

Ethnocultural diversity of immigrants' personal social networks, bicultural identity integration and global identification

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There is some evidence that ethnocultural diversity encourages superordinate levels of categorisation, such as feeling identified with people globally. A remaining question is what *type* of engagement with diversity facilitates this link and *why*. We use immigrants' personal social network data and examine the link between global identification and ethnocultural diversity among closer relationships (i.e. *strong* network contacts, such as friendships) and more distant ones (i.e. *weak* contacts, including neighbours and acquaintances). Furthermore, following exposure to diversity, individuals may internalise more than one culture and differ how they integrate their multiple cultural socialisation into the self (i.e. vary in their degree of bicultural identity integration). We thus test whether relational ethnocultural diversity is linked to a stronger global identification through either cultural *blendedness* (i.e. combining two cultures) or *harmony* (i.e. perceiving two cultures as compatible). Relying on a culturally diverse community sample of 216 immigrants residing in Barcelona (53% female, $M_{\text{age}} = 31$ years, $SD = 10.4$), we found that ethnocultural diversity among *strong* (but not *weak*) contacts was associated with stronger global identification and that this association is mediated by cultural harmony (but not blendedness). These results attest to the link between having ethnoculturally diverse close social relationships and superordinate identification.

Keywords: Personal social networks; Ethnocultural diversity; Global identification; Bicultural identity integration; Immigration.

“Our ability to reach unity in diversity will be the beauty and the test of our civilisation.”

Mahatma Gandhi

Exposure to diversity leads to cultural and psychological changes, which often result from both immigration and globalisation processes (Arnett, 2002; Chen et al., 2008). Immigration- and globalisation-based acculturation phenomena are undeniably intertwined: migration takes place in a context of social reality transformed by transnationalism (e.g. Vertovec, 2007)

and globalisation is an implication of increased mobility. Yet, surprisingly little is known about the implications that starting a new life abroad has for developing an identification with global culture. Acculturation research has been more concerned with understanding what predicts immigrants' identification with the heritage (i.e. their cultural origin) or the mainstream culture (i.e. the specific culture of the receiving country), or both. Migrants, who frequently represent devalued ethnic minority groups, may feel pressure to fit into the mainstream culture yet

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All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the Parc de Salut MAR Clinical Research Ethics Committee and with the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

Informed consent was obtained from all individual adult participants in this study.

enjoy less freedom to incorporate different and frequently conflicting cultural elements into their lives than international professionals or students (Chen et al., 2008). In socio-political contexts characterized by exclusionary immigration policies, becoming recognised as an ethnic minority and preserving one's cultural identity is often problematic. Instead, migrants are often expected to assimilate to the host culture. Under such circumstances, identifying with a superordinate category (i.e. global culture) may serve as an alternative identity management strategy (Kunst & Sam, 2013). Understanding global identification processes among immigrants, who are frequently at risk of social exclusion, is of utmost importance because superordinate, global identification may be an alternative to radicalisation and religious extremism (Lyons-Padilla et al., 2015) and instead foster appreciation of people of all cultures and their rights (see McFarland et al., 2019 for a review).

Engagement with ethnocultural diversity may be particularly relevant for developing a sense of identification with a global community (McFarland et al., 2019). Yet, a remaining question is what *type* of ethnocultural diversity is predictive of it. Consistent with the idea that deep (vs. superficial) engagement with a new culture is important in shaping our cognitions (Gołowska & Crisp, 2014), we see relational diversity—i.e. active and regular interpersonal involvement with culturally diverse others—as relevant to understanding complex identity configurations, such as a global identification. Research on contact (e.g. Davies et al., 2011) and social networks (e.g. Centola & Macy, 2007) suggests that close relationships, often based on trust and cooperation (e.g. friendships), are vital for immigrants' identity management. We thus propose that ethnocultural diversity among immigrants' *closer* personal relationships will be particularly predictive of having a global identification. We use personal social network data to operationalise relational diversity beyond explicit self-reports and look at diversity among closer (i.e. *strong* contacts, such as friends) and more distant relationships (i.e. *weak* contacts, including neighbours and acquaintances).

