National and European Identity Formation: A Longitudinal Cross-National Comparison Study

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Abstract

This study examined social identity development on the national and European domain using the three-dimensional identity status model. We took a person-centered approach to identify identity statuses and to study stability and change of identity statuses across one year within two longitudinal samples of young people aged 15 to 26 (M_{T1} = 19.81, SD_{T1} = 3.22) from Germany (n = 1028) and Czech Republic (n = 1342). Latent profile analyses of questionnaire-based data showed evidence for four identity statuses for the national and European domain (i.e., diffusion, moratorium, closure, and achievement). The statuses differed substantially in terms of civic engagement, nationalism, and views towards the EU. Stability of identity statuses was moderate to high across domains and countries with little evidence for systematic transitions over time. Overall, identity patterns were very similar across domains and countries. However, congruence between the national and the European identity domain was substantially lower in Czech Republic than in Germany, suggesting that both identities are more aligned in the latter country.

Keywords: Identity Formation, National Identity, European Identity, Latent Profile Analysis, Latent Transition Analysis

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Identity formation is one of the most important developmental tasks throughout the lifespan. While this task becomes particularly salient in adolescence (Erikson, 1968) it continues to be of great importance through early adulthood (Arnett, 2000). Identity formation involves making commitments in various life domains, after having explored alternative commitments. Next to personal identity domains (e.g., education, work, relational), social identity domains (e.g., ethnic, regional) stem from one's membership in social groups (Tajfel, 1978). One social identity that is relevant for young people is their national identity, their sense of belonging to the nation. On the one hand, national identity is positively associated with political knowledge and voter turnout (Huddy & Khatib, 2007). On the other hand, depending on how national group membership is defined in a country (i.e., based on shared ancestry or citizenship), it can also be positively associated with anti-immigration and anti-minority attitudes (Pehrson, Vignoles, & Brown, 2009). But individuals develop multiple social identities and one social identity that may help to overcome divisions between and stereotypes towards different countries in Europe is a supranational identity – European identity. Supranational identities are positively associated with greater trust and tolerance of immigrants, and ethnic minorities (Keating, 2016; Norris & Inglehart, 2009).

Despite its relevance for intergroup relations, there is little research on how young people develop national or European identities. Previous studies on the development of multiple identities have typically focused on processes of ethnic and national identity development in youth from ethnic/national minorities (e.g., Jugert, Pink, Fleischmann, & Leszczensky, 2020). This study extends previous research by focusing on the development of national and supranational (European) identity among young people in two European countries. The study goes beyond often-reported mere cross-sectional associations between national and European identity (e.g., Jugert, Šerek, & Stollberg, 2019), and captures their

changes over time. Hence, identity is conceptualized in a more realistic way as a dynamic process characterized by both stability and change. Moreover, the study employs a person-oriented approach allowing to grasp individual configurations of the two identities. By employing data from two different countries, we were able, at least to some extent, to differentiate between those patterns of identity development that are country-specific and those that can be found across different national contexts.

Identity Development

While Erikson (1950) described identity development theoretically, Marcia (1966) provided a way to study it empirically with his identity status model. He assumed that two identity dimensions are fundamental to determining identity status – *exploration*, the search for various alternatives concerning values, beliefs, and goals, and *commitment*, the selection of a particular alternative. More recently, this model has been extended to include three dimensions: commitment, in-depth exploration, and reconsideration of commitment (Crocetti, Rubini, & Meeus, 2008; Meeus, van de Schoot, Keijsers, Schwartz, & Branje, 2010). While *commitment* refers to making a firm choice for an identity alternative, *in-depth exploration* refers to exploring one's already chosen identity. *Reconsideration of commitment* refers to considering alternative commitments to the current commitment. The various possible combinations of these identity dimensions determine identity status: *diffusion* (very low commitment, exploration, and reconsideration), *moratorium* (low commitment, moderate exploration, high reconsideration), *closure* (high commitment, low exploration, very low recondiseration), and *achievement* (high commitment, high exploration, very low reconsideration). In addition to these four statuses, already suggested by Marcia (1966), Meeus et al. (2010) suggested a fifth status, *searching moratorium* (high commitment, high exploration, high reconsideration). Even more complex identity models have been suggested that distinguish between different forms of exploration and commitment (e.g., Luyckx,

Goossens, Soenens, & Beyers, 2006) but we follow the more parsimonious three-factor model by Crocetti et al. (2008) here.

Identity status models (Marcia, 1966; Meeus et al., 2010) assume progressive identity development across the life span, starting with diffusion (the least established status) and moving via moratorium, searching moratorium, or closure to achievement (the most established status). However, not all statuses need to be experienced and identity regression (e.g., moving from achievement to moratorium) is also possible. While research supports the developmental order of these identity statuses, it also shows that many adolescents and young adults do not change identity status (Meeus, 2018) and that there are no age-specific effects in the development of identity (Meeus, Iedema, Helsen, & Vollebergh, 1999). Research using the identity status models has mostly concentrated on personal, not on social identity development (Crocetti, Prati, & Rubini, 2018) although occasional applications of this approach in the realm of regional (Schubach, Zimmermann, Noack, & Neyer, 2016) and national identity (Greischel, Noack, & Neyer, 2018) can be found. Another exception is work on ethnic-racial identity development among ethnic minority youth, which has a long tradition in working with the Marcia model (c. Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014).

