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GLOBAL IDENTITY IN AN UNCERTAIN WORLD

A LONGITUDINAL STUDY OF THE
DEVELOPMENT OF COSMOPOLITAN SOCIAL
ATTITUDES AT AN ELITE INTERNATIONAL
UNIVERSITY SETTING IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Jennifer Sheehy-Skeffington, Iván Cano, PJ Henry & Tatiana Karabchuk

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Global Identity in an Uncertain
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University Setting in the Middle East

Jennifer Sheehy-Skeffington, Iván Cano, PJ Henry
& Tatiana Karabchuk

About the Authors

Jennifer Sheehy-Skeffington is a Visiting Associate Professor at New York University Abu Dhabi. She is also an Associate Professor in the Department of Psychological and Behavioural Science at the London School of Economics, a Faculty Affiliate of the LSE International Inequalities Institute, and Associate Editor at the *European Journal of Social Psychology* and the *British Journal of Psychology*.

Iván Cano is a final-year Ph.D. candidate in the LSE Department of Psychological and Behavioural Science. His academic roots in social psychology were supplemented with an MSc in Social Intervention and Policy Evaluation from the University of Oxford.

PJ Henry is an Associate Professor and founding faculty member of the Psychology Program at New York University Abu Dhabi. He received his PhD in social psychology from UCLA and has held research and faculty positions worldwide, including the American University of Beirut, UC Santa Barbara, Yale University, DePaul University, and Bielefeld University where he was a Humboldt Fellow.

Tatiana Karabchuk is an Associate Professor at the Department of Government and Society, United Arab Emirates University, and is ranked #1 in the UAE in Demographic Studies (AD Scientific Index, World Scientist and University Rankings 2022).

Abstract

The global resurgence of populist and authoritarian leaders in democratic countries has been argued to signal a decline in internationalist attitudes and the displacement of economic concerns with concerns that are more cultural in nature: unease around notions such as identity, values, and recognition. This paper considers how such social psychological processes are developing in the next generation of young leaders across the world, and what kinds of environments might foster a liberal, globalist outlook, just as it shows signs of being in retreat.

The research presented studies high achievers from a range of countries in a unique setting: New York University Abu Dhabi, a UAE-based campus of a leading US university that offers highly competitive, fully funded places to students recruited with the goal of global representation. The result is a geographically and socioeconomically diverse student body gathered in the Middle East for four years of study following the liberal arts model. This makes it an ideal test case for the ability of exposure to liberal values and multicultural settings to develop a cosmopolitan outlook in a critical period of identity and attitudinal development: the young adult years. We present results from the first two years of this ongoing longitudinal survey, with a focus on predictors and consequences of a sense of global identity.

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Introduction

A common refrain when considering urgent global challenges such as climate change, inequality, and conflict is that the era of internationalism is over. The rise in cosmopolitan attitudes and multilateral cooperation that accompanied late twentieth century globalisation has seemingly been eclipsed by an inward-looking nationalism and populist authoritarianism that emerged in the early decades of the twenty-first century.¹ This culminated in the resurgence of ethno-nationalist sentiment from India to Brazil and across the industrialised West, as manifested in rising support for political candidates on the far right, and decline in support for democracy,² especially among the young.³ Running through the core of such developments in population attitudes is a common pattern of displacing purely economic matters with concerns that are more cultural in nature: unease around notions such as identity, values, and recognition.⁴ Considering this, understanding social psychological processes and how they change over time plays an important role in addressing whether the world is becoming more globally versus locally oriented with each generation, and what this means for tackling global issues.

This project adopted a social psychological lens in turning to the question of how values, identities, and sociopolitical attitudes are developing among the next generation of leaders across the world. Whereas research on the mindset underpinning a retreat from liberal internationalist sentiment has often focused on homogeneous communities in which globalisation is experienced as economic and cultural disruption,⁵ our research team approached the problem from the opposite direction, focusing on a community constructed from the beginning with the goal of diversity and global leadership. Specifically, we focus on high-achievers from a range of countries in a unique setting: New York Uni-

¹ Paul R. Abramson & Ronald Inglehart, *Value Change in Global Perspective* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993); Francis Fukuyama, 'The End of History?', *The National Interest* 16 (1989), pp. 3–18; Roger Eatwell and Cas Mudde, *Democracy and the New Extreme Right Challenge* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004); Bart Meuleman, Eldad Davidov and Jaak Billiet, 'Changing Attitudes toward Immigration in Europe, 2002–2007: A Dynamic Group Conflict Theory Approach', *Social Science Research* 38/2 (2009), pp. 352–65.

² Christopher Claassen, 'Time-Series Plots of Support for Democracy and Extent of Democracy in 135 Countries from 1988 to 2017', (2018). Available at: <https://www.almendron.com/tribuna/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/support-democracy-1988-2017.pdf> (accessed 24 April 2024); Yascha Mounk, *The People Vs. Democracy: Why Our Freedom is in Danger and how to Save it* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018); Surendra Munshi, ed., *Democracy Under Threat* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

³ Alexander Wuttke, Konstantin Gavras & Harald Schoen, 'Have Europeans grown Tired of Democracy? New Evidence from Eighteen Consolidated Democracies, 1981–2018', *British Journal of Political Science* 52/1 (2022), pp. 416–28.

⁴ Francis Fukuyama, *Identity: The Demand for Dignity and the Politics of Resentment* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2018); Sandra Obradović, Séamus A. Power & Jennifer Sheehy-Skeffington, 'Understanding the psychological appeal of populism', *Current Opinion in Psychology* 35 (2020), pp. 125–31; Dani Rodrik, 'Why does Globalization Fuel Populism? Economics, culture, and the Rise of Right-Wing Populism', *Annual Review of Economics* 13 (2021), pp. 133–70.

⁵ E.g., David Goodhart, *The Road to Somewhere: The Populist Revolt and the Future of Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Arlie Russell Hochschild, *Strangers in their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right* (New York: The New Press, 2018).

versity Abu Dhabi (NYUAD), a UAE-based campus of a leading US university that offers highly competitive, financially supported places on a four-year liberal arts programme of study to students recruited with the goal of global representation. The result is an academically accomplished student body, possibly the most diverse in the world in terms of both national origin (representing more than 120 countries) and socioeconomic background (almost one fifth first-generation college students). It is thus arguably the best test case for the ability of exposure to liberal values and multicultural settings to develop a cosmopolitan outlook in a critical period of identity and attitudinal development: the young adult years.⁶

In this paper, we examine key social attitudes of this unique population as they relate to cosmopolitanism and political agency, asking whether and how the aspiration of ‘global leadership’ can be cultivated in a multicultural university setting. We consider the relationship between identification as a ‘global citizen’ and indicators of potential influence in addressing global issues: sense of external political efficacy and concern for global injustice. At a time of apparent fragility of the international liberal democratic order, one way of interpreting this research is in terms of shedding the most optimistic light possible on future prospects for the kind of universalist global orientation which was taken for granted only twenty years ago.