Further, as a result of exposure to ethnocultural diversity, immigrants may internalise more than one culture and yet also differ in the way they integrate their multiple cultural socialisation into the self (i.e. vary in their degree of bicultural identity integration or BII, see Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; Huynh et al., 2018). However, little is known about the extent to which BII goes along with a superordinate (global) identification. We thus test whether ethnocultural diversity is linked to a stronger global identification through BII (identity blendness, harmony, or both).

Contact with ethnocultural diversity and globalisation

Regardless of where they live, people may feel part of a worldwide, global community; that is, experience a psychological state of connectedness with others far beyond one's current geographical location, local communities, and personal relationships (McFarland et al., 2019). Importantly, people may also develop a sense of identification with a global culture—the focus of this study—which includes an awareness of the events, practices, models of lifestyle and consumption and information (symbols, images) that are developed in different parts of the world and shared transnationally (see Arnett, 2002). Thus, people may reshape and extend their identities and sense of self, create a sense of connection to combined, emerging “third” cultures and even achieve the highest level of social inclusiveness (Roccas & Brewer, 2002) when exposed to multiple cultural frameworks (e.g. Arnett, 2002; Mao & Shen, 2015). Indeed, contact with diverse others has been argued to change cognitive representations of ingroup and outgroup and promote positive responses to existing diversity (Allport, 1954). Some evidence suggests that ethnocultural diversity is linked to more inclusive, superordinate identity configurations among immigrants (e.g. Lubbers et al., 2007). Finally, recent studies confirm that diversity experiences, such as participation in a multicultural team (e.g. Erez et al., 2013), involvement in global networks (Grimalda et al., 2018), or multicultural experiences more broadly (Sparkman & Eidelman, 2018; Sparkman & Hamer, 2020), are associated with feeling identified with people globally.

The present research focuses on the ethnocultural diversity of immigrants' social relationships. It captures these interactions through a social network approach that provides an innovative tool for observing the nature of acculturating individuals' social relationships: Participants first list people with whom they regularly interact. Then, they answer questions about these individuals (e.g. their ethnocultural background) and their connections. In contrast, in traditional self-reports, participants directly rate their overall amount of contact or exposure to a specific group. In this sense, the network approach provides a less conspicuous way of studying social relations.

We test whether the type of relationship moderates the link between one's network diversity and the degree of identification with a global, international culture. Consistent with the idea of complex contagion, the change of more costly social behaviours or cognitions may require repeated social affirmation or reinforcement from multiple sources (Centola & Macy, 2007). Thus, we expect that engaging and frequent social interactions (vs. more casual ones) are particularly relevant for one's identification processes (see Mao & Shen, 2015), which may have crucial consequences for migrants' lives in a new

community. More precisely, we propose that people who share *strong ties*—that is, social relationships such as friendships, romantic relationships and family kin, typically characterised by high levels of trust, frequency of contact and affectivity—are highly relevant to each other (Centola & Macy, 2007) and thus also have a high potential to change their identity configurations. When these people who share strong ties are culturally different, then a more inclusive supraordinate sense of belonging may emerge and eventually strengthen a sense of connection with a global culture. Initial empirical evidence confirms that contact with diverse others leads to increases in global identity, especially under conditions of high trust in a team environment (Erez et al., 2013). In contrast, more distant contacts (*weak ties*; e.g. less frequent interactions with neighbours or acquaintances, which require less investment in the relationship) are less likely to influence each other (Centola & Macy, 2007). They would thus be less relevant for profound changes in one's social identity because the change of more costly social behaviours or cognitions requires a more meaningful engagement and more investment in a social relationship.