National and European Identity

Research on the development of national identity has been mostly conducted with children and not with adolescents or young adults (Barret, 2007; Oppenheimer & Barrett, 2011). Among the few studies drawing on adolescent samples, the strength of national identification was either found to decrease after age 12 among Dutch adolescents (Oppenheimer, 2011) or to remain consistently high among Hungarian adolescents (Lam & Katona, 2018). This suggests that there are no uniform age trends but that national identity development depends on socio-historical context.

Work by Barrett (2007) suggests that from age 12 to 15 European identity becomes a relevant identity for adolescents, alongside their national identity, which is typically regarded

as more important. Concerning age group differences, Lam and Katona (2018) found that strength of European identification was lower among late than among early adolescents in Hungary (Lam & Katona, 2018). On a related matter, results from the Eurobarometer showed that adolescents (15 to 19 years) have more positive views about the EU than young adults (20-30 years; European Commission, 2007). Although national and European identification are generally positively associated in adolescents, the actual strength of this association systematically varies across different European countries (Jugert et al., 2019). This finding, again, suggests that the development of identity in this domain is dependent on socio-historical context.

Nevertheless, previous work on national and European identity among youth has its limitations. First, it has typically focused on national identification in terms of positive attachment (e.g., "I feel strong ties to Germany") to the nation (Umaña-Taylor, Kornienko, McDermott, & Motti-Stefanidi, 2020). This matches the commitment dimension of the identity status models but it tells little about the process of developing a particular identity because it does not consider exploration and reconsideration. Next, studies that have used different national identity dimensions (e.g., identity exploration or reconsideration) have examined only a limited age range (early to mid-adolescence), did not use all three dimensions together, and did not determine identity status from these dimensions (Greischel et al., 2018; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2020). In addition, we know of no study that has used the identity status model to examine European identity and there is little work that has examined European identity longitudinally..

The Present Study

The study had four aims. The first aim was to examine national and European identity from an identity status perspective. Thus, we took a person-centred approach to explore the optimal number of identity statuses and to see whether we could replicate the four (Marcia, 1966) or five (Meeus et al., 2010) identity statuses for national and European identity,

respectively. The second aim was to characterize extracted identity statuses on external correlates to validate these solutions. Third, to investigate how national and European identity change, we studied the stability of identity statuses in both domains across time, analysing transitions between statuses over a period of one year. Fourth, to understand whether national and European identity statuses are more or less aligned (e.g., achievement is reached in both domains) we explored the congruence of status configurations across both identity domains.

Because the socio-historic context is important for national and European identity development this study compared findings across two European countries that differ in socio-political discourses about the nation and Europe. While both countries shared an ethnic conception of national identity that is based on a common culture and heritage for a long time, this has changed more recently. Up to the year 2000, citizenship was awarded according to the jus sanguinis principle in Germany, meaning that one had to have German ancestors to become German. But since then, citizenship laws were liberalized and citizenship no longer depends on ethnic German heritage. This fits the perspective of many Germans who reject an ethnic model of national identity due to its resemblance to Germany's Nazi past (Miller-Idriss & Rothenberg, 2012) and findings showing that even heritage-based definitions of national identity are becoming poly-ethnic and less essentialist (Ditlmann & Kopf-Beck, 2019). On the other hand, the European project (i.e., the EU) was born out of the idea to prevent further wars in Europe and Germany has played a large role in it from the beginning. Many people realize that Germany has profited a lot from membership in the EU, the free movement of individuals and goods and thus approval of the EU and Europe is among the highest in Germany (Eurobarometer, 2019).

By contrast, political discourse in Czech Republic is often characterized by euro-sceptic views that pit national interests against the interests of the European Union (Havlik, Hloušek, & Kaniok, 2017). Compared to Germany, Czech Republic is ethnically very homogeneous (i.e., predominantly White) and is among the countries most opposed to

distributing asylum seekers evenly across the EU. While Czech Republic joined the EU much more recently (2004), it has deliberately chosen not to join its common currency (the Euro). This EU-sceptic stance is to some extent present also in a wider public whose attitudes towards the EU are typically more critical and negative compared to the European average (Eurobarometer, 2019). Quite paradoxically, however, this view is not accompanied by high levels of national pride (Vlachová, 2019) .Thus, while average levels of national identification may be low in both countries, enthusiasm for the EU and Europe seem to be higher in Germany than in Czech Republic, making this an interesting case for cross-national comparison.

Method

Participants and Procedure

Data for this study came from a large cross-national European project (name of project and citation removed for blind review). Data were collected in eight European countries[1] in two waves, one year apart, in 2016 and 2017. Ethical approval was obtained from the local ethical review board of each participating university. Participants provided informed consent after having been informed about the study details. Participants filled out questionnaires either online or in paper-pencil format. The analytical sample comprises 2,394 young people aged 15 to 26 (M = 19.81, SD = 3.22; 51 % female) from Germany (n_{T1} = 1028, n_{T2} = 330) and Czech Republic (n_{T1} = 1342, n_{T2} = 829)[2]. More information on sample characteristics divided by country and wave is provided in the online supplemental material (Table A1). Longitudinal retention was

[1] These countries were Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, United Kingdom, Greece, Italy, Portugal, and Sweden.

