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Research article

Ideal and Real Multiculturalism in Post-Soviet Countries: Relationship with Mutual Acculturation and Psychological Well-Being among Ethnic Majorities and Minorities

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Abstract. The article presents a socio-psychological view of multiculturalism as a subjective reflection of the sociocultural context at the level of attitudes and perceptions. The concepts of ideal (expected) and real (perceived) multiculturalism are distinguished and studied in relationship with acculturation preferences and psychological well-being among members of ethnic minority and majority groups. The study was conducted on members of the Russian ethnic minority ($N = 746$) and the ethnic majorities ($N = 754$) of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Estonia. The total sample size was 1,500 respondents. The methodological tools included prescriptive and descriptive versions of *The Multicultural Ideology Scale (MIS)*, *The Acculturation Strategies Scale for Ethnic Minorities*, *The Acculturation Expectations Scale for Ethnic Majorities*, *The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)*, and *The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES)*. The analysis revealed that the universal basis for life satisfaction among members of the Russian ethnic minority and the ethnic majorities in all the post-Soviet countries studied was real (perceived) multiculturalism but not abstract attitudes towards the adoption of multicultural ideology. Moreover, real multiculturalism, as perceived by the Russian minority, also serves as a universal basis for their choice of the integration strategy in intercultural interactions with members of the ethnic majority. But for the members of the ethnic majority, real multiculturalism in their perception manifests itself as a basis for the integration or assimilation of the Russians, depending on the context: thus, the Kazakhs and Kyrgyz tend toward the former, while the Estonians tend toward the latter. These and other findings are discussed within the sociocultural contexts of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Estonia, as well as within the core differences between ideal and real multiculturalism. The article concludes with an exploration of the practical value of the tested model for diagnosing intercultural relations in multicultural societies.

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Key words: multicultural ideology, multiculturalism, ideal (expected) multiculturalism, real (perceived) multiculturalism, acculturation strategies, acculturation expectations, psychological well-being, life satisfaction, self-esteem, Post-Soviet countries, ethnic majority, ethnic minority, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Estonia.

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Introduction

Today it is hardly possible to find a country that does not support the idea of creating a peaceful social climate where people of different nationalities and religions could live in harmony, mutual understanding and respect. Awareness of this is very important, but not sufficient, as there arise questions that have no clear-cut answers. How can this harmony be achieved? What principles should define policies that are open to the diversity of cultures and religions? Should the focus be on common features or should important differences between groups be acknowledged? What policies and ideologies will help overcome bias, discrimination and conflict between groups? But the most challenging question is how to ensure that the proclaimed principles of recognizing cultural diversity do not diverge from real actions and contribute to the psychological well-being of all ethnocultural groups in society?

For years, social psychologists, sociologists, ethnologists, political scientists, and specialists from many other related fields of knowledge have been struggling with these questions, trying to find answers to them to give humanity a ‘recipe’ for peaceful and harmonious coexistence. The most prominent living cross-cultural psychologist, John Berry, believes that this recipe lies in the adoption of ‘multicultural ideology’ (Berry, 2013), which in its purest form represents a civil society that takes into account the interests of all ethnic and cultural groups. State institutions involve these groups in the life of society, ensuring equal rights for all of them, regardless of their size, influence, and power, and thus preventing their assimilation. Today, multicultural ideology, commonly referred to as ‘multiculturalism’, is officially recognized by a number of countries, such as Canada, Australia, Singapore, Azerbaijan, and some others.

But despite the commitment of the above-mentioned countries to this ideology, it has repeatedly been and continues to be seriously criticized in other countries for its failure as an official national intergroup ideology (Ward et al., 2023). In this regard, in some societies (especially European ones), multiculturalism is seen as the cause of the ‘disease’ of intercultural relations (Ward et al., 2020). However, there are societies that consider multiculturalism to be a ‘cure’ for a disease. Apparently, the time has come to understand this problem, which, in our opinion, lies in the discrepancy between the principles of recognition and acceptance of cultural diversity declared in society or by society with the actually implemented multicultural ideology and its perception by the population. We be-

lieve that this problem can be tackled from a socio-psychological point of view and with an understanding of the foundations of the nation-building history in multicultural states. This is exactly what we set out to do using the example of intercultural relations in the newly independent states of the post-Soviet space in order to find an answer to the question: what is the role of the ideal (expected) and real (perceived) multiculturalism in the mutual acculturation and psychological well-being of members of the ethnic majorities and the Russian ethnic minority in post-Soviet countries, such as Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Estonia? To answer this question, we should first of all clearly understand what ideal (expected) and real (perceived) multiculturalism is.

*Ideal (Expected) and Real (Perceived) Multiculturalism:
A Socio-Psychological Approach*

Using the theoretical apparatus of social psychology, we can consider multicultural ideology (multiculturalism) as a certain system of intercultural relations through the prism of social attitudes, ideas, expectations and social perception. The social-psychological view of multiculturalism as a subjective reflection of the socio-cultural context at the level of attitudes and perception allows us to distinguish clearly between how, in people's opinion, intercultural interaction should be built (attitudes) and how it is actually built from their point of view (perception). Based on this, we define two views on the problem of intercultural relations: (1) prescriptive and (2) descriptive.

From the prescriptive point of view, multiculturalism in social psychology can be studied through the prism of social attitudes and personal representations, or, to be more precise, social expectations of how people want relations between different ethnocultural groups in society to be built, that is, how they should live together. We define such multiculturalism as expected or 'ideal', since it expresses people's ideal representations about how relationships between ethnocultural groups in a multicultural society should be arranged. Such personal representations can be formed partly under the influence of a general system of beliefs about how society should function (Badea, 2017).

