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Ethnic-racial identity in Europe: Adapting the identity project intervention in five countries

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ABSTRACT

A global challenge for developmental psychology is to better understand how young people around the world make sense of their identities growing up in pluralistic societies. The study of ethnic-racial identity provides an important lens for this process. This paper describes how five European countries (Germany, Greece, Italy, Norway, and Sweden) adapted the *Identity Project*, an 8-week school-based intervention originally developed in the United States to promote adolescents' ethnic-racial identity exploration and resolution. Across the five countries, deep structure adaptations included revised or added content regarding key terminology used, a focus on migration and foreignness rather than 'race,' and discussions regarding national and regional identities, in addition to ethnic-racial identities, and how they may relate to one another. The process and content of adaptation we describe addresses two fundamental issues relevant to a globalized developmental psychology: 1) contributing to theoretical advances on key aspects of development by taking sociohistorical context seriously, and 2) moving between etic and emic perspectives to arrive at psychological constructs that can be appropriately studied across diverse cultural contexts.

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A global challenge for developmental psychology is to better understand how young people make sense of their identities growing up

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in pluralistic societies. The study of ethnic-racial identity provides an important lens for this process. Ethnic-racial identity refers to overlapping ethnic and racialized aspects of how youth think and feel about being a member of their ethnic-racial groups (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014). Although psychological studies of ethnic-racial and related identities (e.g., cultural, religious) in Europe have focused predominantly on youth of immigrant descent (Verkuyten et al., 2019), the concepts are relevant for all youth, and there is a pressing need for a deeper understanding of identity dynamics among youth in multicultural Europe (Erentaitė et al., 2018).

In this paper, we describe five European adaptations of the *Identity Project*, an 8-week school-based intervention developed in the United States to promote ethnic-racial identity exploration and resolution among adolescents (Umaña-Taylor & Douglass, 2017). Our aim is to synthesize the five separate cultural adaptations to address two fundamental issues: 1) contributing to theoretical advances on key aspects of development by taking sociohistorical context seriously (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2018), and 2) doing so by moving between etic (outside culture) and emic (within culture) perspectives to arrive at psychological constructs that can be appropriately studied across diverse cultural contexts (Harkness et al., 2006). Because identity development is so rooted in a particular time and place (Erikson, 1968), adopting both etic and emic perspectives is a necessary part of a thorough cultural adaptation.

We begin with a description of the development of the *Identity Project*, then briefly describe the sociohistorical contexts of each country (*where* the project was adapted) before discussing *who* did the adaptation, *how* the project was adapted, and *what* was adapted. The paper ends with a critical discussion on the study of ethnic-racial identity across countries, which vary in the histories and understandings of ethnicity-race, culture, and migration. This synthesis is an attempt to push the study of ethnic-racial identity further by raising questions on how we define and discuss ethnicity and race-related issues of identity across national contexts. By documenting these cultural adaptations, we provide theoretical and practical implications for how evidence-based interventions developed in one context have potential to be useful and effective in others (Beelmann et al., 2018).

The *Identity Project*: An ethnic-racial identity intervention

Acknowledging that researchers' lived experiences inform theoretical and empirical work (Nzinga et al., 2018; Roberts et al., 2020; Syed et al., 2018), a first-person account from the lead developer of the original intervention, Adriana Umaña-Taylor, provides important context:

As a Latina, growing up in a Spanish-speaking household but living in an English-dominant society, and being born in the US but raised by immigrant parents, I have only known the experience of being a member of an ethnic-racial minoritized group. Throughout childhood, I was aware that my Colombian ethnicity led to my family eating "different" food, celebrating holidays "differently," and having "different" belief systems or values relative to people from other ethnicities. As an adolescent, these facts about my life (and my identity) were salient markers of how I was "different," based on what I was being socialized to see as a "mainstream norm" by the media, my role models in school (e.g., teachers), and our country's leaders. But this difference was about more than just ethnicity. I noticed patterns: I was looked down upon at school by some teachers and administrators and this was common for other Latinx students who looked like me (and were not necessarily Colombian). When shopping with my mother, I noticed that salesclerks were sometimes rude and condescending to us (and to others who looked like us or looked African American or Asian American) but were helpful and friendly to other shoppers who looked like a supposed mainstream norm. I repeatedly heard that my English was "so good," reminding me that the expectation for someone who looked like me was that my English would be bad. These experiences communicated many messages: I was considered by others to be a part of a group that was different from the mainstream norm; my group membership was determined by how I looked; this group was not viewed favorably; and these attitudes affected how I would be treated. As an academic, I would later learn that this is what it meant to be racially othered and that these experiences that I believed made me so different, were in fact common for youth who were members of minoritized groups.

