Sense of Belonging to Latvia in Latvian- and Russian-Speaking Residents of Latvia

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This study examined the sense of belonging to Latvia in Latvian-speaking and Russian-speaking residents of Latvia. The structural model involved opportunities for the fulfillment of personal goals and views of the situation in Latvia and the community as predictors of the sense of belonging at both levels of ecological systems. The Russian-speaking subsample consisted of 202 students ranging in age from 18 to 36 (65% females). The Latvian-speaking subsample involved 438 students ranging in age from 18 to 37 (67% females). The Sense of Belonging in Social Context Questionnaire and the Future of Country Questionnaire were applied. Belonging to community predicted belonging to Latvia in both groups of residents. However, the Russian-speaking minority group demonstrated more signs of local belonging and pragmatic ties with Latvia. Providing opportunities for fulfillment of personal goals and facilitating involvement of young people in processes at the country level are challenges for policies, aimed at integration and limiting emigration of young people.

Key words: sense of belonging, perceived opportunities, Latvia, community, ethnolinguistic group

Highlights:

- Perceived opportunities predict the sense of belonging to community and Latvia.
- Belonging to community predicts belonging to Latvia in both groups of residents.
- Latvian-speaking group’s belonging to Latvia is relatively higher.
- Russian-speaking group’s belonging is more local and pragmatic.
- Opportunities and involvement might facilitate integration and limit emigration.

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The sense of belonging to a country integrates perceived social, historical, and geographical ties, which are experienced in association with a particular community and locality (Miller, 2003). Belonging to a country reflects one’s involvement in social systems at different levels (Anthias, 2011) and, by analogy with ethnic (Phinney & Ong, 2007) and local identity (Pretty, Chipuer, & Bramston, 2003; Ujang & Zakaryia, 2018), forms the national identity (Tartakovsky, 2011). In a comparison to the sense of belonging to a local community (e.g., Ng, Kam, & Pong, 2005; Pretty et al., 2003; Tartaglia, 2006), predictors of the sense of belonging to a country were predominantly investigated in immigrant groups (Chow, 2007; Tartakovsky, 2009). In residents of Latvia, Kolesovs and Melne (2017) revealed opposite effects of an ethnic group on predictors of belonging to Latvia. The aim of this study was a comparison of models predicting the sense of belonging to Latvia in the Latvian-speaking (majority) and Russian-speaking (minority) residents of Latvia.

### The Sense of Belonging

Generally, the sense of belonging is a complex construct, which can be presented as involving two components: relational and spatiotemporal. The relational component reflects the basic human need for belonging (for a review, see Baumeister & Leary, 1995) and relatedness (for a review, see Deci & Ryan, 2000). Various definitions of the sense of belonging emphasize personal involvement in social relationships (Anant, 1966; Hagerty, Lynch-Sauer, Patusky, Bouwsema, & Collier, 1992) and perceived acceptance from others (Anthias, 2011; Banting & Soroka, 2012; Walton & Cohen, 2011) as main aspects of the relational component. The spatiotemporal component of the sense of belonging links individual-context interaction to particular places and time (Anthias, 2011; Miller, 2003). In studies on belonging to a community, this component manifests in relations to a particular living place and individual life prospects associated with it (e.g., Arcidiacono, Procentese, & Di Napoli, 2007; Pretty et al., 2003).

In addition to structural complexity, development of the sense of belonging occurs in a complex social context. From a bioecological perspective (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006), development of this sense constitutes a proximal process reflecting an interaction between the person and the social environment. Gradual involvement of the person in social systems adds new facets to the individual sense of belonging from micro to macro level. In the frame of the chronosystem, the person-context interaction may change individual experiences and expectations regarding personal belonging at different levels, including the level of a community or country.

Another model, describing individual involvement in the society, is a summarized model of socialization (Nurmi, 2004) including four interrelated processes: channeling, selection, adjustment, and reflection. From this perspective, development of the sense of belonging occurs through individual reflection on the interaction of goal-setting, pursuit, and coping behavior, aimed at need satisfaction, with the social context, perceived as the field of opportunities, constraints, and interpersonal relationships. Studies at the level of community...
(Arcidiacono et al., 2007; Tartaglia, 2006) confirmed the development of the sense of belonging through considering contextual opportunities and constraints.

