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**ATTITUDES TOWARD CULTURAL DIVERSITY:
A STUDY OF RUSSIAN TEACHERS**

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Abstract: The paper presents results of an exploratory study of teachers' social attitudes toward ethnic and religious diversity, and variables influencing such attitudes. The study was conducted in Russia and is focused on school teachers in culturally diverse modern societies. Using the social distance scale we sampled 355 school teachers from two Russian regions known for their high cultural diversity (Moscow region and Republic of Tatarstan), measured teacher attitudes toward large religious and ethnic groups (including migrants). The findings showed that teachers hold mostly tolerant attitudes with respect to members belonging to culturally and religiously diverse groups. The social distance between respondents and native residents of their region was minimal. Social distance was larger with respect to such ethnic groups as migrants from the Caucasian and Central Asian countries. The analysis of perception of different religious groups also showed positive attitudes toward these groups and readiness to interact with them. Teacher attitudes were not related to their age or ethnicity. There was a significant correlation between social distance and the region of residence, and between social distance and the degree of social interaction. The results of this study will be used to develop a large-scale study to contribute to a better understanding of teacher attitudes toward immigrant students in public schools.

Key words: attitudes, social distance, migrants, religious minorities, cultural diversity, Russian teachers

Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies, vol. 18, issue 52 (Spring 2019): 80-95.

ISSN: 1583-0039 © SACRI

1. Introduction and Literature Review

With the process of globalization many countries, including Russia, face the challenge of training and educating students who are ethnic and religious minorities. The Directive of June 29, 2000 issued by the committee of the Council of Europe (2001) has guaranteed the assistance of 'the increase of awareness on requirements of human rights and the duties following from this in democratic society' (point IV). With that in mind, the committee encouraged 'creation of a climate of active understanding and respect for culture of other people in an education system starting from the preschool level' (point III). Recognizing cultural diversity among students in educational institutions is particularly important in societies with a large number of migrants. Daily interactions with teachers make them one of the most important figures for newly arrived immigrant children in school. Therefore it is important to understand teacher attitudes toward diverse ethnic and religious groups represented in their classrooms, as attitudes contribute to shaping the relationships between teachers and immigrant students (Grant and Tate 1995; Nieto 2015).

The concept of attitudes has always attracted considerable attention, by both international and Russian scholars (Ajzen & Fishbein 2000; Schwarz & Bohner 2001; Paniotto 2006; Ostrom 2013; Lebedeva, Tatarko & Berry 2016; Abakumova, Boguslavskaya & Grishina 2016). 'Attitudes' is an important psychological construct, first introduced by sociologists Thomas and Znaniecki (1918) in their study of Polish immigrants coming to America in the early 20th century. They defined 'attitude' as 'a condition of consciousness of the individual in relation to some social value', or the experience by the person of the meaning of this value (Thomas & Znaniecki 1918). Such 'condition of consciousness' is manifested in a combination of a person's beliefs, feelings, behavior in relation to socially significant objects, groups, or events (Vaughan & Hogg 2005) revealed when evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor (Eagly & Chaiken 2007). In 1947 Smith suggested distinguishing three interconnected components of attitudes: cognitive, emotional and behavioral (Smith, Bruner & White 1956). Attitudes held by individuals are influenced by the culture of the surrounding society and their social experience (Allport 1935). Among social attitudes the most crucial ones are ethnic and religious. Formed through ethnocultural contacts, ethnic and religious attitudes may be positive or negative; they may strengthen emotional-evaluative attitudes both toward one's own ethnicity and religion and toward representatives of other ethnic and religious groups (Banks 1995; Jackson 2011).

Banks et al. (2001) suggest that teachers in diverse societies need to respect and understand the complex characteristics of ethnic groups so

they can build upon cultural strengths and characteristics that students from diverse groups bring to school. In the U.S., many teacher preparation programs do not incorporate ethnic and cultural content into the teacher education curriculum (Banks 1995; Ladson-Billings 1995). The authors suggest that teacher preparation must include having educators uncover their personal attitudes toward these groups and acquire knowledge about their histories and cultures. With knowledge and new information, attitudes, or the cognitive attitudinal system, can be changed, resulting in more positive or negative beliefs, convictions, and opinions (Shikhirev 1999). Therefore, assessing attitudes of teachers toward different ethnic and religious groups can help inform the development of teacher preparation programs that increase teacher knowledge and influence their attitudes.