From the descriptive point of view, multiculturalism in social psychology can be studied through the prism of social perception, that is, how people perceive the emerging intercultural relations between ethnocultural groups in their society. We define such multiculturalism as perceived or 'real', since it is a real (in people's understanding) state of intercultural interaction, that is, people's subjective evaluation of how different ethnocultural groups actually live in their society. In other words, it is a kind of 'everyday multiculturalism' observed by people. Our study of multiculturalism from the perspective of social perception is based on the idea that perception has a more powerful and direct influence on key social and psychological outcomes (Guimond et al., 2013; Koopmans & Schaeffer, 2016;

Van Assche et al., 2016) than objective data. This is due to the fact that it is subjective interpretations that construct our reality and determine our reactions (Zagefka, Brown, 2002). In addition, research has already accumulated data showing that perceived multiculturalism is an integral part of the perceived inclusiveness (openness) of the sociocultural context, which in turn plays a significant role in social identification, acculturation and psychological adaptation (Lepshokova, 2020; 2021).

In this study, we attempt to understand which acculturation preferences and indicators of psychological well-being are associated with ideal and real multiculturalism and in what way.

Multiculturalism and Acculturation

Many acculturation studies have traced a relationship between attitudes toward accepting multicultural ideology and acculturation orientations among members of both ethnic majorities and minorities. For example, according to the results of a study of migrants from the North Caucasus in Moscow, multiculturalism perceived by the migrants is part of the perceived inclusive social context, which in turn contributes to the choice of an integration strategy but does not contribute to the choice of a separation strategy (Lepshokova, 2020). A study of the relationship between the acculturation orientations of Germans, as the ethnic majority of Germany, has found that the positive correlation between the acculturation orientation towards preserving their own culture and the acculturation orientation towards accepting the culture of the migrants is strengthened by the expression of the attitude towards accepting multicultural ideology (Kunst et al., 2023), that is, multicultural ideology strengthens the orientation toward integration, if we are based on D. Berry's definition of integration (Berry, 2013).

When speaking of multiculturalism and acculturation, it is also worth raising the question of the potential relationship between multiculturalism and the acculturation preference for assimilation. In this regard, it is important to recall that multicultural ideology encourages the recognition and appreciation of group differences, whereas the preference for assimilation by members of an ethnic minority focuses on interaction with the majority while renouncing their cultural identity. As for the ethnic majority, its desire to assimilate other groups also contradicts multicultural ideology, which is based on the need to preserve the cultural identity of all ethnocultural groups. In view of the above, we put forward the first research hypothesis:

H1. Ideal (expected) multiculturalism and real (perceived) multiculturalism are positively associated with acculturation preferences for integration and negatively associated with acculturation preferences for separation/segregation and assimilation among members of the Russian ethnic minority and the ethnic majorities of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Estonia.

Multiculturalism and Psychological Well-Being

Many researchers conclude that multicultural policies implemented at the national level affect subjective psychological well-being (Guimond et al., 2013; Jackson, Doershler, 2016; Ward et al., 2018). Thus, based on data from the European Social Survey (ESS) and the Multicultural Policy Index (MPI) project, it was found that the adoption of multiculturalism at the state level has a positive impact on life satisfaction of both the ethnic minority and the ethnic majority (Jackson, Doershler, 2016). A study of UK residents found that normative multiculturalism, which refers to the perception of a normative multicultural climate, is positively associated with psychological well-being (Ward et al., 2016). According to the social-ecological model of health, based on Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1992), contextual factors have a significant impact on well-being. In our case, by contextual factor we mean real (perceived) multiculturalism. With that in mind, we put forward the second research hypothesis:

H2. Ideal (expected) multiculturalism and real (perceived) multiculturalism are positively associated with such indicators of psychological well-being as life satisfaction and self-esteem among members of the Russian ethnic minority and the ethnic majorities of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Estonia.

Acculturation and Psychological Well-Being

One of the main results of acculturation is psychological adaptation, as the most important indicator of the successful/unsuccessful implementation of acculturation strategies. Typically, the psychological adaptation of members of an ethnic minority and majority is operationalized through psychological well-being (Scottham, Dias, 2010), in particular through such indicators as life satisfaction (Berry et al., 2019), self-esteem (Berry, Sabatier, 2010), self-satisfaction (Lepshokova, 2012), etc. According to the results of numerous studies, the acculturation strategy of integration, which implies maintaining one's cultural identity and interaction with the dominant society, is the most adaptive strategy of intercultural interaction (Berry, 2005; Nguyen, Benet-Martinez, 2013; Stogianni et al., 2021; Berry et al., 2022). In samples of the ethnic majority, it has been shown that acculturation expectations of integration are also positively associated with psychological well-being (Berry et al., 2022). At the same time, there is no definite consensus in research regarding the relationship of separation and assimilation with psychological well-being, since, depending on the context, these strategies can be either completely adaptive or not (Birman et al., 2002; Rudmin, 2006; Lepshokova, Tatarko, 2016). Taking this into account, we put forward the third research hypothesis and a research question:

H3. Acculturation preferences for integration are positively associated with indicators of psychological well-being such as life satisfaction and self-esteem among members of the Russian ethnic minority and the ethnic majorities of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Estonia.

How does acculturation preferences for separation/segregation and assimilation relate to such indicators of psychological well-being as life satisfaction and self-esteem among members of the Russian ethnic minority and the ethnic majorities in the studied countries?

