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Cross-Cultural Communication and The Construction of Ukrainian National and Ethnic Identity: Intercultural Relations in the Global Public Sphere

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Abstract

This study investigates how Ukrainian diaspora communities employ cross-cultural communication to construct, sustain, and assert national and ethnic identity within global contexts. Emphasizing increased migration and the 2022 Russian invasion, the research identifies communicative strategies that facilitate the maintenance of cultural identity abroad. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, data were collected from focus groups, social media analysis through content analysis, and a survey of 600 diaspora members in Poland, Germany, and Canada. The results showed a strong and positive correlation between national identity and diaspora communication networks ($r = 0.63$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that community organizations and digital platforms are essential for fostering cultural ties and expressing identity. Symbolic cultural resources emerged as a stronger predictor of national identity among dias-

pora members ($\beta = 0.28$, $p < 0.05$) than intercultural processes ($\beta = 0.09$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that Ukrainian language, symbols, traditions, and collective war memory are primary markers of ethnic identity. The analysis reveals the emergence of hybrid identities as diaspora members integrate Ukrainian and host-country norms. Notably, identity representation and recognition vary significantly across host countries ($p < 0.05$). The study integrates communication practices, symbolic resources, and the host country's context to examine how diaspora identity is formed and constructed through everyday communication and intercultural interaction in a transnational, multicultural setting.

Keywords: Digital networks, identity preservation, intercultural interaction, transnational communication, Ukrainian diaspora

1. INTRODUCTION

Diaspora members have become the center of the processes of negotiation and maintenance of the cultural and national identity at the cross-national level due to the emergence of modern globalization and greater migration. However, the process of globalization has also intensified the disorientation of identity, the sense of belonging, and the pressure to adapt to the culture among migrants [1]. Migrants must balance between integration into host communities and language, heritage, and collective memory preservation. The cross-cultural communication in this instance plays a leading part in self-identification, integration with the community, and exposure to multicultural societies. Transnational systems are diasporas that form identities, meanings, and social networks across national borders [2, 3, 4].

One of the good examples of contemporary transnational identity building is the Ukrainian diaspora. Migration of Ukrainians has been in many waves, including economic migration, political emigration following the Second World War, and the labor migration that followed the breakup of the Soviet Union. During the XXI century, particularly after the escalation of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict and the 2022 Russian invasion, the migration increased greatly, resulting in the displacement of millions of individuals across Europe and beyond [5]. Such a large displacement has resulted in new identity issues, including language changes, trauma, a sense of belonging, and the need to redefine Ukrainian identity in new locations. These activities have made the diaspora networks larger and the importance of communication processes to the preservation of national identity in foreign countries more pronounced [6, 7, 8]. Communication can also assist Ukrainian communities to maintain their cultural activity, disseminate national discourse, and state their unity with Ukraine [9, 10].

Through the digital tools of communication with which the members of the diasporas interact and communicate, they are able to participate in the transnational publics. Facebook, Telegram, and YouTube allow Ukrainian migrant communities in other countries to find shared identity and culture, and make sure that the global community is aware of the Ukrainian national identity [11, 12]. Cultural traditions are preserved and changed through encounters with the world, as migrants embrace them. Both physical and online spaces, as challenged by scholars, play a significant role in preserving Ukrainian identity during unexpected migration [13, 14]. These findings indicate that digital media are not a communication medium but a moving medium of re-creation of identity during crisis.

In the meantime, the host-country settings determine the manifestations and acknowledgment of the diaspora identities. Intercultural interaction may be a negotiation between the minority communities and mainstream cultures about identity [15]. The recognition of the diaspora identities in a public sphere is affected by language policies, models of multiculturalism, and attitudes of the host societies [16, 17]. Some of the symbolic resources that enable migrants to feel belonging to new sociocultural environments include language, folklore, historical memory, religion, and national narratives [18, 19, 20]. The practice and symbolism of multilingualism in identity development, such as that of the Ukrainians in Shanghai, are also practical [21].

Though there is growing literature on the migration of Ukrainians and their diaspora politics, no systematic research has been done on the effect of cross-cultural communication in sustaining, perpetuating, and reproducing Ukrainian identity, particularly since the invasion of 2022. The key focus of current studies is the issue of political mobilization, migration patterns, and activism [6, 10], and the issue of everyday communicative processes has received less attention as members of a diaspora strive to negotiate belonging and cope with identity pressures in a multiethnic setting.

This gap is pertinent to be filled because the diaspora communities are operating in a complex intercultural milieu, which forms the self-representation and the recognition of the diasporas. The differences in policies of the host country, language, cultural integration models, and media discourses determine the perception and preservation of Ukrainian identity. It is on this basis that this study examines how communicative practices, symbolic resources, and cultural contexts interact in the host country to create the present experience of the Ukrainian diaspora.

In this regard, this study examines the role of cross-cultural communication within Ukrainian diaspora communities in creating, maintaining, and reproducing national and ethnic identity within the global population. The following are the research questions in this study:

1. How do Ukrainian diaspora communities engage in cross-cultural communication to create, maintain, and reproduce their national and ethnic identity within the global public space?
2. Which intercultural processes and symbolically material resources promote or prevent the creation, maintenance, and reproduction of Ukrainian identity in host countries?
3. What roles are host country cultural contexts playing in (a) the self-representation of Ukrainian ethnic identity by the members of the Ukrainian diaspora and (b) the recognition of Ukrainian ethnic identity by host-country societies?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Diaspora has become a concept that has developed greatly in migration and cultural studies. Previous definitions of the concept described diaspora in the context of displacement, collective memory, attachment to the homeland, and the desire to return [22, 23]. These authors contributed significantly to the further development of the diaspora theory. However, more recent literature has conceptualized diaspora as transnational social networks maintained by mobility, networks, and symbolic relationships across borders [24, 3].