These personal experiences motivated the decades of generative research that resulted in the *Identity Project*. The *Identity Project* targets ethnic-racial identity exploration and resolution and was developed based on existing theory, prior research, and in collaboration with adolescents (Umaña-Taylor & Douglass, 2017; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2018a, 2018b). The intervention is grounded in developmental theory (Erikson, 1968), which suggests that achieving a clearer sense of one's identity (i.e., resolution) through an active process of self-examination (i.e., exploration) provides individuals with a greater sense of self-assurance and inner strength, and other psychosocial benefits that ultimately promote adjustment. These ideas were extended to the domain of *ethnic-racial* identity, supported largely by social identity theories (Spears, 2011), highlighting

that a social identity becomes salient when individuals are distinguished from one another based on that social group membership and when the distribution of resources and power varies as a function of that particular social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

Drawing from Erikson's (1968) theory of psychosocial development, Marcia's (1980) operationalization of identity processes, and principles from social identity theories (e.g., Tajfel & Turner, 1986), Phinney and Sellers focused on ethnic identity and racial identity in the US (Phinney, 1989; Sellers et al., 1998). These seminal works led to research showing that youth increasingly explore and resolve issues related to their ethnic-racial group membership from early to late adolescence (e.g., French et al., 2006). Importantly, youth with higher levels of exploration and a greater sense of clarity regarding their ethnic-racial identity tended to demonstrate more positive adjustment (Rivas-Drake et al., 2014; Umaña-Taylor, 2018). This collection of evidence was foundational to the *Identity Project's* theory of change and enabled a move towards intervention focused on a new and compelling question: *Could we intervene in adolescents' ethnic-racial identity development and, if successful, are there downstream impacts on their adjustment?* Creating this intervention, then, was a way to promote positive youth development by stimulating a universal developmental process that may be particularly beneficial for youth from minoritized and marginalized backgrounds (Umaña-Taylor & Douglass, 2017).

The development and original efficacy testing of the *Identity Project* was conducted in the US with an ethnic-racially diverse sample of adolescents via a randomized controlled trial with an attention control group (Umaña-Taylor, 2018). Consistent with the intervention's theory of change, the *Identity Project* stimulated increases in adolescents' ethnic-racial identity exploration at the 12-week post-test, leading to higher ethnic-racial identity resolution at the 18-week post-test (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2018b), and ultimately predicted adolescents' higher global identity cohesion, higher self-esteem, higher grades, and lower depressive symptoms more than a year later (67-week post-test; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2018a).

The *Identity Project* was designed as a *universal* programme relevant to all youth in the US, given the country's extensive history of immigration, racism, and ethnic-racial tensions (Umaña-Taylor & Douglass, 2017). However, the racialization of minoritized groups (e.g., based on immigrant descent, religion), and increased salience of social identities based

on such racialization, is a common experience across many countries, which is what led scholars from five European countries to see immediate relevance to their contexts. But because identity is very much rooted in sociohistorical context, the *Identity Project* adaptation in Europe required a rethinking of core concepts to ensure that the programme content and method of delivery were appropriate for the target population in each country.

Identity Project adaptations in five European countries

Frameworks for adaptation

All research teams drew from two frameworks for the cultural adaptation of evidence-based interventions. They followed a sequence of four steps outlined by Barrera and Castro (2006): (1) information gathering, (2) preliminary adaptation design, (3) preliminary adaptation test, and (4) adaptation refinement. At the same time, they considered four issues highlighted by Knight et al. (2009): (1) considering cultural context and using it to inform all aspects of adaptation, (2) collaborating with the community, (3) translating intervention and materials in participants' language, and (4) determining where to administer the intervention. Based on these processes, *surface structure* and *deep structure* adaptations (Resnicow et al., 2000) were made. Surface structure adaptations do not change the programme content but modify, for example, delivery of the programme in terms of who, how, and where it is being implemented. Deep structure adaptations do change the content of the programme as it considers ways in which the specific historical and social contexts and their 'core values, beliefs, norms, and other significant aspects of worldviews and lifestyles' (Knight et al., 2009, pg. 172) contribute to the target populations' lived experiences and behaviours. The etic approach of adapting the original U.S. intervention to each country was therefore complemented by emic approaches to identify areas for deep structure adaptations when surface structure adaptations would not suffice. Both types of adaptations are important for the reception, feasibility, and impact of the programme (Resnicow et al., 2000). See [Table 1](#) for a summary of the adaptations across the five countries.

Table 1. Adaptations of the *Identity Project* intervention in five European countries.

Region	Germany		Greece		Italy		Norway		Sweden	
	Berlin, Halle Heritage cultural identity (Berlin), cultural identity (Halle)	Athens Cultural-ethnic identity	Padova Cultural identity	Oslo Ethnic-cultural identity	Gothenburg Ethnic identity					
Ethnicity and race discussions	Discussion of racism and racialization of categories like immigrant descent, no discussion of 'race' or 'ethnicity'	No discussion of 'ethnicity' or 'race'	Included explanation to students of how the term 'race' is socially constructed and does not have a biological foundation	Included a paragraph explaining why 'race' is not used. The students are encouraged to reflect upon and discuss how they experience race in Norwegian context. Discussion of 'ethnicity'	Included discussions of how the concept 'race' has been used in the Swedish context to highlight and validate both historic and current experiences of discrimination, racism of racialization, racism included as a term.					
Content added specific to country	Discussion of Germany as a migration-diverse country, national identity and separation from 'ethnic' identity, migration status, regional identities (incl. East Germans as politically minoritized group), polycultural perspective on cultural identity	In progress	Discussion of migration status, 'foreigner', regional identities, Italian law concerning acquisition of citizenship	Information about various historical and more recent ethnic-cultural groups in Norway	Discussion of Sweden as a migration-diverse country, 'immigrant / Swedish' dichotomy, regional identities.					

(Continued)

Table 1. (Continued).