[2] Including more countries in the analyses would have been possible but given the complexity of the analyses (two identity domains by two time points across two countries) we decided to include only these two countries.

low in the German data set (31.4 %) while it was considerably higher in Czech Republic (61.6 %). One reason for this may have been that Czech data from young adults (age 20 to 26) was collected a professional pollster. These samples are treated separately in the analyses because it was not possible to establish measurement invariance of latent classes (i.e., identity statuses, see below) across countries. This means that results across both countries can only be compared descriptively and not statistically (e.g., multiple group analysis).

Measures

If not indicated differently, answers to items were scored on a five-point Likert scale ranging from (1) *strongly disagree* to (5) *strongly agree*.

National identity and European identity. Identity on the national and European level was measured using adaptations of the Utrecht-Management of Identity Commitments Scale (U-MICS; Crocetti et al., 2008; Schubach, Zimmermann, Noack, & Neyer, 2017), which assesses identity commitment, exploration, and reconsideration. The scale has been extensively tested and validated across a number of countries, including Germany (Greischel et al., 2018) and Czech Republic (Dimitrova et al., 2016). Each dimension was measured with three items (e.g., *commitment*: "I feel strong ties to my country/Europe; *exploration*: "I often think about what it means to be German/European", *reconsideration*: "My feelings about Germany/Europe are changing"). All items are shown verbatim in the supplemental materials. Cronbach's Alphas for the identity dimensions ranged from .73 to .87.

External correlates for validating profile solutions.

To validate the identity status profiles found in the latent profile analyses (see below), we accounted for additional measures that we expected to vary according to identity profile.

Sociodemographic variables. We included age (in years), gender (0 = *female*, 1 = *male*), socio-economic background (SES) and ethnic self-identification (0 = *ethnic majority*, 1 = *ethnic minority or double identification*) as socio-demographic variables. To gauge SES we computed the mean score of the highest completed level of education of the mother and father (1 = "*not*

completed lower secondary education", 2 = "*completed lower secondary education*", 3 = "*completed upper secondary education*", 4 = "*completed higher education*") and whether household money covers all family needs (1 = "*not at all*", 2 = "*partly*", 3 = "*mostly*", 4 = "*fully*").

Civic engagement. Participants indicated their participation in different civic and political attitudes in the last 12 months on a 5-point scale (1 = *no* to 5 = *very often*) with 18 items adapted from Barrett and Zani (2015). The distribution of these items was heavily left-skewed. Therefore, we used a sum score index reflecting the amount of civic activities from low to high (M_{GER} = 28.71, SD_{GER} = 9.29; M_{CZE} = 23.45, SD_{CZE} = 6.97).

Nationalism. This was assessed with three items (e.g., "Generally, the more influence Germany/Czech Republic has on other nations, the better off these nations are."); α_{GER} = .75, α_{CZE} = .76.

Views on the EU. Two items asked about participants' view on the EU (e.g., "Life in my country would be better if there were no European Union", reverse-coded); r_{GER} = .59, $p < .001$; r_{CZE} = .65, $p < .001$.

Analytic Strategy

First, we ran latent profile analysis (LPA) on the nine identity items to explore the optimal number of identity statuses using the identity dimensions of commitment, exploration and reconsideration. LPA is a specific type of latent variable modeling where the observed variables are continuous and the latent variables are categorical. The goal of LPA is to recover unobserved categorical profiles based on the means of continuous observed variables (Oberski, 2016). Profile membership of individuals is unknown but is inferred from the measured items. We examined the number of identity statuses separately for national and European identity. This was done for each wave and country separately to test whether the LPAs would discover the same number of profiles (i.e. statuses) in each wave while also considering whether the meaning of profiles (e.g., the distribution of the three identity dimensions within profiles)

remained consistent across waves. In order to extract the optimal number of identity statuses, we ran LPAs with two to six profiles for each domain and time point. LPA is a person-centered approach that identifies distinct subgroups in a sample and is superior to cluster analysis because it considers measurement error. LPA differs from latent class analysis in that it uses continuous (i.e., the items of the three identity dimensions) instead of categorical indicators (Nylund, Asparouhov, & Muthén, 2007). We ran the LPAs on the nine identity items rather than on the three scale means because research suggests that a higher number of indicator variables leads to more power for differentiating between latent classes (Tein, Coxe, & Cham, 2013). To evaluate different LPA solutions, a set of five criteria was used, adopted from previous research (Meeus et al., 2010; Nagin, 2005). First, a model with one profile more should provide better fit as shown by lower values in the information criteria, such as the Akaike information criterion (AIC), the Bayesian information criterion (BIC), or adjusted BIC. Second, tests of statistical significance, such as the Lo-Mendell-Rubin likelihood ratio test (LMRT) or the bootstrapped Lo-Mendel-Rubin likelihood ratio (BLRT) indicate better fit for a model with *k* profiles compared to one with *k-1* profiles (Nylund et al., 2007). Third, entropy should be higher than 0.70, indicating good overall classification accuracy (Reinecke, 2006). Fourth, each profile should be substantively meaningful, representing a sufficient number of students in the sample (> 5 %). Fifth, across waves the substantive meaning of the profiles should remain equivalent (Collins & Lanza, 2010). This was inspected visually using bar plots that showed the attributions of students to the profiles according to their mean levels of commitment, exploration, and reconsideration. Because statistical criteria alone often do not help to identify optimal profile solutions it is necessary to also take into account theoretical considerations and parsimony when deciding on the number of profiles (Collins & Lanza, 2010).