Diaspora identity has generally been interpreted as dynamic, relational, and constructed rather than fixed. It is developed out of historical experience, social interaction, and cultural representation [25]. In the conditions of the diaspora, identity is negotiated between homeland clinging and adaptation to the host society, which sometimes leads to multiple or hybrid identities [26, 4]. Cultural signs such as language, traditions, religion, and historical accounts are key indicators of belonging [19, 27, 20].

It is a development in the literature that under globalization, forced migration, and multicultural integration, diaspora communities often face identity crises. These crises can be of various kinds: (1) belonging crises as migrants are caught between the home country and the host country; (2) generational crises as young people loosen the attachment to their ancestors; (3) linguistic crisis in terms of language shift or language loss; (4) recognition crisis as the identity of migrants is distorted or marginalized in the host countries [28].

To the Ukrainian diaspora, the problems of identity crises have been exacerbated by the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022. The forced displacement, trauma, and language politics, the necessity to distinguish between Ukrainian identity and Russian cultural discourses, have become the focus [29, 30, 10]. More recent findings reveal that war has enhanced national consciousness and also introduced pressure of adapting to host countries [4, 10].

One of the most prominent mechanisms that help create, maintain, and reproduce diaspora identities is communication. According to intercultural communication theory, identity is a negotiation process between host societies and minority groups, which is ongoing as a result of interaction [31, 32]. Communicative practices are significant in passing on memory, values, and cultural belonging across generations, including language use, storytelling, rituals, and community participation [21].

Another communicative institution within which identity is enacted and reinforced is the diaspora association, cultural festival, church, and community organization [9]. Meanwhile, the multiculturalism, immigration, and minority recognition policies in host countries have an impact on the visibility of diaspora identities to the world [33, 17]. In this way, identity construction is not only a matter of the internal community communication but also of the wider sociopolitical settings.

Digital technologies have revolutionized diaspora communication as it allows the populations that are scattered to maintain daily relationships and shared identities. Family contact, cultural exchange, mobilisation, and symbolic solidarity across boundaries are made possible by social media platforms [11, 14]. These technologies form connected diasporas, in which groups located across geographical areas sustain community by engaging in constant online communication [12].

Preservation of languages, virtual cultural events, advocacy campaigns, and representation of identities are also carried out in digital spaces. The presence of shared identities is becoming increasingly replicated by means of participatory content production and online conversation [13, 34]. Digital platforms are particularly relevant to the Ukrainian diaspora in mobilization, humanitarian coordination, and affirming Ukrainian identity in the world since 2022.

The empirical research on the Ukrainian diaspora has been mostly devoted to the migration history, political mobilization, and cultural preservation. Historical studies have documented the history of Ukrainian diasporas in America and Europe, and how cultural institutions have led to national identity in host countries [16, 35]. The political literature also shows how diaspora communities can shape the politics of the home country, the sovereignty discourse, humanitarian aid, and even international advocacy, especially in times of geopolitical crisis [6, 36]. Since the Russian invasion of 2022, the study of war-based mobilisation and solidarity networks, as well as the strengthening of national consciousness among Ukrainians abroad, has become a growing area of scholarly interest [10, 29].

Recent studies have been more concerned with culture, communication, and identity negotiation. Goshylyk and Goshylyk [9] discovered that the Ukrainian-American organizations form diasporic identity using both personal and communal narratives, whereas Trzeszczyńska and Demel [17] demonstrated that local Ukrainians and new migrants in Poland bargain over heritage, belonging, and internal differences, and notions of common culture can sometimes produce exclusion. In a similar vein, Pidkurkova and Hoi [37] have highlighted the role of cultural, educational, media, and political institutions as a means of maintaining identity and anti-assimilation. Kölbel [38] also showed that language learning, peer support, and communication networks were key resources that war-displaced Ukrainians in Europe used in adapting, coping, and recovering their identity. Together, these works imply that the identity of the Ukrainian diaspora is both dynamic and contested, and it is also dependent on the processes of the internal community and the conditions of the host country.

Regardless of these contributions, a lot of the literature has focused on macro-level processes, including migration

flows, political activism, and institutional structures. There has been a relative focus on minor communicative events, such as language use, computer-mediated communication, intercultural experiences, and symbolic exchange, as processes by which identity is continually negotiated and reproduced in multicultural contexts. This study fills that gap by discussing the role of cross-cultural communication by the Ukrainian diaspora communities to preserve national and ethnic identity in transnational settings.

Despite the existing body of literature on diaspora identity and migration, there are still significant gaps. The majority of the research is related to macro-level concerns like migration flow, political mobilization, and governmental institutions, and the role of communication as a mode of daily identity negotiation and reproduction in multicultural environments is underreported. Despite the fact that digital technologies have changed the nature of maintaining homeland connections by diaspora communities, there is a lack of empirical data that defines the role of digital communication in the development of the identity of Ukrainian migrant communities. In addition, the scholarship of diaspora studies and intercultural communication tends to emerge independently. Intercultural communication studies prefer to study the adjustment of migrants in the host nations, and diaspora studies focus on the transnational relations and homeland orientations. This gap has curtailed the knowledge of how communication dynamics relate to adaptation, belonging, and identity negotiation in transnational environments. Another consequence of the recent Ukrainian diaspora explosion after the 2022 displacement crisis is new transnational communities whose communication patterns are still under-researched. There is not much information regarding how the cross-cultural and digital communication of these communities is applied to maintain national identity in the circumstances of displacement and resettlement. This study fills these gaps by explaining how the practices of cross-cultural communication can help Ukrainian migrant communities to create, maintain, and reproduce national identity in the contemporary environment of transnational environments.