Political Efficacy in a Jaded Age

The notion of global leadership begins first with the concept of political efficacy, or the extent to which one feels they can act in ways which influence governments. If young people are convinced that they can make a difference in the world, might they be able to lead the pushback against inward-looking cynicism at the national level? This hope is tempered, first, by the observation that confidence in the ability to effect political change tends to be lowest among young people.⁷ At the same time, trust in political institutions, alongside trust in people from different regions and countries, has been in steady decline internationally with the only recent gains in political trust occurring in non-democracies such as China and countries of the Persian Gulf.⁸

Political efficacy can be considered as internal, a political manifestation of self-efficacy, or the perception of one’s capability to understand and participate in political processes.

⁶ See David O. Sears & Sheri Levy, ‘Childhood and Adult Political Development’ in David O. Sears, Leonie Huddy & Robert Jervis, eds, *Handbook of Political Psychology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

⁷ E.g., Alan I. Abramowitz, ‘The United States: Political Culture under Stress’ in Gabriel Almond & Sidney Verba, eds, *The Civic Culture Revisited* (London: Sage, 1989), pp. 177–211; Bernadette C. Hayes & Clive S. Bean, ‘Political efficacy: a comparative study of the United States, West Germany, Great Britain and Australia’, *European Journal of Political Research* 23/3 (1993), pp. 261–80; OECD, *Government at a Glance*, 2021. Available at: https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/governance/government-at-a-glance-2021_1c258f55-en (accessed 6 October 2023)

⁸ ‘Global Report’, *Edelman Trust Barometer*, 2022. Available at: <http://www.edelman.com/trust/2022-trust-barometer> (accessed 6 October 2023); Eric M. Uslaner, ‘Trust, Political’, in James D. Wright, ed., *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences* (2nd ed. Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2015), pp. 658–63.

Perhaps most important for the health of democracy, however, is the notion of external political efficacy – the perception of the extent to which what one does can have an influence what governments do.⁹ The potency of external political efficacy in driving conventional political participation,¹⁰ satisfaction with democracy,¹¹ and trust in public institutions,¹² has been demonstrated across time and nations. We investigate the seeds of external political efficacy in the college years (Analyses 1 and 2), and whether and when later levels of political efficacy will translate into concern for global inequality and injustice among the most privileged (Analysis 3).

The Concept of Global Identification

Implicit in the notion of global leadership is a sense of global citizenship, or the extent to which one sees oneself as a citizen of the world, holding a sense of identification with the notion of humanity at large.¹³ Indeed, it is precisely this sense of global belonging and responsibility on which the notion of cultivating global leaders in university settings is based.¹⁴

Globalisation can lead to the development of superordinate identities alongside the more common identities attached to one's home country or culture.¹⁵ Individuals who report greater levels of 'global identification' can better resolve tensions between other identities at lower levels (e.g., between being gay and being Muslim),¹⁶ and can potentially maintain strong local forms of identification at the same time.¹⁷ When measured in terms of one's

⁹ George I. Balch, 'Multiple Indicators in Survey Research: The Concept "Sense of Political Efficacy"', *Political Methodology* 1/2 (1974), pp. 1–43; Stephen C. Craig, Richard G. Niemi & Glenn E. Silver, 'Political Efficacy and Trust: A Report on the NES Pilot Study Items', *Political Behaviour* 2/3, (1990), pp. 289–314.

¹⁰ Steven E. Finkel, 'Reciprocal Effects of Participation and Political Efficacy: A Panel Analysis', *American Journal of Political Science* (1985), pp. 891–913; Mariana Prats & Axel Meunier, 'Political Efficacy and Participation: An Empirical Analysis in European Countries', *OECD Working Papers on Public Governance* 46 (OECD Publishing: Paris, 2021).

¹¹ OECD, *Government at a Glance*.

¹² Santiago González, 'Testing the Evidence, how Good are Public Sector Responsiveness Measures and How to Improve them?', *OECD Working Papers in Public Governance* (2020).

¹³ Sylvia Xiaohua Chen, Ben C.P. Lam, Bryant P.H. Hui, Jacky C.K. Ng, Winnie W.S. Mak, Yanjun Guan, Emma E. Buchtel, Willie C.S. Tang & Victor C.Y. Lau, 'Conceptualizing Psychological Processes in Response to Globalization: Components, Antecedents, and Consequences of Global Orientations', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 110/2 (2016), p. 302; Ilka H. Gleibs & Geetha Reddy, 'The Social and Political Psychology of Globalisation and Global Identities', in *The Social Psychology of Everyday Politics* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), pp. 75–88; Lene Arnett Jensen & Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, 'Going Global: New Pathways for Adolescents and Emerging Adults in a Changing World', *Journal of Social Issues* 68/3 (2012), pp. 473–92.

¹⁴ New York University Abu Dhabi, *Vision and Mission* (2023). Available at: <https://nyuad.nyu.edu/en/about/nyuad-at-a-glance/vision-and-mission.html> (accessed 6 October 2023).

¹⁵ Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, 'The Psychology of Globalization', *American Psychologist* 57/10 (2002), p. 774; Jensen & Arnett, 'Going Global'; Gleibs & Reddy, 'The Social and Political Psychology of Globalisation and Global Identities'.

¹⁶ Yasin Koc & Vivian L. Vignoles, 'Global Identification Helps Increase Identity Integration among Turkish Gay Men', *Psychology & Sexuality* 9/4 (2018), pp. 329–42.

¹⁷ Sagar Sharma & Monica Sharma, 'Globalization, Threatened Identities, Coping and Well-Being', *Psychological Studies* 55/4, (2010), pp. 313–22; Sylvia Xiaohua Chen, Veronica Benet-Martínez & Michael Harris Bond, 'Bicultural Identity, Bilingualism, and Psychological Adjustment in Multicultural Socie-

self-reported identification ‘with all humanity’, global identity can cultivate lower levels of interethnic prejudice and greater willingness to act to help groups who are disadvantaged at the global scale.¹⁸ Most recently, it has been found that the construct of ‘moral cosmopolitanism’ predicts support for policies that work toward equality of resources and security at the global level.¹⁹ Yet the benefits of global identity are not uncontested, as it can also trigger tension with more localised forms of self-understanding or act as a conduit to the imposition of Western or other dominant identities, in either case doing little to mobilise people to address global inequality or injustice.²⁰

We focus our analysis of the development of global leadership in an elite international university setting on the notion of global identity, asking how it might be cultivated and what it means for the evolution of a sense of political efficacy and concern for global injustice.

Living and Learning in Multicultural Settings

The third field of scholarship tapped by this research concerns the study of the impact of the college years on social attitudes, with a particular focus on the role of intercultural experiences. Two influential longitudinal studies have examined changes in political attitudes at American universities, both reporting an increase in liberal attitudes and a decrease in prejudice as students progress through university.²¹ However, another more

ties: Immigration-Based and Globalization-Based Acculturation’, *Journal of Personality* 76/4 (2008), pp. 803–38.