Second, we compared the extracted identity statuses on external correlates using the Bolck-Croon-Hagenaars (BCH) method (Bakk & Vermunt, 2016). While different approaches have been proposed recently how to explore the relationship between latent variables and other

external variables in mixture modeling, the BCH method is the method of choice for continuous distal outcome variables (Asparouhov & Muthén, 2020). The BCH method uses weights to reflect the measurement error of the latent profile variables. For each external correlate an overall test for the equality of means across statuses is performed. Subsequently post-hoc comparisons reveal differences among identity statuses on the correlates.

Third, we employed latent transition analysis (LTA; Collins & Lanza, 2010) to explore stability and changes in identity statuses across one year for national and European identity, respectively. Finally, we used LTA to assess the degree of congruence across national and European identity at T1. Although LTA is typically used to describe transitions within one categorical latent variable across different time points it can also be applied in cross-sectional designs to analyze the congruence between two different categorical latent variables (i.e., national and European identity; Schubach et al., 2016). We evaluated the degree of congruence with Cohen's kappa (Cohen, 1960) based on participants' most likely latent profile membership. Models were estimated using MPlus 8.4 (Muthén & Muthén, 2012-2017), using full information maximum likelihood (FIML) estimation with robust standard errors (MLR) to handle missing data.

Results

Attrition Analyses

To rule out that participants who completed all waves differed from those who dropped out after wave 1, we conducted logistic regression analyses. Participation (both waves, vs. wave 1) was regressed on mean levels of European and national identity commitment, exploration and reconsideration as well as age, gender, and SES. Results are shown in Table B2 of the Supplementary materials. Participants who dropped out were older than those who remained in both countries. In Czech Republic, participants who dropped out scored lower on European identity commitment, and national identity exploration and higher on national identity reconsideration. These results indicate that participants who dropped out after wave 1 differed

on these variables from participants who took part in both waves, suggestive of selective dropout.

Identifying the number of profiles

Table 1 displays model fit information for the different latent profile solutions for the identity items by domain (national and European) and country. Almost all statistical criteria favored higher number of profiles. Thus, we based our decision on theoretical considerations, which advocated either for a four or a five-profile solution. Figure B1 of the Supplementary Materials shows mean levels of the identity dimensions for each identity status for the four vs. five-profile solution by country and time point. We decided for a four-profile solution given that the four identity statuses diffusion, achievement, moratorium, and early closure were evident quite consistently in the four-profile solution. On the other hand, in the five-profile solution there was no clear evidence for an additional theoretically meaningful searching moratorium status characterized by high commitment and exploration and extremely high reconsideration. Thus, we selected the more parsimonious solution.

Describing the profiles: national and European identity

Figure 1 displays mean levels of identity dimensions for each identity status for the four-profile solution at T1. The status of *closure* (national identity prevalences: GER: 29 %, *n* = 298, CZE: 37 %, *n* = 497; European identity prevalences: GER: 23 %, *n* = 236; CZE: 16 %, *n* = 219) was characterized by moderate scores on commitment and low scores on exploration and reconsideration (for national identity in CZE these scores were average). *Achievement* (national identity prevalences: GER: 18 %, *n* = 190, CZE: 25%, *n* = 333; European identity prevalences: GER: 32 %, *n* = 335, CZE: 23 %, *n* = 307) had high scores on both commitment and exploration and low to average scores on reconsideration. *Diffusion* (national identity prevalences: GER: 16 %, *n* = 166, CZE: 15 %, *n* = 200; European identity prevalences: GER: 13 %, *n* = 130, CZE: 11 %, *n* = 147) had low to average scores on all dimensions while *moratorium* (national identity prevalences: GER: 36 %, *n* = 374, CZE: 23 %, *n* = 310; European identity prevalences: GER:

32 %, *n* = 335, CZE: 50 %, *n* = 667) was characterized by low commitment, average to moderate exploration, and moderate to high reconsideration.

Validating the profiles: external correlates of identity status

Tables 2 and 3 display the results for Germany and Czech Republic, respectively. With the exception of the socio-demographic variables age, gender and SES, and views on the EU in case of national identity, the mean comparisons showed consistent significant differences across profiles in both domains and countries.

Participants in the closure group (henceforth *closures*) tended to be youngest in Germany (but not in Czech Republic) in both identity domains. They also scored lowest on civic engagement. Individuals in the achievement group (henceforth *achievers*) were oldest with regard to European identity, least likely to have an ethnic minority background for national identity in Germany, scored highest on civic engagement (not for national identity in Germany), nationalism for national identity, as well as views on the EU for European identity. Individuals in the diffusion group (henceforth *diffused*) were more likely to have an ethnic minority background in Germany for national identity, scored lowest on nationalism for national identity and lowest on views on the EU for European identity. Participants in the moratorium group (henceforth *moratoriums*) resembled in many ways the achievers but were younger in case of European identity and notably less nationalistic.

