投稿論文

Effects of Overlapping Relative Gratification and Deprivation on Ethnic Minorities:

A Case Study of Narva on the EU–Russia Border

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Approximately one-third of Estonia's population comprises Russian speakers, as many of them were *de facto* immigrants and their descendants during the Soviet period. After 1991, the Estonian government adopted relatively restrictive citizenship policies. More than 30 years after the restoration of Estonia's independence, the situation of Russian speakers has improved considerably, although some of them occasionally face structural difficulties in their daily lives. Nevertheless, Estonians have maintained interethnic relationships relatively well compared to other Eastern European and post-Soviet countries, without direct confrontations or disputes. This study aims to investigate the crucial factors behind such stable interethnic relationships, focusing on the Estonian border town of Narva, which shares its border with Russia, and where 96% of residents are Russian speakers. Based on six months of ethnographic fieldwork in Narva, and by applying the classic sociological concepts of the reference group and relative deprivation/gratification, this study identifies the crucial factors that reduce Russian speakers' sense of deprivation, and strengthen their sense of gratification. These findings contribute to the discussion on the social inclusion of ethnic minorities and immigrants in the host society.

Introduction

Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 highlights the importance of capturing the reality and complexity of the experiences of Russian-speaking people living in former Soviet states, especially those in Eastern Europe. Estonia is a former Soviet state that includes a large Russian-speaking population, accounting for approximately one-fourth (24.7%) of its overall population. After the restoration of Estonia's independence in 1991, the government announced that Soviet occupation was illegal, and readopted the 1938 Citizenship Act. It politically "contained" Soviet-era settlers

by granting automatic citizenship almost exclusively to the citizens in 1940 and their descendants (Järve and Poleshchuk, 2019: 1). Consequently, many Russian speakers (approximately one-third of the population) became *de facto* stateless.[*1] Russian speakers have occasionally been perceived as a potential threat to Estonia's security in the context of the history of Soviet occupation, as well as their large population. Although the situation of Russian speakers has improved in the areas of citizenship and language during the process of accession to the European Union (EU),[*2] as well as after the accession,[*3] disparities between the two ethnic groups remain.

Presumably, a disadvantageous socioeconomic structure for minorities in various sectors, including labor, education, and everyday activities, tends to increase their distrust and frustration towards the host society and central government. However, Estonian society has been moderately stable, without major confrontations with Russian speakers (except for some particular cases like the Bronze Night event in 2007[*4]), in comparison with other Central and Eastern European countries with various ethnic minorities and immigrants. What factors contribute to such stable interethnic relationships?

By focusing on Russian speakers' perceptions of residing in Estonia and Russia based on a half-year of ethnographic fieldwork conducted by the author, this article aims to contribute to the discussion on the social inclusion of minorities and immigrants into the host society.

1. Setting the Scene

(1) Russian Speakers in Estonia

Due to Soviet policies, the number of Russian speakers in Estonia increased from 26,000 in 1945, to 602,000 in 1989 (Vetik, 1993: 273). These immigrants did not consider themselves ethnic minorities or immigrants, as they believed that they were simply moving within one country, the Soviet Union (Kus, 2011). However, Russian-speaking immigrants are not monolithic; they comprise ethnic Russians, Ukrainians, Belarusians, and other ethnic groups coming from other parts of the Soviet Union, as well as those who had already settled in Estonia before WWII.

Considering these complexities, scholars have referred to them as Russian speakers, Estonian Russians, and Russophones. Some scholars suggested to avoid analyzing them through the lens of being Russian speakers, because Russian-speaking populations are fragmented and their self-identification is highly diversified (Jašina-Schäfer, 2021). Nevertheless, the category "Russian speakers" is used in this study because these Russian speakers have their own identity centering the Russian language through a diversified identity formation, rather than a common group consciousness with those living in Russia and other post-Soviet states (Cheskin, 2016; Kosmarskaya, 2002; Laitin, 1998; Vihalemm and Masso, 2007). The self-identification and level of integration into Estonian society vary among the first, second-, and third- generations[*5] (Kallas, 2021).

Russian speakers' identity formations need to be analyzed from various perspectives, including culture, language, historical memory, economy, and social integration (Cheskin, 2015). Acknowledging the complexity of their identities, this study focuses on the economic aspect with a combination of comparisons involving Estonians and Russians.

(2) Narva: A Border Town Between the EU and Russia

Estonia's nation-building is premised upon the independence of ethnic Estonians and their culture in relation to the history of its occupation by the Soviet Union (Smith, 1996). Hence, the Estonian government adopted relatively restrictive linguistic and citizenship registrations against Russian speakers. Although human rights and social integration have improved, residential and socioeconomic segregation between Estonians and Russian speakers has partially deepened (Mägi, 2018: 34).

