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**ATTITUDES TOWARDS MIGRANTS AMONG SCHOOL
STUDENTS IN ST. PETERSBURG**

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Abstract

Large-scale migration is a typical phenomenon in the life of a large city. The host country has to deal with tens and even hundreds of thousands of visitors every year, taking into account their ethnic and confessional features. Tolerant attitude towards migrants improves the prospects for their successful adaptation, forms an atmosphere of social harmony, creates safe social environment. If these mechanisms do not work, social tensions emerge which at any moment can develop into conflicts, and with a high level of xenophobia, they tend to be politicized. Of particular importance for long-term regulation of the processes of migrants' integration into the host community are young people's attitudes. The article presents an analysis of the social attitudes of tolerance/intolerance among adolescents in relation to migrants and the problem of migration. It is based on the data of the authors' empirical study conducted in a number of schools in St. Petersburg. Comparative characteristics of schoolchildren and adults are distinguished in terms of their perception of the degree of conflict in interethnic relations and the assessment of the problem of national unity and harmony.

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1. Introduction

The paper is prepared under the project “Creating a model of a multifunctional centre of competencies in social work with migrants under conditions of their growing inflow in Russia and Switzerland to mitigate threats to society, economy, the state”. The project is realized at Saint Petersburg State University under the support of the Federal Target Programme “Research and Development in Top Priority Dimensions of the Science and Technology Complex of Russia in 2014-2020”. The Project ID is RFMEFI61317X0072.

Recently, both in Russia and in other countries, there has been an increase in the interest of researchers in the topic of interethnic relations and problems of tolerance, intolerance and xenophobia. Waves of interethnic, ethnic and confessional violence sweep not only developing countries, but also prosperous Western states. According to sociological data, there has been recorded growth of the "conflict potential" in the mass consciousness, readiness of social groups to actively defend their "ethnic interests" (Crul, 2016).

For multiethnic and multiconfessional Russia, issues of migration policy are important not only at the national level but in international relations. The so-called receiving party in the migration process can be more or less prepared to integrate newcomers, having different ethnic and cultural values.

There is also an important social aspect to the issue of attitudes towards migrants; it is connected with the problem of social well-being. The problems of social inequality and social injustice are especially acute for young people. There is a connection between the extent to which social security in a particular country is developed and the conflict potential of young people (Rapp, 2017). In stable democratic societies, young people form motives and attitudes of civic activity, participate in volunteerism, develop interest in creative selfrealisation. In unstable social and political systems, young people often give vent to their frustrating energy in deviant behaviour.

2. Problem Statement

Labor migration is a common phenomenon in the life of a large city, and St. Petersburg is one of them. Tolerant attitude towards migrants increases the possibility of their adaptation, forms an atmosphere of social harmony, creates a safe social environment. And this, in turn, is a guarantee of social wellbeing. If this social mechanism does not work, there arise social tensions which can at any time develop into conflicts. The attitudes of young people are of particular importance for long-term regulation of the processes of migrants' integration.

The educational space of a city is characterized by intensive intercultural interaction. It is no coincidence that in St. Petersburg the state program "Tolerance" was adopted (the program of harmonization of intercultural, interethnic and interconfessional relations, the cultivation of a culture of tolerance in St. Petersburg, 2006), followed by the program "Creating Conditions for Public Consent in St. Petersburg" for years 2015 -2020"(Resolution of the Government of St. Petersburg of September 23, 2010, No. 1256). Great attention is given to the development of tolerance in the process of young people socialization, primarily through municipal programmes of school education. Together with measures to combat extremism in adolescents' environment, these programmes are focused on monitoring the public

consciousness and social and psychological attitudes of the young, the formation of the civil worldview of the individual.

Our study of high school students' opinions on the problem of tolerance towards immigrants in St. Petersburg enables us to identify those factors which may exacerbate intergroup relations and to develop recommendations to administrations of educational institutions in St. Petersburg to minimize such risks. Experts on migration rightly point out that the development of adequate practices of interaction with migrants in a changing social environment will, to a large extent, depend on the ability to cognize the causes, consequences and permissible limits of the migration process (Dmitriev & Piadukhov, 2009). This task applies to the authorities of St. Petersburg at all levels.