	Germany	Greece	Italy	Norway	Sweden
Examples of country-specific material	<p>Germania videos immigrant descent musicians and artists on being of multiple heritages; reinforcing diversity in who is "German" e.g., rapper "Musa": https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H0eMIX4igY&t=1254s = KNVAIgf-Bq0</p> <p>Syrian and German refugee video to emphasize commonalities across groups that seemly differ: https://www.funk.net/channel/d_eutschland3000-1570/flucht-1945-und-heute-2-generationen-1-schicksal-1229440</p> <p>Personal stories of discrimination experiences by (family) members of the research team</p>	<p>Video of the Onassis Foundation: "8 Young People Discuss: Cultural Identity and the Concept of Belonging": https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H0eMIX4igY&t=1254s</p>	<p>Video of genetic studies explaining that humans originate from the same African population (session 2): "Sapiens – only one planet" https://www.raiplay.it/video/20_19/03/II-test-delle-raze-23032019-a67e9315-2e07-4da8-8e24-5bc6a9295f27.html</p> <p>Video made by the research team showing interviews with young adults of immigrant descent in Italy and Italians living abroad who talk about their cultural identity as a journey (session 6)</p>	<p>To deepen the discussions about stereotypes, obtained rights from the Norwegian Public Broadcast to use a video from a series "Don't ask about it" in which the audience send in questions they'd like to ask different minority groups. The episode used shows Somali immigrants responding to the questions that have been posed. Video made by the research team with immigrant background young adults talking about their ethnic identity journey.</p>	<p>Video made by the research team showing interviews with young adults of immigrant and non-immigrant descent in Sweden who talk about their ethnic identity as a journey.</p>
Grade of students	7th	8th	10th	11th (1. Grade in upper secondary school)	10th
Adaptation team	Minoritized and majority researchers and research assistants from Germany and the US (Berlin), and Austria (Halle)	Minoritized and majority researchers and research assistants	Researchers and research assistants from different cultural backgrounds	Research team in collaboration with minority counsellors, both with varying ethnic-cultural backgrounds	Minoritized and majority researchers and research assistant

(Continued)



Table 1. (Continued).

	Germany	Greece	Italy	Norway	Sweden
Methods and strategies for adaptation	Discussions with minoritized and majority German pre-service teachers, followed recommended practices for cultural adaptations of evidence-based interventions (e.g., Barrera & Castro, 2006), focus groups with teachers and youth after first cohort, consultation with Umaña-Taylor	Consultation with Umaña-Taylor and researchers adapting the <i>Identity Project</i> in other European countries	Focus group discussions with linguistic-cultural mediators, individual interviews with young adult immigrants in Italy and with Italian citizens living abroad, followed recommended practices for cultural adaptation of evidence-based interventions (e.g., Barrera & Castro, 2006), consultation with Umaña-Taylor and researchers adapting the <i>Identity Project</i> in other European countries. To accommodate COVID-19 related restrictions the intervention was delivered online.	Focus group with adolescents, consultation with Umaña-Taylor and researchers adapting the <i>Identity Project</i> in other European countries. Discussions with teachers, minority counsellors and members of the advisory group comprising governmental institutions, voluntary organizations and multi-cultural school personnel	Focus groups with adolescents and pre-service teachers to discuss terminology and content of sessions, analysed Swedish authorities' usage of the terms, consultation with Umaña-Taylor and researchers adapting the <i>Identity Project</i> in other European countries
Facilitators of the <i>Identity Project</i> per classroom	One minoritized (Halle; refugee background teacher) and one majority pre-service teacher or researcher (one male, one female)	PhD candidate, a clinical psychologist and a psychotherapist, with experience in classroom interventions. Each facilitator is supported during the intervention by an assistant psychologist.	Two facilitators (one PhD candidate and several Master-level Psychology students)	One high school teacher and one minority counsellor working together during sessions.	Two minoritized researchers/research assistant or one minoritized and one majority researcher/research assistant

(Continued)

Table 1. (Continued).

	Germany	Greece	Italy	Norway	Sweden
Length of time to adapt	7 months meeting weekly, followed by feedback from students and teachers at the end of the first cohort, revised for subsequent cohorts (Berlin); about four months weekly meetings for second German adaptation (Halle)	1 year weekly online meetings during the pandemic	6 months meeting weekly, followed by pilot study (pre- and post-test), focus group discussions with students and teachers, and subsequent revision of adaptation prior to starting main intervention	One year including COVID related postponements to adapt the manual, followed by pilot- study (also interrupted because of COVID) with pre- and post-tests, and interviews with students and facilitators.	6 months work on focus group studies to get input on original manual, followed by 3 months of weekly meetings and then 3 months of several meetings per week
Key lessons learned in adaptation process	It is necessary to include minoritized researchers in adaptation, adolescents may be more willing to discuss topics that seem taboo to adult researchers, feedback from adolescents, teachers, and moderators are extremely helpful.	<i>Identity Project</i> core constructs are bound to ideology. It was important to acknowledge the different worldviews of the members of the research team and to take into account the school and societal characteristics.	Must take into account the characteristics of the local school context and national educational policies.	It is of great value to gather information from a variety of stakeholders, not only students and teachers, but also other personnel experienced with education in multicultural schools and bureaucrats in central positions.	To guide the adaptation process and balance many perspectives on diversity, a central theme to consider is what is uncomfortable or inappropriate. When exploring and defining what is uncomfortable, we asked, for whom? And if there is discomfort for some, does this mean that it is inappropriate?

(Continued)



Table 1. (Continued).