From the perspective of Russian speakers' identity formation, Narva is significant because it is a "battlefield" of "nation-building processes" with competing identity claims owing to its geographical, historical, and socio-linguistic conditions (Pfoser, 2014). Narva is the largest town in Ida-Viru County (Ida-Virumaa), northeastern Estonia, where Russian speakers comprise 74% of the population.[*6] Narva shares its borders with the Russian town of Ivangorod.[*7] Historically, Narva was destroyed during WWII. Residents were evacuated from the city and replaced primarily by working-class people from other Soviet republics. Therefore, it has 96% of Russian speakers, despite being an Estonian town.

Narva was reconstructed, and underwent industrial development in the Soviet era. However, it experienced an economic downturn in the 1990s after the collapse of the Soviet Union (Nikiforova, 2004). Unemployment rose, and Narva's socioeconomic situation deteriorated. Some scholars have defined Narva's situation in relation to Estonia as internal peripheralization (Pfoser, 2018). Therefore, there has been an outflow of young people from Narva to larger cities such as Tallinn for higher education and job opportunities. Consequently, the population is aging rapidly. These features give Narva a conservative perspective. Despite these negative stereotypes, several attempts have been made to invest in both the socioeconomic and cultural domains of Narva to engender a sense of belonging, international cultural events, and investments to redevelop the city.[*8]

(3) Previous Studies

Although socio-economic disparities between Russian speakers and Estonians persist, Russian speakers' sense of belonging, trust towards the Estonian society and state, and command over the Estonian language have been gradually increasing (Estonian Integration Monitoring (EIM), 2020). Recent studies also show positive trends in Estonian political discourse related to the kin-state (Russia) and EU (Schulze, 2018). Furthermore, Estonia's party competition system has contributed

to the non-radicalization of interethnic groups in politics (Nakai, 2014). Another study on "horizontal citizenship" presented the possibility of increasing their sense of belonging in Estonian society through everyday practice and participation in various events (Jašina-Schäfer and Cheskin, 2020).

In 2020, while majority of the people from other nationalities (mainly Russian in this context) considered themselves a part of Estonian society (76%) and were welcomed here (62%), several others saw themselves as second-class persons (38%) unable to defend their interests (40%) (EIM, 2020). In the same year, 14% of Estonians felt that they were second-class persons, and 28% felt unable to protect their interests. Particularly, the difference in material well-being is acutely perceived by people of other nationalities living in Ida-Viru County, of whom, only 14% consider opportunities to be equal and 83% find the situation of Estonians to be relatively better (EIM, 2020). However, the same data showed that there has been an improvement in Russian speakers' trust and perceptions towards the Estonian government and society, as well as in interethnic relations.

Alena Pfoser (2017) points out that Russian speakers in Narva have a sense of "Europeanness" and superiority compared with their counterparts in Ivangorod, Narva's twin town located across the Narva River in Russian territory. This study aims to explore this point further.

2. Theories and Research Method

(1) Reference Group

Individuals often identify with a group, based on which they evaluate their situation and conduct. To a certain extent, an individual's self-evaluation of their status depends on the group used as a framework for judgment. Herbert Hyman formally called it the "reference group" (Hyman, 1942). Robert K. Merton distinguished between a membership group to which people belong, and a reference group used as a basis for comparison and evaluation (Merton, 1968: 358-361). Therefore, the reference group can be selected from either the membership or non-membership group.

Reference group theory distinguishes between normative and comparative reference groups (Hyman, 1942; Sherif, 1948). In a normative reference group, individuals are motivated to gain or maintain acceptance. To promote this acceptance, individuals hold attitudes that conform with what they perceive to be a consensus among group members (Kelley, 1952). Normative reference group theory suggests that a group sets and enforces individual standards. Such standards are often referred to as group norms, resulting in the "normative function" of reference groups. By contrast, in a comparative reference group, individuals use a standard or point of reference to evaluate or compare themselves with other individuals or groups. In the comparative reference group theory, the evaluation of an individual by members of the reference group is largely irrelevant (Kelley, 1952). A comparative reference group is merely a standard or checkpoint that individuals or others use to make judgments.

(2) Relative Deprivation and Gratification

This study revisits the classic sociological concepts of relative deprivation and gratification. Relative deprivation is used to describe feelings or measures of economic, political, or social deprivation, that are relative rather than absolute (Bayertz, 1999). According to James Davis (1959: 284), "when a deprived person compares himself with a non-deprived person, the resulting state will be called 'relative deprivation'". Specifically, relative deprivation arises from the gap between the levels of aspiration and achievement. According to Marnie Sayles (1984: 451-2), there are three types of relative deprivation: (a) individual deprivation, (b) egoistic deprivation, and (c) fraternalistic deprivation.

(a) Individual deprivation: People's current expectations are based upon past achievements or promises of greater prosperity. Relative deprivation occurs when people perceive a gap between their expectations and ability to fulfill them. This discrepancy between value expectations and capabilities may arise when expectations remain constant but capabilities decrease, when capabilities remain static but expectations increase, or when expectations increase but capabilities decrease (Sayles, 1984: 451; Gurr, 1970).

