

Polish and Belaurian students' attitudes toward other nations

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Approximately 7,000 different ethnic groups and nations inhabit the earth, and most of the tensions among people stem from prejudice and intolerance.

Purpose: To assess a student perception of foreign nations and cultures.

Materials and methods: We used the original questionnaire to assess the views of 150 students from Poland and 102 students from Belarus.

Results: Twenty percent of the Polish respondents indicated that Poland is a tolerant nation; in contrast, 70.6% of Belarusian students claim that theirs is a tolerant nation. Almost 57% of the Polish and 34.3% of the Belarusian students knew a person belonging to a national or ethnic minority. 37.4% of the Polish respondents and 12.7% of the Belarusians were convinced that tolerance among foreign nations has increased. Neither the Polish nor the Belarusian students wanted to have as a neighbor, partner or spouse, a colleague at school who was a drug addict, homosexual or HIV positive. Nearly 40% of the Polish and 77.5% of the Belarusian respondents indicated that national

minorities could have the opportunity to learn their language by accessing extra lessons offered at school. Fifty-eight percent from Poland and 52.9% from Belarus were opposed to providing financial assistance to support foreign cultures and traditions, and the same number believed that foreign students could communicate in their language in local offices. The Polish students' most positive features were attributed to the Italian, French, and Greek, whereas the Belarusian students held the British, Finnish and French in the highest esteem. The Polish respondent's most negative features were attributed to Gypsies and Russians, and the Belarusian students had the lowest esteem for the Germans, Arabs and Chechens.

Conclusions: Poles are not tolerant nation, but their acceptance is increasing. Belarusians are tolerant, but their acceptance is declining. We found differences in the positive and negative perceptions of other nations depending on the nationality.

Key words: students, Poland, Belarus, tolerance

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INTRODUCTION

Cultural and religious diversity have been a matter of lived reality in European societies and their educational systems for a long time. Dealing with this diversity has not always implied shaping and developing attitudes of tolerance, respect, and understanding toward others, as examples from European history show. Yet tolerance is widely regarded as an indispensable, commonly shared value for assuring the cohesion of plural societies.

[1-3]

On the day of its fiftieth anniversary, 16 November 1995, UNESCO's Member States adopted a Declaration of Principles on Tolerance [4]. Among other things, the Declaration affirms that tolerance is neither indulgence nor indifference. It is respect and appreciation for the rich variety of our world's cultures, our forms of expression, and our ways of being human. Tolerance recognizes the existence of universal human rights and fundamental freedoms of others. People are naturally diverse; thus, only tolerance can ensure the survival of mixed communities in every region of the globe.

Tolerance includes the appreciation of diversity and the ability to live and let others live. It is the ability to exercise a fair and objective attitude toward those whose opinions, practices, religion, nationality, and so on may differ from one's own [5]. As William Ury notes, "tolerance is not just agreeing with one another or remaining indifferent in the face of injustice, but rather showing respect for the essential humanity in every person."

According to Węgrzecki, [6], tolerance for attitudes, opinions and beliefs are personal, biological, economic and spiritual danger, are determined by human needs (charity), but also out of respect for others and their own morality.

People perceive many nations and their peoples through stereotypes that they have learned throughout their lives. Some of them are closer and some further from the truth; some are not dangerous, while the rest hurt or offend others. In Poland, we retain stereotypes about other countries, such as all French eat frogs, Italians are looking for romance, and the Germans love order.

Historical relations and direct or indirect experiences with foreigners can influence attitudinal changes in Poles and Belarusians. Neighboring countries like Russia, Germany, Slovakia, and Lithuania can moderate Polish attitudes toward Belarus and vice versa [7]. From the fourteenth to the twentieth century's, Belarus and Ukraine together with Poland and Lithuania shared their histories. The historical experience of a nation is an interesting thing. It is impossible to build national identity and to comprehend your place and purpose in space and time without it. At the same time, this experience may become a

source of many phobias that can significantly limit a nation's opportunities for further development. Belarusians are not an exception to the rule in this case.

More than 80 percent of the population are native Belarusians, with sizable minorities of Russians, Poles, and Ukrainians. Belarus lies in Eastern Europe and borders Poland to the west. In Poland, according to the 2002 census, 96.74 percent of the population consider themselves Poles, while 1.23 percent declared another nationality, and 2.03 percent did not declare any nationality.

