Identity and outgroup devaluation in Europe:
The role of reflecting self.

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Identity development in adolescence
The construct of identity

The development of identity is a central theme in adolescence and it occurs in context of family and culture. In the research literature identity formation and development is very often described as a problematic challenge of our time and influenced by many risk factors. Among these risk factors are processes of individualisation in modern industrialised societies, ethnic pluralisation and economic globalisation as well as factors of dysfunctional familial socialisation.

Even though there is no common definition or theory about "identity", most authors agree with Erikson (1959/1980), that identity bases upon the perception of consistency and continuity, and that from others this consistency and continuity can be noticed. In other words, identity defines a person as unique and unmistakable in two different ways: By the individual and by the social surroundings. Identity describes an unique personality structure and includes how the person is viewed by others. For the individual, identity essentially means the answer to the question "Who am I?". According to Tajfel (1982) the question of "who am I" can be answered with reference to several positions: in view to the own person, in view to the affiliation to ingroups and in view to the relation to out-groups.
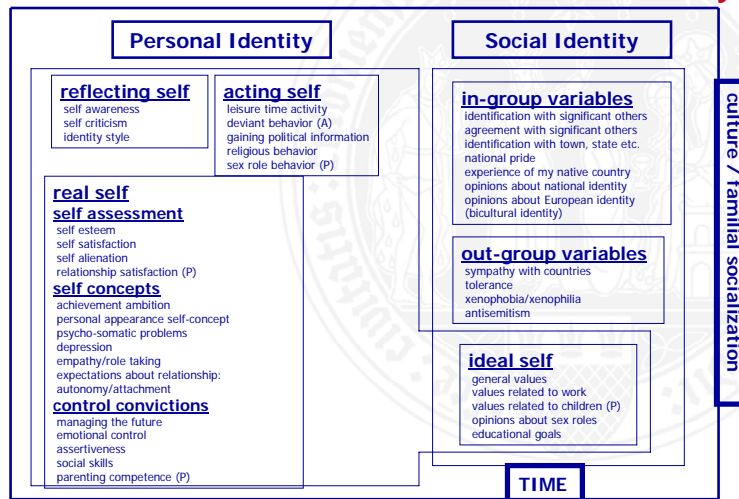
Research project
Theoretical background

At the University of Cologne Schmidt-Denter et al. (2005) developed an integrative structural model of identity. In the theoretical model we differentiate between personal and social identity. Our structural model is based on the one hand on William Stern's (1918) critical personalism and on the other hand on Fend's (e.g. 1994) research on the development of self-concepts in adolescence. The concept of identity style by Berzonsky (1989) was integrated, too, as well as the identity regulation model by Haußer (1995). For social identity we differentiate between in-group-variables and out-group variables, according to the theory of Tajfel (1982).

Our theoretical framework is a contextual one. In our opinion family socialisation and cultural factors especially influence identity development, respectively the components of the structural model.

To operationalise all these constructs in this model we developed a questionnaire which includes 43 scales for the adolescents with 327 items. It was translated into several languages by native speakers. The question of measurement invariance was investigated by Schmidt-Denter and Schick, 2006.

Structural Model of Personal and Social Identity

Personal Identity		Social Identity	culture / familial socialization

reflecting self
self awareness
self criticism
identity style

acting self
leisure time activity
deviant behavior (A)
gaining political information
religious behavior
sex role behavior (P)

in-group variables
identification with significant others
agreement with significant others
identification with town, state etc.
national pride
experience of my native country
opinions about national identity
opinions about European identity
(bicultural identity)

real self
self assessment
self esteem
self satisfaction
self alienation
relationship satisfaction (P)
self concepts
achievement ambition
personal appearance self-concept
psycho-somatic problems
depression
empathy/role taking
expectations about relationship:
autonomy/attachment
control convictions
managing the future
emotional control
assertiveness
social skills
parenting competence (P)

out-group variables
sympathy with countries
tolerance
xenophobia/xenophilia
antisemitism

ideal self
general values
values related to work
values related to children (P)
opinions about sex roles
educational goals

TIME

Samples

Our research project investigates the identity development of adolescents in Germany and all its neighbouring countries. That is Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, France, Switzerland, Austria, the Czech Republic and Poland. The project is named "Personal and social identity in context of globalization and national delimitation" and is led by Professor Ulrich Schmidt-Denter, Chair of development and education at the Psychological Institute, University of Cologne.