(b) Egoistic deprivation: Expectations are based on comparisons with one's reference group rather than on individuals' past experiences. Egoistic deprivation describes deprivation sensed through comparisons made between one's self and others within one's own in-group (Vanneman and Pettigrew, 1972: 465). One's in-group may vary; people make comparisons with the situation of others with whom they are in actual association or in some pertinent respect of the same status or social category (Merton and Rossi, 1968: 285).

(c) Fraternalistic deprivation: It exists only among individuals who have a collective consciousness. Fraternalistic deprivation describes group deprivation sensed through comparisons made between one's in-group and other groups positions within the in-group itself (Vanneman and Pettigrew, 1972: 465).

Furthermore, a mathematical model of relative deprivation shows a case in which the degree of relative deprivation decreases. If a society is divided into several groups, an individual feels relative deprivation by perceiving the divided group as the reference group. The degree of relative deprivation experienced by an individual would be reduced (or equal) compared to the case in which the individual perceives the entire society as a reference group. This is called the "reduction effect of the relative deprivation by a reference group" (Ishida, 2015: 68-75).

(3) Hypothesis

Russian speakers in Estonia occasionally face socio-structural difficulties as members of an ethnic minority. In this context, ethnic Estonians are considered a reference group from the Russian speakers' perspective; therefore, it can be assumed that they tend to feel "fraternalistic deprivation." Alternately, Russian speakers in Narva are constantly aware of the daily life in Russia, especially in Ivangorod. Therefore, this comparison could reduce the negative effect of relative deprivation caused by their comparison with Estonians, and conversely, give them a sense of superiority or satisfaction.

In the context of the relationship between Russian speakers in Narva and Estonia, we can assume that the former group could be categorized as "deprived people" and the latter as "not deprived people." Accordingly, this study proposes the following five hypotheses:

(a) Russian speakers in Narva tend to experience relative deprivation in their comparison with Estonians.

(b) Russian speakers in Narva do not perceive Estonians as a monolithic group, but as diverse groups of people based on different characteristics, such as regional affiliations (i.e., people from Tallinn, Tartu, etc.), economic prosperity, and human capital (i.e., knowledge, skills, education, etc.).

(c) If Hypothesis (b) is correct, it could reduce the level of relative deprivation that Russian speakers feel when comparing themselves with Estonians.

(d) Russian speakers in Narva tend to feel relative gratification in their comparison with Russians in Ivangorod.

(e) If Hypothesis (d) is accurate, it eases their feelings of relative deprivation against Estonians.

(4) Research Method

This study combines ethnographical observations and interviews with Russian speakers in Narva. Interviews[*9] were conducted with 18 Russian speakers who had Russian as their native language and ethnic background. All interviewees were originally from Narva and were officially registered residents of Estonia; however, their citizenship status differed: Estonian citizenship, Russian citizenship, and individuals with unidentified citizenship. The interviewees included ten women and eight men, ranging from teenagers (> 19 years old) to the older generation (aged 60 and above). Some were first-generation immigrants who came to Estonia during the Soviet era, whereas

others were second- and third-generation immigrants born in Soviet Estonia or in independent Estonia (after 1991). The interviews were conducted in either Russian or English, depending on interviewees' preferences.

The interviews and participant observations were conducted between February and July 2022. As this is a sensitive topic, care was taken to build trust and rapport with interviewees without causing emotional distress (King and Horrocks, 2010: 115). Pseudonyms are used to protect their identities. Although interviews were conducted during the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the aim was to understand how they viewed their daily lives in Narva, and broadly, in Estonia; consequently, questions related to the war were not asked.

To reduce potential mistrust towards the interviewer, who is a foreigner, the objective of this study was explained in advance. Respondents were selected using snowball sampling, and the first-contact participants were from a local university. Therefore, there is a possibility of uneven distribution of informants' social orientation.

The original interview included questions regarding interviewees' personal profiles (e.g., origin, family composition, affiliation, and ethnicity), their life in Narva, and their relationship with the Estonian society. Notably, the questions were simply about their lives in Narva; no other conditions (e.g., compared with other places/countries) were inquired about to avoid asking leading questions. They were only asked for details if they answered with particular examples (e.g., life is better in Narva than in Russia).

3. Analytical Part 1: Relative Deprivation in Estonia

(1) Structural Disadvantages of Russian Speakers in Comparison with Estonians

Integration is often a challenge for first-generation immigrants because of a lack of resources, such as fluency in the language of the host country, host country educational qualification, and work experience (Heath, 2007). Although this disadvantage is somewhat reduced for the second generation as they are more fluent in the host language and have broader social networks, there are visible gaps in various indicators in the case of Estonians and Russian speakers.

