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Identities and Identifications: Politicized Uses of Collective Identities

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Russian and Siberian Regional Identity: Commonalities and Differences

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ABSTRACT

The results of 2010 Russian national census have demonstrated that the number of people who refer to themselves as ‘Sibiriyak’ (a person who belongs to the respective Russian regional subculture or, more broadly, the natives of Siberia whatever their ethnic origin) is growing. In 2002 only 10 respondents identified themselves this way, while eight years later the number was more than 400 times as many (4116 people). Traditionally, features that are ascribed to this Russian ethnographic group or subculture are resilience and good health, both due to severe climate. The Russian language reflects these beliefs in set expressions such as ‘sibirskiy kharacter’ (Siberian character) and ‘sibirskoye zdorovye’ (Siberian health’). The aim of the research to be presented is to single out those features of regional identity that can be distinguished on the basis of a free and directed associative experiments (a relatively new research method on the brink of linguistics and cultural studies) carried out among undergraduate and graduate students of Novosibirsk State University.

Key words: *regional identity, free associative experiment, directed, auto-stereotype, sub-ethnic group*

Siberia has always had sinister reputation among people who were lucky to be born in warmer climes. As Ian Frazier puts it, “for most people, Siberia is not the place itself but a figure of speech. In fashionable restaurants in New York and Los Angeles, Siberia is the section of less-desirable tables given to customers whom the maître d’ does not especially like.” [Frazier: 3]. A contextual analysis of *Siberia* or *Siberian* sample from two books dealing with Russian culture, in its historical and modern aspects (namely, *The Icon and The Axe* by James Billington and *Russia: A Journey to the Heart of a Land and its People* by Jonathan Dimbleby), has revealed the following images of Siberia persisting in the Western mind. In 24 out of 140 contexts Siberia is regarded as a place of exile, GULAG and hard physical labour of its inhabitants, the image supported by 15 more references to the harsh climate of the area. Being a vast territory that amazes Europeans, accustomed to much more modest scales, (18 examples in the sample), it has been regarded as a Russian treasure-trove whose immense resources, for better or for worse, form the basis of modern Russian economy (22 contexts). However, almost equal number of examples (32) demonstrate that Siberia has been considered a frontier and/or a haven – a place attracting all kinds of people searching refuge and running from stifling regime ruling in the centre of Russia – be it Old Believers who regarded Siberia as the Promised Land, peasants who were seeking land far away from their landowners, or the Soviet intellectual elite of 1950s looking for ideological freedom. The latter established a world-known research centre Akademgorodok right in the heart of Siberia, in its self-proclaimed capital, Novosibirsk, the place which is *malaya rodina* (native town) for both authors of the paper presented.

Although it is true that the ancestors of quite a few Siberians came to the area against their will, for most of us, its inhabitants, Siberia is neither Heaven, nor Hell, it is simply HOME. [Fryer, 1999]. They are proud of their land and sometimes identify themselves as Siberians even while answering a question about their nationality during a census. As it was mentioned in the abstract, the number of those who prefer such identification to a standard one (Russian) rose dramatically from 2002 to 2010.

The paper presented deals with autostereotypes that exist among Siberians and form a part of their regional identity. The method the authors used is so called free and directed associative experiment – a popular psycholinguistic instrument originally designed early in the 20th century by two American scholars Grace H. Kent and Aaron J. Rosanoff in order to determine so called “associative norms” (the reactions of the majority among 1000 normal respondents) and to enable psychologists to reveal people with emotional or psychological problems. Since that time the focus of the research has shifted from the deviation to the norm itself and the method is widely used in contrastive ethnolinguistic studies, as the most frequent associations may provide a researcher with valuable information about the worldview of a particular ethnic or regional (as in this paper) group [Titova].

The procedure of the free associative experiment implies the exposure of the participants to a certain number of randomly organized words, among them one or two words that are actually important for the study. The rest (in this particular case 20 more words) are so called “white noise” which is supposed to hide the real intentions of the scholar and prevent the participants from an attempt to “please” the presenter or seem more sophisticated or original. For the same reason the participants should not know the subject of your research. The answers are given very fast (the instruction limits the response time to 5-7 seconds per word) and thus reflect the most stereotypical image that exists in the mind of an average speaker. The associations collected are processed to reveal the features

of the image. In the experiment discussed here, the data were collected from 80 participants, all students of Novosibirsk State University, one of the leading universities in Russia (actually the third Russian university in national and international ratings, ambitiously aiming at entering Top100 of the world ones) and as such, attracting students from numerous towns and cities of Siberia.