In the context of the growing migration worldwide, scholars stress the importance of public schools in integrating migrants into the new societies and cultures. The role of the teacher in this process is critically important (Emler, Okhana, & Moskovichi 1987). Daily classroom interactions provide many opportunities for mutual contacts. Since teachers have a very high status in the life of their students (Tatar 1998), their role is particularly important for students adapting to a new society. Grant and Tate (1995) stress that in order to understand how schools approach cultural diversity it is very important to concentrate on the teacher and on interactions between the teacher and the student in culturally diverse situations. Their research emphasizes the importance of teachers' previous experience with members of various groups, and their attitudes toward cultural diversity in society for specific practices in the classroom. This line of research is crucial for Russia as a multiethnic country chosen as a destination country by many new migrants.

Russia has been a multi-ethnic society for many centuries, and currently receives a large number of immigrants (UN, 2015). Modern Russia is characterized by existence of two types of the interethnic relations, referred to as integrated and nonintegrated. Historically, Russia has been a multi-ethnic society, with over 194 ethnic groups living on the territory of the Russian Federation today. Ethnic Russians, Tatars, Ukrainians, Chuvashs, Maris, Udmurts and others who trace their heritage to the territory of Russia have had extensive intergroup contact over centuries, and are integrated into the larger society (Shaykhelislamov & Sadretdinova 2015). Ethnic Russians constitute an overwhelming majority of the Russian population. They are spread across almost all the regions of the country. Ukrainians and Tatars form the second and the third largest ethnic groups occupying predominantly historical regions of Russia. The second most numerous ethnic group amongst resident population in Moscow is composed by Ukrainians, preceded by Russians and followed by Tatars. Both Russians and Tatars are equally presented in the Republic of Tatarstan (Russian Population Census, 2010). The second type of

interethnic relations characterizes interaction with migrants (Shaykhelislamov & Sadretdinova 2015). In case of Russia, this is to talk about migrants from Central Asia and North Caucasus who came to the country more recently, at the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st centuries. According to migratory flow data in Russia the largest number of migrants come to the country from Ukraine (31%), Kazakhstan (12%), Uzbekistan (11%), Tajikistan (9%), Armenia (8%), Kyrgyzstan (5%), Azerbaijan (4%), and China (2%). Tatarstan is ranked the sixth in terms of the total number of immigrants in Russia. Estimated number of registered migrants in Tatarstan is slightly more than one hundred thousand people. 30% of them are labour migrants (Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2017).

Little empirical research has focused on exploring ethnic and religious attitudes in Russia. Researchers have studied intergroup attitudes of migrants and the host population in polycultural regions of the Central and Southern Russia (Lebedeva & Tatarko 2009), Moscow (Tatarko 2009), Kabardino-Balkaria (Lebedeva, Tatarko, & Berry 2016), and some post-Soviet countries. In the research conducted by Tatarko (2009) in Moscow, where the number of migrants is high, participants reported positive attitudes toward migrants and willingness to interact with them. At the same time participants from Moscow region expressed the feeling of being threatened in the presence of migrants. The results of the research carried out in the Southern region of the country indicated that positive attitudes toward other diverse groups were related to positive ethnic identification with one's own group (Lebedeva & Tatarko 2009).

A number of studies have used the social distance scale originally developed by Bogardus (1926) to measure intergroup attitudes (Ethington 1997). Although Bogardus Social Distance Scale is over 80 years old it is regarded as a sound instrument provided reliability and validity of given data are established (Brown 2004). The scale asks respondents the extent to which they would be accepting of a target group on a scale from 1 to 7, as close relatives by marriage (score 1), close personal friends (2), neighbors on the same street (3), co-workers in the same occupation (4), citizens in their country (5), non-citizen visitors in their country (6), or would exclude from entry into their country (7). Sergeev (2008) has interpreted these scores for the Russian context. He suggests that the scale can be divided into three intervals: the lower scores (1-2) represent readiness toward fusion with other groups, while high scores (6-7) reflect desire for isolation and separation. The middle scores (3-5) represent what in political language is called tolerance.

Abakumova, Boguslavskaya and Grishina (2016) examined students' attitudes toward migrants in Russia. While the participants reported less distant attitudes toward migrants who were white-collar workers, social distance from migrants who were laborers was very large, within the scores 6-7 on the Bogardus scale. The researchers suggest that mass media plays a pivotal role in formation of these attitudes by creating and

perpetuating negative stereotypes and images of migrants.

