**Perceptions of diversity and attitudes of tolerance in the ‘fragmented’ United Kingdom**

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***Abstract***

Relying on a quantitative survey (n=1500) and semi-structured interviews (n=30) conducted in the UK, we explore British nationals’, Romanian and Turkish migrants’ attitudes of tolerance and the factors influencing them in the current socio-political context characterised by ‘super-diversity’ (Vertovec 2007). The quantitative data reveal the role of younger age, diverse networks, higher education, attachment to city/region and supranational identifications in more open attitudes towards diversity. The qualitative findings illustrate how diverse these three groups’ attitudes of tolerance can be – ranging from passive resignation to enthusiasm (Walzer 1997) – and how they are affected by their position and status in the UK. The British’ attitudes show their tolerance can reflect diverse forms of acceptance of ethnic and cultural differences but can also draw lines in terms of civic values opposing ‘those who contribute to society’ versus those who ‘live as parasites’. The Turks are in favour of diversity with the expectation of receiving more civic rights and facing less prejudice. The Romanians tend to have a more ambiguous relation to diversity given their position of stigmatised migrants in the UK. Our analysis reveal how inclusive or exclusive people’s (sub- and supra-)national identities can be and how these frame their attitudes of tolerance.

Key words: diversity, tolerance, cosmopolitanism, supranational identities, living with difference

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**Introduction**

Over the last decade, European politicians, notably Angela Merkel and David Cameron, expressed their concern that immigrants had formed and maintained bounded communities based on their ethnic and/or religious identities, lived in ghettos and were threatening national unity. This political discourse and islamophobia escalated more in the UK after the terrorist attacks committed by British-born and raised citizens (Vertovec 2010, 86). In addition, the 2008 financial crisis along with the intra-EU migration following the EU’s enlargement played a catalysing effect on anti-immigrant sentiments and hostility towards migrants in Europe (Ambrosini and Boccagni 2015; Lesińska 2015), such as the stigmatisation of the Eastern European migrants in the UK (Fox et al 2012; Morosanu and Fox 2013). Integration policies have become more assimilationist (Lesińska 2015; Kymlicka 2010). Furthermore, in the UK, the referendum concerning the separation of Scotland and the rise of the populist political right (UKIP) have created fragmented definitions of Britishness. This background context has fermented a ‘toxic discourse on citizenship and belonging, and the rights that pertain as a consequence’ (Bhambra, 2016) that was recurrently used in public debates about the EU referendum, and that fuelled racism towards and hate against migrants, minorities and those arguably defending them, such as the assassination of the MP Jo Cox in June 2016.

Yet, the UK cannot ‘go back to being culturally homogenous society ever again’ (Hall and Beck 2008, 679) and it is essential to understand how people from different ethno-religious and national backgrounds can live together and what influences their perceptions of diversity. We would like to explore the attitudes of British nationals and of migrants, who were affected by the debates about Islamophobia, economic crisis and migration from Eastern Europe prior the Brexit. Turkish citizens are chosen, as non-UK and non-EU citizens of Muslim origins with restricted rights. We excluded holders of double citizenship, thus the majority of our Turkish sample moved to the UK within the last ten years[[1]](#endnote-1). Our other group are Romanians, who joined the EU in 2007, who had permit restrictions until 2014 and have been seen with distrust or even scorn as bringing with them negative social and economic consequences (Morosanu and Fox 2013). Both groups form large migrant groups in Europe (the Eastern Europeans and the Muslims) that have negatively been portrayed in the press and public discourses and that have suffered from racist attacks, even more so since the Brexit. Romania was in 2010 the EU country with the largest number of people living in other EU countries[[2]](#endnote-2) and citizens of Turkey are the largest group of non-EU nationals residing in the EU (based on 20 countries) (Eurostat 2015[[3]](#endnote-3)). In 2011, the estimates population of Romanian citizens in the UK were 80000 (Fox et al 2012) and in 2014, about 175000 (ONS 2015[[4]](#endnote-4)). In 2014, the estimate population of Turkish migrants in the UK was 47000 (ONS 2014[[5]](#endnote-5)) but the 2011 census reveals that there are 91115 usual residents in England and Wales born in Turkey[[6]](#endnote-6), showing that a significant part acquired the British citizenship.

Relying on rich quantitative and qualitative data from the FP7 EUCROSS project, this paper provides an insightful comparison between British nationals and Turkish[[7]](#endnote-7) and Romanian migrants living in the UK in terms of their attitudes towards diversity. We explore the ways in people show different forms of tolerance depending on their position in the UK and show that, in a context of ‘super-diversity’ (Vertovec 2007), tolerance towards diversity is not necessarily targeted towards a specific ethnic/religious/national group but also towards those with civic values opposing ‘those who contribute to society’ versus those who ‘live as parasites’. We also assess the factors that make people more tolerant towards the ‘Others’. Among them, supranational identities will turn out to be particularly important to reveal how inclusive or exclusive people’s (sub- and supra-) national identities can be and how these frame their attitudes of tolerance. Although our study took place a few years before the UK’s decision to leave the EU in June 2016, our findings help understand the deep divides inside the British society with regard to its attitudes towards diversity and migration.

