

# **Bridging or Competing? Intergroup Ideologies, Social Orientations, and Students' Creativity**

## **Research Overview**

This study examines how intergroup ideologies relate to social creativity among Russian university students studying with international peers. Using survey data and structural equation modeling, it shows that polyculturalism and cooperation support creativity, whereas assimilationism and competition inhibit it, highlighting conditions under which culturally diverse education fosters creativity.

## **Purpose of Study**

Creativity is increasingly recognized as a key competence in higher education and the contemporary labor market. Beyond formal educational interventions, students' creative potential is shaped by the broader social environment of the university, including intercultural interactions. In the context of internationalization, cultural diversity may enhance creativity by expanding cognitive frames and enabling the recombination of diverse ideas. However, intercultural contact does not automatically lead to positive outcomes, as its effects depend on how cultural differences are perceived and how relationships with outgroup members are structured.

This study examines whether intergroup ideologies are associated with the creativity of Russian university students studying alongside international peers. Intergroup ideologies are conceptualized as beliefs about how cultural and ethnic groups should coexist in society. The study focuses on multiculturalism, polyculturalism, ethnic colorblindness, and assimilationism, and explores whether cooperative and competitive orientations toward international students mediate the relationship between these ideologies and creativity.

## **Research Methods**

The study employed a cross-sectional correlational survey design. The sample included 170 Russian university students (mean age = 23.54), the majority under 30, all with experience of face-to-face study alongside international students. Participants were recruited from over 60 universities across 34 Russian regions; 52.9% were women.

The online questionnaire included informed consent, screening questions, measures of intergroup ideologies, cooperative and competitive orientations, a social creativity task, and socio-demographic items. Multiculturalism, polyculturalism, and ethnic colorblindness were measured using the Russian adaptation of Rosenthal and Levy's scale; assimilationism was measured using an established Russian scale. Each ideology was assessed with five items on a 7-point Likert scale. Internal consistency ranged from acceptable to good ( $\alpha = .66-.86$ ).

Cooperative and competitive orientations were assessed using an adapted version of Chen et al.'s scale, translated, back-translated, and refined through cognitive interviews. Each subscale included six items ( $\alpha = .85-.87$ ).

Creativity was operationalized as social creativity and assessed using a realistic problem-situation task. Responses were scored for fluency, flexibility, and originality, and modeled as a latent variable.

Data were analyzed in SPSS 22.0 and AMOS 22.0 using descriptive statistics, correlations, and structural equation modeling with mediation analysis.

## **Results and Discussion**

Descriptive results showed that Russian students supported polyculturalism and multiculturalism most strongly, followed by ethnic colorblindness, while assimilationism received the lowest support. Students also reported stronger cooperative than competitive orientations toward international students.

The structural equation model demonstrated acceptable fit:  $p = .12$ , CMIN/df = 1.45, CFI = .99, GFI = .97, RMSEA = .05, Pclose = .43. The model explained 22% of variance in cooperative orientations, 9% in competitive orientations, 17% in creativity fluency, 19% in flexibility, and 7% in originality.

The results showed that polyculturalism was positively associated with creativity,  $\beta = .57$ ,  $p = .01$ . Assimilationism was negatively associated with creativity,  $\beta = -.49$ ,  $p < .01$ . Cooperative orientations were positively associated with creativity,  $\beta = .47$ ,  $p = .01$ , whereas competitive orientations were negatively associated with creativity,  $\beta = -.39$ ,  $p = .03$ . Assimilationism was also positively associated with competitive orientations,  $\beta = .24$ ,  $p = .02$ . Multiculturalism and ethnic colorblindness were not directly related to creativity, but both were positively associated with cooperative orientations.

Mediation analysis showed that cooperative orientations mediated the positive effects of multiculturalism,  $\beta = .12$ ,  $p = .04$ , and ethnic colorblindness,  $\beta = .16$ ,  $p = .03$ , on creativity. Competitive orientations partially mediated the negative effect of assimilationism on creativity,  $\beta = -.11$ ,  $p = .05$ .

These findings suggest that culturally diverse higher education may foster creativity when students perceive intercultural relations through interaction, equality, and cooperation. Polyculturalism appears to support creativity directly by emphasizing cultural interconnectedness and openness to culturally diverse ideas. Multiculturalism and ethnic colorblindness may contribute to creativity only when they promote cooperation with international students. In contrast, assimilationism constrains creativity both directly and indirectly by strengthening competitive orientations. The study contributes to educational psychology and intercultural

learning by showing that the creative potential of cultural diversity depends not only on contact itself, but also on the ideological and relational conditions under which contact occurs.

***Keywords:*** intergroup ideologies, creativity, competition, cooperation, higher education