*Modern Sociocultural Context and Position of Russians
in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Estonia*

Kazakhstan. After the collapse of the USSR, Kazakhstan took the vector of building a national Kazakh state. Kazakhs today are the absolute ethnic majority in Kazakhstan, while Russians are the largest ethnic and religious minority and make up just over 15% of the country's total population. Russians in Kazakhstan are an influential socio-political group, quite active in the social, military, cultural and economic life of Kazakhstan. And, despite the fact that the Kazakh language is the state language, the Russian language is officially used on an equal basis in government institutions of Kazakhstan. Nevertheless, Russians and other minorities in Kazakhstan sometimes feel elements of bias against them (Jumageldinov, 2014), which is partly associated with the active policy of introducing the Kazakh language (Dihn Lam, 2013) and the approved program for the transition from Cyrillic to Latin by 2031 (Moldabaeva, Zeynelgabdin, 2024).

The attitude towards the Soviet past in Kazakhstan is contradictory: not only positive but also negative aspects are noted. This is especially evident in the evaluation of the development of virgin and fallow lands, as well as in consideration of the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site (Galiev, 2016). In economic terms, modern Kazakhstan is a self-sufficient country and one of the most successful post-Soviet countries (Kuvalin et al., 2022).

Kyrgyzstan. After the collapse of the USSR, the political course of Kyrgyzstan was aimed at building a democratic state governed by the rule of law to protect the interests and dignity of all citizens of a multinational society, regardless of their ethnicity (Nemeshina et al., 2008). Despite the fact that Russians in Kyrgyzstan are a religious minority, the second ethnic minority after the Uzbeks, and make up slightly less than 6% of the population, the Russian language has official status and is mandatory for study (Commercio, 2004). At the same time, some authors note that in reality in Kyrgyzstan the signs of an ethnocratic state with a developed clan system (Commercio, 2004) are becoming increasingly clear (Nemeshina et al., 2008). Moreover, it is noted that Russians are largely removed from power and resources (Shulga, 2013).

Regarding attitudes towards the Soviet past, it can be said that in Kyrgyzstan there are elements of nostalgia for Soviet greatness, which are expressed in the prominence of Soviet identity, which remains an important part of everyday life (Florin, 2011). In terms of economic development, Kyrgyzstan is classified as

an underdeveloped country (Dzhamankulov, 2019) with high migration activity of the population.

Estonia. After the collapse of the USSR, Estonia went through a rapid wave of de-Russification (Pavlenko, 2008) and set a course for rapprochement with European countries, which was marked by joining the European Union in 2004 (Furman, Zadorozhnyuk, 2004). Estonia has an ethnically charged model of the nation state, which equates integration with forced acculturation (Kruusvall et al., 2009). Russians are the largest ethnic minority in Estonia and make up about 25% of the country's total population. Russian has the status of a foreign language in Estonia, which is why its study and use is limited. Despite their significant number, the Russian-speaking minority in Estonia is socio-politically and economically relatively disadvantaged compared to native Estonians (Leping, Toomet, 2008; Lindemann, Vöörmann, 2010). Moreover, the majority of “individuals with undefined citizenship” in Estonia are ethnic Russians (Croft, 2016).

It is important to note that in Estonia there are diametrically contrasting attitudes between Russians and Estonians towards the Soviet period: the Russians share the opinion that Soviet troops liberated Estonia from the fascists, whereas the Estonians perceive the establishment of Soviet power in Estonia as aggression, occupation and illegal annexation (Vetik, 1993). Moreover, the Russians are often defined as the “former colonial elite” (Kus-Harbord, Ward, 2015). As for the economic situation, Estonia is one of the most economically developed countries in the post-Soviet space (Furman, Zadorozhnyuk, 2004).

Taking into account the differences in the socio-cultural contexts of the countries studied and the position of Russians in them, we put forward the following research question:

Are there universal and country-specific patterns of associations between ideal (expected) and real (perceived) multiculturalism with acculturation preferences and indicators of psychological well-being among members of the Russian ethnic minority and ethnic majorities of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Estonia?

Methods

Participants. The study sample included 754 representatives of the ethnic majorities and 746 representatives of the Russian ethnic minority of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Estonia, with a total sample size of 1,500 respondents. Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the sample, including gender and age distribution. It is noteworthy that there is a bias against women in the samples of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, which is partly reflected in the gender asymmetry of the population of these countries (e.g., Dobrokhleb, Kondakova, 2022). The socio-psychological survey was conducted in collaboration with colleagues from partner universities in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Estonia. In Kazakhstan and Kyrgyz-

stan, the survey was conducted in person, whereas in Estonia via the online platform 1ka. The study design was cross-sectional.

Gender and Age Distribution of the Sample

Table 1

Countries	Groups	N	Age		Gender	
			M	Min.-Max.	Male	Female
Kazakhstan	Kazakhs	226	30	17–70	60	161
	Russians	116	36	17–69	26	90
Kyrgyzstan	Kyrgyz	299	36	18–64	95	204
	Russians	300	36	17–65	104	196
Estonia	Estonians	229	33	18–70	116	113
	Russians	330	37	18–80	151	179

Measures. The study used scales aimed at measuring the level of expression of acculturation strategies, acculturation expectations, self-esteem and life satisfaction from the MIRIPS questionnaire (Berry, 2017), adapted to the Russian sample (Lebedeva, Tatarko, 2009).

Ideal (expected) multiculturalism was assessed using the prescriptive version of *The Multicultural Ideology Scale* (Berry, Kalin, 1995). The scale included 6 statements, for example: “It would be nice if all ethnic groups in [Kazakhstan/Kyrgyzstan/Estonia] maintained their cultures.”

Real (perceived) multiculturalism was assessed using the descriptive version of *The Multicultural Ideology Scale* (Lepshokova, 2021). The scale included 6 statements, for example: “In [Kazakhstan/Kyrgyzstan/Estonia] it is customary to help ethnic groups to maintain their cultural heritage.”

