

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

Irina V. Abakumova^a, Pavel N. Ermakov^{a*}, Karina Y. Kolesina^b

^a*Academy of Psychology and Pedagogics, South Federal University, Rostov-on-Don, Russia*

^b*Institute of Philology, Journalism and Intercultural Communication, South Federal University, Rostov-on-Don, Russia*

* Corresponding author. E-mail: paver@sfedu.ru

The research in question investigates life-purpose orientations and values of various groups of a population living in a multicultural area with a variety of ethnic and religious communities. Members may have different attitudes to one and the same set of values due to their specific cultural traditions and religious guidelines. A common set of life-purpose orientations and values as well as distinctly different ones were identified in the research. It employed an ethno-psychological questionnaire designed specifically to that end and psychometric instruments aimed at identifying the values of the adults of various ethnic identities and religious affiliations. Residents of a multi-cultural area in the south of Russia who belong to different denominations were surveyed. It is stated that there is a substantial difference between the sets of values held by Baptists and Buddhists and representatives of other ethnic and religious groups (Muslims and Christians) participating in this investigation. The survey found that all of the Baptist and Buddhist respondents were described by a high-to-medium level of civil identity. Indifference to ethnic standards and a failure to accept the culture of their own people were found among all of the respondents; it was displayed by a small proportion of Orthodox Christians, whereas all of the Buddhists under investigation had a positive ethnic identity, and a certain proportion of Muslims and Catholics as well as a tiny proportion of Orthodox believers reported that they placed a priority for ethnic rights over human rights. Among all of the denominations surveyed, the majority of respondents surveyed have a positive attitude towards both their own nation and other nations.

Keywords: axiological sphere of the person, life-purpose orientations, values, ethnic identity and religious affiliation, civil identity, strategy

Introduction

The contemporary science of psychology and pedagogy gives careful attention to the study of particular features of the sets of values cherished by various age-, social- and gender groups (Kruteleva & Abakumova, 2013; Kruteleva, Abakumova, & Karaa, 2013). This interest is accounted for by the psychological peculiarity of values as a factor that has an actual effect on the social and psychological climate resulting from some personal interactions. It is possible to assume that “semantic consonance” (viewed as a certain coincidence of semantic preferences) occurs in communities that are fairly homogeneous in terms of their most generalized life-purpose orientations (the way you perceive yourself, your family and people around you, your attitude to professional activity and nationwide values, etc.). The consonance in question harmonizes relations between people who happen to be very different in terms of many other aspects. Conversely, the situation in which people happen to stick to opposing values results in the lack of integration, alienation, and, not infrequently, active behavioral animosity of those who find themselves in the situation of “semantic dissonance” (Abakumova, 2008; Abakumova, Kagermazova, & Savin, 2013). A number of researchers have found that people’s personal characteristics depend on their ethnic identities and religious affiliations. Researchers discovered in southern areas of the Russian Federation that the religious affiliations of people greatly influence their attitudes toward moral values, features of legal awareness and priorities in the realization of life purposes and self-realization (Grimsoltanova, 2013; Kashirina, 2005).

The scientific problem in question is especially vital for modern Russia as a multinational state because the issue of defining the values of a particular culture or deciding on your own ethnicity or religious denomination is subject to both theoretical analysis and practical application, giving an opportunity to identify and sometimes prevent interpersonal conflicts brought about by the discrepancy in the priority given to some values over others (Abakumova, Kagermazova, & Savin, 2013). According to the All-Russian census of 2010, there are currently over 200 ethnic groups in the Russian federation, each with its own particular cultural, ethnic and denominational features. Which of these have the strongest effects on interactions within a multi-cultural society? This is a vexing question for many scientists who do research in the humanities. The situation is exacerbated by the fact that active migration processes have been recently taking place in a number of regions of Russia; these transform the existing traditional relationships between various communities and incur new risks for intercultural interaction. Both actual and potential conflicts encourage scientists to perform empirical diagnostics to bring to light the differences in value scales within ethnic and denominational groups that find themselves in new conditions of life (Abakumova, Grimsoltanova, & Miroshnichenko, 2014; Grimsoltanova, 2013; Rostova, 2012).

Within the framework of this research, we aimed at studying the specific features of life-purpose values of representatives of various ethnic identities and religious affiliations — Muslims (residing in Chechen Republic, Kabardino-Balkarian Republic), Christians (Orthodox, Catholics), Baptists (residing in Rostov region, Krasnodar Territory and Stavropol Territory) and Buddhists (residing in Republic of Kalmykia and Astrakhan Region). The total number of respondents is a group of 625 adults (aged 35–55).

The hypotheses to be examined are as follows: ethnic identities and religious affiliations may condition the individual's world outlook and may prove to be the factor shaping the behavioral mechanisms of interethnic interaction in a multi-cultural and multi-confessional area; herewith, value scales of different groups of population of various ethnic identity and religious affiliation may affect the psychosocial climate in certain regions of the country.

