

Profiles of Multiple Social Identification and Attitude to Representatives of Other Nations in Russians and Bulgarians: A Cross-Cultural Analysis

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The paper explores latent profiles of social identification and attitudes to representatives of other nations in the cultural contexts of Russia and Bulgaria through the lens of personality-oriented approach. The research methodology included modified versions of social identity scales from the MIRIPS questionnaire and Verkuyten's scale of religious identity. The online social psychological survey involved 234 Russians (66% females, 60% aged 30–49 years) and 278 Bulgarians (76% females, 45% aged 18–29). As a result, four latent profiles were identified in Russia (Internationalists, Individualists, Europeans, Nationalists) and three – in Bulgaria (Individualists, Europeans, Nationalists). Nevertheless, the content of the profiles as well as the features of the respondents constituting the profiles were similar. Nationalists displayed strong multiple identification and negative attitudes towards representatives of other nations; Individualists expressed weak multiple identification and negative attitudes towards representatives of other nations; Europeans demonstrated very strong European identification and positive attitudes towards representatives of other nations. The Internationalist profile was found only among the Russians and featured weak multiple identification and positive attitudes towards representatives of other nations. The paper concludes that there are both intercultural similarities and differences in the characteristics of the respondents that constitute each latent profile of multiple social identification and attitude to representatives of other nations.

Keywords: multiple identity, intergroup attitudes, intergroup prejudices, latent profile analysis, post-communist countries, Russia, Bulgaria.

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Профили множественной социальной идентификации и отношения к представителям других наций россиян и болгар: кросс-культурный анализ

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В статье рассматриваются латентные профили социальной идентификации и отношения к представителям других наций в культурных контекстах России и Болгарии с позиций личностно-ориентированного подхода. Методологию исследования составили модифицированные версии шкал социальных идентичностей из опросника MIRIPS и шкалы религиозной идентичности Веркайтена. В онлайн-социально-психологическом опросе приняли участие 234 россиянина (66% женщин, 60% в возрасте 30–49 лет) и 278 болгар (76% женщин, 45% в возрасте 18–29 лет). В результате латентного анализа профилей в России было выявлено четыре профиля (Интернационалисты, Индивидуали-

сты, Европейцы, Националисты), в то время как в Болгарии выявлено три латентных профиля (Индивидуалисты, Европейцы, Националисты). Несмотря на это, содержание профилей и особенности респондентов, вошедших в профили, оказались схожими. Националисты отличались сильной множественной идентификацией и негативными аттитюдами по отношению к представителям других наций, Индивидуалисты показали слабую множественную идентификацию и негативные аттитюды к представителям других наций, а Европейцы продемонстрировали очень сильную европейскую идентификацию и позитивные аттитюды к представителям других наций. Профиль Интернационалистов, который был обнаружен только среди россиян, характеризовался слабой множественной идентификацией и положительными аттитюдами к представителям других наций. Основной вывод исследования заключается в том, что существуют как межкультурные сходства, так и различия в характеристиках респондентов, вошедших в структуру каждого латентного профиля множественной социальной идентификации и отношения к представителям других наций.

Ключевые слова: множественная идентичность, межгрупповые установки, межгрупповые предубеждения, анализ латентных профилей, посткоммунистические страны, Россия, Болгария.

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Introduction

Social identity to a great extent explains the relations between different social groups [7; 10]. Social group belongingness indicates intergroup differences [7; 10], discrepancies in perception [20] and distortions of ascribed personal characteristics of others [11]. Moreover, a tendency to perceive outgroups less favorably compared to ingroups has been revealed [7]. It has been suggested that group membership models intergroup interactions and affect: People tend to express more anger and anxiety toward outgroups [22] and trust them less [12]. Such differentiation might create intergroup prejudice, positive attitudes toward members of one's own group and negative attitudes toward "others" and, thus, contribute to the persistence of intergroup bias [10].

It is worth mentioning that variations in the degree of social identification might also affect intergroup bias and, therefore, stronger social group identification might lead to a greater need for positive ingroup vs negative outgroup differentiation [16]. This means that the higher level of ingroup social identification, the more people rely on their group membership and the more actively they interact with their ingroups.

