

# **Intercultural relations in Russian Crimea:**

## **Empirical testing of three hypotheses of intercultural relations**

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### **Introduction**

The study examines intercultural relations in Crimea - one of the multicultural regions of Russia. Russians constitute the ethnic majority in Crimea (about 68%), the most numerous ethnic minorities are Ukrainians (about 16%) and Crimean Tatars - about 10% (according to the results of the census in the Crimean Federal district, 2015).

The character of interethnic relations in Crimea has been influenced by the historical, political, and socio-economic challenges of recent decades. One of these challenges was the events of 2014 were - a massive social and political transformation, accompanied by a change in the status of ethnic groups and increased tension in interethnic relations.

The unique socio-cultural context of the Crimea opens wide provides big opportunities for the research on interethnic interaction. The current study is aimed at testing three hypotheses of intercultural relations: the multiculturalism hypothesis, the integration hypothesis, and the contact hypothesis. Three hypotheses of intercultural relations originate in empirical studies of Canadian multiculturalism policy (Berry, 1984) and were later tested in many countries.

The multiculturalism hypothesis states that confidence in one's identity based on a sense of security decreases discrimination and promotes the acceptance of people of different cultures (Ward, Masgoret, 2008; Lebedeva, Tatarko, 2017; Galyapina, Lepshokova, 2017).

The contact hypothesis states that under certain conditions (equality of individuals or groups; voluntary contact; support of intercultural contacts by social norms, etc.), intercultural contacts promote mutual acceptance (Tropp, Pettigrew, 2005; Ryabichenko, Lebedeva, 2017; Lepshokova, 2017).

The integration hypothesis states that the involvement of individuals both in the maintenance of their distinctive cultures and in the life of a larger society leads to greater psychological well-being than participation in the life of only one cultural group (Abu Raaya, Sam, 2017; Berry, Hou, 2016; Intercultural relations in the post-Soviet space, 2017).

Figure 1 shows a theoretical model to test three hypotheses of intercultural relations.

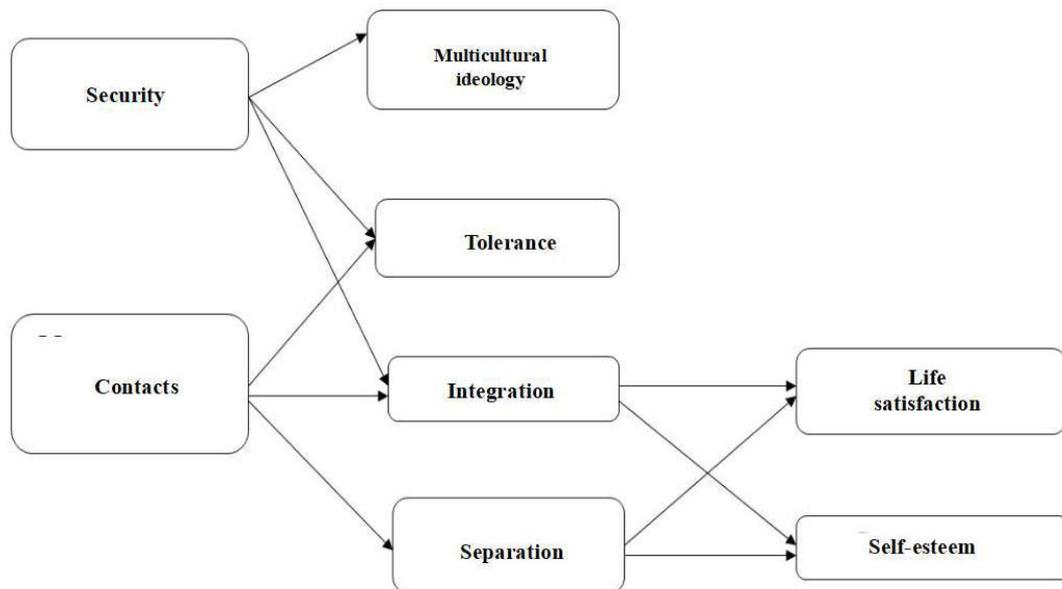


Figure 1. Theoretical model

In the current study on the intercultural relations in Crimea the following hypotheses have been suggested:

H1. The level of perceived security is positively related to the level of support for multicultural ideology, ethnic tolerance and preference for integration in intercultural interaction among Russians, Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars.

H2. Intercultural friendly contacts are positively related to the level of ethnic tolerance and integration preferences of Russians, Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars.

H3. The preference for integration is positively related to the level of life satisfaction and self-esteem among Russians, Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars.

## Method

*Sample.* This study was conducted in the Republic of Crimea in 2018. The study participants were representatives of three ethnic groups aged 17 to 67 years old: Russians (ethnic majority; N = 195), Crimean Tatars (ethnic minority; N = 196), Ukrainians (ethnic minority; N = 196).

*Measures.* Scales from the MIRIPS questionnaire (<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/cacr/research/mirips>): perceived security, intercultural friendships, multicultural ideology, ethnic tolerance, acculturation preferences (integration and separation); Self-esteem scale (Rosenberg, 1965); Life satisfaction scale (Diener et al., 1985).

Data processing was carried out using path analysis. Additionally 25 interviews were conducted with the members of three ethnic groups to deeper analyze the results of the quantitative study.

## Results

The comparison of the main variables of the study demonstrated a rather favorable background of intercultural relations in the Crimea. Representatives of all ethnic groups have a high level of psychological well-being (life satisfaction and self-esteem).