	Germany	Greece	Italy	Norway	Sweden
Measures for outcome/evaluation and possible moderators (labelled with 'M'), for all students unless otherwise indicated	Heritage cultural and national identity exploration and resolution. Religious identity exploration and resolution. Global identity resolution. Self-esteem. Depressive symptoms. Intrinsic learning motivation. Academic self-concept. Academic engagement.	Cultural-ethnic and national identity exploration and resolution. Global identity resolution. Self-esteem. Depressive symptoms. Group attitudes. Peer acceptance and rejection. Perceived discrimination (only immigrant adolescents).	Cultural identity exploration and resolution. Other group orientation. Global identity cohesion. Self-esteem. Depressive symptoms. Academic engagement. Classroom cultural diversity climate. Environmental sensitivity (M).	Heritage and majority ethnic-cultural identity affirmation and resolution. Ethnic identity exploration and resolution. Ethnic identity crisis. Global identity resolution. Centrality/private regard/public regard. Perceived discrimination. Classroom cultural diversity climate.	Ethnic identity exploration and resolution. Global identity resolution. Centrality/private regard/public regard. Everyday discrimination. Classroom cultural diversity climate. Identity distress. Self-esteem. Satisfaction with life.
	Other-group attitudes. Classroom cultural diversity climate (M). Autonomy and relatedness support by teachers (M). National identity flexibility. National identity content. Critical consciousness.	Bicultural identity integration (only immigrant adolescents).	Familial ethnic socialization (M). Prosocial behavior towards friends. Discrimination*. *only for pilot study	Self-esteem. Satisfaction with life. Depressive symptoms. Academic engagement. Classmate and teacher social support. Other-group attitudes. Familial ethnic socialization	Depressive symptoms. Anxiety symptoms. Academic engagement. Global school climate. Experiences of school- and cyberbullying. Other-group attitudes. Acceptance/respect/tolerance of diversity. Big five personality traits (baseline only). (M) Familial ethnic socialization (M)

Where the project was adapted: Sociohistorical contexts

The *Identity Project* was adapted in five European countries – Germany, Greece, Italy, Norway, and Sweden – all Western democracies that, since the 1960s, have increasingly acknowledged their multicultural realities. Yet, they differ in their approaches to this reality. The Multicultural Policy Index (2021), assessing how supportive countries' policies are towards immigrant minorities, national minorities, and indigenous peoples, show great variation. Sweden scores highest (7 on a scale from 0 to 8), followed by Norway (4.5), Germany (3), Greece (2.5), and Italy (1.5).

Germany. In Germany, where the *Identity Project* was first implemented outside the US, about one-fourth of its population is of immigrant descent (defined as having immigrated or having a parent who did not have German citizenship at birth) with proportions varying greatly by city (Federal Statistics Office, 2020). The largest heritage groups are from Turkey, Poland, and Russia. Despite a long history of being a culturally diverse country (Oltmer, 2017), Germany for a long time did not see itself as such (Wegmann, 2014). Now, Germany receives the largest number of refugees in Europe, with most arriving from Syria (Statistica, 2022), further diversifying the population.

The German adaptation was carried out in Berlin (Juang et.al., 2020), with further adaptations in Halle (Saxony-Anhalt), with almost 50% and 13% of school-aged children, respectively, of immigrant descent. Berlin is the capital and largest city in Germany and has been a multicultural city for centuries. In contrast, Halle is a smaller university and former industrial town with a more recent increase in cultural diversity due to incoming refugees starting in 2015. Historically, Berlin and Halle were profoundly shaped by WWII atrocities and reconciliations, as well as the former West/East divide during the Cold War, which shapes the sociopolitical climate in Germany to this day (Canan & Foroutan, 2019). Berlin was divided between West and East Germany, whereas Halle was located in East Germany, a closed, communist dictatorship occupied by Soviet allied troops after WWII that existed until German reunification in 1990. Because of these contrasting contexts, the *Identity Project* was adapted slightly differently, demonstrating within-country variation in understanding ethnic-racial identity.

Greece. Greece used to be the source of immigrants to other countries. This trend reversed in the early 1990s with the collapse of communist regimes in Eastern Europe, leading to many immigrants coming to Greece. This rapidly transformed the country into an immigrant receiving

society and, as a result, challenged its supposed cultural homogeneity (Pavlopoulos & Motti-Stefanidi, 2017). Today, Greece is a major entry and transition country for immigrants to Europe, receiving large numbers of refugees crossing the Mediterranean Sea. This may partly explain resentments against immigrants, reflected in unsupportive multicultural policies, as well as in the popularity and rhetoric of far-right political parties. Currently, more than 10% of the country's population is of immigrant descent (OECD, 2022).

Greece ranks first in terms of immigrants' perceived discrimination in Europe (OECD & European Union, 2015). Not all immigrants, however, experience discrimination to the same degree (Pavlopoulos & Motti-Stefanidi, 2017). A hierarchy of 'Greekness' creates multiple levels of inclusion-exclusion in society (Triandafyllidou, 2000). Immigrants, such as ethnic Greek immigrants of the Diaspora, i.e., Pontian-Greeks from the former Soviet Union who receive full Greek citizenship status and share common ancestry, cultural traditions and religion with non-immigrant Greeks, experience less discrimination than other economic immigrants (e.g., Albanians) and refugees (Triandafyllidou, 2000). Attitudes towards old groups of immigrants in Greece are shifting from rejection to 'tolerance' (Adamczyk, 2016) in light of new immigrant and refugee arrivals that challenge established ingroup-outgroup distinctions.