According to a Russian scholar Gennadyi Martinovitch [Martinovitch, 1997], while analyzing the data collected during the free association experiment, one obtains three types of associations – syntagmatic ones (in other words ready made two- or three- part units which exist as chunks in the minds of speakers), paradigmatic (those reactions that show different relationship of words in the language system: synonyms, opposites, etc.) and, the third type, most interesting for a cross-cultural study, so called thematic ones. These associations are also referred to as mediated because they deal more with the image of the referent than with the unit of a language). Most scholars agree that the more frequent a response is the more reliable is the conclusion about the place of its referent in the language community. Therefore, most reliable information can be obtained from thousands of participants, but even when the number of respondents is limited, a scholar can observe certain trends that will just be supported as more material accrues.

In the following discussions the words-associations (translated into English) will be written in *italics*. The number in brackets after such a word means the frequency of this particular reaction. All responses might be divided into several groups, partly coinciding with the images of Siberia and Siberians shared by European population. The first group includes those associations that deal with the geographical position (*inhabitants of Siberia*), landscape (*snow, cedar trees*, though what we call cedar in Siberia is actually a pine tree of a certain kind), climate (*frost (9), cold (4)*). Two more associations add to the stereotypical image of the area – *an exile* and *bears*. For three respondents, a Siberian is associated with a person who is spiritually and emotionally close – a *fellow countryman* (in this case the Russian words refers more to sharing not the citizenship but the origin from the same region, city or town) in other words, to one coming from the same *malaya Rodina* (expression which has no exact equivalent in English, but can be translated as *Heimat* into German). The person might be your *kindred spirit* as well.

A large group of associations is related to the image of a Siberian (more stereotypical than realistic). A Siberian is *warmly dressed*: he (the form of the Russian word implied a male) wears *valenki* (a type of felt boots), or *tulup* (a sheep-skin coat), has a special kind of a hat (*shapka-ushanka* a warm, usually fur winter hat with ear flaps), *a scarf* and *a hood*. Nevertheless, the attire does not save him from the notorious Siberian winter, as one more association implies – he has *a cold nose*. This clothing along with such a facial feature as a *beard* makes a typical (or rather stereotypical) Siberian look like a proverbial *muzshik* (a Russian equivalent of a hillbilly). The image evokes in mind a famous character from the Russian history, namely Ivan *Susanin*, although the man himself had never set his foot in Siberia, being a peasant from Central Russia who is known for his self-sacrifice during the war between Russia and Poland in 17th century.

One more set of reactions is related to a stereotype of so called “Siberian health” according to which (contrary to the fact in many cases) a man living in this area can boast really good *health (2)*, is *strong (3)* and *sturdy (3)*. Living in Siberia one has to become really *hardy* in order to withstand extreme conditions. The latter also contributes to the formation of a Siberian’s character, which combines seemingly irreconcilable features: a Siberian is regarded as *severe (3)*, *brave*, and *resilient*, but at the same time *hospitable* and *dushevny* (the word which might be translated as *heartly*) but has much more positive connotation than the latter. A person who is referred to as *dushevny* or having a *great heart* is a good and generous companion and a reliable friend, which is essential for surviving in harsh environment.

And finally, several reactions are accounted for by the existing precedent phenomena (the term refers to names, quotations, literary images, titles of films and books which are easily recognized by the majority of people identifying themselves with certain culture). These verbal clues play various roles in communication: they may become a password distinguishing in-group and out-group members; they may be a way to express a certain idea in indirect but clear fashion, or a way to ease some tension in communication. Two of the associations originate from the name of the Russian writer *Mamin-Sibiriyak* (his surname contains a word meaning a Siberian, although he has nothing to do with Siberia and is not extremely popular nowadays) and one stems from a saying “Sibiriyak znachit *lyzhnik*” (meaning “A Siberian means a (cross-country) skier”), popular in the Soviet times. No wonder then, that this association belongs to the oldest participant, a woman in her forties.

Thus, the data of the free associative experiment have demonstrated that the autostereotype of Siberians is not far from the stereotypes existing in different parts of the world. The stereotype is partly formed and supported by the media discourse creating the image of a strong, manly hero who is ready to overcome any difficulties but has a great heart and is much less cunning than people in “more civilized” parts of the Russian Federation. Maybe he lacks their sophistication but actually is a diamond in the rough.

