



***Stereotypical Images of Ukrainians and Russians  
 in a Humanitarian Crisis: Multicultural Perspectives  
 Stereotypowy obraz Ukraińców i Rosjan w trakcie kryzysu  
 humanitarnego. Perspektywa międzykulturowa***

**ABSTRACT**

**RESEARCH OBJECTIVE:** This article aims to map the stereotypical image of Ukrainians and Russians from a cross-cultural perspective in the context of the ongoing armed conflict.

**RESEARCH PROBLEM AND METHODS:** The research problem concerns the cultural differences that are revealed in the perception of representatives of the two nationalities that are involved in the armed conflict. Since stereotypical judgements are most often revealed in language, an adjective check list was used for the study. A sample of 92 Polish and Slovenian students took part in the study. The collected linguistic material was used to analyse and compare cross-cultural stereotypical judgements about Ukrainian and Russian citizens.

**THE PROCESS OF ARGUMENTATION:** The argument begins with theoretical perspectives on the concept of stereotyping and the process of stereotyping. The role of language in the stereotyping process is analysed. An analysis of the results and conclusions is presented.

**RESEARCH RESULTS:** In general, Polish students attribute fewer positive adjectives than Slovenian students to both Ukrainians and Russians. The analysis revealed significant statistical differences as well as similarities between the researched groups of Polish and Slovenian students in terms of the stereotypical image of Ukrainians and Russians.

**CONCLUSIONS, INNOVATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS:** Empirical evidence shows that Polish and Slovenian students have more in common in their perception of Russians, while they perceive Ukrainians quite differently. The linguistic characteristics obtained in this study provide a general insight into the perceptions of the two nationalities involved in the war. It should also be noted that these characteristics of Ukrainians and Russians may constitute socially important knowledge on the negative stereotypes about these nationalities. This knowledge may be useful in challenging,

counteracting or disseminating such judgements, which may be harmful and lead to prejudice or discrimination against people from the nationalities studied.

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→ **KEYWORD: STEREOTYPES, UKRAINIANS, RUSSIANS, MULTICULTURAL PERSPECTIVE, ADJECTIVE CHECK LIST**

## **STRESZCZENIE**

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**CEL NAUKOWY:** Celem artykułu jest porównanie międzykulturowej perspektywy stereotypowego obrazu Ukraińców/Ukrainek oraz Rosjan/Rosjanek w kontekście trwającego konfliktu zbrojnego.

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**PROBLEM I METODY BADAWCZE:** Problem badawczy dotyczy kulturowych różnic, jakie ujawniają się w procesie spostrzegania przedstawicieli dwóch narodowości, które są zaangażowane w konflikt zbrojny. Ponieważ stereotypowe sądy najczęściej ujawniają się w języku, dlatego też do badań wykorzystano narzędzie, które opiera się na języku (lista przymiotników), a równocześnie jest zaadaptowane do badań międzykulturowych. W badaniu wzięło udział 92 studentów z Polski i Słowenii. Zebrany materiał językowy posłużył do analizy i porównania międzykulturowych, stereotypowych sądów dotyczących obywateli Ukrainy i Rosji.

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**PROCES WYWODU:** Wywód rozpoczęto od założeń teoretycznych dotyczących pojęcia stereotypu oraz procesu stereotypizacji. Przeanalizowano rolę języka w procesie stereotypizacji, a także przedstawiono analizę wyników i wnioski.

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**WYNIKI ANALIZY NAUKOWEJ:** Ogólny wynik wskazuje, że polscy studenci przypisują mniej przymiotników pozytywnych niż słoweńscy zarówno Ukraińcom, jak i Rosjanom. Analiza wykazała istotne różnice statystyczne oraz podobieństwa między badanymi grupami studentów polskich i słoweńskich w zakresie stereotypowego obrazu Ukraińców i Rosjan.

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**WNIOSKI, INNOWACJE, REKOMENDACJE:** Wyniki przeprowadzonych badań wskazują na występowanie podobieństwa u młodych Polaków i Słoweńców w postrzeganiu Rosjan, natomiast zupełnie inaczej spostrzegają oni Ukraińców. Charakterystyki językowe uzyskane w niniejszym badaniu pozwalają na ogólny wgląd w sposób spostrzegania dwóch narodowości zaangażowanych w wojnę. Należy też zauważyć, że uzyskane w badaniach charakterystyki Ukraińców i Rosjan stanowią ważną społecznie wiedzę o negatywnych stereotypach, jakie funkcjonują o tych narodowościach. Wiedza ta może być przydatna w podważaniu, przeciwdziałaniu, lub rozpowszechnianiu takich sądów, które mogą być szkodliwe i prowadzić z kolei do uprzedzeń lub dyskryminacji ludzi z badanych narodowości.