Italy. Italy is commonly considered an ethnically homogeneous country, yet throughout its history it has experienced extensive and prolonged contact with different peoples and cultures, due to its central geographic position in Southern Europe and the Mediterranean. Italy became a unified state in 1861, when an uprising forced foreign dynasties out of the national territory (Gilbert & Moneta, 2020). Since then, it developed into a prosperous country composed of 20 regions, each with its own traditions, history, and language. However, the southern regions mostly remained excluded from economic progress, leading to massive internal and international migration flows, as well as to a North-South divide that persists today. Moreover, regional differences contributed to the enhanced salience of local dimensions in people's identity, which often coexist with a more general sense of national identity (Inguglia et al., 2009).

To date, Italy is a multicultural society that changed from being a country of emigration into one of immigration starting in the 1970s. Similar to Greece, several historical events, including the fall of Communism in Eastern Europe, the entry of Romania into the European

Union, and the more recent arrival of large numbers of refugees further boosted immigration. Nine percent (5 million) of the total population are legally residing immigrants (ISTAT, 2020). Over 200 different nationalities are represented, with the main nationalities being Romanian, Albanian, Moroccan, Chinese, and Ukrainian. At the societal level, Italy endorses less supportive multicultural policies, mostly reflecting an 'emergency' rather than a structured, long-term, integration-oriented approach, which is also mirrored in the general populations' ambivalent attitudes towards immigrants. Moreover, mass media often perpetuate negative stereotypes and spreads narratives of immigration associated with illegality and crime (Rubaltelli et al., 2020).

Norway. Norway is home to various indigenous and ethnic-cultural minority groups who have experienced collective traumatic assaults, forced relocation, and loss of land under public assimilation policies. After WWII, authorities have gradually changed the policies and practices towards minorities, recognizing that a culturally diverse Norwegian society is valuable. As in Sweden, the Sami have status as indigenous people. Five other groups, including Jews, have status as 'national minorities' in Norway. These groups are entitled to preserving and developing their culture and to maintaining the foundation of their identity, i.e., their religion, language, traditions, and cultural heritage.

Despite the long-term existence of indigenous and national minority groups, Norway was perceived as culturally homogeneous at least until 1970, with the arrival of labour immigrants from Pakistan, Turkey, and Morocco, and refugees from Vietnam, Latin-America, and Sri Lanka. These new immigrants and their descendants are officially referred to as 'other ethnic minorities,' however, they do not have stated rights to maintaining their heritage culture, religion, or language. In educational contexts, the term 'minority-language speakers' are used for students with a native language other than Norwegian or Sami. Immigrants and their descendants constitute 18.5% of the Norwegian population (Statistics Norway, 2022). In Oslo, minority-language speakers of immigrant descent comprise 40% of all school students, with the largest groups from Somalia, Pakistan, Iraq, Poland, and Sri Lanka.

Sweden. Sweden is an ethnically diverse country with 26% of Swedes themselves or their parents being born outside of Sweden (38% under 18 years; Statistics Sweden, 2020a, 2020b). The geographical locations from which people have immigrated have changed throughout history, and currently the most common countries of birth

outside of Sweden are Syria, Iraq, Finland, Poland and Iran. Paradoxically, while the population becomes more ethnically diverse, ethnic segregation seems to be increasing in schools and residential areas (Hedström, 2019).

In Sweden, school policies and documents reflect changing ways of addressing ethnicity (Hällgren et al., 2006). Following WWII, school policies and curriculum centred around 'moral upbringing,' stressing assimilationist goals by fostering a sense of 'belongingness to the nation and to the national heritage.' In the 60s and 70s, during the Cold War, the curriculum shifted to fostering solidarity between people of different cultures, mainly with people in distant places. 'Immigrant children' or 'children of new citizens' were named as a collective group; their roles described as a way of learning about other countries. Discourses about minority groups' sense of ethnic belonging increased in the 1980s and in the 1990s emphasized multiculturalism and the right to one's 'home language' (Hällgren et al., 2006). While the journey from assimilationism to multiculturalism can be traced in the school curriculum, the translation to practice in pre-service teacher training and in schools is less clear. Courses addressing multiculturalism have been scarce, scattered, and often voluntary.

Summary. Taken together, these five countries show commonalities regarding increasing demographic diversity, histories of exclusion and negative treatment of minoritized peoples, and immigration as a key group-based marker in society. The five countries also show differences regarding specific indigenous and migration groups represented, within-country regional variations (e.g., North-South and West-East), and multicultural policies that range in supportiveness. Importantly, the particular sociohistorical contexts are distinct from the U.S. context, therefore, context-specific modifications to the *Identity Project* were necessary to ensure the deeper meanings of constructs were maintained in line with the proposed theory of change.

Who did the adaptation: Adaptation team and researcher reflexivity

Because researchers cannot take off their ontological and epistemological positions when doing research (Marsh & Furlong, 2002), considering the composition of the research teams was important (see Table 1 for a list of

the adaptation teams). Both majority non-immigrant and minoritized immigrant-descent researchers were included in every step, from information gathering to implementation and refinement. All teams also included or consulted with practitioners with expertise on ethnic-racial identity among youth in Europe.

Access to different perspectives and diversity within the research groups was crucial. For example, a central theme in the Swedish team's many discussions was how to balance different perspectives in terms of what is considered uncomfortable or inappropriate to discuss. Important questions asked when deciding what to address in the intervention included, 'If certain topics are uncomfortable, for whom are they uncomfortable?' and 'Does discomfort equal inappropriate to discuss?' Posing these questions, engaging in researcher reflexivity, and continually re-orienting to the overarching goal of the intervention was necessary.

