

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Collective identity assets for psychological well-being in Slovene minority and Italian majority adolescents in Italy

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BACKGROUND

We examined core assets of collective identity for enhanced psychological well-being among hardly investigated Slovene ethnic minority and Italian majority youth in Italy. The Slovene minority is an autochthonous minority living in Italy since the 6th century.

PARTICIPANTS AND PROCEDURE

We tested a model based on the notion that collective identity derives from familial, ethnic and religious identities as important sources of identification for youth in line with prior work on the salience and relations among these sources. Participants were 114 Slovene and 144 Italian adolescents (aged 14 to 18 years old) living in the North-East of Italy. They filled in standardized measures on ethnic, national, familial and religious identity, the Satisfaction with Life Scale and the Positive Affective Schedule.

RESULTS

Path models showed that stronger collective identity was related to higher scores of perceived psychological well-being. Interestingly, for the Slovene minority youth, ethnic Slovenian identity was unrelated to collective identity. Overall, among all youth, all identity components loaded into a single factor of collective identity, confirming previous studies with bicultural minority youth.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings shed light on the path linking multiple aspects of collective identities together to adolescents' well-being and are useful in pragmatic terms for improving and facilitating assets of individual and social/collective well-being and functioning of youth.

KEY WORDS

familial identity; ethnic identity; religious identity; Slovene minority; Italy; well-being; adolescents

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BACKGROUND

Collective identity is a multidimensional concept including self-identification, evaluation, salience, importance, affective attachment and commitment towards a social group category as well as behaviors towards one's group (Ashmore, Deaux, & McLaughlin-Volpe, 2004; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). The intersecting domains of collective identity are socially embedded in an individual's social relationships as posited by the collective identity framework (Ashmore et al., 2004). Similarly, the ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 2005) posits that developmental outcomes result from interactions an individual has with his or her environments. Based on the collective identity (Ashmore et al., 2004), social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) and ecological frameworks (Bronfenbrenner, 2005), this paper focuses on ethnic, familial, and religious identities, which have been recognized as important aspects of self-definition and belonging to proximate social groups (Cheek, 1989). In fact, extant empirical work has found that these identities are positively correlated with self-concept and psychological well-being for ethnic minority youth (Crocetti, Schwartz, Fermani, Klimstra, & Meeus, 2011; Dimitrova, Bender, Chasiotis, & van de Vijver, 2012; Dimitrova, Chasiotis, Bender, & van de Vijver, 2014; Dimitrova, Aydinli, Chasiotis, Bender, & van de Vijver, 2015; Dimitrova et al., 2016; Fuligni & Flook, 2005; Farrow, King, & White, 2004; Lopez, Huynh, & Fuligni, 2011; Smith & Silva, 2011) and negatively with depression and anxiety (Crocetti, Rubini, & Meeus, 2008).

Despite the recognized importance of collective identity and its relevance for the development of positive outcomes, such as psychological, social, educational and physical healthy behaviors, sense of security, support and access to social networks (Eder, Giesen, Schmidtke, & Tambini, 2002), research so far has been mostly focused on single components rather than on their combination. Moreover, there is a tendency to compare majority groups of the host society with immigrant communities, whereas fewer studies take into consideration majority groups in comparison with national minorities, i.e., ethnic groups who live in one country, but are simultaneously ethnic kins of the population of another, often neighboring country. Since collective identity fosters positive and resilient developmental trajectories, it is important to advance our understanding on its distinctive as well as joint contribution as a resource that enhances youth well-being (Russo, Murrrough, Han, Charney, & Nestler, 2012; Seery, 2011). Developmental assets such as skills, experiences, relationships, and behaviors that facilitate healthy development and their unfolding among minority youth have been so far relatively understudied (Bialystok,

Majumder, & Martin, 2003; García Coll et al., 1996). With the present work, we bridge the gap in the literature by adopting a novel comparative analysis of the effects of three core identities (i.e., ethnic, familial, and religious) as comprising one collective identity factor relevant for well-being of autochthonous ethnic minority youth in Italy (Dimitrova et al., 2012; Dimitrova, Chasiotis, Bender, & van de Vijver, 2013; Dimitrova et al., 2014, 2016).