Research Project

- 10 European countries
- Data collection 8/2001-3/2006
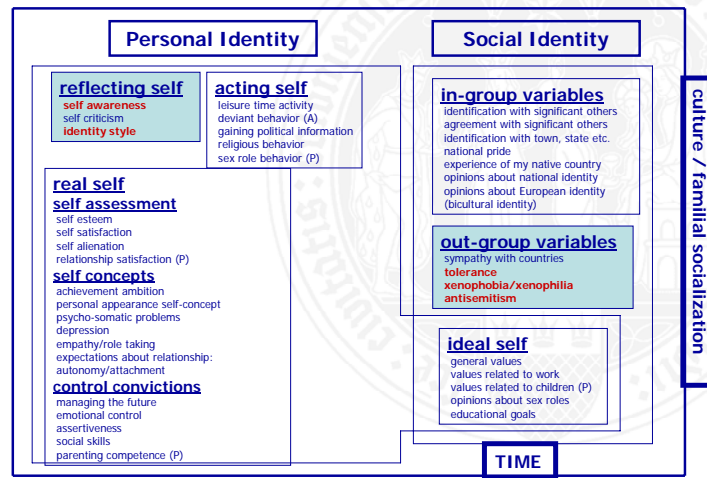- N = 4312 Adolescents (13-19 years)
- N = 1810 Parents

Presented Contribution

Aim of the presented study

The research interest of the presented contribution is to investigate the relationship between two of the components: Reflecting self and out-group variables.

Personal Identity		Social Identity	
reflecting self self awareness self criticism **identity style**	**acting self** leisure time activity deviant behavior (A) gaining political information religious behavior sex role behavior (P)	**in-group variables** identification with significant others agreement with significant others identification with town, state etc. national pride experience of my native country opinions about national identity opinions about European identity (bicultural identity)	culture / familial socialization
real self **self assessment** self esteem self satisfaction self alienation relationship satisfaction (P) **self concepts** achievement ambition personal appearance self-concept psycho-somatic problems depression empathy/role taking expectations about relationship: autonomy/attachment **control convictions** managing the future emotional control assertiveness social skills parenting competence (P)		**out-group variables** sympathy with countries **tolerance** **xenophobia/xenophilia** **antisemitism** **ideal self** general values values related to work values related to children (P) opinions about sex roles educational goals	
		TIME	

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In the research literature self-reflection is typically operationalised in scales of ego-centrism and introspectiveness. It is described in two ways: as problematic because of being linked to dysfunctional self-consciousness, symptomatology, and risk behaviour, and as well as essential for adolescent development, particularly with respect to individuation and identity formation.

In the course of globalisation and due to numerous migrations, the issue of keeping one's own identity as well as the search of social affiliation might become an important topic. Simultaneously, it is possible to observe a growing tendency towards nationalistic thought and differentiation world-wide, which can be seen in anxieties about strangers and violence against foreigners. The problem of protecting an identity in the tension between the desire to be open to the world on the one hand and the innate need for intimacy and social affiliation on the other hand is the subject of our research project. So with "out-group variables" we ask about attitudes toward minorities. There are three scales: Tolerance, attitudes toward foreigners and attitudes toward Jews.
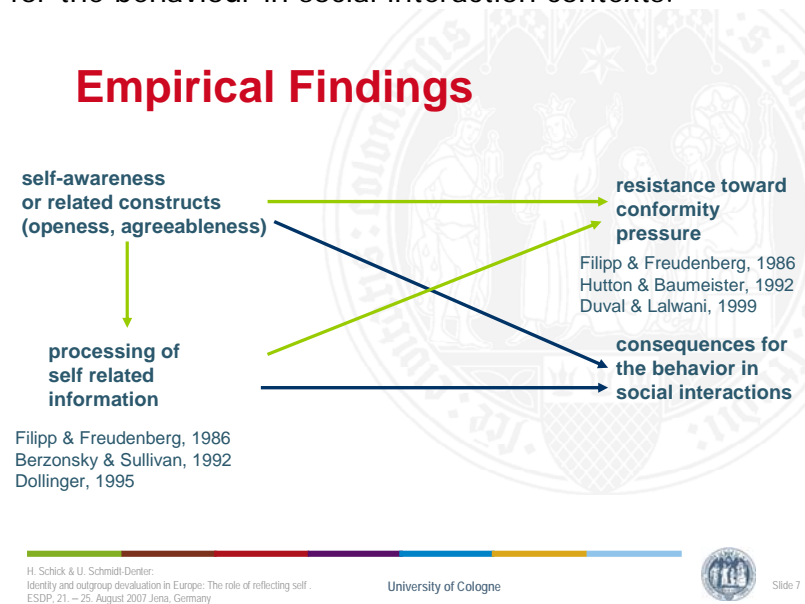
Research Questions