Generally, the labor market disadvantage of ethnic minorities can be explained by the process of social reproduction in Europe (Heath, 2007). However, this is not the case for the Baltic States, as immigrants who moved to Estonia during the Soviet period were not characterized by lower educational or occupational qualifications (Lindemann and Saar, 2012). It is probable that the influences of labor market segregation and separated social networks are stronger in Estonia (Lindemann, 2009: 125).

Estonia's drastic neoliberal market economic reform has contributed to the emergence of new ethnic inequalities (Vetik and Helemäe, 2011: 231). Estonian labor markets still have the characteristics

of ethnic inequality (Hansson and Aavik, 2012) and ethnic segregation (Saar and Helemäe, 2017; EIM, 2020). Russian speakers tend to be employed in lower-skilled and lower-position jobs, whereas Estonians are disproportionately represented in higher positions (Saar and Helemäe, 2017; EIM, 2020).

For example, in 2021, the unemployment rate of non-Estonians (mainly Russian speakers) was 9.8%, while that of Estonians was 4.7%.[*10] On an average, the unemployment rate of non-Estonians has been twice as high as that of Estonians for many years. In 2020, the average annual income of non-Estonians was 12,734 euros, compared to the 14,792 euros for Estonians.[*11] The at-risk-of-poverty rate of non-Estonians was 25.4% in 2020, while it stood at 18.7% for Estonians (NB, the absolute poverty rate is low for both ethnic groups: 2.1% for Estonians and 2.3% for non-Estonians in 2020).[*12] The deprivation rate was 7.8% for non-Estonians in 2021, compared to 3.8% for Estonians.[*13] It must be asked what decisive factors drive these differences, in addition to regional economic disparities.

Kristina Lindemann (2009) analyzed the influence of ethnicity and Estonian language skills on labor market success for young Estonians and non-Estonians. Generally, Estonian-language-proficient non-Estonians are less successful labor market entrants than ethnic Estonians. The possession of Estonian citizenship also plays an important role in individuals' success in the Estonian labor market (Saar and Helemäe, 2017). The following cases of Tanja and Sergey are used to understand how Russian speakers perceive their situation from the perspective of education and the labor market:

> You should be fluent in Estonian to work in good companies here (Estonia), unless you are an IT specialist. However, it is difficult for many of us to master the language. In this sense, it is true that Estonians are more privileged than us. Therefore, we need to make additional efforts to gain admission and graduate from university. If you are successful, you can obtain a better position than Estonians.[…] I was lucky because I went to an Estonian school (Tanja, 20s, female university student).

> It is not easy to learn Estonian here. If you cannot speak Estonian, you have fewer opportunities for promotion than Estonians. I can hardly bear to watch the situations of "grey-passport" holders since their possibilities in the job market are limited. There are people who are not good at studying because of their age or talent.[…] (However) if you make efforts, you have a chance to be successful. That is what I want to show other people in Narva; so, I decided to come back here to establish a new business (Sergey, 30s, male, company manager).

As elucidated by Tanja and Sergey, Russian speakers in Narva tend to be in a disadvantageous

position in terms of Estonian language acquisition. Young students with higher education such as Tanja may have the capacity to overcome linguistic barriers; however, it is more difficult for older generations. According to Sergey, people with undetermined citizenship are further disadvantaged. According to recent data, 7,099 residents (13%) in Narva are undetermined citizenship holders, while 18,695 residents (35%) hold Russian citizenship.[*14]

Russian speakers in Narva tend to have structural disadvantages, especially because of the social situation. Nevertheless, as Tanja implied, Russian speakers could be successful if they could overcome the aforementioned challenges. We can assume that they categorize Estonians based on their socioeconomic and educational level. This is also the case for the reduction effect of the degree of relative deprivation, as she recognizes opportunities for Russian speakers, regardless of their ethnicity and origin.

Additionally, the role of education is important. Opportunities for the reproduction of social capital are diminished for Russian-speaking minorities (Vihalemm and Kalmus, 2009). In Estonia, the overall educational attainment of second-generation immigrants has diverged from that of the native population. It is influenced by adolescents' language proficiency and citizenship status (Lindemann and Saar, 2012). Therefore, it is assumed that Russian speakers in Narva easily experience relative deprivation, partly due to the existing structural disadvantages.

(2) Estonia's Regional Differences in Development

Within 30 years of the restoration of independence, Estonia achieved socioeconomic development. The average GDP growth rate was 8.11% between 2000 and 2007,[*15] considered high among EU countries rapidly. The average GDP growth rate between 2010 and 2022 is 3.48%.[*16] Compared to other Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development countries, Estonia has managed an impressive convergence of socioeconomic development since the restoration of independence (Fina et al., 2021: 6).