As for the participants’ reactions to the word Russian, they were much less telling. On the one hand it is due to the fact that most respondents (26 out of 80) took the word to be a part of a collocation the Russian *language (26)* and answered accordingly. On the other hand, the fact may be attributed to a certain degree of tiredness of the patriotic discourse of the past few months (although it is also reflected in the association *Ukranian*). However, one of the important feelings Russians have about their identity is *pride* (or rather *being proud*, the thing is that the Russian language distinguishes between *gordost’*, the word used by the two respondents and having positive connotation of ignity and *gordynya* (conveying the idea of one of the mortal sins). Some associations are rather empty (*man (4)*, *nationality (2)*), some deal with the symbols of Russia (*two-headed eagle, matryoshka, sarafan*,

ushanka), but there are some that describe a Russian person. Unlike a Siberian, a Russian is quite a *complex* and *amazing* character, he is simultaneously *tolerant and open-hearted* and participates or at least sympathizes with the Russian *march* (a rather controversial nationalistic demonstration), he is a *rude ruffian*, but also *creative* and *free* (2). The freedom for a Russian person is not political one, it is freedom in their personal life and a certain degree of legal nihilism. Unlike the reactions to a Siberian, the reactions to a Russian do not create a vivid picture, as they are very diverse and contradictory.

For the following part of our research we conducted a directed associative experiment as a research method for describing sub-ethnic stereotypes of Russian students living and studying in Siberia about the Siberians and the Moscovites. We have gathered lexical units verbalizing the axiological components of the structure of the stereotypes selected.

The results were obtained by means of the text-centered method when the respondents, students of Siberian universities, were asked to complete a set of phrases about Siberians “All Siberians...”; “Siberians like/dislike...”; “As a true Siberian...” and the same set about Moscovites. The respondents were also asked to interpret the phrase “Siberians are Siberians” in order to emphasize the most typical, in their view, associations.

The text-centered method exploits some basic, core texts when associations provided are rather syntagmatic than paradigmatic, and the stimulus given are interpreted in a more detailed manner. The opposition to the auto-stereotype of a Siberian was chosen consciously as Siberia is commonly considered a remote area located far from the Russian capital, and the dwellers of regional cities, towns and villages oppose themselves to those of the capital emphasizing the sharp contrast. The research is quite topical in view of quite difficult relations between the center, concentrating finance and authority, and regions, which try to obtain more power to the extent of certain autonomy. Moreover, by comparing inner-group values and those of the outer-group, members of sub-ethnic communities apply their own values to the other culture, which helps to identify these values more precisely. The results of this research aid in completing the map of links between the language, sub-ethnic groups and the culture; widens the scope of the Russian mental space concept and shows more and more fragments of the linguistic world-image in their complicated interconnections.

We have collected 100 questionnaires and compared our results to the results reviewed by another Siberian researcher, Olga Felde, who published her findings in the Russian language [Felde, 2011]. The results show great agreement, which testifies to their validity.

Talking about all Siberians, the majority of respondents mentioned their **characteristics developed due to the climate** (60 associations): they are not afraid of frosts (36), wear warm clothes including fur caps, fur coats and warm felt boots, *valenki* (20), are happy to welcome summer (3) and cannot imagine New Year holidays without snow. The next group of associations includes **positive features of character** (46) with the emphasis on Siberians being kind, generous, strong in their spirit and having **high moral virtues** – altogether our respondents used 17 different positive characteristics, many of which were synonyms. The third group of associations can be classified as connected with **good health**: Siberians are weather-worn, strong and healthy people (14). Next comes the **sense of humour**, which helps Siberians to survive in such harsh conditions (5 associations): Siberians complain when it is not cold enough outside, drink vodka and have bear-friends, frighten foreigners with scary stories about Siberia and taiga. It is worth mentioning here that drinking vodka, as a traditional stereotype about Russians, was not considered by the respondents seriously as such a response was only one and obviously given in a humorous context, which was supported by the data about what the Siberians like and dislike. Some food and drinks were mentioned there, but they included mostly delicious food, ice-cream, especially in winter (which can be interpreted as a sense of humour as well), meat, *pelmeni* (a special type of meat dumplings), tea and honey. As Olga Felde confirms according to her data, drinking vodka is not typical of Siberians at all. Siberians are also proud of belonging to this sub-ethnic group, which was mentioned by 5 respondents. In their free time all Siberians visit *banya* (a special type of sauna), which is also supported by what they like to do. In general, we should point out that the beliefs revealed are based on some mythological and everyday awareness. The inner- and outer features add to a harmonic picture without any controversy. We also cannot but mention the 7 negative characteristics given by different respondents: Siberians are considered as angry because of the cold, aggressive, naïve, wishing to move to warmer places or Moscow and quite poor. Such responses can be explained by the fact that some students study at university in order to get a good education and be able to move to more prestigious regions, either the capital or abroad. They regard Siberia not as their motherland, but rather a starting point for further achievements. Thus, they would like to distance themselves from Siberians.