How was the project adapted: The process

In the information gathering stage (Barrera & Castro, 2006) and in considering the specific sociocultural context (Knight et al., 2009), teams reviewed literature regarding ethnic-cultural identity in their respective countries. Similar to U.S. findings (e.g., review by Rivas-Drake et al., 2014), stronger ethnic identities are related to better psychological well-being in Germany (Schachner et al., 2016; Schotte et al., 2018), Greece (Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2008), Norway (Oppedal et al., 2022, 2020), and Sweden (Vedder et al., 2005; Virta et al., 2004). In Italy, immigrant adolescents who engaged in greater ethnic identity exploration and resolution experienced greater acculturative stress (Musso et al., 2017). A review of identity development among ethnic minority youth in Europe concluded that the positive link between ethnic identity and well-being is less consistent compared to U.S. findings and that specificity regarding ethnic group, level of societal marginalization, and multicultural policies need to be considered (Erentaité et al., 2018).

In addition to reviewing the literature, each European *Identity Project* team considered the specific educational context. For instance, the Italian school system adopts a universalist approach involving the absence of early school tracking and the integration of immigrant children into mainstream classes from the beginning of their schooling (MIUR, 2020). This inclusion-based perspective, a long tradition in Italian pedagogy, was

combined with a cultural pluralism view by valuing cultural differences that emerged as unique expressions of students' identities. Thus, materials and activities were adapted to represent the history of immigration in Italy and the ethnic composition of classrooms to ensure that all adolescents felt represented by the curriculum.

In line with recommendations by Knight et al. (2009), including community members was also an important part of the adaptation process. In Norway, the research team worked closely with 'minority counselors' who were experts on migration-related issues. Together, they translated each module, discussed important concepts, and adapted activities to be more culturally relevant. The Norwegian team also obtained feedback on selected content from *Identity Project* facilitators and an advisory board of educational authorities, NGOs and researchers. In Berlin, minoritized pre-service teacher students were recruited for the translation and adaptation of the project, and students and teachers who participated in the intervention attended feedback sessions to further revise the material. In Halle, the project was discussed with a team from the NGO 'Schools without Racism.'

To capture the complexity and scope of ethnicity, culture, and race in the Swedish setting, the Swedish team adopted an emic approach and first conducted focus groups with adolescents and pre-service teachers and analysed Swedish authorities' usage of the terms. The focus groups showed how topics related to ethnic-racial identity were handled in Swedish schools, while also informing the *Identity Project* intervention by discussing its content and activities. Regarding terminology, the focus groups highlighted a great variation of experiences, comfort and willingness to discuss concepts. For instance, some understood 'race' as a non-scientific pseudo-biological term and recommended it be removed completely while others expressed a need to address it in order to problematize beliefs around race. This emic approach provided important information for an appropriate cultural adaptation that considered a range of experiences from both majority and minoritized perspectives.

What was adapted: Surface structure and deep structure adaptations

Surface structure adaptations

While maintaining the goals of the intervention, surface structure adaptations were made, such as revising activities to be country specific. For

example, in Greece, videos from the original intervention for a session on 'identity journeys' were replaced by existing Greek videos, while the teams in Norway, Italy and Sweden created their own videos with young adults of various cultural backgrounds. In Germany, more hands-on activities and scaffolding to explain concepts and guide discussions were included. All teams adapted *who* gave the intervention, ranging from pre-service teachers and researchers to minority counsellors and teachers of refugee background.

Deep structure adaptations

Deep structure adaptations included revised or added content regarding key terminology used, a focus on migration and foreignness rather than 'race,' and discussions regarding national and regional identities in addition to ethnic-racial identities, as well as how they may relate to one another.

Terminology and constructs

A challenge with adapting the *Identity Project* was defining and conceptualizing key terms. All teams agreed that coming to a consensus regarding meaningful, descriptive, and unifying concepts related to cultural diversity and specifically ethnic-racial identity was difficult, and thus created challenges for discussion for both youth and adults. Some of these challenges are related to the specific histories of the five countries.

As a response to the racial and ethnic categorization, stigmatization, and genocide during the Holocaust, German and Italian governments explicitly banned race-based discrimination. The term 'race' was also largely removed from dominant discourse across continental Europe following WWII (Simon, 2017). Adopting ideologies such as 'colorblindness' to not see race (in Germany and Italy) or strongly emphasizing equality of all individuals and groups (in Norway and Sweden) was meant to avoid the reification of racial categorization (Simon, 2017). In other words, actively de-emphasizing racial, ethnic, or cultural group differences was seen as a way to move beyond this harsh history. A Eurobarometer survey (2019), however, shows that 59% of people in Europe believe that discrimination based on ethnic origin or skin colour is still widespread. There is also a recognition that such discrimination is not solely due to interpersonal attitudes, but rather embedded within

a societal system that disadvantages groups based on ethnicity-race and migration status, for instance, in education and employment (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), 2017, 2018). Thus, despite attempts to erase 'race,' racialization as a system of power structuring society remains relevant (Grigolo et al., 2011). With this backdrop, each country chose a different term to capture 'ethnic-racial identity' while simultaneously recognizing the relevance of race and racism for youth experiences and identities.

