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Everyday cosmopolitanism in representations of Europe among young Romanians in Britain

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Abstract

The paper presents an analysis of everyday cosmopolitanism in constructions of Europe among young Romanian nationals living in Britain. Adopting a social representations approach, cosmopolitanism is understood as a cultural symbolic resource that is part of everyday knowledge. Through a discursively-oriented analysis of focus group data, we explore the ways in which notions of cosmopolitanism intersect with images of Europeanness in the accounts of participants. We show that, for our participants, representations of Europe are anchored in an Orientalist schema of West-vs.-East, whereby the West is seen as epitomising European values of modernity and progress, while the East is seen as backward and traditional. Our findings further show that representations of cosmopolitanism reinforce this East/West dichotomy, within a discourse of 'Occidental cosmopolitanism'. The paper concludes with a critical discussion of the diverse and complex ideological foundations of these constructions of European cosmopolitanism and their implications.

Keywords

Introduction

One of the thorny issues in the UK's relationship with the European Union has been the principle of free movement, particularly concerning immigration from Eastern Europe. This paper asks what Europe means for young Romanians living in Britain, who, on the one hand, can be said to epitomise Europeanness (by enacting their EU citizenship), but, on the other hand, they are often stigmatised. Through an analysis of focus groups with young Romanians, the paper explores the complexities of constructions of Europe in this highly politicised context. We focus particularly on the interconnections between discourses of Europeanness and discourses of cosmopolitanism, both of which were salient in our data. Before presenting our study and findings, we first outline our approach on everyday cosmopolitanism and then we discuss the East/West polarisation that is central in Orientalist constructions of Europe.

Everyday cosmopolitanism

Cosmopolitanism is generally associated with the moral ideal of global democracy (Calhoun, 2002). It is primarily a prescriptive concept: it describes how things should be rather than engaging directly with how things are in people's everyday realities. The conceptual distinction between cosmopolitanism as an ideal and as a practice (Nowicka and Rovisco, 2009) is useful for extending

the meaning of the term. The latter approach focuses on the ways in which people develop post-national loyalties and cross boundaries between 'us' and 'them'.

The study of such 'actually existing cosmopolitanism' (Robbins, 1998) has gained ground across the social sciences. For example, Beck (2002) uses the term 'banal cosmopolitanism' to describe everyday practices that challenge cultural incommensurability. Likewise, Noble (2009) discusses cosmopolitanism in terms of everyday practices of 'intercultural cohabitation'. Wessendorf (2014) describes 'corner-shop cosmopolitanism' in terms of the intercultural skills that are cultivated in super-diverse contexts and facilitate interaction with 'cultural others'. London, for instance, is an exemplary case where diversity has become a commonplace feature of everyday life. Despite their differences, these approaches all focus on the everydayness of lived cosmopolitanism and are generally aligned with a wider trend towards the study of everyday life in the social sciences (Neal and Murji, 2015; Howarth and Andreouli, 2017).

In this paper, we extend such bottom-up approaches. Instead of considering cosmopolitanism as a condition or a trait that can be attributed to specific persons or events by researchers, we explore the ways that cosmopolitanism is reasoned about and conceptualised by people themselves. We move, in other words, from social science theorising to lay theories about cosmopolitanism. Drawing on the theory of social representations, a social psychological theory about the processes of construction and the functions of everyday knowledge (Moscovici and Duveen, 2000), we consider the ways that abstract ideas around cosmopolitanism are appropriated into 'practical' common sense. We conceptualise everyday cosmopolitanism as a social representation, that is, a symbolic resource which is part of everyday knowledge and can be drawn upon to understand, debate and negotiate aspects of social life (such as immigration, diversity, and in this case, European identity). Alongside Lamont and Aksartova (2002: 2), we suggest that everyday cosmopolitanism is grounded in "cultural repertoires of universalism that are differentially available to individuals" across different contexts. As cultural resources, representations of cosmopolitanism are also embedded in specific political contexts. They form part of 'lay' or 'lived' ideologies (Billig et al., 1988). Such lay ideologies are not rigid or one-sided; they consist of dynamic tensions and dilemmas, for example, between universalism and particularism, which provide people with resources to think and debate with others.