¹⁸ Sam McFarland, Matthew Webb & Derek Brown, ‘All Humanity is my Ingroup: A Measure and Studies of Identification with all Humanity’, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 103/5 (2012), p. 830; Sam McFarland, Derek Brown & Matthew Webb, ‘Identification with all Humanity as a Moral Concept and Psychological Construct’, *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 22/3 (2013), pp. 194–8; David J. Sparkman & Scott Eidelman, ‘We Are the “Human Family”’, *Social Psychology* 49 (2018), pp. 135–53; see also Gal Ariely, ‘Globalization, Immigration and National Identity: How the Level of Globalization affects the Relations between Nationalism, Constructive Patriotism and Attitudes toward Immigrants?’, *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations* 15/4 (2012), pp. 539–57; Gerhard Reese, Jutta Proch & Christopher Cohrs, ‘Individual Differences in Responses to Global Inequality’, *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy* 14/1 (2014), pp. 217–38; for a review, see Sam McFarland, Justin Hackett, Katarzyna Hamer, Iva Katzarska-Miller, Anna Malsch, Gerhard Reese & Stephen Reysen, ‘Global Human Identification and Citizenship: A Review of Psychological Studies’, *Political Psychology* 40 (2019), pp. 141–71.

¹⁹ Xuechunzi Bai, Varun Gauri & Susan T. Fiske, ‘Cosmopolitan Morality Trades Off In-Group for the World, Separating Benefits and Protection’, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 118/40 (2021).

²⁰ Lakshmi Ramarajan, ‘Past, Present and Future Research on Multiple Identities: Toward an Intrapersonal Network Approach’, *The Academy of Management Annals* 8 (2014), pp. 589–659; Sharma & Sharma, ‘Globalization, Threatened Identities, Coping and Well-Being’; Michal Bilewicz & Aleksandra Bilewicz, ‘Who Defines Humanity? Psychological and Cultural Obstacles to Omniculturalism’, *Culture & Psychology* 18/3 (2012), pp. 331–44; Amir Rosenmann, ‘Alignment with Globalized Western Culture: Between Inclusionary Values and an Exclusionary Social Identity’, *European Journal of Social Psychology* 46/1 (2016), pp. 26–43; Amir Rosenmann, Gerhard Reese & James E. Cameron, ‘Social Identities in a Globalized World: Challenges and Opportunities for Collective Action’, *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 11/2, (2016), pp. 202–21.

²¹ Duane F. Alwin, Ronald L. Cohen & Theodore M. Newcomb, *Political Attitudes over the Life Span: The Bennington Women after Fifty Years* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991); Jim Sidanius, Shana Levin, Colette van Laar & David O. Sears, *The Diversity Challenge: Social Identity and Intergroup Relations on the College Campus* (New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation, 2008).

recent study conducted in an American higher education setting did not find an overall increase in liberal attitudes throughout the college years.²²

Focusing on intergroup attitudes and outlooks, the formative work of Jim Sidanius, Shana Levin, Colette van Laar, and David Sears, which followed a cohort of 831 (out of a sampling frame of approximately 2,700) students enrolled in the elite University of California Los Angeles (UCLA), found that having more friends of another ethnicity and having a dorm roommate of another ethnicity both predicted reduced prejudice over time.²³ The mechanism through which this is theorised to occur is intergroup contact, such that having positive interactions with outgroup members improves intergroup attitudes, especially where such contact is on equal terms and sanctioned by relevant authorities.²⁴ Cross-group friendship predicts more inclusive social identities and intercultural exposure predicts identification with all humanity and downstream support for international humanitarian helping.²⁵ Intergroup contact at the international level has been linked to greater solidarity with poorer countries and willingness to address global inequality.²⁶ On the other hand, positive contact between differing ethnic, religious, and other social groups can produce harmful consequences, such as the glossing over of intergroup inequalities and reduced willingness to engage in collective action to address injustice.²⁷

²² Logan Strother, Spencer Piston, Ezra Golberstein, Sarah E. Gollust & Daniel Eisenberg, 'College Roommates have a Modest but Significant Influence on Each Other's Political Ideology', *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 118/2 (2021).

²³ Shana Levin, Colette van Laar & Jim Sidanius, 'The Effects of Ingroup and Outgroup Friendships on Ethnic Attitudes in College: A Longitudinal Study', *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations* 6/1 (2003), pp. 76–92; Colette van Laar, Shana Levin, Stacey Sinclair & Jim Sidanius, 'The Effect of University Roommate Contact on Ethnic Attitudes and Behavior', *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 41, (2005), pp. 329–45; for a summary, see Sidanius et. al, *The Diversity Challenge*.

²⁴ Gordon W. Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice*, (Boston: Addison-Wesley, 1954); Thomas F. Pettigrew and Linda R Tropp, 'A Meta-Analytic Test of Intergroup Contact Theory', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 90/5 (2006), p. 751.

²⁵ Nils Karl Reimer, Shanmukh Vasant Kamble, Katharina Schmid & Miles Hewstone, 'Intergroup Contact Fosters more Inclusive Social Identities', *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations* 25/1 (2022), pp. 133–57; Sparkman & Eidelman, 'We Are the "Human Family"'; David J. Sparkman & Katarzyna Hamer, 'Seeing the Human in Everyone: Multicultural Experiences Predict more Positive Intergroup Attitudes and Humanitarian Helping through Identification with all Humanity', *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 79 (2020), pp. 121–34; Katharina Schmid, Miles Hewstone, Nicole Tausch, Ed Cairns & Joanne Hughes, 'Antecedents and Consequences of Social Identity Complexity: Intergroup Contact, Distinctiveness Threat, and Outgroup Attitudes', *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 35/8 (2009), pp. 1085–98.

²⁶ Rachael E. Hoskin, Emma F. Thomas & Craig McGarty, 'Transnational Contact and Challenging Global Poverty: Intergroup Contact Intensifies (the Right Kind of) Social Identities to Promote Solidarity-Based Collective Action for those Low in Social Dominance', *Journal of Theoretical Social Psychology* 3/1 (2019), pp. 23–34; Anne-Kristin Römpke, Immo Fritsche & Gerhard Reese, 'Get Together, Feel Together, Act Together: International Personal Contact Increases Identification with Humanity and Global Collective Action', *Journal of Theoretical Social Psychology* 3/1 (2019), pp. 35–48.

²⁷ E.g., Tamar Saguy & Lily Chernyak-Hai, 'Intergroup Contact can Undermine Disadvantaged Group Members' Attributions to Discrimination', *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 48/3 (2012), pp. 714–20; Tamar Saguy, Nicole Tausch, John F. Dovidio & Felicia Pratto, 'The Irony of Harmony: Intergroup Contact can Produce False Expectations for Equality', *Psychological Science* 20/1 (2009), pp. 114–21; John Dixon, Mark Levine, Steve Reicher & Kevin Durrheim, 'Beyond Prejudice: Are Negative Evaluations

It is thus important to conduct a direct test of the role of intergroup contact in shaping the development of global identification, political efficacy, and concern for global injustice. Longitudinal data in a highly multicultural, non-Western setting and context, whereby students from all over the world are assigned first year roommates on a quasi-random basis, can provide particularly strong and illustrative evidence of the relationship between these social psychological constructs.

