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The Analysis of National Identification of Russians through Images of Meta-Ethnic Groups: The Case of Four Borderland Regions

Svetlana Maximova, Daria Omelchenko* and Oksana Noyanzina

Department of Psychology of Communications and Psychotechnologies, Faculty of Sociology, Altai State University, Barnaul 656049, Russian Federation

ABSTRACT

In today's Russia, questions about national identity, nation-building, and nationwide integration are among the most discussed issues at the highest possible political levels. The issues become more acute in borderland regions, where more trans-border movement creates an environment for double or multiple cultural identities and diffuse representations about "ownness" and "otherness". Sociological surveys conducted in four regions of Russia (the Altai region, the Amur region, the Republic of Karelia, and the Jewish Autonomous Region, n=400) explored national identification, structuring ethnic diversity in Russia, and giving grounds for generalizations and stereotypes from the data collected with repertory grids and using hierarchical cluster analysis, PCA, Proctrustes analysis, and psychosemantic space building. Main results included elaboration of the original research tool, tested in the Russian borderland, description of Russians as they are perceived by borderland inhabitants, their relations with meta-ethnic groups associated with the Russian nation, and latent factors, influencing the assessment of people of different nationalities.

Keywords: Border regions, meta-ethnic groups, national identification, repertory grid, Russian identity, semantic analysis

INTRODUCTION

The Russian Federation is a poly-ethnic and poly-confessional society. Within the territory of Russia reside more than 190 ethnic groups and nationalities with unique material and spiritual cultures, most of them having played a historical role in the development of the Russian statehood. Ethnic minorities try to preserve their

distinctiveness and traits of traditional culture, and, at the same time, they are integrated in an all-Russian civic nation as independent and equal in civic rights.

The issues of national identity become more acute in borderland regions which are situated on the crossing of geographic, political, ethno-cultural, confessional, economic and trade areas, and spaces. The Russian border region covers about 76% of its overall land area. Bordering with 16 countries, eight of which previously formed part of the Soviet Union, Russia still has problems with the undetermined status of several borderland territories (sections of the borders with Azerbaijan, Estonia, China, Japan, and Ukraine) and the socio-economic problems caused by intense migration and interactions of people, previously residing in a common social and economic space near new borders with Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries (Kolossov, 2003).

In this context, it is crucial to develop theoretical and empirical models, be able to explore in a comprehensive manner the national identity of Russians in the aggregate of self-perception and the perception of other ethnic groups residing on the same territory, and forming its specific ethno-cultural color. The current article does just this by exploring national identity of a population from four border regions of Russia through the prism of images of the most important meta-ethnic groups inhabiting Russia, treating national identification as a result of comparison of images of 'own' and 'alien' groups.

Literature Review

The multi-national character of Russian society forms its uniqueness and cultural wealth. Simultaneously, it is an important factor of national security, given that inter-ethnic relations are rarely calm or conflict-free. Peculiarities of the historical situation of the last decades of the 20th century, characterized by political turmoil and ethnically motivated violence, have led to a change of priorities in the investigation and political presentation of the Russian national identity. Until the end of 1990s they were focused on the domination of Russian (civic) identity over certain ethnic identities, while recent scientific works took up the idea of pacifist coexistence, positive compatibility, and the integration of national-civic and ethnic identities (Drobizheva, Gottemoeller, Kelleher, & Walker, 2015; Lubsky, Lurje, Popov, Serikova, & Zagutin, 2015). The search for Russian identity became a foundation stone for the successful realization of the State's national strategy, based on the concepts of an 'all-Russian nation' and 'unique multi-national people of Russia'.

Traditionally understood as a part of the socialization process, identification issues were primarily reflected in the works of sociologists tending to present a new vision of this phenomenon, differing from psychological interpretations and based on classical sociological paradigms – structural functionalism, integral sociology, comprehensive sociology, phenomenological sociology, and ethnomethodology. Modern identity research is focused on temporary

nature, fluidity, and individual choice of identity, as opposed to its predisposition and unchangeability (see detailed analysis in Boudon, 1993; Hughes, Sharrock, & Martin, 2003; Misztal, 2003).

The focal point of our research is national identity, shaped and displayed in inter-ethnic, inter-cultural interactions. Analysis of foreign scientific works shows that terms 'state identity', 'state-civic identity' or 'civic identity', very common in corresponding Russian literature, are rather rarely used. Instead, the notion of 'national identity' is widely accepted to refer a nation as a political entity. One of the most powerful definitions of national identity is given by Smith (1991), who presented nation as a political community, having common institutions, a single set of rules and duties for all members of this community, as well as special social space, with which people identified themselves. Smith considered national identity as a multi-dimensional phenomenon, possessing five fundamental attributes: historic territory or homeland, common myths and historical memories, a common, mass public culture, common legal rights and duties for all members, and a common economy with territorial mobility for members.

National identity is assumed to be a significant instrument, helping individuals to fulfill their role as members of a nation. The salience of national identity increases if one needs to compare a person's national ingroup and outgroup and decreases when national identity is not challenged (Stryker & Burke, 2000). Mechanisms of national identification have a subjective nature but are conditioned and affirmed by objective factors, such as territory, language, religion, state, traditions, which act as symbols, markers used to distinguish one's national community ('we') from another one ('they') and giving the feeling of belonging of the self to its 'own' community (Achkasov, 1999).

It is widely accepted that national identity is a complex phenomenon, including three principal dimensions or components, whose structure is adopted from the social attitude theory. The cognitive component is represented by the awareness of belonging to a nation, representations about people, state, its history, merits and defeats, cultural traditions, and symbols. These representations reflect the image of the country-state and the image of a nation. The effective-evaluative component reflects attitudes towards national community, which may be positive, negative or neutral and indifferent. It could be manifested in recognition or rejection of one's national identity, feelings of pride or shame, patriotic feelings, respect and tolerance towards other peoples or, in contrast, irritation and non-acceptance of national values. The behavioral component of national identity is found in generally beneficial activities, public engagement, ability to confront illegal actions and take responsibility for what is going on in the country (Efimenko, 2013; Kozhanov, 2013; Pratkanis, Breckler, & Greenwald, 2014; Smith, 2014).