It should be also noted that cultural background plays a role in defining multiple group identities. Consequently, the processes of multiple social identification and variation of social categories in multicultural contexts, including attitudes toward outgroup members, serve as important features of intergroup dynamics [9]. Individual characteristics people possess, which are directly connected with culture (such as values, beliefs, and norms), develop throughout the socializa-

tion process and transmit through interaction within primary groups in a similar manner to cultural characteristics (for instance, ethnic, national, and religious belongingness) [23]. Furthermore, social groups differ in their level of inclusiveness and increase in the scope of group categories positively impacts intergroup relations [10]. Hence, intergroup bias decreases when outgroup members are ascribed to broader categories due to a higher personalization of the interaction.

Given the existing data on the relationship between social identification and intergroup relations, this study focuses on the stratification of post-Communist societies depending on the levels of social identification and the attitude towards members of other cultural and national groups as outgroup members. However, the approach of personality-oriented analysis of identification and attitudes towards outgroups has not been applied to post-Communist countries to date. In this regard, the current research aims at studying the profiles of social identification and attitudes towards outgroup representatives, conditioned by cultural and national belonging. Considering multiple social identification, this work explored culturally determined social identities with varying degrees of inclusiveness: less inclusive culture-specific (national, religious, and regional) and more inclusive (Soviet / Communist, European) identities. This study was conducted in the sociocultural contexts of Russia and Bulgaria, as these two countries represent two post-Communist societies that have undergone significant cultural, political, and social changes after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Bloc and follow different trajectories of nation-building.

Sociocultural research context

On the one hand, the two researched post-Communist societies (i.e., Russia and Bulgaria) share many similarities. Hofstede defined both cultures as having high levels of Collectivism, Femininity, Restraint, Uncertainty Avoidance, Power Distance, and Long-Term Orientation [15]. According to the cross-cultural value analysis Russian and Bulgarian cultures are characterized by similar levels of Harmony, Embeddedness, Hierarchy, Mastery, Autonomy, and Egalitarianism [24]. Moreover, Security, Tradition, Power, and Achievement are the leading values among Russians [18] and similar levels of commitment to those values were observed in post-Communist societies, including Bulgaria [19]. On the other hand, each sociocultural context has its own specificity. For example, Russian multicultural society has experienced serious social changes after the collapse of the USSR, including a transformation of social identity. Thus, the inclusive Soviet identity was replaced by narrower identity categories: national, religious, and regional [13]. However, Soviet identity remained an important element of Russian multiple identity [2]. Contrariwise, in Bulgaria post-Communist society has rejected Communist identity due to the political influence and perceptions of repressiveness of the Communist regime despite the fact that this social identity ideologically reflected the socialist values. Bulgarian multiple social identity has undergone a transformation as well; however, it was directed mainly at reconstructing Bulgarian national identity beyond historical and political frameworks [17], and subsequently, at further expansion and modification of the multiple social identity as a result of country's membership in the European Union.

Theoretical approach and research hypotheses

It is important to note that individuals who belong to one general population could reflect several subpopulations that hold different sets of group characteristics [21]. Because of this reason, Latent Profile Analysis (LPA) was implemented in this study as it is directed at identifying relatively homogeneous subpopulations (profiles) of respondents that represent different configurations of indicators in terms of both quality and quantity. The specific feature of this analytical approach is related to the number and nature of the profiles as they are initially unknown and should be derived from the data. Thus, the construction of latent profile models aims at finding a solution with a sufficient number of profiles and revealing the different response structured between various profiles as well as relatively homogeneous responses within each profile [8].

Considering the specificity of the Latent Profile Analysis method, research goal, and existing data related to the connection between social identification and attitudes toward outgroup members, I formed the following hypotheses:

H1. Respondents who identify strongly with culture-specific identities (national, religious, and regional) have a more negative attitude toward members of other nations across both cultural contexts.

H2. Respondents who identify weakly with culture-specific identities (national, religious, and regional) have a more positive attitude toward members of other nations across both cultural contexts.

H3. Respondents who identify strongly with the more inclusive identities (Soviet / Communist, European) have a more positive attitude toward members of other nations across both cultural contexts.

Sample

The total number of 512 respondents took part in an online survey, including 234 Russians and 278 Bulgarians. The main sample characteristics by country are presented in Table 1.