Consequences and Predictors of the Sense of Belonging to a Country

Empirical studies confirmed the importance of the sense of belonging for social connectedness at the level of a country (Dekel & Nuttman-Shwartz, 2009; McCoy, Kirova, & Knight, 2016). A higher sense of belonging is associated with better integration into a multicultural society (McCoy et al., 2016). A sense of belonging to one’s country was also a resource for post-traumatic growth after exposure to traumatic events (Dekel & Nuttman-Shwartz, 2009).

In adolescent immigrants, political and cultural reasons for emigration, socioeconomic and demographic factors, and academic and social involvement were predictors for their sense of belonging to Canada (Chow, 2007). Tartakovsky (2009) has found that the sense of belonging to the receiving country (Israel) depends on immigrants’ attitude towards it in a pre-migration period and changes nonlinearly during a post-migration period.

Prediction of the sense of belonging to one’s country by belonging to a local community remains in question. Theoretical analyses (Anthias, 2011; Miller, 2003) indicated variability in the relationship between these senses. Empirical studies in ethnically diverse communities confirmed this trend. For example, higher belonging to a local community was associated with a higher level of national identity in one of three ethnic minority groups in Reggio Emilia (Barbieri & Zani, 2015). Living in ethnic enclaves in the USA was associated with a more developed sense of belonging to a local Arab community than to the mainstream society (Kumar, Seay, & Karabenick, 2015). Therefore, views of particular ethnic groups within a specific sociocultural context shape the connection between two senses of belonging.

In a study in Latvia, Kolesovs and Melne (2017) confirmed that predictors of a higher level of the sense of belonging to the country include a higher level of perceived opportunities for the fulfillment of personal goals (Nurmi, 2004, 2013) and a more positive evaluation of the situation. Similar relationships were observed at the level of a community as a nested ecological system (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). The connection between the macro and community level was confirmed for the evaluation of the situation and for opportunities while belonging to a particular community was not significantly associated with belonging to Latvia. Opposite effects of an ethnic group on the sense of belonging to a community and on perceived opportunities in Latvia indicated possible differences in the sense of belonging to Latvia in the Latvian-speaking majority and the Russian-speaking minority groups.

The Current Model and Hypotheses

The performed analysis allows the conclusion that the sense of belonging to a country can be described as individual reflections on balancing personal involvement and perceived acceptance (relational component) and individual
ties with the territorial unit and personal prospects, associated with it (spatiotemporal component). Taking into account the nested structure of social systems (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) and the significance of local territorial belonging (e.g., Arcidiacono et al., 2007), the level of a community should be involved in the analysis of belonging to a country.

At the most generalized level, the sense of belonging to a country can be defined as “the level of association of personal life with it in the present and in the future” (Kolesovs & Melne, 2017, p. 545). This definition emphasizes individual reflection on the level of personal integration with a particular aspect of the social world, highlighted in the analysis of the sense of belonging (Anant, 1966; Hagerty et al., 1992; Miller, 2003), and the temporal dimension of person-context interaction, pointed in theoretical models (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Nurmi, 2004) and confirmed in empirical studies (e.g., Arcidiacono, Procentese, & Di Napoli, 2007; Pretty et al., 2003). The level of generalization allows applying the same definition at the level of a community forming a nested social system under investigation.

To improve the model predicting the sense of belonging to a country, the exploratory path model (Kolesovs & Melne, 2017, p. 546) was updated (Figure 1). Following Arcidiacono et al. (2007) and Tartaglia (2006), the view of a community included personal control over the situation, the attractiveness of the living place, and one’s evaluation of the situation in the community. By analogy with the community level, the view of the country involved personal control and evaluation of the situation at the macro level. Perceived power and stability of Latvia were also added to the view of the country, as associated with an evaluation of its present and future (Kolesovs & Kashirsky, 2014). Therefore, the model extended the scope of perceived characteristics of a community and the country.

Figure 1. The model suggested for predicting the sense of belonging to Latvia.
Within the updated model, perceived opportunities for the fulfillment of personal goals remained the main predictor of the sense of belonging at both levels of social systems. This is in accordance with Nurmi’s (2004) conception of socialization in the field of perceived contextual opportunities and constraints. The pursuit of opportunities is also among the main drivers of migration processes worldwide (World Bank, 2018). A study on the perceived future of Latvia demonstrated that insufficient perceived opportunities form a reason for changing life prospects and emigration of people from Latvia (Kolesovs & Kashirsky, 2014). The later currently forms the main factor of depopulation in the country (Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, 2016).