	Russians	Ukrainians	Crimean Tatars	F (2, 584)	Partial $\eta^2$
	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )		
Perceived security	3.88(.82) <sub>a</sub>	3.67(.86) <sub>b</sub>	3.50(.72) <sub>b</sub>	10.855	.036***
Contacts	3.03(1.00) <sub>a</sub>	3.26(1.00) <sub>a b</sub>	3.38(1.01) <sub>b</sub>	5.915	.020**
Multicultural ideology	3.91(.65) <sub>a</sub>	3.99(.72) <sub>a</sub>	4.17(.55) <sub>b</sub>	8.449	.028***
Tolerance	3.57(1.01) <sub>a</sub>	3.56(1.00) <sub>a</sub>	3.39(1.00) <sub>a</sub>	1.953	.007
Integration	3.97(.65) <sub>a</sub>	3.89(.72) <sub>a b</sub>	3.77(.73) <sub>b</sub>	4.110	.014*
Separation	2.51(.67) <sub>a</sub>	2.32(.83) <sub>a</sub>	3.11(.93) <sub>b</sub>	50.202	.146***
Self-esteem	4.30(.56) <sub>a</sub>	4.25(.56) <sub>a</sub>	4.31(.55) <sub>a</sub>	.600	.002
Life satisfaction	3.34(.92) <sub>a</sub>	3.27(.93) <sub>a</sub>	3.46(.89) <sub>a</sub>	2.083	.007

The ethnic majority (Russians) showed a higher level of perceived security and a preference for the integration of minorities. Support for multicultural ideology among Crimean Tatars was significantly higher than of Russians and Ukrainians, and intercultural friendships are more intense. At the same time, Crimean Tatars prefer separation strategy more than Russians and Ukrainians.

Figure 2 shows the results of the path analysis.

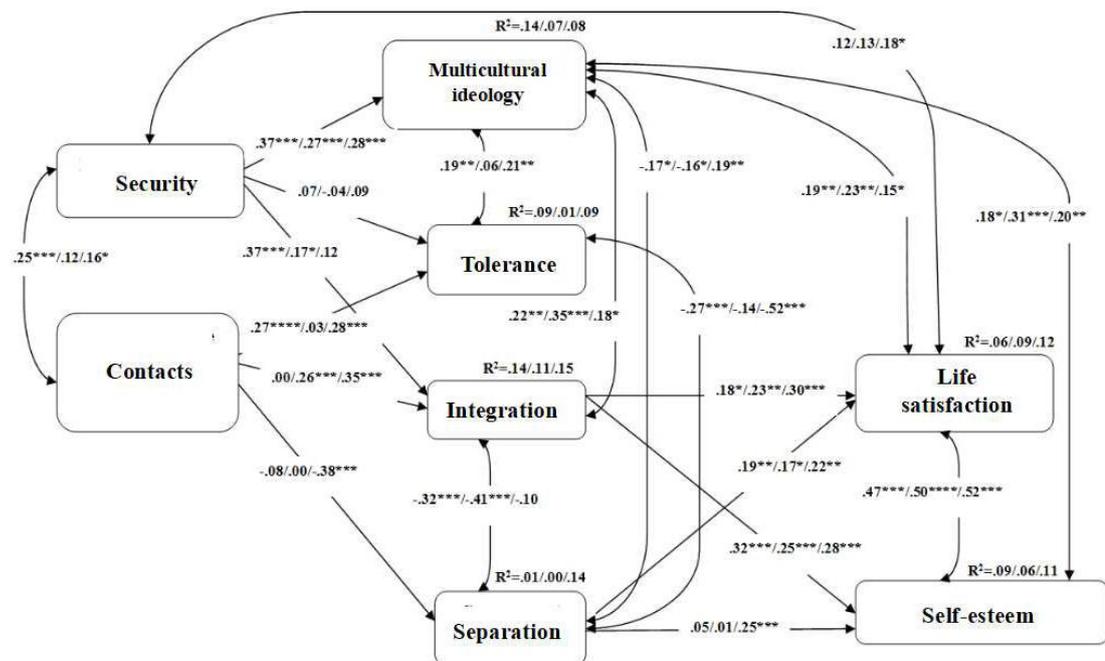


Figure 2. Path model of testing three hypotheses.

Note: \* -  $p < .05$ ; \*\* -  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* -  $p < .001$ .

The results of the study showed that the multiculturalism hypothesis was partially confirmed: the perceived security among Russians and Ukrainians is significantly positively related with the support of multicultural ideology and the preference for integration, among Crimean Tatars - only with the support of multicultural ideology. The study revealed no relationship between security and tolerance in three samples.

The contact hypothesis was also partially confirmed: intercultural contacts of Russians are significantly positively related with their attitudes to tolerance, of Ukrainians – with the preference for the integration strategy; of Crimean Tatars - with attitudes to tolerance, and with the preference for the integration strategy.

The integration hypothesis has been fully confirmed: the preference for integration is positively related with both life satisfaction and self-esteem.

The preference for separation also has a significant positive relationship with the self-esteem of the Crimean Tatars and with the life satisfaction of the representatives of all three groups. The importance of maintaining group identity for the psychological well-being of all residents of Crimea is also confirmed by the results of qualitative research.

The study revealed that integration and multicultural ideology contribute to the psychological well-being of representatives of all groups. This is also consistent with the data of qualitative research, which demonstrate, first, a positive attitude of residents to the multiculturalism in Crimea, and secondly, a strong regional identity ("we are Crimeans"), which also contributes to the unification of cultures and reduces the conflict potential of interethnic relations.

## **Conclusion**

For centuries Crimea has been a region of multiple ethnic and religious groups living together, therefore, the generations of Crimeans have a long experience of intercultural interaction. As this study shows, interethnic relations in Crimea are generally favorable and reflect the willingness of Crimea residents to live peacefully in a multicultural society.

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