ETHNIC, FAMILIAL AND RELIGIOUS COMPONENTS OF COLLECTIVE IDENTITY

In this section we describe the conceptualizations of each collective identity component distinctively, and provide a rationale for considering them all parts of a joint collective identity construct. The present study follows the argumentation adopted in previous studies in which a single latent variable of collective identity with positive loadings for ethnic, familial, and religious identities was positively associated with well-being (Dimitrova et al., 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016). These core domains were chosen because, in the literature, minority members have shown to exhibit stronger ethnic, familial and religious identities (Lopez et al., 2011) and because these aspects are considered to increase feelings of coherence, positive self-evaluation, and belongingness in proximal social groups and, in turn, well-being.

Ethnic identity is the process of sharing common origin, descent, history and culture with a certain ethnic group to which the person feels cognitively and affectionately to belong (Verkuyten, 2005). It also refers to the significance and meaning of ethnicity and ethnic self-identification to one's life (Roccas & Brewer, 2002; Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous, 1998) as well as to shared behavioral practices with the in-group, such as language, religion and cultural behaviors (Phinney, 1989, 1990, 1992). Ethnic identity has been conceived as a fluid concept developed in interactions with others in a given society in different historical, political, socio-economic contexts and times (Roccas & Brewer, 2002; Umaña-Taylor, 2011). It represents a crucial aspect of identity, especially salient for ethnic minority adolescents (Ponterotto, Gretchen, Utsey, Stracuzzi, & Saya, 2003), related to feelings of distinctiveness, belongingness, commitment and shared values with the in-group. In that sense, ethnic identity is among the most important developmental tasks (French, Seidman, Allen, & Aber, 2006), as a stress-buffering resource that equips members of ethnic minority groups with a sense of support and strength facilitating a positive view of the self (Phinney & Ong, 2007), psychological adjustment (Costigan, Koryzma, Hua, & Chance, 2010), and life satisfaction (Yap, Settles, & Pratt-Hyatt, 2011).

Ethnic identity is also closely related to familial identity and has been linked to orientations towards familism (Kiang & Fuligni, 2009). Ethnic identity is formed, constructed and reconstructed through a process of socialization, starting within one's primary social group, the family. Therefore, family dynamics, relationships, and values an individual grew up in or is exposed to relate to identity development (e.g., ethnic or religious identity), particularly in adolescence. A strong *familial identity* refers to the perception of the familial group as a supportive resource (Arends-Tóth & van de Vijver, 2008; Bagger, Li, & Gutek, 2008). Particularly for ethnic minority groups, familial identity has been found to be a good stress buffer (Masood, Okazaki, & Takeuchi, 2009) and a relevant determinant of positive adjustment outcomes (Fuligni & Flook, 2005). As we focus on the environments that are closer to an adolescent's daily life, we consider that the family is the first and most salient social in-group to which a person belongs and the primary environment for conveying ethno-cultural learning, cultural values and practices, heritage and national language, internalization of the ethnic group history, and the development of ethnic and religious identity (Helms, 2007; Lay et al., 1998; Phinney & Ong, 2007).

Similarly, *religious identity* (i.e., the salience of religious beliefs, values and practices in one's life; Verkuyten & Yildiz, 2007) is a relevant identity component dependent on socialization processes and transmission of values, beliefs, and commitments (Kurien, 2004; Lövheim, 2012; Min, 2010). Religious identity has protective and health-enhancing effects (Bartkowski, Xu, & Levin, 2008; Wagener, Furrow, King, Leffert, & Benson, 2003), being positively associated with prosocial attitudes, social responsibility and emotional self-regulation (Cheung & Yeung, 2011).

COLLECTIVE IDENTITY AND WELL-BEING

Existing empirical evidence suggests that ethnicity, family and religion play an important role in shaping adolescents' psychological well-being. Research has consistently found that strong ethnic identity correlates with enhanced levels of well-being and adjustment outcomes for members of ethnic minority groups (Schwartz, Zamboanga, Weisskirch, & Rodriguez, 2009). Significant associations between religiosity and ethnic identity, as well as between a strong religious and familial identification and positive youth development, have also been documented (Furrow, King, & White, 2004).

