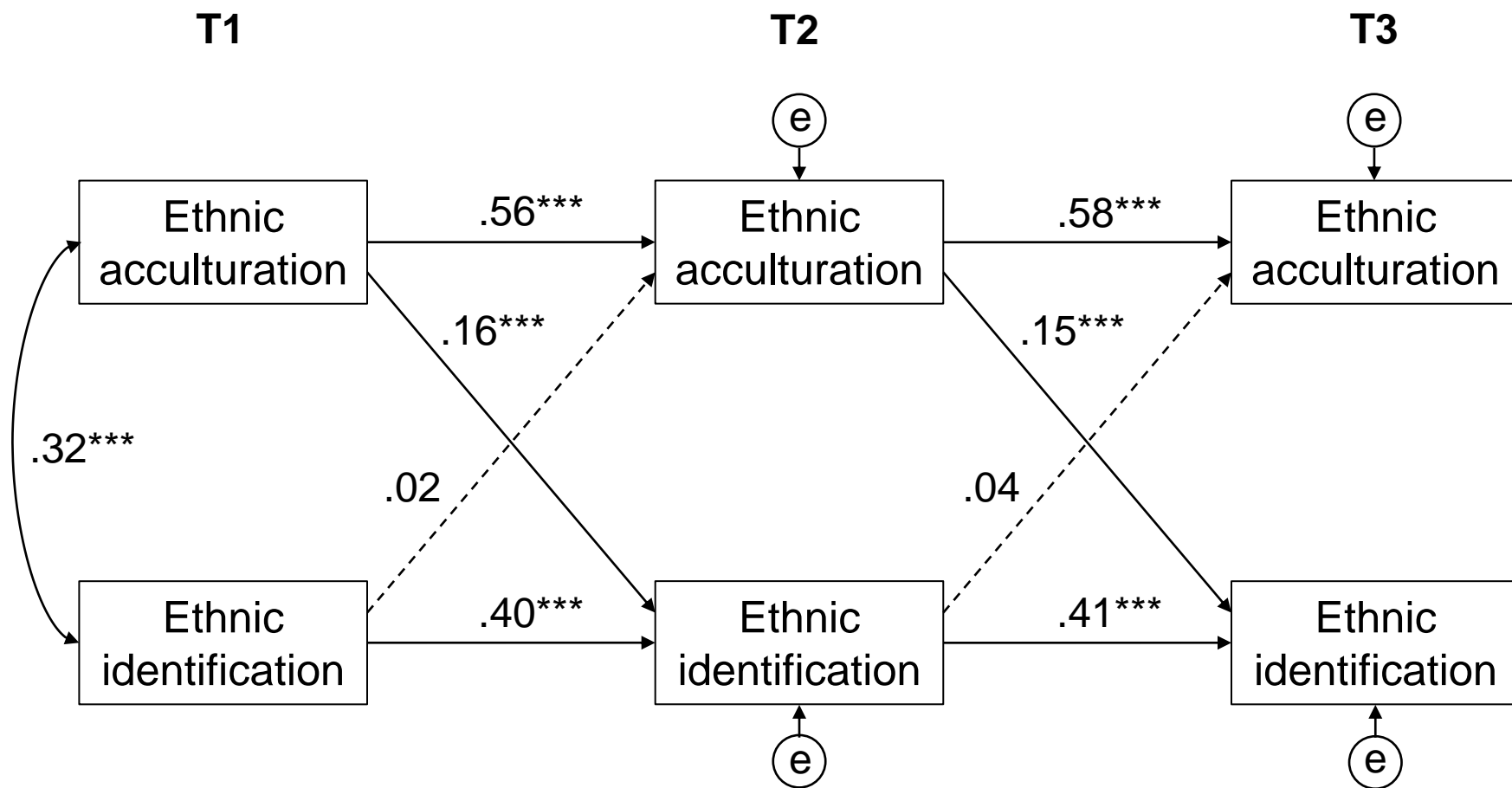
# Longitudinal association of acculturation orientations of immigrant youth (causality model)



