

The Relationship Between Multiple Identities and Social Capital in the Post-Soviet Space: An Intergenerational Analysis

Alexander N. Tatarko

National Research University Higher School of Economics (HSE), Moscow, Russian Federation

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7557-9107>, e-mail: atatarko@hse.ru

Natalia V. Tšuiкина

University of Tallinn, Tallinn, Republic of Estonia

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0362-1457>, e-mail: natalia.tshuikina@tlu.ee

This study aims to identify the associations between multiple identities (ethnic, civil, religious, Soviet, civilizational) and two types of social capital (bridging and bonding) in two post-Soviet republics: Estonia and Kyrgyzstan. In both republics, the sample included representatives of two generations of ethnic Russians and representatives of the ethnic majority (the Estonians and the Kyrgyz), with at least 150 respondents in each group, so the total sample was 1,296 respondents. The authors used their own techniques to evaluate multiple identities, and a modified version of the social resource generator was used to evaluate bridging and bonding social capital. The results of the study showed that the younger generation in the post-Soviet space tends to have lower social capital, especially the bridging one. "Soviet" identity in the ethnic Russians is not associated with social capital, whereas in the representatives of the ethnic majority it is. Religious identity proved to be an important factor of both types of social capital in all the groups considered. The civic identity is linked to the bridging social capital in the Russians in both republics. Among the Estonian and Kyrgyz young people, ethnic identity is strongly associated with their bonding social capital. Also, the "European" identity of both generations of the Estonians demonstrated a strong association with the bonding social capital.

Keywords: bridging social capital, bonding social capital, trust, post-Soviet space, multiple identities.

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Взаимосвязь множественных идентичностей и социального капитала на постсоветском пространстве: межпоколенный анализ

А.Н. Татарко

Национальный исследовательский университет «Высшая школа экономики» (ФГАОУ ВО «НИУ ВШЭ»),
г. Москва, Российская Федерация

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7557-9107>, e-mail: atatarko@hse.ru

Н.В. Чуйкина

Таллинский университет, г. Таллин, Эстонская Республика

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0362-1457>, e-mail: natalia.tshuikina@tlu.ee

Работа направлена на выявление связей между множественными идентичностями (этнической, гражданской, религиозной, советской, цивилизационной) и двумя видами социального капитала (со-

единяющим и связывающим) в двух постсоветских республиках — Эстонии и Киргизии. В обеих республиках в выборку вошли представители двух поколений этнических русских и представителей этнического большинства (эстонцев и киргизов) не менее чем по 150 респондентов в каждой группе. Таким образом, общая выборка составила 1296 респондентов. Для оценок множественных идентичностей использовались авторские методики, для оценки соединяющего и связывающего социального капитала — модифицированная версия генератора социальных ресурсов. Результаты исследования показывают, что у молодого поколения на постсоветском пространстве наблюдаются тенденции к снижению социального капитала, особенно соединяющего. «Советская» идентичность не связана с социальным капиталом этнических русских в рассмотренных республиках, а у представителей этнического большинства — связана. Религиозная идентичность оказалась важным фактором обоих видов социального капитала во всех рассматриваемых группах. Гражданская идентичность связана с соединяющим социальным капиталом у русских в обеих республиках. У молодежи среди эстонцев и киргизов этническая идентичность является фактором, значительно сопряженным с их связывающим социальным капиталом. Также «европейская» идентичность у обоих поколений эстонцев продемонстрировала сильную сопряженность со связывающим социальным капиталом.

Ключевые слова: соединяющий социальный капитал, связывающий социальный капитал, доверие, постсоветское пространство, множественные идентичности.

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Problem Statement

Studies dedicated to social capital are highly relevant, because social capital is society's most important intangible asset, encouraging economic development and improving the population's health and wellbeing [3; 11; 13; 17; 22]. The latest research, carried out during the current COVID-19 pandemic, shows that social capital is an effective means of countering the spread of the disease, and the countries or regions with more substantial social capital are more efficient at deploying anti-COVID measures [6].