**Context and debates in the UK**

In the post-war period, notably African-Caribbeans and South Asians from old colonies were accommodated under policies of multiculturalism (Vertovec 2007, Weedon 2011, Modood 2013). Within the last twenty years, patterns and channels of migrations from many different nations and socio-demographic backgrounds, and related immigrant legal statuses, have become increasingly diversified along with the reasons for migrating (e.g labour migration, studying, family reunification, marriage migration, asylum seeking). The UK has thus been conceived as a case of super-diversity (Vertovec 2007), which has reached a new level of complexity that cannot be accounted for ‘simply’ by people’s ethnicity. In this context, there has been a growing need to reflect upon the new societal challenges and political projects that have come with this super-diversity.

At the political level, following the riots and terrorist attacks in London, there have been growing concerns about multiculturalism based on politics of difference and a rhetoric arguing for the death of multiculturalism in the UK has emerged. Multiculturalism, as a political project that supports ethnic minorities to maintain their cultures, has been feared as creating ‘parallel-lives’ and as posing a threat to national unity (Rietveld 2014). In 2011, Cameron advocated for a ‘muscular liberalism’ targeting multiculturalism that has been – in his mind - favourable to radicalisation and extremism; in contrast, his ‘active’ view of tolerance is inscribed in ‘narratives of civilizational supremacy’ promoting a strong vision of national identity that leaves little place to differences (Dobbernack and Modood 2015).

‘Social cohesion’ has thus progressively appeared as the new political project that stresses shared British values and identities in order to bond the nation (Jones 2014, Sturgis et al 2013), although it has been criticised as a return to assimilation (Kymlicka 2010, Karner and Parker 2011). The last decade has also seen intra-EU migration to the UK followed by the EU enlargement and the economic crisis. The literature on ‘too much diversity is not good for social cohesion’ (Putnam 2007) has positioned multiculturalism in conflict with national unity and shared national identity (Rietveld 2014). As a response to this literature and political discourse, academics, notably Meer and Modood (2009) argued that multiculturalism is not necessarily disappearing and that it can go hand-in-hand with a national identity when a ‘civic rebalancing’ emphasises both shared citizenship and accommodation of minority cultural identities. Similarly, Heath and Demirova (2014) demonstrated empirically that positive orientations towards one’s own ethnic culture are not in contradiction with a willingness to integrate into British society.

The brief analysis of this complex context triggers the question of how people react to others and what forms tolerance can take at the individual level, as an attitude or state of mind. Walzer[[8]](#endnote-8) suggests that it can take five different meanings: 1) a ‘resigned acceptance of difference for the sake of peace’, 2) a ‘passive, relaxed, benignly indifferen[ce] to difference’, 3) a ‘principled recognition that the "others" have rights even if they exercise those rights in unattractive ways’, 4) a ‘curiosity; perhaps even respect, a willingness to listen and learn’ and 5) an ‘enthusiastic endorsement of difference’ seen as a condition for humanity to flourish (1997: 10-11). Building on Walzer, the next section discusses factors that can explain why people have different levels of (in)tolerance by focusing on intergroup relations.

**Intergroup tolerance: the role of contacts, supranational identities & cross-border practices**

People’s attitudes towards others in a context of super-diversity can range from resignation, indifference, and stoical acceptance to curiosity and enthusiasm. These attitudes also depend on the position of the different groups within the society and the literature has largely focused on the relations between the majority group and the minority groups, and more especially on anti-immigrants attitudes. Economic anxiety, crime concern, demographics, and perceived cultural threat have been the usual suspects (Curtis 2014; see also Savelkoul et al. 2010; Coenders et al., 2004; Scheepers et al., 2002). Migrants would be seen as taking the natives’ jobs, as responsible for higher rates of crime, and as potentially destroying the national culture by promoting other ways of living. These characteristics are rarely all associated to one single minority group; some groups are more feared for economic reasons or crime concerns, while others for cultural and religious reasons. Age and education also influence people’s perceptions of immigrants. According to research on contextual factors through multi-level modelling, the relative size of the minority groups matters but for more cultural than for economic reasons (Schneider 2007). Yet, it appears that it is more the perceived threat than their actual size that plays a role on anti-immigrant attitudes (Hooghe & de Vroome, 2015; Semyonov et al. 2004). If these findings tell us about what can create social distance between groups, they explain much less about what can lead to higher levels of tolerance towards the ‘others’ for *both* natives and migrants. In what follows, we investigate this by focusing on the intergroup contact theory, the role of supranational identity and factors influencing cosmopolitan openness.

First, Allport (1954) suggests that intergroup contact could lead to less prejudice. However, these contacts must be of a certain ‘quality’ in order to reduce anxiety and threat (Pettigrew & Troop 2006); otherwise, they risk to have the opposite impact. Among the ‘facilitating conditions’ in Pettigrew & Troop’s terms (2006, 766) that make contacts positive, we can mention that contact should be taken place between people of equal status and inscribed within intergroup cooperation to achieve common goals. As Kanas et al. (2015) noted, intergroup friendship could be a good indicator of positive contact and that the quality is more important than the quantity to reduce negative attitudes towards the ‘Others’. Yet, if research tends to support the positive role of having immigrant friends on the attitudes towards immigrants (Schneider 2007), the impact of intergroup friendship does not always turn out to be significant (Savelkoul et 2010).