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→ **SŁOWA KLUCZOWE STEREOTYPY, UKRAIŃCY, ROSJANIE, PERSPEKTYWA MIĘDZYKULTUROWA, LISTA KONTROLNA PRZYMOTNIKÓW**

## Introduction

Stereotyping is an inherent part of social life. Although it is an unavoidable outcome of intergroup relations, the reproduction of stereotypical judgements can lead to a simplification of perceptions of social relations and even contribute to more dangerous phenomena related to intergroup relations such as prejudice and discrimination.

In order to better understand how people perceive and describe each other, it is worth looking at and analysing what terms they use in language to do so. On the one hand, language is a carrier of stereotypical beliefs, on the other hand, it can also be a transmitter of content and values.

The current socio-political situation resulting from the ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine provides an important and emotionally difficult background for considering relations between the two nations. Events of this nature exacerbate inter-group differences and sometimes become the cause of long-standing resentment between representatives of the parties to the conflict. Research into stereotypical judgements can identify the most frequently used negative terms, which are often reproduced. The aim of this study was to examine how stereotypical images of Ukrainians and Russians differ or are similar from across-cultural perspective. In analysing stereotypical images from a multi-cultural perspective, the authors may provide more insights into understanding conflict situations, into supporting migrants, and in taming foreignness.

## Theoretical framework for the concept of stereotype and the process of stereotyping

Lippman (1921/2023) first used the term “stereotype” to describe the images in our minds, referring to simplified schemes that categorize others based on similar characteristics. People use these patterns to evaluate and categorize each other. The term stereotype refers to the form of pressure mentioned above, i.e., the repeated replication of these prefabricated rigid “matrices”: judgments about different social groups. According to Lippman, the culture in which we live is the root of the “multiplication” of judgments (i.e., the process of stereotyping). Later research confirmed that the content of stereotypes is significantly related to the culture in which a person lives (Nelson, 2003).

The concept of a stereotype has been permanently embraced by the social sciences. Over the years, its definition has changed, as has the attitude of researchers to the process. Initially, a stereotype was considered a “lazy way of perceiving social groups” (Nelson, 2003, p. 25). Stereotyping indicated a person’s (or a group’s) lack of analytical thinking and irrational perception of the world. There was also a widespread view that a stereotype is an example of rigid thinking (Nelson, 2003) and could even testify to a “moral handicap” (Nelson, 2003, p. 25). The 1970s saw the development of the socio-cognitive approach in psychology, therefore new definitions of the stereotype and the process of stereotyping emerged. Hamilton and Troiler (1986) understood a stereotype

as a cognitive structure containing a certain type of knowledge, beliefs, and expectations that an observer holds about a group of people. In this theory, attention is paid to both the knowledge and the expectations of the perceiver, which is more characteristic of the concept of a cognitive schema. The definition of a stereotype as a set of beliefs relating to the attributes of a certain group of people (Ashmore & Del Boca, 1981) is considered the most accurate and is recognized by researchers of socio-cognitive orientation. Stereotypes are a type of knowledge about the social world and are formed by people's accumulation of observations of the world around them. Their perceptions are interpreted, encoded in memory and can be extracted to guide reactions (they become distorted). Whether a particular model of stereotype representation is effective is considered based on its ability to explain the process of searching, noticing and remembering information about members of different social groups. The socio-cognitive approach believes that learning and the ability to change stereotypes are primarily the result of an individual's acquisition of information through interactions with members of other social groups. The second approach, called cultural, assumes that society is the basis of the knowledge we have stored and that a stereotype is a set of information about social groups that is widespread among members of a particular culture. In other words, stereotypes exist in the minds of a given population. They are also part of the very "structure of society" (Macrae et al., 1999, p. 20). Cultural orientation, unlike the individual approach, argues that learning and transmission of stereotypes takes place through immediate and close family members and friends, or people with authority or public figures. So, unlike the individual model, the cultural perspective posits indirect transmission. A significant role in this approach is also played by mass media, e.g. the press, television, radio advertising, which facilitate the flow of stereotypical information through their widespread availability. At this point, it is worth emphasizing the important role played by language as a carrier of this information and, at the same time, as a communication tool of a given social group.

## The role of language in the process of stereotyping

There are various forms of stereotype transmission, which include verbal and non-verbal means of communication. When it comes to verbal communication, language is the most important means of conveying, defining and evaluating in the process stereotyping. Some scholars even claim that there are non-linguistic stereotypes (Mininni, 1982). In the classic work of Katz and Braly (Macrae et al., 1999), language was used to identify national, ethnic and racial content. Stereotypical beliefs were measured through the attribution of characteristics. Allport noted that "linguistic concepts can not only define content, but also serve as principles of organization and as a basis for evaluation" (Allport, 1954, as cited in Macrae et al., 1999, p. 161). Thus, language is a transmitter of content, and it performs different functions in an intergroup context. The most important functions of language include transmitting stereotypes, ordering meanings, maintaining stereotypes, and expressing stereotypical identity. The first function consists in

conveying culturally shared stereotypes through a language common to a culture. This occurs from one person to another and from generation to generation. There are different levels of analysis of a stereotypical message. At the most general level, there is a belief that the vocabulary of a language contains the description of attributes or specific features (e.g. physical and mental).

