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Editorial	2
SPECIAL ISSUE "MULTICULTURALISM AND INTERCULTURAL RELATIONS: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS"	
Multiculturalism and intercultural relations: Regional cases	
Comparative analysis of Canadian multiculturalism policy and the multiculturalism policies of other countries	4
<i>Berry J.</i>	
Is multiculturalism in Russia possible? Intercultural relations in North Ossetia-Alania	24
<i>Galyapina V.N., Lebedeva N.M.</i>	
Intercultural relations in Russia and Latvia: the relationship between contact and cultural security	41
<i>Lebedeva N.M., Tatarko A.N., Berry J.</i>	
Intercultural relations in Kabardino-Balkaria: Does integration always lead to subjective well-being?	57
<i>Lepshokova Z. Kh., Tatarko A.N.</i>	
Ethno-confessional identity and complementarity in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia)	74
<i>Mikhailova V.V., Nadkin V.B.</i>	
The representation of love among Brazilians, Russians and Central Africans: A comparative analysis	84
<i>Pilishvili T.S., Koyanongo E.</i>	
Assimilation or integration: Similarities and differences between acculturation attitudes of migrants from Central Asia and Russians in Central Russia	98
<i>Ryabichenko T.A., Lebedeva N.M.</i>	
Intercultural relationships in the students' environment	
Ethnoreligious attitudes of contemporary Russian students toward labor migrants as a social group	112
<i>Abakumova I.V., Boguslavskaya V.F., Grishina A.V.</i>	
Ethnopsychological aspects of the meaning-of-life and value orientations of Armenian and Russian students	121
<i>Berberyan A.S., Berberyan H.S.</i>	
Readiness for interaction with inoethnic subjects of education and ethnic worldview	138
<i>Valiev R.A., Valieva T.V., Maksimova L.A., Karimova V.G.</i>	
Multiculturalism in public and private spaces	
On analyzing the results of empirical research into the life-purpose orientations of adults of various ethnic identities and religious affiliations	155
<i>Abakumova I.V., Ermakov P.N., Kolesina K.Y.</i>	
Examining the public's exposure to reports about ethnic groups in mainstream Russian media	164
<i>Gladkova A.A., Korobeynikova K.A.</i>	
Attitude as labor migrants' social-psychological adaptation factor (Labor migrants from Uzbekistan taken as examples)	178
<i>Mokretcova O.G., Chrustaleva N.S., Fedorov V.F., Karpova E.B., Shkliaruk S.P.</i>	
Book reviews	
Warrior's Spirit: Review of Michael Matthews's book <i>Head Strong: How Psychology is Revolutionizing War</i>	190
<i>Karayani A.G.</i>	

Is multiculturalism in Russia possible? Intercultural relations in North Ossetia-Alania

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This article examines intercultural relations in the Republic of North Ossetia-Alania (RNO-A). The research is based on the theory of acculturation of J. Berry and uses the hypotheses and measures developed in the Mutual Intercultural Relations in Plural Societies project. The RNO-A is the most favorable place for Russians living in the North Caucasus because attitudes toward the Russian minority in the RNO-A are not discriminatory. Our goal was to test three hypotheses in the RNO-A: the multiculturalism hypothesis, the integration hypothesis, and the contact hypothesis. We conducted a sociopsychological survey. The sample included members of the ethnic majority, the Ossetians ($N=318$), and members of the ethnic minority, the Russians ($N=327$). Data processing was carried out using structural equation modeling (SEM) separately for the ethnic minority and for the ethnic majority, and the models were compared with each other. The results show that perceived security among the Russians (the ethnic minority) as well as among the Ossetians (the ethnic majority) promoted support for a multicultural ideology, tolerance, and mutual integration. The number and frequency of friendly intercultural contacts had a positive and significant impact on a preference for integration among both the Ossetians and the Russians. An integration strategy and the expectation of integration promoted life satisfaction in both groups. Because the results of the study confirmed all three hypotheses, we conclude that interethnic relations between the Russians and the Ossetians in the RNO-A are based on the principles of multiculturalism.

Keywords: intercultural relations, acculturation, ethnic majority, ethnic minority, multiculturalism, intercultural contact, integration

Introduction

A major challenge confronting Russian society in the 21st century is finding effective strategies for managing cultural diversity. Researchers have discerned some basic principles that underpin the processes and outcomes of intercultural relations in plural societies. In our survey we used three hypotheses of intercultural relations