Acculturation strategies of members of the ethnic minority were assessed with *The Acculturation Strategy Scale*. Four items were used to measure the following strategies: *Integration*, for example: “I believe that Russians living in [Kazakhstan/Kyrgyzstan/Estonia] should have friends of both their own nationality and [Kazakhs/Kyrgyz/Estonians]”; *Separation*, for example: “I prefer to have only Russians as friends”; and *Assimilation*, for example: “I prefer to have only [Kazakhs/Kyrgyz/Estonians] friends.”

Acculturation expectations of members of the ethnic majority were assessed with *The Acculturation Expectation Scale*. Four items were also used to measure the following strategies: *Integration*, for example: “Russians living in [Kazakhstan/Kyrgyzstan/Estonia] should have friends of both their own nationality and [Kazakhs/Kyrgyz/Estonians]”; *Segregation*, for example: “I believe that Russians living in [Kazakhstan/Kyrgyzstan/Estonia] should have only Russians as friends”; *Assimilation*, for example: “I believe that Russians living in [Kazakhstan/Kyrgyzstan/Estonia] should have only [Kazakhs/Kyrgyz/Estonians] as friends.”

Life satisfaction was measured using 4 questions, for example: “If I could live my life over again, I would change almost nothing in it.”

Self-esteem was measured using 4 questions, for example: “I believe that I have a number of good qualities.”

The responses to the statements in all the scales were given in the form of a 5-point Likert scale: from 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree).

Statistical analysis. The statistical package SPSS 22.0 with the AMOS 22.0 application was used for data processing. The following methods were used: descriptive statistics, structural equation modeling (SEM) (multigroup analysis).

Results

Descriptive statistics for the target study variables are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for the Target Variables

Variables	Kazakhstan		Kyrgyzstan		Estonia	
	Kazakhs	Russians	Kyrgyz	Russians	Estonians	Russians
	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>
Ideal (expected) multiculturalism	3.83 (0.76)	4.02 (0.67)	4.13 (0.58)	4.14 (0.54)	3.79 (0.71)	3.92 (0.73)
Real (perceived) multiculturalism	3.96 (0.72)	3.63 (0.76)	4.10 (0.65)	3.36 (0.57)	3.29 (0.55)	3.25 (0.61)
Integration*	3.98 (0.67)	3.91 (0.64)	4.21 (0.85)	4.01 (0.66)	4.50 (0.57)	4.48 (0.55)
Assimilation*	2.58 (0.81)	2.01 (0.83)	1.49 (0.62)	1.56 (0.52)	2.14 (0.76)	1.66 (0.63)
Segregation/ Separation*	2.23 (0.80)	2.45 (0.76)	2.80 (0.85)	2.77 (0.81)	2.09 (0.60)	2.35 (0.88)
Life satisfaction	3.84 (0.68)	3.22 (0.72)	3.37 (0.77)	3.25 (0.75)	3.33 (0.74)	3.34 (0.74)
Self-esteem	4.28 (0.62)	4.00 (0.67)	4.32 (0.55)	4.29 (0.56)	3.89 (0.69)	4.12 (0.59)

Note. * – acculturation expectations of members of the ethnic majority and acculturation strategies of members of the Russian ethnic minority.

The data presented in Table 2 indicate that ideal (expected) multiculturalism (IEM) and real (perceived) multiculturalism (RPM) are quite pronounced in all the samples studied, as they are higher than the median of the scale. At the same time, among the Russian ethnic minority, the mean values of real multiculturalism are somewhat lower than those of ideal multiculturalism, i.e., some discrepancy between ideal (expected) and real (perceived) multiculturalism is observed among the Russians. Judging by the mean values, integration seems to be the most preferred acculturation expectation among the majority and the acculturation strategy among the minority. The mean values for life satisfaction are higher than the median of the scale, while the mean values for self-esteem in all the samples appear higher.

Structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to analyze the relationship between the two types of multiculturalism, IEM and RPM, with acculturation preferences and indicators of psychological well-being of members of the Russian ethnic minority and the ethnic majorities of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Estonia (Fig. 1–3). Initially, a multigroup path analysis was conducted among the groups of the Russian ethnic minority of the three countries, the results showed the presence of partial invariance ($\Delta CFI = 0.03$; $\Delta RMSEA = 0.003$). The results of a multigroup analysis among the groups of the ethnic majority of the three countries

showed the absence of invariance ($\Delta CFI = 0.06$; $\Delta RMSEA = 0.07$). Based on this, further analysis was carried out separately for each group.

Figure 1 presents the results of the path analysis of the relationship between ideal (expected) and real (perceived) multiculturalism with acculturation preferences and indicators of psychological well-being of members of the Russian ethnic minority and the ethnic majority of Kazakhstan.