A study by Karolczuk (2021) focused on how perceptions of selected nationalities are reflected in language. The study was conducted in 2019 among 128 young adults from the Podlaskie Voivodeship aged 19-29, studying Russian philology. The goal was to identify and analyse the content and ideas that occur in the linguistic awareness of young Poles. The research covered such nationalities as Belarusians, Russians and Ukrainians. The names of the nationalities were a stimulus that was supposed to activate associations in the respondents. The method of the language association test used by the author

[...] provides many interesting opportunities for analysing the findings by looking at language not only as an instrument for transmitting thoughts, but also as a carrier of specific features, traditions and cultural values (Rodziewicz, 2019, p. 66).

The study collected a total of 643 free associations in Polish about the surveyed nationalities. The largest number of language associations, 231, concerned Russians, 193 referred to Belarusians, and 219 referred to Ukrainians. The surveyed students recorded their associations as words, phrases and sentences. Karolczuk (2021) presented the findings in the form of percentage data for selected thematic groups. This article will cite only selected characteristics describing positive and negative features. Other thematic groups are an interesting source of information and knowledge about the stereotypes of the studied nationalities, but they are not the main subject of this article.

The image of Russians consisted of the most positive associations (45.89% of the responses). The students mentioned the following words, expressions and sentences: hospitable, open, friendly people, they like socializing, they show optimism, joy; they are a strong nation, disciplined, firm and consistent in following rules, attached to and caring for tradition. There were also terms that described Russians as patriots, nice, hard-working, dutiful, tolerant people with acting and vocal talents (Karolczuk, 2021, p. 91). The second group of associations can be classified as negative features related to both behaviour and character traits. Negative characteristics amounted to 22.07% of the responses. The following associations were listed they do not shy away from alcohol, alcoholics, drunkards, people who like to drink a lot, heavy drinkers, insist on drinking alcohol together, aggressive, quarrelsome, uncouth, envious, unpleasant, intolerant, un-reformable, not entirely well-mannered, and unpredictable (Karolczuk, 2021, p. 91-92).

The image of Ukrainians, similarly to the two previous nationalities, consisted of both positive and negative associations that the surveyed students listed. The former accounted for 38.34% of the overall description of this nationality. Industriousness was mentioned most often, with other terms following: hard-working, they are not afraid of any work, they work and respect money, they are focused on good profit, but through hard work, hospitality,

openness, nice and friendly disposition and courage, bravery, Orange Revolution, defend their rights, and fight for themselves. The respondents also pointed to Ukrainians' interpersonal skills: cheerful, smiling, joyful, friendly, helpful, kind, friendly, a peaceful nation, good, sociable, positive towards other nations, open to people, care for women, funny, attached to their culture (Karolczuk, 2021, p. 94). Descriptions of negative features of Ukrainians accounted for 14.51% of the responses. The students mentioned such terms as unpleasant, scheming, possessive, mean nation, unfriendly, quarrelsome, loud, pushy, egotistical, thieves, do not take care of themselves, grandmother said that during the war they were terrible, dirty, unpleasant, money-hungry, stubborn, envious, can't work, sly, riotous, aggression, cheats, and possessive people (Karolczuk, 2021, p. 94).

## The social situation in Poland and Slovenia in the context of the Russian invasion of Ukraine

The cited research is important in the context of the study presented in this article. It should be noted that Karolczuk's (2021) study was conducted in 2019, three years before the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. Another important issue is the long and rather complicated history of relations between Poland and Ukraine as well as Poland and Russia, which is not the subject of consideration in this article, but is an important aspect of the formation of stereotypical judgments. Both countries border Poland, but it was Ukrainian men and women who started the exodus from their country in search of shelter when the Russian invasion started. CBOS research in 2022 shows that

[...] the vast majority of respondents (84%) support Poland's acceptance of Ukrainian refugees and this figure is a slight break in the downward trend we have been observing since April. Immediately after the start of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, this percentage reached a record high of 94%, then it was falling by several percentage points every month, to now increase by two percentage points (from 82% in June to 84% in July). Only every ninth respondent (11%) is against accepting Ukrainian refugees (CBOS, 2022, p. 7).

The surveys of Polish public opinion also included areas of social functioning in which Poles have personally encountered or heard about various difficulties related to the admission of Ukrainians.

Problems in using health care were personally encountered more often by respondents aged 25-34 (14%, i.e. twice as often as by all respondents), as well as by residents of the largest cities (13%). When it comes to problems with finding or keeping a job, the youngest respondents aged 18-24 stood out (17%, a percentage more than three times higher than among the general population), as did less educated people (9%), and pupils and students (15%). Problems with access to housing were more often experienced or heard about by the youngest respondents (10%), people with income per capita from PLN 3,000 and above (11% in the range from PLN 3,000 to PLN 3,999 and 13% among those with income per capita from PLN 4,000 upwards), i.e. those who could afford to rent or buy

a flat at all. Again, the youngest respondents (6%), some of whom have not yet completed school education, and residents of the largest cities (7%) encountered difficulties in the functioning of schools. To sum up, it can be said that all the above-mentioned difficulties were more likely to affect young people: a group that often turns out to be the least favourable towards refugees in subsequent surveys (CBOS, 2022, p. 10).