Stability and change in identity status

To examine stability and change in identity status across a one-year period we estimated transition probabilities using a LTA model (Kaplan, 2008). We assumed measurement invariance of the profiles over time in these models. For measurement invariance we constrained within-profile means to be equal across time points. This means that the same number and type of profiles occur at all time points and thus interpretation of transition probabilities is straightforward because the meaning of profiles stays constant

across time (Nylund, 2007). Tables 4 and 5 show the results for Germany, and Czech Republic, respectively.

Results showed that the stability (i.e., staying in the same identity status across time) of the achievers' group was very high across identity domains and countries but it was slightly higher for European identity (latent transition probabilities ranging between .81-.82) than for national identity (.75-.78). The second most stable identity status was moratorium, which was again slightly more stable for European identity (.72-.74) than for national identity (.66-.69). Stability coefficients for closure (.50-.62) and diffusion (.46-.62) were considerably lower. Transition probabilities from one status to another status were generally low to moderate, with the highest percentages observed for moving from closure (.16-.27), achievement (.08-.13), or diffusion (.19-.43) to moratorium. There was evidence for both progression and regression in identity status transitions: Transitions from diffusion to closure (.04-.23), moratorium (.19-.43) or achievement (.04-.05) or from moratorium to closure (.05-.15) or achievement (.11-.16) represent identity progression. Transitions from achievement (.08-.13) or closure (.16-.27) to moratorium or from achievement (.00-.05), closure (.05-.17), or moratorium (.04-.08) to diffusion represent identity regression. Results were remarkably similar across identity domains and countries. The only transition pathway with country differences was the percentage of individuals transitioning from diffusion to moratorium, which was considerably higher in Czech Republic (.41-.43) than in Germany (.19-.26).

Congruence of identity domains

The results provide the prevalence of the 16 different identity status combinations (4 profiles for national x 4 profiles for European identity). Tables 6 and 7 present the absolute probabilities of the different identity status combinations for national and European identity, for T1 and T2, respectively. Results differed between Germany and Czech Republic. In Germany, more than half (T1: 60 %; T2: 59 %) of the participants had the same identity status in both domains: Of these, 75-81 % were assigned to closure in both national and European

identity, 41-58 % to achievement, 48-56 % to diffusion, and 52-64 % to moratorium. In Czech Republic, 36 to 47 % of participants had the same identity status in both domains: Of these, 19-60 % were assigned to closure, 39-43 % to achievement, 27-33 % to diffusion, and 43-64 % to moratorium in both domains. Cohen's kappa as an overall indicator of congruence between both identity domains was substantially lower in Czech Republic ($\kappa_{T1} = .15$, $\kappa_{T2} = .25$) than in Germany ($\kappa_{T1} = .45$, $\kappa_{T2} = .43$), indicating slight/fair vs. moderate congruence (Landis & Koch, 1977), respectively. These results suggest that national and European identity are more aligned in Germany than in Czech Republic among our respondents.

Discussion

This study sought to first identify the optimal number of identity statuses for national and European identity, second to validate the identified solutions with the help of external correlates, third to examine change and stability of these identity statuses across a one-year period, and finally to explore the congruence of status configurations across both identity domains. We will discuss the results for these four research aims in turn.

Regarding identity statuses, our results suggested four identity statuses for both national and European identity in Germany and Czech Republic. These identity statuses fitted the description of the original Marcia (1966) model: diffusion, moratorium, closure, and achievement. Unlike previous work by Crocetti et al. (2008) we did not find evidence for a fifth identity status that could be labelled searching moratorium. It is worth mentioning that previous research that has examined regional identity also identified four identity statuses but found no evidence for diffusion and did extract a searching moratorium status (Schubach et al., 2016). Other research found that in late adolescence (corresponding to the age group of most of our participants), searching moratorium disappears (Meeus et al., 2010). While it is not uncommon for person-centred analyses to provide different results across different samples, this could also indicate that the five-status model fits better with personal identity domains than with social identity domains. A possible explanation might be that while

personal identity is tied to one's search for individuality and distinctiveness from others, social identities refer to one's sense of belonging to social groups and identification with group norms and values. Hence, specific social context might shape and limit the scope of possible identity patterns, which are available to a person, more strongly for social than personal identity domains. Looking specifically at national or European identity, their contents in terms of norms and values are, to a large extent, already given as they are shared by large groups of people, which leaves less room for heterogeneity in young people's approaches (i.e. heterogeneity in specific configurations of their commitment, exploration and reconsideration in this domain), compared to occupational identity, for instance. Of course, it is important to note that our analyses used individual items while previous research has often used scale means, which may also lead to some heterogeneity in results across studies.