Table 1. *Study's theoretical operationalized constructs, indicators, and sampled items*

Theoretical Framework	Construct	Indicators	Sampled Items
Social Identity Theory	National Identity Maintenance	Language use, cultural traditions, and national symbols as a sense of belonging	I am a part of the Ukrainian cultural events (festivals, cultural associations). I frequently use the Ukrainian language in family/community communication.
Third Space Theory	Hybrid Intercultural Identity	Cultural adaptation, self-identification, and bicultural interaction with the host country	My sense of culture is shaped by both Ukrainian and the culture of the country I live in. Living in a different country has changed how I express my Ukrainian identity.
Intercultural Communication Theory	Cross-Communication Practices	Strategies for communication, interaction between cultures, and cultural exchange	Talking to people from other cultures helps me learn more about who I am. Participation in intercultural exchange is important to me.
Public Sphere Theory	Digital Diaspora Engagement	Online diaspora communities, social media content sharing, and involvement in Ukrainian identity and solidarity	I promote Ukrainian culture online (social media, online communities). Digital platforms help me stay in touch with Ukrainians all over the world.
Liquid Identity Theory	Flexible Identity	Multicultural attachments, perception, and adaptability	Living in another country has changed how I see my national identity. My sense of culture is adaptable and changes over time.
	Identity Self-Representation	Identity expression in social and cross-cultural contexts, cultural expression, communicative self-presentation	I actively manifest Ukrainian culture in relationships with other cultures. Communication (online or offline) is one of the ways I convey my Ukrainian identity to the world.
	Identity Perception	Personal identity awareness, self-concept, and cultural belongingness to the host country	I have a clear sense of my identity as a Ukrainian person living in a foreign country. My cultural identity has been affected by living in a foreign country.
	Identity Recognition	External recognition of identity, social approval, and recognition by the host society	People in my host country identify and respect Ukrainian cultural identity. I believe that people of other cultures have a sense of who I am as a Ukrainian.

Note: All items were measured on a 5-point rating scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree)

This study employs an interdisciplinary theoretical explanation, comprising Social Identity Theory, Third Space Theory, Intercultural Communication Theory, Public Sphere Theory, and Bauman's concept of Liquid Identity, to provide a robust

explanation of identity negotiation and communication processes within the diaspora.

Tajfel and Turner [39] provide the framework of how individuals develop collective identities and self-identities as a diaspora based on group membership and comparisons with others in their Social Identity Theory. It has been empirically demonstrated that Ukrainian transnational communities may form collective identity based on symbolic practices, intergroup membership, and online interaction [12], whereas the fact that the language has changed significantly during the conflict between Russia and Ukraine demonstrates that language is a key indicator of identity reorientation and group segregation [11].

The theory of cultural identity reconstruction in a hybrid intercultural identity is described by Bhabha [40] in his concept of Third Space. Empirical data about the Ukrainian migrants show that multilingualism and cultural affiliations contribute to the development of the identity of the migrants, both individual and shared, in the transnational environment [21, 17, 16].

The Intercultural Communication Theory explains how communication influences identity negotiation across cultures with particular reference to the Anxiety/Uncertainty Management Theory and face-negotiation theory, where adaptive communication strategies are necessary [41, 42]. It has been observed that religion, food culture, and everyday practices of communication are crucial in preserving Ukrainian identity [31, 43].

The study also relies on the paradigm of Public Sphere Theory, as it was first proposed by Habermas [44], and operationalizes it by participation in online diaspora communities, sharing content on social media, and participation in Ukrainian identity and solidarity as indicators of digital diaspora involvement. It has been demonstrated that the Ukrainian migrants have been actively discussing cultural heritage and global solidarity through the use of digital channels, including social media [13, 9, 14].

Finally, the study employs the idea of a Liquid Identity by Bauman that is rooted in his more general idea of liquid modernity [26, 45]. Identity change is connected to migration, globalization, and digital communication, as it is a dynamic process that changes according to the changing social environments [46].

In this study, the theories were operationalized into measurable variables and indicators, which offer a strong framework through which the study of the maintenance of the national identity of Ukrainian expatriate communities in various host countries can be conducted (see Table 1).

3. METHODOLOGY

The research design was an explanatory sequential mixed methods design where quantitative data were collected and analyzed first, and then qualitative data were collected to explain, elaborate, and contextualize the statistical results. This design was suitable since the research aimed at both tracking quantifiable trends in the diaspora identity formation across nations and gaining a more profound understanding of how the participants lived and communicated, and their cultural perception [47]. The combination of both data improved the triangulation, the complementary and interpretive validity, because it merged both survey-based evidence and qualitative narratives.

The quantitative part included 600 respondents who were members of the Ukrainian diasporas in Poland, Germany, and Canada. The selection of the participants was done by snowball and purposive sampling techniques. Purposive sampling was used to ensure that the information-rich participants involved were actively involved in intercultural interaction (e.g., students, professionals, cultural organizers, and community members), whereas snowball sampling allowed the initial respondents to recruit other eligible participants via trusted diaspora contacts [48, 49]. The sample size was sufficient to perform multivariate analysis and cross-country comparisons, which would give adequate statistical power and minimize sampling error.

The qualitative phase consisted of 60 survey respondents who stated that they were willing to participate in the qualitative phase. Out of this sample, criterion-based purposive sampling was conducted, and 18 participants were chosen based on active involvement in the diaspora communication networks, cultural events, or identity-related community initiatives. These respondents were grouped into three focus groups (six respondents for each country). The reduced qualitative sample allowed deep theme exploration and more profound discussion, which is aligned with the logic of focus group methodology and explanatory sequential design [47, 50].