According to the reports of the Statistical Office of the European Union (EUROSTAT) and Eurobarometer (Eurobarometer, 2022a), Slovenia deviates from the EU-27 averages. Slovenians are not as concerned about the war in Ukraine (41% in EU-27; 25% in Slovenia) and often do not believe that the EU has responded cohesively and quickly to the war. Slovenians rank last in the European Union in terms of interest in what is happening in Ukraine. Only one in four reads the news several times a day about what is happening in connection with the Russian invasion as do more than half of Italians, Lithuanians, and Poles (Eurobarometer, 2022a). Moreover, Slovenians are not as supportive of the sanctions against Russia (EU 55%, Slovenia 30%), or the financial support for Ukraine (both trade and military). As the statistics of the survey conducted last year show, Slovenians tend to have a lower approval (opinion) of the war, the reactions and the consequences compared to other EU member states (Eurobarometer, 2022a).

Eurobarometer (2022b) also showed that Slovenians are more concerned about the rising prices and the energy supply in the EU than are average EU Member States (Slovenia 43%, EU 35%; Slovenia 43%, EU 28%), but less concerned about the international situation (Slovenia 24%, EU 28%). Only 26% of Slovenians fully agree that responsibility for the war lies with Russia (EU 52%), and even fewer agree that Ukraine is part of the EU family (Slovenia 24%, EU 31%) (Eurobarometer, 2022b).

Slovenians are also at the bottom of the list of countries in terms of how often they bring up the topic of Ukraine in conversations with friends or family members. Only one-third of Slovenians talk about Ukraine at least once a day, while Italians are most likely to talk about the Russian invasion (Eurobarometer, 2022a). This places Slovenes among the European nations least concerned about the situation in Ukraine. One in five Slovenians is not at all or only partially concerned, while 96 percent of Portuguese are seriously concerned about the situation. On average, 81 percent of Europeans are very or partly concerned about the situation (78 percent in Slovenia) (Eurobarometer, 2022a). Ninety-five percent of Slovenians support humanitarian aid for Ukrainians whose lives have been shattered by the war. Accepting refugees from Ukraine is also supported by 90 percent of Slovenes. Only one in two Slovenes supports arms deliveries to Ukraine, while sanctions against Russia are supported by 66 percent of Slovenians (80 percent of Europeans on average) (Eurobarometer, 2022a).

## Objective and research questions of the study

The purpose of this study is to examine the cross-cultural perspectives of the two nations affected by the war. This is because the perceptions of nations living in close proximity

to a war may differ from those that are not as directly and intensely affected. Therefore, Poland, which is a neighbor of Ukraine and still hosts 1.6 million of refugees, and Slovenia, which does not appear to be directly affected by the war, but tends to follow the day-to-day conflict situation from a distance as a member state of the European Union, were chosen. To guide this study, the following research questions (RQs) were posed:

- RQ1: How are people in direct war conflicts generally perceived by Polish and Slovenian students?
- RQ2: What differences can be identified between Ukrainians and Russians in international perceptions using the ACL instrument?
- RQ3: Do Polish and Slovenian students share common perceptions of conflict-affected nations, and if so, how can this be reflected?

## Methods

### Sample

The sample consists of 92 students from two countries, Poland ( $n = 61$ ) and Slovenia ( $n = 31$ ). Female students make up the majority of the sample (78.3%), while male students were in the minority (21.7%). On average, students were 22.95 years old. The Slovenian students were invited to take the survey digitally (<https://1ka.arnes.si/>), while Polish students completed the survey in the presence of a researcher, and using paper and pencil in classes. The participation rate of the Slovenian students was 48%, while 52% of the registered students did not complete the survey. This percentage is comparable to the average response rate for online surveys as reported by Wu et al. (2022). The participation rate of Polish students was almost 100% because the researcher was present. The distribution of students across years of study was fairly random, with all years of study from one through four almost evenly represented in the sample (22.5%, 26.4%, 24.3%, and 26.5%, respectively).

### Measures

The ACL was used for the study. The original ACL consists of 300 adjectives designed to best describe personality distributed across 35 scales (Gough & Heilbrun, 1983). The students were instructed how to complete the survey, and by checking the answer box, they chose the adjective that best matched their perception of a given nationality. All 35 scales were created and calculated using the guidelines established by Gough and Heilbrun (1983). Because the adjective checklist method is transferable to other cultures and languages, we still need to consider the following: (1) the selected adjectives require a translation that has essentially the same meaning as the original adjective in the host culture, and (2) the researchers need to ensure equivalence of meaning after translation (Craig, 2005).