The Current Research

This report presents the methodology for the first systematic longitudinal study of the development of identities, outlooks and sociopolitical attitudes in a global university setting. We focus on the student population of New York University Abu Dhabi (NYUAD), an overseas campus of New York University established in 2010 in collaboration with the Government of Abu Dhabi as both a liberal arts college and a full faculty research university. Located in a purpose-built campus on Saadiyat Island in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates (UAE), NYUAD houses approximately 2,000 students, all of whom live on campus and almost all of whom receive generous financial aid packages covering their tuition, housing, a living stipend, and regular home leave travel. As noted above, the student body is more diverse by geographic origin than that of any other university, housing students from more than 120 countries, almost one fifth of whom are the first in their families to attend college. Below, we outline the methodology for the implementation of the WeAreNYUAD Survey developed for this study.

In addition to the survey at NYUAD, we also collaborated with a local public university, United Arab Emirates University (UAEU), to obtain data on an adapted version of the survey from a local student sample. Although both universities are based in the UAE, funded by the Government of Abu Dhabi, and have English as the primary medium of instruction, they differ markedly in terms of the make-up of their student body – most notably with the proportion of students of Emirati nationality rising from approximately 20 percent at NYUAD to approximately 82 percent at UAEU. An outline of the methodology and key descriptive statistics for this comparison sample is provided in Appendix A.

For the purpose of this report, we limit our analyses to a subset of items from the survey that address the key aims of the project as outlined above. Specifically, we explore the extent to which strength of global identification among NYUAD students shapes their external political efficacy over time and can be shaped by interethnic contact in a university residential setting. We then extend this to consider the downstream impact of such political empowerment on concern for global injustices, with a focus on those on whom the greatest responsibility for addressing injustice arguably lies: those high in socioeconomic status.

Methodology

Procedure and Data Collection

Ethical Considerations

- *Ethical Clearance:* The research protocol was reviewed and approved by the LSE Research Ethics Committee and the New York University Abu Dhabi Institutional Review Board prior to any data collection, the latter also reviewing all study measures and recruitment communications with potential participants before they were distributed.
- *Informed Consent:* Before gathering data, participants were briefed about the study and provided their informed consent.
- *Anonymity:* All personal identifiers were excluded and questions on personal background were asked at a level of generality (e.g., home country region) that precluded identification of respondents, thus enabling full data anonymity.

Study Population and Sampling Approach

- *Population of Study:* Our research targeted every first-year undergraduate student at NYUAD commencing in August 2021 and August 2022 (data from August 2023 is not examined here).

Data Collection

- *Platform:* We used the Qualtrics platform to gather data through an online survey.
- *Duration:* The current analysis focuses on data from two undergraduate cohorts over two waves, one year apart. Beyond the scope of the current project, the survey will continue to collect data from future cohorts and student years, so that at least 5 cohorts are studied and each student in the relevant cohorts has the potential to provide 4 waves of data.
- *Data Gathered:* All survey waves included blocked sets of questions on personal outlook, social identity, intergroup attitudes, political views, and well-being. The first wave additionally assessed the family background and demographics that students bring with them to university, and subsequent waves measured on-campus activities and experiences.

Participant Recruitment

The survey was introduced to all incoming students a week before they commenced the first semester through a personalised email that included a unique survey link (with embedded participant identification number). For those students under 18, we obtained the informed consent of their parents or guardians before study commencement. We aimed to boost survey participation through a number of methods:

1. *Follow-Up Emails*: Our email strategy involved sending a series of up to six follow-up messages to engage recipients. The content was double layered in its customisation, based on whether the recipient was a first-time respondent or a repeat participant, with each follow-up including a novel message to tap into varying motivations to complete the survey and to keep engagement consistent.
2. *Student Orientation Sessions*: We worked in cooperation with the NYUAD Office of Student Affairs and the Office of Global Education to ensure the survey was mentioned in the 'Marhaba' welcome orientation week and through meetings with first year student 'Weyak' leaders and upper-class student resident assistants. The survey had prominent tables at academic and student interest group resource fairs, so that members of the survey team could speak with students in person about the survey.
3. *Poster and Door Hanger Campaign*: The survey team designed and distributed a set of paper and electronic posters for public areas on campus and door hangers for the student residence halls with the name of the survey and mention of incentives and the method to participate.
4. *Social Media*: The survey at one point 'took over' the Instagram account for the student welcome orientation, providing video and visual content to engage students in the survey.
5. *Compensation*: First-year participants were informed that their names would be entered into a prize draw for a chance to win an Apple product (e.g., Airpod Pros, Apple watch, iPad). A larger compensation was offered to students who participated in subsequent waves of data collection: their names were re-entered into another prize draw, and they were provided 45 AED through the Campus Dirhams program that loads money onto student ID cards for use in dining halls, the university bookstore, and other campus outlets.
6. *Identity Diary*: To further incentivise participation, students were informed of the chance to receive a graphical summary of their responses to key survey questions over the four years of participation in the form of an 'Identity Diary' that would be made available after completion of the fourth survey wave.
7. *Re-Engagement*: Beyond the data collection periods, we re-engaged with students to encourage them to stay connected to the survey and willing to participate in future waves even if they had not completed a previous wave, through regular electronic newsletters disseminating basic descriptive highlights from the survey, and focus groups through which we received feedback on the survey and our recruitment techniques.

Participants

The analyses presented centre on the data from Waves 1 and 2 from the initial survey cohort of students first enrolling in August 2021. From these two waves, we had initially recruited 332 participants, but due to missing data in at least one wave, 124 participants were excluded from the longitudinal analyses. The final sample comprised 208 participants (55.3% female), whose age ranged from 17 to 21 years ($M= 18.35$, $SD= 0.82$). In terms of ethnic identity, 71 individuals identified as South Asian (34.1%), 39 as White (18.8%), 35

as Arab (16.8%), 23 as East Asian (11.1%), 13 as Latinx (6.3%), 11 as Central Asian (5.3%), 7 as Black (3.4%), 4 as Southeast Asian (1.9%), 3 (1.4%) as belonging to other ethnic groups, 1 (0.5%) as Pacific Islander, and 1 (0.5%) as Multiracial. Although not large per se, our data reflect a response rate of between 64% (wave 2) and 70% (wave 1), and is representative in terms of gender and ethnicity of the relatively small student body at the university.

Measures

In this paper we focus on the following variables from the survey:

Time-Variant Variables

Since these variables possess values that might vary over time, they were collected in both Wave 1 and Wave 2.

- Global Identity assessed the extent to which students viewed themselves as members of a global community. Respondents rated 4 items, adapted from Yasin Koc and Vivian L. Vignoles' 2018 study,²⁸ on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Example item: 'I would describe myself as a global citizen.' ($\alpha_{t1} = .88$; $\alpha_{t2} = .82$).
- Political Efficacy (external) was assessed using a single-item 7-point scale: 'How much can people like you affect what governments do?' ranging from 1 (not at all) to 7 (a lot), as used in the American National Election Study.²⁹
- Global Injustice Concern: This bespoke scale captured students' perceptions of severe inequities in the global context. Respondents rated 2 items on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The items were 'Inequality is one of the biggest issues the world faces', and 'In the world, great injustices exist between those who have more power and money and those who have less.' ($\alpha_{t1} = .71$; $\alpha_{t2} = .70$).