Second, the role of supranational identities is much less investigated while Brewer (1999, 291) suggested that ‘contact is not enough’ to decrease prejudice and group conflict. Recent research in social psychology outlines the important role of these identities on positive attitudes towards immigrants. For instance, Curtis (2014) shows that feeling European is related to more favourable views toward immigrants, while feeling strongly national has the inverse impact and a regional identity has no influence. He draws his inspiration on the Common Ingroup Identity Model (Gaertner and Dovidio 2000) stating that greater tolerance can be achieved if people can overcome divisions by relying on a superordinate and overarching identity (i.e. an ‘all-inclusive “we”’, Curtis 2014, 522). In comparison, feeling strongly national reinforces people’s tendency to exclude those who are not seen as belonging to the nation such as immigrants or groups with different cultural ways of living. However, Nagayoshi (2011) reminded us that national identity can be broken down into two dimensions, the civic/voluntary and the ethnic/ascriptive. The first ‘includes everyone who belongs to the state, regardless of his/her ethnicity’ (ibid, 562), the second, those who ‘share ancestry, tradition and ethnic cultures’ (ibid, 563). Citizens could show some negative attitudes towards those who are seen as not British only when they equate civic nation with a specific ethnic identity, such as ‘Britishness’. Finally, Maddens et al (2000) showed that regional feelings are not necessarily opposed to positive attitudes towards cultural diversity depending on the (sub)national context.

Third, we explore the literature on factors influencing cosmopolitan openness as a more positive form of tolerance. We approach cosmopolitanism as a ‘willingness to engage with the Other’ and ‘an intellectual and aesthetic stance of openness toward divergent cultural experiences, a search for contrasts rather than uniformity’ (Hannerz 1990, 239). An openness towards cultural and ethnic diversity has often been presented as an ‘elite affair’ (Calhoun 2002) and as an attitude that can be fostered by greater contacts with people from different countries, through trips and longer stays abroad (Hannerz 1990). Mau et al (2008) showed a clear relation between border-crossing experiences and transnational social relations and positive or ‘cosmopolitan’ attitudes with respect to foreigners. Glick-Schiller et al (2011) argue that mobility and crossing-borders are not necessary to create cosmopolitan sociability and identity, but it is the living in a diverse place, and interacting with people from different backgrounds that create, in Jones and Jackson’s (2014) terms, a ‘cosmopolitan belonging’ (see Jones 2014; Hall 2012; Karner and Parker 2011; Erel 2011; Baumann 1996). Therefore, having strong diverse networks, sense of belonging in the neighbourhood, city as well as the region contributes to positive attitudes towards diversity.

Finally, as European identity can unite people, those who feel citizen of the world will be more open to cultural and ethnic diversity. Lizardo (2005) suggested that feeling European or citizen of the world may not have the same link with attitudes towards diversity. Feeling European may require specific knowledge and ‘capital’ to be part of the ‘European field’ to use Fligstein’s term (2008). In this sense, the European identity could be simply the extension of a more national identity that could incite to be exclusive towards non-Europeans.

In summary, the literature review suggests that inter-group contacts not only at home but also through cross-border practices, belonging to the majority or the minority groups (Kanas et al. 2014) and supranational identities are likely to affect how migrants and natives perceive cultural and ethnic (super-)diversity in which they live, alongside socio-demographic characteristics such as age, education and income.

**Methodology and Samples**

This paper provides findings from the FP7 EUCROSS mixed-methods project about the ‘Europeanisation of Everyday Life’, which examines the relationship between the various activities of EU residents (nationals, mobile EU citizens and third-country nationals) across the borders of nation-states and their collective identities.

First, a quantitative EUCROSS survey[[9]](#endnote-9) was carried out in the six countries (UK, Spain, Romania, Italy, Germany, Denmark) between June 2012 and April 2013 using random digit dialling and computer-assisted telephone interviews (CATI). In each country, about 1000 respondents were interviewed by native speakers of the respective language. In addition, samples of about 250 first-generation Romanian (except in Romania) and first-generation Turkish migrants (except in Spain) were collected. In this article, we focus on the British case. Although CATI via linguistic screening of names in telephone directories was the initial technique to recruit migrant participants, it was not very successful in the UK where a range of other techniques were used, face-to-face interviews by Turkish and Romanian migrants being the most important. In the UK, we obtained a sample of 1001 British nationals, 248 Turks and 248 Romanians. Some of our Turkish respondents (n= 100) moved to the UK in 1970s as labour migrants and as political refugees after 1980 coup in Turkey and Kurdish refugees in late 1980s[[10]](#endnote-10). Family reunions and marriage migration have been restricted and demand was targeted for the high-skilled and prospective students. The majority of Turkish sample moved in the last ten years (n=148) to learn English, or to undertake a degree. Some got married to EU and British citizens and remained, just like those who found employment after graduation and those who were recruited from abroad as high-skilled migrants. The recent ones have temporary residence as students, workers with the Ankara pact, skilled workers (Tier 1 and 2), and spouses. The vast majority of our Romanian sample moved to the UK just after Romania joined the EU in 2007 for both high-skilled (e.g. administrative roles in higher education, trade/commerce) and low-skilled (e.g. construction, hospitality and cleaning services) work, and a some for education. Although, our Romanian migrants had restriction for work (before 2014), they did not reflect on their work permits and legal status in the interviews.