The Berlin adaptation chose 'heritage culture identity' to emphasize ancestry and family, terms that adolescents could easily understand as 'ethnic' and 'racial' are not part of adolescents' everyday language. The Greece team argued that immigrant status, ethnicity and religion are the key social categories determining who is perceived to belong to the nation and who is not and thus chose 'cultural and ethnic identity.' In Italy, because public discourses about race are considered a taboo, 'cultural identity' was chosen. In Norway, 'ethnic-cultural identity' was used and the Swedish team settled on 'ethnic identity' and adopted a pluralistic approach to encourage students to explore more than one cultural or ethnic background. Notably, despite difficulty with 'race,' both the Norwegian and Swedish teams included a rationale for why 'race' was not used in the intervention and described how the term has been used in the Swedish and Norwegian contexts. Points of discussion included how racialized categorization based on appearance still exists but different terms are used. This is a good example of not avoiding but directly confronting these important terms in context.

More focus on migration and foreignness as more common ways of othering

In Italy and Germany, programmes for 'guest workers' arriving in the 1960s have long since expired, but immigration and citizenship laws made it difficult for the children and grandchildren of immigrants from that era to gain citizenship, thus creating 'perpetual foreigners' across generations (El-Tayeb, 2014; Will, 2019). The term 'foreigner' is also commonly used to describe a person with a national, religious, and linguistic background that differs from the dominant population, and mostly overlaps with the term 'immigrant' in public discourse. Hence, being a 'foreigner' is more stigmatized than the concept of race or ethnicity itself (Levy, 2015), but this could also be because the racialization of who

is considered a foreigner is not openly discussed. Therefore, it was important to de-stigmatize the terms 'immigrant' and 'foreigner' across the intervention curriculum by emphasizing the common experience of migration (both internal and international) and promote valuing all backgrounds, migration or not.

Focus on national and regional identities

In contrast to the original U.S. intervention, discussions of national and regional identities were added to the content of the *Identity Project*. National identity in Europe is often seen as synonymous to ethnic identity, also called 'ethnic nationalism' (Brubaker, 2009). Equating nationality with ethnicity results in national labels that end up being exclusionary as 'Germans', 'Greeks', 'Italians', 'Norwegians', and 'Swedes' are typically reserved for ethnic majority individuals and as a contrast to 'immigrants' or 'foreigners' (Moffitt et al., 2018; Svensson et al., 2018). This shapes the research discourse in Europe where studies focus on 'immigrant' or 'ethnic' adolescents vs. 'native' or 'national' adolescents (Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2021). Subsequently, majority non-immigrant adolescents are not usually included in studies of ethnic identity (Erentaitė et al., 2018), a limitation that reinforces the notion that only minoritized adolescents have 'culture' or 'ethnicity'.

To address the exclusionary implications of ethnic nationalism, some of the teams added content to emphasize a more inclusive national identity. For example, the intervention in Germany highlighted that Germany has a very long history of migration, there is not just one way of looking or sounding German, and that having multiple heritage cultures is not oppositional to feeling and being German or belonging to German society. Further, to avoid essentializing culture, a polycultural view was presented to highlight that no one is truly monocultural as we all draw from a plurality of cultures that are constantly interacting and changing (Morris et al., 2015).

In Halle and Italy, given the high proportion of students of non-immigrant descent and the salience of regional dimensions, discussions of local identities and cultures were added to ensure inclusiveness and relevance of the intervention. In the Halle and Italian adaptations, the word 'heritage' was changed to 'cultural identity' to emphasize that a cultural identity is not only based on one's heritage cultures, but also on national or regional cultures. For instance, in Halle, stereotypes about

'East Germans' were discussed to highlight shared experiences with other minoritized groups and acknowledge the importance of identities based on regional variations.

In sum, the adapted interventions focus on exploring both heritage and national identities, while also highlighting regional and local affiliations specific to each country. Highlighting a multiplicity of identities rarely viewed as connected with ethnic-racial identity in U.S. studies was an emic-driven adaptation across all five European *Identity Project* interventions. Understanding how these multiple identities develop in relation to one another can clarify how they may be developmental assets to foster both in and outside the school context. Notably, the five teams move the study of ethnic identity in Europe forward by including all adolescents (and not just ethnic minority adolescents) in their *Identity Project* studies.

Discussion

The aim of the paper was to describe and synthesize five cultural adaptations of the *Identity Project* in Europe. Doing so draws attention to two fundamental and interrelated issues when pursuing a globalized developmental psychology: 1) the need for theoretical advances grounded in sociohistorical context, and 2) the balance between etic and emic perspectives to achieve this goal. Although the focus was on adapting and implementing the *Identity Project* intervention, this work contributes to theoretically and empirically based knowledge about youth development. Namely, that understanding more deeply how issues of ethnicity-race, culture, migration, and nationality inform how young people explore and gain clarity regarding their complex and multiple identities has important implications for their psychosocial adjustment.

Ethnic-racial identity has been identified as a developmental asset in the US (Neblett et al., 2012), but less so based on limited research in Europe (Erentaitė et al., 2018). This raises questions regarding the concept of ethnic-racial identity, with both theoretical and practical implications. Because ethnic-racial identity development is explicitly tied to a particular sociohistorical context, there are major challenges to understanding how such context-dependent research can be exported across national borders. The deep structure adaptations to this intervention addressed at least three: underlying assumptions, lack of shared meaning of terminology and conceptualizations, and ourselves as researchers. These points

represent broader issues that pertain to any research on ethnicity-race conducted across cultures, and thus are concerns that all developmental researchers must grapple with.