Time-Invariant Variable

- Subjective Socioeconomic Status (SSES): was assessed in Wave 1 using a 10-rung ladder representation on which students placed themselves to indicate their perceived relative socio-economic standing in terms of family income, education, and job prestige, compared to other students at NYUAD.³⁰

²⁸ Koc & Vignoles, 'Global Identification Helps Increase Identity Integration among Turkish Gay Men', pp. 329–42.

²⁹ ANES, *Guide to Public Opinion and Electoral Behavior* (2010). Available at: <https://electionstudies.org/data-tools/anes-guide/> (accessed 6 October 2023).

³⁰ Adapted from Nancy E. Adler, Elissa S. Epel, Grace Castellazzo & Jeannette R. Ickovics, 'Relationship of Subjective and Objective Social Status with Psychological and Physiological Functioning: Preliminary Data in Healthy, White Women', *Health Psychology* 19/6 (2000), p. 586.

Transitional Variable

This variable was collected at Wave 2, yet it represents a continuous experience from Wave 1 to 2 (see below). NYUAD students are quasi-randomly assigned to roommates in their first year (random except for the consideration by the housing office of a small number of factors such as visitation preferences and an institutional goal of mixing nationalities), enabling us to approximate the causal impact of living with a member of one's own (versus another) ethnicity during their first year at college, on their attitudes at the start of their second year.

- Ethnic Outgroup Roommate (EOR): Participants were asked to 'list the ethnicity of your roommate last year (person who shared a bedroom with you), if you had one'. If a participant's ethnicity *was not the same* as the ethnicity (as reported by the participant) of the roommate with whom they lived during the first year, the value for EOR was coded as 1. Conversely, if participant's Ethnicity did match that of their roommate, EOR was coded as 0.

Analytical Approach

Analyses were conducted using SPSS v25, Mplus v8.10, RStudio (2022 version), and Jamovi v2.3. We employed a mixed-method design, leveraging both longitudinal and cross-sectional data, taking different analytical approaches to provide a multi-layered understanding. Specifically, we employed the following analytical techniques:

1. Model A: Cross-Lagged Panel Design (CLPD). This approach captures the evolution of variables, highlighting temporal relationships and providing insights into potential causality.
2. Model B: Moderated Sequential Cross-lagged Panel Design. This approach builds on CLPD, enabling us to investigate whether and how living with an ethnic outgroup roommate, a contextual campus experience, potentially modifies the temporal evolution of global identity and the downstream impact on (external) political efficacy.
3. Model C: Moderation Analysis (Cross-sectional). Having delineated the underpinnings of political efficacy in Models A and B, this approach explores the implications of enhanced political efficacy for concern for global injustice and the influence of SES in conditioning this relationship.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Tables 1 and 2 present descriptive statistics for the study variables at all relevant timepoints. This report focuses the WeAreNYUAD Survey; for reference, comparative descriptive and correlation statistics from the UAEU survey are reported in Appendix Tables A.1 and A.2. Mean levels of focal variables were broadly similar across the two samples, with mean levels of global identity and global injustice concern somewhat lower in the UAEU sample, and mean levels of political efficacy somewhat higher in the UAEU sample.³¹ Differences in correlations between variables were mostly modest, with the exception of the correlation between subjective socioeconomic status and global identity, which was small and nonsignificant among NYUAD students ($r = .04$) but larger and statistically significant among UAEU students ($r = .25$).

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Global Identity		Political Efficacy		Global Injustice		SSES	EOR
Time Point	Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 1	Wave 2	Invariant	Transitional
Mean	5.153	5.063	3.514	3.514	6.211	6.107	5.156	
SD	1.266	1.182	1.714	1.545	0.923	1.001	1.872	
N (% Yes)								127 (61.06%)

Table 2: Pearson Correlation Coefficients Representing Association between Focal Variables from the NYUAD Survey

Time Point	Transitional	Wave 1			Wave 2			Invariant
	Variable EOR	Global Identity	Political Efficacy	Global Injustice	Global Identity	Political Efficacy	Global Injustice	SSES
Transitional	EOR	–						
Wave 1	Global Identity	0.127	–					
	Political Efficacy	-0.019	0.145*	–				
	Global Injustice	-0.043	0.006	0.047	–			
Wave 2	Global Identity	0.073	0.540***	0.071	0.073	–		
	Political Efficacy	0.070	0.236***	0.294***	0.066	0.272***	–	
	Global Injustice	-0.147*	-0.006	-0.022	0.452***	0.043	0.026	–
Invariant	SSES	-0.110	0.043	0.115	0.054	0.048	0.034	-0.073

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

³¹ The mean value for subjective socioeconomic status was markedly higher at UAEU (7.20); however, comparison on this variable across samples should be interpreted with caution as they each use a different reference group.

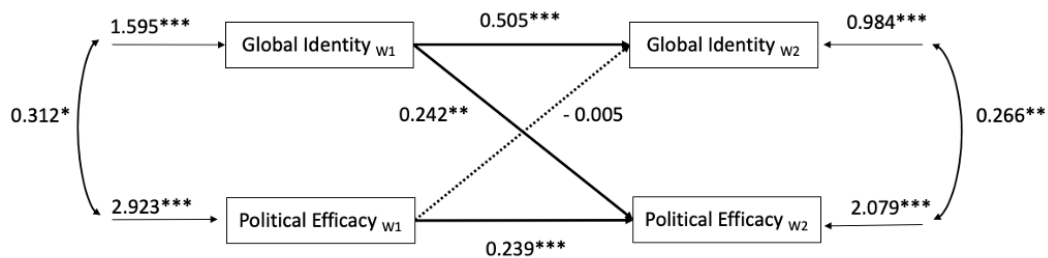
Analysis 1

Our first question concerned the importance of identifying as a global citizen to feeling that one can have an influence on global political affairs. We employed a CLPD (Model A) to explore dynamic and reciprocal relationships between Global Identity and Political Efficacy over two time points.

- Autoregressive Paths: The stability of Global Identity over time was evident from Wave 1 to Wave 2, $b = 0.505$, $SE = 0.055$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [0.397, 0.613]. Political Efficacy displayed significant, though somewhat lower, stability across the successive time points, $b = 0.239$, $SE = 0.059$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [0.123, 0.355].
- Cross-Lagged Effects: There was a significant cross-lagged influence of Global Identity in Wave 1 on Political Efficacy in Wave 2, $b = 0.242$, $SE = 0.080$, $p = .003$, 95% CI [0.085, 0.398]. The reverse relationship from Political Efficacy in Wave 1 to Global Identity in Wave 2 was not significant, $b = -0.005$, $SE = 0.041$, $p = .896$, 95% CI [-0.085, 0.074].