Second, qualitative interviews (EUMEAN) were conducted between April and October 2013 with a sample chosen from the quantitative survey respondents. The qualitative sample ensured diversity in terms of gender, age, education, and also transnational practices. In each country, 8 people with high transnational practices and 2 with low transnational practices (based on a country-specific transnationalism index, see Pötzschke et al. 2014) were interviewed. The choice of the respondents was primarily defined by these criteria but we also tried to target different parts of the country to account for diverse living environments and to avoid a focus on London. In the UK, 10 interviews with Turkish migrants and British nationals were conducted by two of the authors of this article, and 10 interviews with the Romanian migrants by the Romanian team (Croitoru et al. 2014). For the British qualitative sample, there were 3 men and 2 women with low educational level (LE) and 2 men and 3 women with high educational level (HE), interviewed in York, Huddersfield, Leeds, Manchester and London. For the Romanian sample, there were 2 men and 2 women with HE, and 3 men and 3 women with LE interviewed in Romford, Manchester, High Wycombe and London. For the Turks, 4 men and 4 women with HE, and 1 man and 1 woman with LE were interviewed in York, Exeter, London and Brighton.

The interviews explored travel practices, media use, living with diversity, networks and relationships with foreign friends and working with foreign colleagues. The analysis focused on people’s perceptions and experiences of diversity, and sense of belonging. The same interview guidelines were used for natives and migrants. All informants were asked to describe what diversity means for them, and to reflect on living in a diverse context. We performed selective coding, choosing ‘diversity’ as the core category, by exploring further the relations between descriptions of diversity, likes and dislikes, categorisations of ‘others’ and self-identification, diversity and strength of social networks and conditions of openness towards diversity. In addition, immigrants were asked their experience of living as a foreigner in the country of residence and the situations when they felt welcomed or discriminated against were coded for contextual analysis.

**Data**

The questionnaire measured the attitudes towards complex forms of diversity using the following question: ‘Please tell how much you agree: It is a good thing for a society to be made up of people from different ethnic groups, religions and cultures’. This item assesses whether the ‘others’ are perceived to enrich life and hence as one possible indicator of positive attitudes of tolerance. Table 1 shows the percentages of those who agree with the question. We see that most people could be considered as open to diversity. The qualitative findings will help us nuance this by showing the various forms this openness take and under which conditions. We will see that sometimes this openness translates into more resigned forms of tolerance that the quantitative results can show.

(Table 1)

This variable on attitudes towards diversity is inserted in a logistic regression where the two highest levels of agreement (4 and 5) are predicted according to a series of independent variables, which are described in Table 2. Beyond controlling for the classical socio-demographic variables, we assess whether a mixed social network, some abroad experience and regional, national and supranational identities have an impact on people’s attitudes towards diversity. In line with our literature review, the choice of our independent variable enables us to assess the role of intergroup contacts (through friendship and being member of an association), cross-border practices (experiences and trips abroad, familiarity with another country) and supranational identities (European and global identity) on the attitudes towards diversity.

(Table 2)

**Factors influencing openness towards diversity**

Table 3 shows the results of a hierarchical logistic regression assessing the different factors influencing the attitudes towards cultural, ethnic and religious diversity. Model 1 only includes variables linked to people’s national origin. Model 2 also considers the impact of socio-demographic factors and social networks, while Model 3 adds variables linked to mobility practices. Model 4 incorporates the sub-/supra-national feelings of identity. This final model, which shows that these variables of identities are especially important, explains around 19% of the variation in the dependent variable.

(Table 3)

Despite a higher percentage in Table 1, the Turkish migrants do not differentiate themselves from the Brits when it comes to assess the contribution of people from diverse backgrounds to the society. Only the Romanian migrants do: they value it to a lesser extent than the British. However, we should recall that more than 70% of the Romanians believe that a society composed of different cultures is a good thing. In addition, the socio-demographic variables appear to have a strong impact. Those with a secondary education diploma have lower odds to perceive a diverse society as a good thing, compared to those with tertiary education.

Most variables of transnational experiences (friends, trips, etc.) do not have an impact on people’s attitudes, contradicting previous findings. If we look at our interviews, we note that the British citizens enjoy the proximity within Europe in terms of travelling. For example, our interviewees travel to Spain, Portugal, Greece or Turkey for beach holidays with friends and family. They also visit the US and Canada, which they prefer because of the linguistic similarity and because of family and friends there. Most of these contacts with other cultural environments arguably remain too superficial for the British to embrace diversity unconditionally. Likewise, most of the Turkish sample has travelled within the EU, notably Germany, Holland, Spain and Italy and mentioned visiting relatives living there as well as vacations. The richer and high-skilled also travelled to Asia and Latin America. Like Turkish migrants, Romanian migrants in our sample generally travel for both work and leisure purposes within the EU mostly France and Germany, but some also Italy, Serbia (non-EU), US and Switzerland. Most popular holiday destinations are Spain, Greece and Turkey.