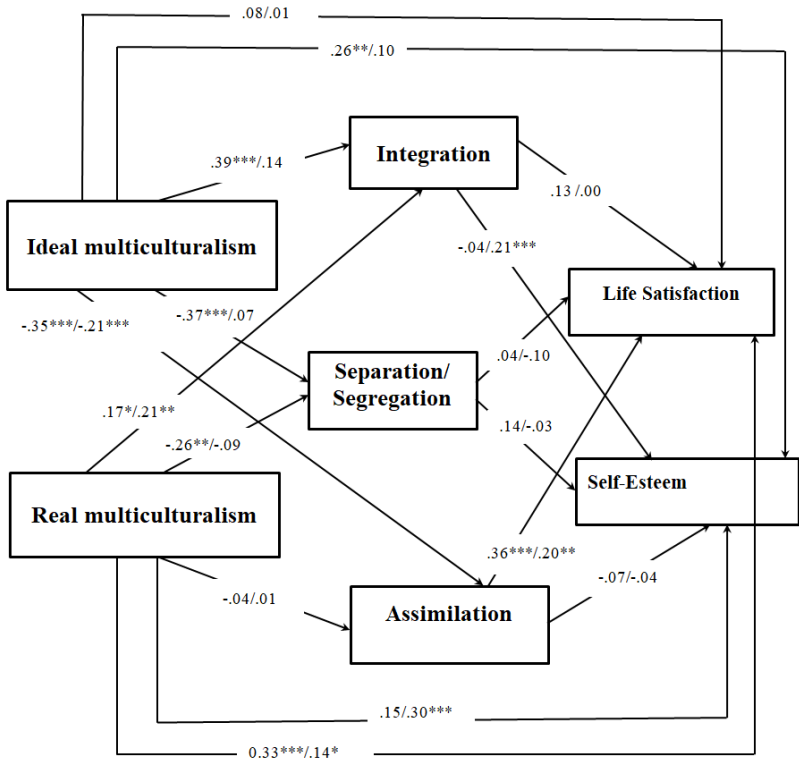


Figure 1. Path model of the relationship between IEM and RPM with acculturation preferences and indicators of psychological well-being among the Russians and Kazakhs in Kazakhstan

Note: The first coefficients refer to the Russians, the second ones after the slash refer to the Kazakhs; the model fit indices are satisfactory: $\chi^2/df = 1.115$, CFI = 0.998, RMSEA = .030, PCLOSE = 0.800 (the Russians) / $\chi^2/df = 2.090$, CFI = 0.977, RMSEA = .052, PCLOSE = 0.435 (the Kazakhs)
*** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$

The data presented in Figure 1 indicate that IEM of the Russians in Kazakhstan is associated positively with the integration strategy and negatively with the separation and assimilation strategy, while RPM of the Russians is also associated positively with the integration strategy and negatively with the separation strategy, but is not associated with the assimilation strategy. IEM is positively associated with self-esteem, while RPM is positively associated with life satisfaction. The assimilation strategy of the Russians is positively associated with life satisfaction. Among the Kazakhs, IEM is associated positively with the integration expectation of the Russians and negatively with the assimilation expectation, while RPM among the Kazakhs is positively associated with the integration expectation. IEM among the Kazakhs is not associated with indicators of psychological well-being, while RPM is positively associated with both life satisfaction and self-esteem. The

integration expectation among the Kazakhs is positively associated with self-esteem, while the assimilation expectation is positively associated with life satisfaction.

Figure 2 presents the results of the path analysis of the relationship between ideal (expected) and real (perceived) multiculturalism with acculturation preferences and indicators of psychological well-being of members of the Russian ethnic minority and the ethnic majority of Kyrgyzstan.

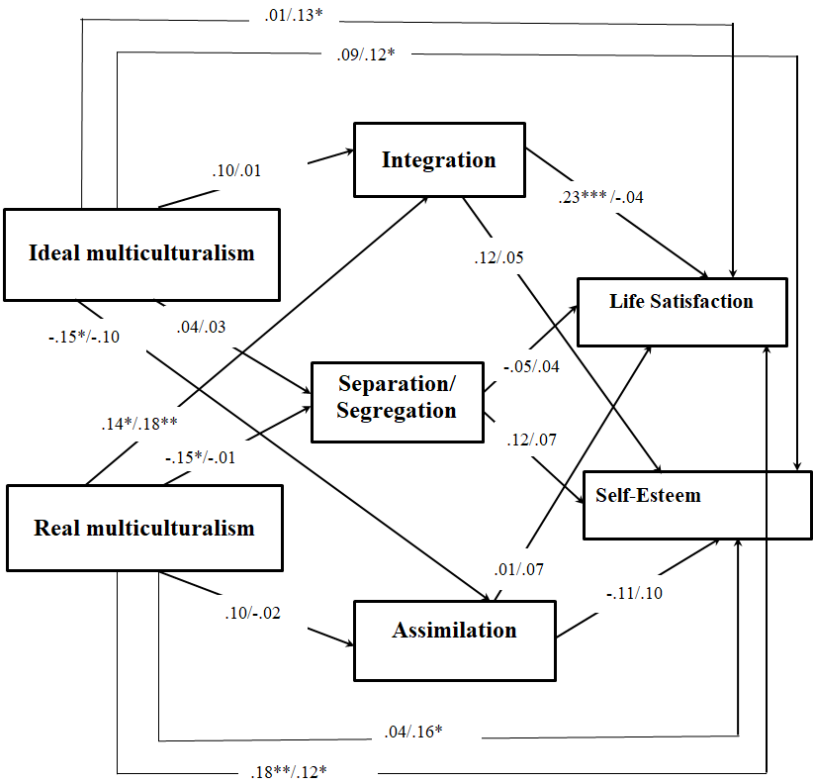


Figure 2. Path model of the relationship between IEM and RPM with acculturation preferences and indicators of psychological well-being among the Russians and Kyrgyz in Kyrgyzstan

Note. The first coefficients refer to the Russians, the second ones after the slash refer to the Kyrgyz; the model fit indices are satisfactory: $\chi^2/df = 1.105$, CFI = 0.997, RMSEA = .019, PCLOSE = 0.736 (the Russians) / $\chi^2/df = 2.132$, CFI = 0.955, RMSEA = .062, PCLOSE = 0.235 (the Kyrgyz)
*** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$;

The data presented in Figure 2 indicate that IEM of the Russians in Kyrgyzstan is negatively associated with the assimilation strategy, while RPM is associated positively with the integration strategy and negatively with the separation strategy. RPM among the Russians in Kyrgyzstan is positively associated with life satisfaction. The integration strategy of the Russians in Kyrgyzstan is positively associated with life satisfaction. Among the Kyrgyz, RPM is positively associated with the integration expectation of the Russians. Moreover, RPM and IEM among the Kyrgyz are positively associated with both life satisfaction and self-esteem.