In the current study, we examined how ethnic, familial and religious identities relate to well-being. Specifically, we explored how ethnic identity in conjunction with religion and family belonging relates to well-being of Slovene ethnic minority adolescents

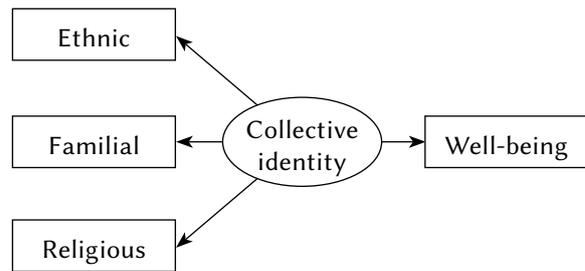


Figure 1. Conceptual model of collective identity.

compared to their Italian mainstream peers. In so doing, we have provided an integrated understanding of three identity components by developing and replicating a conceptual model of interrelationships of ethnic, familial and religious identity components in minority and majority adolescents and well-being (Figure 1). Well-being has been conceptualized as reflective cognitive evaluations regarding life satisfaction and positive affective reactions to life events (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985; Ponizovsky, Dimitrova, Schachner, & van de Schoot, 2013; Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988). We assumed that the model would apply to mainstream and minority adolescents from two ethnically diverse communities in Italy, whose current and historical situation vary considerably as described in the next section.

THE SLOVENE ETHNIC MINORITY IN ITALY

The present study was conducted in North-Eastern Italy, more precisely in the autonomous region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia, a location that meets several important criteria for this study. First, it allows a comparison of ethnic minority and majority groups co-habiting in a territory that has changed political borders among states (e.g., Austro-Hungary, Italy, former Yugoslavia) several times and has a turbulent history of ethno-political conflicts, culminating in the Italian Fascist forced assimilation/Italianization of the Slovenes and violent repression of the Slovene culture and language in the 1920s (Wohinz & Troha, 2001). The Slovenes are an autochthonous/national minority living in the region since the 6th century. Yet historical traumas have left long-term intergroup tensions affecting ethnic and national identity. The Slovene minority in Italy is the largest historical minority, estimated to number between 50,000 and 183,000 out of a regional population of 1.2 million (Minority Rights Group International, 2008). This minority is composed of Italian citizens belonging to the Slovene ethnic community, who are nowadays entitled by the national Constitution and international treaties to special collective rights and legal protection, inter alia, expression of their Slovenian culture, political representation

and minority language use. The Slovene language is co-official along with Italian in municipalities with significant presence of the autochthonous Slovene minority. Public usage of Slovene with the authorities and visual bilingualism in this area are permitted and protected by minority protection laws (Law n. 482/1999 and Law n. 38/2001). Members of the Slovene minority are entitled to primary and secondary education in their native language, as well as to radio and television programs, daily newspapers, magazines, local governmental, cultural and educational organizations in Slovene language (Kosic, Medeot, & Vidau, 2013).

A second relevant aspect of this minority is that the Slovene minority lives along the border with Slovenia, the neighboring country with which inhabitants the Slovene minority in Italy shares common origins, language and culture. Slovenia became an independent country only in 1991, changing its profile from the former communist Yugoslavia. In 2004, the country joined the European Union, an event which appeared to further positively affect Slovene minority members' sense of belonging and identification with the Slovene culture, especially among the younger generation (Kosic, 2013; Kosic & Caudek, 2005).

A third relevant aspect is that most of the Italian citizens, both from the Slovenian minority and the Italian majority, are raised in the Roman Catholic religion, with a percentage that is significantly higher (over 90% of citizens) than in other European Union member states (with an average of 49%). Religion influences the daily life of people, values and behavior, even when people do not consider themselves practicing believers (Vignoli & Salvini, 2014). These aspects all together allow us to study in an ideal "natural laboratory" (Kosic, 2011) the collective identity components under investigation in this study.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

The major goal of the present study was to examine collective identity components in adolescents from different ethnic backgrounds in Italy. Specifically, we investigated ethnic, familial and religious components and their relation to adolescent well-being. In doing so, two primary research questions guided our study: 1) Are there differences in ethnic Slovene and Italian identity within the Slovene-Italian minority adolescents? 2) What is the structural relationship of these identity components in minority and majority groups as related to psychological well-being?