The place and the space play an important role in defining national identity,

especially in borderland, where symbolic and politico-jural boundaries between nations and states are much closer (Wilson & Donnan, 1998). As Sadowski (2009) pointed out, a borderland possessed some features that distinguished it from other territories. First, it is always populated by at least two or more ethnic groups, 'which in social consciousness are perceived as distinct'. The scientist highlights the greater sustainability of these groups in comparison with political borders. Second, the border supposes different forms of coexistence of ethno-cultural groups – from cooperation to confrontation. Third, the conditions of borderlands form a singular type of social subjects for whom it is natural to belong to different cultures. Thus, a borderland is a place that contains the moment of achievement and passage to another state and political structure, social-economic reality, language and culture, and where national identity becomes, on the one hand, more salient between other social identities and more ambivalent, and 'fluent', on the other hand.

The security of Russian borders is assured by the economic cooperation with its neighbours and latent politic agreements, entailing economic aid in exchange for stability in borderland regions of neighbouring countries (Ivakhniouk & Daurov, 2003). Economic, social and cultural cooperation and confrontation of ethnic groups, inhabiting borderland regions, is deeply explored by Dines and Nikolaev (2010), Tatarko and Lebedeva (2010), and Ryazantsev, Karabulatova,

Mashin, Pismennaya, and Sivoplyasova (2015). In analysis of migration problems, they emphasize that in the situation of post-migration stress, ethnic consolidation among migrants is very high and this ethnic cohesion may be characterized as 'peculiar inter-community immunity, emerging in conditions, when the ethnic group becomes minority'. It is in this context that the analysis of national identification of Russians should incorporate not only regional peculiarities, but also take into account actual tendencies in inter-ethnic relations, affected by migration.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The empirical study was fulfilled by means of modified techniques of semantic differential and repertory grids (Coshall, 2000; Fransella, Bell, & Bannister 2004; Kelly, 2003; Petrenko, 2010; Tan & Hunter, 2002). The basic theoretical premise was that people belonging to one nation identify themselves with, or distance themselves from, others on the base of shared representations about common traits of personality, mentality and behavior, specific for members of this particular nation or supranational groups which had been denoted in the title of the article as meta-ethnic groups. Therefore, in designing our measuring instruments, we proceeded from findings in studying national character and stereotypes, national culture and values, (Bar-Tal, 1997; Minkov & Hofstede, 2012; Phalet & Poppe, 1997; Realo et al., 2009; Terracciano et al., 2005), providing extensive materials about how and on which

grounds this can be done. Especially do we mention the theory of national cultures and their differences (Hofstede, 2011), describing six dimensions, influencing individual values and predisposing human action: *power distance*, related to perception of social inequality and distribution of power; *uncertainty avoidance*, associated with strict rules, traditions and in-group conformity (high levels) and initiative, risk and tolerance (low levels); *individualism versus collectivism*, defining the extent to which individuals are integrated into groups; *masculinity versus femininity*, highlighting focus on results, competitiveness and commitment opposed to human relations and cultural values; *long term versus short term orientation*, describing orientation on resolution of strategical, long-term objectives; and *indulgence versus restraint*, related to the gratification versus control of basic human desires related to enjoying life. Though plausibility of systematically causal national cultures is often questioned and criticized (McSweeney, 2002) we found it possible to use this model as the theoretical basis to elaborate scales for subjective assessment of meta-ethnic groups.

From the technical point of view, the procedure involved assessment of ten elements (supranational communities and social groups, in which ethnicity played a substantial role) by 22 seven-point graded scales (from –3 to +3 points).

Reasons for selection of precisely such elements were as follows:

- aims and tasks of the research, supposing exploration of peculiarities of social perception of ethnic groups and their relation to national identity;

- the objective geographic position of Russia, its intermediate place between the West and the East, that had played a key role in the development of Russian mentality, philosophic and political ideological world-view;

- the structure of ethnic composition of the population of the Russian Federation, historical determinants of the development of the Russian Statehood and its multi-ethnic character, the necessity to satisfy needs and interests of people of different nationalities living on its territory;

- historical specificities and actual state of interethnic and intercultural interactions among different peoples of Russia, changes in ethno-cultural landscape influenced by globalization.

Finally, among over 30 elements originally proposed in the previous stages of the research, only 10 of them were selected following the results of expert evaluations: Russians, Europeans, Asians, Slavs, Caucasian peoples, Central Asian peoples, Small indigenous peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East, Migrants, Friendly people and Hostile people.

The set of constructs, proposed for evaluation, included assessment characteristics, describing mentality,

national culture, behavior, interethnic and intercultural relations, auto-identification: 1) own/alien; 2) similar to me / different from me; 3) distant / close: 4) lazy, goes with the flow / laborious, purposeful; 5) friendly / hostile; 6) cunning, self-seeking / naïve, artless; 7) practical, rational / emotional, impulsive; 8) indifferent, disinterested / compassionate, empathic; 9) aggressive, warlike / peaceable; 10) unpleasant / inspiring sympathy and respect; 11) conservator, traditionalist/ supporting progress and innovations; 12) individualist, puts personal interests before public interests/conformist, abides by expected behaviour or established practices; 13) intolerant towards people sharing different points of view / tolerant towards other points of view, lifestyle; 14) aspires to superiority, exceptionality / aspires to equality, justice; 15) uncivilized, ignorant / educated, intelligent; 16) responsible, disciplined / easy-going, hopes for the best; 17) honest, decent / insincere, deceitful; 18) brave / cowardly; 19) free, independent / dependent; 20) excites envy / doesn't excite envy; 21) poor / rich; 22) is on a lower level of the social ladder (than me) / is on a higher level of the social ladder.