The role of identity integration

Culturally diverse social networks are also expected to contribute to identity integration. Accordingly, ethnocultural neighbourhood diversity is linked to more social identity complexity (Schmid et al., 2013) and some studies have shown a link between diverse intercultural networks and bicultural identity integration among ethnic minorities and immigrants (Mok et al., 2007; Repke & Benet-Martínez, 2018). Whereas Mok et al. (2007) pointed out the importance of having close relationships with diverse others (i.e. friendships), Repke and Benet-Martínez (2018) found that weak ties to different-ethnicity (i.e. host national) contacts are relevant predictors of immigrants' identity integration. However, these earlier studies did not analyse the link between BII and strong *and* weak diverse contacts in tandem and thus are inconclusive regarding the role of both for bicultural identity integration.

Previous research has also not examined whether BII is an explanatory mechanism linking ethnocultural diversity and global identification. Activating superordinate levels of categorisation may require an active integration of new cultural experiences and identities into the self (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; Chen et al., 2008). As a result of exposure to diversity, acculturating individuals might experience their different cultures as synergetic—i.e. blended and compatible—, while others may see them as highly distinct and conflictual (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; Huynh et al., 2018). Furthermore, cultural blendedness (vs. distance) and harmony (vs. conflict) have differential psychological

antecedents and correlates. The former reflects more perceptual (e.g. perceived overlap and permeability between the two cultures) and the second more affective (e.g. not feeling torn between dual cultural-group loyalties) elements of acculturation (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; Miramontez et al., 2008). For instance, Miramontez et al. (2008) found that cultural blendedness, rather than harmony, was consistently related to a perceived overlap between the social-personality traits attributed to mainstream and heritage culture members (and also the overlap between these two and social-personality self-attributes) and concluded that cultural blendedness is a reflection of identity complexity processes (Roccas & Brewer, 2002).

In the present study, we go further and test the joint consequences of cultural harmony and blendedness for a higher-order, inclusive identity configuration. We propose that cultural harmony and blendedness might be relevant predictors of the strength of global identification, which widens the range of identity inclusiveness, allowing one to see beyond one possible cultural membership. On the one hand, it may be logical to expect cultural blendedness to translate into more “intersecting” identity configurations, whereby “only the conjunction of two group identities constitutes the perceiver's ingroup” (see Figure 1a, Roccas & Brewer, 2002, p. 90). On the other hand, cultural harmony may mirror an even more complex and inclusive “merger” identity configuration (Figure 1d), which “goes beyond additivity of multiple ingroup memberships” and “in which non-convergent group memberships are simultaneously recognised and embraced in their most inclusive form” (Roccas & Brewer, 2002, p. 91). To our knowledge, only two studies so far showed a positive link between BII and global identification (Koc & Vignoles, 2016, 2018). However, this research did not differentiate between blendedness and harmony nor examined these processes in the context of relational diversity.

Present research

We examined ethnocultural diversity in the habitual social networks of a culturally diverse community sample of immigrants residing in Barcelona, Spain. Our goal was to examine whether having highly diverse social networks, including strong and weak relationships (i.e. friendships vs. casual acquaintances), is linked with more inclusive identity configurations (i.e. global identification). We tested whether BII (both cultural harmony and blendedness) explains the link between ethnocultural diversity and global identification. We expected diversity in immigrants' circles of strong bonds, such as friends and relatives, to be positively associated with global identification (H1). Furthermore, we predicted that cultural harmony and blendedness would explain the link between

ethnocultural diversity among strong ties and global identification (H2).

We selected four immigrant groups (i.e. Ecuadorians, Moroccans, Pakistani and Romanians) based on four criteria: (a) prevalence in the province of Barcelona; (b) worldwide geographic representativeness (Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America); (c) representativeness of two main religions (Christianity and Islam); and (d) representativeness of two linguistic traditions (Romance and Indo-Arabic; for further details see Repke & Benet-Martínez, 2018). To capture relational ethnocultural diversity, we considered the following groups: (a) coethnic contacts (same-ethnicity contacts); (b) host national contacts (Catalan and Spanish contacts); and (c) culturally diverse others.