Everyday cosmopolitanism is intrinsically linked with processes of identity. Cosmopolitan identities are discursively constructed, and they intersect with other social categorisations, such as class (Calhoun, 2002; Sklair, 2001), sexuality (Binnie and Skeggs, 2004) and gender (Høy-Petersen, Woodward and Skrbis, 2016). Considering the intersections between cosmopolitanism and social class, it can be argued that social representations of cosmopolitanism can exclude the working classes that are seen as local (c.f. Hannerz, 1990). This idea of cosmopolitan elites is captured in Calhoun's (2002) formulation of the 'class consciousness of frequent travellers'. Cosmopolitan identities are associated with cultural sophistication as opposed to supposed local provincialism (Binnie and Skeggs, 2004). In their insightful analysis, Binnie and Skegg (2004) have shown, for example, how Manchester's gay village is constructed as a European and cosmopolitan cultural space in a way that makes gay culture more appealing but also more exclusionary. The village serves as a class marker: while straight women are able to navigate and consume this cultural space, straight white working-class men are seen as a threat to its cultural sophistication. In another example from immigration research, Jones (2013) has shown that young Tamils in the UK who engaged in diverse social networks expressed pride in their cosmopolitan lifestyle while looking down on their peers who socialised in co-ethnic networks as failed cosmopolitans.

In this paper, we are attuned to these politics of everyday cosmopolitanism. We study the perspectives of young Romanians in London, seeking to explore how cosmopolitanism is constructed and mobilised in interaction and, also, how it is embedded in wider ideological traditions, particularly Orientalism in which hierarchical representations of Europe are grounded.

Orientalism in representations of Europe

Representations of Europe intersect with representations of cosmopolitanism. Europe is commonly seen as encapsulating cosmopolitan ideals, such as peace and tolerance, against its various 'Eastern others' (Neumann, 1999). As Said (1995) has observed in his study of Orientalism, the Islamic Orient has served historically as Europe's quintessential 'other': the 'civilised West' has been defined through its opposition to the 'uncivilised East'.

Eastern Europe and the Balkans are also seen through Orientalist lenses. Todorova (1997) has shown how the Western discourse of Balkanism denigrates the Balkans as the 'other' of the 'civilised' Western Europe. This 'other' is not simply opposed to the European West: discourses of Balkanism place the Balkans in an ambivalent position of semi-Europeanness. The Balkans are seen as 'semi-civilised' and 'semi-modernised' compared to the European West. Similarly, the invention of Eastern Europe, rooted in the age of the Enlightenment, has been described as a project of demi-Orientalisation, whereby Eastern Europe is represented as both the defining opposite of Western Europe and as the border between Europe and the Orient (Wolff, 1996).

Discourses related to the Cold War in recent history were shaped by such Orientalist thinking. Burell (2011) considered the everyday manifestations of this East-West polarised ideological schema. He showed, in particular, that 'Western things' could acquire an enchanting quality from the perspectives of Eastern Europeans during the Cold War, because they were associated with progress and with a luxurious lifestyle. This can be described as a 'banal' form of Occidentalism (Bozatzis, 2014), because it operates through mundane everyday practices to reproduce a taken for granted assumption that the West is superior to the East.

Following the fall of the Berlin Wall, the East-West polarity has continued to be significant in framing constructions of Europe. The prototypical 'normal' European in the eyes of the East is still the Western European (Rabikowska, 2010), but these Orientalist representations have been re-articulated in the new world order of economic globalisation and capitalism. Buchowski (2006) argues that Orientalism has been reconfigured in line with a hegemonic liberal ideology that differentiates between the winners and the losers of socio-economic transformations of the post-socialist era. Under a lineal progress narrative, Eastern Europe is understood as being 'in the making', as not yet fully Westernised and modernised (Stenning and Horschelmann, 2008). Moreover, in the post-1989 context, the distinction between the East and the West of Europe is not only geopolitical; it is also a classed distinction within Eastern European societies themselves. This distinction differentiates between those who, in the post-communist era, have been able to take advantage of economic liberalism and market capitalism and those who have been disadvantaged and/or have resisted these changes (Buchowski, 2006).

Current study

Bringing these ideas to the context of Eastern Europeans in the UK, it is no surprise that the 2004 and 2007 EU enlargements were coupled with moral panics about the influx of Eastern Europeans (Allen and Vicol, 2014). The stigmatisation of Eastern Europeans in the UK has been shown in research. Despite their seemingly privileged position as ethnically white Europeans, Eastern European migrants are racialised in the British press (Fox, Moroşanu and Szilassy, 2012). The 2016 Brexit vote to leave the European Union can also be read as demonstrating public concerns over, particularly Eastern, European immigration (Goodwin and Milazzo, 2017; Meleady et al., 2017). Stigma can have a profound effect on identity (Goffman, 1968). For example, Ryan (2010), in her

work with Polish migrants in the UK, has shown that stigmatisation can become a barrier to migrants' "quest for normality" (p.360) in their efforts to adapt to a new sociocultural environment.