According to cluster analysis, Estonia can be divided into four regions termed "Four Estonias" based on living conditions, economic indicators, and social well-being (Fina et al, 2021). The clusters were framed semantically with labels derived from the interpretation of the indicator values and additional information on the geography of their delineation. Narva and its two small neighboring municipalities (Kohtla-Järve and Sillamäe), have been categorized as "hot spots of long-standing structural disadvantage." The socioeconomic disadvantages of these regions are striking; unemployment rates are the highest in comparison with the Estonian national average, and income rates are the lowest, as are the government revenues, with a negative internal migration balance.[*17] For example, the unemployment rate in Estonia was 6.8%, and 10.4% in Narva in 2020.[*18]

To understand how Russian speakers in Narva perceive Estonians from the perspective of relative deprivation/gratification, this section examines the case of Anna.[*19]

> Narva's economy is poor. Young people leave for Tallinn and Tartu for better jobs and educational opportunities. I am also considering working in Tallinn after graduation, although I like my hometown, Narva. However, the economy is bad; there are no young people, so I think Estonians and Russians (Russian speakers) in Tallinn and Tartu have more opportunities and are definitely in a better situation (Anna, 20s, female, university student).

Anna believes that there are clear differences in the level of living standards in terms of the development of the city, economy, education, and opportunities for life in general. However, investments in Narva have also been increasing, especially since the Ukrainian crisis of 2014. For example, college buildings were renovated, a new defense college was constructed, modern shopping centers were established, and some public spaces were innovated. How these changes are perceived by locals is highlighted by Ivan.

> We have new constructions, such as Narva College, Lidle (new supermarket), and the riverside promenade. We are also renovating the city council areas. However, the changes are slow. If you visit Tallinn, you can see many modern buildings, restaurants, and districts. Things are changing and developing annually there.[…] Narva is a big town by Estonian standards. We have new universities, shopping centers, and cinema. There are beautiful beaches and forests in Narva-Jõesuu (Narva's neighboring town), and it is just 20 minutes' drive. Personally, we have a good life, if not rich, compared to many other small towns in Estonia.[…] We are not as rich as Estonians in Tallinn and Tartu, but it is the same for other small towns (Ivan, 40s, male, teacher).

While Ivan acknowledges, and is proud of the recent positive changes in Narva, he considers the changes slow and insufficient compared to big cities like Tallinn. Simultaneously, he compares Narva's situation with other small municipalities in Estonia and considers them inferior to Narva, at least from the perspective of everyday socioeconomic activities. This is a prime example of a reduction in the degree of relative deprivation by referring to other reference groups. This comparison seems to reduce feelings of relative deprivation against Estonians as a whole. Does this only occur vis-à-vis Estonians? Olga, who previously lived in Tallinn, narrates another example.

> Many people think we (people in Narva) are poor compared to people in Tallinn. It might be true. However, I think that this depends on the person. For example, I lived in Lasnamäe (most populous district in Tallinn, where the majority of residents are Russian speakers)

> before. It is basically a Russian district, and I saw a number of uneducated and poor Russians there. The way they dressed, behaved, or communicated. Of course, there were nice people too.[...] But I felt that we were more cultural (Olga, in her 40s, female, shop worker).

Olga's story presents the case of Russian speakers in Narva, comparing their situation with that of Russian speakers living in other Estonian regions. In her case, the reference group consisted of Russian speakers living in a particular district of Tallinn. Based on her personal experiences, she clearly differentiates Russian speakers from Narva and Tallinn (Lasnamäe). The differences are diverse, from economic conditions to behavior in daily life, and are not limited to socioeconomic affluence. Her story implies that this is also the case of a reduction in the degree of relative deprivation by referring to other reference groups. Olga and Ivan's stories also suggest the importance of reconsidering the stereotype of the one-sided relationship; that Narva is a poor town compared to the rest of Estonia.

4. Analytical Part 2: Relative Gratification in Relation to Russians in Ivangorod (Russia)

(1) Comparison with Russians in Ivangorod

The data showed that Estonia was the most economically successful country in the post-Soviet era. World Bank data show that Estonia's GDP (nominal) per capita[*20] was USD 27,280 in 2021, while Russia's GDP per capita was USD 12,172. The average monthly income (gross) per employee in Narva was 1,073 euros in 2021.[*21] Although the figure is lowest in Estonia, it is assumed to be higher than that of Ivangorod.[*22] Residents in Narva are familiar with life in Ivangorod as it is easy to visit Ivangorod with official permission for valid reasons (e.g., visiting relatives). Therefore, how do Narvans perceive the living conditions in Narva and Ivangorod? First, we examine Anton's story.

> I retired after working at an energy company for approximately 30 years. I received a decent pension. We renovated our apartments and traveled to foreign countries. My relatives live in Ivangorod and its neighboring regions in Russia, but their lives are miserable. People in Moscow probably earn more, but ordinary Russians do not earn as much.[…] Narva is not as developed as Tallinn, but life is more comfortable. We have new shopping centers, parks, promenade (bordering Narva River), and universities. We definitely have better lives than in Russia (Anton, 60s, male, pensioner).