In this paper, we shall consider the social capital of the communities in two post-Soviet countries, Estonia and Kyrgyzstan. Furthermore, we shall study the links between social capital and various types of social identity (multiple identities). Social capital can be defined as a range of resources available to an individual or a group through social connections [16].

A number of researchers [7; 19] have focused on social capital as a source of various means of assisting an individual with different life goals. On the micro-level, social capital can be viewed as a social resource possessed by individuals; and is thus referred to as “individual social capital” [24]. This paper will deal with social capital specifically on the individual level; in other words, we will be studying individual social capital. R. Putnam suggested dividing social capital into in-group social resources (bonding social capital) and out-group social resources (bridging social capital) [21]. In this study, we shall use the term “bonding so-

cial capital” to describe the social capital received from members of the same ethnic group [12; 15]. Social capital sourced from other ethnic groups shall be described as “bridging social capital” [14; 15].

Existing studies show that there is a lack of social capital in the post-Soviet space, accompanied by difficulties with forming said capital. Trend analysis reveals a decline of social capital in post-Soviet countries between 1991 and the early 2000s, with the Baltic states as an exception [10]. The latter have not undergone the same sharp reduction of social capital. Other studies, dedicated specifically to the dynamics of trust (which is a key component of social capital) in the post-Soviet space, have shown that trust diminished significantly in most post-Soviet countries after the collapse of the USSR in 1991, not recovering by 2011 [23].

This decline can be partially attributed to the changes in the identity of the nations that were once part of the USSR, as well as to shifts in the balance of status among ethnic groups. The latter primarily concerns ethnic Russians, who stopped being the “state-forming” group in the former Soviet republics. In this context, we find it important to examine the nature of the links between the different types of social identity, on the one hand, and the social capital, on the other hand, among the ethnic majority and ethnic Russians in the post-Soviet republics.

The studies done to date highlight the strong link between identifying with a group and being ready to invest one's resources into this group's wellbeing [9; 18]. We will apply this idea in our own study as well, but with

slightly different emphasis: if people share the same identity, they are more inclined to mutual cooperation and aid. Consequently, we will be able to assess the contribution of various types of social identity, or multiple identities [4], to the respondent's individual social capital (that is, the number of people from the respondent's own ethnic group and other ethnic groups who are willing to provide them with various types of assistance).

Social identities make it easier for people to find their bearings in the social reality, building a foundation for social connections [18]. If a person sees that they belong to the same social category as another person, they will have more reasons to form social ties and provide mutual aid. Therefore, the stronger individuals identify with a given group, the more they are inclined to help and support other members of the same group; which is the essence of social capital if we are looking at individual social capital specifically. This assumption is confirmed by a number of empirical studies (find an overview of them in 18, pp. 30–31).

As the socialization of the older and younger generation took place under different conditions (during the Soviet period and after the USSR's collapse respectively), and as certain social identities may be expressed to different degrees, this study compares results displayed by two generations among the ethnic majority and the ethnic Russians in each republic (Estonia and Kyrgyzstan). Notably, the number of ethnic Russians differs greatly in these two countries. It is also worth additionally pointing out that the previous intergenerational studies on social capital have documented a difference in social capital among respondents belonging to different generations [1]. These findings, among other insights, give us reason to believe that there are intergenerational differences in the social capital of respondents who were socialized before and after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

In light of the above, this study shall seek to answer the following key questions.

1. To what extent does the salience of various components making up the individual social capital of ethnic Russians, on the one hand, and members of the ethnic majority, on the other hand, differ in Estonia and Kyrgyzstan?

2. Which of the multiple identity types of different generations among the Russian and native population of

the post-Soviet republics can be linked to the respective generations' individual social capital?

Method

Table 1 describes the parameters of our sample. We surveyed ethnic Russians and members of the ethnic majority in Estonia and Kyrgyzstan.

Instruments

1. Individual Social Capital.

1.1. Social support resources. Here, we used a modified version of the "resource generator" [5]. We assessed the number of friends and acquaintances from the respondent's own ethnic group and the ethnic out-group that would be ready to provide different types of assistance.

1.2. Number of close friends. We assessed the number of close friends within the same ethnic group and from the ethnic out-group.