As for all Moscovites, the greatest number of associations among Siberian students dealt with their **character and moral values** (60 associations), which shows that they are not so much influenced by the climate. Moscovites being members of the outer-group, most associations are negative, described with 26 different words with negative connotation and only 2 positive responses (good people). Perceived by Siberians, they are arrogant, egoistic, posh, greedy, cannot help others, rude, nervous, etc. If the positive qualities of Siberians had several similar responses, the negative qualities of Moscovites were described emotionally and in various ways. The next group of associations, which was not mentioned about Siberians, was connected with **money and business** (16): they are rich, business-like, lead hectic life, always worry about time and being on time. They prefer luxurious cars, which is supported by the associations about what they like – Moscovites like to think about their image, which is very important for Moscow. That is why they strive to obtain prestigious things emphasizing their high status. As for Siberia, this parameter is not important at all with business and money never mentioned as features of Siberian

identity. However, Siberians like to joke about Moscovites and their cars by saying that a typical Moscovite should buy a *Moskvitch*, which is a play of words as the two words sound the same, but the latter is a non-prestigious car of quite a poor quality, which used to be produced in the USSR. There were also some **neutral associations** saying that Moscovites live in Moscow, have to spend their time in traffic jams, like to have rest in foreign countries, use Underground to get to work and saw the Red Square. However, next comes another group of quite **negative associations** saying that Moscovites do not know where Siberia is located, are not aware that there are some other big cities in Russia except Moscow, have scorn for regions, are complaining about the climate and are afraid of frosts (unlike Siberians, of course). One more peculiar notice was that there are almost no true Moscovites now as most of them come from other regions. And the paradox is that Moscovites do not like people who come from other regions. In Russian there is even a special word with a negative connotation for this, which was coined by Moscovites – *ponaekhali*. It is used about people from other regions who come to Moscow abundantly every day and try to earn their place in the sun. On the one hand, they are ready to do almost every job for little money and fill the workplaces. On the other hand, they apply for different grants, aid, benefits, etc., which the Moscovites consider unfair. In addition, being not local residents such “immigrants” do not care about the city or obeying the rules, which causes natural discontent on the part of the local dwellers.

Thus, we received only four groups of associations for Moscovites unlike eight groups for Siberians, and positive associations about Moscovites count only two. All the other associations are either neutral or, in the case with business and money, are considered rather negative by Siberians as thinking about these aspects is typical of the dwellers of the capital as opposed to the ideas of other people, who do substantial things without thinking how much it should cost or how much they can earn doing it. It also emphasizes the altruistic nature of those who live outside the capital.

As a true Siberian, a person first of all has a **specific character**: they are not afraid of frosts and bears (33), which reflects the stereotypes. In general, the bear is the animal mentioned most frequently and mostly in humorous context. They are also hard-working, hospitable, tough and enduring. **Due to the harsh climate** (16 associations) they wear warm clothes and love winter and snow. A true Siberian is quite **patriotic** (15 associations), loves the native city and Siberian in general. I believe people emphasize it because otherwise they just move to other regions and do not consider themselves true Siberians. It really requires certain love to the region, its nature and people to endure the harshness of the climate. However, these factors compensate each other. In their **free time** (10 associations), which Moscovites do not seem to have at all, true Siberians like to go fishing and hunting, visit *banya*, love winter sports (e.g., cross-country skiing), love travelling and have a rest outdoors. It is also connected with their love of **Siberian nature** in general and forests and the Altai Mountains in particular. A true Siberian is a **healthy person**, which is never mentioned about Moscovites, and **likes to joke** (8 associations) about bears, frosts and the taiga. This sense of humour is supported with self-ironic comments of the kind: “I’ll go to catch a bear”, “I have a pet bear”, “I live in the taiga”, “People will not understand a true Siberian person.” The only negative association here was about being tired of frost and winter.