METHOD

Participants and procedure

We relied on a community sample of 216 adults with an immigrant background who lived in the metropolitan area of Barcelona, Catalonia, Spain (53% female, $M_{\text{age}} = 31$ years, $SD = 10.4$). All participants were adult, foreign-born (90.3%), or with at least one parent born in Ecuador, Morocco, Pakistan, or Romania. Foreign-born participants had lived in Spain for 10 years on average ($M = 9.60$, $SD = 4.73$). Most of them had resided in Catalonia from the beginning of their migratory experience ($M = 8.58$, $SD = 4.16$).

The data collection took place in 2012. Based on advice from experts in Barcelona's associative scene, we located relevant cultural, religious and immigrant-related organisations from where we recruited a broad community sample of participants to fill in social network data and some self-reported measures (Repke & Benet-Martínez, 2018). For more details on the socio-demographic characteristics of this sample and procedure, see Supporting information (Table S1).

Measures

Ethnocultural diversity among strong and weak contacts

We used the *EgoNet* software (a programme for the collection, analysis and visualisation of personal social network data; McCarty, 2003) to elicit the regular social network contacts from our immigrant respondents: "Please, give us the names of 25 persons you know (of any culture or ethnicity), with whom you have had regular contact in the past two years, either face-to-face, by phone, mail or e-mail and whom you could still contact if you had to." Then, respondents answered questions about each contact's ethnocultural background ("What

is the ethnicity/culture of [name]?" and the relationship type with each contact ("What is your relationship with [name]?").

For ethnocultural background, respondents could choose between four answer categories: (a) Moroccan/Pakistani/Ecuadorian/Romanian; (b) Catalan; (c) Spanish; and (d) other. Based on these responses, we categorised the contacts into three groups: coethnic, host national (Catalan and Spanish contacts) and other contacts. For relationship type, participants selected one of eight categories: (a) immediate family (parents, siblings, children); (b) extended family (e.g. aunt, uncle, cousin); (c) partner, spouse, fiancé, boy-/girlfriend; (d) friend; (e) colleague from work or school; (f) person from the neighbourhood (e.g. living in your area or your house, shopkeeper); (g) acquaintance from church/mosque; and (h) other. We categorised immediate and extended family members, romantic partners and friends as *strong ties*. Colleagues from work/school, neighbours, acquaintances and others were grouped as *weak ties*.

Considering the contacts' ethnocultural background and their classification as strong or weak ties, we calculated two diversity measures. These diversity measures represent the probability that two randomly selected contacts were from different ethnocultural groups (i.e. coethnic, host national, or other contacts; see Repke & Benet-Martínez, 2018) among strong ties and weak ties. We calculated ethnocultural diversity among strong ties as follows:

$$\text{Diversity}_s = p_{cs} (1 - p_{cs}) + p_{hs} (1 - p_{hs}) + p_{os} (1 - p_{os}),$$

where p_{cs} is the proportion of coethnic, p_{hs} is the proportion of host national and p_{os} is the proportion of other contacts among strong ties. Likewise, we calculated ethnocultural diversity among weak ties as follows:

$$\text{Diversity}_w = p_{cw} (1 - p_{cw}) + p_{hw} (1 - p_{hw}) + p_{ow} (1 - p_{ow}),$$

where p_{cw} is the proportion of coethnics, p_{hw} is the proportion of host national and p_{ow} is the proportion of other contacts among weak ties. Using proportions instead of counts takes into account the network's overall number of strong and weak ties.

Bicultural identity integration

We used an abbreviated version of the Bicultural Identity Integration Scale—Version 2 (BIIS-2; Huynh et al., 2018) to assess the degree to which participants perceived their ethnic and host national (i.e. Catalan) cultures as blended and compatible versus compartmentalised and clashing. On a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 0 (*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*strongly agree*), five items

assessed cultural harmony (e.g. “I feel that [ethnic group] and Catalan cultures are compatible,” $\alpha = .68$) and five items reflected cultural blendedness (e.g. “I feel part of a combined culture,” $\alpha = .70$).