1.3. Frequency of contacts with close friends. We assessed the number of interactions with close friends both from the same ethnic group and from the ethnic out-group.

2. Generalized trust. Generalized trust is not a part of individual social capital, but it serves as the basis for forming social capital at the level of the community and society. For this reason, we added an assessment of the generalized trust among respondents to our study.

2. Multiple Identities. We used a 5-point scale to assess the following types of multiple identities among the members of the ethnic groups that took part in our survey: ethnic identity, civic identity, religious identity, "Soviet" identity, and "civilizational" identity (Turkic for the Kyrgyz respondents and European for the Russian and Estonian respondents). Each identity type was assessed across 4 aspects. The consistency reliability of the scales measuring identity was higher than 0.7 for all groups.

Results

Table 2 shows the results of comparing social capital indicators across two generations in the samples of Russians and Estonians respectively.

Table 1

	Youth		Adults	
	N	% female	N	% male
Russians in Estonia	152	35,5	234	40,2
Russians in Kirgizstan	150	28	150	41,3
Estonians	151	53,3	159	53,5
Kirgizs	150	27,3	150	36,7

Table 2 reveals the following trends. In both samples, the younger generation possesses more bonding social capital than the older generation. In terms of bridging social capital, there are no significant intergenerational differences within either ethnic group, but its absolute value is low. The older generation has a higher generalized level of trust. As for the number of social ties (close friends and contacts therewith), the trends in the group of Russians are similar to the values for social capital: younger Russians have a higher number of in-group friendships and a greater density of in-group contacts. Among Estonians, the younger generation also has more friends from the in-group; the other indicators do not reveal any major differences. This allows us to conclude that young people from both ethnic groups are more inclined to build their social capital on the basis of ethnicity than their elders.

Table 3 provides an intergenerational comparison of social capital indicators among ethnic Russians living in Kyrgyzstan and the Kyrgyz people. Young Russians living in Kyrgyzstan are ahead of their elders in terms of both bonding and bridging social capital. The Kyrgyz people display the opposite trend: both types of social capital have higher values among the older generation. Generalized trust is higher among the older Russians and the younger Kyrgyz. Moving on to the number of

friends and contacts with them: in the group of Russian respondents, members of the older generation have a statistically significantly higher number of friends within their own group; the Kyrgyz display a similar trend. Other indicators do not possess any statistically significant differences (Table 3).

At the next stage of our analysis, we tested the links between multiple identities and the individual social capital of respondents from all 8 subsamples of our study.

Fig. 1 illustrates the conceptual model that we tested during our study.

This model was tested via multi-group structural equation modeling. We assessed the links in pairs of groups that shared a status/age, in each republic, as follows: 1) Russian youth in both republics; 2) Russians in both republics; 3) Estonian and Kyrgyz youth; 4) older Estonians and Kyrgyz.

Among young Russians living in Estonia, there is no link between multiple identities and social capital. Among young Russians living in Kyrgyzstan, ethnic and civic identity have a positive correlation to bonding social capital, while civic identity also correlates to bridging social capital.

Older Russians living in Estonia display a positive correlation between religious identity, on the one hand, and both bonding and bridging social capital, on the other hand. The ethnic identity of older Russians works

Table 2
Individual Social Capital Among Two Generations of Estonians and Russians Living in Estonia

Group	Russians in Estonia		t	Estonians		t
	Adults M (SD)	Youth M (SD)		Adults (M, SD)	Youth (M, SD)	
Bonding SC	1,90 (0,55)	2,21 (0,66)	-3,73***	2,18 (0,73)	2,42 (0,66)	-2,73**
Bridging SC	1,49 (0,55)	1,40 (0,52)	1,28	1,58 (0,74)	1,43 (0,47)	1,75
Generalized trust	3,32 (0,73)	2,89 (0,76)	4,34***	3,29 (0,77)	3,08 (0,72)	2,27*
Number of close friends (Russians)	3,82 (1,07)	4,16 (0,99)	-2,44*	3,22 (1,34)	2,50 (1,27)	4,38***
Number of close friends (Estonians)	2,67 (1,27)	2,06 (1,29)	3,43***	4,31 (0,86)	4,15 (0,94)	1,43
Frequency of contacts with close friends (Russians)	3,36 (0,92)	3,83 (0,95)	-3,74***	2,76 (1,09)	2,53 (1,19)	1,52
Frequency of contacts with close friends (Estonians)	2,40 (1,17)	2,09 (1,20)	1,92*	2,76 (0,85)	3,67 (0,87)	0,76