The study was conducted in four Russian regions in 2015. The need for balance between good coverage and territorial compactness has led to the acceptance of the scheme of stratified proportional sampling, combining probabilistic and non-random technics. The first phase of procedures consisted of selection of regions, urban and rural settlements, followed by calculation of quota samples on the base of statistical data (proportions of urban and rural population, sex and age of inhabitants). In the next stage, for each randomly-chosen sampling points, interviewers were assigned with a starting location and provided with instructions on the random walking rules and respondents' selection.

The choice of regions was justified by the necessity to represent different parts of the Russian borderland. Thus, the Republic of Karelia was selected as representative of the western part of Russia, which is one of the national republics with specific ethnic composition, having greater proportions of non-ethnic Russians (Russian Federal State Statistics Service, 2012). The Altai region represented Siberian territories, sharing long borders with Asian countries – Kazakhstan, China and Mongolia. The Jewish autonomous region (JAR) was selected as the only remaining federal subject with similar status, but having nothing to do with the nationality, indicated in its title. Considering the intensive development of the international relations of the region, especially in agro-industry, where China plays a role of the key partner (Gessen, 2016; Mishuk, 2016), our research might provide empirical data concerning attitudes of population about migration and changes in ethnic structure of the population. The Russian Far East was represented by the Amur region and was typical for this region's demographic and migration situation – negative natural increase of the population, low standards of living accompanied by intensive international migration (Belenets, 2016).

Regional samples consisted of 100 respondents residing in urban and rural areas. Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents are shown in Table 1. The respondents' age varied from 15 to 75 years. The regional differences in age group proportions did not differ significantly ($\chi2$, $p>0,05$). Ethnic identification was measured by the classical question "What is your ethnicity? If you cannot mention only one, enumerate all ethnicities you identify with". In the Altai region, 86.3% of respondents were Russians, 11.3% were Armenians, Germans, Ukrainians and Avars and 2.4% had mixed or unknown ethnicities. In the Amur region, 91.2% were Russians, 4.4% were Ukrainians, 1.5% were Polish, others had mixed ethnicities. In the Republic of Karelia 77.0% were Russians, 17.0% had mixed or unidentified ethnicity, 2.0% were Karels, 2.0% were Armenians, 1.0% were Karachays, and 1.0% were Finns. In the JAR, 76.8% of respondents had pure Russian ethnicity, 20.0% had mixed or uncertain ethnicities, 2.0% of respondents were Uzbeks and 1.0% were Circassians.

Table 1
Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents in four regions in percentage

Socio-demographic characteristics		Regions			
		AlR	AmR	JAR	RK
Sex	Male	46,2	50,0	45,5	44,4
	Female	53,8	50,0	54,5	55,6
Age	15-29 years	27,6	29,4	28,3	24,0
	30-49 years	35,2	45,6	37,4	39,0
	50 years and over	37,1	25,0	34,3	37,0
Settlement type	Urban	58,5	82,4	68,7	78,0
	Rural	41,5	17,6	31,3	22,0
Ethnicity	Russians	88,3	94,0	96,2	90,6
	Non-Russians	11,7	6,0	3,8	9,4

Note: Hereinafter following notation keys for regions are used: AlR – the Altai region, AmR – the Amur region, JAR – the Jewish autonomous region, RK – the Republic of Karelia.

Data processing and analysis were conducted in several steps. In the first step, general profiles of elements were described on the basis of mean values and their variability (Table 2). In the second step, constructs were analyzed by means of hierarchical cluster analysis and PCA to describe the most important factors and determining assessment of elements. Additionally, factorial invariance was explored by Tucker's congruence φ coefficient and the orthogonal Procrustes rotation among regional samples. Significance was proved by Monte-Carlo permutation tests, generating reference distribution of the data and, thus, giving

more accurate results than those obtained with the use of traditional statistical methods (Chan, Ho, Leung, Chan, & Yung, 1999; Lorenzo-Seva & Ten Berge, 2006; McCrae & Costa, 2008). The fourth step consisted of building semantic spaces, visualising sematic ties and interrelations between different images of ethnic 'other" or 'own' in the structure of social representations of population of borderland regions of Russia, having their general, invariant (core) and specific (peripheral) features. All calculations were made using SPSS, version 23.0, and software environment for statistical computing and graphics using R.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

At the primary stage of the analysis, mean values of bipolar supplied constructs were calculated after data averaging in each region and selected by comparison of a particular mean (Table 2). This was done with the range of a grand mean±1σ (for all elements), which was used for the description of the generalized profiles of elements. Such a method of selection allowed us to avoid biases caused by the tendency of respondents from particular regions to give assessment within a certain range and to reveal the most significant components of the images of meta-ethnic groups that were typical for all covered borderlands and were specific for single territories.

Thus, in three regions, except the Amur region, *the Russians* were described as 'own', 'close', 'similar to me', 'practical, rational'. In the Altai region and the JAR,

the list of the most important characteristics also included 'inspiring sympathy, respect'. General negative traits for this group were related to the lack of responsibility and discipline (except in the Republic of Karelia), low social status and poor financial situation, ruse and deviousness. Given that all mean values for negative characteristics were not lower than 3.85 points, the image of Russians was to a large extent idealized and consisted of identification characteristics, associated with positive emotions – respect and sympathy. At the same time, most respondents underlined negative traits of Russian national character, which were perceived as evident and taken for granted, including low assessment of material position.