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

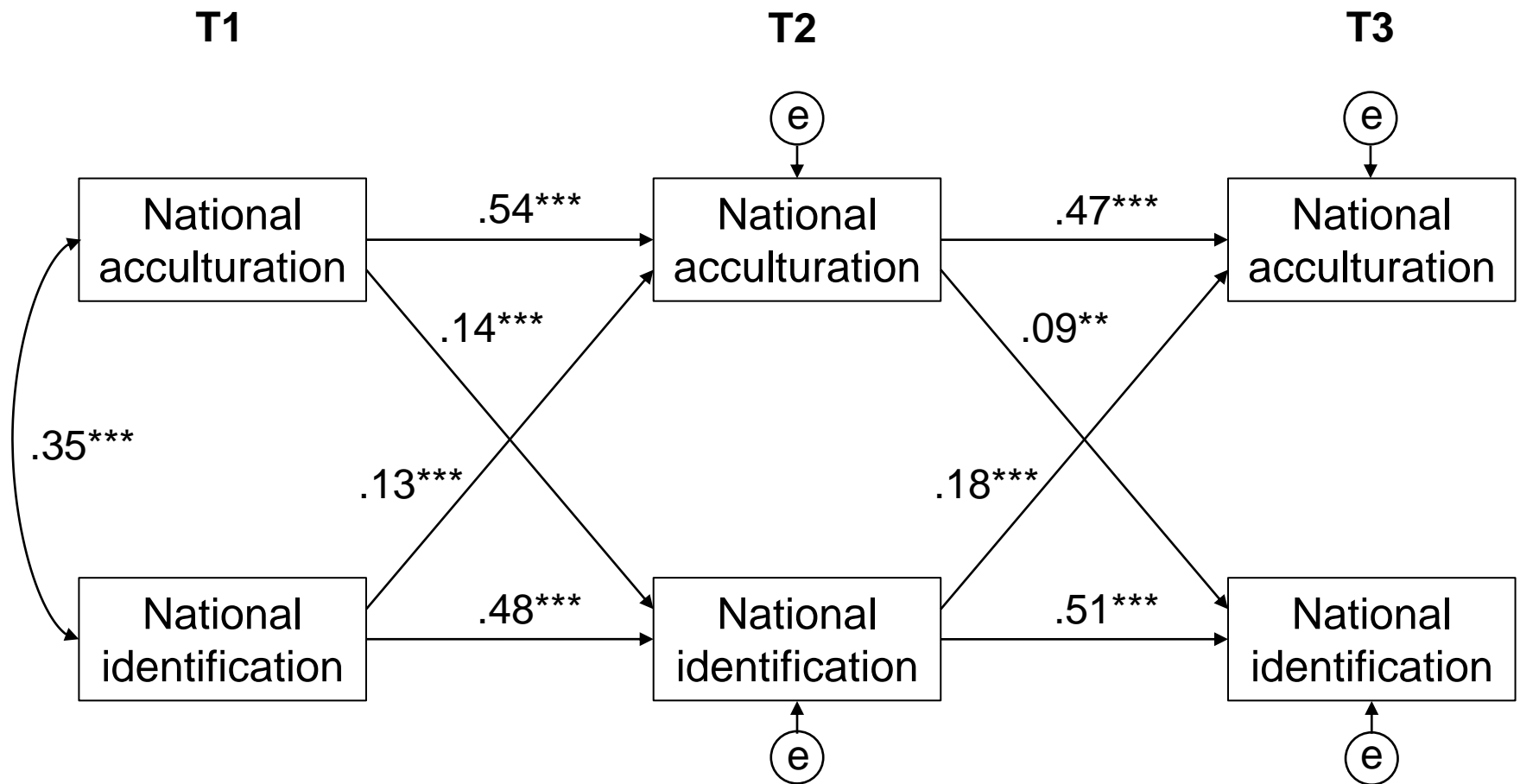


# Longitudinal association of ethnic components of immigrant youth (causality model)



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

# Longitudinal association of national components of immigrant youth (reciprocity model)



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

# Longitudinal associations of cultural identification and acculturation orientations: Summary

- ✓ Ethnic identification and national identification develop independently over time.
- ✓ Ethnic acculturation negatively predicts national acculturation across time points.
- ✓ In addition, ethnic acculturation positively predicts ethnic identification across time points.
- ✓ National acculturation and national identification are mutually predicted longitudinally.

# Conclusions

- Multiple cultural identifications are not mutually exclusive; bicultural identity formation is a legitimate possibility in the course of identity development (Berry et al., 2006).
- Asymmetrical emphasis on ethnic involvement may lead in separation/segregation (Berry, 2005), as it strengthens ethnic identification and discourages host national relations.
- National identity building and participation are interdependent processes (Phinney et al., 2001). Therefore, naturalization of immigrant youth is not a trophy to be awarded, but rather a tool to promote active citizenship and social inclusion.

# Conclusions

- Ethnic and national components of cultural identity are differentially related to acculturation:
  - ✓ Engagement with one's ethnic group promotes ethnic identity formation, probably because it takes place at early stages of development through family socialization (Kwak, 2003).
  - ✓ Positive interactions and involvement of immigrant youth with their national peers promote –and are promoted by– a sense of belonging to the host culture.
  - ✓ Therefore, accommodation of diversity from the majority nationals and mutual acceptance are important (Pavlopoulos & Motti-Stefanidi, 2015).

# Conclusions

- Ethnic and national orientation of immigrant youth evolve towards a balance across time, which suggests an integration strategy in spite of assimilationist attitudes and policies in the Greek school context (Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2008).
- Gender differences (boys more ethnic oriented than girls) not to be underestimated, as they may reflect socialization practices (e.g., more competitive contact, fewer rewards for boys) that undermine intercultural relations.
- School is an important context and for positive developmental and acculturation outcomes. Thus, conditions for optimal contact (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006) should be taken into serious consideration in the school curricula.



*Thank you for your attention!*

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