Table 3
Individual Social Capital Among Two Generations of the Kyrgyz People and Russians Living in Kyrgyzstan

Group	Russians in Kyrgyzstan		t	Kyrgyz		t
	Adults M (SD)	Youth M (SD)		Adults (M,SD)	Youth (M,SD)	
Bonding SC	1,97 (0,57)	2,17 (0,61)	-2,93**	2,95 (0,88)	2,66 (0,80)	3,02**
Bridging SC	1,63 (0,66)	1,93 (0,73)	-3,66***	1,75 (0,72)	1,43 (0,51)	4,3***
Generalized trust	2,97 (0,79)	2,77 (0,69)	2,35*	3,26 (0,87)	2,86 (0,82)	4,05***
Number of close friends (Russians)	4,43 (0,79)	3,92 (1,01)	4,80***	4,43 (0,76)	4,49 (0,81)	-0,65
Number of close friends (Kyrgyz)	3,62 (1,34)	3,40 (1,31)	1,43	3,11 (1,37)	2,62 (1,38)	3,05**
Frequency of contacts with close friends (Russians)	3,88	3,89	-0,06	4,0 (0,72)	4,44 (3,25)	-1,61
Frequency of contacts with close friends (Kyrgyz)	3,16	3,41	-1,90	2,68 (1,27)	2,58 (1,36)	0,65

against bridging social capital, in both Estonia and Kyrgyzstan alike. Civic identity, by contrast, is connected positively to bridging social capital in both groups. In Kyrgyzstan, the religious identity of Russians has a positive correlation to their bonding social capital

Young Estonian and Kyrgyz respondents display the same pattern that we already encountered before: there is a positive correlation between the salience of their ethnic identity and bonding social capital. At the same time, Kyrgyz respondents also show a negative correlation between this type of identity and bridging social capital. Civic identity works against bridging social capital among young Estonians; among young Kyrgyz, the situation is reversed. The “Soviet” type of identity has a negative correlation to bonding social capital among young Estonians, unlike their “civilizational” (European) identity, which correlates positively to bonding capital. Notably, “Soviet” identity does not demonstrate any other links, either among young Estonian respondents or among young Kyrgyz respondents.

Older Estonians and Kyrgyz display no links between civic and religious identity, on the one hand, and social capital, on the other hand. The supra-ethnic identities – the past “Soviet” identity and the current “civilizational” identity – displayed the largest number of links to social capital. Among the Kyrgyz respondents, the “Soviet” identity is associated with bonding social capital. Both groups also link this identity to bridging social capital. “Civilizational” (European) identity has a positive correlation to bonding social capital both among younger and older Estonians. In the group of Kyrgyz respondents, we can observe a positive correlation between “civilizational” (Turkic) identity and bridging social capital.

Discussion

We shall now remind the reader that the goal of this paper was to study the link between multiple identities and social capital among members of two generations,