With regard to the first question and based on previous studies on ethnic identity salience in minority groups (Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind, & Vedder,

2001; Ponterotto et al., 2003), we anticipated that Slovene ethnic identity would be more pronounced than Italian national identity for Slovene-Italian youth (Hypothesis 1). To our knowledge, there is no prior research on identity formation within this minority, but considering its distinctive characteristics of ethnic conflicts and strong attachment to the Slovene culture, it is reasonable to expect specific differences in this direction. We did not expect any significant group difference between groups in religious and familial identities. Therefore, Slovene minority and Italian majority adolescents were not expected to differ in terms of their familial and religious identity. We base this reasoning on further cross-cultural evidence in 17 countries, where it has been found that in cultures with a medium level of religiosity, such as the Italian one, adolescents' religiosity was more positively related to their family orientation than it was in cultures with a very low or a very high level of religiosity (Mayer & Trommsdorff, 2012; Mayer et al., 2015).

With regards to the second research question, we expected that collective identity of the Slovene-Italian adolescents would be represented by four factors of Slovene and Italian ethnic, familial and religious identity positively related to well-being (Hypothesis 2). The same model is assumed to replicate in the Italian group with three identity components related to Italian, familial and religious identity, respectively. This expectation is based on the model previously studied with diverse ethnic minority samples, which showed that ethnic, familial, and religious group as core elements of collective identity are associated with well-being among minority youth (Dimitrova et al., 2016).

PARTICIPANTS AND PROCEDURE

Participants were 114 Slovene minority and 144 Italian majority adolescents (aged 14 to 21 years) living in the North-East of Italy in the cities of Trieste and Gorizia (Table 1). The adolescent groups in this study differed in terms of age, with Slovene youth being a year older than their majority counterparts, $F(1, 253) = 35.87, p < .001$. The groups did not differ in terms of gender, $\chi^2(1, N = 255) = .01, p = .908$. All questionnaires were translated from English into Italian and Slovene by four bilingual speakers following the procedure for establishment of construct equivalence across ethnic groups (van de Vijver & Leung, 1997). In addition to the parent informed consent form, local school authorities and teachers were informed about the purpose and methods of the study. Upon approval, students were recruited during normal teaching time. The questionnaires were presented only in Italian, because all minority students agreed to choose this language version.

MEASURES

The *Socio-Demographic Questionnaire* concerned information on ethnic belonging, country of birth, gender and age.

The *Collective Identity Scale – Self Report (CIS-SR)* developed by Dimitrova and colleagues (2014, 2015) was used. The scale investigates three identity components of ethnic, familial and religious dimensions of identity. Ethnic identity items were adapted from the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM; Phinney, 1992), while familial and religious identity items were adapted from a measure developed by Kiang and colleagues (Kiang, Yip, & Fuligni, 2008). For the Slovene minority group, the ethnic identity scale comprised items referring to both ethnic Slovenian and Italian national identity aspects. The number of items varied among groups, with a total of 42 ethnic identity items for the Slovene minority respondents and 21 items for the Italian majority youth. The familial and religious identity scales had the same format, with 21 items for each scale referring to religious self-categorization, attachment, evaluation, importance, and involvement. Answers were given on 5-point Likert scale (1 – *completely disagree*, 5 – *completely agree*), so that higher scores would indicate higher levels of the respective identity construct. Sample items for ethnic identity include “I consider myself Slovene/Italian”, “I participate in Slovene/Italian cultural practices”, as well as for familial “I see problems of my family as my problems”, “I have a strong sense of belonging to my family” and religious identity “Being part of my religious community has much to do with how I feel about myself”, “When I need help, I can count on my religious community”. Internal consistencies were .93 for the Italian and .98 for the Slovene sample.

Psychological Well-Being. In the literature, two independent components of positive subjective well-being have been identified referring to emotional and cognitive-judgmental aspects: positive affect and life satisfaction. On the basis of these considerations, the following two measures of well-being were applied.