Anton's story demonstrates that he knows his life is better in terms of income and the

socioeconomic situation of Narva. Like most of the other interviewees, he acknowledges that Narva is not as rich as industrialized cities like Tallinn, buthe admits that his life in Narva is more comfortable and better than life in Ivangorod or other Russian regions. Geographical proximity and frequent interaction with Russian people provides him with information on their daily lives. He acknowledges the large socioeconomic gap between Narva and Ivangorod, and this unequal situation consolidates his sense of privilege. Next, we hear from Lyudmila and Mikhail:

> I have been witnessing life in Ivangorod since my childhood and have been there several times. There are daily interactions between the people of Narva and Ivangorod, so I know their situation. They are poor, the streets are not paved, and there is rampant corruption. As you can see, we are not super-rich, but we still have modern shops, restaurants, universities, and some international cultural events. We can also go out safely at night. In addition, we are from an EU country. We can easily travel, study, or work in Europe, while they cannot. I am proud of it (Lyudmila, 20s, female, office worker).

> I am a citizen of Russia and my relatives live there, but I was born here and like Estonia. […] I like Putin because he restored Russia to a strong state from chaos. I am a Russian citizen, and I share Russian values, so it is natural to feel a connection with Russia.[…] [But] I have a proper job here, get a decent salary, and all three of my children study at Estonian universities. We definitely have a better life than the people in Russia, and I am proud of it. So, why do we need to move there? (Mikhail, 40s, male, plant worker).

Lyudmila compares the socioeconomic situations of the two border regions. Her perception is in line with Anton's, but the major difference is that she recognizes the benefits of belonging to the EU. While Russian speakers in Narva are also residents of an EU member state, Russians in Ivangorod and Russia are not. She perceives being a citizen of an EU country as a privilege, which strengthens her relative gratification. All three interviewees believe that the socioeconomic and/or cultural situations are better in Narva than in Ivangorod or other neighboring Russian regions. Lyudmila also considers living in an EU country to be a privilege, and convenient for travel or education, which strengthens her satisfaction. In other words, Anton, Lyudmila, and Mikhail see Russians in Ivangorod or Russia as a reference group, and feel relative gratification by comparing life in Narva and Ivangorod.

Additionally, Mikhail's claim of supporting Russian President Putin reminds us of the importance of considering the possible influence of Russian compatriot policies vis-à-vis Russian speakers abroad. In the field of Russian diplomacy, the concept of the Kremlin-led policy of the "Russian World" (Russkii mir) is considered a geopolitical imagination that aims to reconnect the

Russian diaspora abroad with Russia, its pre-Soviet past, and the Soviet past (Laruelle, 2015).[*23] This notion contains broader and looser concepts comprising language, culture, religion, and history, symbolically unified under the umbrella concept of "Russian World" (Gorham, 2019: 186). Overall, it is a collection of strategies, programs, and policies pursued by the Kremlin over the last two decades to foster a sense of community with and loyalty to the Russian Federation among the globally-dispersed populations of Russians and Russophones (Platt, 2019: 14).

Meanwhile, the "Russian World" is considered unsuccessful in Estonia and is only partially effective in cultural and linguistic spheres (Kallas, 2016). Although Mikhail's story implies that he might have been influenced by it, the comparison with Russians in Russia reduces Russia's attractiveness in terms of its socioeconomic condition, and relatively increases Estonia's attractiveness.

(2) Comparison with People in the Post-Soviet Space

Given that Estonia has the highest per capita GDP in the post-Soviet space,[*24] does its high level of development affect Russian speakers' perceptions of their situation in relation to other national groups in these countries? We continue to analyze the case of Olga.

> Estonians believe that Narva is a poor region, and this is true in comparison to Tallinn, Finland, and Sweden. I partly agree with them. Indeed, we will never catch up to them. Here, life is not that easy economically. However, our lives are much better than those of small Russian towns, Ukraine, and Belarus. I have some friends there, but their salaries are considerably lower. Many of them come to Estonia for better jobs. This tells us how wide the economic gap between Estonia and these countries is (Olga).

The gap in economic levels between Estonia and other post-Soviet countries is large, with some exceptions, such as other Baltic states or highly developed large cities such as Moscow and St. Petersburg in Russia. Nonetheless, Estonia's high socioeconomic status among these post-Soviet countries is remarkable and apparent. Importantly, the people of Narva, such as Olga, know job-seeking immigrants from other post-Soviet countries through their daily experiences. It is assumed that such encounters strengthen Russian speakers' sense of superiority towards people from other economically disadvantaged post-Soviet countries.

> Considering the poor Narva economy, I am thinking of working in Tallinn when I complete my university degree for more opportunities. However, whatever people say, Narva is part of Estonia. Our economy is the best among former Soviet countries. Estonia is a small country; therefore, we do not have size, but people's income and level of social life are the

> best among these countries. So, I am proud of it. In fact, I do not consider myself Estonian, but Russian in front of Estonians, but Estonian rather than Russian, when I talk with Russians, Ukrainians, or anyone from these countries (Elena, 20s, female, student).