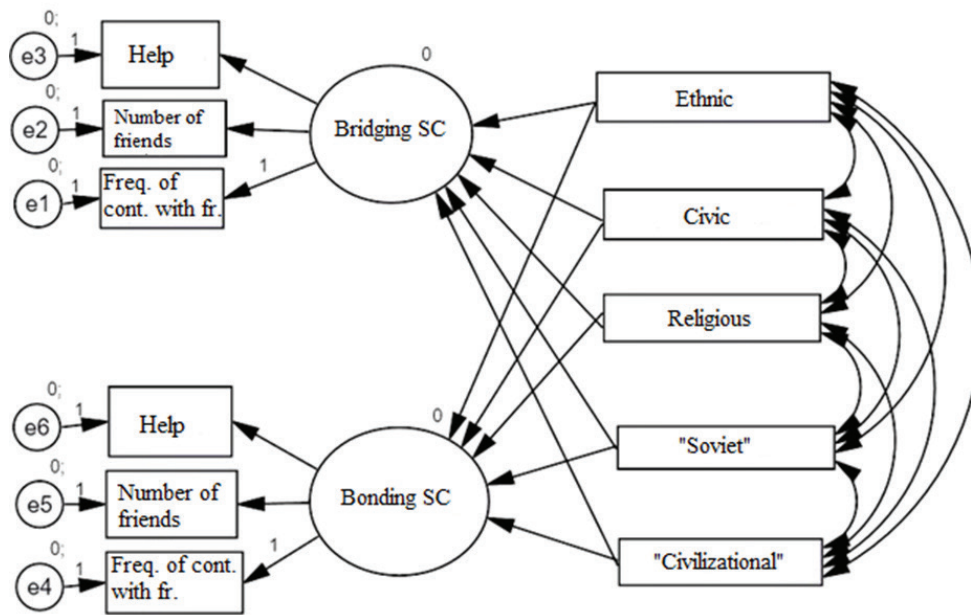


Fig. 1. The Study's Conceptual Model

Table 4
The Link Between Multiple Identities and Individual Social Capital (Multi-Group Model for Young Russians Living in Estonia and Kyrgyzstan)

Dependent: Soc. Cap. Predictor: Identity	Bonding SC		Bridging SC		Model fit	
	Russians in Estonia β	Russians in Kyrgyzstan β	Russians in Estonia β	Russians in Kyrgyzstan β	Unconstrained	Measurement weights
Ethnic	-0,01	0,17*	-0,11	0,02	CFA=0,960; $\chi^2/df=1,58$; RMSEA=0,045; PCLOSE=0,665.	CFA=0,954; $\chi^2/df=1,57$; RMSEA=0,044; PCLOSE=0,703.
Civic	0,09	-0,08	0,01	0,33***		
Religious	0,10	0,19***	0,08	-0,05		
“Soviet”	-0,09	-0,04	-0,07	0,11		
“Civilizational”	0,12	-0,04	0,01	-0,15		
					$\Delta CFI^+ = 0,006$	

* $p < 0,05$; ** $p < 0,01$; *** $p < 0,001$; ⁺The metric invariance is hereinafter present at $\Delta \leq 0,01$, allowing us to compare the regression coefficients of the respondent groups.

Table 5

The Link Between Multiple Identities and Individual Social Capital (Multi-Group Model for Older Russians Living in Estonia and Kyrgyzstan)

Dependent: Soc. Cap. Predictor: Identity	Bonding SC		Bridging SC		Model fit	
	Russians in Estonia β	Russians in Kyrgyzstan β	Russians in Estonia β	Russians in Kyrgyzstan β	Unconstrained	Measurement weights
Ethnic	-0,04	0,12	-0,28*	-0,18*	CFA=0,934; $\chi^2/df=2,12$; RMSEA=0,068; PCLOSE=0,10.	CFA=0,937; $\chi^2/df=1,99$; RMSEA=0,065; PCLOSE=0,10.
Civic	-0,09	0,12	0,58***	0,35***		
Religious	0,58***	0,42***	0,26*	0,16		
“Soviet”	0,07	-0,05	0,09	0,08		
“Civilizational”	0,07	0,06	-0,05	0,03		
					$\Delta CFI = 0,003$	

* $p \leq 0,05$; ** $p \leq 0,01$; *** $p \leq 0,001$;

Table 6

The Link Between Multiple Identities and Individual Social Capital (Multi-Group Model for Young Members of the Ethnic Majority in Estonia and Kyrgyzstan)

Dependent: Soc. Cap. Predictor: Identity	Bonding SC		Bridging SC		Model fit	
	Estonian β	Kyrgyz β	Estonians β	Kyrgyz β	Unconstrained	Measurement weights
Ethnic	0,44***	0,33*	0,15	-0,30*	CFA=0,914; $\chi^2/df=2,28$; RMSEA=0,65; PCLOSE=0,10.	CFA=0,928; $\chi^2/df=2,44$; RMSEA=0,69; PCLOSE=0,02.
Civic	-0,13	-0,01	-0,28*	0,36*		
Religious	0,04	0,00	-0,02	-0,17		
“Soviet”	-0,31***	-0,01	0,06	0,06		
“Civilizational”	0,20*	0,01	0,02	0,03		
					$\Delta CFI = 0,013$	