In recent years, the phenomenon of xenophobia has grown in importance because immigrants, refugees, and migrant workers in numerous countries are seen as a threat to the jobs, conditions of present life, and cultural identity of a nation's citizens. Education for tolerance is increasingly concentrated in formal education. However, it is also noticeable in the public domain, where tolerance education has become part of various informal education initiatives. [8]

Attitudes are usually identified as positive or negative feelings toward culture. developmental stages of cultural attitudes essentially capture two polarities of positive and negative attitudes, separated by the midpoint of the continuum, negative being extreme to relative ethnocentrism and positive extreme to relative ethnorelativism. Attitudes are learned. Social and interpersonal interactions with people in a foreign land provide opportunities to promote changes in students' feelings toward the people and country visited. According to Moran [9], attitudes directly influence people's behaviors.

In Polish report from 2010 (N=1058), about one third of respondents express sympathy to Russians, Byelorussians, Jews, Armenians, the Chinese, Ukrainians, Egyptians, Serbs and the Vietnamese [10]. The best-liked foreign nationalities are Czechs and Slovaks. The best-liked foreign nationalities are Czechs and Slovaks: almost three-fifths have a positive attitude towards them. The attitude is only slightly worse in case of Italians, the English, Spaniards, the French, Norwegians, the Swiss, Hungarians, Swedes and Americans.

This is the first study to compare students' attitudes toward other nations in two different countries. The objective of this study was to assess perceptions of foreign nations by students from Poland and Belarus.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Random samples of university students were selected from two universities of Poland and Belarus. As a result, 150 students from Medical University of Białystok and 102 students from

University of Grodno were respondents in this study. A questionnaire measuring attitudes towards foreigners was developed. Respondents were required to select 5 metrical questions and 13 basic questions. Survey was conducted under the guidance of assistants from March 3, 2011 to May 5, 2011. Two hundred and fifty-two responses were analyzed by Statistica, 7.0 PL .

RESULTS

The mean age of the whole sample was 19.6 (S.D. = 0.75; range, 18–20 years). Of the respondents from Poland and Belarus, 61.3% and 56.9% respectively were women; 38.7% were men from Poland and 43.1% were men from Belarus.

A mere 12% of the Polish respondents indicated that Poland is a tolerant nation; in contrast, 70.6% of Belarusian students claimed that theirs is a tolerant nation ($p < 0.001$). Almost 37% of the Polish students and only 6% from Belarus ($p < 0.001$) had a different opinion on this matter.

We found significant differences in perceptions of foreign nations between the Polish and Belarusian students. According to 37.4% of the Polish students and 12.7% of the Belarusians, tolerance among foreign nations has increased ($p < 0.001$). In contrast, 6% of the Polish respondents and 43.1% of the Belarusians were convinced that tolerance among foreign nations has decreased ($p < 0.001$).

On the question about what is necessary to regard someone as a Pole or a Belarusian, a

majority of the Polish respondents (66.7%) and just over half of Belarusians (56.7%) considered themselves to be Poles or Belarusians.

Almost 57% of the Polish and 34.3% of the Belarusian students knew a person belonging to a national or ethnic minority. On the other hand, 31.3% of respondents from Poland and 45.1% from Belarus did not know such a person.

Nearly half (48.7%) of the Polish and 50% of the Belarusian students did not agree with the statement that “people living in these countries who are not Poles or Belarusians should adopt a Polish or Belarusian language and culture as their own” ($p < 0.01$). The opposite opinion was expressed by 13.3% of Poles and 21.6% of Belarusians.

The vast majority of respondents (84% from Poland and 91.2% from Belarus) argued that one religion is as good as any other, if it helps people to live the best lives they can.

Only 9.3% of the Polish and 24.6% of Belarusian students agreed with the statement “it is good for all of the people living in one country to have the same nationality” ($p < 0.01$). The opposite opinion was held by 37% of Poles and 30% of Belarusians.