Even though there is a vast number of studies in the last 20 years that focus on the development of facets of identity or of the self-concept, much remains un-known concerning the structural relationships between the parts of identity. And even less is known about their development in particular cultural contexts.

Thus the paper deals with following questions: "How are variables of reflecting self related to attitudes toward minorities?" and "Are there differences between European countries?".
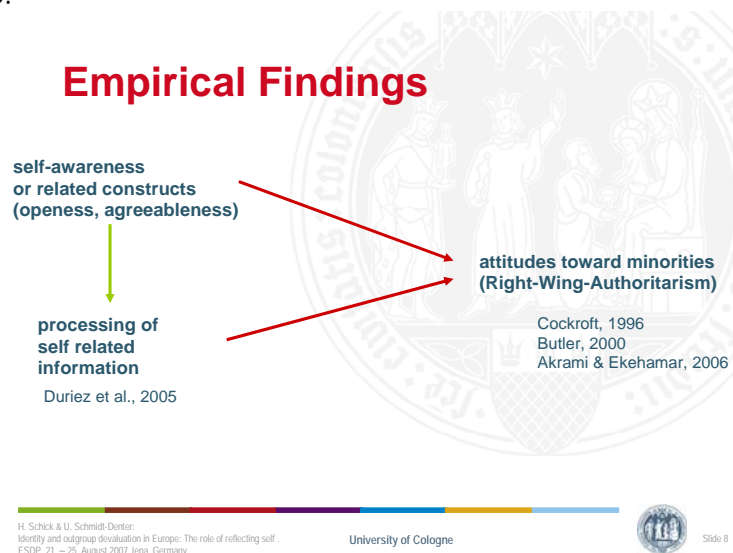
Hypothesis

The empirical findings of the literature concerning the topic of structural relationships are twofold:

Firstly, several studies showed that differences in self-awareness or related constructs (e.g. openness) have an impact on the processing of self-related information. Furthermore they are related to resistance toward conformity pressure and have consequences for the behaviour in social interaction contexts.

Empirical Findings

**self-awareness
or related constructs
(openess, agreeableness)**

**resistance toward
conformity
pressure**

Filipp & Freudenberg, 1986
Hutton & Baumeister, 1992
Duval & Lalwani, 1999

**processing of
self related
information**

**consequences for
the behavior in
social interactions**

Filipp & Freudenberg, 1986
Berzonsky & Sullivan, 1992
Dollinger, 1995

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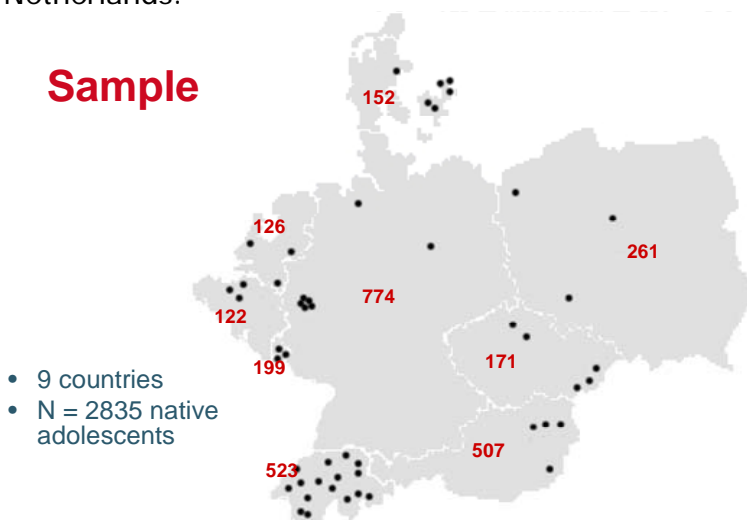
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Secondly, the relation between variables of reflecting self and attitudes toward minorities was often investigated with the concept of Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA). It was shown that RWA is negative related to the personality factors "openness" and "agreeableness" and that this relation is completely mediated by informative identity style.