Elena emphasizes Estonia's European character vis-à-vis other former Soviet countries (except for the Baltic States). Both Elena and Olga are proud of Estonia's advanced social and economic situation. Elena's story also reveals the fluidity of her identity. While her Russian identity is more apparent when dealing with Estonians, her European identity is vivid when encountering Russians and people from other post-Soviet countries. This shows how a sense of relative gratification in comparison with Russians and people from other post-Soviet countries can reduce the sense of relative deprivation in comparison with Estonians.

It is also important to focus on the Russian media's potential influence on Russian speakers in Estonia. Prior to the Ukraine war, majority of Russian speakers in Estonia claimed to follow at least one media channel originating in Russia daily, in conjunction with local media in Estonian or Russian, and to a lesser extent Western media (Vihalemm et al., 2019). There are several types of Russian speakers vis-à-vis Russian state media; from those who trust the Kremlin's political narratives to those who try to take the "in-between-ness" stance (*Ibid.*). Another study determined that their trust in Russian state media has been decreasing, and trust towards Estonian–Russian media has been increasing (EIM, 2020).[*25] To understand how Russian media influences Russian speakers' perceptions of others in the post-Soviet space, we will now examine Anton's narrative.

> I am a Russian citizen, but I was born in Estonia and lived there throughout. I had many good friends and colleagues from Russia and other former Soviet Republics.[…] Currently, there is a war (in Ukraine) because of the US, but we did not have any problems with them. We were like brothers. We belonged to the same country, shared similar values, and everyone speaks Russian.[…] I watch Russian channels, and I also have relatives and friends there; so I also know their situation (Anton).

Anton mentions that despite restrictions on accessing Russian media, he uses bypassing tools to access it and obtain information. Anton's story reveals that he is somewhat influenced by Kremlin's narrative, such as the "brotherly" (bratskii) notion, in which Ukraine is portrayed as a brother nation with a shared ethnocultural and religious background (A'Beckatt, 2012). Interestingly, Anton also mentions getting information about people living in other post-Soviet countries via his acquaintances and the Russian media. Anton's previous story shows that he acknowledged the socioeconomic superiority of daily life in Narva compared with Ivangorod (or broadly, Russia). His case implies the twisted relationship between Russian-centered imperialistic notions, and individuals' perceptions of

their living place based on their experiences.

Conclusion

This study examined Russian speakers' perceptions from the perspective of the classic sociological concept of the reference group and relative deprivation/gratification. Results of the analysis show that Hypotheses (a), (c), (d), and (e) are correct; however, Hypothesis (b) is only partially supported. Russian speakers in Narva perceive Estonians as a non-monolithic ethnic group in terms of regional differences and status. Therefore, Hypothesis (b) may be considered valid. However, their references to a diverse group of people based on regional affiliation are only partly and ambiguously observed (e.g., Estonians living in small towns). Furthermore, there is a possibility that Russian speakers in Narva also consider Russian speakers in other Estonian regions to be diversified, which may also reduce the degree of relative deprivation. This is beyond the scope of this study, and further research is required.

Russian speakers in Narva sometimes refer to Estonians as a reference group against which they compare their socioeconomic status, and in many cases, feel a sense of inferiority or complaint. This varies from individual to individual; nevertheless, various gaps exist between Estonian and Russian speakers, as well as between other major Estonian cities and Narva. In this sense, Russian speakers experience "double relative deprivations." Simultaneously, they feel relative gratification vis-à-vis Russians in Ivangorod and other Russian regions. They also feel an additional sense of relative gratification in comparison with people from other post-Soviet countries, because they know the real socioeconomic situation in these countries through the media and daily interactions with residents. They unconsciously refer to Russians in Russia and people living in other post-Soviet countries as the reference groups. By doing so, they feel "double relative gratification."

The results of this study support the following viewpoint: Russians in Ivangorod and other parts of Russia, as well as people from other post-Soviet countries, function as reference groups and reduce the degree of relative deprivation perceived by Russian speakers in Narva. Russian speakers' sense of superiority compared with Russians in these economically disadvantaged regions helps reduce the negative effects of relative deprivation and contributes to their feeling of satisfaction and pride while living in Estonia. This study demonstrates that "double relative gratifications" decrease the "double relative deprivations" experienced by Russian speakers in Narva, if not totally cancelling them.

Various researchers have focused on the multiple identities of Russian-speakers. However, the effect of a sense of deprivation/gratification arising from comparisons with people living in post-Soviet countries, not limited to Russia, has not been explored adequately. This study indicates that such comparisons could reduce the degree of relative deprivation among Russian speakers in Narva,

although within a limited sample and scope.

Additionally, some Russian speakers almost unconsciously refer to people living in Russia as well as other post-Soviet states, at least when comparing their socioeconomic situations. Referring to people living in the post-Soviet space does not necessarily mean that they are influenced by Russia's "Russian World" policy. At the same time, it is assumed that some interviewees have consciously and institutionally (e.g., citizenship) connected with Russian statehood, and are conscious of Russians in Russia in certain circumstances (e.g., comparing living situations, as this study explores).