The relationships among these variables, including both autoregressive and cross-lagged effects, are presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Cross-Lagged Panel Model of the Global Identity/Political Efficacy Relationship over Two Time Points



All path coefficients presented are unstandardised estimates. Solid lines represent significant paths and dotted lines indicate non-significant relationships. Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Implications: The higher one's level of global identification when one arrives at university, the greater one's level of political efficacy one year later, with political efficacy not exhibiting a reverse causal effect on global identity. This underscores the importance of global identity as a trait construct in shaping one's readiness to exert influence on governmental affairs as one moves through college. However, it does not shed light on the origins of an individual's level of global identification, nor on how to increase it among those who arrive at university not feeling strongly identified to the world or to the notion of global citizenship.

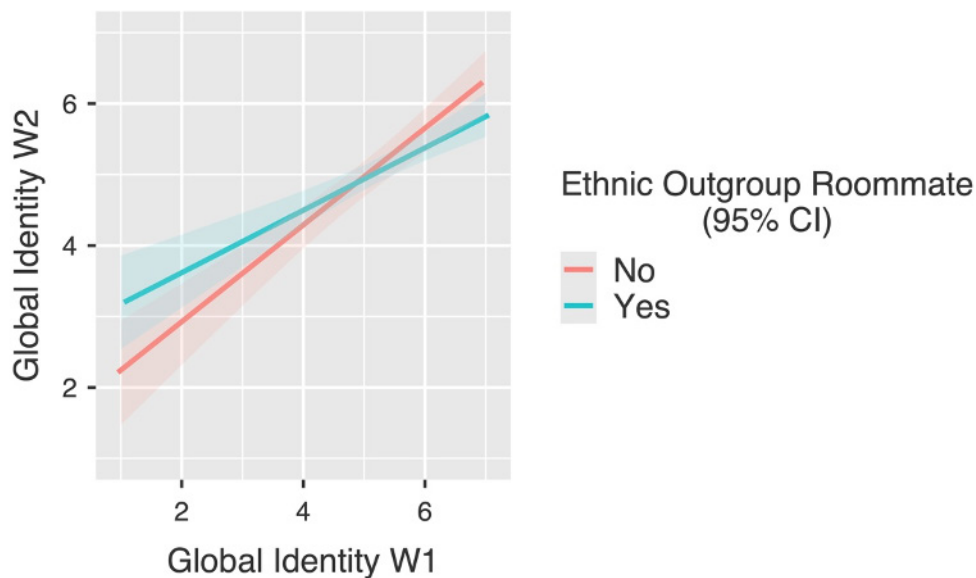
Analysis 2

The second analysis explored whether the experience of living in a multicultural campus setting might increase the sense of global identification among those initially low in global identity. We used a Moderated Sequential Cross-lagged Panel Design (Model B) to explore the potential moderating effect of a particular exogenous campus experience, i.e., living with a roommate from a different ethnic background, on the development of global identification and the resulting influence on political efficacy.

Interaction Effect:

There was a significant interaction between Global Identity in Wave 1 and EOR on the prediction of Global Identity in Wave 2, $b = -0.242$, $SE = 0.114$, $p = .034$, 95% CI $[-0.466, -0.018]$. This suggests that having a roommate of another ethnicity leads to higher identification as a global citizen a year later depending on one's baseline level of global identification. We conducted a simple slopes analysis using the Johnson-Neyman technique with 5000 bootstrap samples to determine regions of significance for the effect of EOR on Wave 2 Global Identity. This revealed that within the low range of baseline global identity, the positive relationship between EOR and Global Identity in Wave 2 was significant at the $p = .1$ level. At higher levels of Wave 1 Global Identity, the relationship between EOR and Wave 2 Global Identity was nonsignificant. This interaction is graphically depicted in Figure 2.

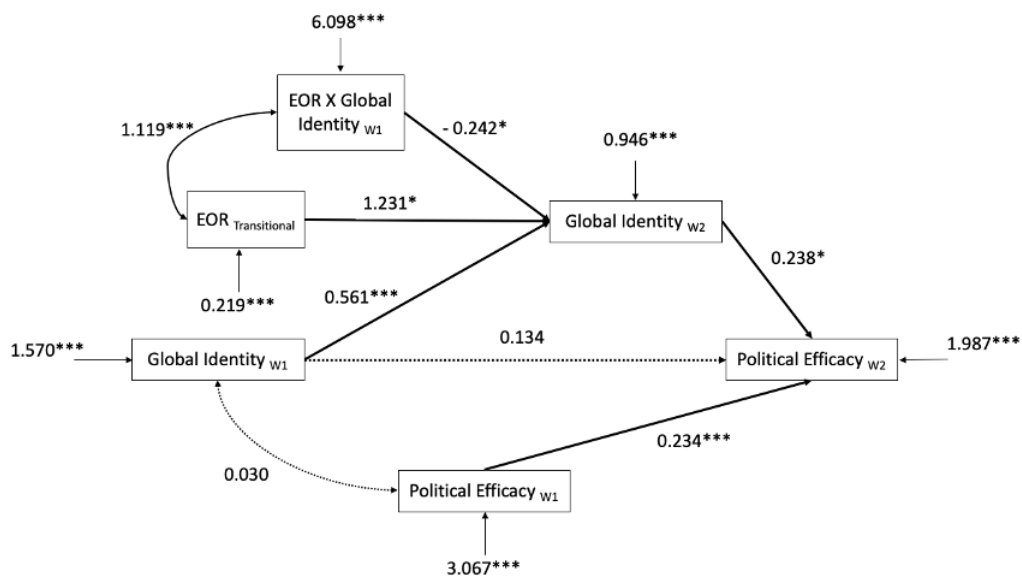
Figure 2: The Positive Effect of Living with a Roommate from a Different Ethnicity on Strength of Global Identification among those Initially Low in Global Identification (Analysis 2)



Main Effects (Direct Paths):

- Autoregressive Paths: Consistent with our previous findings, both Political Efficacy ($b = 0.234$) and Global Identity ($b = .56$) exhibited significant stability across the observed time intervals.
- Cross-Sectional Path: The relationship between Wave 2 Global Identity and Wave 2 Political Efficacy was statistically significant, $b = 0.238$, $SE = 0.104$, $p = .023$, 95% CI $[0.033, 0.443]$.
- Cross-Lagged Path: In line with full mediation through Wave 2 Global Identity, the path from Global Identity in Wave 1 to Political Efficacy in Wave 2 did not retain its significance in Model B, $b = 0.134$, $SE = 0.101$, $p = .185$, 95% CI $[-0.064, 0.333]$, see Figure 3.

Figure 3: Moderated Sequential Cross-Lagged Panel Model of the Relationships between Global Identity and Political Efficacy over Two Time Points, with the Inclusion of the Moderator Ethnic Outgroup Roommate (EOR) and its Interaction with Global Identity in Wave 1



All path coefficients are unstandardised estimates. Solid lines represent significant paths and dotted lines indicate non-significant relationships. Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Implications: Campus experiences appear to play an important role in shaping the development of global identity over time. Specifically, for those students starting with lower levels of identification as a global citizen, living with a roommate from another ethnicity (versus living with a roommate of the same ethnic group) seems to boost such identification over time. The quasi-exogenous nature of roommate assignment suggests that this small effect may be causal in nature. This enhancement in global identity is associated with an increase in external political efficacy over time, over and above the initial levels of political efficacy that the students held upon arriving on campus.