* $p \leq 0,05$; ** $p \leq 0,01$; *** $p \leq 0,001$;

Table 7

The Link Between Multiple Identities and Individual Social Capital (Multi-Group Model for Older Members of the Ethnic Majority in Estonia and Kyrgyzstan)

Dependent: Soc. Cap. Predictor: Identity	Bonding SC		Bridging SC		Model fit	
	Estonian β	Kyrgyz β	Estonians β	Kyrgyz β	Unconstrained	Measurement weights
Ethnic	0,17	-0,12	0,02	-0,20	CFA=0,956; $\chi^2/df=1,91$; RMSEA=0,06; PCLOSE=0,20.	CFA=0,946; $\chi^2/df=2,05$; RMSEA=0,06; PCLOSE=0,10.
Civic	0,12	0,21	0,22	0,14		
Religious	-0,14	-0,03	0,20	-0,04		
“Soviet”	-0,04	0,29**	0,28*	0,29**		
“Civilizational”	0,34*	0,06	-0,20	0,19		
					$\Delta CFI = 0,01$	

* $p \leq 0,05$; ** $p \leq 0,01$; *** $p \leq 0,001$;

representing the ethnic Russians and the ethnic majority living in two post-Soviet republics, which differ by the size of the Russian population, namely Estonia and Kyrgyzstan.

First and foremost, we should note a certain reduction of social capital, specifically bridging social capital, among younger respondents, as compared to their elders. In Estonia, young people (Russians and Estonians alike) have more bonding than bridging social capital; their bonding social capital also has higher values than among the older generation, while their trust level is lower. This affirms that members of the younger generation within both ethnic groups primarily see social support resources within their own ethnic group and look outside the group for support to a much lesser extent.

Young Russians living in Kyrgyzstan are ahead of their elders in terms of both bridging and bonding social capital. Using J. Berry’s concept, this is evidence of the dual connections to both cultures [2]. Russian youth living in Kyrgyzstan strive to adapt to this context. At the same time, it is important to remember that one of the possible reasons behind this trend is that there are very few Russians in Kyrgyzstan, making this “dual” cultural experience inevitable. Among the Kyrgyz respondents, the trend is reversed: the older generation exhibits both dual cultural connections and higher generalized trust. This points to the older Kyrgyz generation having more social capital than the younger.

Overall, our general assumption that multiple identities can be associated with bridging and bonding social

capital indicators has been confirmed. The links that we discovered reveal a number of fairly interesting trends. First of all, we must note that religious identity makes an important contribution to the social capital of Russians living in the former Soviet republics (as exemplified by the two countries that we studied). This is most typical of the older generation, and much less so of the younger generation. Surprising as it may seem, it is religious, not ethnic identity, that bolsters bonding social capital among Russians in the republics in question. For Russians, religion serves as a link to the rest of their people and a powerful source of social capital. The local ethnic majority (Estonians/Kyrgyz) does not assign this function to religious identity.

If we make a generalized comparison between the ethnic and civic identities in terms of how they correlate to both types of social capital, we will discover that, overall, ethnic identity lies at the foundation of bonding social capital and may, in some cases, work against bridging social capital, which is linked to civic identity. The positive link between civic identity and bridging social capital can be observed in most of the groups selected for the study, except for young Estonians. This means that civic identity can serve as the basis for social capital, particularly among Russians in post-Soviet republics. As for why the group of young Estonians exhibited a negative correlation between civic identity and bonding social capital, this question remains open-ended and requires further study.

European identity, as our research shows, is of great importance for bonding social capital among Estonians. More than that: among older Estonians, this is the identity that has ties to bonding social capital, unlike the narrower identities, civic and ethnic. In other words, the growth of the European identity has the capacity to form the foundation for bonding social capital in Estonian society.