Global identification

Participants rated the strength of their identification with a global international culture, that is an awareness of the events, practices, styles and information that are shared transnationally (Arnett, 2002). Participants were asked to respond to the following question “Do you identify with (do you feel part of) the following cultural communities? Please indicate your degree of identification with these cultures and communities by circling the number you consider appropriate on this rating scale: global international culture” on a 7-point scale ranging from 0 (*none*) to 6 (*very strong*). For a discussion of the justification for and advantages of single-item measures of social identification, please, see Postmes et al. (2013). Please see Supporting information for more details about this measure.

Analytical strategy

We estimated a path model in Mplus 7.3 with a maximum likelihood estimator. We used the conventional goodness-of-fit criteria to assess the model fit: Comparative Fit index (CFI) and Tucker–Lewis index (TLI) $\geq .90$ and a Root-Mean-Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) $\leq .06$. We introduced ethnocultural diversity among strong ties and that among weak ties as two observed predictors and global identification was the outcome variable. Composite scores for harmony and blendedness were observed explanatory variables and were allowed to covary. Given that younger and more educated individuals were found to score higher on global identification (McFarland et al., 2019), we controlled our analyses for age and education. We applied bias-corrected bootstrapping with 5000 replacement samples to obtain confidence intervals for the indirect effects.

RESULTS

Path model: Ethnocultural diversity, BII and global identification

Detailed descriptive social network data (Table S2) and descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations for all variables under study (Table S3) can be found in Supporting information.

Regression results

Figure 1 shows the standardised regression coefficients for the main paths in the model and fit statistics.

The decomposition of unstandardised direct and total effects is presented in Table 1. Analyses revealed that, as expected, ethnocultural diversity among strong (but not weak) ties was positively associated with the strength of global identification (a significant total effect), which confirms H1. Ethnocultural diversity among strong ties was positively related to cultural harmony and blendedness, but diversity among weak ties was not significantly related to any of the BII dimensions. Cultural harmony (but not blendedness) predicted global identification.¹

Mediation analyses

Table 2 presents the decomposition of unstandardised indirect effects with bootstrapped confidence intervals. The analysis of indirect effects indicated that, controlling for age and education, ethnocultural diversity among *strong* (but not *weak*) relationships was associated with stronger global identification via cultural harmony but not blendedness, supporting H2. The more ethnoculturally diverse immigrants' close personal social networks were, the more compatible they considered their bicultural identities and thus, the stronger was their identification with a global culture. We did not find similar indirect effects with diversity among weak relationships.

DISCUSSION

This study examined the role played by ethnoculturally diverse personal social relationships and identity integration processes in predicting the strength of global cultural identification among immigrants. We found clear support, for the link between ethnocultural diversity involving closer social relationships (i.e. strong ties), usually richer in trust and support and global identification. Conversely, the benefit of having more casual, diverse networks (i.e. weak ties) for activating inclusive social identities was not clear. These findings tie well with previous literature suggesting that people extend their social identities due to exposure to multiple cultural frameworks (e.g. Arnett, 2002). Overall, our results are consistent with research wherein interactions with ethnocultural diversity foster more complex or more inclusive identity configurations (Schmid et al., 2013), also among members of minority groups (e.g. Lubbers et al., 2007; Mok et al., 2007), and promote feeling identified with people globally (e.g. Erez et al., 2013; Grimalda et al., 2018; Sparkman & Eidelman, 2018). However, to our knowledge, our study is the first to shed light on the type of relational ethnocultural diversity that may be particularly relevant to superordinate categorisation processes among ethnic minorities, such as immigrants.