The Slavs were evaluated, similarly, with the Russians. This meta-ethnic group was very attractive for identification. In three regions, except the Amour region, *the Slavs* were associated with practicality and rationality. In the Amur region, key characteristics were intelligence and a high level of culture, going along with individuality and demonstration of superiority. In the Altai region *Slavs* were perceived as cunning and devious, in the JAR they were perceived as responsible and disciplined, supporting progress and innovation, whereas in the Republic of Karelia the most highlighted features were sympathy and respect. Thus, even being quite positively assessed in all borderland regions, the image of *Slavs* differed by core characteristics, attributed to it in different locations in Russia.

The image of the *Europeans* was marked as 'practical', 'intelligent, culturally developed', but 'alien', 'different from me', 'distant' (except the Republic of Karelia, bordering Finland and thus being objectively much closer to the Europe than other regions), 'cunning and devious', 'not exciting envy' (in three regions except the Altai region). Besides this, the residents of the Altai and the Amur regions gave the *Europeans* higher assessments of responsibility and discipline, zeal and firmness of purposes, richness, support for progress and innovations. At the same time, they were perceived as individualists, oriented towards personal than public needs and interests. In general, the image of the inhabitants of Europe was positive and attractive, but incompatible with the mentality of most respondents.

The Asians, regardless of common representations about distance and dissimilarity from respondents, had additional characteristics in several regions studied. Inhabitants of the Amur region and the Republic of Karelia considered *Asians* as purposeful and laborious, responsible and disciplined, but cunning and devious. In the JAR, they were associated to a great extent with friendliness. Therefore, the content of the image of Asians varied depending on the specific interethnic interactions, emerging in every region.

The Caucasian peoples were one of the most contradictory groups considering the painful history of ethnic conflicts in the territory of Caucasus (for the comprehensive analysis of the history and the modern state of the question see Avksentyev & Aksumov, 2007; Cheterian, 2008). In all regions, this position was assessed as 'alien', 'distant', 'different from me', 'impulsive', but 'independent' and 'brave'. In the Altai region, they were described as conservative traditionalists, demonstrating intolerance towards people, aspiring to superiority, whereas in the JAR this position was described as responsible and disciplined. In the Amur region and the Republic of Karelia Caucasians were as well associated with wealth and fortune, diligence and purposefulness.

The Central Asian peoples have received similar evaluations, but unlike Caucasians they were characterized by very low values of 'envy', combined with other characteristics specific to individual regions. Thus, in the Amur region and the Republic of Karelia, *Central Asian peoples* were considered to be laborious and purposeful, in the Altai region they were labeled friendly and peaceable, whereas in the JAR honesty and decency, responsibility and discipline were attributed to them. These results show that in the context of persistent migration from Central Asian countries, their expatriates are not perceived to be hostile or invasive.

The Small indigenous peoples of the North, Siberia and the Russian Far East inspired sympathy and respect and were evaluated as 'rational', 'peaceable' and 'secure', but 'poor' and 'occupying lower steps on the social ladder', 'not exciting envy' and 'conservative, traditionalist'. The values of identification constructs

(own/alien, similar/different, close/distant) were relatively high. At the same time, this position was singled out by the originality of life-style and traditions. In the Altai region, it was associated with courage, ruse, and shrewdness. In the Amur region, the emphasis was on the physical dissimilarity of this population, while in the JAR, small indigenous peoples were considered as 'own', 'close' and 'compassionate', but lacking responsibility and discipline.

The Migrant's image contains characteristics 'alien', 'different from me', 'distant', it didn't excite envy. Additionally, in the Altai region migrants were associated with poverty, courage and persistence. In the JAR they were described as having responsibility and discipline, and in the Republic of Karelia – with low social status, diligence and firmness of purposes. This category didn't represent in the respondents' view to be a serious danger. It was perceived in the whole as a group with conservative thinking, low level of education and culture, and dependent on the receiving society.

Among two reference categories – *the Friendly people* and *the Hostile people*, the first was perceived as 'own', 'practical, rational', 'cunning', 'putting personal interests before public ones', 'peaceable' and 'secure', inspiring sympathy and respect and, paradoxically, 'having low position at social ladder', 'not exciting envy'. The image of the *Hostile people* was opposite to the *Friendly people*. It was perceived as 'alien', 'different' and 'distant', 'aspiring for superiority and exceptionality', but 'not exciting envy' too. Additional meanings varied depending on region. In the Altai region, *the Enemy's* image was associated with courage, in the Amur region and in the Republic of Karelia it was associated with emotionality and impulsivity, intelligence and wealth, whereas in the JAR the main connotations were related to responsibility and high social status. Therefore, unlike the *Friend*, the image of *Ethic Enemy* was endowed with much more power and force, manifested in educational attainment and high cultural levels and material well-being. In the minds of the population, *the Enemy* should merit to be hated and to deserve animosity.

At the next stage of the analysis, the hierarchical cluster analysis was applied to reveal the ensemble of constructs and meta-ethnic groups that were perceived to be similar. The presence of large quantities of constructs hierarchically dependent on each other in regional cases was indicative of the integration of construct systems, their interrelation in the construction of ethnic images. The procedure of multiscale bootstrap resampling was used to define only significant clusters, reproduced in most stimulated samples (Suzuki & Shimodaira, 2006).