Analysis 3

We next address the question of whether the political efficacy that emerges because of rising global identification translates into greater awareness of and concern for injustices at the global scale. We focused on those students who already held a strong degree of privilege on the global level and thus on whom arguably rests the greatest responsibility in the context of global inequality – those who rated themselves as coming from the highest status families at NYUAD in terms of income, education, and job prestige. We thus examined the role of subjective socioeconomic status (SSES) at NYUAD in moderating the link between political efficacy and awareness of and concern for global injustice and inequality.

Model Summary

The overall model containing Political Efficacy in Wave 2, SSES as the time-invariant moderator, and the interaction between Political Efficacy and SSES significantly predicted Global Injustice Concern at Wave 2, $F(3, 193) = 2.904$, $p = .036$, $\eta^2_p = .043$, which can be considered a small-medium effect size. The model coefficients can be found in Table 4.

Table 4: Summary of Model Coefficients for Analysis 3, Examining the Role of Political Efficacy (Wave 1), Subjective Socioeconomic Status (SSES), and their Interaction, in Predicting Global Injustice Perceptions (Wave 2)

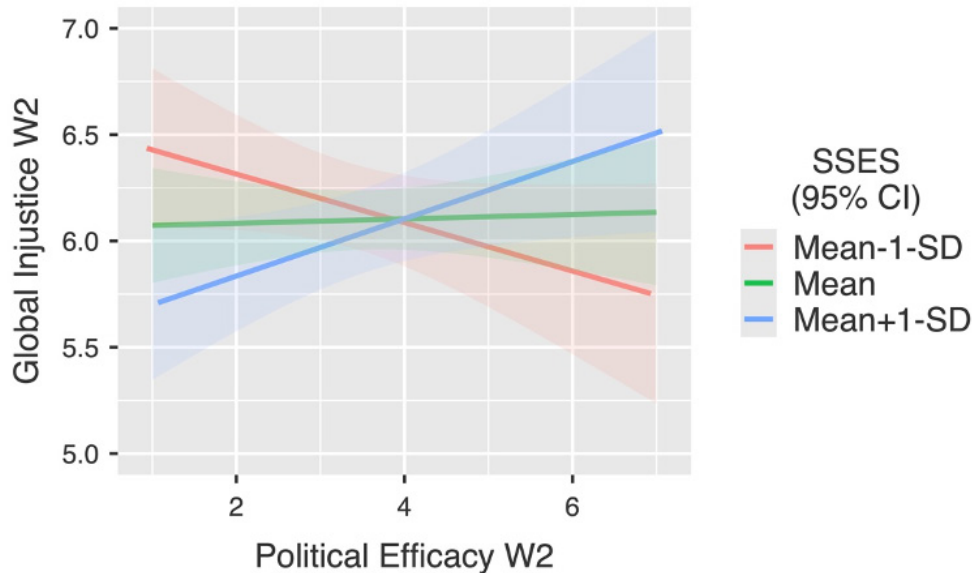
Names	Estimate	SE	95% Confidence Interval		df	t	p	η^2_p
			Lower	Upper				
<i>(Intercept)</i>	6.099	0.071	5.960	6.239	193	86.239	< .001	
<i>SSES</i>	-0.025	0.038	-0.099	0.050	193	-0.651	0.516	0.002
<i>Political Efficacy</i>	0.010	0.046	-0.080	0.101	193	0.225	0.822	0.000
<i>SSES * Political Efficacy</i>	0.066	0.024	0.018	0.113	193	2.728	0.007	0.037

Interaction Effect

The interaction between Political Efficacy and SSES was significant, $b = .066$, $SE = .024$, $p = .007$, 95% CI [0.018, 0.113].

- A simple slopes analyses revealed that for individuals in low (1 SD below the mean, $b = -0.114$, $SE = 0.067$, $p = .093$, 95% CI [-0.247, 0.019]) or mean ($b = 0.010$, $SE = 0.046$, $p = .822$, 95% CI [-0.080, 0.101]) Subjective SES, the relationship between Political Efficacy and Global Injustice was weak or non-significant. However, we found a positive association between the two variables for those in high (1 SD above the mean) in Subjective SES, $b = 0.135$, $SE = 0.062$, $p = .031$, 95% CI [0.012, 0.257]. These relationships can be seen in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Moderating Role of Subjective SES on the Relationship between Political Efficacy and Global Injustice Concern



Coefficients presented are unstandardised estimates.

Implications: For those who perceive themselves as relatively high in family socioeconomic status compared to other families at NYUAD, believing they can influence the political system predicts greater awareness of and concern for global injustice. This translation of political efficacy into global injustice concern was not observed for those at the middle or bottom of the socioeconomic spectrum.

Discussion

Against the backdrop of the potential decline in internationalist and democratic sentiment and the persistence of huge disparities at the global scale, this study set out to investigate the antecedents and consequences of global identification in a population charged with becoming the next generation of global leaders.³² We report early results from a longitudinal survey conducted in a highly diverse, high-achieving student sample attending an elite American liberal arts university, New York University Abu Dhabi (NYUAD), in the non-democratic setting of the United Arab Emirates. Our focus here was on the extent to which identification as a global citizen can shape external political efficacy, a construct critical to democratic health yet which has been observed to be in decline globally and particularly low among young people.³³ We also considered how the multicultural campus experience might shape global identity, and whether and when external political efficacy might yield greater concerns for global inequality and injustice.

The results imply, first, that there is merit in looking toward global identification as a potential social psychological route to addressing political disengagement and dis-

³² New York University Abu Dhabi, *Vision and Mission*.

³³ Edelman Trust Barometer, *Edelman Trust Barometer: Global Report*; OECD, *Government at a Glance*.

empowerment. When looking at the over-time relationship between strength of global identification and external political efficacy, or one's sense that one can influence what governments do, we found evidence that global identification can strengthen political efficacy over time. The cross-lagged results imply that the most globally identified may feel more politically empowered as they go through college. This is consistent with social psychological research on the positive effects of global identity,³⁴ though here we demonstrate for the first time the link between global identity and political efficacy, which is critical to political participation and thus democratic health.³⁵

This may paint a hopeful picture for those who arrive at university with a strong global orientation, but what about those who do not? Might there be a chance for the experience of living in a multicultural campus to enhance global identification even among those who seem least internationally inclined at the outset? Our results point to a tentative 'yes'. We took advantage of the fact that in the first year at NYUAD, roommates are quasi-randomly assigned, which enabled us to conduct a causal test of the impact of prolonged interethnic contact over the course of a year in shaping the evolution of global identity from the start of one's first to the start of one's second year. This is a strong, quasi-experimental test of the intergroup contact hypothesis, which is usually only examined with cross-sectional or longitudinal data, or using experimental treatments that are brief and thus rather superficial.³⁶ Being exposed to such prolonged interethnic contact did (weakly) affect the relationship between global identity at the two timepoints, slightly increasing later levels of global identity for those responding at the lower values of this scale at Wave 1. This is the first time quasi-randomly assigned, prolonged intergroup contact has been shown to exert an influence on strength of global identification, albeit small and conditional, and thus marks an important contribution to the social psychology literature on this topic.