The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) (Diener et al., 1985) for the measurement of life satisfaction as a cognitive-judgmental process was used. The SWLS measures global life satisfaction with 5 items evaluated on a 7-point scale (1 – *strongly disagree*, 7 – *strongly agree*). Sample items include “In most ways my life is close to my ideal”, “I am satisfied with life”, “If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing”. Internal consistencies (Cronbach’s α) for the SWLS scale were .77 for the Italian and .79 for the Slovenian sample, respectively.

The Positive Affective Schedule (PA) by Watson, Clark and Tellegen (1988) to provide a brief measure of positive affect was applied. The scale consists of

Table 1

Descriptive statistics of the sample by ethnic group

	Slovene (n = 114)	Italian (n = 144)
Age		
Range	15-21	14-20
M (SD)	17.30 (1.08)	16.31 (1.47)
Gender, %		
Boys	52	53
Girls	48	47
Country of birth, %		
Italy	75	98
Slovenia	–	–
Other	18	2
CIS-SR, M (SD)		
Slovene	3.38 (0.88)	–
Italian	2.59 (0.89)	3.23 (0.75)
Familial	3.58 (0.84)	4.04 (0.72)
Religious	2.28 (0.97)	2.15 (1.08)
Well-being, M (SD)		
SWLS	4.52 (1.26)	4.59 (1.21)
PA	3.10 (0.85)	3.17 (0.75)

Note. CIS-SR – Collective Identity Scale – Self Report, SWLS – Satisfaction with Life Scale, PA – Positive Affect.

10 descriptors of mood states (e.g., enthusiastic, active) referring to positive feelings. Participants are asked to rate on a 5-point scale (1 – *very slightly*, 5 – *extremely*) the extent to which they experienced each mood state during the past two weeks. Internal consistencies for the scale were .82 for the Italian and .85 for the Slovene sample, respectively.

RESULTS

Preliminary analyses explored missing data patterns across samples. The response rate was very high among youth (98%) and missing data across measures ranged from 4% (Italians) to 2% (Slovenes). Missing values analysis (i.e., Little’s MCAR test) showed non-significant results, suggesting that these data were missing completely at random. Additional preliminary analyses tested for cultural equivalence among groups. Structural equivalence was

evaluated with Tucker's ϕ coefficient (above 0.90 acceptable and above 0.95 excellent) (van de Vijver & Leung, 1997) and checked through comparing each group factor solution. The values of Tucker's ϕ values across groups ranged from 0.99 to 1.00 for measures of identity and well-being. We can conclude that cultural groups showed a very good structural equivalence even if we do not aim to perform group comparisons. Further, we tested the study hypotheses in two main steps. We will first present the results from comparative analyses within the group of Slovene-Italian adolescents (see Table 2). We will then proceed with analysis concerning the test of the conceptual model on collective identity and subjective well-being among groups.

First, we explored mean differences in ethnic identity components within the Slovene minority group by running paired sample *t*-tests. In line with expectations, Slovene ethnic identity was more salient compared to their Italian identity, $t(115) = 6.29$, $p < .001$. Second, the association between collective identity components and psychological well-being was examined in a path model using AMOS (Arbuckle, 2009) with the χ^2 goodness-of-fit (ideally the *p* value should not be statistically significant), the error-based root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) (ideally less than or equal to 0.08), and the comparative fit index (CFI) (ideally close to 1.00) as model fit indicators (Milfont & Fischer, 2010). A first path model was implemented for the Slovene group with four identity components (Slovene, Italian, familial and religious) as predictors for well-being. The model showed an adequate fit, $\chi^2 = 9.46$, $df = 4$, $p = .221$, RMSEA = .055, CI (.00-.08), CFI = .965. According to expectations, Slovene, Italian, familial and religious identity formed one latent factor of collective identity positively related to well-being, $\beta = .24$, $p < .01$. Yet, Slovene identity was not significantly related to well-being (upper panel of Figure 2). A second path model was implemented in the Italian majority group with Italian, familial

and religious identity forming one collective identity factor related to well-being. The model had an adequate fit, $\chi^2 = 4.80$, $df = 4$, $p = .308$, RMSEA = .030, CI (.00-.01), CFI = .991 (lower panel of Figure 2). We also tested a concurrent model to see if there was a direct link between Slovene ethnic identity and well-being, but the results remained unmodified. This model had an adequate fit, $\chi^2 = 7.51$, $df = 6$, $p = .275$, RMSEA = .047, CI (.00-.01), CFI = .978. In line with the established cut-off criteria, we achieved a good fit for all models tested (Milfont & Fischer, 2010). We can conclude that collective identity components as correlates of well-being show a common composition for minority and majority adolescents, but this is not entirely the case for the Slovene group, where ethnic and national identity assume opposite connotations, with the Italian identity positively associated with well-being, contrary to the relationship between Slovene ethnic identity and well-being.