However, the outcome appears somewhat counterproductive. By (unconsciously) referring to people living in Russia and post-Soviet countries, Russian speakers in Narva can reduce the degree of relative deprivation owing to their higher living standards. Consequently, it does not strengthen Russia's attractiveness to them; rather, it partly strengthens Russian speakers' trust and positive attitudes towards Estonia. This paradoxical effect of the "Russian World" does not directly solve the existing structural problems preventing the effective social integration of minorities. Nonetheless, it could increase their positive feelings towards Narva and Estonia, and provide them with a sense of pride in being a member of Estonian society.

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*1 It is termed "individual with undefined citizenship" (määratlemata kodakondsusega isikud) in Estonian, and also known as "grey-passport."

*2 For details, see Komori (2009).

*3 In 2015, the Estonian parliament (Riigikogu) approved an amendment to the Citizenship Act that simplified the procedure of naturalization of children whose parents had undetermined citizernship. As a matter of fact, it allowed them to atutomatically be granted Estonian citizenship by naturalization. In 2019, further amendment was approved and the qualifying age of children was raised to 18 years from 15. For details, see Citizenship Act (Kodakondsuse seadus) (https://www.riigiteataja.ee/akt/108072021006, January 1, 2023).

*4 For details, see Ehala (2009).

*5 For example, strong relationship of ethnic identification and school language is observed among Russian-speaking children (Kemppainen et al., 2015).

*6 Data from 2021, accessed from Statistics Estonia (https://andmed.stat.ee/en/stat/rahvastik__rahvastikunaitajad-ja-koosseis__rahvaarv-ja-rahvastiku-koosseis/RV0222U, July 23, 2022).

*7 The border is separated by a river (Narva jõgi).

*8 The Estonian state has funded sport and cultural activities in Narva. See Integratsiooni Sihutastus, Taotlusvoor "Ida-Virumaa ettevõtlust edendavad spordi- ja kultuuriüritused" (https://www.integratsioon.ee/taotlusvoor-ida-virumaa-ettevotlust-edendavad-spordi-ja-kultuuriuritused-3, August 22, 2022).

*9 The interviewees provided oral informed consent to participate in the study. They were informed that participation is voluntary and their identity would remain confidential.

*10 Eesti Statistika.

*11 Idem. This figure is based on the whole comparison, but not comparison by occupation.
*12 Idem.
*13 Idem.
*14 Idem. The number of residents in Narva reached 53,955 in 2021, with about 50% being Estonian citizenship holders.
*15 The World Bank, Estonia, (https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?locations=EE, August 21, 2022).
*16 The World Bank, Estonia, (https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?locations=EE, August 21, 2022).
*17 See Fina et al. (2021: 9-12) for more detailed information.
*18 Eesti Statistika, (https://www.stat.ee/en/find-statistics/statistics-theme/work-life/labour-market/unemployment-rate, August 22, 2022), and Fina et al. (2021: 17).
*19 All the names of informants were changed in this article to protect their privacy.
*20 The nominal GDP per capita can be a barometer for evaluating the prosperity of nations.
*21 Idem.
*22 According to the Russian Federal State Statistics Service (Росстат), the average salary in Russia was 57,244 Russian ruble (RUB) in 2021 (Росстат, https://rosstat.gov.ru/labour_costs#, September 7, 2022). Another data shows that the range of an average salary of Leningrad Oblast, where Ivangorod is located, was between RUB 25,000 and RUB 53,000 in 2021 (РИА Новости, https://ria.ru/20211122/zarplata-1759282489.html, September 14, 2022).
*23 The concept of the "Russian World" also serves as a justification of Russia's intervention and invasion to its "Near Abroad" (Laruelle, 2015). Specifically, when Putin invoked "Russian World" for the protection of Russian-speaking populations in Donbas region in Ukraine in the wake of Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea, the concept swiftly transformed from a tool of soft power into that of hard power (Gorham, 2019).
*24 According to the World Bank, GDP (nominal) per capita of post-Soviet countries are as follows (current USD (September 8, 2022), data of 2021): Armenia USD 4,670; Azerbaijan USD 5,384; Belarus USD 7,303; Estonia USD 27,280; Georgia USD 5,042; Kazakhstan $10,041; Kyrgyz Republic $1,276; Latvia $20,642; Lithuania $23,433; Moldova USD 5,314; Tajikistan USD 897; Turkmenistan USD 7,612; Ukraine USD 4,835; Uzbekistan USD 1,983; Russia USD 12,172. (https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?locations=AM-AZ-BY-EE-GE-KZ-KG-LV-RU-LT-TM-UZ-UA-MD-TJ, September 5, 2022).
*25 The Estonian government banned access to Russian media sponsored by the Russian government to combat Russia's disinformation since Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

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