The result stands as evidence in favour of the assumption that the multicultural university experience broadens student minds.³⁷ Education level is one of the strongest of predictors of identification as a world citizen,³⁸ which can be enhanced by higher educational classroom content that focuses on global citizenship themes.³⁹ Some have even recommended

³⁴ McFarland et al., 'Global Human Identification and Citizenship'.

³⁵ OECD, *Government at a Glance*; Prats & Meunier, 'Political efficacy and participation: An empirical analysis in European countries'.

³⁶ Stefania Paolini, Fiona A. White, Linda R. Tropp, Rhiannon N. Turner, Elizabeth Page-Gould, Fiona K. Barlow & Ángel Gómez, 'Intergroup Contact Research in the 21st Century: Lessons Learned and Forward Progress if we Remain Open', *Journal of Social Issues*, 77/1 (2021), pp. 11–37.

³⁷ Michael Harris Bond & Yiming Jing, 'Socializing Human Capital for Twenty-First Century Educational Goals: Suggestive Empirical Findings from Multinational Research', in *The Oxford Handbook of Higher Education Systems and University Management* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), p. 40.

³⁸ William C. Smith, Pablo Fraser, Volha Chykina, Sakiko Ikoma, Joseph Levitan, Jing Liu & Julia Mahfouz, 'Global Citizenship and the Importance of Education in a Globally Integrated World', *Globalisation, Societies and Education* 15/5 (2017), pp. 648–65.

³⁹ Linda Morrison & Christina Pedram, 'Becoming a Global Citizen: Evaluating the Efficacy of Social/Global Core Curriculum Courses in Meeting Learning Outcomes,' Poster presented at *American Psychological Society Annual Meeting*, Boston, MA (2017); see also C. Nathan Dewall & David G. Myers, 'The Hidden Key to Virtuous Behavior: We're All on the Same Side', *APS Observer*, (2013). Available at: <http://www.psychologicalscience.org/index.php/publications/observer/2013/september-13/teaching-current-directions-in-psychological-science-5.html> (accessed 6 October 2023).

that global citizenship messaging be incorporated into messaging in every sphere of the university,⁴⁰ as is evident at NYUAD. Going beyond classroom-based and institutional communications, this study provides insight into the nuanced ways in which the cultivation of global citizenship might work in the case of interethnic cohabitation, supportive of the benefits of the campus living model. As with other recent quasi-experimental work showing roommate effects among those low in liberalism,⁴¹ it also suggests greater attitudinal malleability among those previously relatively more closed-minded in their orientation.

One critique of global universities as sites of cultivation of future global leaders could be that they produce students who see themselves as outward looking and focused on international influence only to the extent that this enhances the economic supremacy of the upper social classes from which they originate. The risk is that even in a university with an extremely generous student scholarship and stipend package and a very wide global reach in terms of student recruitment, as is the case with NYUAD, there are limits to the socioeconomic diversity that can be achieved when entry is also highly academically selective, drawing as it does inevitably on students based in leading private schools internationally. The ancillary question arises, then, as to whether political efficacy among this student body translates into true concern for global inequalities, especially among those who arrive at university in a socioeconomically privileged position. We considered this by examining the relationship between political efficacy and global injustice concern at different levels of perceived family socioeconomic status (SES) at NYUAD. The finding, that political efficacy predicts greater concern for global injustice only among those relatively high in subjective SES, points to the mobilising potential of global citizenship and empowerment among those with arguably the greatest responsibility, and best opportunity, to address global challenges. It is not necessarily concerning that we do not observe this relationship between political efficacy and concerns over global injustice among those low in subjective SES, as this is the group who have been empowered perhaps for the first time by coming to NYUAD, and thus who might be seen as the intended beneficiaries, rather than the expected instigators, of efforts to enhance inclusion and equity globally.

These conclusions are based on a single survey with data from only two waves of data collection, and the results await further confirmation and elaboration as we continue to track these students, and their younger cohorts, along their educational journey. We can also look for similar or contrasting relationships among students at UAEU, a university based in the same country yet solidly oriented toward local as opposed to global students, as perhaps reflected in lower levels of global identity and global injustice concern than those of the NYUAD student sample. As it stands, however, the current results point toward an important, potentially hopeful contribution to our understanding of the dynamics of cosmopolitanism, identity, agency, and inequality awareness, with particular insight into how they are interrelated in an emerging generation of university graduates in a global university setting located outside of the liberal democratic West.

⁴⁰ Stephen Reysen & Iva Katzarska-Miller, 'A Model of Global Citizenship: Antecedents and Outcomes', *International Journal of Psychology* 48 (2013), pp. 858–70. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00207594.2012.701749> (accessed 6 October 2023).

⁴¹ See Logan Strother et. al, 'College Roommates have a Modest but Significant Influence on Each Other's Political Ideology'.

Appendix: The Global Identity Survey at UAE University

The survey was made available in October 2023 to students enrolled in a popular general education course, 'Happiness and Well-being', drawing in students from across the university colleges (originating from, in order of representation: Humanities and Social Science, Information Technology, Science, Business and Economics, Food and Agriculture, Medicine and Health Science, Engineering, and Law). The questionnaire was modelled on the WeAreNYUAD Survey, slightly modified to meet requirements of the Ethics Committee of the UAEU.

Sample Demographics

In total 234 UAEU students participated in the survey, aged 18–30, with an average age of 20.3 years. 76% of the respondents self-identified as female. The majority of students participating in the survey were from Al Ain (58%), with 10% from Abu Dhabi, 10% from Dubai, and the remainder from other emirates of the UAE. 87.5% of the respondents were UAE citizens, the rest expatriate students.

In terms of international experience, 76% of respondents declared that they had lived only in one country, although almost 90% of students reported being able to speak 2 or more languages fluently.

In terms of family background, 41% of respondents reported that their mothers completed a university degree and 45% reported that their fathers had completed a university degree. Approximately 86% of respondents had their tuition fees covered by the university.

Descriptive Statistics for Core Variables

Table A1 presents basic descriptive statistics for the focal social psychological variables, and Table A2 presents correlations between them.

Table A1: Means, Sample Sizes and Standard Deviations for Focal Variables in the UAEU Survey

Variable	Global Identity	Political Efficacy	Global Injustice	SSES
Mean	4.78	4.82	5.03	5.156
SD	1.291	1.850	1.311	1.872
N	219	214	209	

Table A2: Pearson Correlation Coefficients Representing the Association between Focal Variables in the UAEU Survey

Variable	Global Identity	Political Efficacy	Global Injustice	SSES
Global Identity	—			
Political Efficacy	0.212**	—		
Global Injustice	-0.067	-0.075	—	
SSES	0.248**	0.160*	-0.097	—

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

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A graduation ceremony at NYU Abu Dhabi.
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