The population of Latvia is not homogenous. For a variety of historical reasons (for a review, see Draguns, 2004), two main ethnolinguistic groups – the Latvian-speaking residents (currently about 62% of the population) and the Russian-speaking residents (about 37% of it) – form the population of Latvia. After the collapse of the USSR, Russian-speaking residents experienced a sense of alienation from decision-making processes and political institutions (Draguns, 2004). This tendency remains powerful and is expressed through skeptical views of Russian speakers about their impact and rights in Latvia (e.g., Birka, 2016). A recent change in legal regulations in the area of education (Augstskolu likums, 1995; & Supp. 2018) excluded Russian from languages for higher education in universities and colleges (with language studies being an exception) as a language that is not official in Latvia or the European Union. It is, therefore, no surprise that a study on acculturation (Lebedeva, Tatarko, & Berry, 2016) revealed signs of mutual avoidance of Latvian-speaking and Russian-speaking groups in Latvia.

As Miller (2003) pointed out, the sense of alienation can be closely associated with the reconstruction of the sense of belonging. Experiences of low political participation and acceptance at the level of the society can limit the perceived level of personal involvement and integration with Latvia in Russian-speaking residents. Therefore, the first hypothesis was: 1) The sense of belonging to Latvia in the Russian-speaking residents is lower than in the Latvian-speaking residents; A positive association between the sense of alienation at the macro level and the sense of belonging to a local community (Kumar et al., 2015), combined with a negative relationship between the sense of belonging to a local community and being a member of the Latvian-speaking group (Kolesovs & Melne, 2017), led to the second hypothesis: 2) The sense of belonging to a local community in the Russian-speaking residents is higher than in the Latvian-speaking residents. In addition, the variability of the relationship between senses of belonging to the country and community in minority groups (e.g., Barbieri & Zani, 2015) pointed at possible structural differences in the model of the sense of belonging to Latvia in Latvian- and Russian-speaking residents.
Method

Participants

Participants were 655 university students from 18 to 37 (M = 22.07, SD = 3.78, 66% were females). They formed a convenience sample, recruited through an informal network of social psychologists from Riga, Daugavpils, and Valmiera. There were no international students, and most of the participants (64%) were studying at their place of permanent residence. Students identified themselves as Latvian-speaking (67%), Russian-speaking (31%), or bilingual or speaking another language (2%). In accordance with the aim of the study, 640 Russian- or Latvian-speaking students were included in the analysis (Table 1) while 15 students were excluded from it.

Table 1
Demographic characteristics of Latvian– and Russian-speaking participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Latvian-speaking</th>
<th>Russian-speaking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of participants</td>
<td>438</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age, M (SD), years</td>
<td>22.13 (3.83)</td>
<td>21.81 (3.49)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age range, years</td>
<td>18–37</td>
<td>18–36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females, %</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of residence, M (SD), years</td>
<td>14.55 (8.46)</td>
<td>17.01 (7.57)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor graduates, %</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed, %</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married, %</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having children, %</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher than the median income*, %</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* – income per capita (Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, 2014).

The subsamples were similar in age and gender distributions, employment status, income, and proportions of bachelor graduates and students having children. The groups differed in reported marital status, χ²(1) = 7.09, p = .008, and the mean length of living in the current place of permanent residence was higher in Russian-speaking than in Latvian-speaking students, t(638) = 3.52, p < .001.

Measures

The Sense of Belonging in Social Context Questionnaire (Kolesovs & Melne, 2017). The questionnaire was administered in Latvian and aimed at revealing the generalized sense of belonging with an emphasis on its spatiotemporal component. A community and the country form the spatial frame of belonging while the present and near and distant future represent its temporal frame. Dividing the future into two categories was based on theoretical considerations on temporal distance (Trope & Liberman, 2003) and empirical findings on the perceived future of the country (Kolesovs & Kashirsky, 2014). Participants used a seven-point scale to rate their answers. The sense of belonging was assessed by asking the question: “To what extent do you associate your life with your place of residence/Latvia?” Three temporal categories – the present and the near and distant future were provided for answers. In the exploratory study (Kolesovs & Melne, 2017), Cronbach’s alphas were .80 and .78 for a community and Latvia, respectively.
Perceived opportunities for near and distant personal goals were assessed by answering the question: “To what extent does your place of residence/Latvia provide opportunities for fulfilling your near/distant personal goals?” The generalized assessment of opportunities minimized variability between different categories of personal goals, revealed in a multi-level analysis (Nurmi, Salmela-Aro, & Aunola, 2009). Cronbach’s alphas were .80 for the level of a community and .78 for the level of Latvia (Kolesovs & Melne, 2017).