Empirical Findings

**self-awareness
or related constructs
(openess, agreeableness)**

**attitudes toward minorities
(Right-Wing-Authoritarism)**

Cockroft, 1996
Butler, 2000
Akrami & Ekehamar, 2006

**processing of
self related
information**

Duriez et al., 2005

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So we expect, that variables of reflecting self predict more tolerant positions and less negative attitudes toward minorities such as foreigners and Jews. We assume that this is a general mechanism and we do not expect a difference between European countries.
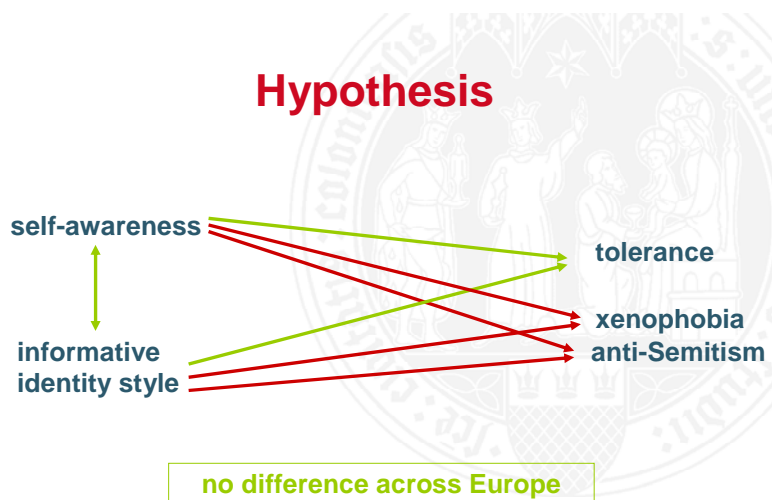
Method
Sample
For this investigation we used a sample from nine of the investigated European countries: France had to be excluded because of too many missing data in the interesting variables. The chart shows the sample sizes and places of data collection. The biggest samples came from the German speaking countries, the smallest samples from Belgium and the Netherlands.

Variables

As variables of reflecting self "self-awareness" and "informative identity style" were used, as variables of out-group devaluation "tolerance", "xenophobia" and "anti-Semitism" were included.

The self-awareness-scale is leant against the private self-consciousness subscale of Fenigstein et al. (1975). Items are for instance "I am often occupied with thoughts about myself" and "I would really like to know more about myself".

An informative identity-style involves actively seeking out, evaluating, and utilising self-relevant information. The scale is leant against the identity style inventory of Berzonsky (1989). Items are for instance "I've spent a lot of time thinking about what I should do with my life" and "I've spent a lot of time talking to people to find a set of beliefs that works for me".

"Tolerance" is leant on Maes et al. (1996) and ask for refusing or step up to people of different orientations, for instance political, religious, or cultural. "Xenophobia" and "Anti-Semitism" were constructed within the project, items are for instance "It isn't good to have too many different ethnic groups in a country" and "Jews have too much influence in the world".

Procedure

The method was as follows: First we explored the relationships between the variables with the German data while creating a structural equation model using LISREL 8.71-Software. We tested a full model and then varied the relationships with regard to theoretical considerations.