Procedure and measures

All participants filled out a questionnaire shared in social media and on the online platform anketolog.ru. The questionnaire included socio-demographic indicators (gender, age, level of education, religious affiliation), indicators of identification and attitudes towards representatives of other nations (Russia/Bulgaria, Serbia, Ukraine, Germany, The USA, China, Syria). All used scales were translated into Russian and Bulgarian using the method of direct and reverse translation and the translation was performed by two independent experts. Also, before the survey administration the questionnaires were validated in both countries.

The degree of social identification was measured using scales from the questionnaire "Mutual intercultural relations in multicultural societies" (MIRIPS) (<https://www.victoria.ac.nz/cacr/research/mirips>) that were translated into Russian and adapted for use in Russia [4] and a modification of Verkuyten's scale of religious identity [25].

The scale of national identity consisted of eight items, for example: "I am happy to be a part of Russian culture" ($\alpha=0,91$ — in Russia; $\alpha=0,88$ — in Bulgaria).

Soviet/Communist identity scale was a modification of national identification scale and also consisted of eight items, for instance: "I am proud to be a Soviet

Social and demographic characteristics of the samples in Russia and Bulgaria

Social and demographic characteristics		Russia		Bulgaria	
		n	%	n	%
Sex	Male	80	34,2	68	24,5
	Female	154	65,8	210	75,5
Age	18–29	66	28,2	124	44,6
	30–49	140	59,8	112	40,3
	50+	28	12	42	15,1
Religion	Orthodox	133	56,8	201	72,3
	Atheist	80	34,2	57	20,5
	Other	21	8	20	7,2
Education	Primary	2	0,9	0	0
	High School	20	8,5	47	16,9
	College	32	13,7	28	10,1
	University	158	67,5	189	68
	Higher	22	9,4	14	5

person/Communist” ($\alpha=0,92$ – in Russia; $\alpha=0,90$ – in Bulgaria).

Religious identity was measured by six items, for example: “I strongly identify myself with Christians” ($\alpha=0,98$ – in Russia; $\alpha=0,97$ – in Bulgaria).

Regional (for instance: “I feel a strong sense of belonging to the place where I was born”) and European (for example: “I feel a strong attachment to Europe”) identity scales were modifications of the used religious identity scale ($\alpha=0,94$ – in Russia; $\alpha=0,96$ – in Bulgaria; $\alpha=0,94$ – in Russia; $\alpha=0,94$ – in Bulgaria, respectively).

Attitudes towards members of other nations were measured using affective evaluations and the level of perceived social distance.

Affective evaluations measured the participants’ ratings of perceived likability of members of other nations ranged from 1 – “not likable at all” to 5 – “very likable”. For the purposes of the study, an average generalized estimate was used, which included the individual evaluations of each respondent in relation to all members of other nations ($\alpha = 0,89$ – in Russia; $\alpha = 0,77$ – in Bulgaria).

Perceived social distance was measured using Bogardus’ social distance scale, translated into Russian [6]. It required participants to indicate their readiness to accept members of other countries, considering 7 answer options, varying in the degree of closeness of contacts from “Accept as members of my family” to “In general, I would not allow them to come to Russia / Bulgaria” ($\alpha=0,93$ – in Russia; $\alpha=0,89$ – in Bulgaria).

Statistical analysis

Obtained data was analyzed through descriptive statistics, Cronbach alpha coefficient of scale reliability/consistency, correlation analysis, multivariate analysis of

variance using SPSS 23. Latent profile analysis was also performed [21] based on the degree of social identification and attitudes towards members of other nations, applying the maximum likelihood method (MLR) available in Mplus 7.11. Models for both countries were estimated through 5000 random sets of start values and 100 iterations.

Results

Mean values, standard deviations, and correlations of investigated variables are presented in Table 2.