The simplest cluster structure was found in the Amur region, where two clusters were reproduced, the first with identification characteristics (close/distant, similar/different, own/alien), and the second one with remaining constructs. The most differentiated five clusters structure was found in the Republic of Karelia. Analysis revealed similarities of constructs

Table 2

Descriptive statistics of constructs for analyzed meta-groups (means and standard errors of mean, all regions)

Construct/ Element/	Element																			
	Russians		Europeans		Asians		Slavs		Caucasians		Central Asian peoples		Minor indigenous peoples		Migrants		Friendly people		Hostile people	
	Mean	SE	Mean	SE	Mean	SE	Mean	SE	Mean	SE	Mean	SE	Mean	SE	Mean	SE	Mean	SE	Mean	SE
Own/alien	6,38	0,05	3,28	0,08	2,71	0,07	5,73	0,06	2,75	0,08	2,63	0,07	5,03	0,08	2,42	0,07	5,80	0,06	1,52	0,04
Similar / different	6,01	0,07	3,40	0,08	2,35	0,06	5,62	0,07	2,44	0,08	2,31	0,06	4,54	0,08	2,54	0,07	5,49	0,07	1,77	0,06
Distant / close	6,08	0,06	3,22	0,07	2,57	0,07	5,55	0,07	2,63	0,08	2,50	0,06	4,78	0,08	2,56	0,07	5,62	0,06	1,65	0,05
Lazy, goes with the flow / laborious, purposeful	5,34	0,07	4,51	0,07	4,41	0,08	5,11	0,06	4,12	0,08	3,95	0,07	5,02	0,06	3,98	0,07	5,36	0,06	3,15	0,07
Friendly / hostile	5,33	0,08	4,46	0,06	4,41	0,06	5,08	0,07	3,53	0,07	4,35	0,06	4,93	0,07	4,16	0,05	5,48	0,07	2,28	0,08
Cunning, self-seeking / naïve, artless	4,42	0,07	3,45	0,06	3,56	0,06	4,17	0,06	3,22	0,07	3,68	0,06	4,28	0,06	3,77	0,06	4,10	0,07	2,95	0,09
Practical, rational / emotional, impulsive	4,11	0,07	3,14	0,06	3,81	0,06	3,89	0,06	4,69	0,08	3,94	0,06	3,87	0,06	3,96	0,06	3,73	0,07	4,03	0,09
Indifferent, disinterested / compassionate, empathic	5,45	0,06	3,92	0,06	4,16	0,05	5,07	0,06	3,84	0,07	3,99	0,06	5,05	0,06	3,57	0,06	5,30	0,06	2,47	0,06
Aggressive, warrior / peaceable	5,49	0,06	4,23	0,06	4,24	0,06	5,14	0,06	3,03	0,07	4,10	0,06	5,30	0,06	3,91	0,06	5,50	0,06	2,17	0,06
Unpleasant / inspiring sympathy and respect	5,81	0,05	4,51	0,06	4,20	0,06	5,28	0,06	3,65	0,07	3,80	0,06	5,25	0,06	3,69	0,05	5,64	0,06	2,34	0,06
Conservator, traditionalist / supporting progress and innovations	4,72	0,07	4,81	0,07	3,82	0,07	4,34	0,06	3,11	0,07	3,20	0,06	4,03	0,07	3,59	0,06	4,87	0,07	3,61	0,07

Table 2 (*continue*)

Construct/ Element/	Element																			
	Russians		Europeans		Asians		Slavs		Caucasians		Central Asian peoples		Minor indigenous peoples		Migrants		Friendly people		Hostile people	
	Mean	SE	Mean	SE	Mean	SE	Mean	SE	Mean	SE	Mean	SE	Mean	SE	Mean	SE	Mean	SE	Mean	SE
Individualist, puts personal interests before public interests	4,70	0,06	3,57	0,07	4,09	0,06	4,44	0,06	3,57	0,07	3,88	0,06	4,62	0,06	3,48	0,06	4,82	0,06	2,78	0,07
Intolerant/tolerant	4,88	0,06	4,32	0,06	4,14	0,06	4,50	0,06	3,00	0,06	3,79	0,06	4,76	0,06	3,81	0,06	5,03	0,06	2,59	0,07
Aspires to superiority, exceptionality / aspires to equality, justice	4,94	0,07	3,71	0,07	3,84	0,06	4,61	0,06	3,07	0,06	3,82	0,06	4,77	0,06	3,77	0,06	5,04	0,06	2,43	0,06
Uncivilized, ignorant / educated, intelligent	5,36	0,06	5,07	0,06	4,16	0,06	5,01	0,06	3,76	0,06	3,50	0,06	4,64	0,06	3,57	0,06	5,41	0,06	3,56	0,07
Responsible, disciplined / easygoing, hopes for the best	4,23	0,07	4,83	0,06	4,51	0,06	4,27	0,06	4,12	0,06	4,13	0,05	4,29	0,06	4,16	0,06	4,67	0,06	3,91	0,07
Honest, decent / insincere, deceitful	4,97	0,06	4,45	0,06	4,22	0,05	4,83	0,05	3,73	0,07	4,04	0,05	4,80	0,06	3,94	0,05	5,21	0,06	2,75	0,07
Brave / cowardly	5,35	0,07	4,35	0,06	4,36	0,06	5,07	0,06	4,99	0,07	4,26	0,06	5,06	0,06	4,18	0,06	5,35	0,06	3,72	0,08
Free, independent / dependent	4,94	0,07	4,63	0,07	4,03	0,06	4,73	0,07	4,51	0,07	3,81	0,06	4,81	0,06	3,52	0,07	5,09	0,07	3,57	0,08
Exciting envy / Not exciting envy	4,69	0,08	4,76	0,08	5,11	0,07	4,81	0,07	5,14	0,07	5,30	0,07	4,94	0,07	5,27	0,08	4,79	0,08	5,45	0,08
Poor/rich	4,04	0,05	4,73	0,05	3,86	0,05	4,09	0,04	4,21	0,05	3,43	0,05	3,90	0,05	3,14	0,06	4,42	0,05	3,96	0,06
Low status/high status	3,95	0,04	4,34	0,05	3,59	0,05	3,95	0,03	3,77	0,05	3,43	0,05	3,66	0,04	3,39	0,06	3,90	0,04	3,68	0,06

partially that were reproduced in regional samples and united by the subjects of social economic position, ways of thinking, interpersonal relations, national character and identification, which intermediated the distinction between 'own' and 'alien' meta-ethnic groups.