The fact that only strong, but not weak, social relationships predicted identification with a global culture is worth discussing. Our findings are broadly consistent

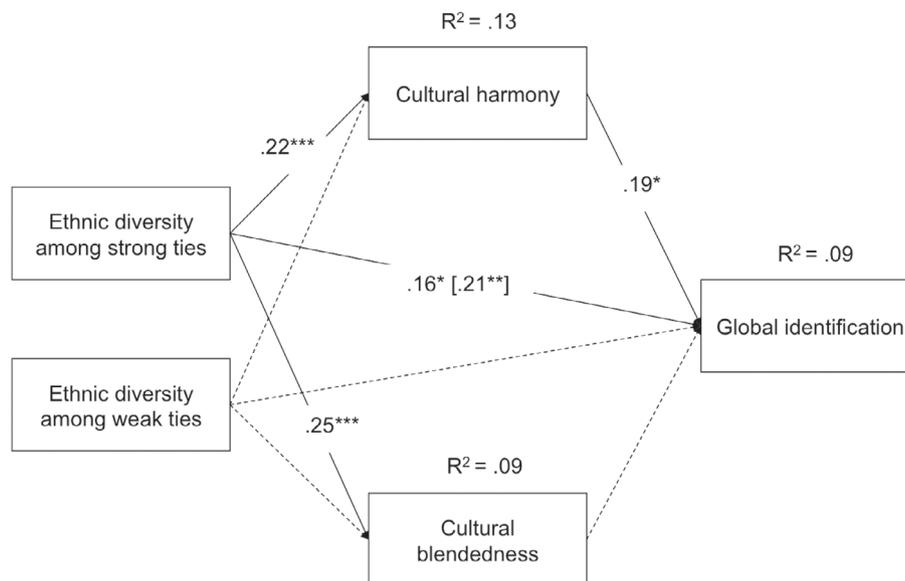


Figure 1. Findings from the path model ($N = 216$). Fit statistics: $\chi^2(df) = 0(0)$, $p < .001$, CFI = 1, TLI = 1, RMSEA = 0. Standardised estimates are presented. Non-significant paths are dashed lines. Controlled for age and education. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

TABLE 1
The decomposition of direct and total effects: Ethnocultural diversity, BII and global identification ($N = 216$)

	<i>B</i>	(<i>SE</i>)	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	95% <i>CI</i> [<i>LL</i> , <i>UL</i>]
<i>Total effects</i>					
Diversity among strong ties on global identification	2.01	(0.65)	3.09	.002	[0.74, 3.29]
Diversity among weak ties on global identification	-0.69	(0.50)	-1.38	.167	[-1.67, 0.29]
<i>Direct effects</i>					
Diversity among strong ties on harmony	1.00	(0.29)	3.41	.001	[0.42, 1.57]
Diversity among weak ties on harmony	0.40	(0.22)	1.78	.075	[-0.04, 0.84]
Diversity among strong ties on blendedness	1.28	(0.34)	3.81	<.001	[0.62, 1.94]
Diversity among weak ties on blendedness	-0.05	(0.26)	-0.21	.835	[-0.56, 0.45]
BII harmony on global identification	0.39	(0.16)	2.44	.015	[0.08, 0.70]
BII blendedness on global identification	0.09	(0.14)	0.61	.541	[-0.19, 0.36]
Diversity among strong ties on global identification	1.51	(0.67)	2.27	.023	[0.21, 2.82]
Diversity among weak ties on global identification	-0.84	(0.49)	-1.70	.089	[-1.81, 0.13]

Note: Controlled for age and education. *B* = non-standardised regression coefficient; *CI* = confidence interval; *LL* = lower limit; *SE* = standard error; *UL* = upper limit.

with the classic notion in social network theory of complex contagion: More costly or rigid social behaviours or cognitions may only be modified by repeated interactions with tighter, usually trustworthy and cooperative, contacts (e.g. Centola & Macy, 2007). These results are also concordant with existing organisational literature on international professionals, which argues that having a highly dense and redundant network helps migrants transcend the feeling of rootlessness, gain a sense of belonging to a close-knit global culture and develop multiculturalism in their cultural identity (Mao & Shen, 2015). Our data also align well with empirical organisational research evidence by Erez et al. (2013). They found that only trustworthy relationships within a multicultural team were associated with an increase in the strength of global

identification. These authors argued that only close and reliable relations with diverse others facilitate efficient communication (while reducing conflict) and increase the likelihood of getting to know each other and thus the sense of being part of a broader group category.