The vast majority of respondents (93.3% of Poles and 94.1% of Belarusians) did not want to have as a neighbor, partner, or spouse someone who was a drug addict, and 82.7% of Poles and 82.4% of Belarusians felt the same way concerning homosexuals or persons who are HIV positive. Details are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Respondents' perceptions of neighbors, friends, and partners/spouses

Groups	Number of respondents/ perceptions							
	Yes		No		I do not care		It is difficult to say	
	Poland n=150	Belarus n=102	Poland n=150	Belarus n=102	Poland n=150	Belarus n=102	Poland n=150	Belarus n=102
to have a neighbor								
Homosexual	7	3	124	84	9	14	10	1
P value	ns	ns	ns	<0.05				
HIV positive	3	0	105	85	35	15	7	2
P value	<0.01	<0.001	<0.001	ns				
Drug addict	0	2	140	96	7	3	3	1
P value	ns	ns	ns	ns				
Member of national minority	41	8	91	43	11	44	7	7
P value	<0.01	<0.001	<0.001	ns				
Member of ethnic groups	36	10	83	41	16	43	15	8
P value	<0.05	ns	< 0.001	ns				

Immigrant	23	8	17	45	97	41	13	8
P value	ns	<0.001	ns	ns				
to have a friend at university								
Homosexual	11	6	95	86	29	9	15	1
P value	ns		ns		<0.05		<0.01	
HIV positive	6	1	102	81	25	17	17	3
P value	ns		ns		ns		<0.05	
Drug addict	3	5	129	91	10	4	8	0
P value	ns		ns		ns		<0.05	
Member of national minority	59	14	23	27	39	57	29	4
P value	ns		ns		ns		<0.01	
Member of ethnic groups	62	15	23	23	43	59	22	5
P value	ns		ns		ns		<0.05	
Immigrant	56	19	23	22	35	68	36	3
P value	<0.05	ns	<0.001	<0.001				
To have a partner/spouse								
Homosexual	0	3	143	98	2	1	5	0
P value	ns	ns	ns	ns				
HIV positive	0	0	137	101	4	0	5	1
P value	ns	ns	ns	ns				
Drug addict	0	3	139	99	5	0	6	0
P value	ns	ns	ns	ns				
Member of national minority	16	7	104	73	12	12	18	11
P value	ns	ns	ns	<0.05				
Member of ethnic groups	18	8	86	67	31	16	15	11
P value	ns	ns	ns	ns				
Immigrant	17	7	95	63	27	12	11	11
P value	ns	ns	ns	ns				

Similarly, the respondents did not want to have such a colleague (drug addict, homosexual, or HIV positive) at the university (Table 1).

The Polish students counted 23 national or ethnic minorities in their country. Most often, they mentioned the following minorities: Jews, 96%; Gypsies, 88%; Kashubians, 87.3%; Ukrainians, 77.3%; Muslims, 76.7%; Lithuanians, 75.3%; and Tatars, 68%. (The percentages given refer to the percentages of Polish students who named each of the minorities listed.)

The Belarusian students counted 21 minorities in their country. Most often, the following minorities were named: Poles, 95.1%;

Russians, 94.1%; Ukrainians, 92.2%; Gypsies, 89.2%; Lithuanians, 85.3%; Jews, 77.5%; Chinese, 78.4%; Armenians, 68.6%; and Turks, 56.7%.

Nearly half of all respondents (47.3% from Poland and 45.1% from Belarus) argued that national minorities should have the opportunity to learn their language by accessing extra lessons offered at school. The opposite opinion was held by 23.9% of the Polish and 24.5% of the Belarusian students.

According to 58% of the Polish and 19.6% of the Belarusian respondents, the national minorities should not use their native languages in local offices ($p < 0.001$).

Only 7.7% of the Polish and 35.3% of Belarussian students supported the possibility of affixing boards with the names of cities listed in the native languages of national minorities (p <0.001).

The respondents were asked to provide the features that first come to mind to characterize the nations. The Polish respondents attributed the most

positive features to Italians (11 features), French, Greeks, and Germans (nine features), whereas the Belarussian students held the British (23 features), Finns, and French (20 features) in the highest esteem. Details are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Features, which first came to mind the students to characterize the selected nations