Most of the research on Eastern European migration in the UK has focused on Polish migrants. This is understandable as they are the largest Eastern European community in the UK. However, this focus has left underexplored the experiences of other communities. In this paper, we explore the views and experiences of Romanian migrants in the UK. Romanians have been particularly stigmatised by the UK media as criminal and they have attracted more press attention compared to migrants from Hungary which entered the EU in the same year (Allen and Vicol, 2014). Romanians also present a particular case as they are commonly associated, even conflated, with the Roma towards whom prejudice is deeply entrenched (Tileaga, 2006).

On the whole, while Romanian migrants as 'EU movers' can be said to represent an integrated and cosmopolitan Europe (Recchi and Favell, 2009), they are also heavily stigmatised. Their position is ambivalent. On the one hand, they might be seen as European insiders compared to non-EU and non-white migrants. They are ethnically closer to the ideal of European whiteness and they are also EU citizens who face no visa restrictions. But, on the other hand, they can be stigmatised. As explained above, Eastern Europeans have been historically Orientalised and they are positioned outside the (Western) European core. On the basis of these considerations, this paper uses focus group data to explore how Romanian migrants in London construct Europeanness and how these constructions relate to representations of cosmopolitanism.

Methodology

Four focus groups in English with Romanian nationals were conducted in London in March-July 2015. London is where most Romanian migrants have settled in the UK (Glennie and Pennington, 2013). Recruitment was carried out by approaching potential participants in events organised by a Romanian community centre. After making initial contacts, snowballing was used to recruit additional participants. Each focus group consisted of four or five participants (sixteen in total) and was moderated by a female Danish research assistant.

The aim of the study was not to map the diversity of Eastern Europeans' views, which would have required a bigger and more diverse sample. Our aim was to explore in depth the social representations of Europe in this particular Romanian social milieu. Having fairly homogeneous focus groups allowed us to do this. The focus groups were thus mixed in terms of gender (nine males, seven females), but they were relatively uniform in terms of age and socioeconomic status. Participants were between twenty-five and thirty-seven years old, with most in their late twenties (mean age was 29). Participants' employment profile differed from the overall employment profile of Romanians in the UK, who are often over-qualified, working in low or lower-middle skilled jobs, and with a lower average pay than the UK average (ONS, 2017). Participants of this study were skilled and highly skilled workers employed in the following fields: creative industries, banking, administration/management, software engineering, data analysis, healthcare, education, and academia. Participants' length of stay in the UK ranged from one to seventeen years, but most had lived in the UK, predominantly in London only, five or six years (mean was 5.25 years). Apart from one participant, they had all moved to the UK after Romania's EU accession (2007).

The focus groups were semi-structured and addressed the following topics: meanings of European identities, experiences of migration, and experiences of being Romanian in the UK. Each focus group started with a three-minute word association task with the word 'European' which served as a warm-up for the discussion.

We initially analysed the focus group data using thematic analysis. We identified two salient and intersecting themes across the focus groups: cosmopolitanism and East/West polarity. While the

distinction between Eastern and Western Europe was specifically addressed in the focus group topic guide, cosmopolitanism, in terms of cultural repertoires of universalism and post-nationalism, was spontaneously brought up by the participants. This may be partly the result of the fact that the study was conducted in London that has an ethos of tolerance and intercultural mixing (Wessendorf, 2013). Focusing on these two themes, we conducted a more in-depth analysis drawing on discursive psychology in order to explore the connections between local discourses (in the here-and-now of the focus groups) and wider ideological and cultural resources (see Billig et al., 1988).

Analysis: representations of Europe and cosmopolitanism

Europe was, on the whole, constructed in the focus groups within a progress narrative. Democracy, rationality, human rights, tolerance, meritocracy and efficiency, were mentioned as specifically European values. Within this framework, cosmopolitanism emerged as a key element of Europeanness, as the extract below shows.

> Extract 1
> "Ben: Europe tells you that there's no reason why two persons of different ethnicities or nationalities should be treated differently. This is the underlying principle, that you have freedom of movement, freedom of investment of capital, of marrying who you want, of having the exact same rights whether you are Romanian or French or German. And that's a good thing. For me, that's a universal project that should be expanded to the global scale. […] And this to me inspires me more than anything that national states can aspire at national state level." (FG1)

The quote above is extracted from a discussion about the differences of being Romanian and being British. Ben, who was an ardent supporter of European integration, responds to a presumed dichotomy of identities by putting forward an image of Europe as a post-national and post-ethnic entity. This idea of Europe, which is here conflated with the European Union, is associated with principles of non-discrimination ("there's no reason why two persons of different ethnicities or nationalities should be treated differently") and freedom (of mobility and capital). Europe is presented as going beyond national attachments and having a broader cosmopolitan vision. Ben portrays this type of European cosmopolitanism as an inspiring project that has universal value. In this account of cosmopolitan Europe, the differences between Britishness and Romanianness disappear with Europe becoming an overarching identity that is equally accessible to all Europeans.