In contrast, the link between more casual relationships with diverse others and more inclusive or plural self-identifications seems to be less straightforward. In our study, ethnocultural diversity among the broader circle of social relationships, including colleagues from work or school, neighbours or acquaintances, was unrelated to the strength of global identification among immigrants. We speculate that this link may be conditional upon the quality of interactions with diverse others. While we can argue that strong ties usually involve positive and

TABLE 2
The decomposition of indirect effects: Ethnic diversity, BII and global identification ($N = 216$)

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	95% <i>CI</i> [<i>LL</i> , <i>UL</i>]
Diversity among strong ties on global identification via harmony	0.39	(0.21)	[0.09, 0.92]
Diversity among strong ties on global identification via blendedness	0.11	(0.20)	[-0.23, 0.55]
Diversity among weak ties on global identification via harmony	0.16	(0.11)	[0.00, 0.44]
Ethnic diversity among weak ties on global identification via blendedness	0.00	(0.05)	[-0.15, 0.06]

Note: *B* = non-standardised regression coefficient; *CI* = bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval; *LL* = lower limit; *SE* = standard error; *UL* = upper limit.

supportive relationships with diverse others, more casual interethnic encounters may be both positive (i.e. cooperative) and negative (i.e. conflictual) in nature. If the contact established with members of other cultures is negative or competitive, people may prefer to identify in a more exclusive way and draw clear boundaries between “us” and “them,” probably because it increases the salience of group competition and thus one’s group exclusive membership (Paolini et al., 2010). Hence, the moderating role of existing conflict is an issue for future research to explore. For instance, one could expect that in the case of immigrant populations, acculturative stress or perceived discrimination, known to negatively predict cultural harmony (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005), may hinder the benefits of exposure to diversity, including superordinate identity processes (e.g. sense of belonging to a global culture). In the current research, we decided not to investigate these conditional indirect effects because of insufficient sample size. We hope that future studies will fruitfully explore this issue further.

In parallel, we also found that only ethnoculturally diverse habitual social networks involving closer (but not more distant) relationships were predictive of bicultural identity integration (BII); that is, perceiving one’s cultural identities as both compatible (i.e. harmonious) and merged (i.e. blended). This is in line with evidence provided by Mok et al. (2007), who found that BII is linked to the number of different-ethnicity friendships in the personal networks of bicultural individuals and more broadly with the work of Repke and Benet-Martínez (2018), who found that overall network ethnocultural diversity was associated with BII. Yet, our study additionally differentiated the diversity within the circle of closer versus more distant relationships. Future work should consider more aspects of social network configurations apart from ethnic diversity among both strong and weak ties (e.g. network density, that is, the number of connections between different contacts) to disentangle the nuances regarding the role of specific aspects of social networks in identity integration.

Our findings provide additional insight into a potential mechanism through which the association between having ethnoculturally diverse close contacts in one’s network and identification with a global culture. Results

from this study clarify that diverse habitual social networks involving closer relationships are linked to stronger global identification via identity-based cultural harmony but not blendedness. That is, whereas ethnic diversity among one’s circle of friendships and family kin is linked to both facets of identity integration, only perceiving one’s multiple cultural identities as non-conflictual further predicts the strength of identification with a global culture.

These findings are consistent with previous research showing that cultural harmony and blendedness are two independent components of BII (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005) which can result in different identity configurations and intergroup outcomes (Miramontez et al., 2008; van der Werf et al., 2020). Our findings also fit the evidence showing that bicultural individuals with conflicted (although at the same time blended) identities derive more positive distinctiveness from their ethnocultural group and support fragmented pluralism (i.e. ethnocultural group maintenance where each group thrives according to its own values and traditions) more than those with blended but harmonious identities (van der Werf et al., 2020). Our findings are novel in showing that the two aspects of identity integration have different implications for superordinate categorisation processes. Cultural blendedness does not seem crucial for superordinate identity configurations, which go beyond an individual’s dual group membership and perceptions of similarity between two specific cultures. In contrast, cultural harmony is relevant for enhancing a feeling of connectedness with a global culture because experiencing one’s identities as compatible might translate into perceiving all cultures as potentially compatible, and thus seeing all human beings as ultimately belonging to one, united global culture. This identity management strategy thus seems to exempt bicultural individuals from one specific cultural frame, allows them to easily switch between multiple cultural contexts (Lee et al., 2017) and thus encourages appreciation of people of all cultures.