DISCUSSION

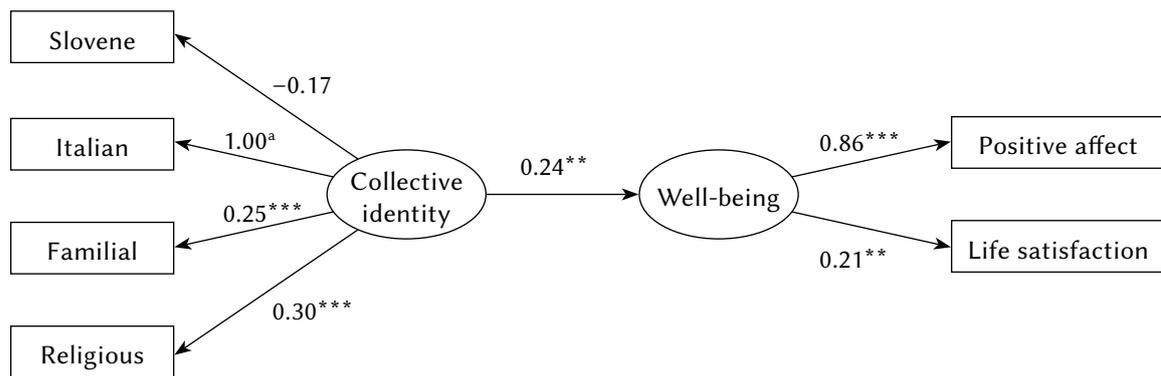
The purpose of this study was to examine to what extent a composite measure of collective identity (ethnic, familial and religious identity) is related to well-being in Slovene minority and Italian majority adolescents in Italy. The findings were consistent with expectations and provided support for previous studies (Dimitrova et al., 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016). The collective identity functioned as an assembled latent factor predicting well-being in both groups. As expected, the Slovene ethnic identity was more salient than the national Italian identity in the Slovene minority group, confirming that individuals from minority groups in multiethnic contexts show a stronger sense of ethnic identity than their national majority peers (Kiang, Yip, & Fuligni, 2008; Phinney & Alipuria, 1990; Smith & Silva, 2011; Tsai & Fuligni, 2012). Thus, ethnic identity seems to be a more important social identity aspect for them (Sellers,

Table 2
Correlations between collective identity and well-being per ethnic group

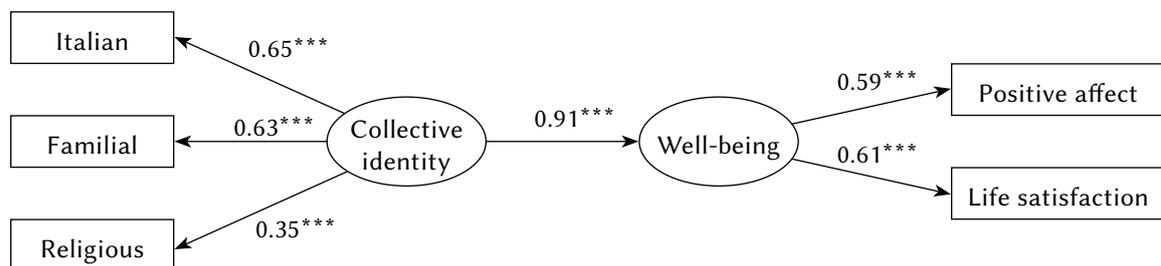
Variable	Slovene minority						Italian majority					
	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.
1. SLO_ID	–						–	–	–	–	–	–
2. ITA_ID	–.17	–					–	–				
3. FAM_ID	.42**	.26**	–				–	.39**	–			
4. REL_ID	.23*	.29**	.10	–			–	.31**	.18*	–		
5. PA	.06	.20*	.17	–.13	–		–	.37**	.34**	.13	–	
6. SWLS	.13	.09	.24*	–.04	.14	–	–	.32**	.40**	.22*	.36**	–

Note. SLO_ID – Slovene Identity; ITA_ID – Italian Identity; FAM_ID – Familial Identity; REL_ID – Religious Identity; PA – Positive Affect; SWLS – Satisfaction with Life Scale. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

a) Slovene minority adolescents



b) Italian majority adolescents



Note. ^aItalian identity was fixed at 1 in the unstandardized model. ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Figure 2. Path models of collective identity and well-being.