## Procedure and data analysis

The survey was conducted in the winter semester of the 2022/2023 academic year. Students were informed about the study in lectures by the study leaders, and a questionnaire was sent as a link to their email addresses (Slovenia), while Polish students filled out the questionnaire on site. It took 10-15 minutes to complete the questionnaire. The students were provided with all the necessary information by the study leader, and a detailed introduction to the study and its purpose was also provided on the survey cover sheet before they gave consent to the collection of personal data, e.g., gender, age, year of study, and then proceeded with the survey.

Data were analysed using SPSS Statistics (v. 25), a software package commonly used for statistical analysis in the social sciences. Descriptive analysis of the data was performed to describe and summarise the characteristics of the sample, expressed by means and confidence intervals. Prior to the analysis, tests were conducted to verify the normality of data distribution using the Shapiro-Wilk test. The premise of normality distribution was violated. The two-way repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) is used to determine if there is a statistically significant interaction effect between two within-subjects factors on a continuous dependent variable. Eta squared ( $\eta^2$ ) was used as a measure of effect size with the following interpretation: size from 0.01 to 0.05 = a small effect, 0.06 to 0.14 = medium effect, and 0.14 and more = large effect (Cohen et al., 2003).

## Results

### General perceptions of Russians and Ukrainians

The 35 ACL scales and the total number of the adjectives that the students marked were subjected to analysis. First, the descriptive statistics revealed that on average 31.05 adjectives were ticked by the students in the description of Ukrainians, while 30.48 adjectives per student were ticked in the description of Russians. The number of adjectives ticked did not differ significantly ( $p = 0.62$ ) between the perceived objects. The second part of the descriptive analysis deals with checking 35 ACL scales, calculating the average score for both perceived objects, as shown in Figure 1.

A close look at Figure 1 indicates that the scales have both positive and negative ratings, with the unfavorable scale being the most prevalent, followed by the favorable scale, which was not assigned any excluded items. The next positive scale shown in Figure 1 is the critical parent scale, while the self-control, deference, humiliation, and caring scales tend to have negative scores.