Quantitative data were collected from a 20-item Likert-scale questionnaire (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). The theoretical framework of the study and the measurement of communication networks, symbolic cultural resources, intercultural processes, and national identity led to the development of items. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) indicated good model fit ($\chi^2/df = 2.31$, CFI = 0.93, TLI = 0.92, RMSEA = 0.056, and SRMR = 0.048). Factor loadings were 0.61 to 0.84 with satisfactory construct validity. It was pilot-tested on a group of 30 diaspora members, and its internal consistency reliability was high (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.91$).

The qualitative stage consisted of three online discussions in the form of focus groups in English. Every group was comprised of six participants and took around 90 minutes. Sessions were held on March 17, 2026 (Poland), March 19, 2026 (Germany), and March 21, 2026 (Canada). Themes of cross-cultural communication, language and cultural preservation,

use of digital media, identity negotiation, and influence of the host country were explored using a semi-structured interview guide. All the sessions were moderated by the principal researcher to ensure balanced participation and responses aligned with the research objectives.

Moreover, a qualitative analysis of diaspora social media posts was conducted to discuss the online representation of identity. The criteria used to select the posts were relevance to Ukrainian cultural identity, diaspora mobilization, and intercultural communication. The process encompassed data selection, the creation of a coding framework, thematic coding, and the discovery of repeated narratives, symbols, and practices.

To analyze data, composite mean scores were computed from the questionnaire items. Intercultural Processes (Items 5-12) measured hybrid identity construction and cross-cultural communication practices. Symbolic Cultural Resources (Items 1-4, 13-16) evaluated language use, cultural practices, heritage practices, and digital symbolic activities. National Identity evaluated a sense of belonging, identity maintenance, and affiliation to Ukrainian culture.

Thematic analysis was conducted using NVivo software to analyze qualitative data, with coding, categorization, and theme creation and interpretation in accordance with the theoretical framework [51]. SPSS was used to analyze quantitative data. Frequency, percentages, standard deviation, and means were used to summarize data. Pearson correlation, multiple regression, and ANOVA with Tukey's post hoc were used as inferential statistics. Regression analysis was conducted based on the following assumptions. The VIF was below the threshold of 5, indicating multicollinearity. The Durbin-Watson (DW) = 1.72 indicated no autocorrelation in the models, and the Breusch-Pagan heteroscedasticity test was also not significant ($\chi^2(2) = 3.41$, $p = 0.18$).

The study was approved by the Ethics Committee of the State University "Kyiv Aviation Institute", Kyiv, Ukraine (Protocol No. EC-2026/03-0147, dated 16 March 2026). The research complied with established ethical guidelines for social science research.

4. RESULTS

Question 1. *How do Ukrainian diaspora communities engage in cross-cultural communication in order to maintain their national and ethnic identity within the global public space?*

Qualitative Findings. The 18-participant focus group discussion identified five key themes relating to five theories guiding the study. These themes were explained, and participants' representative responses were highlighted.

Theme 1: Cultural Events as Sites of Identity and Publicity. The participants repeatedly mentioned cultural festivals, local events, and national holidays as the critical places to practice Ukrainian identity and manifest it in the society of hosts. These events were not just described as celebratory events but also as a way of passing intergenerational information, educating the masses, and even a symbolic assertion of belonging, which is consistent with the Social Identity Theory [39].

Local people are also invited when we organize Ukrainian cultural festivals; it turns out to be a way of self-expression, self-definition, and clarification of our traditions. (P4)

Congratulating Independence Day overseas makes us realize that we are still part of a single nation, even though we may be miles apart. (P9)

Theme 2: Language as a Principal Symbolic Resource of Identity Maintenance. Language emerged as a major factor in maintaining identity. Participants talked about purposeful attempts to use Ukrainian at home, educate children about the language, and apply it to the community. Such stories suggest that language is not just a means of communication, but a symbolic resource that ensures the preservation of memory, heritage, and group boundaries.

We also speak Ukrainian at home so that our children can grow up knowing the language, as it is one of the strongest links we have to our culture. (P7)

We continue to speak Ukrainian because even when children speak in a different language, they do not lose that contact. (P12)

Theme 3: Digital Media as a Transnational Network. The participants pointed to the increasing significance of Telegram, Facebook, YouTube, and other media in uniting scattered Ukrainians across borders. The digital media facilitated the exchange of information, emotional support, fundraising, and cultural circulation rapidly. Supporting the Public Sphere Theory that communication spaces shrink distance and enable people in the participation and formation of collective identities.

We maintain contact with Ukrainians in the world via Telegram and Facebook pages. We disseminate the news, culture, and aid programs about Ukraine. (P5)

Online communities make it feel like a single community, even though we are living in different countries. (P14)

Theme 4: Intercultural Interaction as Identity Negotiation Arena. Participants indicated that their daily interaction with the members of the host society tended to make them more aware of their identity. The inquiries regarding Ukraine, culture, or the war often placed them as informal cultural representatives. Therefore, intercultural contact was not only characterized as an adaptation, but also as a process, which initiates active identity expression and reflective self-determination.

People normally enquire about Ukraine, our culture, and the war. That leaves us in a position of explaining who we are (P10).

I did not give much thought to identity until I was questioned by other people to tell them about Ukrainian traditions. (P16)

Theme 5: Solidarity and Strengthened Collective Identification by War. The participants said that the full-scale war boosted their involvement in cultural events, humanitarian campaigns, protests, and community activities. Most of them talked about being more connected with other Ukrainians in exile since the invasion. This implies that a geopolitical crisis has the power to enhance diaspora identity by changing the sense of belonging from a passive feeling to an active solidarity.

We hold events and campaigns that support Ukraine and bring awareness. (P1)

We are responsible for assisting and representing our country because, since the invasion, more Ukrainians have united here than they did previously. (P18)

Quantitative Findings. Table 2 presents the cross-cultural communication practices used to maintain Ukrainian identity.