Rowley, Chavous, Shelton, & Smith, 1997). Research stemming from the social identity theory has comprehensively shown that ethnic identity becomes salient for minority members when interacting with the majority group (Smith & Leach, 2004; Waters, 1990). Therefore, the strong ethnic identity among Slovenes may reflect a tendency to stress their distinctiveness from the majority outgroup, and to maintain a clear sense of self within an inclusive group of moderate size and a positive self-view (Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999; Leonardelli & Brewer, 2001; Pickett & Leonardelli, 2006), as well as being a counter-reaction to perceived marginalization, discrimination and hostility (Leach, Rodriguez Mosquera, Vliek, & Hirt, 2010; Verkuyten & Nekuee, 1999).

Interestingly, the Slovene ethnic identity did not contribute to well-being as much as the Italian national identity. As mentioned in the introduction, major theoretical frameworks (Ashmore et al., 2004; Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Tajfel & Turner, 1986) suggest that the extent to which ethnic identity becomes situationally salient depends on the wider context in which the personal is embedded. It also matters how this context defines minority-majority status as well as similarities and differences among groups (McGuire, McGuire, Child, & Fujioka, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Turner, Oakes, Haslam, & McGarty, 1994). For example, Phinney (1990) suggested

that ethnic identity manifests in a more visible and salient way in people who live in a multiethnic environment, and particularly in individuals who perceive themselves as minorities in a majority context, because they would experience their ethno-cultural differences at a more conscious level. A certain and clear ethnic identity may facilitate emotional security and a sense of advantage in living in a multicultural society and, in turn, good feelings about themselves and emotional well-being (Martinez & Dukes, 1997). This is not necessarily always the case in that, as in our study, ethnic identity did not contribute to well-being as the national identity. We can reason that ethnic identity can provide either benefits or disadvantages. The salience of minority group membership may increase the perceived threat to which Slovene minority members react in different ways (Kosic, 2012). In an attempt to maintain a positive self-view, individuals can adopt different strategies, such as increasing either national or ethnic identity, switching between them depending on the context or finding a good combination of both (Benet-Martínez, 2012). The literature supports the view that ethnic minorities can be bicultural in maintaining their ethnic identity while adapting their behaviors to fit into the mainstream culture without compromising either ethnic or national identity. We can reflect on our findings, in light of the social identity theory (Tajfel

& Turner, 1986), that people strive to maintain a positive self-image by identifying with in-groups that can satisfy the universal needs for assimilation and differentiation. On one hand, identification with the dominant group might serve as a protective identity to enhance self-esteem and subjective well-being. On the other hand, it might reflect a good level of cultural integration, in that, according to the acculturation models, endorsement of both ethnic and mainstream culture correlates with more positive psychological outcomes (Berry, 1980; Sam & Berry, 2006). In fact, dual identity, i.e., the successful integration of one's ethnic as well as national identity, facilitates psychological well-being (Amiot, Terry, Wirawan, & Grice, 2010) by providing social support networks (Mok, Morris, Benet-Martínez, & Karakitapoğlu-Aygün, 2007). Moreover, we were able to show that familial, religious and ethnic group identities can act as relevant assets for enhanced well-being for youth navigating through the potentially challenging period of adolescence.