Limitations and future research

Our findings should be interpreted with several constraints in mind. First, this study elucidates the importance

of differentiating closer relationships from more distant ones, but we are aware that choosing the type of bonds (e.g. family kin and friendships vs. colleagues and neighbours) as a parameter assessing tie strength implies a certain bias. Also, while strong relationships categorised in our study might be more likely to involve high-quality supportive social relationships (friendships, romantic partners), it is possible that weaker bonds are both cooperative and conflictual in nature. Still, one needs to consider that it is also probable that a person has a distant (not warm and not close) relationship with a family member. Note, our social network measure did not elicit contacts immigrants meet solely through social media or online discussion forums, but contacts that our participants are (also) in contact with either face-to-face, by phone, mail, or e-mail. Future research should consider online contacts as well.

Another shortcoming is the cross-sectional nature of our data, which prevents us from making assumptions about the causality of the identified relationships between immigrants' social network characteristics and their inclusive identity configurations. Immigrants with more inclusive levels of identification may also develop more ethnically diverse networks. Thus longitudinal and experimental research is needed to determine the directionality of associations between the variables under study. Indeed, research suggests that more open people have broader social identities (see, e.g. Hamer et al., 2019) and perhaps this facilitates developing more diverse relationships. Nonetheless, it is reasonable to expect that variations in network composition, which transcend individual and psychological reality, might be better predictors of individual processes, such as the strength of identification, than vice versa.

Another drawback is our relatively small sample. Though, it should be highlighted that social network methodology involves a labour-intensive data collection phase. So, gathering data from 216 respondents with each 25 contacts translates into creating a dataset with information on 5616 different individuals ($216 \times 25 + 216$). In addition, our data include community sample individuals (vs. convenience samples such as students) representing four culturally distinct immigrant groups, thereby overcoming a limitation of lack of ethnic diversity in samples. But, given the limited number of participants within each ethnocultural category, we could not explore group differences in the link between diversity and the strength of global identification. Further analyses with more robust and representative samples are required to replicate and generalise our findings.

The indirect effects via cultural harmony that we identified were relatively small. Future research should consider alternative mediators in the link between diverse social networks and inclusive identity configurations. Given that feeling connected with a global culture

involves embracing multiple cultural perspectives, multiple (vs. bicultural) identity integration (Yampolsky et al., 2016) may be a relevant explanatory mechanism at play. Research has also shown that dispositional variables such as cognitive complexity, openness to experience and agreeableness are linked to identification with a global community (for a review, see McFarland et al., 2019). Future work could delimitate the potential moderating role of dispositional variables in the link between exposure to diversity and inclusive identity constellations. Macro-social contextual characteristics, such as existing immigration policies that facilitate immigrants' development of culturally diverse social networks and non-conflictual multicultural identities could also be moderators of these processes.

CONCLUSION

Successful adjustment to and thriving in our increasingly globalised world as an immigrant may not be limited to traditional biculturalism, whereby a new identity of the receiving culture is added to that of the ethnic culture (Chen et al., 2008). Migrants experience more than the mainstream and heritage cultures and may even prefer to incorporate other cultural elements in their identities. We found that the more ethnoculturally diverse their close social relationships are, the more they feel connected to a broader globalised culture. Diverse and meaningful close relationships may help bicultural individuals accept their cultural identities as compatible and non-conflictual experiences which facilitate having more inclusive identity configuration. More research is necessary to comprehensively understand the antecedents, involved mechanisms and consequences of superordinate categorisation processes among ethnic minority groups. Feeling identified with a global culture may enhance migrants' integration into local and broader communities and help them develop an appreciation for people of other cultures.

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SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information may be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of the article.

Appendix S1 Supporting information.

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