Most commonly, however, European values were specifically anchored in Western Europe. The idea that only Western Europe is truly European was a taken-for-granted assumption running through the focus group discussions. It is explicitly mentioned in the following extract in the context of a discussion of the differences between living in Romania and living in Western Europe:

> Extract 2
> "Adam: I find that if you go to a Romanian and tell him "what do you think of European", they would think of a Western European. I think, for us, being European means actually more Western European." (FG1)

While Western Europe was seen as prototypically European, Romania and Eastern Europe in general were described in the focus groups as not "fully-fledged European" and as "a work in progress" (FG1), thus rehearsing a teleological understanding of progress from the West to the East. In these Orientalising narratives, Eastern Europe was not, however, fully fixed as Europe's 'other'. Its position appeared more nuanced and malleable. The extract below shows how Eastern Europe can be positioned ambivalently in-between the East and the West:

> Extract 3

"Matei: So, it was occupation that always influenced them [Eastern Europeans]. That's why we are so similar because we were always occupied by the same people. It was Russia, it was the Turkish before that.

Nikoleta: Back home, my grandparents and like older people, they were always talking about like how the Americans helped the Western European countries and how we were left to the Russians and to the communists. So, there was always this separation and stuff and we had to fight for us.

Sabina: And the really interesting thing I've noticed. I did art history and we went to the Museum of Collections and that museum had gathered all the collections from really big aristocrats after the communists and things like that and we noticed that there is no Eastern art. Asia wasn't there, nothing from Middle East, nothing, nothing, everything was West. It was pointing towards West, because of the occupation, you couldn't, yeah, you didn't want to have tokens from your oppressor. So, you go towards the West and I think we always had this fascination about the West.

Matei: Yeah, because that represented freedom.

Nikoleta: And all the time I am hearing this conversation, I'm thinking that like the countries in Eastern Europe are like the border that was protecting the Western European countries from invaders or whatever, so we were like sacrificed, like we were just on the border fighting all these

David: Even Second World War, we were waiting for the Americans to save us." (FG3)

The extract above follows a discussion about the cultural similarities of Eastern Europeans. In the beginning of the extract, these similarities are attributed by Matei to Eastern Europeans' common political history, namely, being occupied by the same empires and having gone through communist regimes in modern history. This reference to occupation prompts Nikoleta to express a historical grievance towards the Americans who helped Western countries in WWII but left Romanians in the hands of Russians and communists. The other participants seem to agree with this assessment of Romania's historical relationship with the West. Sabina makes reference to Eastern "fascination" towards the West arguing that art has historically been seen in Romania as Western, to which Matei adds that the West has represented freedom. At the core of this line of argument that is co-constructed by participants in the extract is an Orientalist distinction between the (democratic) West and the (communist) East. The former is seen as free, as fascinating and as Romanian's desirable saviour ("we were waiting for the Americans to save us"), and the latter is described as its opposite, that is, unfree and oppressive (as the use of words like "occupation" and "oppressor" illustrates). This polarity serves as an organising principle for this historical account. But the fact that Eastern Europe has been occupied by Eastern hegemonic powers does not mean that it is itself an inherent part of this Eastern bloc. Indeed, references to occupation in the extract imply that this has been a forced association. This gives Eastern Europe a quality of in-betweenness, which allows for malleability in the construction of Eastern European identities. Towards the end of the extract, the gap between Eastern Europe and the West is bridged by Nikoleta who argues that the East was the West's protector: it was the "border that was protecting the Western European countries from invaders". Hence, Eastern Europe is ambivalently positioned here being as both non-European and as necessary for the very existence of Europe.

Constructions of the differences between the East and the West can be understood as instantiations of the broader ideological theme of 'banal Occidentalism' (Bozatzis, 2014), a set of representational resources that reproduce the hegemonic distinction between a 'superior West' and an 'inferior Rest' in everyday talk. In our data, such discourses often took the form of 'Occidental cosmopolitanism', whereby cosmopolitanism was understood as part of a highly valued Western lifestyle. While an

affinity with other Eastern European countries was often acknowledged (as in the previous extract), participants also distanced themselves from them in an effort to claim Western identity credentials.