Latent profile analysis was conducted to test the study hypotheses, and therefore, four different models were built across both contexts accounting for the peculiarities of the data and varying the number of latent profiles (from two to five). The optimal latent profile model across the Russian sample indicated four profiles: This latent model showed lower values of the sample-size adjusted Bayesian information criterion (SSBIC=4691,55) and parametric bootstrapped likelihood ratio test for k-1 (H0) vs. k classes (BLRT=61,07; $p<0,001$) compared to other models and the indicators of likelihood ratio tests were significant (VLMR=61,07; $p<0,05$; adj. LMR=59,70; $p<0,05$). Obtained results showed that each of the four profiles had a sufficient number of cases in the range between 37 and 73 (see Table 3).

The optimal latent profile model across the Bulgarian sample consisted of three profiles. The three-profile latent model demonstrated lower values of the sample-size adjusted Bayesian information criterion (SSBIC=5331,28) and parametric bootstrapped likelihood ratio test for k-1 (H0) vs. k classes (BLRT=73,81; $p<0,001$) compared to other models and the indicators of likelihood ratio tests were significant (VLMR= 73,81; $p<0,05$; adj. LMR=72,20; $p<0,05$). Results indicated

that each of the profiles had a sufficient number of cases ranging from 42 to 189 and are presented in Table 3.

Average latent class probabilities (in Russia [1,00-0,86], in Bulgaria [1,00-0,90]) confirmed that people belong to their assigned profiles and the classes in both models differ from each other (Table 4).

In addition, MANOVA was conducted to test for differences between profiles in both countries. This test results indicated that, in general, there were significant differences between the profiles for the variables used. Significant differences were observed in relation to the examined variables in Russia as follows: national identity ($F(3, 230)=25,48; p<0,001$), Soviet identity ($F(3, 230)=26,09; p<0,001$), European identity ($F(3, 230)=4,45; p<0,01$), regional identity ($F(3, 230)=173,72; p<0,001$), religious identity ($F(3, 230)=40,72; p<0,001$), affective evaluations ($F(3, 230)=26,05; p<0,001$) and perceived social distance ($F(3, 230)=210,38; p<0,001$). In Bulgaria significant results were found in relation to national identity ($F(2, 275)=23,94; p<0,001$), European identity ($F(2, 275)=11,49; p<0,001$), regional identity ($F(2, 275)=212,99; p<0,001$), religious identity ($F(2, 275)=24,69; p<0,00$), affective evaluations ($F(2, 275)=25,06; p<0,001$) and perceived social distance ($F(2, 275)=186,58; p<0,001$) and no differences were observed in identification with Communist past ($F(2, 275)=2,09; p>0,05$).

To sum up, the performed analysis identified 4 latent profiles in Russia and 3 latent profiles in Bulgaria (see Figure 1 and 2). In Russia, the four profiles had the following characteristics:

Profile 1 ($n=37$) included respondents who weakly identified with all identification categories (national, Soviet, European, regional, and religious), but demonstrated positive affective evaluations of members of other nations and had low levels of perceived distance with those outgroup members. This profile was called “Internationalists”.

Profile 2 ($n=58$) consisted of respondents who strongly identified with the state, Europe and their region, their identification with Soviet past and religion was average, their affective evaluations of members of other nations were positive and their perceived social distance levels were low. They were called “Europeans”.

Profile 3 ($n=73$) consisted of those respondents who identified weakly with all group identification categories, showed more negative affective evaluations of members of other nations and a high perceived distance with those outgroup members. They were called “Individualists”.

Profile 4 ($n=66$) included those respondents who had a strong identification with their nation, the Soviet past, region, and religion, but had a weak identification with

Europe, more negative affective evaluations of members of other nations and high levels of perceived distance with those outgroup members. They were called “Nationalists”.

Three profiles across the Bulgarian sample were characterized as follows:

Profile 1 ($n=47$) consisted of those respondents who had low identification with all group identification categories, rather negative affective evaluations of members of other nations and high levels of perceived social distance with those outgroup members. Similarly to the third profile in Russia, they were called “Individualists”.

Profile 2 ($n=189$) included those respondents who strongly identified with the state, region and religion, moderately identified with Europe, and weakly identified with Communist past. In addition, those respondents showed more negative affective evaluations of members of other nations and higher levels of perceived social distance with those outgroup members. Similarly to the fourth profile in Russia, they were called “Nationalists”.

Profile 3 ($n=42$) consisted of respondents who strongly identified with the state, Europe, region, and religion, weakly identified with Communist ideology, had positive affective evaluations of members of other nations and low perceived social distance with those outgroup members. They were called “Europeans” based on some similarity with the second profile observed among Russians.