About half of the respondents consider a Siberian dweller to be a hard-working person, a handyman, a breadwinner; it is a good worker, host, fisherman, hunter, and friend. All of the above helped the Siberians to form a particular wisdom which differs from that in other areas. Students also mentioned that such features are inherent and they will not change under any circumstances. Thus, it is possible to recognize a true Siberian even if they move to other places. We can interpret that by such wisdom students meant certain moral values and high responsibility for the results of the work, which is more common for rural areas and not widely spread in cities with their hectic life and everybody’s individualism. The fact seems to deserve special mentioning as our respondents live in big cities rather than rural areas and have been to other big cities outside Siberia; thus, they have some ground for comparing Siberians to dwellers of other big cities outside Siberia (including Moscow, of course).

A true Moscovite, according to the data obtained, also has **specific features of character** (31 associations), which are mostly negative or considered unaccepted for true Siberians, such as: they hate those who come to Moscow, are always in a hurry for something unnecessary, love power and are spoiled with thinking about accommodation (often quarrel with their relatives about it). Actually, the latter is a reference to a well-known novel by Mikhail Bulgakov, a Russian writer and playwright of XX century who used to live in Ukraine but in the 1920s moved to Moscow. (Thus, he could compare the habits of people living in different parts of the country including those living in and outside Moscow). He is best known for his novel *The Master and Margarita*, which has been called one of the masterpieces of the XX century but was published only 26 years after the author’s death. This is how Mikhail Bulgakov characterized Moscovites:

“Well, now,” the latter replied pensively, “they [Moscovites] are people like any other people... they love money, but that has always been so... Mankind loves money, whatever it’s made of – leather, paper, bronze, gold. Well, they’re light-minded... well, what of it... Mercy sometimes knocks at their hearts... ordinary people... In general, reminiscent of the former ones... Only the housing problem has corrupted them...” (The Master and Margarita, Chapter 12)

Moscovites also like posh parties and prefer Moscow to Saint Petersburg. Actually, Saint Petersburg used to be the Russian capital, but then it was moved to Moscow. Now it remains the so-called cultural capital, and people in Russia are generally divided into two big groups of those who love Moscow with its business, financial centers, power, hectic lifestyle, etc. and those who prefer Saint Petersburg for its cultural heritage, a special spirit and different nature of the city. A big group of associations (24) emphasizes that a true Moscovite **lives in a big city**

with all its advantages and disadvantages of traffic jams, trying to impress people, using the underground and easily finding the necessary direction in the most effective way, breaking the parking rules, etc. **Business and money** again play a big role here (16 associations): a true Moscovite is always busy trying to make money and get power, likes to spend or waste money, buys two cars, etc. They are often ill and are afraid of frosts. However, a true Moscovite is associated by our respondents with relatively more **positive characteristics** (10) as being patriotic, knowing the sites of the city, being well-educated, having an active position in life, adopting to difficult circumstances and dreaming about sun and positive emotions.

Obviously, the word “true” is subconsciously connected by the respondents with more positive rather than negative characteristics, including the people of outer groups. The respondents try to analyze what it means to be a true dweller of a certain place, and although generally the data agree with other parameters quite well, respondents tend to idealize a true representative of some group. Probably, emphasizing such features in social advertising or some other forms of influencing different sub-ethnic groups will help to overcome the barriers between them and get them to feel something common, such as patriotism and high moral values, which is present in both groups of responses.

As for likes and dislikes, Siberians like winter and snow (34), nature including forest, squirrels and (white) bears (17), delicious and substantial food (16 associations including ‘*pelmeni*’ and 2 humorous responses about eating ice-cream in winter), their native city or town, Siberia or Russia (15), summer and warm weather (13), Russian banya (8), outdoor activities including winter fishing, hunting and cross-country skiing (5), guests and friendly people (5). One response mentioned celebrating the end of winter. However, the situation is quite curious because according to the responses Siberians at the same time dislike winter (especially warm one), frost and when other people complain about the frost (27 responses). According to the survey, the Siberians like summer and sea but dislike hot weather.