Nationality	Features					
	Positive		Negative		Neutral	
	POLAND N=145	BELARUS N=92	POLAND N=145	BELARUS N=92	POLAND N=145	BELARUS N=92
Africans	nice, strong openminded, laughing, free, happy with their lives	smart, good, pretty, athletic, optimistic, independent, hardworking, tolerant, smart, cheerful	poor, trollop, niggers, savages, traders, backward	poor, ugly, I dislike them, wild, capricious, uncivilized, stingy, dull, enslaved		black curly hair, black skin color
N	6	10	6	10		2
P value	ns		ns		ns	
Americans	rich, proud, free, open-minded, relaxed	rich, democratic, good, polite, jocks, pretty, smart, modern, optimistic, great, industrious, practical, friendly, happy, courteous, well-educated	comic, lazy, limited, fat, selfconfident, capriciousness, commercialized	aggressive, arrogant, fat, rude, stupid, disorganized, cunning, lazy, stingy, flock, dull, arrogant, angry		it's all about Obama, new technologies
N	5	18	8	14		2
P value	<0.001		<0.05		ns	
English	elegant, friendly, orderly, resourceful, with the principles	aristocracy, rich, patient, elegant, kind, practical, intelligent, cultured, smart, good-looking, modern, family, self-controlled, pedantic, honest, full of grace, punctual, religious	phlegmatic, lazy, serious, stiff, vulgar, sophisticated, not very intelligent,	arrogant, humorless, meticulous, with high regard, prohibitively, boring	eccentrics, riding the tide	tea, football
N	5	23	7	6	2	2
P value	<0.001		ns		ns	
Arabs	religious	rich, good, deeply religious, good-looking, nice dancing, smart, impatient, passionate, patriotic, resourceful, serious, tough, musically talented, cheerful,	aggressive, dirty, selfish, fanatics, conflict, gaudy, prohibitively, intolerant,	insolent, cruel, arousing fears cunning, freaks, the niggers, talkative, loud, capricious, coarse, smelly, crazy, malicious, cowards, withdrawn, degrading women		dressed in a suit, fully dressed in robes
N	1	15	8	19		2
P value	<0.001		<0.01		ns	

Austrians	rich, fond of order, kind, conscientious, athletic	good, pretty, interesting, smart, kind, thinkers, fast, courageous, self-controlled, pedantic, polite, serious, resilient, friendly, pleasant, cheerful,	false, Krauts, arrogant	cunning, fickle, overzealous, lonely, arrogant,		
N	5	16	3	6		
P value	<0.001		ns		ns	
Belgians	European, liberal, tolerant, educated, integrated	rich, kind, hospitable, intelligent, wise, courageous, self-controlled, serious, resilient, romantic, calm, funny	trollop, lazy, prohibitively, stupid	cunning, fickle, they do not like, crooks, conceited		speaking with an accent
N	5	13	5	5		1
P value						
Bulgarians	devout, friendly, tough, good	seeking to end, good, hospitable, generous, wise, calm, peaceful, funny, faithful	poor, ebullient, should the	insolent, sullen, impulsive, fibers, drunkards, old, crazy people, important, bad guys		love for seafood, short men, peppers, grapes
N	4	9	3	9		4
P value	<0.05		ns		ns	
Chinese	hard working, quiet, fast, smart	good, happy, experienced, interesting, smart, caring, hardworking, shrewd, funny, inventive, kind, agile	cunning, gooks	ugly freaks, fickle, twister, imitating others, terrifying sight, sellers, terrible, character, dull, stubborn, gooks		numerous nation, short men, clothing, rice, slanted eyes, mobile phones
N	4	12	2	11		6
P value	<0.001		<0.001		<0.001	
Croats	friendship, smiling, religious, fighters	rich, patient, kind, pleasant, friendly, calm, winsome, tough, kind, friendly	cunning	slow, selfish, stubborn, conceited, bad guys		
N	4	10	1	5		
P value	<0.05		ns		ns	
Gypsies	family practices, free	good, dancers, interesting, jocks, happy, nice singing, optimists	slut, cunning, dodger, glottis, always ready to help, scammer, leading dissolute lifestyle, terrible, poor, thieves	goons, insolent, trollop, cunning, I dislike them, freaks, false, liars, nomads, terrible, bad, fraudsters, stubborn, thieves, malicious, beggars		black hair color, a lot of children, tabor, divination
N	2	7	10	16		4
P value	<0.05		ns		ns	