Discussion

The current study was aimed at studying the latent profiles of identification and attitudes towards members of other nations in Russia and Bulgaria using a person-centered approach. It is important to note that the obtained results were consistent with the theory of social categorization and strong group (culture-specific) identification was combined with less positive attitudes towards outgroups [7; 10]. In addition, different attitudes towards members of other nations were observed and those attitudes were related to particular group belonging due to differences in inclusiveness of higher-order compared to lower-order categories [10].

The presented results indicated that Russians could be classified into one out of four profiles, i.e., Internationalists, Europeans, Individualists, and Nationalists, while Bulgarians could be ascribed to one out of three profiles, i.e., Europeans, Individualists, and Nationalists.

Conducted analysis showed that some quantitative differences were evident between the latent profiles of the representatives of the two countries under examina-

Table 2

Descriptive statistics and correlations between variables in Russia and Bulgaria

	Russia						Bulgaria									
	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1.National identity	3,64	0,88	1						4,24	0,69	1					
2.Soviet/Communist identity	3,16	0,93	0,35***	1					2,03	0,80	-0,20	1				
3.European identity	2,71	1,06	-0,4	-0,21**	1				3,39	1,12	0,75	-0,19**	1			
4.Regional identity	3,36	1,04	0,41***	0,39***	0,9	1			3,80	1,18	0,43***	-0,02	0,17**	1		
5.Religious identity	2,77	1,30	0,50***	0,29***	0,04	0,47***	1		3,31	1,31	0,36***	0,03	0,15*	0,35***	1	
6.Affective evaluations	3,09	0,94	0,06	-0,15*	0,20**	-0,12	-0,11	1	3,18	0,73	0,01	0,04	0,10	-0,05	-0,09	1
7.Perceived social distance	3,71	1,67	0,12	0,31***	-0,15*	0,22**	0,24***	-0,53***	4,57	1,35	0,04	0,01	-0,06	0,11	-0,44***	1

Note: «*» – p<0,05; «**» – p<0,01; «***» – p<0,001; M – mean, SD – standard deviation.

Table 3

Results of the Latent Profile Analysis in Russia and Bulgaria: Fit indexes, likelihood ratio tests, and distribution of members in each latent profile by country

Profiles	Fit indexes			Likelihood ratio tests				Member distribution in each profile				
	AIC	BIC	SSBIC	En	VLMR	Adj, LMR	BLRT	1	2	3	4	5
Two	4775,13	4851,15	4781,42	0,75	196,57**	192,16**	196,57***	88	146			
Three	4725,77	4829,42	4734,34	0,80	65,37	63,90	65,37***	72	127	35		
Four	4680,69	4811,99	4691,55	0,80	61,07*	59,70*	61,07***	37	58	73	66	
Five	4653,32	4812,26	4666,46	0,81	43,37	42,40	43,37***	36	36	69	65	28
								Bulgaria				
Two	5375,38	5455,19	5385,43	0,82	151,79*	148,49*	151,79***	51	227			
Three	5317,57	5426,40	5331,28	0,86	73,81*	72,20*	73,81***	47	189	42		
Four	5286,02	5423,87	5303,38	0,85	47,55	46,52	47,55***	39	187	14	38	
Five	5271,07	5437,94	5292,08	0,85	30,95	30,27	30,95***	14	39	11	39	175

Note: «*» – p<0,05; «**» – p<0,01; «***» – p<0,001; AIC – Akaike information criterion; SSBIC – sample-size adjusted Bayesian information criterion; VLMR – Vuong–Lo–Mendell–Rubin likelihood ratio test for k-1 (H0) vs. k classes; Adj. LMR – adjusted Vuong–Lo–Mendell–Rubin likelihood ratio test; BLRT – parametric bootstrapped likelihood ratio test for k-1 (H0) vs. k classes.