Table 2. Cross-cultural communication practices to maintain Ukrainian identity

Communication Practice	Poland (n=200)	Germany (n=200)	Canada (n=200)	Total (n=600)	Percentage (%)
I am a part of the Ukrainian cultural events (festivals, cultural associations)	140	130	160	430	71.7
Every day, intercultural communication with the host society (workplace, community)	110	120	110	340	56.7
I frequently use the Ukrainian language in family/community communication	130	140	140	410	68.3
Talking to people from other cultures helps me learn more about who I am.	160	150	170	480	80.0
Involvement with the diaspora or humanitarian activity in support of Ukraine	120	110	130	360	60.0
Participation in intercultural exchange is important to me	90	100	110	300	50.0

From the survey results, 71.7% reported actively attending Ukrainian cultural events. 56.7% of respondents communicate with representatives of host societies daily. Language preservation also became a major indicator of identity, with 68.3% of participants reporting regular use of Ukrainian in their family or community. 80% of respondents reported they often talk to people from other cultures in the country where they live to promote Ukrainian culture. Lastly, 60% of respondents reported engaging in advocacy or humanitarian work in support of Ukraine, underscoring the close connection between the preservation of cultural identity and solidarity and civic activity within the global community. The frequency of cross-cultural communication between the respondents representing the Ukrainian diaspora is shown in Figure 1.

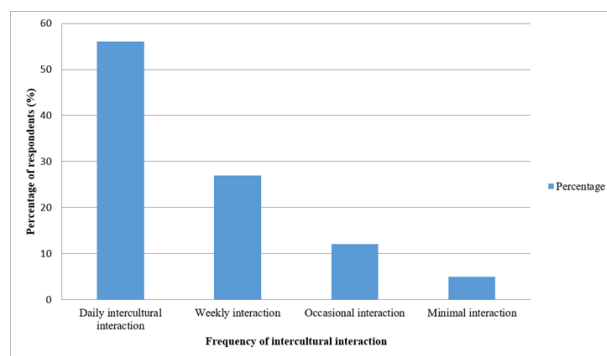


Figure 1. *Frequency of cross-cultural communication*

As shown in Figure 1, 56% of interviewees engaged in intercultural communication every day, indicating that they are highly integrated into multicultural environments through work, education, and social life. Participants interact weekly, with one-quarter of them based on particular contexts such as work or community activities. About 12% say they occasionally interact with others, with barriers such as language problems or a lack of social contacts. Lastly, the 5% reported low levels of intercultural interaction and are mostly dependent on diaspora relationships. The association between diaspora communication practices and the preservation of Ukrainian national identity was investigated using Pearson correlation analysis, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. *Pearson correlation analysis between diaspora communication practices and identity preservation*

	Diaspora Communication Practices	Identity Preservation
Diaspora Communication Practices		
Pearson Correlation	1	0.630**
Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
Identity Preservation		
Pearson Correlation	0.630**	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
N	600	600

** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The results in Table 3 showed that active engagement in diaspora communication practices is associated with stronger preservation of Ukrainian national identity, as evidenced by a strong correlation between these practices and identity preservation ($r = 0.63$, $p < 0.05$).

The quantitative survey data, as well as the qualitative information presented in interviews, focus groups, and the discursive analysis, showed that communication practices can be supported by cultural participation, online activity, linguistic maintenance, and connections with host cultures. The findings indicated that Ukrainian diaspora communities can maintain their national and ethnic identities through cultural communication, language maintenance, use of digital media, and intercultural interaction with host societies. These results attest to the increased significance of digital environments to the maintenance of diaspora identity and the establishment of transnational communication. The practices also allowed members of the diaspora to maintain cultural continuity while engaging global communication networks. The results emphasized that cross-cultural communication is both a tool of cultural maintenance and a medium for marking Ukrainian identity in the wider international discourse. Therefore, diaspora communication networks were significant in ensuring Ukrainian national and ethnic identity in a foreign country.

Question 2. *Which intercultural processes and symbolically material resources promote or prevent the construction, maintenance, and reproduction of Ukrainian identity in host countries?*

Qualitative Findings. The data obtained in the focus group identified five related themes to how the members of the Ukrainian diaspora maintain identity in the host societies.

Theme 1: Cultural Traditions as a Sustainable Intergenerational Identity. Drawing on Social Identity Theory, participants stressed that the Ukrainian identity in foreign countries was maintained by the traditional food, music, dance, religious celebrations, and national festivals. These were also defined as not only cultural practices but also as means of passing memory from generation to generation.

The Ukrainian holidays and festivals in foreign countries remind us of our roots and teach our children about their roots. (P1)

The cultural traditions are regarded as a generational bridge; they help younger individuals not forget

about Ukraine. (P10)

These children, when they are included in our dances and songs, start to realize their origin. (P16)

Theme 2: Digital Diaspora Networks as Transnational Infrastructure of Identity. Digital communication platforms were also found to be important for linking diaspora communities across various countries. The participants explained social media as places to exchange culture, organize events, provide emotional support, and receive news about the homeland. These suggest that digital platforms have become transnational structures, maintaining belonging even when the distance is geographical.

Social media communities bring Ukrainians together even if we live in foreign countries. (P5)

The Internet makes it possible to stay in touch with Ukraine and other Ukrainians living abroad. (P18)

Online groups unite us as a single people, even though we might be divided by borders. (P8)

Theme 3: Intercultural Adaptation as a Negotiation for Identity. Participants have reported that living in multicultural societies frequently demands reconciliation between adapting to the expectations set by the host countries and maintaining Ukrainian values. This finding supports the Intercultural Communication Theory through ongoing interaction with people of different cultural backgrounds, and that intercultural adaptation is an active process of identity management that is molded in the course of daily experiences.