Method

Two types of instruments were employed to confirm the hypotheses put forward. A survey was conducted, in which answers to the author-devised questionnaire were analyzed by means of content analysis, and psychometric testing was carried out, in which the Rokeach Value Survey (RVS) and "Proverbs" of S.M. Petrova were used. Empirical research was conducted in two stages. At stage 1, the researchers used an established questionnaire containing 13 basic ethnopsychological questions. In terms of its organization, the questionnaire contained a set of general demographic information items (gender, age, full name (should the respondent choose to indicate it); city of residence, occupation, field of work); and a set of questions requesting straightforward answers about priorities in values scales.

At stage 2, the same group of respondents was surveyed with the use of two psychometric instruments.

Results

The findings are as follows: "Life for oneself" is the first priority (34.00%), and the following interpretations are given by way of examples: primary life values are health, cheerfulness, opportunity to achieve self-fulfillment, to become great, to achieve some objective and self-improvement.

"Life for others" is the second priority (33.00%): examples are procreation, assistance to fellow creatures, family and children.

"Process of life" is the third priority (19.00%): living is a value in itself.

"Philosophic and religious approach" is the fourth priority (9.00%): examples are decency and conscientiousness in everything, development of a human according to the laws of nature, productive life and honesty.

Finally, a lack of values was stated by 2.00% of the respondents.

The survey of basic life values among the respondents of various religious affiliations are presented in Table 2.

Of interest were the answers to the question of the person who is the one to mostly influence the formation of values. The results are as follows (Table 3).

Considerable distinctions were discovered in the answers to the question of whether values depend on the person's nationality (Table 4).

The data presented in Table 4 show that it is mainly atheists and Muslims who believe in the national origin of value scales. There are much lower percentages of those who hold the same view among people of other denominations, whereas Baptists maintain that "Thorough understanding of true life values does not depend on either the person's nationality or their gender".

Table 1. Findings of ethnopsychological empirical research of the respondents (N=625)

What are your primary life values?			
№	Typical associations	Example of interpretation	% of respondents who chose the stated answer
1		<i>Life for oneself</i>	34.00%
1.1	Biological phenomenon	Health	4.00 %
1.2	Activity	Self-improvement	7.00%
1.3	Emotions	Cheerfulness	14.00%
1.4	Opportunity	Opportunity to achieve self-fulfillment, to become great, to achieve some objectives	9.00 %
2		<i>Life for others</i>	33.00%
2.1	Sacrifice	Assistance to fellow creatures	11.00%
	Procreation	Producing offspring	10.00%
2.2	Your own flesh and blood	Your family	12.00 %
3		<i>Process of life</i>	19.00%
3.1	Process	Process of living	9.00%
3.2	Social role	Change of roles: daughter, wife, mother, grandmother	6.00 %
	Emotional experience	Love, happiness	4.00%
4		<i>Philosophic and religious approach</i>	12.00%
4.1	Religious interpretation	God	4.00%
4.2	Philosophic interpretation	Development of a human according to the laws of nature	6.00%
4.3	Aspiration for ideals	Decency and conscientiousness in everything	2.00%
5.	<i>The respondent fails to identify his or her primary life values</i>		2.00%

The question of whether values depend on a certain religious affiliation was answered in the following way (Table 5).

Buddhists, atheists and Orthodox Christians believe that person's values are independent of religious creed, whereas Baptists are unanimous in the opposite opinion. Muslims and Catholics, on the other hand, hold the view that it is possible and most probable that your religious affiliation is crucial for your choice of life values.

At stage 2, the Rokeach Value Survey interpretation was used to interpret and define the essential aspect of the person's orientation; the basis for the person's attitude towards the world around him or her, other people, and oneself; the basis of the world outlook and the core of activity motivation; and the concept of life. One

Table 2. The survey of basic life values among the respondents of various religious affiliations

Types of answers	% of respondents who chose the stated answer
<i>For Orthodox Christians</i>	
Life for oneself	39.00 %
Life for others	37.50 %
Process of life	17.50 %
Philosophic and religious approach	4.00 %
Absence of life values	2.00 %
<i>For Muslims</i>	
Life for oneself	25.00 %
Life for others	10.00 %
Process of life	30.00 %
Philosophic and religious approach	35.00 %
Absence of life values	-
<i>For Catholics</i>	
Life for oneself	30.00 %
Life for others	20.00 %
Process of life	30.00 %
Philosophic and religious approach	10.00 %
Absence of life values	10.00 %
<i>For Baptists</i>	
Life for oneself	-
Life for others	10.00 %
Process of life	-
Philosophic and religious approach	90 %
Absence of life values	-
<i>For Atheists</i>	
Life for oneself	58.00 %
Life for others	-
Process of life	42.00 %
Philosophic and religious approach	-
Absence of life values	-
<i>For Buddhists</i>	
Life for oneself	-
Life for others	-
Process of life	100.00 %
Philosophic and religious approach	-
Absence of life values	-