However, being an active member of an organisation or group oriented towards other countries or cultures turns out to be important; this outlines the importance of local networks for open attitudes towards diversity. The qualitative interviews support the importance of networks and being an active member of this kind of organisations and networks. In the 30 qualitative interviews we conducted, those who have stronger social network ties with foreigners were more favourable to diversity. This can also overcome religious differences. For instance, a Turkish woman who wears a headscarf mentioned that she had not faced discrimination. A reason for this is that she attended social activities organised by a charity for immigrants and refugees in York, where one of us also volunteered as a translator. This kind of charities makes the immigrant feel more at home.

Considering diversity, I think that England is especially very respectful, everyone, all these people with different origins in terms religion, race, language, and they understand each other. For example, I am covered, even though I am like this, I am very much respected, I can’t even explain you this, there are many people (wearing head scarves) around me, they don’t have any problems either. I haven’t faced any negative thing yet, of course there can be some exceptions but I have never experienced yet.

While the Turks and Romanians narrated more emotionally engaged stories connected with foreign friends, the British informants had relatively weaker connections. Among the British, those with more contacts with foreigners expressed more tolerant views. This tends to support the intergroup theory: contacts with people from other cultures, whether our respondents be migrants or natives, need to be of a certain quality[[11]](#endnote-11) and of a certain depth that superficial friendships or interactions are likely not to have.

Age had a significant impact on being open to diversity. The younger, the more tolerant are our informants towards diversity and this was also supported by our interviews. For instance, a male British informant (age 20) in higher education in London, who volunteered in teaching English to immigrant children, showed understanding and empathy towards immigrants. While teaching, he learnt about their stories, their living conditions and the difficulties they had gone through. When we asked him his opinions about the immigrants coming to the UK, he replied:

Well, if they’re seeking asylum, then that’s deserved and fair enough, I suppose. Again, I can’t really blame them, because I might do the same if I were in their situation but… I suppose, we’ve all been given a different level of opportunity.

In contrast, some of the British informants (mostly between 35-60 years old) showed a more neutral, sometimes indifferent attitude towards migrants in the UK, mostly towards Eastern Europeans ones. Some said that they heard in the news that many migrants from Eastern Europe were migrating to the UK but it did not affect their life negatively. Certain respondents simply perceived the added-value of their presence on the territory in the fact that they were doing the menial jobs that the British were not be happy to do.

Finally, Table 3 indicates that feeling citizen of the region where one lives, feeling European and feeling citizen of the world but not feeling citizen of one’s country of residence are positively linked with the idea that a diverse society is a good thing. We will come back to that later.

**Different forms of tolerance**

The qualitative data allow us now to contextualise and illustrate further possible the reasons why different groups display a more or less inclusive attitude and also to nuance the findings here above. Our interviews generally reveal curious or, even, enthusiastic attitudes towards diversity. This is no surprise given that our qualitative sample was in majority composed of people with transnational practices. Even if there is no statistically significant difference between the Turks and the Brits, the Turks expressed different reasons why they appreciated a society composed of different cultures. For instance, according to a female PhD student, in a way echoed Appiah’s ‘there is no wisdom in a single polis (hometown)’ (2005, 272) in which he argues that strong societies are the ones that can cope, regulate and embrace differences and diversity.

I like the fact that ‘diversity’ recognises me. I am one of the many colours of diversity. I come from a different culture, different belief, from a different ‘background’ [said in English]. I come from a different colour, taste, smell, language and it [diversity] embraces me. To the contrary, a completely opposite perspective/concept, which rejects [diversity] and promotes one culture, one religion, one language, could exist, but I do not know how ‘sustainable’ [said in English] or realistic could this [society] be. In these kinds of societies [homogenous] there would be violence, civil war or war. I am using the word “fluidity” [says in English] so often but it is a must in today’s conditions.

Similarly, most of our Turkish informants were in favour of diversity, as it gave them a place in the host society. Some of our informants stated being discriminated because they were foreigners, and they had restricted rights as non-EU citizens, and, sometimes, because they were Muslim. They valued diversity with the expectation and the condition that they would be better treated. Their openness towards diversity appeared as a wish to have fewer restrictive rights and to suffer less from prejudice. For instance, some interviewees raised concerns that British tended to overlook the many ways to be Muslim. This young Turk (lowly educated male, age 24, married to an Italian, living in London) told us that he felt misunderstood by his friends about his own practice of Islam:

You could believe in cheddar cheese or you could believe in Allah, I respect both faiths. I never tell anyone ‘believe in this thing or don’t believe in this thing’. I don’t drink alcohol, as it is Ramadan, now, this is my faith. I am someone who normally drinks alcohol for the remaining 11 months [of the year]. Everyone has his own faiths. (…) Some people are racist towards me as I am Muslim. However, I am not bothered as it is those people’s views.

He felt that his behaviour of not drinking for one month and drinking the rest of the year was not understood and joked by his British friends and judged as an inconsistent and incoherent act while it was for him his own way of practising Islam. Tolerance here is associated to the importance of recognising others’ rights, such as being free not to drink alcohol for a month while not having to justify oneself. The position of most Turks can be understood by the very fact that they embody to some extent, and in different ways, diversity within the UK.