Other studies using the Bogardus scale suggest that greater contact with the target group is related to more close/less distant attitudes. In a study of students conducted by Lyapunova (2014) in Arkhangelsk relatively distant attitudes were most prevalent toward non ethnic Russians. The largest (5.7) was distance from Caucasian migrants and also relatively large with respect to migrants from Central Asia and ethnic Tatars (both 4.9). The relatively distant attitudes toward Tatars can be explained by historically few Tatars living in the Arkhangelsk region. Shaykelislamov and Sadretdinova (2015) assessed attitudes of inhabitants of the Republic of Bashkortostan toward migrants from Central Asia and North Caucasus as well as toward various ethnic groups living in the region. The findings indicated that there was little social distance from ethnic Russians and Tatars, but attitudes toward migrants from Caucasus and Central Asia were more distant and less positive. Both groups of researchers (Lyapunova 2014; Shaykelislamov & Sadretdinova 2015) found that contact with different ethnic groups (i.e. living in the same region) led to adopting less distant attitudes toward them. Radina and Moiseev (2010) studied social distance among students in Nizhny Novgorod and the surrounding region. Their research also confirms little social distance from ethnic Russians and Tatars compared to groups of migrants from the Caucasus and Central Asia. Attitudes among students from rural areas toward Tatars and migrants were more distant compared to students from the city, who are likely to have had more contact with them. Kuzmin, Petrova and Popov (2015) examined perception of various ethnic groups in the Ural region and found that parents' attitudes were more negative than their children's. The researchers suggest that while children learn these attitudes from their parents, personal experience and contact with members of these groups led them to reconsider and re-evaluate ethnic stereotypes and prejudices. Taken together, these findings indicate that the most positive (closest distance) attitudes in varied regions are registered toward ethnic Russians, the largest ethnic group in the Russian Federation. Attitudes toward Tatars vary, depending on the degree of contact in different regions. More distant attitudes are held with respect to the ethnic groups from Central Asia and the Caucasus who are primarily labor migrants in most regions. At the same time, it appears that attitudes are changed to being more positive through being in contact with different ethnic and religious groups (Shaykelislamov & Sadretdinova 2015).

While the sources described above provide interesting data on students' attitudes toward ethnic, religious, and migrant groups in the Russian Federation, attitudes of teachers have not been examined yet. Studies conducted in other countries, however, suggest that students with an ethnic minority background face many difficulties at school (Glock 2016) which may partially be accounted for stereotypes, attitudes and

expectations that teachers hold towards them. Teacher attitudes toward multiculturalism and toward diverse ethnic groups influence teaching practices involving students, representatives of these diverse groups, in a classroom setting (Nespor 1987). Teacher attitudes, expectations and stereotypes are reported to significantly depend on students' ethnic background and their socio-economic status (Iwai 2013; Tobisch & Dresel 2016); on reported lack of essential knowledge about multicultural education and unwillingness of school authorities to take responsibility for altering school policies in order to solve problems rising from cultural diversity (Howarth & Andreouli 2014; Coronel & Gómez-Hurtado 2015); on the issues of racism and discrimination (Forrest, Lean & Dunn 2016). External factors like the concealed assertion of values imposed by nonimmigrant students may also be influential (Machovcová 2017). German researchers Hachfeld et al (2015) employed the framework of professional competence to look at the relationship between the concepts of multiculturalism and colorblindness, as well as various aspects of professional competence essential for teaching immigrant students.

Scholars note that teacher attitudes and behavior toward diverse cultural populations do not exist in a social vacuum but are influenced by norms and values of both the wider society, and conditions of educational settings where teachers interact with them (Horenczyk & Tatar 2002). Results based on the responses teachers, working at Israeli schools, revealed that pluralistic attitudes were higher when referring to the integration of immigrants into the general society, whereas assimilationist attitudes were more predominant when related to the approach toward immigrants in educational contexts.

Cross-cultural comparative research of European teachers' social attitudes toward ethnic and religious minorities in Ireland, Great Britain, France, Latvia, Italy and Spain (Fine-Davis & Faas 2014) showed generally positive attitudes of teachers toward the growing cultural diversity in society and in their classrooms. Moreover, comparative studies show that in countries with more diverse population perception of non-native students is more positive than in countries with less diversity. This pattern of findings also suggests that greater exposure to intercultural contacts may lead to more positive attitudes held by teachers in multicultural societies.