We would also like to emphasize a very popular concept which is considered a Russian stereotype about what the Siberians like. It is the concept of *banya* (which differs from bath or sauna). Actually, it can be treated as both, a stereotype about Russia and about Siberia, however, different regions of Russia have different ‘banya’ traditions. As Orlova O. mentions in her report for the European Conference on Language Learning [Orlova, 2013],

“a good ‘banya’ is well heated and happens on Saturdays. From the time point of view there is a weekly ‘banya’, regular ‘banya’, Christmas ‘banya’. ‘Banya’ is differentiated by gender: there are ‘banyas’ for men and women. Socially ‘banyas’ are divided into ‘banyas’ for sailors, public ‘banyas’, special ‘banya’ for strollers, liberal (not overheated), own ‘banya’. ‘Banyas’ differ on the basis of locus: there are city ‘banyas’, but, as a rule, ‘banya’ is located in the country, in the village. From a geographical point of view Siberian / Moscow ‘banyas’ are distinguished. ‘Banya’ brings a good mood, fun. ‘Banya’ has a direct access to the Russian soul.”

It is especially good in winter, when steamed people go out and jump into snow. Such contrast of temperatures is considered good for health and helps the Siberians to be weather-resistant and have so-called Siberian health.

As for food and drinks, tea was mentioned much more often than vodka, probably because vodka is not what people like, unlike tea, but what some people drink. However, drinking vodka is a popular negative stereotype, and the Siberians do not like to hear stereotypes about themselves, especially negative ones. It is mainly a subject of jokes. Actually, it is even dangerous to drink much vodka in Siberia in winter as a drunk may easily freeze to death outside.

Among the things that Siberians dislike, students mentioned Moscovites (8), but it can be easily explained by the content of the questionnaire which asked them about Moscovites as well, and Siberians tend to oppose themselves to the latter. The respondents also mentioned such negative characteristics that they dislike – hardness and insincerity, which are sometimes ascribed to Moscovites.

CONCLUSIONS

Stereotypes seem to be very stable ideas rooted deep in people’s minds. The more a person knows the country and its customs, people and the culture, the deeper understanding that the reality differs much from the stereotypes. That is why stereotypes of outsiders and insiders may have a great distance. Of course, we should also take into account the positive trends in the auto-stereotypes of the insiders, which can be some exaggeration, but knowing them an outsider can get a much deeper insight into the target culture and everyday life, which can be especially useful in terms of the globalization.

Auto-stereotypes by Siberian students emphasize that the Siberians possess distinguishing character shaped by nature, high moral and psychological characteristics which help people to survive due to their good health, humor and collectivism, and love of their native land in spite of the difficulties they face. If we compare all the results given by students from different Siberian cities, we can see that the responses may slightly differ due to some local features which are important to the local residents and make part of their everyday life, but in general the differences are quite subtle. With such minor local differences, the sub-ethnic auto-stereotypes considered are based mainly on emotional and moral components with insiders possessing mostly positive qualities, which developed due to the harsh climate of Siberia. They are close to nature, like outdoor activities and good food including fish and meat and drink tea. The Siberians have their own wisdom and are a separate subgroup different from dwellers of other

regions, which is demonstrated by having a particular type of *'banya'* and *'pelmeni'* or considering a bear either as a real animal with its zoological characteristics or as a character of numerous stories and tales rather than as a stereotypical symbol. Some cognitive aspects connected with the history, or particular people, or traditions take the edge of the respondents' linguistic consciousness. The respondents demonstrated the knowledge of the traditional symbols but they often take them humorously and try to make foreigners laugh at silly stereotypes by showing them pictures of the nature, which is really beautiful, and explaining how to survive, which is not very difficult if you are an insider.

However, the survey has obviously demonstrated that there are two opposite images of people living in the capital on the one hand and in such a remote and vast area as Siberia on the other hand. The emotional coloring of responses is positive about the inner group and negative about the outer group, which creates certain tense relations in society. In terms of politicized uses of such collective identities, it creates separatism which has to be suppressed by authorities by giving the regions more power in solving their local issues. As for some investments into regions, a certain financial support given now to 14 regional universities including Novosibirsk State University for improving their international competitiveness also seems to be a promising step in promoting regional educational institutions and helping them to identify themselves as a decent part of global community. The results of our analysis could help to shape some local policies aimed at promoting the positive image of Siberia, hopefully attract foreign students and researchers to get unique experience of living, working and studying in Siberia and guide federal authorities in their attempts to smooth over differences between the capital and the regions.

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