3. Research Questions

As the experience of recent years shows, it is too early to speak about high-level social stability in Russia. Problems and contradictions in the development of Russian society are manifested in the increasing protest activity of the population, especially among young people. The growth of social tension can provoke chain reactions of conflicts, the spread of which, as a domino effect, will affect the sphere of ethno-confessional relations. Immigrants and internal migrants, ethnic minorities are becoming objects of social discontent, turning into one of the parties to the conflict.

How much do these processes threaten the preservation of the ethnic and confessional peace at the present time; what attitudes dominate the mass consciousness of Russians with regard to migration and migrants? We seek to find this out by studying opinions of high school students aged 14-17 - young people the most "sensitive" in terms of the object impact on the opinion of a. By studying this group, we can, on the one hand, assess the effectiveness of the mechanisms of tolerance formation in the system of education and upbringing and, on the other hand, determine factors involved in the formation of civic identity of the younger generation.

4. Purpose of the Study

The authors' empirical research conducted in St. Petersburg schools aimed to analyze attitudes of tolerance / intolerance of migrants existing among adolescents and their stance on the problem of migration. The paper describes comparative characteristics of school students' and adults' perception of interethnic relations and issues of civil unity.

Indicators of tolerance / xenophobia in society are the value orientations of young people. Views and attitudes of the younger generation reflect the effectiveness of Russian cultural and educational policies. Ethnic and cultural attitudes, stereotypes of young people regarding social boundaries "us - them" form a certain space of social stability or conflict. It is known that, due to their age, the conflict potential of young people is higher for than that of other social and demographic categories. This potential, as a mass phenomenon, is realized only under certain conditions. This also largely depends on what types of group identity and what interests prevail in society. Young people can relatively easier than older generations get involved in extremist activities of nationalist and religious communities. As studies

of Russian society demonstrate, there is high correlation between age and attitudes of ethnic intolerance. Peak attitudes of intolerance are observed in groups of young people under the age of 25.

It is too early to talk about the onset of long-term social stability in Russia, as periodic upsurges of social tension can provoke chain reactions of conflicts with migrants as objects of social discontent.

5. Research Methods

What attitudes dominate the mass consciousness of high school students aged 14-17? We conducted a questionnaire survey in St. Petersburg on the topic: "Tolerance / Intolerance of School Students in Relation to Migrants". From December 2016 to April 2017, a total of 495 students of 9th-11th grades were surveyed in eight schools in the Central and Krasnogvardeysky administrative districts. The sample was designed to include respondents from mainstream and prestigious schools. Since the confidence probability of sampling is 97%, the confidence error is 5% and the obtained data are representative with the minimal probability of a statistical error.

The study of everyday attitudes to migrants in the host society makes it possible to draw conclusions about the condition of interethnic relations and conflict potential in it. According to Mastikova and Gorshkov (2017), the resolution at the local level of conflict-related problems in migration processes depends on the adaptive potential of the host population, which, in turn, consists of values and friendly or hostile attitude towards migrants that is formed on their basis (Mastikova and Gorshkov, 2017). Stepanov and Tishkov (2014) identify a whole range of value judgements demonstrating acceptance or rejection of ethnic stereotypes, which enables them to calculate a person's indicator of ethnic tolerance. In this regard, we believe that the theory of social tension, which helps to reveal obvious and latent tensions and conflict situations, can be instrumental in diagnosing the area of ethnic and confessional relations as the space of unfolding or contained contradictions and conflicts.