Table 4

Average latent class probabilities for Four-profile model in Russia and Three-profile model in Bulgaria

Profiles	1	2	3	4
Russia				
1	0,94	0,03	0,04	0,00
2	0,02	0,92	0,03	0,03
3	0,01	0,03	0,86	0,10
4	0,00	0,02	0,12	0,87
Bulgaria				
1	0,91	0,06	0,02	
2	0,03	0,95	0,03	
3	0,01	0,05	0,94	

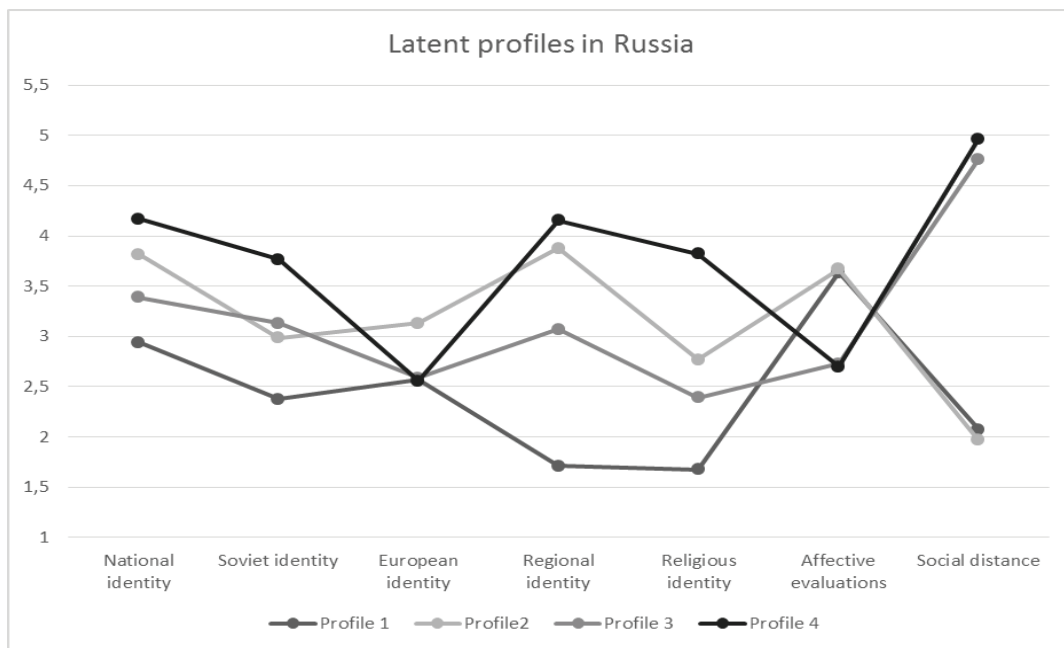


Fig. 1. Profiles of identification and attitudes toward members of other nations in Russia

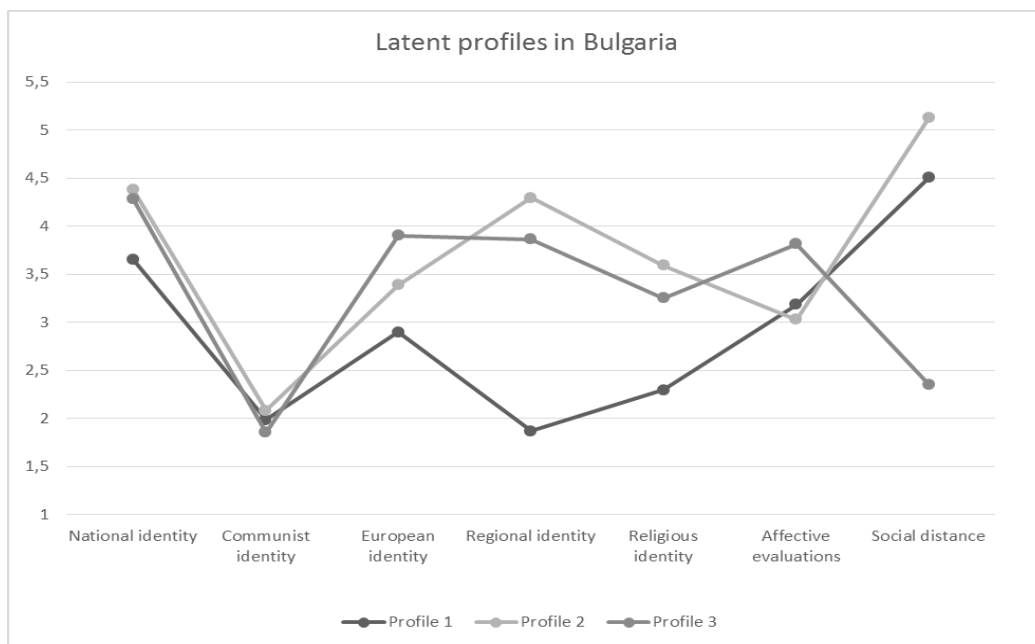


Fig. 2. Profiles of identification and attitudes toward members of other nations in Bulgaria