The fact that we could identity the same four identity statuses across both countries and waves increases our confidence in the results. Also, the comparison across external correlates did show evidence for the distinctness of these identity statuses. However, this was less the case for the moratorium group, which was in many ways quite similar to the achievement group. It is likely that in the case of national and European identity, one's identification with the nation or Europe is hardly distinguishable from a mere active search of information in this domain as both identity dimensions often go hand in hand. One problem was that we lacked data on individual differences (e.g., Big Five Personality) or psychosocial adjustment that would have been helpful in validating these identity statuses. Previous research suggests that more established identity statuses (e.g., achievement) go along with more mature personality traits and higher life satisfaction (Crocetti, 2017; Schubach et al., 2016).

The analyses of stability and change of identity statuses showed their considerable stability in both domains, which suggests that the development of national and European identity is a long-term process and only a limited amount of change can be expected over a

one-year period. Not surprisingly, achievement turned out to be the most stable status. However, the analyses also provided some surprising results. Over-time stabilities for closure were comparably low (around .50). Following Marcia (1966), one may expect higher stability in closure for individuals who may just take over views from their parents unquestioned and without exploring it on their own. But research on the identity process model has shown that individuals may regress from achievement back to closure (Meeus et al., 2010), which implies that it is important to distinguish between early closures (i.e., those that have never explored their identity or considered alternative commitments) and closures (i.e., those that did once consider alternative commitments but are currently not engaged in exploration). Nevertheless, the stability of the closure status was considerably lower compared to previous studies reporting one-year stability coefficients of .90 (Meeus et al., 2010). This may be suggestive of differences in stability according to the identity domain under study. Thus, it may be important for future research to take a domain-specific approach to the study of identity development rather than assuming uniformly global processes (cf. Vosylis, Erentaitė, & Crocetti, 2018).

On the other hand, diffusion and moratorium could have been expected to be more volatile than we found because they are less established identity statuses that individuals are expected to eventually move out of (cf. Kroger, Martinussen, & Marcia, 2010). However, very few studies have examined identity formation across different developmental periods longitudinally (e.g., from mid- to late adolescence) and those that did so found also rather high one-year stability coefficients for diffusion and moratorium (e.g., around.70; Meeus et al., 2010). Another point to consider is that the diffusion profile had low prevalence (11-16 %) to begin with, suggesting that many participants had already moved out of this identity status in our sample of late adolescents and young adults, in line with developmental propositions regarding identity status change (cf. Waterman, 1999).

There was little evidence for systematic patterns of transitions across identity statuses, with one exception. In Czech Republic, individuals were just as likely to remain within diffusion as to change to moratorium, compared to Germany where the transition from diffusion to moratorium was much less common. This pattern, which was particularly pronounced for national identity, suggested that for young Czechs it was easier to switch between indifference to and interest in their nation, while for young Germans their indifference was more settled and unlikely to change.

Concerning the fourth research aim, results suggested that national and European identity were more aligned in Germany than in Czech Republic. The comparatively low congruence of identity domains across nation and Europe suggest that national and European identity are less compatible in Czech Republic. This is in line with earlier research that only examined the commitment dimension and showed that national and European identity were less associated in countries with a communist past (Jugert et al., 2019). This points to the relevance of context for social identity development as it shows that national and European identity might develop in one common, or two separate processes across different social contexts. Future research should examine whether these contextual differences can also be seen longitudinally. For this, associative latent transition analyses can be employed to examine whether transitions in one domain (e.g., national) affect transitions in another domain (e.g., European). However, this was beyond the scope of the current paper.

Limitations

This study has a number of limitations. First, the analyses are based on data from only two time points, covering a time period of one year. This limits our possibilities to draw conclusions about long-term changes in national and European identity. Future research, should span longer time periods or should include quasi-experimental factors such as political events with great media coverage that may spur changes in national and European identity development (e.g., before and after the summer of migration in Europe in 2015). Further,

there was evidence for selective dropout in our sample. Yet, research suggests that selective attrition many not necessarily threaten the validity of longitudinal comparisons (Salthouse, 2014; Wolke et al., 2009).

Second, the context-dependent, fluid, and dynamic nature of social identity may not be adequately addressed with annual measurements. Thus, future research should make use of experience-sampling methods, such as daily diary studies that provide much more fine-grained information on identity dynamics (Yip, Cheon, & Ehrhardt, 2020). Next, data from a more diverse set of European countries representing different types of relations to Europe and different meanings of European identity (e.g., United Kingdom, Greece or Ukraine) should be included to further test the universality versus contextual dependence of the studied processes. Finally, future studies should include data on individual differences (e.g., Big Five Personality) or psychosocial adjustment that would help to validate these identity statuses.

Conclusion

This study shows that the identity status model is a useful framework to study the development of social identities such as national and European identity. Results suggest that the process of identity development in each domain is similar across two countries, suggesting generality in process. However, there are contextual differences in whether national and European identity are more or less aligned, suggesting that context affects similarity of identity development across domains.