In their studies, Russian scientists have made multiple attempts to categorize groups on the scales of tolerance-xenophobia, ethnic centrism-multiculturalism. With regards to ethnic identification, such typology is presented by Soldatova (1998) who distinguishes ethnic nihilism, ethnic indifference, positive ethnic identity, ethnical egoism, ethnical isolationism, ethnical fanaticism. Mukomel uses the criterion of tolerance / xenophobia to describe a person's social portrait and identifies four groups: those who are tolerant, hesitant, hypo-intolerant and hyperintolerant (Mukomel, 2017). By a similar method, Bavin has divided his respondents into four groups according to their attitude to foreign migrants. Based on the attitudes of the presence or absence of intolerance, he identified four types described as "tolerant, guardians, ethnical purists, xenophobes" (Bavin, 2006). However, when classifying negative types of "xenophobes", researchers often use criteria implying simple / situational intolerance and reflecting the respondent's ambiguous attitude toward a hypothetical situation.

6. Findings

Using the general indicators of St. Petersburg school students' attitudes towards migration and migrants, we obtained the data which allow us to provisionally divide the students into groups characterized as: altogether tolerant – having positive attitude towards migrants on the whole, not

advocating tight migration restrictions (22%); neutral-positive, indifferent or perceiving migrants placidly, not advocating harsh restrictions (52%); neutral-negative-, claiming absence of hostility toward migrants but being for tight restrictive measures against them (4.2%), intolerant expressing an overall negative opinion of migrants and supporting strict or semi-strict measures to curb migration (18%).

It should be explained that these groups of opinions are related to the attitude towards migration as such, irrespective of it being legal or illegal, internal or external, or regarding those people who seek long-term or permanent residence for work or study purposes. Incoming labor migrants, who make up a significant part of immigrants (especially considering illegal immigrants), "affect" public attitudes towards migration, but rarely enter into direct contact with local residents, especially with St. Petersburg school students. Approximately half of the students surveyed perceive all visitors "in the same vein", not discriminating between foreign and internal migrants, including people who come from the North Caucasus republics. In general, the level of intolerance towards migrants among young people in St. Petersburg does not exceed all-Russian indicators. For example, the general data of the All-Russian survey, conducted by the Institute for Comparative Social Research (CESSI) in 2014 as part of the European Social Research (ESS) monitoring, indicate that, in the Northern and North-Western regions, the number of interviewed local residents-supporters of banning immigration of persons of another nationality was 13.6% - by 7.5% below the national average (Artemov et al., 2016).

Table 01. [Attitude of St. Petersburg high school students towards migrants ("How do you feel about migrants in St. Petersburg - those who have come here for permanent residence: to work, study?")]

	%
positive	13.7
more positive than negative	9.1
neutral	55.8
more negative than positive	10.7
negative	7.7
not sure	3.0

The findings show ambivalence in the perceptions of tolerance and attitudes towards migrants among St. Petersburg school students. Most of the answers demonstrate lack of confidence in assessment, but 12% of the respondents said they did not consider themselves tolerant. As further answers and the results of other sociological surveys on this issue show, 10-15% of the respondents constitute a risk group, i.e. are subject to xenophobic attitudes. At the same time, 30% of high school students surveyed consider themselves tolerant, 47% doubt but tend to respond positively. Those respondents who unambiguously identified themselves as intolerant, constitute 3.4%; those who doubted but were inclined to intolerance - 8%.

Table 02. The agreement of high school students and adult respondents with the statement: "St. Petersburg is a tolerant city where there are no serious conflicts between nationalities and representatives of different religions"

	Adults %	School students %
definitely agree	23.3	7.1
rather agree	45.1	44.6
rather disagree	20.5	29.7
definitely disagree	8.2	9.1
not sure	2.6	9.5

The optimism that St. Petersburg is an example of a tolerant city in which there are practically no ethnic or confessional conflicts is shared by much less school youth than adult city residents (SPbIAS RAS, 2016). Among all categories of the population, 23% of the respondents completely agree that "Petersburg is a tolerant city", with only 7% of the school students saying this. Of the total of city residents, 29% do not agree with this statement, and the proportion of disagreeing school students is 39%. What also attracts attention is the high percentage of young people who were not sure what to say, which suggests that they do not engage in such considerations, and part of them do not perceive the city as a space for self-identification of the individual. In addition, we note the fact that only 73% of the students surveyed consider St. Petersburg to be their home town, despite the fact that, according to official statistics, migrants comprise about 8% of St. Petersburg schoolchildren (Moiseeva, 2012).