Table 3. Parental and life experience influence on formation the values

Religious Affiliation	Parents' example	Personal life experience
An Orthodox Christian	57.5 %	42.50 %
A Muslim	85 %	15.00 %
A Catholic	60 %	40.00 %
An Atheist	28 %	72.00 %
A Buddhist	0 %	100.00 %

Table 4. The influence of the person's nationality on the choice of life values

Religious Affiliation	Yes	No
An Orthodox Christian	10.5 %	89.50 %
A Muslim	90 %	10.00 %
A Catholic	30 %	70.00 %
A Baptist	0 %	100.00 %
An Atheist	85 %	15.00 %
A Buddhist	34 %	66.00 %

Table 5. The choice of life values and its dependence on religious affiliation

Religious Affiliation	Yes	Perhaps	No
An Orthodox Christian	93.50 %	5.50 %	1.00 %
A Muslim	85.00 %	15.00 %	–
A Catholic	70.00 %	30.00 %	–
A Baptist	100.00 %	–	–
An Atheist	43.00 %	28.50 %	28.50 %
A Buddhist	33.30 %	33.30 %	33.40 %

part of the Rokeach Value Survey focuses on ideals, individual's values at the level of beliefs and the structure of values, while the other part studies values at the level of behavior; individual priorities that are displayed is the social medium.

Despite the differences in ethnic identity and religious affiliation, the basic life values and priorities were found to be the same for all people. For Orthodox Christians, Catholics, Muslims, Buddhists, Baptists and atheists, a happy family life is of highest value. Mental and physical health is also listed among the top 5 life priorities. Buddhists may be treated as the only exception here, as they treat cognition as the most important value, whereas for other groups of respondents, it is not so valuable.

Age and gender differences were either insignificant or not identified at all.

Thus, the data collected by means of the Rokeach Value Survey make it possible to conclude that there are certain universal human values that are important for all people, irrespective of their age, gender, ethnic identity and religious affiliation.

The second part of the psychometric diagnostics employed the “Proverbs” instrument of S.M. Petrova, which measures the morality of the individual and helps to find out the individual features of value judgements concerning life, people and one’s own self. This instrument complements the Rokeach Value Survey and is helpful in interpreting the content of the values viewed by the individual as priorities.

The text of the instrument includes 30 pairs of value judgements concerning life, people, and oneself, which are expressed in Petrova’s proverbs and which contradict one another. The value judgements concerning life, people, and oneself are specified in individual proverbs, and the subsequent analysis of the data arrived at makes it possible to measure the morality of the individual (Petrova, 2003).

Data on the denominational differences which were discovered when applying the above instrument are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. The levels of morality among the respondents of different denominations

Religious Affiliation	High level	Middle level	Low level
An Orthodox Christian	67.00 %	22.50 %	10.50 %
A Muslim	50.00 %	30.00 %	20.00 %
A Catholic	60.00 %	20.00 %	20.00 %
A Baptist	60.00 %	40.00 %	–
An Atheist	42.80 %	42.80 %	14.40 %
A Buddhist	100.00 %	–	–

All of the Buddhist and Baptist respondents have a high level of morality as the average level of morality, whereas respondents from other groups display levels of morality coincident with the all-Russian data, most of them showing a high level of morality. Analysis according to the respondents’ ethnic identity and religious affiliation did not discover any significant differences, with the exception of the Baptist and Buddhist groups.

Conclusion

The research in question showed that the interpretation of life values may depend on the individual’s ethnic identity and religious affiliation. Most persistent life values determine the individual’s typical behavior and certain aspects of interpersonal communication. Thus, the group of Orthodox Christians expressed the highest preference for two life values (or strategies) — life for oneself and life for others. The philosophic and religious interpretations of what is of high value for the individual are the primary life values for Muslims. Catholics view life for oneself and the process of life as their main life strategies. Most of the Baptists claim that their

life strategy is to serve God and supreme forces. Most of the atheists view life for oneself as their major life strategy. All of the Buddhist respondents believe that the meaning of existence lies in the process of living.

The value judgements of the groups of Baptists and Buddhists in question differ significantly from those of other ethnic-religious groups surveyed. All of the Baptists and Buddhist respondents have high and average levels of civil identity. A small proportion of Orthodox Christians, among all of the respondents, displayed indifference towards ethnic standards as well as non-acceptance of the culture of their people; all of the Buddhists have a positive ethnic identity; some of the Muslims, Catholics and a few Orthodox Christians recognize the priority of ethnic rights over human rights. The greater proportion of respondents among the groups of different ethnic identities and religious affiliations display positive attitudes regarding their own nation, which goes together with the positive attitude toward other nations. Thus, the empirical research completely confirms the hypotheses put forward.

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