The fact that I am a resident here means that I will have to learn new lifestyles, but I still strive to retain my Ukrainian values (P9).

You grow a conformist, yet you do not want to be a full-fledged conformist. (P13)

Theme 4: Dual Cultural Competence and Hybrid Belonging. The participants often spoke about identities that were simultaneously based on attachment to Ukraine and engagement in life in the host country. Instead of losing their original identity, most members of the diaspora were quoted as saying they blended the two cultures in their day-to-day lives, including language, social life, and even cultural festivities.

I am Ukrainian, and in this country, I am a mixture of two cultures. (P4)

At home, we speak Ukrainian; when not at home, we live according to the culture of the host country (P7).

Theme 5: Host society Structural Constraints and Inequal Recognition. Several respondents noted other barriers, including language challenges, institutional inadequacy, and an absence of publicity about the Ukrainian culture. These restrictions usually meant extra efforts to clarify or justify their identity. In support of the Intercultural Communication Theory, these issues are the manifestations of the failure of effective intercultural interaction and meaning-making processes that define the way in which individuals bargain identity and belonging within host cultures.

People in the host country are not usually very familiar with Ukraine, and therefore, we have to educate people. (P12)

Lack of institutional support in promoting our culture can be frustrating (P15).

Quantitative Findings. The extent to which intercultural processes and symbolic material resources predict the formation of Ukrainian identity in host nations was examined using multiple regression analysis. The model fit indices and regression results were presented in Tables 4 and 5, respectively.

Table 4. Model summary fit

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error of Estimate	Cohen's (f^2)
1	0.67	0.45	0.44	0.51	0.82

The model accounted for 45% of the variance in national identity ($R^2 = 0.45$), indicating that intercultural processes and symbolic cultural resources are significant predictors of national identity. Cohen's $f^2 = 0.82$, which corresponds to a large effect by Cohen's benchmarks.

Table 5. Multiple regression result of the influence of intercultural processes and symbolic cultural resources on national identity

Predictors	B	Std. Error	β	t	F	df	p	VIF
Constant	1.21	0.12	–	10.00	99.03	2	0.000	–
Intercultural Processes	0.09	0.03	0.10	2.67		597	0.000	1.84
Symbolic Cultural Resources	0.28	0.04	0.29	6.93			0.000	2.11

The results in Table 5 indicated that both intercultural processes and symbolic cultural resources positively and statistically significantly influence the preservation of national identity $F(2, 597) = 99.03, p < 0.05$). Meanwhile, symbolic cultural resources such as language, traditions, and national identifiers emerged as stronger predictors of national identity among diaspora members ($\beta = 0.28, p < 0.05$) compared to intercultural processes with lesser effect ($\beta = 0.09, p < 0.05$) on national identity.

The survey results and qualitative data showed that Ukrainian diaspora communities employ a range of intercultural processes and symbolic cultural means to create and maintain national identity in a foreign land. In the course of the analysis, it was possible to identify a complex of symbolic resources that are key indicators of Ukrainian ethnic identity. Some of the most common ones included the Ukrainian language, national symbols (the flag and embroidered clothing), collective memory of the war, and collective cultural traditions. These represent symbolic properties that serve as communication tools, helping members of the diaspora identify with and associate with one another. Simultaneously, sociocultural and structural factors can suppress the expression and preservation of Ukrainian identity within host communities. Findings reveal that cultural institutions, language use, and the use of digital communication media and diaspora networks are among the facilitating factors of national identity among diaspora members. In contrast, language barriers, pressures of assimilation, and a lack of institutional support are among the challenges.

Question 3. *What role are host country cultural contexts playing in (a) the self-representation of Ukrainian ethnic identity by the members of the Ukrainian diaspora and (b) the recognition of Ukrainian ethnic identity by host-country societies?*

Qualitative Findings. Focus group interview data, as qualitative data, revealed five key themes that provided further insight into the impacts of host-country cultural settings on the representation and identification of diasporas.

Theme 1: Multicultural Environments as Prerequisites to Cultural Visibility. Participants defined multicultural host societies as the place in which they could freely portray Ukrainian identity in terms of festivals, exhibitions, language usage, and intercultural events. These environments were seen as conducive since diversity was publicly appreciated and institutionally accommodated.

In multicultural countries, we are free to hold festivals and to express our culture (P2).

We can retain our identity with multicultural policies (P16).

Theme 2: Daily Intercultural Contact as Identity Representation Space. gave a rationale that everyday communication with members of the host society made them explain Ukrainian history, culture, and present realities. Many of them became informal representatives of their neighborhoods, schools, and workplaces.

I tell people about our history and culture when they ask about Ukraine. (P3)

We tend to act as cultural ambassadors, especially in workplaces and schools. (P7)

Theme 3: Recognition of the Diaspora by the Society. One aspect that was highlighted by Canadian participants, especially, is that many years of Ukrainian settlement had made institutions and the general population more familiar with Ukrainian culture. Schools, churches, and local organizations were considered pillars of recognition at an extended level.

People are already familiar with our culture since Ukrainians have been living here since time immemorial. (P2)

There are Ukrainian schools and institutions, which save our identity. (P11)

Theme 4: Misrecognition, Stereotypes, and Identity Correction. Some respondents have experienced misunderstanding, cultural confusion, or stereotyping. Others observed that the culture of the host populations got mixed up with that of the Russians, or were unaware of Ukraine as a separate country.

People misperceiving us is frustrating and exhausting (P15).

At times, we have to rectify erroneous beliefs so that individuals can know who we are. (P9)

Theme 5: War as a Path to Global Recognition and Identity Catalyst. Numerous times, participants said that the 2022 Russian invasion made more people worldwide aware of Ukraine and inspired curiosity about Ukrainian culture, language, and history. Although it was based on the crisis, this visibility opened up new possibilities for recognition.