As shown above we used 3 to 11 indicators per variable with ordinal scale level, sample sizes differed between 122 and 523 individuals. The relation of the tested basic model is shown above. According to Jöreskog (2005) the polychoric correlation matrix and asymptotic covariance matrix with robust maximum likelihood estimate were used and the Satorra-Bentler Chi-Square was interpreted.
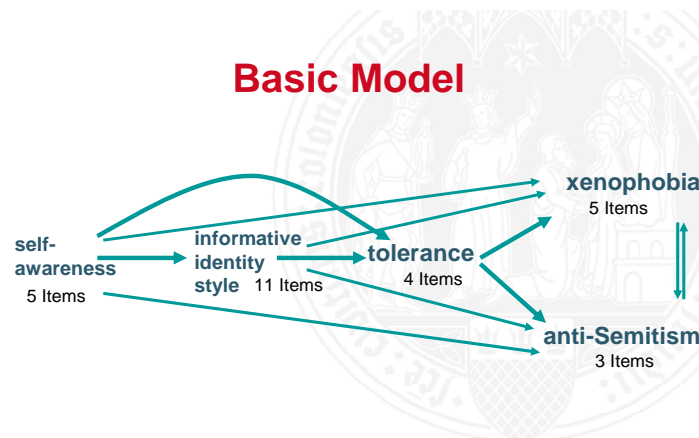
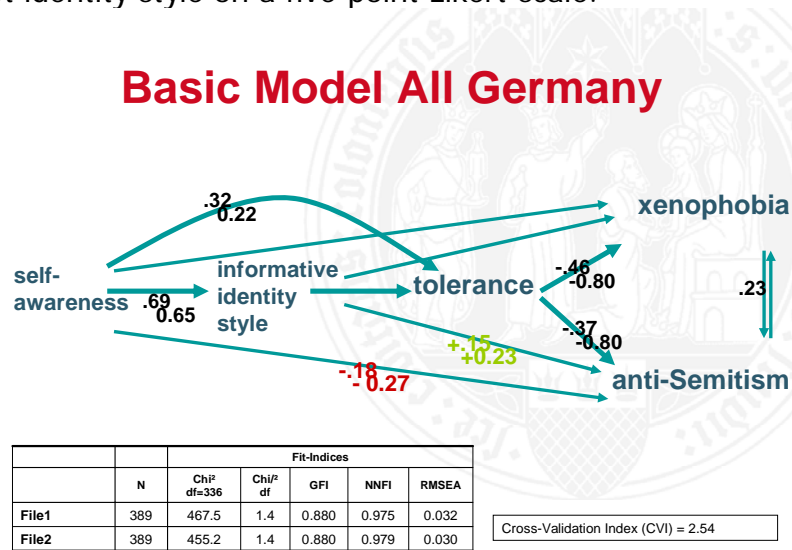**Basic Model**

Results

Basic model

Using the split-half-technique (Schumacker & Lomax, 2004), in the German sample the interrelations of the basic model were confirmed as follows:

As expected there were positive significant paths from self-awareness to informative identity-style and from self-awareness to tolerance, and significant negative paths from tolerance to xenophobia and anti-Semitism. Furthermore, xenophobia and anti-Semitism correlated positively.

Looking for the strength of the interrelations we found a surprising effect: To a substantial extent anti-Semitism is predicted negatively from self-awareness and positive from informative identity-style.

This result is supported by the parameter-estimates. The scaling is the same for all variables except identity style on a five-point Likert-scale.

Basic Model All Germany

		Fit-Indices				
	N	Chi² df=336	Chi/² df	GFI	NNFI	RMSEA
File1	389	467.5	1.4	0.880	0.975	0.032
File2	389	455.2	1.4	0.880	0.979	0.030

Cross-Validation Index (CVI) = 2.54

European countries

Secondly, we applied this model to all other samples, and differentiated between East and West Germany. In all cases the model fit was appropriate, with the exception of a somewhat less satisfying Goodness of Fit-Index.

Model Fit all countries

|		Fit-Indices				
	N	Chi² df=336	Chi/²df	GFI	NNFI	RMSEA
Germany West	436	538.1	1.6	0.876	0.964	0.037
Germany East	342	453.7	1.3	0.865	0.979	0.032
Denmark	152	407.1	1.2	0.764	0.965	0.037
The Netherlands	126	475.2	1.4	0.700	0.921	0.058
Belgium	122	434.4	1.3	0.696	0.952	0.049
Luxemburg	199	385.9	1.1	0.811	0.975	0.027
Switzerland	523	580.6	1.7	0.891	0.963	0.037
Austria	507	461.6	1.4	0.906	0.984	0.027
Czech Republic	171	395.4	1.2	0.802	0.958	0.032
Poland	261	478.7	1.4	0.825	0.959	0.040