Extract 4
"Simon: Growing up in Romania, I never felt the need of a bigger picture. For me, the bigger picture was Romania. I knew exactly where it started, where it ended. Then, as soon as I moved out, and the first time I did that I was twenty-one, I went to the US, I realised that all these distant places that I was being told about, they're not that distant. And there are people living in there as well. And then I asked myself, why the people around me can't tell me about the fact that we are actually a huge community living on the same planet, we're doing stuff in the same way, in a way. And why are we so disconnected? Hence, why I started to travel, that's why I'm here. This was the second time that I left home and I came here after the US. Because I wanted to be part of something bigger and in Romania I didn't know that there is something bigger […] So, that's why I left, to give you an answer. Because I felt that I was restricted by the environment that I grew up in a lot. And I never knew there was a bigger picture and I went on that discovery to find the bigger picture." (FG4)

Simon, in the extract above, brings in images of cosmopolitanism by discussing travelling and developing universal solidarities. This cosmopolitanism is contrasted with a Romanian lifestyle, where he "never felt the need for a bigger picture" and which is presented as familiar and predictable ("I knew exactly where it started, where it ended") and, further down, as restricting. On the other hand, travelling abroad, to the US and the UK, is constructed as an eye-opening and liberating experience which enabled him to be "part of something bigger". What is also alluded to by Simon, is that it is not so much travelling in itself that is a highly valued practice, but travelling and experiencing life in the West, in particular. Developing a cosmopolitan outlook in life, in terms of being free from the traditions of Romania and discovering the "bigger picture", is constructed as a feature of a Western lifestyle. The kind of cosmopolitanism that Simon evokes in the extract is grounded in a polarity between the localism of Romania against the globalism of the West. The identity of the 'Westernised and cosmopolitan Easterner' is juxtaposed to the identity of 'local Eastern Europeans'. Extract 5 more clearly shows how claiming an idealised Western identity is discursively achieved by Orientalising Romania.

Extract 5
"Stefan: You know, I'm thirty years old, so most of my friends who stayed in Romania, they still have this notion that you need to get married by this age and they're still, you know, you're plagued by the idea that remaining alone is a problem, being a bachelor is probably a negative thing. They are pressured by their peers, by the society to get married, form families. Families are highly valued. Whereas after ten years of living in France, I can say that it's nowhere near in my priorities and I'm kind of shocked when I meet old friends from school which I used to spend all my life when I was a kid, which have these ideas which I do not share because, I don't know, [I've] just grown up in a way in the Western society. I think there are more examples that are like this, that are just proof that I have transformed by living in the West." (FG2)

In the extract above, Stefan contrasts his attitudes towards family to those of his friends who stayed in Romania. For most of his friends having a family is an unquestioned life choice, whereas for Stefan having a family is "nowhere near his priorities". While his staying single is presented as a choice, his friends' decision to start families is presented as the outcome of being pressured by Romanian societal norms. Stefan's Western liberal-individualistic values and lifestyle are thus starkly contrasted with the traditionalism and collectivism of Romania. Through this comparison, Stefan is able to perform a Western identity ("[I've] just grown up in a way in the Western society", "I have

transformed by living in the West"). There is an interesting parallel with the 'Poles abroad' concept in Ryan's (2010) study with Polish participants in the UK. In Ryan's study, participants constructed 'Poles abroad' as behaving badly and spoiling Poland's reputation. Similarly, here, Stefan presents his peers back home as less sophisticated because they are not sufficiently Westernised. The distinction works in similar ways in both cases: differentiating oneself from other 'Poles abroad' and differentiating oneself from Romanians back home, both work to build up valued identity credentials in the context East-West immigration. In the extract above, the distinction between Romania and the West also intersects with social class, in terms of cultural capital rather than economic capital. People, like Stefan, who are able to subscribe to a Western lifestyle are contrasted to the presumed provincialism of those who have not 'caught up' with the Westernisation of the former Eastern bloc (see Buckowski, 2006).

> Extract 6
> "Daniela: I observe that I'm much calmer than the majority of people. It's like, you
> know, people there [Romania], they are sensitised to other people not being nice
> to them, so they react violently to each other. Whereas I'm- it's like I'm Zen. You
> know, I'm like, "but it's just a queue", you know, "why can't you not wait for two
> minutes", you know?
> Ben: What I notice, I have a context-dependent personality. So, when I'm there, maybe I
> get this feeling in the first few days that I'm cool, I can manage and I'm like a
> Westerner coming in to a developing country, but then I remember what it is to
> be a Romanian. And I get pissed off from the same thing that I used to get pissed
> off about when I was back then.
> Interviewer: Okay. So, for some of you here, there isn't a sense of necessarily European
> identity or British identity being in the UK, but then going home to Romania you
> feel maybe not as Romanian? You're feeling a little bit -
> Daniela: Outsider.
> Interviewer: And are you then feeling British or are you feeling more European,
> especially, I mean, some of you have been to, all of you have been to several
> countries.
> Adam: I think it's European because there are things that are happening in Western
> Europe, no matter the country, that would seem out of place in Romania. So,
> when you do that, you feel outsider." (FG1)

