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SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH TO IMMIGRANTS' INTEGRATION: EVIDENCE FROM MIRIPS-FI

ABOUT MIRIPS-FI

“Determinants of an inclusive immigration context” (MIRIPS-FI) is a three-year research project funded by the KONE Foundation (2012-2014) and led by Professor Inga Jasinskaja-Lahti (University of Helsinki). The project is a partner of the MIRIPS network (Mutual Intercultural Relations In Plural Societies), which is a collaborative international project led by Professor John Berry (Queen's University, Canada). The network brings together scholars focusing on intergroup relations between majority and minority members in contemporary societies worldwide. MIRIPS-FI focuses on intergroup relations between majority Finns and Russian-speaking immigrants in Finland.

AIMS

Immigrants' integration into host society can be facilitated by an inclusive social context that supports positive intergroup relations. Successful integration is also inevitably linked to the endorsement of multiculturalism among majority and minority group members. Thus, the predictors of positive intergroup attitudes, intergroup solidarity, and multiculturalism are the foci of four quantitative MIRIPS-FI sub-studies. As there are different ways to understand and support multiculturalism, attitudes towards multiculturalism were of interest in the qualitative part of the project.

DATA

The quantitative part of MIRIPS-FI is based on survey data collected between June and November 2012 from two nation-wide samples drawn by the Finnish Population Register Centre (majority Finns: $N = 335$; 57 % female, $Age = 45.9$ and Russian-speaking immigrants: $N = 317$; 77 % female, $Age = 44.8$). The qualitative part of the project utilises two focus group interviews ($N = 7$) data gathered in April 2013 with Finnish majority members.

MAIN FINDINGS

Quantitative Part

Study 1: Immigration-Related Threats and Gains

The threat posed by outgroups is a key predictor of intergroup conflict, but how do people balance threat and gain perceptions? Among majority Finns, the overall perception of immigration-related threats and gains mediated the relationship between national (Finnish) identification and attitudes towards Russian-speaking immigrants. Specifically, high national identifiers perceived more threats than gains which, in turn, resulted in more negative outgroup attitudes. When analysed separately, the observed overall mediational effect was stronger for realistic than symbolic threats and gains. This suggests that in the Finnish national context threats and gains related to society's economic welfare and security may be of primary importance for intergroup relations.

Brylka, A., Mähönen, T. A., & Jasinskaja-Lahti, I. (in review). National identification and attitudes towards Russian immigrants in Finland: Investigating the role of perceived threats and gains. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*.

Study 2: Psychological Ownership of Finland

Psychological ownership of a country, defined as possessive feelings held towards the country of one's birth or residence, mediated the association between national (Finnish) identification and intergroup attitudes among both Finns and Russian-speaking immigrants. However, while higher national identification elicited stronger ownership of Finland among both majority and minority members, stronger ownership contributed to more positive attitudes towards the majority among immigrants but to more negative attitudes towards immigrants among Finns. Thus, while feelings of ownership of a country promote inclusive outgroup attitudes among immigrants, they cause exclusive attitudes among national majority members.

Brylka, A., Mähönen, T. A., & Jasinskaja-Lahti, I. (in review). National identification and intergroup attitudes among members of the national majority and immigrants: Preliminary evidence for the mediational role of psychological ownership of a country. *Journal of Social and Political Psychology*.

Study 3: Ethnic Superiority

Perceived ethnic superiority—a belief that the ingroup is more worthy than other ethnic groups in society—may be expected to have a detrimental effect on intergroup relations. Indeed, among Russian-speaking immigrants, it was directly associated with less positive attitudes towards majority Finns. In addition, higher ethnic identification predicted stronger support for multiculturalism only among those immigrants who did not perceive their ingroup as superior to other ethnic groups. In order to promote harmonious intergroup relations, mutual trust and respect are needed to avoid excess bolstering of the ingroup's value.

Mähönen, T. A., Brylka, A., & Jasinskaja-Lahti, I. (2014). Perceived ethnic superiority and immigrants' attitudes towards multiculturalism and the national majority. *International Journal of Psychology*, 49, 318–322.

Study 4: Cultural Discordance

Perceived cultural discordance—a disagreement between immigrants and majority group members about the preferred degree of minority groups' cultural maintenance—has been found to affect the quality of intergroup relations. For majority Finns, high cultural discordance elicited stronger intergroup anxiety and eroded trust towards Russian-speaking immigrants, leading to weaker support for these immigrants' collective action that would improve their position in society. For Russian-speaking immigrants, in contrast, high cultural discordance eroded trust towards majority Finns and led to stronger support for collective action. These findings show that the association between cultural discordance and support for collective action in plural societies is complex and depends on group status.

Brylka, A., Mähönen, T. A., Schellhaas, F. M. H., & Jasinskaja-Lahti, I. (in review). From cultural discordance to support for collective action: The roles of intergroup anxiety, trust, and group status. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*.

Qualitative Part

Study 5: Attitudes Towards Multiculturalism Among Majority Finns

The aim of the study was to explore what kinds of attitudes representatives of the Finnish majority can express when they talk about multiculturalism. In two focus group interviews, Finnish majority members evaluated and discussed seven statements taken from the multicultural ideology scale by Berry and Kalin (1995). The rhetorical analysis, based on the qualitative attitude approach, revealed that multiculturalism was evaluated either as a problem or as a resource. Justifications of the attitude expressions drew from both the multiculturalist and the nationalist ideologies.

Nortio, E. (2014). *Attitudes towards multiculturalism among Finnish majority members. A qualitative attitude approach*. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Helsinki.