CAVEATS AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

Despite being a useful contribution in testing a novel collective identity model in relation to the well-being of hardly investigated ethnic minority and majority adolescents in Italy, this study is limited in several ways. First, multiple identities are fluid processes influenced by positive or negative experiences and interactions in the social contexts in a given time (Cross, 1978; Huot & Rudman, 2010; Umaña-Taylor, 2011). As we could not entirely control for these social aspects (e.g., quality and frequency of interactions and time spent with friends and people from the Slovene minority or Italian majority group, social distance between groups), the findings in our study need to be considered carefully. The reasons why the ethnic Slovene identity was not significantly related to well-being in the composite measure of collective identities can only be inferred with great caution at the present time. Slovenes in Italy are defined and self-defined with various labels/categories, but a majority of adolescents in previous surveys (Kosic, 2011, 2012, 2013) would self-identify with a complex dual identity as Italian citizens of Slovene ethnic background, stressing the primary belonging to the Italian community, and at the same time proudly acknowledging ethnic identity components of Slovenian language, culture, and origins. Most of them would identify specifically as "slovenski zamejci" (in Slovenian), meaning "Slovenes living beyond the border" (of Slovenia). This latter label amplifies the local geographical sense of attachment as a relevant part of a composite collective identity, influenced by familial relations and socialization processes. It is therefore very likely that we would have obtained different results if the ter-

ritorial aspect of the "Slovenian" ethnic identity had been taken into consideration, allowing respondents the distinction between "Slovenes from Slovenia" and "Italian citizens, members of the Slovene minority in Italy" (Kosic, 2011, 2013; Pertot & Kosic, 2014). Moreover, the examined components of collective identity are rather fluid and dynamic, and can change with time and in different contextual situations (Phinney & Ong, 2007). Further investigation is needed on collective identity in the transition from adolescence to adulthood. Qualitative research exploring in detail the relationship among collective identity domains might help, as well as repeated-measures designs. This will address the limitations of the cross-sectional design that does not allow us to establish causal pathways among identities investigated here. Additionally, it may be useful to collect data in different contextual situations such as school, home, ethnic or national peer-group activity. Further, directly testing an ecological model (e.g., Bronfenbrenner, 2005) that focuses on the environmental and contextual influences might help to better understand such influences on adolescents' well-being (e.g., school teachers, parents, grandparents, siblings, peers, neighbors, etc.).

An additional study limitation is the fact that the Slovene minority sample was recruited only in the provinces of Gorizia and Trieste, excluding the third province where the minority is historically present, namely Udine. Udine is a city with different contextual situations (e.g., the presence of a Slovene-Italian bilingual school, more episodes of discrimination and the emergence of local identity with Italian rather than the Slovenian belonging, since this territory spent more time as part of Italy (Luthar, 2008)). It would be worth enlarging the sample to include this territory and reinforce the generalizability of the present results.

CONCLUSIONS

Given that ethnic, familial and religious identity are related to an individual's well-being (Ibrahim, 2010; Ibrahim & Ohnishi, 2001; Umaña-Taylor, Alfaro, Bámaca, & Guimond, 2009), our findings bring relevant implications for policy, practice and intervention for youngsters going through the critical and sensitive developmental period of identity formation. We bring relevant input to further focus on well-being and mental health (e.g., stress, internalizing or externalizing symptoms) related to multiple identities to determine proper interventions that can be useful in counseling (Benet-Martínez, 2012). Policy and practice interventions should promote multiple social identities as resources and assets to adolescents as these identities can facilitate the development of positive identities. Collective identity also has the potential to foster positive self-esteem, academic achieve-

ment, psychological and socio-cultural adjustment, and adaptation to adversities such as discrimination or prejudice, to which minority members are generally more vulnerable. In that sense, collective identity may increase individual self-regulatory and coping skills (Seery, 2011; Umaña-Taylor, Gonzales-Backen, & Guimond, 2009) and attenuate problematic developmental outcomes associated with the risks in environments the adolescent try to fit in (Garcia Coll & Magnusson, 1997).

In conclusion, this study offers unique new insights to guide research and interventions on collective identity of minority and majority adolescents in Italy. Our results also suggest that a composite collective identity factor can be used in a parsimonious model to study psychologically beneficial effects of social identity core aspects on well-being of ethnic minority groups. What is more, finding meaningful affiliative interactions that could promote a better quality of life in youth will help them to cope better with identity challenges they face in multicultural contexts. We provide valuable indications in that regard, affirming that collective identity is a positive resource for youth with different ethnic backgrounds in Italy.

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