Figure 3 presents the results of the path analysis of the relationship between ideal (expected) and real (perceived) multiculturalism with acculturation prefer-

ences and indicators of psychological well-being among members of the Russian ethnic minority and the ethnic majority of Estonia.

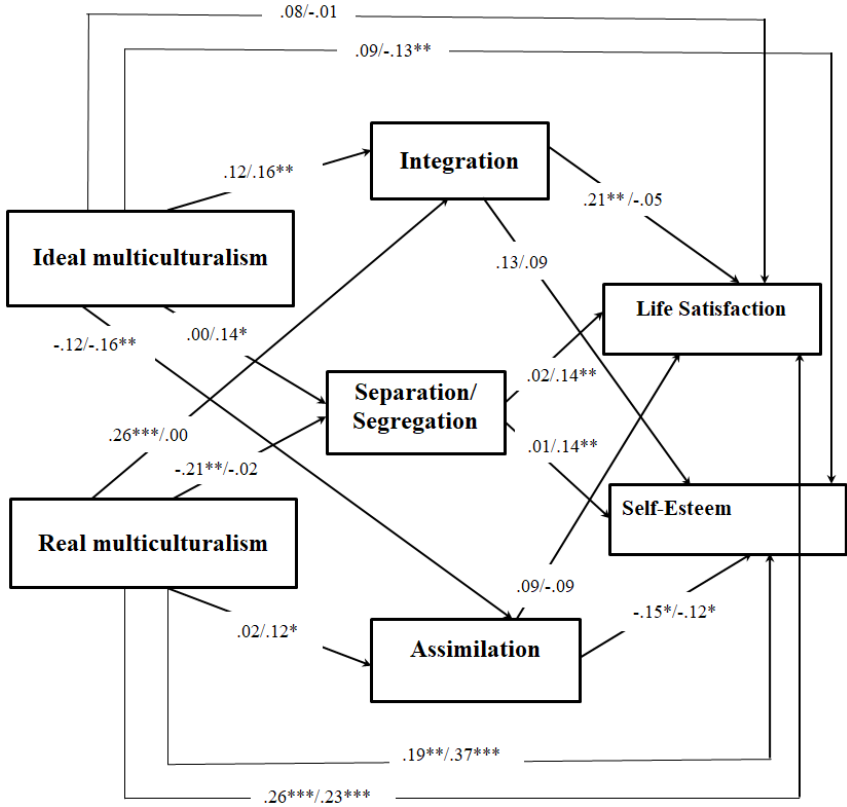


Figure 3. Path model of the relationship between IEM and RPM with acculturation preferences and indicators of psychological well-being among the Russians and Estonians in Estonia

Note. The first coefficients refer to the Russians, the second ones after the slash refer to the Estonians; model fits are satisfactory: $\chi^2/df = 1.765$, CFI = 0.977, RMSEA = .060, PCLOSE = 0.327 (the Russians) / $\chi^2/df = 2.300$, CFI = 0.978, RMSEA = .064, PCLOSE = 0.256 (the Estonians)
*** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$

The data presented in Figure 3 indicate that RPM among the Russians in Estonia is associated positively with the integration strategy and negatively with the separation strategy. Moreover, RPM among the Russians in Estonia is positively associated with both life satisfaction and self-esteem. The integration strategy among the Russians in Estonia is positively associated with life satisfaction, while the assimilation strategy is negatively associated with self-esteem. Among the Estonians, IEM is associated positively with the integration and separation expectations of the Russians and negatively with the assimilation expectations the Russians. At the same time, RPM among the Estonians is positively associated with the assimilation expectation of the Russians. Among the Estonians, IEM is negatively associated with self-esteem, whereas RPM is positively associated with both life satisfaction and self-esteem. The segregation expectation of the Russian among the Estonians is positively associated with life satisfaction and self-esteem, while their assimilation expectation is negatively associated with self-esteem.

Discussion

The main goal of this study was to find an answer to the question about the role of ideal (expected) and real (perceived) multiculturalism in the mutual acculturation and psychological well-being of members of the Russian ethnic minority and the ethnic majorities of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Estonia. The answer was found as a result of verification of the research hypotheses through the prism of intra- and inter-country analysis.

The first hypothesis that IEM and RPM were associated positively with acculturation preferences for integration and negatively with acculturation preferences for separation and assimilation among members of the ethnic minority and the ethnic majority was partially confirmed in all the studied samples and countries.

Thus, in Kazakhstan, the Russians with high levels of ideal (expected) multiculturalism and real (perceived) multiculturalism prefer integration in intercultural interaction with the Kazakhs but do not prefer separation. The Kazakhs, in turn, with a high level of ideal (expected) multiculturalism, demonstrate readiness to integrate the Russians but do not accept their assimilation. In addition, the Kazakhs with a high level of real (perceived) multiculturalism expect Russians to integrate into Kazakh society, that is, they expect Russians not to renounce their cultural identity when interacting with the Kazakhs. It turns out that the attitudes towards the adoption of multicultural ideology in this country, and the vision of its full implementation, consistently lead to a preference for the integration of the Russians, both from the point of view of the Russians themselves and the Kazakhs. The results obtained can be considered as a sign of a favorable background for intercultural interaction in Kazakhstan. This once again proves that integration can only be achieved in a society where cultural diversity is encouraged (Berry *et al.*, 2022).