We can also identify different strategies of positioning among the British nationals. For them, tolerance can come with conditions, especially when discussing about the presence of migrants in their country. In line with our quantitative findings, this conditional acceptance is more visible among the older and less educated among our qualitative sample. For instance, one British lady in her 60s (high school graduate), living outside Manchester was in principle open to diversity but the latter had to be expressed in very defined areas of life.

[…] if somebody is here, working and paying their taxes I have no problem with it at all. If they are here and they are getting benefits for this that and the other and they can’t even speak English… you know what I mean? But that’s the government’s fault, it isn’t the people that are doing. […] I don’t want to sound racist, because I am not racist but, but there are certain areas with certain, what do you call them, ethnic minorities that they can bring an area down. By the cleanliness or, you know, they don’t keep properties nice. (…) Whereas, on the upside, foreign people coming in can give a lot, different experiences, which you can share. Food, that is an important, there are different foods. And there are people who will do jobs that the British people won’t do.

She welcomed diversity favourably when associated with a variety of cultural offers, either through shops or restaurants like in central Manchester, namely when it gave the British society something (e.g. labour force for undesirable jobs), but much more negatively when it supposedly took something away from it (e.g. benefits). Such attitude was mainly directed towards two categorisations of ‘others’: the Eastern Europeans, and non-white Muslims. Recall that the interviews took place when debates about the removal of migration restrictions of Romanians and Bulgarians were vivid in the UK.

More generally, the question about the position of the UK inside the EU often underpins the accounts of those who set some limitations to cultural diversity. Hence, the link between European and global self-identification and positive attitude towards diversity shown in the quantitative data is clearly illustrated by the qualitative data. Here is an inverted example in which a lowly educated British male in his 80s from York did not seem keen on the EU and suspicious about newcomers in his country:

Well, I don't like them allowing all these people in that, er...., haven't got a job and, er.., they're immediately on DHSS (social benefits) […]. But they can't do anything about it now they're members of the, now we're members of the European Union, they can't stop them coming in, can they? You see, I think it should be regulated. Because we are an island, aren't we? And therefore, you know...they're going to be a saturation point at some time. […] for instance, next year, they're going to allow all the Yugoslavs and everybody in, aren't they? Er, I'm not against it, but I think it should be more regulated.

We find in this quote similar ingredients to the previous one. These two respondents would like the government to be stricter in terms of the number of migrants accepted on the territory. According to them, it is not the fault of the migrants but the government who ‘lets people in’.

Quantitative findings show that, in contrast with the Turks, Romanians are slightly less in favour (72% - significant B coefficient) of diversity compared to the British nationals. The interviews show that some Romanians may have a more ambiguous relation to cultural diversity given their position of stigmatised migrants in the UK. When asked about reflecting on living in a diverse society, our Romanian informants tended to refer to their experience of being stigmatised as a group instead of directly discussing their views on diversity. In recent years, the British tabloids repeatedly associated Romanians with criminality and anti-social behaviour[[12]](#endnote-12) and were represented as benefit claimers at the expense of taxpayers by both the British government and press. In reaction to this, Romanians tend to reject the link between the Roma and Romanians (Fox et al. 2012; Woodcock 2007) by transferring the stigma onto the Roma (Morosanu and Fox 2013). We observed a similar discursive strategy from our Romanian informants. Although they did not draw clear-cut frontiers between Roma and Romanian nationalities, some of them perceived the Roma, whom they called ‘gypsy’, as responsible for this negative image from which they were suffering. For example, here is how a Romanian woman who has her own student recruitment agency explained what she did not like about diversity:

‘Yes, the only thing I don’t like is that the people do not distinguish between searching for a better life and living off as parasites. Unfortunately, this phenomenon applies mainly to Romanians. (…) I work since I came here, I pay my taxes and this is all! Even of our own, of our Romanians, come and apply for all kind all benefits, without even moving a finger. Then they make about 3, 4, 5 children, they live from the state’s money and we all are classified as Romanians (deprecating). I do not remember accurately, it was that scandal with the French who sent all our ‘Romanians’ back to their homeland. They were gypsies actually, who were sent back to Romania and in that period it was this thing and in all the newspapers you could read about it. In *The Sun*, in *Metro*… And everybody labelled you as ‘Romanian’, although there are… For example none of my friends benefits from social support or other benefits.’

In this respect, negative stereotyping towards the Roma creates a common concern among the Romanian participants that they are more likely to face discrimination due to their nationality; hence they would like people not to simply believe in the stereotypes but to see the differences within Romanians and distinguish those who contribute to society from those who do not.

Our qualitative data with Romanians also provide some indication of what they appreciate in an open society. Our informants migrated to the UK during the post-communist period. The Romanian communist regime was one of the most repressive emigration regimes in the Warsaw Pact, when it was very difficult for Romanian citizens to legally travel or work in Western countries in between 1990-2002 (Ban 2012). Qualitative interviews illustrated that these open borders made them enjoy their freedom of movement, and benefit from better socio-economic situation they had by living in UK, compared to living in Romania. Beyond this principle of equality of rights, their experience in the UK allowed them to meet different cultural groups, widen their social networks and benefit from all sorts of cultural exchanges. A highly educated male participant, who is an actor and an employee at a call-centre, said:

‘Meeting people from that country, them meeting people from Romania and what the newspapers are writing, what the television is saying. I have had enough! I want to meet the person, talk to him and if he is an opposite example of what they are saying, done! It’s all ruined. (…) I always thought: “Albans steal, they kill, they break” and I met one, two, three who were ok, and now everyone who comes and says bad things about them I will reply: “dude, I would move to Albania, Croatia, Serbia. I met wonderful people, I want to go there.’