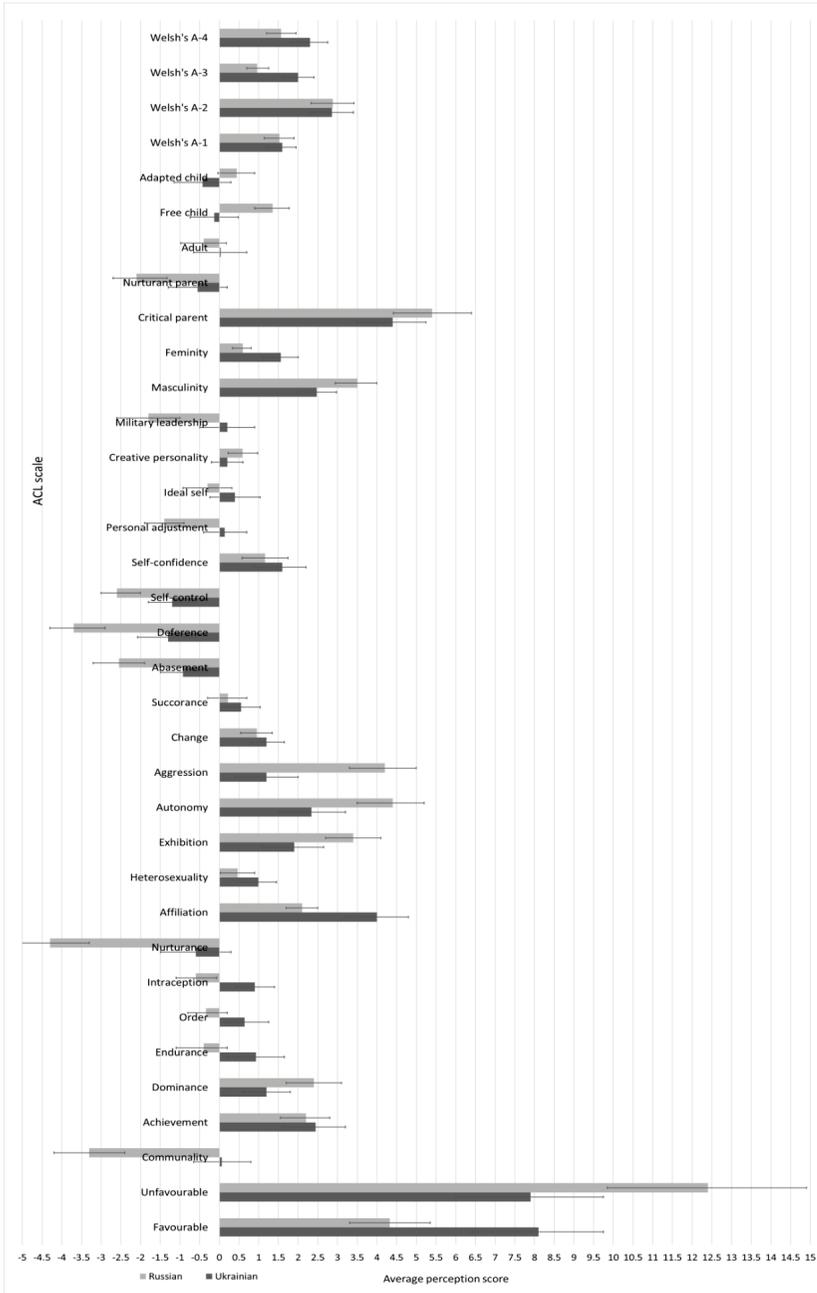


Figure 1. Average perception score on ACL scales with 95% confidence interval

## Differences in the perception of Ukrainians and Russians

The Shapiro-Wilk test was used to examine if the variables are normally distributed in the sample. The test rejected the hypothesis of normality ( $p < 0.05$ ). Because ANOVA is quite robust to violations of the assumption of normality, we used a two-way ANOVA, a statistical analysis tool that determines the effect of two variables on an outcome and tests how changing the variables affects the outcome. Violations of the assumption of homogeneity of variances can have a greater impact, especially when sample sizes are unequal between conditions (MacFarland, 2012). Thus, Levene's test for equality of error variances was applied to each of the 36 scales of the ACL. This test confirmed the assumption of homogeneity of variances for all scales ( $p > 0.05$ ). Because the sample sizes were unequal, the Scheffe test with post-hoc comparisons was used. The Bonferroni test was used to adjust for multiple comparisons.

The differences in Polish and Slovenian students' perceptions of Ukrainians and Russians were further analysed for effect size (Table 1). Table 1 lists only those scales where either the within-subjects and/or between subject effects were found and classified as large ( $\eta^2 \geq 0.14$ ) as defined by Cohen et al. (2003). Tests of within-subjects effects reveal how groups of students differ in their perceptions of Ukrainians and of Russians, while the test of between-subject effects examines if there are significant differences in perceptions between the two groups of students.

Before interpreting the results, it should be noted that both Ukrainians and Russians were described by a comparable number of adjectives, where Polish students on average provided a significantly larger number of adjectives than their did Slovenian counterparts. Unfavourable adjectives tended to be attributed to Russians, with the Polish students choosing significantly more negative adjectives than the Slovenian students. Moreover, it seems that the Slovenian students provided responses about both nations which are typical of the general population. The largest effect in the needs scales was found for nurturance, where Slovenian students perceived Russians significantly more often as people who are engaged in behaviours that provide material or emotional benefits to others. The students' perceptions of aggression of Ukrainians and Russians were similar. The Polish students rated Russians significantly higher on aggression than did the Slovenian students. Among the topical scales, interestingly, both Slovenians and Poles rated Ukrainians higher when it came to military leadership, where large differences in perception were indicated among the Polish students. In comparison with their Slovenian counterparts, the Polish students also rated both Ukrainians and Russians significantly higher on role-qualities such as ambition, assertiveness, and initiative associated with everyday notions of masculinity.

Table 1. The ACL scales with a large effect size of differences perceived by the students, where *F*-statistics, *p*-statistical significance, and  $\eta^2$ -effect size. The Polish students rated the scales with the dark grey cells higher, while the responses of the Slovenian students can be seen in the light grey cells

ACL	Scale	Within-subject effects			Between-subject effects		
		<i>F</i>	<i>p-value</i>	Partial $\eta^2$	<i>F</i>	<i>p-value</i>	Partial $\eta^2$
Modus operandi	Total number of adjectives	0.068	0.795	0.001	13.444	0.000	0.14
	Unfavourable	4.539	0.036	0.048	19.603	0.000	0.18
	Communality	15.781	0.000	0.149	21.951	0.000	0.20
Needs scales	Intracception	2.578	0.112	0.028	17.888	0.000	0.17
	Nurturance	8.946	0.004	0.090	27.557	0.000	0.24
	Exhibition	0.191	0.664	0.002	22.268	0.000	0.20
	Autonomy	1.129	0.291	0.012	16.332	0.000	0.16
	Aggression	3.055	0.084	0.033	22.290	0.000	0.20
	Abasement	0.810	0.371	0.009	18.178	0.000	0.17
	Deference	1.023	0.314	0.011	14.918	0.000	0.15
Topical scales	Military leadership	7.851	0.006	0.080	14.296	0.001	0.14
	Masculinity	1.710	0.194	0.019	18.591	0.000	0.17
Transactional analysis scale	Critical parent	0.569	0.453	0.006	16.153	0.000	0.16
	Nurturing parent	1.183	0.280	0.013	17.869	0.000	0.17
Origence-intellectence scale	Welsh's A-2	0.113	0.737	0.001	15.084	0.000	0.15

The attitudes of Ukrainians and Russians toward support, stability, and acceptance related to the concept of “caring parents” were rated similarly, while Slovenian students rated both nations more positively than did their Polish counterparts. The opposite was true for evaluation, strictness, and scepticism associated with the concept of “critical parents,” where Polish students rated both nations significantly higher than did the Slovenian students. The Polish students also rated affect and rationality significantly higher for Ukrainians and Russians than did their Slovenians counterparts, suggesting that the nations rated are more flexible, unconventional, and individualistic.