In the Altai region and in the JAR the 'own' group was composed of *Russians*, *Friendly people*, *Slavs*, *Small indigenous peoples*, perceived similarly as the unique people (see Fig. 1). In the Republic of Karelia this group also included the position of *Europeans* and had stable sub-clusters, connecting *Russians* and *Friendly people*, *Slavs* and *Small indigenous peoples*. The Amur region was the only region where these positions were not combined into one cluster, meaning that they had very distinctive features in public conscience.

The second cluster was unique in every region, showing its specificity in perceiving ethnic 'others'. In the Republic of Karelia the same positions were complemented with *Caucasians* and *Hostile people*, thereby forming separate sub-clusters. In the Amur region, the 'alien' side sub-clusters were significant only at the 10% level, associating together *Migrants*, *Central Asian peoples,* and *Caucasians* with *Hostile people*. In the JAR *Caucasians* were related to *Central Asian peoples*, whereas at the next step of agglomeration they were combined with *Europeans*, *Asians* and *Migrants* in a single sub-cluster. *Hostile people*, despite being in the same cluster of 'alien' ethnic-groups, took a distant position as a detached sub-cluster. In the Altai region, it united *Asians, Central Asian peoples* and *Migrants*, reflecting actual trends in migration situation. The absence of association between any meta-ethnic groups and imaginary *Hostile people* is further evidence of harmonious inter-ethnic relations in this region which is consistent with the data of annual sociological surveys (Maximova & Morkovkina, 2016).
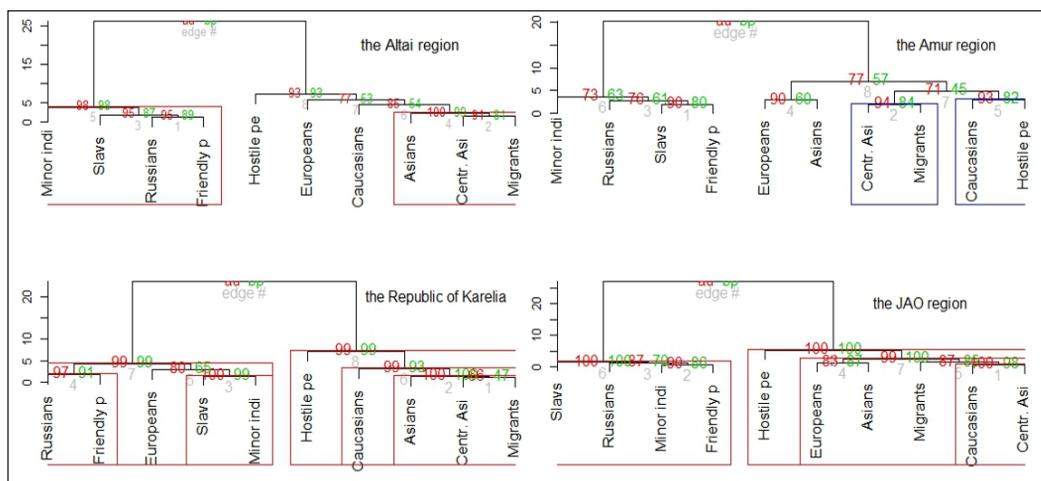

Figure 1. Cluster analysis between elements in four regions (red clusters are significant at 5% level, blue clusters – at 10% level)

The results of cluster analysis (Figure 1) provided evidence for existing latent factors, intermediating the perception of meta-ethnic groups and acting as meaningful determinants for national identification.

It was found that the congruence of factorial structures relevant for the Altai region, the Republic of Karelia and the Amur region was more than 92%, which was indicative of almost equal factor interpretations. The JAR stood out from three other regions because its congruence coefficient varied in the range of 77-79%, which was not satisfactory and indicated significant differences in the factorial loadings (Table 3). Therefore, it was appropriate to present the results of factor analysis for three regions and supplement them with the data from the JAR.

Table 3
Congruence of factorial matrices: Pairwise comparisons between regions

	AlR	AmR	JAR	RK
AlR	1	0.96	0.78	0.92
AmR	0.96	1	0.79	0.92
JAR	0.78	0.79	1	0.77
RK	0.92	0.92	0.77	1

In the Altai and the Amur regions three factors were extracted with eigenvalues over 1.0 and 90% of explained variance, while in the Republic of Karelia there were only two essential factors (Table 4). The first factor contained constructs having positive loadings related to traits of personality and character ('friendly', 'trusting', 'compassionate', 'honest and decent', 'aspiring to equality and justice', 'oriented towards public interests', 'tolerant', 'laborious'), security ('peaceable'), attitudes ('inspiring sympathy and respect'), and identification. These allowed us to characterize this factor as the factor of general assessment, determining positive or negative perception of meta-ethnic groups. In the Republic of Karelia this factor also contained the constructs of responsibility, intelligence and independence.

The meaning of the second factor was associated with social economic position and cultural development. The positive pole was represented by constructs related to wealth and high level of progress and technology development, culture and education ('rich', 'has high social status', 'intelligent, culturally developed', 'supports progress, and innovation', 'disciplined'), whereas the opposite pole was associated with conservatism, weak discipline, low level of education and culture, poverty.

Key characteristics of the third factor were tolerance, responsibility and discipline, support for progress and innovations, combined with prudence, practicality and rationality. The negative pole was defined by opposite meanings – excessive emotionality and impulsivity, conservatism, and lack of discipline. In general, this factor represented opposition between modern and traditionalist cultures with corresponding types of mentality (rational, individualistic or intuitive, attentive to emotions).