Hence, Romanians’ regular contacts with diverse groups in the UK made them more curious towards others. Now that we have explored different forms that tolerance can take according to their very own position in the country of residence and vis-à-vis their country of birth, the role of supranational identities is investigated in the next section.

**The role of supranational identities**

The quantitative findings reveal the importance of supranational identities for positive attitudes towards diversity. Our qualitative data tends to suggest that, in line with Curtis (2014), migrants and nationals, tend to be more enthusiastically tolerant when they can overcome intergroup divisions by identifying themselves as belonging to an overarching entity, such as Europe or even the world. In contrast, our interviews with British citizens indicate that, when Britishness was based on ethnic/ascriptive dimension of national identity – shared ancestry, tradition and ethnic culture – rather than the civic/voluntary dimension (Nagayoshi 2011), the respondents tended to categorise the ‘Others’ into diverse (and hierarchical) ethnic groups (e.g. ‘White Anglo-Saxons’, non-European migrants/ Muslims, Eastern European migrants). For them, to hold British citizenship, to have lived in the UK for a long time, or to be born in the UK were not enough to belong to the UK. Being and behaving as a white Anglo-Saxon (speaking English very well, not being Muslim) mattered the most. This outlines why supranational identities (being citizens of Europe and/or the world) – built in opposition to clear national ethnic boundaries – are positively related with support to diversity. However, as Lizardo (2005) shows, sometimes a European identity can also be conceived as the extension of a national project. For instance, among our interviewees, an old lady (lowly educated) living in London distinguished herself as English and even as an English European but not British, nor as British European:

Informant: English is being born in England and brought up in England etcetera. I don’t want to be British, I liked the Europeans but I am English European, not a British European. British is somebody who lives here or was born here but not English. Not Anglo-Saxon. […] Well British is anybody who lives in England or the family been here for years or whatever. Or somebody who claimed nationality, British citizenship. […]

Interviewer: And how about non-Europeans living in Europe. What is your opinion…’

Informant: Well, you know, they just have to buckle down and be like us.

This last sentence shows that she can hardly tolerate the presence of people with different practices and beliefs than the ones prescribed in the English society. As such, and following Walzer (1997), she does not show tolerance. She can tolerate white Europeans, as their lifestyles present similarities with hers, but does not approve the differences and the presence of non-European people, including the Commonwealth countries and Muslims. She only appreciates the ‘European diversity of the white’. She also overtly said her disapproval of certain Muslim practices, such as wearing a niqab, which she qualified as ‘degrading’ and ‘insulting’.

Despite the absence of significant interactions between ethnic origin and supranational feelings on positive attitudes towards diversity, the Turkish migrants do not perceive themselves as European to a great extent (Table 2). This incites us to be nuanced about the links between feeling European and being open to diversity for the Turks. The interviews provide us with some explanation for this. For instance, for a highly educated Turkish man living in London, Europe is a ‘Christian club’, explaining that, since Europe does not accept a Muslim country, it cannot be truly or genuinely culturally tolerant. Turks actually most perceived themselves as cosmopolitans/citizens of the world compared to the British and the Romanians, as some might need a more encompassing and overarching identity, besides ‘Christian European’.

In comparison, Romanians tend to feel strongly Europeans. Their stronger European feelings may reflect the fact that they perceive immediate – civic – advantages of a culturally open society beyond a possible shared heritage. Entering the EU and gaining freedom on movement was important in the European identification of our respondents. In the interviews they compared themselves to non-Europeans, who do not have the same rights. In addition to this civic aspect, culturally speaking, being Romanian is often seen as the equivalent of being European. Respondents stressed that Romania had always been a part of Europe, European culture and history.

**Discussion and Points for Conclusion**

This paper shows that, as the quantitative findings reflect, most people, whether migrants or nationals, agree in *principle* with the idea that it is a good thing for a society to be made up of people from different ethnic groups, religions and cultures. However, we also saw that this tolerant attitude could take different forms ranging from resignation to enthusiasm. As such, our analysis acts as an empirical demonstration of Walzer’s conceptualisation of toleration.

Our findings echo some of the divides that the analysis of the Brexit vote has revealed[[13]](#endnote-13): while the older and lower educated British citizens of our sample tend to show more nationalist and Eurosceptic attitudes and less tolerance towards migrants, the younger and highly-educated ones are more pro-European and tolerant towards diversity. Yet, beyond these statistical correlations, our article also reminds us of the very complex and multidimensional nature of processes such as tolerance, identity and sense of belonging that research on the impact of the Brexit on living with diversity in the UK should further explore. While quantitative data reveal the importance of younger age, diverse networks, higher education, attachment to city/region and supranational identifications to have a more open and tolerant attitude towards diversity, qualitative findings illustrated how diverse the British’, Turks’ and Romanians’ attitudes of tolerance could be and how they were affected by their position and status in the UK. Arguments about the equality of rights, for instance, were used by migrants and nationals but not necessarily in the same way. While some nationals valued this principle of equality as a way to offer support and empathy, Turkish migrants were really keen on it as it could offer them the possibility of a better life with less restrictive rights and less prejudice in a society in which they have entirely their place, in the same way as Romanians who are now able to enjoy a Europe free of borders. This principle also supports the idea that Turkish migrants should be free to enjoy diverse ways of living a Muslim life. Similarly, while some people truly cherish the idea of a super-diverse society, others feel enthusiasm only for rather superficial forms of cultural and ethnic diversity (food) and experience more difficulty to accept more visible forms of difference, as we observed in some British’s accounts.