In Kyrgyzstan, the Russians with a pronounced attitude towards the adoption of multicultural ideology do not accept assimilation as a strategy of intercultural interaction with the Kyrgyz. Moreover, those of them, who feel the implementation of multicultural ideology in the country, demonstrate a commitment to the integration strategy in intercultural interaction with the Kyrgyz, but are not at all inclined to separation. The Kyrgyz with a high level of real (perceived) multiculturalism demonstrate a commitment to the integration of the Russians. In summary, it can be said that the perception by the Russians and Kyrgyz in Kyrgyzstan that multicultural ideology is being implemented in their country leads to a preference for integration on both sides, which in turn is a clear indication of the favorable background of intercultural relations in this country.

The situation in Estonia is different from what we observe in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. Thus, among the Russians in Estonia, only real (perceived) multiculturalism leads to integration in intercultural interaction with Estonians and does not lead to separation, while expectations regarding the need to adopt a mul-

multicultural ideology are not associated with the choice of any acculturation strategy. For the Estonians, on the contrary, the expectation of the need to adopt a multicultural ideology in the country is associated positively with both the preference for the integration of the Russians and the preference for their segregation from Estonian society, but negatively with the preference for the assimilation of the Russians. It turns out that among the Estonians, the personal attitude towards the adoption of a multicultural ideology is associated with the fact that the Russians should certainly preserve their cultural heritage (this is what unites the expectations of integration and segregation), but the question of whether the Russians should interact and be fully “let in” into Estonian society remains open and controversial (since the expectation of integration implies interaction with Estonians, while that of segregation does not). Moreover, the implementation of multicultural ideology in this country as perceived by the Estonians leads to a preference for assimilation of the Russians. This suggests that the Estonians, seeing support for preserving the cultural identity of ethnic minorities in Estonia, expect assimilation from the Russians. Most likely, this is due to the threat that the Estonians perceive from the Russians, which takes the form of fear of increasing Russian influence through the Russian ethnic group (Skuratovskaya, 2016). The results obtained in Estonia indicate the presence of a certain level of tension in the intercultural interaction between the Estonians and Russians.

Thus, the results of verification of the first hypothesis of this study clearly indicate that the universal basis for the integration of Russians in the post-Soviet space, regardless of their country of residence, is real (perceived) multiculturalism, that is, the perception of a real sociocultural context, but not abstract personal attitudes towards multicultural ideology. With regard to the ethnic majority of the studied post-Soviet countries, it should be said that no universal basis for the preference for the integration of Russians has been revealed in the three countries. Among the Kazakhs and Kyrgyz, the basis for the Russians’ integration expectation was real (perceived) multiculturalism, that is, the feeling that the multicultural ideology is fully implemented in the country. Whereas among the Estonians, the basis for the Russians’ integration was ideal (expected) multiculturalism, while perceived multiculturalism became the basis for the preference for their assimilation. The obtained results indicate that in different sociocultural contexts, the implementation of multicultural ideology perceived by the ethnic majority in their country can be the basis for the preference for integration and the assimilation of minorities. From our point of view, this depends on whether members of the ethnic majority consider themselves as something external to the implementation of the multicultural ideology or as part of it. And, moreover, whether they feel a threat to their way of life from ethnic minorities.

The second hypothesis that IEM and RPM were positively associated with such indicators of psychological well-being as life satisfaction and self-esteem among members of the ethnic majorities and ethnic minority was also partially confirmed in all the studied samples and countries.

Thus, among the Russians in Kazakhstan, ideal (expected) multiculturalism is positively associated with self-esteem, whereas their real (perceived) multiculturalism is positively associated with life satisfaction. Among the Kazakhs, however, their real (perceived) multiculturalism is positively associated with both self-esteem and life satisfaction. It is noteworthy that the universal basis for life satisfaction among the Kazakhs and Russians is real (perceived) multiculturalism. Overall, this indicates that the implementation of multicultural ideology in their country, perceived by both the Russians and Kazakhs, has a beneficial effect on their psychological well-being.

In Kyrgyzstan, among the Russians, only real (perceived) multiculturalism is associated with life satisfaction, while among the Kyrgyz, both real (perceived) multiculturalism and ideal (expected) multiculturalism are positively associated with both life satisfaction and self-esteem.

In Estonia, among the Russians and Estonians, real (perceived) multiculturalism is positively associated with both life satisfaction and self-esteem. At the same time, ideal (expected) multiculturalism among the Estonians is negatively associated with their self-esteem. Probably, as we have already noted above, the attitude towards the adoption of multicultural ideology is viewed by them as something external, intended to preserve the cultural identity of minorities, but not of the Estonians themselves, which ultimately does not contribute to their self-esteem.

Summarizing the results obtained during the verification of the second hypothesis, we can say that members of the Russian ethnic minority and the ethnic majority of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Estonia, who see the implementation of multicultural ideology in their countries, demonstrate a high level of life satisfaction. It turns out that the perceived context in which all the ethnocultural groups are valued is associated with life satisfaction among people regardless of their ethnicity and their ethnic group status. These findings are consistent with the idea that perception has a more powerful and direct influence on key social and psychological outcomes (Guimond et al., 2013; Koopmans & Schaeffer, 2016; Van Assche et al., 2016).

The third hypothesis, that acculturation preference for integration was positively associated with life satisfaction and self-esteem, was partially confirmed, but not in all the studied samples.

In Kazakhstan, the Kazakhs who expect the Russians' integration demonstrate a high level of self-esteem. In Kyrgyzstan and Estonia, the Russians who prefer integration in intercultural interaction with the ethnic majority demonstrate

a high level of life satisfaction. The relationships between the acculturation preference for integration and indicators of psychological well-being in all the studied samples are weaker than expected or absent altogether, probably due to the fact that in the model we have tested, real (perceived) multiculturalism turns out to be a more powerful factor of psychological well-being than acculturation preferences for integration.