The Future of Country Questionnaire (FCQ; Kolesovs & Kashirsky, 2014). The questionnaire was applied for the assessment of the situation in Latvia, its power, and perceived personal control over the country. An extension of the FCQ to the level of a community (Kolesovs & Melne, 2017) allowed assessing the situation of a community and personal control over it. The questionnaire included an evaluation of the situation: “Please evaluate the situation in Latvia/community at each timepoint”. The present, near future, and distant future were assessed. Selected categories were congruent with the temporal frame for the assessment of belonging. Kolesovs and Melne (2017) reported Cronbach’s alpha of .88 and .86 for Latvia and the community, respectively.

Levels of personal control over the situation in Latvia and community were measured by a single item each. The power of the country was assessed by a seven-point semantic differential scale, anchored by three pairs of adjectives: powerless-powerful, unstable-stable, and weak-strong. The last pair extended the original subscale of the FCQ, which demonstrated internal consistency ranging from Cronbach’s alpha of .66 to .68 (Kolesovs & Kashirsky, 2014).

An additional scale presented the attractiveness of the place of residence, emphasized in studies on the sense of community (Arcidiacono et al., 2007; Tartaglia, 2006). The attractiveness was assessed as the level of individual agreement with two items on a 7-point scale: “I like my place of residence” and “My place of residence is nice.”

Procedure

The study was conducted in 2016. After the informed consent was received, students answered the questionnaire in a paper-and-pencil form with no time limit. IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows 22.0 and ‘lavaan’ (0.5–23) for R (Rosseel, 2012) were applied for calculations and SEM modeling.

Results

The analysis revealed acceptable internal consistency of applied measures (Table 2). A comparison of means revealed both hypotheses: the Russian-speaking students reported a lower sense of belonging to Latvia and a higher sense of belonging to a community than the Latvian-speaking students. Opportunities for the fulfillment of goals at the level of a community, the attractiveness of the living place, and personal control over the community demonstrated no significant differences in both groups. The Latvian-speaking students evaluated perceived opportunities in Latvia, control over the situation in the country, its power, and the situation in Latvia and community significantly higher than the Russian-speaking students.
Table 2
Reliability, Descriptive Statistics, and a Comparison of Measures in the Latvian-Speaking (n = 438) and Russian-Speaking (n = 202) groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Latvian-speaking</th>
<th>Russian-speaking</th>
<th>t-test</th>
<th>d</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>α</td>
<td>M (SD)</td>
<td>α</td>
<td>M (SD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of community</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of belonging to community</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>4.65 (1.49)</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>4.95 (1.49)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities for goal fulfillment</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>4.65 (1.69)</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>4.72 (1.61)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation of the situation</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>5.23 (1.13)</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>4.91 (1.39)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attractiveness</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>5.46 (1.36)</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>5.49 (1.35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal control</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.56 (1.86)</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.25 (1.99)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macro level (Latvia)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of belonging to Latvia</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>5.87 (1.15)</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>5.31 (1.42)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities for goal fulfillment</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>5.52 (1.27)</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>4.90 (1.56)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation of the situation</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>4.47 (1.25)</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>4.05 (1.40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived power of Latvia</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>3.64 (1.18)</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>2.77 (1.20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal control</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.09 (1.57)</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.43 (1.55)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. $d =$ Cohen’s $d$ for effect size. * $p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001.

Testing the structural model of belonging in the full sample has controlled differences, associated with the main demographic variables. Satorra-Bentler correction (Satorra & Bentler, 1994) was applied in the assessment of model fit. The analysis revealed acceptable or close to acceptable (Hu & Bentler, 1999) fit indices: $\chi^2(24) = 109.14, p < .001$, AGFI = .99, CFI = .94, TLI = .89, RMSEA = .08 (90% CI from .06 to .09, $p = .001$), SRMR = .04. However, the following analysis demonstrated low invariance of the model (Rosseel, 2012; Van de Schoot, Lugtig, & Hox, 2012) regarding demographic variables. For gender, the model was not construct-level metric invariant (Cheung & Rensvold, 2002) in a comparison with the configural model, $\Delta \chi^2(4) = 21.96, p < .001$. The model was also not scalar (strong) invariant for participants’ employment, $\Delta \chi^2(7) = 14.35, p = .045$, and for the Latvian- vs. Russian-speaking group, $\Delta \chi^2(7) = 51.25, p < .001$, in a comparison with construct-level metric invariant models.