Czechs	open-minded, friendly, cheerful, funny	ambitious, rich, kind, elegant, hospitable, wise, intelligent, quiet, cultured, open-minded, tolerant, hard-working, cheerful, educated	beer lovers, a lot of fire, triflers	poor, beer lovers, dull, nasty, bad		beer, advocates of freedom, Slavonic, appearance
N	4	14	3	5		3
P value	<0.01		ns		ns	
Chechens	fighters	fighters, deeply religious, brave, romantic, smart, cheerful, graceful	aggressive, rude, loud, dangerous, conflicts, terrorists, thieves	poor, mentally, i dislike them, strange, fanatics, murderers, i do not like, stingy, arrogant, dangerous, hostile, restless, nasty, terrorists, stubborn, haughty, angry, impetuous	immigrants	bearded, black hair color, refugees
N	1	7	7	18	1	4
P value	<0.01		<0.01		ns	
Danes	well-paid, good, friendly, happy, tolerant	good, confident, happy, smart, modern, passionate, honest, hardworking, friendly, strong	indiscreet	rude, ugly, irritable, bad luck, slow, nasty, bad,	riding bikes, lego	blond hair, Slavic appearance
N	5	10	1	7	2	2
P value	ns		<0.01		ns	
Estonians	good	good, cultured, wise, peaceful, calm, friendship, funny, sensitive, warm	poor		legal marijuana	
N	1	10	1		1	
P value	<0.001		ns		ns	
Finns	friendly, tolerant, kind	heroic, tolerant, clean, educated, polite, freaks, family, good, courageous, modern, calm, exciting, smart, handsome, cheerful, funny, friendship, realists, cheerful	prohibitively	adventurers, overzealous, I do not like, prohibitively, slow, impetuous, angry		hunters, fish, looks slavic
N	3	20	1	7		3
P value	<0.001		<0.01		ns	
Franch	rich, exquisitely, elegant, cultured, creative, romantic, open-minded, serious, gourmets	ambitious, wise, well mannered, good, elegant, peaceful, kind, good-looking, cultured, brave, clever, friendly, at being subtle about it, you, hardworking, friendly, kind, educated	heterosexuals, dudes, drunkards in excess wine, snooty, sex addict, pride in yourself	lovers, reckless, abnormal, womanizer, bad guys	good-cooking	an interesting language, speaking with an accent, beautiful perfume, pizza

N	9	20	7	6	1	4
P value	<0.01		ns		ns	
Greek	valuing its history, witty, consistent, open-minded, helpful, resourceful, friendly, romantic, sociable	good, romantic, welcoming, interesting, kind, pretty, wise, nice dancing, happy, noble, strong, athletes, aesthetes	cunning, lazy, quarrelsome, cunning	sly, stupid, old, villagers, giddy, scary, bad,	both, living from tourism	rich history, tan, sun, long whiskers, big noses
N	9	14	4	7	2	5
P value	ns		ns		ns	
Georgians	fighters, friendly open-minded,	good, proud, hospitable, interesting, courageous, self-controlled, patriotic, hard-working, industrious, good-looking, respecting traditions, weddings		aggressive, bad, cunning, scary, strange, hungry, drunkards, grumpy, boasters, impulsive, obtrusive, there're casual and approachable, gone rampant		long nose, leather clothing, skewers, mustache, wine,
N	3	13		13		5
P value	<0.01		<0.001		ns	
Spanish	fiery, masculine, passionate, friendly, sociable, cheerful, free	good, brave, are graceful, good-looking, hospitable, fire, intelligent, wise, strong, dances, courageous, nice peaceful, friendly, happy, funny, sense, gifted musically	choleric, egoists, talkative, impulsive	impulsive, impetuous	tan, with magnificent monuments	tan, football, wine lovers
N	7	19	4	2	3	3
P value	ns		ns		ns	
Dutch	European, interesting, hardworking, tolerant, honest	feel good, proud, elegant, noble, hospitable, cheerful, interesting, healthy, well-dancing, hard-working, aesthetes, friendship, handsome	jocks, stingy	arrogant, bad, homosexuals, drug addicts, boring, promiscuous	good swimming, legal marijuana	football, cheese, tulips
N	5	14	2	6	2	3
P value	ns		ns		ns	
Irish	European open-minded, joyful, family, happy	good, cultured, good-looking, dancing brave, smart, pretty, happy, optimists, hardworking, friendly, peaceful, talented musically	schematically prohibitively	sly, strange, nationalists, prohibitively, distrustful, drunkards, superstitious,	good beer	pheasants, men in skirts
N	5	13	2	7	1	2
P value	ns		<0.05		ns	