### Similarities in the perception of Ukrainians and Russians

To examine the international perspective on the perceptions of the two countries, we further analysed the data collected by the ACL. We selected ten adjectives that the Polish and Slovenian students most frequently chose to refer to Ukrainians and Russians. Figure 2 shows Polish students’ ACL ratings of the Ukrainian population, while Figure 3 shows which adjectives the Slovenian students most frequently checked to describe the Ukrainian population.

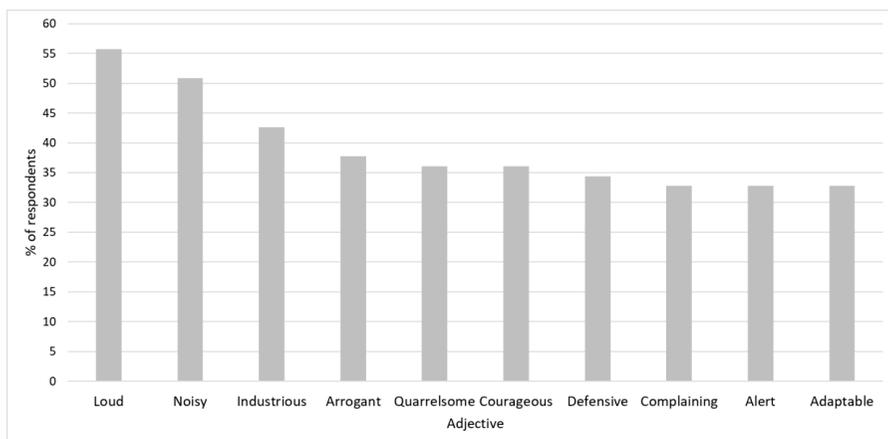


Figure 2. Polish students' perceptions of Ukrainian people

The Polish students perceive Ukrainians as loud and noisy, followed by industrious and arrogant, whereas the Slovenian students perceive Ukrainians quite differently. The two most frequently selected adjectives were courageous and determined, followed by pleasant and friendly. Only one common or overlapping adjective was found among the ten most frequently marked. It seems that the adjective courageous may belong to this common perception.

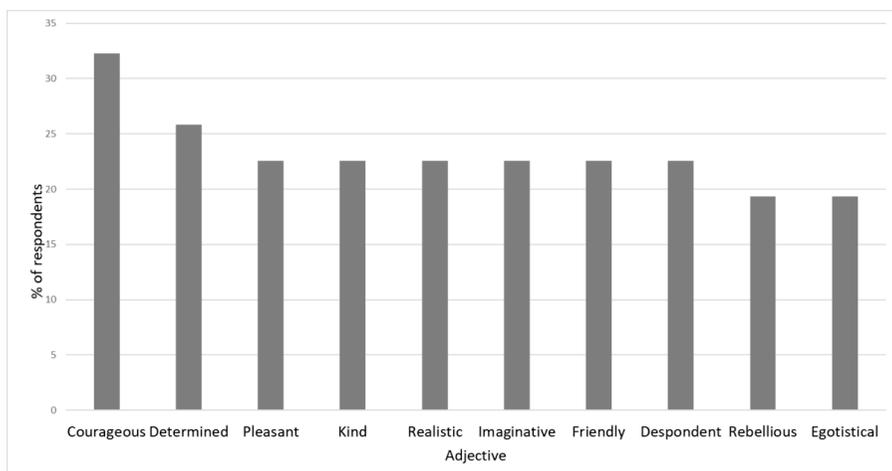


Figure 3. Slovenian students' perceptions of Ukrainian people

The same procedure was applied to the perception of Russian people. Figure 4 shows the perception of the Polish students, while Figure 5 shows the perception of the Slovenian students.