On the basis of these findings, the model was modified. The view of a community was reduced to an evaluation of the situation in the community. As a result, the model demonstrated scalar (strong) invariance regarding participants’ gender, employment, higher education, and income. At the same time, the model was only construct-level metric invariant (weak invariance) for the ethnolinguistic group, $\Delta \chi^2(2) = 0.27, p = .875$. Therefore, the ethnolinguistic group confirmed its significance for structural differences in the model of belonging to Latvia, while invariance, associated with other demographic variables, was reduced. As a result, two models of belonging were tested separately in Latvian- and Russian-speaking subsamples.

For the Latvian-speaking students, model fit indices were good: $\chi^2(24) = 13.35, p = .205$, AGFI = .99, CFI = 1.00, TLI = .99, RMSEA = .03 (90% CI from .00 to .06, $p = .839$), SRMR = .02. Figure 2 presents significant paths and standardized coefficients for the model in the Latvian-speaking subsample.
Figure 2. Predicting the sense of belonging to Latvia in the Latvian-speaking group.

For Russian-speaking students, model fit indices were also good: \( \chi^2(24) = 14.00, p = .173, \) AGFI = .99, CFI = .99, TLI = .97, RMSEA = .05 (90% CI from .00 to .10, \( p = .511 \)), SRMR = .04. Figure 3 presents significant paths and standardized coefficients in the Russian-speaking subsample.

Figure 3. Predicting the sense of belonging to Latvia in the Russian-speaking group.
Structural models revealed common tendencies in Latvian- and Russian-speaking students. In both groups, the sense of belonging to Latvia associated positively with the sense of belonging to a community. Higher perceived opportunities for the fulfillment of personal goals predicted a higher level of the sense of belonging to a community and Latvia. Perceived opportunities at the level of a community predicted a more positive evaluation of the situation at this level. A similar trend was observed at the level of Latvia. In addition, a more positive evaluation of the situation in a community predicted a higher sense of belonging to the community, a more positive view of Latvia, and a higher level of perceived opportunities in Latvia.

Different tendencies were observed in the relationship between perceived opportunities at the levels of a community and Latvia. This connection was significant in the Russian-speaking students only. In turn, the connection between the view of Latvia and the sense of belonging to Latvia was significant in the Latvian-speaking students.

Discussion

The results demonstrate that the ethnolinguistic group is the main source of invariance in the model, suggested for predicting the sense of belonging to Latvia. Nevertheless, the association between the sense of belonging to the country and the sense of belonging to a local community is positive in both ethnolinguistic groups of residents. This finding is in accordance with the proposed relationship between these senses (Anthias, 2011; Miller, 2003) and a view of progressive personal involvement in more complex social systems (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). A comparison with inconsistent associations in immigrant groups (Barbieri & Zani, 2015) indicates that the status of a group – permanent residents or immigrants – can be important for understanding the relationship between two levels of belonging.

At the same time, the study revealed differences in levels of belonging. As expected on the basis of previous analyses (Birka, 2016; Draguns, 2004; Kolesovs & Melne, 2017), the Russian-speaking minority group demonstrated a lower level of belonging to Latvia and a higher sense of belonging to the place of living. These findings concur with the tendency to compensate belonging at a community level, associated with relatively higher safety and relatedness (Kumar et al., 2015). From a bioecological perspective (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006), a lower level of the sense of belonging to the country characterizes relatively lower involvement of the ethnolinguistic minority group in the society. Simultaneously, a lower sense of belonging can reflect perceived lack of acceptance of the minority group, as demonstrated in studies in the educational context (e.g., Walton & Cohen, 2011). Therefore, results confirm the continuity of the problem of integration and intergroup relations in Latvia (Draguns, 2004).