The general findings in the European sample were as follows:
There is a positive correlation between xenophobia and anti-Semitism to a medium extent. There is a positive interrelation between self-awareness and informative identity style to a medium to high extent. And there is a negative interrelation between tolerance and xenophobia and anti-Semitism.
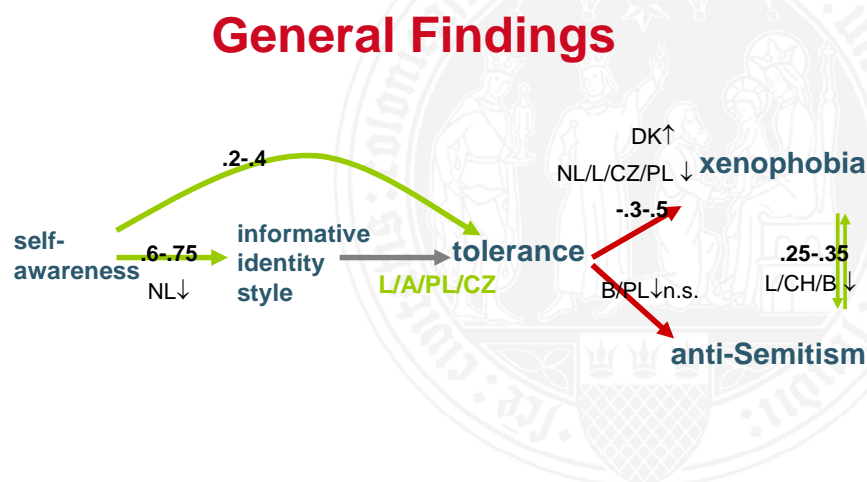
General Findings

But there are also differences and exceptions:
The negative interrelation between tolerance and anti-Semitism is not always significant. This is the case for Belgium and Poland. The interrelation between tolerance and xenophobia is outstanding high in Denmark and outstanding low in The Netherlands, Luxembourg, the Czech Republic and Poland. Xenophobia and anti-Semitism correlate very low in Luxembourg, Switzerland and Belgium. The interrelation between self-awareness informative identity style is outstanding low in The Netherlands.

Furthermore, the positive relation between self-awareness and tolerance was not found in all countries: That is the case in Luxembourg, Austria, Poland and the Czech Republic, therefore in these countries there is a positive relation between informative identity style and tolerance.
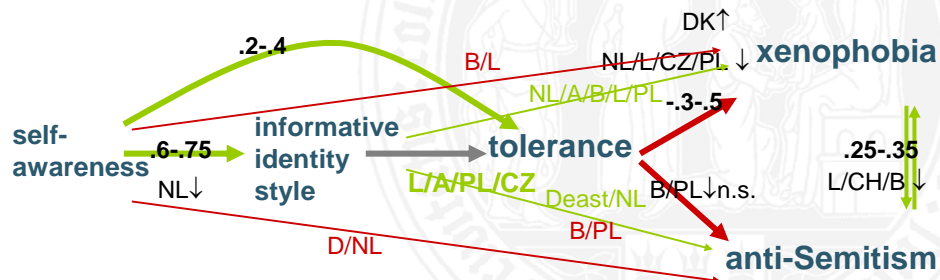
Moreover the most differences were found regarding the direct interrelations between the variables of aspects of reflecting self and out-group devaluation:

There is a direct negative effect of self-awareness on xenophobia just in Belgium and Luxembourg. There is only a direct negative effect of self-awareness on anti-Semitism in Germany and The Netherlands.

There is a direct positive effect of informative identity style on xenophobia in The Netherlands, Austria, Belgium, Luxembourg and Poland.

Finally, there is a direct positive effect of informative identity style on anti-Semitism in East Germany and The Netherlands, but this path is negative in Belgium and Poland. But all the above effects are rather small.

Particularities

DK↑

.2-.4

B/L NL/L/CZ/PL ↓ **xenophobia**

NL/A/B/L/PL

-.3-.5

self-awareness .6-.75 **informative identity style** → **tolerance**

NL↓ L/A/PL/CZ .25-.35 L/CH/B↓

Deast/NL B/PL↓n.s.