As expected, there are different answers to the research question about how the acculturation preferences of separation/segregation and assimilation are associated with psychological well-being of members of the Russian ethnic minority and the ethnic majority in the sociocultural contexts under study. For example, in Kazakhstan, the Kazakhs and Russians who prefer assimilation of the Russians demonstrate a high level of life satisfaction. The relationship between the assimilation strategy and life satisfaction usually indicates that this strategy has a certain adaptive potential in a complex sociocultural context (Lepshokova, Tatarko, 2016) with a bias towards assimilation (Lepshokova et al., 2018). In Kyrgyzstan, the preferences of separation and assimilation among the Russians and Kyrgyz are not associated to their psychological well-being, and therefore do not carry any adaptive potential.

Of particular interest is the positive relationship between segregation expectation and life satisfaction and self-esteem among the Estonians.

It appears that the Estonians with a strong attitude that Russians should preserve their cultural heritage in Estonia, but without interacting with the ethnic majority, demonstrate a high level of psychological well-being. At the same time, the Estonians and Russians who are not inclined to assimilate the Russians demonstrate a high level of self-esteem. Previous studies have already noted that the Estonians with a high level of ethnic self-esteem tend to oppose cultural pluralism and prefer the separation strategy (Raudsepp, 2009). In our study, we see that the Estonians with high levels of personal self-esteem also demonstrate a tendency towards segregation, which is most likely due to the awareness of protecting their cultural identity and originality.

Conclusion

The study is the first of its kind in providing a comprehensive picture of intercultural interaction between an ethnic minority and majority within the model of the relationship between the ideal (expected) and real (perceived) context with mutual acculturation and psychological well-being. The tested model can be used to diagnose intercultural relations in multicultural regions, as it makes it possible to detect points of tension and rapprochement in intercultural relations between members of ethnocultural groups with different statuses in multicultural contexts. For example, no serious tension points have been identified in Kyrgyzstan; in Ka-

zakhstan, the positive relationship between the preference for assimilation and life satisfaction among both the Russians and Kazakhs raises concerns; and in Estonia, the negative relationship between ideal (expected) multiculturalism and self-esteem, as well as the positive relationship between the Russian's segregation expectation and indicators of psychological well-being among the Estonians, is alarming. At the same time, an important resource for psychological well-being in all contexts studied was real (perceived) multiculturalism, that is, people's feeling that multicultural ideology is fully implemented in their country.

In this regard, it seems critically important to create a social environment in which cultural diversity is encouraged in a way that is visible to people, which, as our research has shown, is an invaluable resource for the life satisfaction of members of all ethnocultural groups, regardless of their country of residence and the social status. Multiculturalism can be made visible through mass communications, social media and everyday positive experiences of intercultural interaction.

This study, being a continuation of a series of studies in line with the context-oriented approach in psychology of acculturation (Lepshokova, 2020; 2021), aimed at studying ideal (expected) and real (perceived) multiculturalism, makes a significant contribution to understanding the essence, significance and resourcefulness of perceived inclusiveness of the context for psychological well-being and harmonization of intercultural relations.

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Исследовательская статья

Идеальный и реальный мультикультурализм в постсоветских странах: связь со взаимной аккультурацией и психологическим благополучием этнического большинства и меньшинства

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Аннотация. В статье раскрывается социально-психологический взгляд на мультикультурализм как субъективное отражение социокультурного контекста на уровне установок и восприятия. Разграничиваются понятия идеального (ожидаемого) и реального (воспринимаемого) мультикультурализма и исследуется их связь с аккультурационными предпочтениями и психологическим благополучием представителей этнического меньшинства и большинства. Исследование проведено на представителях русского этнического меньшинства ($N = 746$) и этнического большинства ($N = 754$) Казахстана, Кыргызстана и Эстонии. Общий объем выборки составил 1500 респондентов. Мето-

дологию исследования составили прескриптивная и дескриптивная версии шкалы мультикультурной идеологии, шкалы для измерения аккультурационных стратегий этнического меньшинства и аккультурационных ожиданий этнического большинства, а также шкалы для измерения уровня удовлетворенности жизнью и самоуважения. В результате анализа выяснилось, что универсальной основой удовлетворенности жизнью представителей русского этнического меньшинства и этнического большинства всех исследуемых постсоветских стран является реальный (воспринимаемый) мультикультурализм, а не абстрактные установки в отношении принятия мультикультурной идеологии. Более того, реальный, воспринимаемый русскими, мультикультурализм проявил себя и как универсальная основа выбора ими стратегии интеграции. У представителей этнического большинства реальный, воспринимаемый ими, мультикультурализм проявил себя основой интеграции или ассимиляции русских в зависимости от контекста. У казахов и киргизов он лег в основу интеграции русских, тогда как у эстонцев – в основу ассимиляции русских. Эти и другие результаты исследования обсуждаются через призму социокультурных контекстов Казахстана, Кыргызстана и Эстонии, а также через призму принципиальных различий между идеальным и реальным мультикультурализмом. Завершается статья объяснением практической ценности тестируемой модели для диагностики межкультурных отношений в поликультурных обществах.

Ключевые слова: мультикультурная идеология, идеальный (ожидаемый) мультикультурализм, реальный (воспринимаемый) мультикультурализм, аккультурационные стратегии, аккультурационные ожидания, психологическое благополучие, удовлетворенность жизнью, самоуважение, постсоветские страны, этническое большинство, этническое меньшинство, Казахстан, Кыргызстан, Эстония.

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