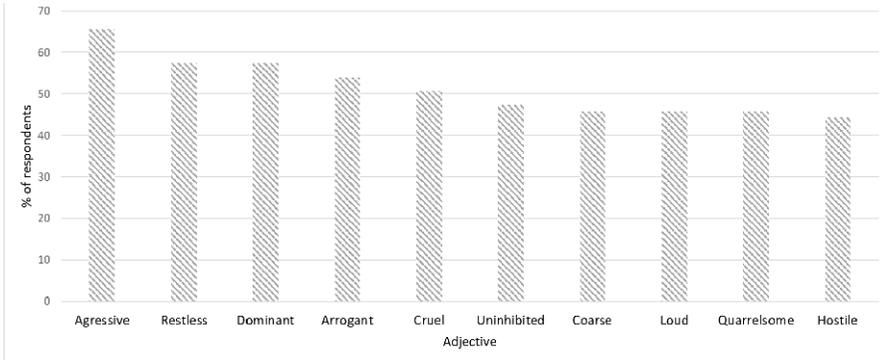


Figure 4. Polish students' perceptions of Russian people

The Polish students perceive Russians as aggressive, restless and dominant, followed by arrogant and cruel, while the Slovenian students most often ticked the adjective courageous, followed by loud and aggressive. We found greater overlap among the ten most frequently selected adjectives with the frequently marked adjectives aggressive, loud, and arrogant, all of which were rated as unfavourable. As shown in Figure 5, the Slovenian students also attributed several positive adjectives to Russians, such as courageous, thoughtful, daring, and strong.

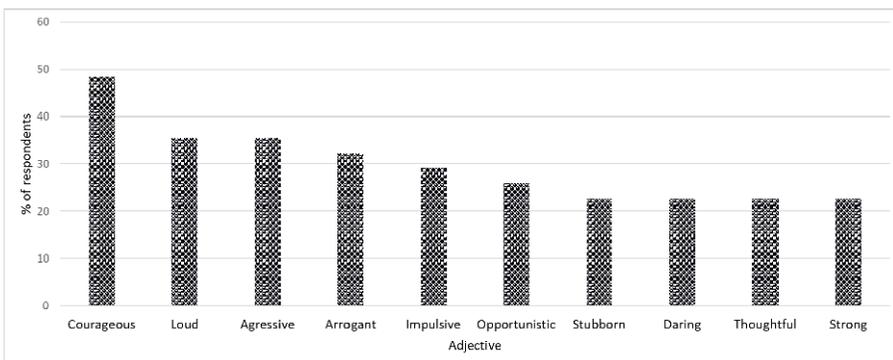


Figure 5. Slovenian students' perceptions of Russian people

## Discussion and conclusions

This study examined the stereotypical image of Ukrainians and Russians, the two nations involved in the ongoing war. We attempted to investigate how Polish and Slovenian students perceive nations at war, using the ACL as a mapping tool.

The first part of the study explained the meaning of stereotypes and their reproduction in language. The content and use of language can play a crucial role in our perception of others. In addition, this part also provides a current overview of the situation of people in Poland and Slovenia during the war in Ukraine. In addition, the study aimed to provide conceptual clarity on multicultural perceptions.

To answer the first research question, we can argue that people in war conflicts can be perceived differently, which is confirmed by the study of Eurobarometer (2022a, 2022b). There are several reasons for this, such as the proximity to the war zone, the number of refugees in the country, and the historical perspective of the nations involved. The Slovenian population and also the students do not seem to pay much attention to the war, while the Polish population and students may be more affected, which is also shown by the Eurostat reports and the ACL results.

In general, Ukrainians are attributed more favourable adjectives, such as need for belonging, persistence, open-mindedness, caring, helpfulness, humility, and respect. Russians are not perceived as positively, with need for dominance, emotional display, autonomy, and aggression often attributed to them. The transactional analysis scales revealed that attitudes of support, stability, and acceptance associated with the concept of the caring parent are more commonly assigned to Ukrainians, while the concepts of the free child and the adapted child are more often associated with Russians.

Empirical evidence was found for the importance of communality (*modus operandi*), caring, and aggression (needs scales) as scales where strong effects can be found between the nations reviewed.

Surprisingly, no differences were found in creativity, while rationality and analysis were ranked higher for Ukrainians than feelings and emotions.

Empirical evidence shows that Polish and Slovenian students have more in common in their perceptions of Russians, while Ukrainians are perceived quite differently, as only one overlap was found among the ten most frequently selected adjectives. Like in the Eurostat report (Eurobarometer, 2022a, 2022b), the Slovenian students attributed more positive adjectives to Russians than did their Polish counterparts.

The findings are an important aspect of knowledge about the linguistic representation of Ukrainians and Russians, which is currently functioning among young Poles and Slovenians. Since linguistic terms are the basis of judgement (Allport, 1954), the results can be an important indication on how to work with others to overcome stereotypical beliefs. Particular attention should be paid to negative linguistic expressions that, when often repeated and simplified, can contribute to the development of more complex and dangerous social phenomena such as prejudice and discrimination. Therefore, the results of this study can be considered useful for the work of various

educators, teachers, trainers, therapists and especially psychology students and researchers in this field.

## Limitations of the study

The use of the ACL for describing others is not an easy process, especially for students because they have to overcome their feelings of insecurity. The next limitation we noted was the quality of the sample in terms of both size and distribution, which suggests that the study should be extended to other disciplines and nations. Therefore, this may limit the generalizability of the results, and some of the results should be interpreted with caution. The third limitation may be reflected in online surveys, where response rates and number of adjectives checked are low.

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