In this extract, participants discuss ordinary events of everyday life which illustrate their cultural differentiation from Romanians in Romania. Daniela starts by bringing in the example of queuing, a quintessential British habit that is commonly used to highlight the politeness of the British people. Daniela uses queuing to illustrate other Romanians' impatience against her own calmness. Ben appears to agree. Like Daniela, he starts off being "cool", which he explains in terms of being a "Westerner coming in to a developing country", but, after a few days, he becomes more Romanian and starts to "get pissed off". Being a Westerner is constructed in terms of calmness, patience and general civility, while being Romanian, in contrast, is assumed to be aggressive and vulgar. Following some prompting from the interviewer in terms of how different identities play into this scenario of a visit to Romania, Daniela states that she feels like an "outsider". Adam, joining the discussion, argues that he feels like a "European" and an "outsider". In this account, European means Western European and this is contrasted to Romania ("because there are things that are happening in Western Europe, no matter the country, that would seem out of place in Romania"). Adam not only positions himself as an outsider in Romania, he also positions Romania as non-European. This ultimately enables him to claim European identity credentials. Here, as in the previous extract, a Westernised/Europeanised Easterner identity is defined through its opposition to an

Orientalised Easterner position. There is a social class undertone here too, of differentiating between the civilised, Westernised and Europeanised Romanians versus the traditional Romanians who do not show appropriate manners.

Underlying the extract above and evident in our data more generally, was that Romanian is a stigmatised identity (Goffman 1968). This is not surprising given the very negative representations of Eastern Europe and Romania in the UK, particularly following the lifting of transitional restrictions in the beginning of 2014. At the same time, the debate over Britain's EU referendum had already begun with one of the key Brexit arguments being controlling Eastern European immigration. As was discussed earlier, stigma against Romanians is anchored in the ideology of Orientalism. The Orientalisation of Eastern Europeans can also be racialized. This is because whiteness comes in shades and it is mediated by other markers of difference (McDowell, 2009). In the case of Romanians, they are often associated with the Roma gypsy (Morosanu and Fox, 2013), who are deeply racialized (Tileaga, 2006). This may explain why Romanians are often seen as outside the norm of European whiteness (see Fox, Morosanu and Szilassy, 2012). Some of the participants of this study did indeed report everyday encounters with British people who expected them to 'look different'. As other studies have also shown (Morosanu and Fox, 2013), participants used strategies against such stigma. One of them was claiming a European identity, because it promotes a broader solidarity that includes Romanians.

> Extract 7
> "Interviewer: What about now, today, living in London, when you meet, for example,
>   British people, do you find this categorisation of the East- are you put in the
>   category of Eastern European?
> Nikoleta: Like when they ask "where are you from"?
> Interviewer: Do you say "I'm from Romania"?
> Nikoleta: I refuse to answer. I just tell them I'm European actually.
> Interviewer: Really? Why?
> Nikoleta: Because I don't like the face they make when I tell them I'm Romanian. I had
>   so many bad experiences especially the last couple years when you tell them that
>   you're Romanian, no matter how much they enjoy your company or whatever,
>   you go to the party and you tell them you're Romanian, when I say "Romanian", I
>   just see their face…" (FG3)

The extract above brings to the fore the ambivalence of Eastern European identities as both 'other' and European. It comes from a discussion about the common history of communist regimes in Eastern Europe and about how the East always looked up to the West because it represented freedom. The interviewer prompts further discussion about the meanings of Eastern Europe, which leads to a discussion about the 'where are you from' question. This seemingly simple question appeared to be a source of unease for some of the participants. An explanation for this is that it disrupts the invisibility of white-skinned Romanians, which would have otherwise been taken as a given. Whereas in Extracts 4, 5 and 6, participants were able to lay claim to Western identities through comparisons with 'local' Romanians, here, they are faced with the othering gaze of ethnically native Brits – whose Westerness is presumably unquestionable and towards whom it is thus harder to claim a Western identity. Nikoleta's first response to the interviewer's direct question "Do you say 'I'm from Romania'?" is that she refuses to answer, which suggests that she construes it as a form of micro-aggression. Nikoleta elaborates further by saying that she would respond by saying that she is European. She would, in other words, undermine the taken-for-grantedness of nationality as the primary source of collective identity and claim instead a European identity. With further prompting from the interviewer, Nikoleta alludes to the racialisation of Romanians in Britain through references to subtle non-verbal signs ("I don't like the face they make when I tell them I'm Romanian", "I just see their face"). It can be argued that Nikoleta's visible whiteness allows her to

perform an ethicised European identity and circumvent the racialisation that is often targeted against other migrants in the UK (Fox, Morosanu and Szilassy, 2015). Her middle-class background may also add to her Europeanness.