In quantitative studies of perceptions of diversity (e.g. Heath and Demirova 2014, Sturgis et al 2013), ‘diversity’ is often ascribed/pre-given to be ethnic, national or religious minorities (e.g. Pakistani, Indian Muslim, Indian Sikh, Turkish, Chinese). Our qualitative data challenged this narrow conceptualisation of ‘diversity’, and emphasised a civic dimension within ‘super-diversity’: it reveals that openness towards diversity did not necessarily target a specific ethnic/religious/national group, but also ‘the ones who contribute to society’, while excluding those who ‘live as parasites’. For instance, the Romanians we interviewed distinguished ‘good Romanians’ from ‘parasites’, ‘good’ Albanians from ‘bad’ ones and stressed their European identification, as a way to cope with discrimination.

In this article, we explored more especially three main factors: intergroup contacts, cross-border practices and supranational identities. With regard to the first two, the results were mixed. Indeed, friendship with people from abroad did not turn out to be significant. However, being a member of an association oriented towards other countries or cultures plays an important role in a positive perception of the contribution of other cultures to the society. The importance of being *engaged* within a culturally diverse network is supported by the qualitative findings. This may explain why belonging to a region (strongly correlated with belonging to a city) is statistically significant as it would embody people’s close network and create a sense of cosmopolitan belonging (Jones and Jackson 2014; Glick-Schiller et al 2011; Hall 2015). In contrast, those with fewer ‘quality’ contacts and less diverse networks tended to overlook the diversity within categories (e.g. Yugoslavs, Muslims, migrants). Their rejection of some aspects of diversity were affected by media representation and stereotypes, hence more imagined (Theodossopoulos 2006) then experienced. Similarly, casual friendships or contacts during trips are likely not to have enough depth to actually have an influential role on people’s perceptions, whether they are nationals or migrants.

The greatest contribution concerns the role of supranational identities, which have been overlooked in the literature. Our results support Curtis’ (2014) claim of the importance of findings an overarching identity that unites people rather than divides. Recent studies in the UK have focused more on the relationship between national identity, diversity and social cohesion (Rietveld 2014, Heath and Demirova 2014). Our findings show that there is not one unified national, in this case British, identity that creates openness towards diversity, but rather more inclusive supranational identifications (in which a national identity can be inserted), such as a European one for the British and Romanian immigrants, and a cosmopolitan one for the Turks. In contrast, the interviews suggested that, when such overarching identity could not be found, people, British nationals in our case, used a more ethnic dimension of national identity, which fragmented the British society into socially unequal ethnic categories. We believe that these supranational identities may actually have a more important role than intergroup contacts and this would most certainly deserve further research.

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**Table 1. Dependent variable: Attitudes towards diversity**



**Table 2. Independent variables: descriptives**

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**Table 3. Logistic regression on openness toward a diverse society (odd ratios)**



1. Permanent residence is given to non-nationals after 10 years of continuous living (a combination of studying, spouse permit holder etc) or 5 years of skilled, highly paid work. One year after receiving permanent residence, they can apply to get UK citizenship. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. http://www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/briefings/eu-migrants-other-eu-countries-analysis-bilateral-migrant-stocks, retrieved on 18/03/16. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/e-library/docs/infographics/immigration/migration-in-eu-infographic\_en.pdf, retrieved on 18/03/16. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/migration1/migration-statistics-quarterly-report/august-2015/sty-bulgarian-and-romanian-migration-to-the-uk.html, retrieved on 18/03/16. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20160105160709/http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/publications/re-reference-tables.html?edition=tcm%3A77-376534, retrieved on 18/03/16. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. http://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/ethnicity/articles/2011censusanalysisethnicityandreligionofthenonukbornpopulationinenglandandwales/2015-06-18, retrieved on 18/03/16. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Turkish is not an ethnic term but refers to holders of Turkish citizenship [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Walzer (1997) actually uses the term of toleration as the activity to tolerate. We do not differentiate between tolerance/toleration in this article. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. The questionnaire is available in Pötzschke et al. 2014. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. See King et al (2008). [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. We introduce interaction terms between groups and the variables related to friendship. They were insignificant and not inserted in the final models (for dependent variables). [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. The Migration Observatory (2014) Bulgarians & Romanians in the British National Press: 1 December 2012 - 1 December 2013. Available at: http://www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/sites/files/migobs/Report-Bulgarians\_Romanians\_Press\_0.pdf, retrieved on 18/03/16. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. http://www.economist.com/news/britain/21701257-results-paint-picture-angry-country-divided-class-age-and-region-country-divided [↑](#endnote-ref-13)