2. Purpose of the Study

This exploratory study aimed to examine social distance attitudes that teachers in Russia hold toward diverse ethnic and religious groups. The questions which this study addresses are:

1. What is the average social distance between teachers and representatives of different ethnicities and faiths?

2. What characteristics of the teacher may influence these attitudes?
Is there any relationship between teachers' age, ethnicity, and geographic area of residence?

3. Methods

3.1. Measure

An adapted version of Bogardus (1926) social distance scale was used in the study to measure social attitudes toward representatives of various social groups on a scale from 1 to 7. Consistent with prior research, the scale was scored cumulatively that is when respondents chose more than one response; we used the lowest score that represented the closest, most acceptable form of relationship.

In our study participants were asked to indicate social distance from 6 groups: Russians, Orthodox Christians, Tatars, Muslims, Caucasians, and Central Asians. Tatars, Central Asians, and Caucasians are predominantly Muslim, and Russians are Orthodox Christian.

The 6 ethnic groups were listed in the questionnaire based on the current migration situation in Russia. The country receives the majority of labour migrants from Central Asian countries such as Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kirgizstan and Caucasian countries such as Azerbaijan, Armenia (Ministry of Internal Affairs 2017). The largest migration flows are registered between Russia and Central Asian countries. These groups are immigrants of low socioeconomic status employed in the service sector. Those of higher socioeconomic status and working in the business, construction and retail sectors are predominantly natives of Caucasian countries. It's important to note that we did not assess attitudes toward Ukrainians who represent the third ethnic group in the country (Russian Population Census 2010) due to possible sensitivities with regard to the current political conflict. In addition, there are very few Ukrainians living in the Republic of Tatarstan (6% of the population). Further, in Moscow and Moscow region there are two groups of Ukrainians, long term Ukrainian residents of the region and Ukrainian migrants moving to the region because of the recent political conflict. This makes it difficult to interpret social distance from Ukrainians as a group.

3.2. Sample

A convenience sample of 355 teachers enrolled in advanced training courses in 2016-2017 in Moscow and Kazan was selected. We used a stratified sample, i.e. teachers were selected based on their age, ethnicity and place of residence. Advanced training courses are obligatory for all teachers willing to maintain their expertise and obtain required certification. The full sample initially comprised 380 subjects but 10 questionnaires were not returned and 15 were spoiled. Teachers were informed about the purpose of the research project which was to add a

better understanding to a question of teacher attitudes toward different ethnic and religious groups given that the topic has not been explored in the Russian context yet. Participation in the study was voluntary and anonymity of responses was assured.

Males made up 4.8% (N=17) of the sample with females accounting for 95.2% (N =338). Even though the sample is heterogeneous prevalence of female teachers is explained by the fact that teacher profession is pursued mostly by females in Russia. The mean age of the respondents is 48 ranging from 20 to 56. The majority of the participants, 55% (N=195) identified themselves as Russian, 43.3 % as Tatar (N =154) and the rest 1.7% (N =6) were represented by Jewish, Ukrainian, Udmurt, Lakt, or Azerbaijani. As for such variable as the composition of the school, the majority of respondents (61%) work in multi-ethnic schools, and 39% in homogeneous schools with only one ethnic group. 25.9% (N =92) of the participants reside in Moscow and Moscow region and 69.3% (N =246) are residence of Kazan and Tatarstan. Place of residence was left blank by 17 respondents.

4. Results

Means and standard deviations on the social distance measures toward different ethnic and religious groups are presented in Table 1. The results show the least social distance was from Russians, Orthodox Christians, Tatars, and Muslims. Social distance from these four groups was scored below 2 (see Table 1), and according to Sergeev (2008) could be considered within the fusion range on the Bogardus scale, meaning that respondents are ready to enter into personal relationships with them (through marriage or friendship). Social distance from Caucasians and Central Asians was 3.74 and 3.97, respectively. These scores are well within the tolerance range (3-5) according to Sergeev (2008). This suggests that on average, respondents find it acceptable to be neighbors or coworkers with members of these ethnically and religiously diverse groups.