tion. However, in terms of qualitative characteristics, various aspects of identification and intergroup relationships had similar patterns. In general, my expectations for the relationship between identity categories with different levels of inclusiveness and attitudes towards outgroups were confirmed. Thus, the profile of Nationalists was characterized by a high level of culture-specific multiple identities, in particular, by a high level of identification with culture-specific social categories (national, regional, and religious identity), and less positive attitudes towards outgroup. Consequently, Hypotheses 1 was confirmed. It should be also emphasized that the Nationalists' profile content revealed intercultural peculiarities associated with the specific correlation structure of multiple identities in Russia and Bulgaria.

It is important to note that the greatest part of the sampled Bulgarians fell into the profile of the Nationalists. On the one hand, such results may be explained by the fact that the idea of national and territorial unity has been extremely popular among Bulgarians since the period of post-war development of the country after the liberation from Ottoman slavery [1]. On the other hand, in the modern Bulgarian society, the so called "familial patriotism" is suggested to be widespread and to reflect a strong sense of belonging to family and local communities [3]. Furthermore, high levels of national identification were observed in Bulgaria in general [9].

Despite the cultural similarities between the two countries [15; 19; 24], there were differences in profiles of social identification and attitudes towards members of other nations as well. The Internationalists' profile in Russia was described by a relatively low to moderate identification with all group categories while their attitude towards members of other nations was more positive. The specification of this profile partially confirmed my second hypothesis, as this effect was present in Russia but absent in Bulgaria. Such outcome might be associated with the effect of multiculturalism: Russian multiethnic environment might contribute to the expansion of Russian mentality to the acceptance of people of all nations [5].

The profile of Europeans was characterized by a relatively high and moderate levels of culture-specific multiple identification, but the level of European identification was the highest compared to all other profiles in both countries. Moreover, high levels of identification with a more inclusive social identity (i.e., European identity) were combined with more positive attitudes towards outgroups and, thus, confirming my third hy-

pothesis. Consequently, those results were consistent with the existing theoretical framework on the association between social identity inclusiveness and intergroup relations [10].

Finally, it should be emphasized that evidence for the presence of Individualists was found in both settings. Individuals who belong to this profile were suggested to lack strong culture-specific identities and be likely to engage in more negative attitudes toward members of other nations. Despite the fact that both cultures were described as collectivistic by social psychological research, a tendency toward individualization has been observed in modern Bulgarian and Russian societies and it might be explained by the ongoing globalization processes. In addition, research conducted during the post-Communist period of development of both Russia and Bulgaria have confirmed the commitment of a part of the population of those countries to individualistic values [14].

The current study contributes significantly to the existing theory as it offers important insights about identification and intergroup relationships in post-Communist and post-Soviet cultural contexts. However, a couple of limitations should be noted as well. Firstly, it is necessary to mention sample size and sampling strategy. Given that the sample was limited in size and participants were gathered using a convenient sampling technique, the obtained results could not be generalized. Secondly, further research should be carried out using larger samples, as greater number of participants might reveal more latent profiles of identification and intergroup relationships and provide a more solid base for making more general conclusions on the topic.

Conclusions

This research demonstrated that Latent Profile Analysis could be also applied to the processes of social identification and intergroup relationships. In addition, the profiles that were discovered in terms of national, regional, religious, European, and Soviet / Communist social identities and attitudes towards members of other nations indicated the presence of significant differences in the distribution of variable levels between profiles. Study outcomes also revealed that exploring variable patterns takes place in modern science, creates new perspectives for the development of social psychological theory and allows drawing conclusions about identification and intergroup relations.

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