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Table 1

Model fit information for the different latent profile solutions for the national and European identity items at T1

Country	**Identity Domain**	**No. of profiles**	**AIC**	**BIC**	**aBIC**	**LMRT *p*-value**	**BLRT *p*-value**	**Entropy**
Germany	National	2	29199.81	29338.00	29249.07	< .001	< .001	.790
		3	28429.21	28616.75	28496.06	.013	< .001	.820
		4	**27936.63**	**28173.53**	**28021.08**	**.031**	**< .001**	**.823**
		5	27638.19	27924.44	27740.23	.042	< .001	.855
		6	27372.95	27708.55	27492.58	.046	< .001	.824
	European	2	28424.26	28562.53	28473.60	< .001	< .001	.809
		3	27910.61	28098.26	27977.57	.130	< .001	.826
		4	**27515.77**	**27752.80**	**27600.35**	**.050**	**< .001**	**.815**
		5	27193.05	27479.47	27295.25	.593	.013	.821
		6	26986.79	27322.59	27106.61	.100	< .001	.844
Czech Republic	National	2	34801.99	34947.60	34858.66	< .001	< .001	.815
		3	33918.26	34115.88	33995.17	< .001	< .001	.834
		4	**32894.64**	**33144.26**	**32991.79**	**< .001**	**< .001**	**.996**
		5	32941.70	33243.32	33059.08	.208	< .001	.827
		6	32621.46	32975.09	32759.08	< .001	< .001	.825
	European	2	34490.40	34636.01	34547.07	< .001	< .001	.775
		3	33797.83	33995.45	33874.74	.011	< .001	.793
		4	**33308.72**	**33558.34**	**33405.86**	**.029**	**< .001**	**.774**
		5	33030.02	33331.64	33147.40	.020	< .001	.783
		6	32733.24	33086.87	32870.87	.547	< .001	.787

Note. The bold values indicate the chosen model. AIC = Akaike information criterion; BIC = Bayesian information criterion; ABIC = adjusted BIC; LMRT = Lo-Mendell-Rubin likelihood ratio test; BLRT = bootstrapped likelihood ratio test.

Table 2

Univariate equality tests of means across profiles and post hoc profile comparisons for the four national and European identity statuses at T1 in Germany (n = 1028)

	National identity						European identity					
	Closure	Achievement	Diffusion	Moratorium	χ^2 (3)	*p*	Closure	Achievement	Diffusion	Moratorium	χ^2(3)	*p*
Age	18.02^{a}	19.50^{b,c}	18.66^{a,c}	19.59^{b}	40.36	< .001	17.81^{a}	20.29^{b}	18.28^{a,c}	18.82^{c}	93.72	< .001
Gender	0.59^{a,b}	0.73^{a}	0.48^{b,c}	0.41^{c}	45.94	< .001	0.65^{a}	0.51^{b}	0.69^{a}	0.41^{b}	35.98	< .001
Minority	0.22^{a}	0.11^{b}	0.43^{c}	0.15^{a,b}	48.42	< .001	0.25^{a,c}	0.18^{a,c}	0.34^{a,b}	0.17^{a,c}	13.47	.004
SES	3.00^{a}	2.90^{a}	3.08^{a}	2.96^{a}	7.40	.060	2.97^{a}	3.08^{a}	2.90^{a}	2.92^{a}	10.27	.016
Civic engagement	24.11^{a}	30.23^{b}	31.11^{b}	30.79^{b}	115.73	< .001	24.67^{a}	32.85^{b}	29.15^{c}	27.72^{c}	93.23	< .001
Nationalism	3.00^{a}	3.34^{b}	2.21^{c}	2.67^{d}	145.19	< .001	3.04^{a}	2.87^{a}	2.78 ^{a,b}	2.62 ^{b}	22.81	< .001
Views on the EU	4.01^{a}	3.90^{a}	3.84^{a}	4.04^{a}	5.68	.128	4.09^{a}	4.16^{a}	3.32^{b}	3.97^{a}	53.59	< .001

Note. Means that do not share superscripts are significantly different at $p < .01$. Gender (0 = *female*, 1 = *male*). Minority = ethnic self-identification (0 = *ethnic majority*, 1 = *ethnic minority or double identification*). Parameter estimates are taken from T1 cross-sectional analyses.

Table 3

Univariate equality tests of means across profiles and post hoc profile comparisons for the four national and European identity statuses at T1 in Czech Republic (n = 1340)

	National identity						European identity					
	Closure	Achievement	Diffusion	Moratorium	χ^2 (3)	*p*	Closure	Achievement	Diffusion	Moratorium	χ^2(3)	*p*
Age	20.39^{a}	20.92^{a}	20.04^{a}	20.35^{a}	8.26	.041	20.49^{a}	21.71^{b}	20.65^{a}	19.73^{a}	58.72	< .001
Gender	0.46 ^{a,b}	0.58 ^{a}	0.49 ^{a,b}	0.37 ^{b}	24.91	< .001	0.40 ^{a,c}	0.50 ^{a,b,c}	0.64 ^{b}	0.40 ^{c}	27.48	< .001
SES	3.24^{a}	3.35^{a}	3.25^{a}	3.30^{a}	8.59	.035	3.32^{a}	3.37^{a}	3.17^{b}	3.27 ^{a,b}	19.74	< .001
Civic engagement	21.98^{a}	24.86^{b}	23.63^{a,b}	23.27^{a,b}	13.14	.004	21.83^{a}	24.98^{b}	22.48^{a}	23.41 ^{a,b}	18.14	< .001
Nationalism	2.84^{a}	3.10^{b}	2.20^{c}	2.62^{d}	124.57	< .001	2.71 ^{a,b}	2.92 ^{a}	2.52 ^{b}	2.63 ^{b,c}	24.82	< .001
Views on the EU	3.39^{a}	3.42^{a}	3.21^{a}	3.41^{a}	5.44	.142	3.70^{a}	3.71^{a}	2.71^{b}	3.25^{c}	102.74	< .001

Note. Means that do not share superscripts are significantly different at $p < .01$. Gender (0 = *female*, 1 = *male*). Ethnic self-identification was not analyzed in Czech Republic because of very low frequencies of ethnic minority participants (2.4 %). Parameter estimates are taken from T1 cross-sectional analyses.