Perceived opportunities for the fulfillment of personal goals confirmed their significance for the perception of the social context (Nurmi, 2004, 2013).
Higher opportunities predicted higher belonging at both levels of ecological systems. It is in accordance with previous studies on communities (Arcidiacono et al., 2007; Tartaglia, 2006) and an exploratory study at the level of a country (Kolesovs & Melne, 2017). Equal perceived opportunities and personal control at the level of a community and relatively lower levels of them at the level of Latvia support a more local view of belonging in the Russian-speaking residents.

The view of Latvia was a significant predictor for the sense of belonging in the Latvian-speaking group. This finding confirms that the assessment of the situation, perceived control over it, and the power of the country are topical in individual perception of the country (Kolesovs & Kashirsky, 2014). It also matches with findings on predictors of belonging to a community (Arcidiacono et al., 2007; Pretty et al., 2003; Tartaglia, 2006). An absence of the connection in Russian-speaking students can indicate more pragmatic ties with Latvia, based on perceived opportunities for personal goals (Tartaglia, 2006), and lower emotional involvement and personal control over processes in the country, pointed out in the analyses of interethnic relations (Birka, 2016; Draguns, 2004).

The connection between perceived opportunities at two levels confirms the importance of a local community for Russian-speaking group’s perception of opportunities in Latvia. In contrast, the Latvian-speaking group has not associated opportunities at their place of residence with opportunities in the country. Together with a shorter time of residence in a particular place, an absence of the association could indicate higher mobility of the Latvian-speaking group within the country.

**Limitations, Further Directions, and Implications**

Aimed at presenting the sense of belonging in two nested social systems, the model has visible limitations. The most generalized views of belonging and its predictors were analyzed. This level of analysis reduced variability in individual patterns (e.g., the variability of personal goals) and, simultaneously, limited a more detailed analysis of concepts under investigation. Furthermore, the study focused on the spatiotemporal component of the sense of belonging while its relational component was underrepresented.

The initial model of predicting the sense of belonging was reduced during the analysis because of its non-invariance, associated with significant demographic variables. It limits the study and indicates a need for the further development of the model and exploration of its partial invariance. Involvement of university students limits the generalization of results. Therefore, further studies should involve a broader population and investigate participants’ sense of belonging to the country in relation to their plans for mobility. Development of a more detailed view of the spatiotemporal component of belonging and extending the measurement by its relational part will be helpful for a deeper empirical investigation of the phenomenon. The interplay between the sense of belonging and participants’ ethnic and national identity is an additional challenge for studies in multiethnic populations.
In addition to multiethnicity and residential status, experienced social changes should be accounted for the generalization of results. Interethnic relations in Latvia occur in the context of post-Soviet transformations, which resulted in significant changes to the political system, groups’ status, and identities. Therefore, the current findings could be applied to minority and majority groups of residents from countries experiencing sociopolitical transformations (e.g., post-Soviet development). A cross-cultural study in post-socialist countries would be useful for testing this assumption.

From a practical perspective, results of the study indicate that providing opportunities for fulfillment of personal goals, developing the sense of belonging to a community, and involvement in the processes in the society are keys for the association of life prospects with the country. Two ways for the development of a greater sense of belonging to Latvia in the Russian-speaking residents can be suggested for social policies: supporting equal opportunities for the ethnolinguistic minority group at the level of the country and facilitating their participation and emotional involvement in the processes in Latvia. As the theoretical analysis demonstrated, mutual acceptance of ethnic groups can provide a basis for integrational processes in the society.

Conclusions

In summary, the study on the sense of belonging to Latvia confirmed significant connections between nested ecological systems. The sense of belonging to a community predicted the sense of belonging to Latvia in the Russian- and Latvian-speaking residents of Latvia. At the same time, the Russian-speaking minority group demonstrated signs of local belonging and more pragmatic ties with Latvia than the Latvian-speaking majority group. The model of predicting the sense of belonging also indicated that providing opportunities for fulfillment of personal goals and involving young people in the processes at the level of the country are challenges for social policies, focused on solving problems of emigration and integration into a society.

References


PSIHOGOJJA, 2019, Vol. 52(3), 249–263


Doživljaj pripadnosti Letoniji kod stanovnika Letonije koji su izvorni govornici ruskog odnosno letonskog jezika

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Ključne reči: osećaj pripadanja, opažene prilike, Letonija, zajednica, etnolingvistička grupa

RECEIVED 08.11.2018.
REVISED 22.01.2019.

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