Table 1. Pairwise Comparisons of Distance to Ethnic and Religious Groups for the Full sample (N=355)

		Mean Difference				
	Mean (SD)	Orthodox	Tatars	Muslims	Caucasians	Central Asians
Russians	1.59 (1.08)	-.14	-.33*	-.46**	-2.06**	-2.22**
Orthodox	1.71 (1.32)		-.19	-.32*	-1.92**	-2.07**

Tatars	1.86 (1.44)			-.13	-1.73**	-1.88**
Muslims	1.96 (1.51)				-1.60**	-1.75**
Caucasians	3.74 (2.28)	*				-.15
Central Asians	3.97 (2.31)					•

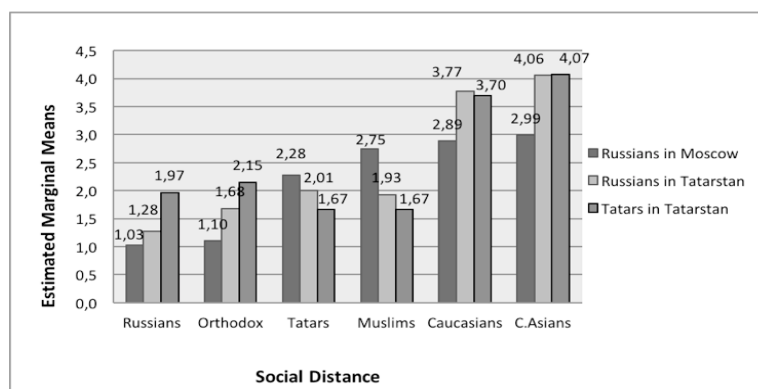
*Significant at the $p < .0$ level

**Significant at the $p < .001$ level

To assess significance of differences between means we conducted a repeated measure ANOVA (see Table 1). Results suggest that for the full sample, social distance from Russians and Orthodox Christians is the smallest, and not significantly different from each other; though significantly slightly different from all other groups. Social distance from Tatars and Muslims is slightly higher. Though differences in distance from Muslims and Russians, Tatars and Russians, and Muslims and Orthodox are significant, they are relatively small. However, social distance from all these four groups is significantly less than from the two migrant groups: Caucasians and Central Asians.

The second question of the study was to assess the relationship of teachers' characteristics to social distance attitudes. To assess the impact of ethnicity and place of residence, we removed 6 respondents whose ethnicity was not Tatar or Russian from the analyses. Examining the data further revealed that of the remaining participants there were only 2 ethnic Tatars in the Moscow region. As a result, we assigned participants to 3 groups: Russians in Moscow ($N=69$), Russians in Tatarstan ($N=105$), and Tatars in Tatarstan ($N=99$). We then ran a MANOVA with age as a covariate and location/ethnicity as the grouping variable. The results are illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Social Distance from Ethnic and Religious Groups by Location and Ethnicity



The overall ANOVA was significant ($F=10.70$ $p<.001$). The effect of age was not significant ($F=1.22$, $p>.05$). Differences between groups on the social distance measures were significant for all ethnic and religious target groups except Tatars. Social distance from Tatars did not differ by location or ethnicity. All three groups were significantly different in distance from Orthodox Christians, with the closest distance for Russians in Moscow, greater distance for Russians in Tatarstan, and greatest for Tatars in Tatarstan. All other differences, as illustrated in Figure 1, are a function of location or ethnicity. Distance from Russians depended on respondents' ethnicity, so that Russians regardless of location (Moscow or Tatarstan) were significantly less distant than Tatars, but not from each other. However, distance from Muslims, Caucasians, and Central Asians was different by location, and not ethnicity. In other words, those living in Moscow reported being significantly more distant from Muslims than those in Tatarstan; and significantly less distant from the migrant groups from the Caucasus and Central Asia than residents of Tatarstan.

5. Discussion

In this study, we examined teachers' attitudes toward ethnic and religious groups in the Russian Federation. To our knowledge this is the first such study to examine this specific phenomenon.

The results of the study suggest that minimal social distance exists between teachers and Russians, between teachers and Orthodox Christians. Next on the scale of social distance are groups of Tatars and Muslims. The greatest social distance is observed between teachers and immigrants from Caucasian and Central Asian countries. Intergroup attitudes toward ethnic groups of Russians, Tatars and religious groups of Muslims, Orthodox Christians are within fusion range on the social distance scale. Participants indicated potential willingness to enter into personal relationship (through marriage or friendship) with Russians and Tatars. This stems from the fact that, historically, these are the two largest ethnic groups in Russia that for a long period of time have resided side by

side and maintained close economic, cultural and social relations.

Although the greatest social distance is observed from Caucasian and Central Asian immigrants, intergroup attitudes toward them can be characterized as being within tolerance range. This suggests that respondents are ready to accept the presence of these groups as an objective reality. They are ready to cooperate with them at work and to live with them in the same city. Nevertheless the distance is greater than with Russians and Tatars. We attribute the larger social distance from ethnic groups from Central Asia and the Caucasus to new flows of labor migrants from these regions who are not only culturally and linguistically different, but are also of lower social status.