In the JAR, the meaning of the first factor was 'diffused' between the first and the second factor in the Altai and the Amur regions, combining key variables related

Table 4
Factor loadings after Varimax-rotation

Construct/Region/	AIR			AmR			JAR			RK	
Component	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2
Own/alien	0,91	0,35	-0,13	0,90	0,41	-0,01	0,77	0,54	0,30	0,82	0,52
Similar / different	0,86	0,40	-0,09	0,83	0,51	-0,02	0,77	0,54	0,28	0,79	0,55
Distant / close	0,90	0,33	-0,14	0,88	0,45	0,01	0,76	0,54	0,33	0,80	0,54
Lazy, goes with the flow / laborious, purposeful	0,85	0,49	0,03	0,72	0,13	0,60	0,70	0,57	0,39	0,94	0,26
Friendly/hostile	0,90	0,20	0,31	0,91	0,20	0,24	0,51	0,70	0,41	0,96	0,19
Cunning, self-seeking / naïve, artless	0,95	-0,20	0,07	0,92	0,25	-0,10	0,49	0,70	0,48	0,96	0,00
Practical, rational / emotional, impulsive	-0,03	-0,33	-0,91	0,09	-0,11	-0,93	0,44	0,32	0,57	-0,64	-0,43
Indifferent, disinterested / compassionate, empathic	0,96	0,23	-0,05	0,97	0,14	0,12	0,65	0,68	0,33	0,92	0,32
Aggressive, warrior / peaceable	0,93	0,13	0,32	0,94	0,11	0,29	0,68	0,62	0,39	0,97	0,22
Unpleasant / inspiring sympathy and respect	0,91	0,39	0,12	0,93	0,28	0,22	0,70	0,61	0,36	0,91	0,40
Conservator, traditionalist / supporting progress and innovations	0,46	0,68	0,46	0,51	0,62	0,38	0,83	0,18	0,45	0,43	0,80
Individualist, puts personal interests before public interests	0,95	0,11	-0,04	0,93	-0,10	0,20	0,71	0,54	0,43	0,95	0,23
Intolerant/tolerant	0,85	0,19	0,49	0,85	0,20	0,46	0,75	0,52	0,36	0,95	0,29
Aspires to superiority, exceptionality / aspires to equality, justice	0,97	0,07	0,21	0,96	0,11	0,23	0,64	0,61	0,45	0,97	0,19
Uncivilized, ignorant / educated, intelligent	0,60	0,75	0,25	0,49	0,82	0,19	0,79	0,37	0,45	0,71	0,68
Responsible, disciplined / easygoing, hopes for the best	0,14	0,68	0,53	0,31	0,21	0,89	-0,84	-0,28	-0,11	0,75	0,58
Honest, decent / insincere, deceitful	0,88	0,37	0,23	0,88	0,23	0,36	0,40	0,88	0,18	0,93	0,33
Brave / cowardly	0,76	0,41	-0,45	0,90	0,27	-0,14	0,57	0,76	0,07	0,70	0,51
Free, independent / dependent	0,56	0,78	-0,16	0,66	0,61	-0,05	0,78	0,62	-0,03	0,72	0,60
Exciting envy / Not exciting envy	-0,47	-0,84	-0,09	-0,76	-0,52	-0,30	0,04	-0,87	-0,01	-0,78	-0,49
Poor/rich	-0,02	0,99	0,06	-0,19	0,90	0,15	0,86	0,02	0,12	-0,09	0,92
Low status/high status	0,02	0,96	0,23	0,28	0,92	0,12	-0,11	-0,03	-0,95	0,22	0,94
Eigenvalues	12,5	6,1	2,3	12,9	4,46	2,99	9,6	7,15	3,45	14,2	5,8
Proportion of variance explained	0,57	0,28	0,1	0,59	0,20	0,14	0,44	0,32	0,16	0,65	0,26
Cumulative variance explained	0,57	0,84	0,95	0,59	0,79	0,93	0,44	0,76	0,92	0,65	0,91

to social position, mentality and national culture, identification and evaluative characteristics. The second factor was more focused on personal characteristics ('independent, 'brave', 'sincere', 'inspiring sympathy and respect', 'aspiring to equality, and justice'). The third factor was described by characteristics related to social status, emotionality and impulsivity, cultural and educational level, and, hence, almost reproduced the second factor in other regions.

Conjoint representation of constructs and elements in the coordinate system, defined by principal components in the form of semantic space, permitted us to visualize processes of auto-identification and perception of meta-ethnic groups in the studied regions (see Figure 2, 3, 4 and 5).

In the semantic spaces, relevant for all regions, one can see the proximity of *Russians*, *Slavs*, *Small indigenous peoples*