Japanese	accurate, intelligent, skilled technically, innovative, hard-working, resourceful, capable	suffering, king, good-looking, skilled technical, happy, strong, inventive, smart, hardworking, educated, love in your culture, friendship, maintained, agile than modern	awkward, busy	insolent, sly, worthy of the regrettable, obese, crazy people, bad, gooks		numerous nation, low rise, super cars, earthquake, narrow eyes
N	7	15	2	7		5
P value	<0.05		<0.05		ns	
Lithuanians	hospitable, resourceful, friendly, sympathetic	good, healthy, welcoming, interesting, kind, smart, tolerant responsible, careful, funny, hardworking, friendly, fast, handsome, fair, cheerful, lovely	unkind	insolent, freaks, laconic, lazy, angry, prohibitively, criticizing others	neighbors	neighbors
N	4	18	1	7	1	1
P value	<0.001		<0.01		ns	
Latvians	hospitable	good, smart, hospitable, nice singing, noble, cheerful, kind, hard-working, friendly	false	sick, talkers, lazy, angry, prohibitively, still hurrying to strange		they do not want to remember the past, neighbors
N	1	9	1	7		3
P	<0.01		<0.01		ns	
Germans	rich, clean, thrifty, perfect, punctual, reliable, principled, disciplined, organized	good doctors, good, proud, intelligent, wise, the best of all nations, polite, responsible, pedantic, practical, perfect, honest, romantic, punctual, disciplined	annoying, unfriendly, selfish, snooty, brusque, Krauts, meanly, haughty	arrogant, lazy, cunning, cruel, deceitful, bad, fascists, beer, Nazis, laconic, fond of risk, overzealous, you should not trust them, haughty, prohibitively, disgusting, coarse, lovers, losers, snooty, enemies, criminals, malicious		good cars, speaking with an accent,
N	9	15	8	22		2
P value	ns		<0.001		ns	
Norwegians	curious, cheerful, neat, organic, tolerant, friendly	good, athletic, interesting, loving freedom, cultured, happiness in the life of the singing, cordial, with nicely, courageous, friendly, smart, punctual, countrymen, talented musically, cheerful		strange, rude, whimsical, I do not like, elemental protectors, bare, tedious, angry, malicious, stubborn	blondes	cognac, speaking with an accent, skis, fisherman, the fish,

N	6	15		10	1	5
P value	<0.05		<0.001		<0.05	
Armenians	religious	active, kind, hospitable, individualists, jocks, romantic, interesting, wise, nice dancing, self-controlled, patriotic, nice, industrious, friendly, handsome	dangerous, scary	ugly, cunning, freaks, talkers, guest worker, coarse, blades, shocking, crazy, impetuous, bad		black long nose, good wine, cognac, speaking with an accent, skewers, mustache
N	1	16	2	11		7
P value	<0.001		<0.001		<0.01	
Russians	hospitable, OK, open-minded, powerful, singing, tolerant	rich, brothers, good, hospitable, ready to help, generous, noble, humane, jocks, happy, friendly, responsible, attractive, kind, resourceful, hard-working, handsome, mnipotent	alcoholics, loud, lack of self-confidence, despotic, strange, false, withdrawn, strong head, the smugglers	trollop, cunning, fickle, corrupt, lazy, restless, dangerous, bad, drunkards, stingy	neighbors	lovers of freedom
N	6	18	9	10	1	1
P value	<0.01		ns		ns	
Serbs		fighters, good, gentleman, kind, courteous thrifty, brave, patriotic, honest, hard-working, family, wise	poor	aggressive, I dislike them, capricious, unpleasant, boring, stubborn, outrageous, mentally	fighters	
N		13	1	8	1	
P value	<0.001		<0.01		ns	
Slovaks	perfect, friendly	polite, decent, interesting, kind, clever, quiet, brave, optimists, peace, tolerant, hard-working, cheerful	beer lovers	arrogant, angry, cunning, stupid, uncouth, stingy		bear, neighbors
N	2	13	1	6		2
P value	<0.001		<0.05		ns	
Swedes	open-minded, helpful, honest, friendly, tolerant	wonderful, wise, good, cultured, you, elegant, hard-working, friendly, kind, punctual, happy, tolerant, tough, smiling	stubborn	insolent, greedy, sly, uncouth, angry, stubborn merchants, overzealous, terrible, stupid		blond hair, good banks, Swedish buffet, cheap clothing,
N	6	14	1	10		4
P	<0.05		<0.001		ns	
Turkish	good cooking, friendship	rich, good, kind, hospitable, calm, jocks, smiling, good-looking, optimists, patriots, ardently, the idea of a religious,	aggressive, operators, dictatorship, glottis, hijackers	arrogant, slow, insolent, smelly, blacks, strange, I feel reluctant to them, sly, bad guys, lazy, dangerous, power-hungry, greedy, slaves,		heat, both tan, cheap clothing,