Ever since the outbreak of the war, individuals have been curious to learn more about Ukraine. (P1)

The war has opened us up to the world. (P6)

Quantitative Findings. To examine whether differences exist across host countries in their self-identification, perception, and recognition of Ukrainian identity, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted, as presented in Table 6.

Table 6. ANOVA results across host countries in identity representation, perception, and recognition

Variables	Source	SS	df	MS	F	η^2	p
Identity Self-Representation	Between Groups	320.5	2	160.25	4.80	0.016	0.009
	Within Groups	19887.5	597	33.30			
Identity Perception	Between Groups	450.0	2	225.00	6.14	0.020	0.002
	Within Groups	21890.0	597	36.67			
Identity Recognition	Between Groups	610.2	2	305.10	8.25	0.027	0.0003
	Within Groups	22045.0	597	36.92			

The ANOVA results show a statistically significant difference in the self-representation ($F(2, 597) = 4.80$, $p = 0.009$, $\eta^2 = 0.016$), in perception ($F(2, 597) = 6.14$, $p = 0.002$, $\eta^2 = 0.020$), and in recognition ($F(2, 597) = 8.25$, $p = 0.0003$, $\eta^2 = 0.027$) of Ukrainian identity across the three host countries. Tukey's analysis was conducted to identify where the differences lie among the host countries, as shown in Table 7.

Table 7. Tukey's post-hoc test across host countries (Poland, Germany, Canada)

Variables	Comparison	Mean Difference	p
Identity Self-Representation	Poland – Germany	1.50	0.020
	Poland – Canada	2.10	0.002
	Germany – Canada	0.60	0.420
Identity Perception	Poland – Germany	1.75	0.015
	Poland – Canada	2.30	0.001
	Germany – Canada	0.55	0.440
Identity Recognition	Poland – Germany	2.05	0.004
	Poland – Canada	2.80	0.000
	Germany – Canada	0.75	0.300

The post hoc comparison shows that Poland exhibits a stronger self-representation of Ukrainian identity than its counterparts in Germany and Canada ($p < 0.05$). Also, the perception of Ukrainian identity is stronger in Poland than in both the German and Canadian diaspora, while Germany and Canada do not differ in their perception. Finally, identity recognition is stronger in Poland than in Germany and Canada. However, there is no significant difference between the German and Canadian groups.

The ANOVA and post-hoc analyses indicate that host-country cultural contexts play a crucial role in shaping how Ukrainian diaspora communities describe their identity and perceptions, and how multicultural societies recognize that identity. According to quantitative survey findings, there is a significant difference in identification, perception, and recognition across host countries ($p < 0.05$), which is also supported by qualitative information gathered during interviews and focus group discussions that the sociocultural environment of the host countries, including migration policy, the degree of cultural diversity, public awareness of Ukraine, and institutional support, influences the presence and expression of Ukrainian ethnic identity. The identification of Ukrainian identity in the diaspora population is supported by policies that promote multiculturalism, mass consciousness, and opportunities for cultural participation. However, issues like cultural misidentification and imbalanced institutional encouragement can shape how this identity is viewed in other societies.

5. DISCUSSION

The study explores the role of Ukrainian diaspora communities in cross-cultural communication in building and maintaining national and ethnic identity in a global public space. Generally, study findings highlight that there is no single and fixed process of identity preservation as a form of cultural retention but rather an ongoing and dynamic process of communication within an integrated transnational social space.

A major finding of the study is the strong and positive correlation between national identity and diaspora communication networks, which highlights its constitutive nature. These networks, especially those of online platforms, diaspora organizations, and informal community spaces, do not just act as a medium of information exchange, but rather as tools where identity is being produced and preserved. This builds on previous research [12, 3, 6] by shifting the level of analytical interest to micro-level, everyday communicative practices that constitute the ongoing enactment of belonging. Compared to previous research that predicts advocacy and transnational mobilization in the foreground, the current findings focus on the core role of everyday interactions, such as sharing cultural content, community organizing, and social connections, in maintaining identity among diaspora members. Compared to Goshylyk and Goshylyk [9], the findings are aligned in terms of shaping intercultural communication as the process that involves adjustment and negotiation across cultural borders.

However, the current research differs with their focus on managing uncertainty as the main communicative problem. Rather, it shows that diaspora actors mobilize communication networks strategically to stabilize and strengthen identity in spite of challenges. This suggests a more structured and organized environment for diaspora networks, highlighting their capacity to mitigate, rather than merely respond to, intercultural misunderstandings.

The regression model has shown that symbolic cultural resources and intercultural processes have a statistically significant influence on national identity among the members of the diaspora. Although both predictors are statistically significant, the symbolic cultural resources influence the preservation of national identity much more significantly than the intercultural processes do, which implies that the internal cultural markers are more decisive than cross-cultural interactions. This observation aligns with the existing body of literature by demonstrating that symbolic resources are actively engaged as a part of communicative practices to establish and sustain a collective identity [52, 25]. The increased prominence of these symbols in times of geopolitical crisis, especially the ongoing war, through the stories of participants, also indicates that the intensification of identity is context-specific and not determined by historical factors [4]. Comparing the present findings with those by Fihel et al. [10], who focus on structural and policy-related factors of migrant integration, the symbolic and communicative practices are relatively autonomous. Although Fihel et al. [10] predicted macro-level institutional structures, it is revealed in this study that preservation of identity is strong at the micro and meso-levels of social interaction and cultural communication. These differences in findings indicate that diasporic identity formation is not entirely dependent on the institutional contexts, despite the fact that the latter may also contribute to the expression of identity, thus highlighting the role of responsibility and daily practice in shaping the identity of the diaspora.