D/NL B/PL

anti-Semitism

These results find their expression in extent of explained variance:
Between 40 and 50% of the variance of informative identity style is explained by self-awareness – but not at all in the Netherlands. For tolerance about 20% of the variance is explained by identity style and self-awareness, but outstanding less in Luxembourg. The explained variance of xenophobia and anti-Semitism is about 20%, too, but there are exceptions:
In Denmark there is an outstanding high value for xenophobia and outstanding low value for anti-Semitism. And in Luxembourg, The Czech Republic and Poland it is outstandingly low for both constructs.

Explained Variance

	N	inf. ID-style	tolerance	xenophobia	anti-Semitism
		self-awareness	inf. ID-style + self-awareness	tolerance + inf. ID-style + self-awareness	tolerance + inf. ID-style + self-awareness
Germany West	436	.41	.22	.25	.14
Germany East	342	.54	.19	.19	.26
Denmark	152	.31	.19	.38	.06
The Netherlands	126	.09	.20	.17	.15
Belgium	122	.57	.23	.18	.15
Luxemburg	199	.44	.12	.08	.03
Switzerland	523	.51	.19	.17	.21
Austria	507	.40	.20	.16	.20
Czech Republic	171	.40	.26	.11	.06
Poland	261	.51	.25	.06	.06

Keeping all these results in mind it could now be expected, that in multiple group comparison there is no fit between the models of the countries. The best fit is between the German speaking countries, but nevertheless it is not satisfying at all.

Examples:
Model Fit Multiple Group Comparison

	Fit-Indices		
	RMSEA	**CFI**	**NNFI**
All over Europe	0.201	0.114	0.082
Germany West-East	0.091	0.772	0.755
The Netherlands -Belgium	0.132	0.514	0.479
Czech Republic - Poland	0.117	0.540	0.507
Switzerland - Austria	0.080	0.846	0.834
Germany - Switzerland - Austria	0.088	0.827	0.817

Discussion
Main results
The main results are as follows:

In all countries there is a positive interrelation between self-awareness and informative identity style, a negative interrelation between tolerance and out-group devaluation, and self-awareness and/or informative identity style predicts tolerance in positive way. Just in a few countries there is a negative interrelation of self-awareness and xenophobia or anti-Semitism or informative identity style directly predicts anti-Semitism in negative way. In most countries informative identity style directly predicts xenophobia or anti-Semitism in positive way. But in general the explained variance of out-group devaluation through reflecting self is low and is very different throughout the European countries.
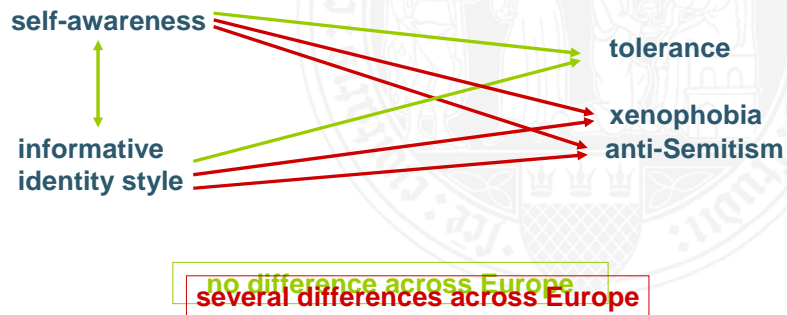
The hypothesis has to be evaluated as follows:

It was correct that there is a strong relation between awareness of oneself and reflection about the things in the world. It was right, that both variables increase tolerance. It was right just for some countries that to be aware of oneself reduces xenophobia and anti-Semitism.

But it was not right, that in-depth reflecting on what happens in the world reduces xenophobia and anti-Semitism: in several countries this relation is just inverse, to reflect on the things in the world increases xenophobia and anti-Semitism.

Furthermore, the second hypothesis has to be rejected: The findings do not reflect cross-cultural mechanisms.

Evaluation of Hypothesis

self-awareness → tolerance

informative identity style → xenophobia, anti-Semitism

no difference across Europe
several differences across Europe

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Conclusion

Thus I conclude that the phenomena of out-group devaluation are only partly affected by cognitive mechanisms and it has to be assumed, that cultural factors play a more prominent role.

Thank You for Your Attention!

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