				stubborn, explosive, gone rampant		
N	2	13	5	17		3
P value						
Ukrainians	hardworking, cheerful	brothers, kind, good cooks, handsome, hospitable, generous, wise, optimists, good, open-minded, friendly, healthy, polite, happy	poor, dangerous, trucker, noisy	insolent, poor, brudasy, fond, sly, greedy, drunkards, lazy		similar language, lard, bacon lovers
N	2	15	4	8		3
P value	<0.001		ns		ns	
Hungarians	they like singing, sweet, open-minded, leading peaceful idyllic life	rich, friendly, good, polite, good-looking smart, joyful, exuberant	loud, difficult to understand	sly, savage, anger, the bad guys		grapes
N	4	9	2	6		1
P value	ns		ns		ns	
Vietnamese	decent, fast, hard-working, good cooking	fighters, good, wise, humble, brave, original, agile than extraordinary, hardworking, modern	poor	insolent, trollop, sick, freaks, stupid, bad, stubborn traffickers, terrible, the terrorists, the eaters of dogs	slanted eyes	low rise, cheap clothing, sneakers, narrow eyes,
N	4	11	1	11	1	4
P value	<0.05		ns		ns	
Italians	hot blood, healthy, open-minded, social, friendly, joyful, religious, family practices, are super, gallant, happy	ambitious, good, elegant, happy, intelligent, hospitable, interesting, smart, loving, dancing, joyful, nice modern, pleasant, handsome, peaceful, educated	glottis, conflict, playboy, guinea, womanizer, ebullient, minded, jealous	sly, talkative, impulsive,		ferrari, pasta, pizza, roses, food lovers,
N	11	17	8	3		6
P value	<0.05		ns		<0.05	
Jews	rich, wise, proud, industrious, serious, religious, resourceful	suffering, the good guys, deeply religious, wise, talented, hard-working, enterprising, family practices, polite	greedy, greedy, operators, war, fanatics, crooks, boasters	arrogant, stupid, greedy, sly, pure, aggressive, speculators, jealous, spiteful	bearded men	beard, cemetery, long nose,
N	7	9	8	9	1	3
P value	ns		ns		ns	
Belarusians	hardworking, friendly, funny, tolerant		alcoholics, poor, trollop, greedy, loud, intimidated			

<p>Poles</p>		<p>rich, cheerful, elegant, kind, interesting, wise, self-controlled, patriots, noble, friendly, polite, handsome, hospitable, cheerful, funny, religious, pickers, friendly</p>		<p>poor, cunning, toadies, stingy, do not like the language, stubborn, angry, arrogant</p>		<p>accent when speaking, Bialystok, neighbors</p>
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The Polish students attributed the most negative features to Gypsies (10 features) and Russians (nine features), and the Belarussian students had the lowest esteem for Germans (22 features), Arabs (19 features), and Chechens (18 features).

DISCUSSION

The survey finds that on several measures, many Poles and Belarussians hold favorable views of each other. The Belarussian students generally said they were tolerant, but on the other hand, the Polish students argued they were not tolerant. To our knowledge, no previous studies were conducted comparing students' (Polish and Belarussian) attitudes toward other nations.

Tolerance is not only seen as a political or legal requirement but also as an educational one. It would be simplistic to expect education only to transmit knowledge about tolerance to subsequent generations. Learning is rather seen as a complex process of meaning making through *interaction* (bringing together previous and new knowledge, experiences, action and interaction in-between teachers and learners). [11]

Hammer, [12] considers that intolerance can take different forms, depending on the strength with which it occurs. Its symptoms include verbal comments, flips, reprimands, a public insult, boycott, avoiding contact, isolation of individuals and groups to create ghettos, discrimination, or denial of rights; emphasis on the assimilation of people differs from the majority, as well as all kinds of acts of aggression.

According to Ambrosiewicz [13] several studies revealed many factors influencing prejudices between people. Prejudice and discrimination have been prevalent throughout human history. Prejudice has to do with the inflexible and irrational attitudes and opinions held by members of one group about another, while discrimination refers to behaviors directed against another group. Prejudices can either be positive or negative—both forms are usually preconceived and difficult to alter. The negative form of prejudice can lead to discrimination, although it is possible to be prejudiced and not act upon the attitudes. Those

who practice discrimination do so to protect opportunities for themselves by denying access to those whom they believe do not deserve the same treatment as everyone else.

It is unfortunate that prejudices against racial and ethnic minorities exist, and continue to flourish, despite the “informed” modern mind. One well-known example of discrimination based on prejudice involves the Jews, who have endured mistreatment and persecution for thousands of years.