Table 4

Latent transition probabilities of national and European identity status in Germany (n = 1028)

	T2 identity status							
	National identity				European identity			
T1 identity status	C	A	D	M	C	A	D	M
Closure (C)	**.50**	.11	.17	.23	**.55**	.11	.10	.23
Achievement (A)	.09	**.75**	.04	.13	.06	**.81**	.05	.08
Diffusion (D)	.08	.04	**.62**	.26	.23	.05	**.52**	.19
Moratorium (M)	.15	.15	.04	**.66**	.08	.11	.08	**.72**

Note. Estimated transition probabilities of being classified into each of the four identity statuses at T2 conditional on status membership at T1. Stability coefficients are shown in bold.

Table 5

Latent transition probabilities of national and European identity status in Czech Republic (n = 1342)

	T2 identity status							
	National identity				European identity			
T1 identity status	C	A	D	M	C	A	D	M
Closure (C)	**.56**	.09	.09	.27	**.62**	.18	.05	.16
Achievement (A)	.10	**.78**	.00	.12	.05	**.82**	.01	.12
Diffusion (D)	.04	.05	**.48**	.43	.09	.04	**.46**	.41
Moratorium (M)	.09	.16	.06	**.69**	.05	.14	.07	**.74**

Note. Estimated transition probabilities of being classified into each of the four identity statuses at T2 conditional on status membership at T1. Stability coefficients are shown in bold.

Table 6

Probabilities of different identity status combinations for national and European identity at T1

	European identity status							
	Germany (*n* = 1031)				Czech Republic (n = 1340)			
National identity status	C	A	D	M	C	A	D	M
Closure (C)	.75 (215)	.03 (9)	.06 (15)	.15 (43)	.19 (88)	.27 (139)	.05 (21)	.48 (248)
Achievement (A)	.11 (21)	.58 (101)	.10 (20)	.22 (42)	.22 (70)	.39 (133)	.07 (22)	.32 (108)
Diffusion (D)	.05 (7)	.16 (25)	.56 (94)	.23 (36)	.09 (18)	.06 (11)	.33 (61)	.53 (110)
Moratorium (M)	.00 (1)	.45 (189)	.02 (6)	.52 (207)	.14 (41)	.09 (24)	.13 (40)	.64 (206)

Note. Numbers in parentheses indicate number of cases in these cells.

Table 7

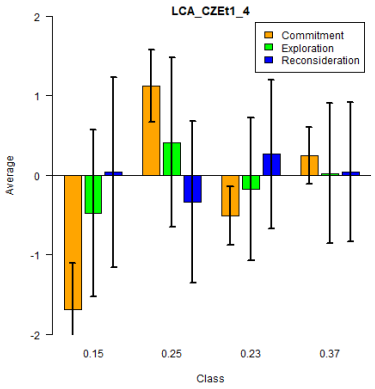
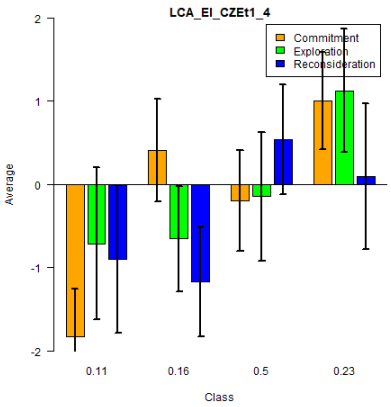
Probabilities of different identity status combinations for national and European identity at T2

	European identity status							
	Germany (*n* = 330)				Czech Republic (*n* = 829)			
National identity status	C	A	D	M	C	A	D	M
Closure (C)	.81 (53)	.00 (0)	.20 (13)	.00 (0)	.60 (195)	.18 (60)	.04 (12)	.18 (60)
Achievement (A)	.18 (15)	.41 (33)	.03 (2)	.38 (31)	.37 (77)	.43 (90)	.05 (10)	.16 (33)
Diffusion (D)	.18 (8)	.24 (11)	.48 (22)	.11 (5)	.29 (30)	.05 (5)	.27 (27)	.40 (41)
Moratorium (M)	.02 (3)	.30 (41)	.04 (6)	.64 (88)	.38 (71)	.10 (20)	.09 (17)	.43 (81)

Note. Numbers in parentheses indicate number of cases in these cells.

Figure 1.

Z-standardized scores (SDs) for commitment, exploration, and reconsideration of commitment for the four identity statuses for national and European identity in Czech Republic and Germany. Parameter estimates are taken from T1 analyses.

	National identity T1	European identity T1
Czech Republic		
Germany