and *Friendly people* being situated near projections of constructs 'laborious', 'free', 'aspiring to equality', 'compassionate', 'collectivist', 'sympathetic'. On the opposite side of the space, *Asians*, *Central Asian peoples* and *Migrants* have similar coordinates near constructs of practicality and ruse, poverty, conservatism, individualism, orientation to personal interests and aspiration to superiority. The position of the *Hostile people* in all spaces is far away from other positions, meaning that despite existing negative stereotypes, none of them is identified as antagonistic. Only in the Amur region does this position come near *Caucasians*, who were described by common characteristics as 'insincere', 'indifferent', 'aspiring to superiority', 'intolerant'. *Europeans* have the most favorable position in the space of the Altai region, where they are juxtaposed with constructs of high social and financial
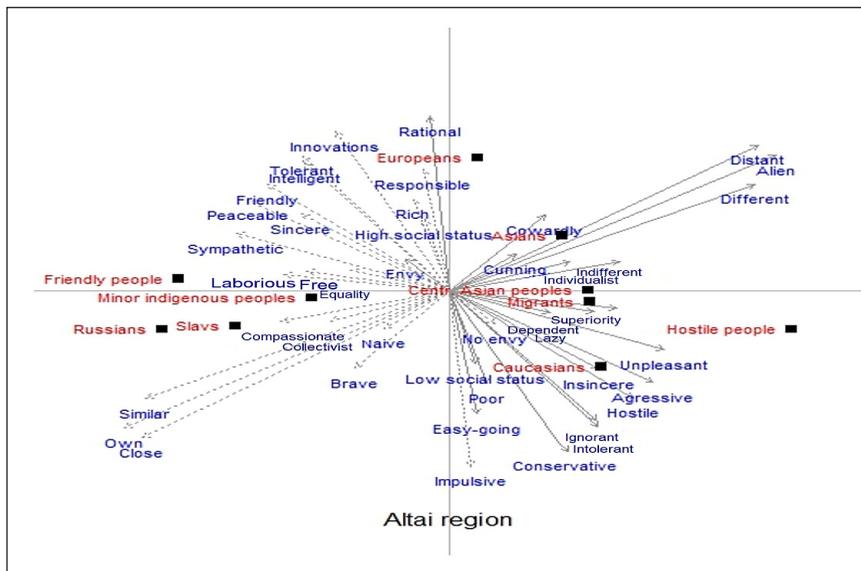
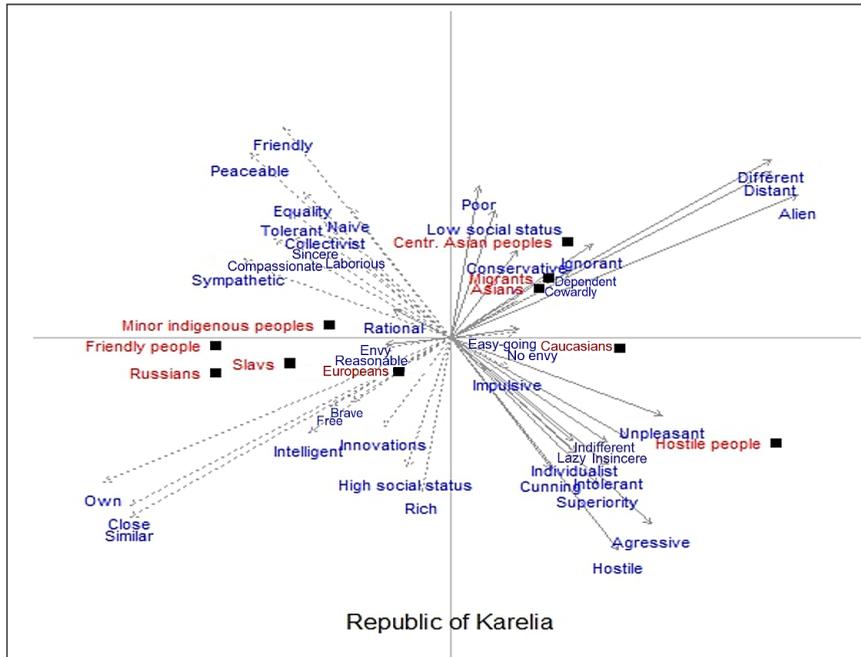

Figure 2. Semantic space relevant for the Altai region

status and responsibility. In the Amur region and the Republic of Karelia this position is occupied by *Russians* and *Slavs* with identical characteristics. In the space,

relevant to the JAR, all elements tend to overlap, forming three distinct groups, within which they are almost identical.

Figure 3. Semantic space relevant for the Amur region

Figure 4. Semantic space relevant for the Jewish Autonomous region

Figure 5. Semantic space relevant for the Republic of Karelia

CONCLUSION

Our research has revealed characteristics related to identification, emotional evaluation, security, and social and economic position that are the most important for the assessment of meta-ethnic groups. In all regions, *Russians* are perceived as 'own' and 'close' and their image is highly idealized, especially with regard to public engagement and willingness to help others, having intelligence and the ability to maintain security and order. Simultaneously, they are associated with weak discipline, poverty, and low social status that lead to a low self-esteem of the majority of the population from border regions, who are not economically well-developed. *Slavs* are very attractive for identification because their image is related

to common physical and moral traits, having shared destiny and implied friendship. The *Europeans* are associated with good material position and high standards of living, but this position is incompatible with the character and mentality of the majority of respondents. Only the inhabitants of Karelia include them in the 'own' group, that might be explained by its specific geographical position. *Caucasian peoples* are perceived in a contradictory manner and have low identification values in all regions. Impulsivity and emotionality, conservatism, supplemented by aggressive behavior and intolerance represents key components of negative stereotypes assigned to this group. *Friendly peoples,* in representations of inhabitants of the Russian borderland are dispossessed of financial power and wealth,

the most important of these is a proof of good intentions and moral virtues, such as courage and diligence.

Interrelations between constructs form sustainable systems of meanings used in comparison of ethnic groups. These systems, united by subjects of social-economic position, interpersonal relations, national character and identification, define conditional divisions of all positions into 'own' and 'alien' ones. 'Own' are usually presented by *'Russians – Slavs – Friendly people – Small indigenous peoples of North, Siberia and Russian Far East'*, forming civilizational and cultural core of all-Russian people, which, despite its multi-national character, is perceived in close connection with dominant Russian nationality. The high congruence of factorial structures was indicative of similar latent factors determining assessment meta-ethnic groups. These factors included the factor of social-economic progress and cultural development and the factor of mentality and the East–West dichotomy. Regional semantic spaces reflected systems of values and representations, existing in the conscience of population, forming stereotyped images of one or another meta-ethnic group. Of course, these representations are very simplified, with exaggerated positive and negative traits; they do not consider many factors of personal, social group and societal character, each having an impact on real inter-ethnic relations.

Meanwhile, such a multicomponent and interactionist view of national identification also has important implications that may provide direction for future research. First, this view suggests a different way of thinking about national identity than in terms of relations between one person and a community within which one may identify. This comprehension may involve various combinations of positive and negative components of national identity, especially those related to the multi-national character of a nation. Finally, the knowledge of semantical mechanisms used for evaluation of people of other nationalities may contribute to efforts to change these images, to convert them into more acceptable and more convenient forms for harmonious inter-ethnic relations.

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