Our analysis further suggests that constructions of European and cosmopolitan identities in this context emphasised individuality and personal development, rather than more inclusive solidarities. This emphasis on individuality may also be rhetorically employed as a shield against nationality-based stigma (see Morosanu and Fox 2013). An example of this is given in the extract below:

> Extract 8
> "Interviewer: Would you rather not start with the question "where you're from"?
> Simon: Personally, not because I don't think-
> Victor: It's a very condescending question. It doesn't, and especially in a place like London [Simon: Yeah]. It invites you to wear your passport around your neck which is not very 21st century.
> Interviewer: And you also said that there's like groupings. Is that your experience?
> Simon: Yeah, there are communities. I'm not necessarily trying to avoid it, but I'm trying not to allow myself to kind of be tagged as part of that community 'cause I know what community I kind of come from, which is the community of my family and friends back home. But I don't feel that represents me entirely and I want to be a free individual who has the right to move wherever and then be treated as me, Simon, rather than be treated as a Romanian." (FG4)

In the extract above, Simon and Victor contest the legitimacy of the "where you're from" question and resist being categorised in national terms. Victor argues that this is a "condescending question" and that it brings undue emphasis on nationality. This is presented as both outdated ("not very 21st century") and as violating a London 'ethos of mixing' (Wessendorf, 2013). A cosmopolitan perspective is implicitly asserted as more appropriate. Simon appears to agree and, although he is "not necessarily trying to avoid it", he argues that being categorised as Romanian reduces him to only one aspect of his personality. He presents himself as an individual instead of a group member. While being a group member would mean that he is positioned as part of a minoritised Romanian community, presenting himself as an individual allows him to perform a cosmopolitan identity against the localism and the fixity that is associated with community identities. This individualistic and a-spatial construction of cosmopolitanism echoes a Western (neo-)liberal understanding of cosmopolitanism (Harvey, 2009).

At times, participants also unsettled the dominant narrative of 'Occidental cosmopolitanism'. This often happened when the discussion turned to more personal life decisions. For instance, when discussing whether they would teach their future children about Romanian culture, some participants made a distinction between an idealised global identity and an emotionally invested national identity. In the extract below, following a discussion about developing more globalised identities through living abroad, the interviewer asks participants about passing on Romanian culture to their children which leads to a discussion about the dangers of globalisation.

> Extract 9
> "Alina: It seems like the less strong countries tend to look very highly towards the stronger ones and say "hey, that's the way to do it and we're going to throw away everything we've done so far and we don't care, and right now we're going to be this European identity". Whereas the Western countries, the stronger countries, are saying "no, this is our identity, we want to keep this and we won't accept the

immigrants as a kind of part of our same, our group". So, it feels like Romania is trying to lose a lot of its identity and it won't get something in return. Like, it won't belong to that - the new identity.

Stefan: It has to be danger in globalisation, the fact that it's like an evolution - an evolution.

Interviewer: Evolution of -

Stefan: An evolution of ideas. I look at this very similarly as evolution of species in a sense that in a pocket somewhere of isolated culture there can be an idea that is brought forward which can be extremely efficient, but that has surged from that place because that place is the way it is. And by uniforming it, by making everything uniform, basically we are essentially limiting the pool of possible ideas that can come up. And we can end up in a situation where we can't get out of the problem because everyone has the same way of thinking, which is the reason why large corporations, successful businesses embrace diversity, simply because everyone's different ways of thinking can bring different solutions to problems." (FG2)

In this extract, the participants are engaging with the ideological dilemma between the value of universalism, exemplified in a shared European identity, and the value of particularism, exemplified in particular national identities (Billig, 1995). While in most of the data, universalism appeared as the more valued pole of this opposition, here, participants place greater value to particular identities and diversity. Previously, participants seemed to draw on a lay moral philosophy of cosmopolitanism that put Western liberalism at its centre; in this extract, they employ an anti-globalisation ideological framework that is critical of Western hegemony. The extract starts with Alina who argues against the supremacy of "stronger" European countries that have the power to impose their version of Europeanness onto "less strong" countries like Romania. Europeanness is seen here as the result of an unequal and unfair power struggle. To Alina's moral argument, Stefan adds a seemingly scientific argument in favour of diversity. Making reference to evolution theory and business practice, Stefan argues for the value of diversity as integral to creative problem-solving against the unimaginativeness of uniformity. In this extract, Romanian identity seems to have inherent value by virtue of being different. At the same time, an alternative representation of cosmopolitanism is put forward: instead of an individualistic and Western-based cosmopolitanism, participants advance a diversity-based cosmopolitanism and a plural European identity.