Sociologists and psychologists hold that some of the emotionality in prejudice stems from unconscious attitudes that cause a person to ward off feelings of inadequacy by projecting them onto a target group [14, 15]. By using certain people as scapegoats—those without power who are unfairly blamed—*anxiety and uncertainty are reduced by attributing complex problems to a simple cause: “Those people are the source of all my problems.”* Social research across the globe has shown that prejudice is fundamentally related to low self-esteem. By hating certain groups (in this case, minorities), people are able to enhance their sense of self-worth and importance.

Social scientists have also identified some common social factors that may contribute to the presence of prejudice and discrimination: e.g., *socialization*. Many prejudices seem to be passed along from parents to children. *Conforming behaviors*. Prejudices may bring support from significant others, so rejecting prejudices may lead to loss of social support. *Economic benefits*. Social studies have confirmed that prejudice especially rises when groups are in direct competition for jobs. *Authoritarian personality*. In response to early socialization, some people are especially prone to stereotypical thinking and projection based on unconscious fears. The child then learns to control his or her anxieties via rigid attitudes. *Ethnocentrism*. Ethnocentrism is the tendency to evaluate others' cultures by one's own cultural norms and values. *Group closure*. Group closure is the process whereby groups keep clear boundaries between themselves and others. Refusing to marry outside an ethnic group is an example of how group closure is accomplished. *Conflict theory*. Under conflict theory, in order to hold onto their

distinctive social status, power, and possessions, privileged groups are invested in seeing that no competition for resources arises from minority groups.

In Borkowski's study [16], almost 30 percent of students considered themselves to have various forms of xenophobia and racism, 18 percent disregard differences, 12 percent lack tolerance for sexual minorities, 10 percent have religious intolerance, and 2 percent are intolerant to disabled people

In the present study, we found that most of the respondents did not want to have neighbors who were drug addicts, homosexuals or HIV carriers. A similar proportion of the students from Polish and Belarus backgrounds (50%) claimed that national or ethnic minorities should have the opportunity to learn in their own language. This is in accordance with the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities: *Persons belonging to minorities have the right to establish and maintain, without any discrimination, free and peaceful contacts with other members of their group and with persons belonging to other minorities, as well as contacts across frontiers with citizens of other States to whom they are related by national or ethnic, religious or linguistic ties.* Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities from 1992 [17].

According to the Strzeszewski study [18] about the degree of like or dislike of Poles to other nations, the Poles were generally more sympathetic toward citizens from the developed countries belonging to the wealthy West, than those representatives of the poorer Eastern European countries from the Balkans.

In a CBOS report from 2011 [19] about nations most liked by the Poles are Czechs and Slovaks, slightly fewer people said they like the Spanish, Italians, Hungarians, the French and the Dutch. At least two-fifths of adult Poles had positive opinions about the English, Americans, Greeks, Norwegians, Swedes, Belgians, Finns, the Irish and the Japanese. Neutrality is the most frequently expressed feeling towards Belarusians, the Chinese, Armenians and Serbs. In the case of Russians, Ukrainians, Turks and Chechens, respondents are divided into three, comparably large groups (negative feelings are expressed only slightly more often than positive or neutral feelings). These findings are in accordance with our results.

According to Borkowski study, [16] 14 percent of the respondents have expressed reluctance to gypsy, and 10 percent to the gay and Lesbians, and 4 percent for handicapped people. These results are similar with our results.

According to Górniewicz [20] *"a man becomes tolerant when the tolerance is the meaning of life existing among the people, and the word is not merely a blank password. Man learns tolerance somewhat involuntarily, without a great and lofty slogan, tolerance of people breathing in a tolerant environment."*

Therefore, it seems that the increase in tolerant attitudes may come from the educational efforts of all people, because when people are aware, they are able to respect other cultures. In Poland and Belarus, this problem for several years has not been distinguished, but now, with the diversity of religion and due to the significant influx of immigrants from different countries, it becomes a major challenge for the educational workers.

According to Marcinkowski [21], Poland has begun its transition of the social changes of monoculturalism (meaning the kind of integration and the accompanying cultural identity, which is dominated by a uniform criterion of race), to the typical multicultural, multinational community.

CONCLUSIONS

Poles are not tolerant nation, but tolerance is increasing. Belarusians are more tolerant, however, their tolerance declines. The students of both countries did not want to have for neighbors, colleagues at school, partner or spouse of drug addicts, homosexuals and HIV carries. We found differences in the positive and negative perceptions of other nations depending on the nationality.

Conflicts of interest

The authors have declared no conflicts of interest.

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