We've also included "Soviet identity" into our analysis, assuming that it might be linked to bridging social capital among the older members of different ethnic groups in the former Soviet republics. A possible reason for this is the so-called sense of common destiny [8] among the older generation. This sense forms the background for shared identity, having a positive impact on bridging social capital, as people feel inclined to support those who have the same "destiny". This assumption was partially reaffirmed in our study. It turns out that the Russian population in the republics in question does not have any connection between its Soviet identity and social capital, while the ethnic majority (Estonians and Kyrgyz) associates this social category primarily with bridging social capital, which correlates to it positively. It is also important to note that we only found the link between "Soviet" identity and bridging social capital (and bonding social capital as well, among Kyrgyz respondents) in the older Estonian and Kyrgyz generation. Young Kyrgyz do not exhibit this link at all, while young Estonians demonstrate a negative correlation between "Soviet" identity and bonding social

capital, which instead correlates positively to "European" identity. In other words, those young people who, to some extent, embrace the Soviet past, risk being left without any social support, while those respondents who have a more salient European identity are characterized by a higher level of social support among members of their own ethnic group.

Conclusion

The study that we have carried out allows for the following conclusions. Firstly, our analysis of bridging and bonding social capital across two generations of Russians and members of the ethnic majority of Estonia and Kyrgyzstan has led us to believe that in the post-Soviet space, there is a trend towards a decline in the bridging social capital of the younger generation. We think that this phenomenon is connected to the changes in the social identity of the younger generation, both among Russians and the ethnic majority, which occurred after the collapse of the USSR.

Civic identity among Russians living in the post-Soviet republics correlates positively to bridging social capital. In other words, this identity can become a bridge between Russians and the native ethnic groups of the respective republics, serving as one of the sources of more diversified social capital. We have also discovered that the "Soviet" identity of ethnic Russians living in the post-Soviet republics in question does not correlate to any type of social capital. Whereas among the ethnic majority, the "Soviet" identity of the older generation gets linked positively to bridging social capital (and bonding social capital as well, in the case of Kyrgyz respondents).

Rather unexpectedly, religious identity has a major impact on both types of social capital (bridging and bonding) among ethnic Russians. Apparently, religious identity is one of the important factors sustaining the community of ethnic Russians in the post-Soviet republics that we examined.

Among the younger people from post-Soviet republics, ethnic identity has a positive impact on building up bonding social capital within their ethnic group. Conversely, the groups of ethnic Russians from both republics demonstrate a negative relationship between ethnic identity and bridging social capital. Furthermore, bonding social capital among Estonians (both younger and older) is tied to how much they express their European identity; in other words, it is this identity that, in many respects, brings the Estonian community closer and encourages mutual support within this community. The group of Russian respondents does not exhibit any ties between European identity and either type of social capital.

We would like to emphasize that the trends that we revealed require further tests and clarifications among other respondent groups from other post-Soviet countries.

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Information about the authors

Alexander N. Tatarko, Doctor of Psychology, Professor, Department of Psychology, Faculty of Social Sciences, Chief Researcher, Center for Sociocultural Research, National Research University Higher School of Economics, Moscow, (HSE), Russian Federation, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7557-9107>, e-mail: atatarko@hse.ru

Natalia V. Tshuikina, PhD, Senior Lecturer, School of Humanities, Tallinn University, Tallinn, Estonian Republic, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0362-1457>, e-mail: natalia.tshuikina@tlu.ee

Информация об авторах

Татарко Александр Николаевич, доктор психологических наук, профессор департамента психологии факультета социальных наук, главный научный сотрудник Центра социокультурных исследований, Национальный исследовательский университет «Высшая школа экономики» (ФГАОУ ВО «НИУ ВШЭ»), г. Москва, Российская Федерация, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7557-9107>, e-mail: atatarko@hse.ru

Чу́йкина Наталия Владимировна, кандидат филологических наук, доцент Института гуманитарных наук, Таллинский университет, г. Таллин, Эстонская Республика, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0362-1457>, e-mail: natalia.tshuikina@tlu.ee

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