Discussion

In this paper, we reported findings from a focus group study with young Romanians in London focusing on constructions of European identities. Contributing to the study of empirical approaches to cosmopolitanism, we have suggested that cosmopolitanism can be studied as a social representation that people draw upon to navigate their everyday realities. Our approach illustrates how abstract ideals become part of people's everyday lexicon and how they function in the micro-politics of everyday life.

Perhaps unsurprisingly (e.g. Wolff, 1996), our study shows that a deeply entrenched Orientalism towards Eastern Europe serves as an anchor for constructing contemporary European identities in this context. Going beyond that, our study further shows that lay representations of cosmopolitanism are implicated in Orientalising Eastern Europe, in general, and Romania, in particular. European identities were constructed by participants not only on the basis of an Orientalist polarity between East and West, but also on the basis of a distinction between cosmopolitanism, associated with Western Europe, and localism, associated with Romania as part of Eastern Europe.

The ambivalence associated with Romanian, and Eastern European identities more generally, plays into these identity dynamics. Being Romanian may put the participants of this study in a position of semi-Europeanness whereby, one the one hand, their Europeanness remains precarious, but on the other hand, this in-betweenness leaves room for those with the necessary cultural capital (associated with a middle-class lifestyle; Savage, 2015) to claim European, and, by extension, Western identity credentials. By positioning themselves as 'Westernised' or 'Europeanised' Eastern Europeans, participants differentiated themselves from 'Eastern' Eastern Europeans. The latter are Romanians who stayed home and have not 'caught up' with the Westernisation of the post-socialist era. Lay representations of cosmopolitanism can work therefore hand-in-hand with Orientalism to produce new identity constellations, which enabled the participants to negotiate a valued position in the UK, as Europeans and as cosmopolitan and Westernised individuals.

However, these highly valued identities were not always accessible to participants. This was evident in some everyday encounters with native Brits in which participants found themselves being seen as 'other'. For example, being asked where they are from in the course of an ordinary conversation disrupted the taken-for-grantedness of their 'insider' status in the British society. In these cases, and in the context of these focus groups, making claims to post-national European identities and to individualistic cosmopolitan identities could function as resources for coping with stigma (see also Morosanu and Fox, 2013) and negotiating their place in the British society.

There were echoes of liberal ideology in these participant accounts. Their emphasis on individual skills and personal development in a globalised market economy can be understood as being indicative of the workings of (neo-)liberalism in everyday thinking. This was also evident in the juxtaposition between the Romanian communitarian lifestyle and the Western liberal-individualistic lifestyle. Our analysis therefore shows the ideological intersections of different ideological themes related to cosmopolitanism, (neo-)liberalism and Orientalism in constructions of European identities and their performance in these local micro-interactions.

These intersections often took the form of a 'cosmopolitan Occidentalism'. This refers to a representation of cosmopolitanism as centred in hegemonic Western culture and liberal ideology, in a way that supports and perpetuates the power differentials between a superior West and an inferior East, as well as differences between upper and lower social classes. In this way, paradoxically, cosmopolitanism becomes the exact opposite of what it is supposed to be, that is, a resource used to draw boundaries and hierarchies, rather than a moral ideal for human solidarity on a global scale. These exclusionary undertones of cosmopolitanism and Europeanism can work to 'taint' values of diversity and mutual respect more broadly as part of an elite ideology of the upper classes.

In the specific context of the UK in the era of Brexit, these representations of cosmopolitan Europe may not only stigmatise migrants of Eastern European descent but also create fertile ground for the development of a more general ethnocentrism. It is telling, for instance, that Teresa May, currently the UK Prime Minister tasked with delivering Brexit, argued that "if you believe you are a citizen of the world, you're a citizen of nowhere", in the context of outlining her vision for Brexit Britain. Indeed, it is possible that our analysis about the stigma attached to Romanian and Eastern European identities may have become more widespread, as prejudice towards European migrants in general was a predictor of support for Brexit (Meleady, Seger and Vermue, 2017)

However, alternative representations of cosmopolitanism and of Europe can also be found in everyday discourse. As the final section of our analysis shows, there were instances where participants constructed a critical representation of Europeanness and asserted more valued

Romanian identities. At the same time, participants could develop alternative accounts of cosmopolitanism that were respectful of local cultures and traditions. Such accounts provide the seeds for developing counter-conceptions of cosmopolitanism as a project of solidarity through diversity, rather than a project of global capitalism that only speaks to the lifestyles and interests of translational elites (Calhoun, 2002). These disruptions to dominant ideological narratives illustrate the multifacetedness of everyday ideologies and their transgressive potential.

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