The development of hybrid identities in members of the diasporas is marked by both preserving the cultural affiliations to Ukrainian culture and the adoption of the elements of the host societies. Although this supports the idea of the third space theory as proposed by Bhabha [40], the study goes further to conceptualize hybridity as a communicative practice, as opposed to a state of culture. Simultaneously, the idea of liquid identity discussed by Bauman [26] is also applied to the fluid and situational character of belonging found among the participants. Notably, the results also refute the belief that hybridity erodes national identity; rather, the results show that hybrid identity formations may co-exist and even strengthen national identification.

When critically compared to Trzeciejska and Demel [17], findings show here is convergence and divergence. Their study posits that the concept of the common culture among the diasporas tends to cover internal diversity and can facilitate the othering process among co-ethnic groups. The current research concurs with this view, such that it recognizes that there is internal diversity in diaspora communities. It, however, deviates to prove that communication networks, especially transnational and digital networks, can have an integrative role such that they contribute to the development of a shared symbolic framework and reduce the perceived differences. This gap is probably contextual: whereas Trzeciejska and Demel [17] concentrate on intra-diasporic connections between migrants and indigenous groups in the same national setting, the current study looks at dispersed transnational groups, where mediated communication can mitigate divisions and enhance cohesion.

The study also points out how host country contexts influence the expression of identity. Although statistically significant country-to-country differences were found, the effect sizes being relatively small indicate that host environments alone do not predetermine identity outcomes. These challenges determined the understandings of multicultural policy frameworks and argue in favour of a relational approach where identity is a resultant outcome of the relationship between internal diaspora processes and societal influences. Intercultural interactions, although making the assimilation process more successful, subject the members of the diaspora to misidentification and stereotyping, which strengthens the importance of active identity expression in the public sphere [53].

The study has a significant theoretical contribution, such that it combines and builds upon various theoretical frameworks to form a unified model of diaspora identity as a communicative process. It expands Public Sphere Theory by conceptualizing the idea of diaspora networks in which identity is actively formed and not inherited in the public sphere. It also expands the Social Identity Theory by showing that membership is maintained by ongoing symbolic communication and not by membership. It expands on the Third Space Theory by defining hybridity as a strategic communicative practice and adds to Intercultural Communication Theory by demonstrating that identity is co-constructed in both intra-diasporic and host-society relationships. It also empirically grounds the concept of liquid identity as Bauman [45] describes it, as it connects it with the communicative behaviors that can be observed. The new model conceptualized diaspora identity as a networked communicative ecosystem, where identity is created in the interaction of communication infrastructures, symbolic resources, and intercultural interactions in both local, national, and transnational settings.

In conclusion, findings prove that Ukrainian diaspora communities not only maintain and manifest their national and ethnic identity by means of cultural retention but also by taking an active role in transnational communication processes. The dynamic nature of identity as a result of interaction, negotiation, and symbolic practice in global public spaces motivates the conceptualization of diaspora as a dynamic communicative process.

6. CONCLUSION

The study explores how Ukrainian diaspora communities communicate across cultures to construct, maintain, and create their national and ethnic identities in the international sphere of publics. The study incorporated both qualitative and quantitative techniques to investigate communication practices, symbolic cultural resources, the development of a hybrid identity, and the effects of host-country contexts on the expression of identity. The findings show that the impact of Ukrainian identity expression and recognition in international public spaces is shaped by diaspora communication networks, cultural symbols, hybrid identity practices, and the environment of the country of residence. The findings further revealed that the host country significantly influences the expression of identity, including self-identification, perception, and recognition of Ukrainian identity, across communities. This underscores the communicative aspects of diaspora identity formation, which contribute to the wider discourse on migration, intercultural relationships, and the role of communication in maintaining cultural identity in an increasingly multicultural environment.

Although this study made contributions, several limitations were noted. The six hundred respondents used in this study are sufficient for a mixed-methods exploratory study, but do not allow extrapolation of the study's results to the overall Ukrainian diaspora population. The research involved three countries as the setting of the study and the subject of interest, namely Poland, Germany, and Canada, as the representative but not the exhaustive contexts of Ukrainian migration, where alternative sociopolitical conditions might play a different role in identity construction, like in the case of the United Kingdom or the United States. In addition, the research employed purposive and snowball sampling, which may introduce sampling bias. Consequently, the results can exaggerate the number of people who already have a high attachment to diaspora communities and cultural practices. Lastly, the research mainly focused on self-reported experiences and identity perceptions. Even though qualitative interviews and surveys can provide important information about participants' views, they may not effectively capture broader structural or institutional forces that shape the diaspora's identity.

These limitations can be addressed in future research in several ways. Larger-scale research with a broader scope of states and diaspora groups would provide a clearer picture of the identities of Ukrainian diasporas across various cultures and political contexts. It may also be conducted through comparative studies of identity-building differences between long-standing diaspora communities and relatively recent migrants, particularly regarding the effects of the war and recent waves of migration. Longitudinal research would also help examine the effects of changes in diaspora identity over time, particularly when the geopolitical situation in the home country changes. One possible inquiry of such research would be generational variations in identity practices, such as the role of second- and third-generation members of the diaspora in relation to the Ukrainian culture and heritage.

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DATA AVAILABILITY

All data used to support the findings of this study will be made available on reasonable request.

DISCLAIMER

The opinions and interpretations in this research are purely those of the researchers and may not be the same as those of any institutions with which the researchers are connected.

AI DECLARATION STATEMENT

Grammarly and QuillBot AI tools were used ethically to check for grammatical errors and structural coherence in the write-up. However, AI tools were not used to produce data, analysis, illustrations, figures, or other significant scholarly materials for the study.

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