Yet, the majority of the respondents adhere to the principle of social justice in inter-ethnic relations. This applies to both the adult population of St. Petersburg (88%) and high-school students (82%), who confirmed that it would be unfair in any territory of Russia to create better life conditions for some peoples than for others: everybody should be treated equally. This position of young people is also confirmed by the data of the study conducted by the Social Technologies Agency "Polytech". It showed that "injustice" is often perceived by respondents as a phenomenon caused by ethnic differences (Romanov & Stepanov, 2011). The majority are of the opinion that the state should guarantee equality, fight against privileges of the elites of the titular peoples and the privileges of local ethnic communities.

Ethnic nationalism as an idea does not find broad support among young people. The motto "Russia for the Russians", allegedly enjoying the support of most Russians, as is often said and written, is nothing more than a myth. The respondents from St. Petersburg share the value of social justice without regard to nationality, and this presents a good basis for the formation of civil unity of Russians and social peace. However, we should not ignore the persisting ambivalence of mass consciousness, the co-existence of opposing attitudes of the so-called centaur-personalities (Toshchenko, 2010). As our survey revealed, the recognition of the need for equal rights coexists with admittance of discrimination.

We believe that migrants' children in general are successfully adapting in St. Petersburg schools. The majority of senior students surveyed (60%) noted that they had acquaintances and friends among those who recently moved to St. Petersburg; besides, almost two-thirds of schoolchildren have friends of another religious faith / other views on religion. The level of tolerance of religions has been found to be fairly high, considering the fact that in St. Petersburg orthodoxy is the dominant confession and representatives of other religious communities, according to our survey, constitute less than 10% of the

city population. Among the students surveyed, according to their self-evaluation, the percentage of believers is not very high (33%), but almost all of the respondents (91%) said that there were believers in their close circle of family and friends.

Table 03. The answers of senior students to the question: "Do you or your family fear or do not fear strangers of another nationality in the place of your residence, study, work?"

	%
definitely fear	6.3
somewhat fear	23.0
rather do not fear	36.0
absolutely not afraid	24.0
not sure	10.7

The question of religious extremism is seen as exceedingly painful these days. Almost daily, the media issue reports about Islamic extremist groups, armed conflicts in the Middle East, and terrorist attacks in Western Europe. Accordingly, the threat of terrorism steadily occupies one of the first places among public fears, which the results of our survey also reflect. There are other fears, for example, less than a third are afraid of foreigners in their daily lives. However, the majority (60%) do not perceive the threats posed by visitors as "real". It is worthy of note here that our survey in schools was for the most part conducted before the terrorist attack in the St. Petersburg metro (April 3, 2017). More than half of the surveyed senior students in St. Petersburg are afraid of religious terrorism and extremism (30% fear, 28% fear "in part").

Table 04. Experience of students' personal involvement in conflict situations with migrants ("Have you ever witnessed or participated in a conflict of local residents with non-residents of St. Petersburg?")

	%
have own experience of repeated or episodic conflict situations	44.4
have no experience of conflict situations	49.5
not sure	6.1

The majority of the surveyed schoolchildren (84%) reported their "awareness" of conflicts and crimes involving migrants in Russia. Crimes committed by migrants often spark a massive outcry in the media and on the Internet. The term "ethnic crime" has even come into daily use, although according to statistics, only about 3% of crimes are committed by migrants, whereas they become victims with equal frequency. When respondents are asked about migrants involved in conflicts and crime not in the whole of Russia, but in the city where the respondent lives, their "awareness" proves to be significantly lower (69%). There are fewer of those who have come across any news about local conflicts (30%). According to their self-assessment, 44% of the school students surveyed have had personal experience of conflict interaction with migrants or have observed such situations. Responses of the adult population to a similar

question (on the experience of observing conflict situations caused by national / ethnic or religious differences), are close to this figure (47% reported having such experience). Yet, young people are not inclined to put the blame solely on migrants. Of the surveyed high school students, 39% say they will not take the side of the "locals" if the latter are wrong. However, 22% are inclined to believe that in most cases, strangers are to blame, those who, they say, behave defiantly, violate local norms. The proportion of those who hold this view does not look "threatening" and does not indicate a high level of social tension. Under the present conditions in St. Petersburg, it is quite possible to find a solution and reduce tension through various prevention programs.