Such variable as the region where teachers reside in was further examined as it might impact teachers' attitudes. Teachers living in Moscow and Moscow region adopted closer social attitudes toward Caucasians and Central Asians compared to attitudes toward the same groups of people adopted by teachers from the Republic of Tatarstan. This could be accounted for the fact that the largest number of immigrants from Caucasian and Central Asian countries is concentrated in the capital of the country and the surrounding region. This has enhanced social interaction between immigrants and local population in Moscow and Moscow region. On the contrary, little social interaction or no such interaction has led teachers in Tatarstan to adopt more distant attitudes to immigrants from Caucasian and Central Asian countries.

Such social distance in attitudes toward ethnic minorities that prevails among teachers in Tatarstan contrasts with their attitudes toward Muslim students. Much more positive attitudes are expressed to this religious group in Tatarstan when compared to that in Moscow and Moscow region which may be justified by the fact that Tatarstan has historically preserved the heritage of Islamic culture. The possible explanation for such distant attitudes that persist among Moscow teachers might be that they have expressed their attitudes to Islam in general rather than to Muslims in particular. Islam is sometimes associated with some form of the dangerous ideology and terrorism. Such view pertains mostly to those having no or little interaction with representatives of this religious group. Therefore, the research results suggest that social interaction with various ethnic and religious groups significantly influences the level of social distance.

The results confirm mutual, close and positive perceptions, suggesting the presence of constructive cross-cultural dialogue, and readiness of teachers to interact with representatives of these ethnic groups and faiths in various social situations.

6. Limitations and Future Research

Our sample was not representative enough as the number of teachers was only 355. At the same time we explored the attitudes toward confessional groups on the whole not dwelling particularly on their ethnicity.

The results we obtained from our research cannot be compared with the research results gathered within other studies of attitudes toward religious and ethnic social groups. The modified version of Bogardus's scale of social distance and novel ways of its interpretation, the composition of ethnic and religious groups examined, and different centuries when researches were conducted do not allow direct comparisons with our data. In addition, other factors not assessed in this study can influence ethnic and religious attitudes of teachers. Thus, it is important to use caution when drawing conclusions from the data gathered in the study.

Despite the existing discrepancy in the teacher attitudes the results point out at some consistent trends. First trend is in the degrees of social distance with respect to different ethnic groups in Russia. Almost no social distance from Russians is expressed by a prevalent majority of teachers as this ethnic group is the largest in the country. As for Tatars, a high or low degree of social distance with respect to this ethnic group depends on the level of interaction with them across different Russian regions. Another steady trend indicates an existence of wary attitudes toward people coming from Caucasian and Central Asian countries, most of them being labor migrants. The previous research results demonstrated various levels of correlation between attitudes toward different ethnic groups and such variables as personal interaction, region of residence, age, ethnicity, influence of the media. Besides, if looking at the attitudes pertaining to different social groups (teachers, students, parents) it becomes clear that teachers show minimal social distance from representatives of different ethnic groups.

Future research can build on these preliminary findings. While teachers in our study showed generally tolerant attitudes toward different ethnic and religious groups, attitudes toward Christians and Muslims, and ethnic Russians and Tatars were particularly positive. Nonetheless, attitudes toward migrant groups from Central Asia and the Caucasus were lower, though still in the generally positive range. Since the number of migrants from these regions in the Russian Federation is increasing, it is important to consider the implications of these findings. While teachers seem to accept the presence of these ethnic groups in their surroundings, they are less comfortable including them in their personal lives. In addition, Horenzcyk and Tatar (2002) found that teachers' attitudes toward immigrant students are contingent on the context, whether it is manifested at the societal or school levels. When asked about integrating immigrant students in the educational contexts teachers tended to adopt more assimilationist attitudes. More pluralistic attitudes were expressed

with regard to the insertion of immigrants into the general society. It might be assumed that teachers' attitudes with respect to cultural diversity in the society may be changed in the context of everyday educational practice.

Further research is needed to examine what factors influence more positive attitudes toward these groups, how such attitudes are reflected in teacher's attitudes toward their students and practices in the classroom, and, ultimately, the ways how positive attitudes can be promoted.

Acknowledgments: The work is performed according to the Russian Government Program of Competitive Growth of Kazan Federal University

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