First, it is necessary to critically examine *underlying assumptions* regarding ethnicity-race. In the process of adaptation, an assumption that repeatedly surfaced was the myth that Europe has been culturally and ethnically homogenous until only recently. This myth is perpetuated in part by arguing that traditional societies of immigration (e.g., the US, UK, Australia) were always culturally diverse, whereas cultural diversity is more recent in European societies, mostly due to immigrants arriving since the 1960s. This myth is also perpetuated by the psychology field itself (Moffitt & Rogers, 2022). For instance, the current APA guideline states, 'When writing about people of European ancestry, the terms "White" and "European American" are acceptable.' (American Psychological Association, 2022). Yet, historians of Europe have documented the immense ethnic, cultural, and migration-diversity that has always been part of the region, including in antiquity (Otele, 2021; Pandey, 2020). Through the process of adapting the intervention, the great diversities within each country were thus highlighted, challenging the white, monocultural, monoethnic assumptions that may inadvertently downplay the relevance of ethnicity-race in the European context. Because heterogeneity is the rule rather than exception, recognizing and incorporating this diversity in theorizing, sampling, and measurement is necessary in studies of European adolescent identity.

Second, another major challenge to conducting ethnic-racial research across cultures is the lack of shared *terminology and conceptualizations* around ethnicity and race. All research teams agreed that European countries do not have a clearly articulated framework for ethnic-racial or cultural group identities. This makes it difficult to integrate group-specific research across contexts. As discussed, the term 'race' is generally not used in European society, largely due to the legacy of WWII and associated fears that pseudo-biological conceptualizations of race will be used to perpetuate oppression. Rather, terms such as 'migrant' and 'immigrant' are used, though inconsistently. They could refer to recent immigrants, the children of immigrants, the grandchildren of immigrants, or more generally, anyone who appears to be non-white. Indeed, the primary social-cultural grouping tends to be around 'immigrants,' who are a heterogeneous group, and 'non-immigrants,' who are also heterogeneous, yet are often referred to by the national label. Residents of the

US widely use hyphenated labels, such as Mexican American or Indian American, that invalidate the mutually exclusive dichotomy, but such a practice is not common in Europe. Importantly, this is not only an issue of terminology, but a conceptual issue as well. Each national immigrant group within a European country does not constitute its own 'racial' group; rather, immigrants have been racialized into a very broad, heterogeneous category that contrasts to white populations. This process is closely tied to the myth of European homogeneity, and together constitute essential background for understanding ethnicity-race in Europe. Future research could focus on consistency in terminology and, at the same time, take into consideration that similar labels and terminologies will have different meanings in different communities and countries.

Third, *researchers themselves* can serve as a major challenge to productive research on ethnicity-race across cultures. Researchers are also people living in cultures and are therefore subject to the same biases and assumptions as everyone else. The Swedish team adopted a useful distinction between what is *uncomfortable* vs. what is *inappropriate*. Because of the lack of everyday discussion about ethnicity-race and the experiences of different groups, researchers are understandably uncomfortable bringing such topics into their research for fear of alienating their partners and participants. Being uncomfortable about a topic, however, can be unintentionally reframed as though the topic itself is inappropriate for inclusion in research. Reflecting on these moments of discomfort can help resolve these misframings. Similarly, the German team observed that when the project was presented to other researchers, a common concern was that discussing and highlighting ethnic-cultural variations would provoke more conflict and separation, or that it was too personal to discuss family heritage and ethnic discrimination in school. What was found in practice was that, in general, 'taboo' topics could be discussed because these issues were already embedded in and experienced by youth in their everyday lives. For future research, this observation highlights the need for developmental studies of ethnicity-race in Europe with a qualitative component that allows researchers to hear directly from youth. Doing so may uncover and possibly challenge researchers' own biases and beliefs regarding what is relevant for youth to discuss.

Finally, one potential limitation of the work described here is that we did not start off as a formal multi-site study. It would have been helpful to plan together at the outset, to lay the groundwork for each of our adaptations, implementations, and evaluations simultaneously. Nonetheless, working

somewhat independently perhaps allowed for greater context-specific adaptation, uniquely tailored to each country. Importantly, initial findings in Germany and Italy show the intervention has similar effects found in the US in terms of prompting adolescents to engage in cultural identity exploration in greater depth (Ceccon et al., 2022; Juang et al., 2020). For future research, extending this work to other regions of the world beyond North America and Western Europe, particularly those with histories of being colonized rather than being the colonizers such as in South America and Africa, will be important and necessary for a more globalized understanding of this important aspect of identity.

Conclusion

The adaptation of the *Identity Project* gives a view into how ethnic-racial identity is conceptualized across five European countries. Adopting both emic and etic approaches allows for identifying commonalities and uniquenesses across countries regarding the development and relevance of ethnic-racial identity. Because each country's histories still inform present-day discussions of diversity, it can be challenging to find words and terminologies that adequately articulate distinctions to the fuzzy boundaries of ethnic-racial, family heritage, cultural, religious, and national identities. Discussing issues of ethnicity and race-related constructs with European young people is useful for capturing experiences that may be overlooked when these topics are not addressed. Adapting and implementing the *Identity Project* provides greater clarity on aspects of identity with relevance to youth living in ethnically, racially, culturally, and religiously diverse communities and societies.





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