Table 05. Being prepared to volunteer assistance to migrants ("Are you yourself willing to become a volunteer and help migrants, those who need it?")

	%
absolutely willing to help	9.7
somewhat willing	23
rather not willing	28.9
completely unwilling to help	21.2
not sure	17.2

We attach importance to public attitude to the topic of support for migrants. About one third of the school students interviewed would agree to help migrants if need arises, but the number of those who would not consider giving help is still greater.

The surveyed students consistently demonstrated their positive attitude to own migration or relocation (60%), only 7% of the sample were absolutely against leaving St. Petersburg. The desire to move abroad was expressed by about one third of the students. For many, their relocation has not formed into a specific plan, rather they express a general intention to find new opportunities, to get prestigious education and/or a job, to see the world.

7. Conclusion

Our study has demonstrated that high school students have a vague idea of tolerance and characteristics of a tolerant person. Development of personality and the formation of civic personal qualities tend to be neglected in the system of school education, although the education of socially safe behavior and citizenship is formally given great attention. Young people are more focused on personal well-being, whereas social problems, including those connected with migration, ethnic and confessional relations, are not seen as particularly significant. Senior school students demonstrate a high level of trust in their environment (friends, classmates), they have a wide circle of contacts, friends of different nationalities and religions. However, among school students there can be observed an urge to isolate themselves from social problems. The assumption that most of them share is that these issues are the concern of the state. The respondents have a weak regional and civil identity. The results of the study correlate with the findings of studies conducted in other regions of Russia; they show that the worldview

and social orientations of young people, their civic initiative, largely correspond to the so-called conformist (adaptive) model of behaviour (Tishkov (ed.) et al., 2014).

Unlike the youth in some regions, St. Petersburg school students do not perceive the migration problem as presenting a threat to society. Most of the teenagers spoke out for soft measures of state regulation of migration. But there are also supporters of harsh measures. In general, two-thirds of the respondents expressed support for restrictive actions. Despite the alleged "awareness" of ethnic conflicts and the criminality of migrants, the respondents do not see this as threatening them personally. Petersburg is perceived by them as a city of an average level of tolerance. Ethnic and confessional relations in St. Petersburg are estimated by the students as neutral-positive. Expressed xenophobia among students in relation to migrants and other ethnic groups was not observed.

Nevertheless, St. Petersburg high school students revealed the existence of a conflict potential, and this requires systemic preventive actions. Today much is said about the need for patriotic and moral education of Russian youth, about the ineffectiveness of the measures adopted. In our opinion, this situation is caused by insufficient funding, but by errors in the information, communication and educational components of youth policy. The problem, apparently, lies in the pedagogical methods of cultivating a culture of tolerance and identity; these methods prove to be much weaker than the modern information environment, primarily the Internet filled with conflict content and attitudes. Youth policy can no longer be successful without the introduction of cultural and educational technologies, not only in textbooks, but also in the blogosphere, social networks of the Internet and other public information resources.

It is necessary to pay attention to the unrealized potential of civil society in the sphere of harmonization of ethnic and confessional relations. As some experts note, the problem of "including" and "excluding" groups of immigrants from social and economic processes in society requires immediate action not only on the part of administrative bodies but also institutions of civil society (Avksentiev et al., 2007). In addition to volunteer activity, the organization of assistance for socially vulnerable and potentially vulnerable categories of the population (including migrants), a public-private partnership should be developed, involving young people in the activities of socially-oriented non-profit organizations and national-cultural autonomies. Schools should and can become centers of such activity. Thus, adolescents in real life, and not just in tolerance classes, will acquire the attitudes and values of civil mutual assistance. The potential for positive intercultural interaction of young people is seen as significant, but its implementation depends on the purposeful efforts of the older generation. This is also the guarantee of the social well-being of society, successful functioning of the mechanisms of social reproduction in it.

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