

* Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin
** Drohobych Ivan Franko State Pedagogical University

MARIJA CZEPIŁ*

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2215-3994>
chepilmaria@gmail.com

ALLA REVT**

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8006-6186>
alla_revt@ukr.net

Lviv Region University Students' Ethnic Identity Formation

Kształtowanie tożsamości etnicznej studentów lwowskiego regionu uniwersyteckiego

STRESZCZENIE

W artykule rozważane jest pojęcie „tożsamości etnicznej”, opisano jego typy. Od tego, w jakim polietnicznym lub jednoetnicznym otoczeniu żyje osoba, zależy uświadomienie sobie przynależności etnicznej. Przeprowadzone badania psychologicznych cech tożsamości etnicznej studentów uniwersytetów we Lwowie ukazały, że charakteryzują się oni niskim i średnim poziomem etnonigilizmu, a także niskim i średnim poziomem izolacji etnicznej. Studenci o niższym poziomie etnonigilizmu mają wyższy poziom kontroli zewnętrznej niż osoby o poziomie niższym niż przeciętny. Osoby o niskim poziomie izolacji etnicznej mają wyższy poziom obojętności etnicznej i pragnienie statusu społecznego niż osoby o średnim poziomie izolacji etnicznej.

Słowa kluczowe: studenci; tożsamość etniczna; typy tożsamości etnicznej; czynniki rozwoju tożsamości etnicznej; środowisko etniczne i monoetniczne

SUMMARY

In the article the concept of “ethnic identity” is considered, its types are described. The perception of ethnic identity depends on the environment (polyethnic or monoethnic) which a person lives

in. The conducted research on psychological features of ethnic identity of students of universities of Lviv region showed that the subjects are characterized by low and lower average levels of ethnonigilism, as well as low and middle levels of ethnic isolation. Students with a lower level of ethnonigilism have a higher level of external control than those with a lower level than average. Persons with a low level of ethnic isolation have a higher level of ethnic indifference and a desire for social status when compared to those with an average level of ethnic isolation.

Keywords: university students; ethnic identity; types of ethnic identity; developmental factors; ethnic/monoethnic environment

INTRODUCTION

The formation of young people's worldview and social mindset takes place against the background of historical processes in society. Their influence on the consciousness and behavior of young people is extremely important. The current events in Ukraine such as political and socio-economic crisis or the military conflict, bring transformations in the system of values, apart from significant changes in the country's life. For the population of multinational Ukraine this influence is especially important.

In modern society, one of the most pressing problems of education is the formation of a new personality, the bearer of humanistic, tolerant ideas in the system of interethnic relations. The issue of formation of young people's ethnic identity is especially relevant today.

The significant role in solving this problem belongs to the education system as the most important institution of socialization of the individual. In this age period, which falls on the years of university education, a young person is under the influence of many environmental factors, reacting to them one way or another. This predetermines a critical reflection on the experience of the previous generations, forms new ideas about one's own future as well as the future of the society, country, and nation.

In modern works on psychology, ethnic identity is defined as an important structure of self-consciousness, which determines socially-meaningful forms of behavior and has an impact on relations between people, starting from interpersonal and finishing with inter-state.

In recent years, there has been an increase in the interest in the phenomenon of ethnic identity (V. Ageev, N. Lebedeva, V. Mukhina, L. Naumenko, G. Soldatova, V. Khotynets). In Ukraine, some aspects of the problem were studied in the structure of psychological and sociological works of M. Borishevskiy, O. Vasylenko, O. Gryba, V. Yevtukh, P. Ihnatenko, L. Orban-Lembryk, V. Pavlenko, M. Piren, S. Tahlin, M. Shulha but to date little is known about the psychology of the formation of modern ethnic self-consciousness of Ukrainians.

The analysis of ethnic identity was carried out both from the standpoint of psycho-analysis (Z. Freud, E. Erikson, J. Marsh, A. Waterman), the theory of social representations (S. Moskovichi), symbolic interactionism, and from the theory of social identity, the theory of self-categorization, behaviorism (M. Sherif, D. Campbell) and the activity approach (V. Ageev). Despite the fact that researchers believe that ethnic identity is one of the key positions in the system of ethno-psychological phenomena, there is no unity of views on the phenomenology and structure of ethnic identity. Therefore, the problem of formation of ethnic identity remains relevant and requires further research.

ETHNIC IDENTITY AND ITS TYPES

Modern scholars have tried to classify ethnic identity and distinguish several different types of it. According to the classifications proposed by American scholars J. McKay and F. Lewins, there are four main types of ethnic identity. To the first type, which the authors called "minimum ethnicity", it is customary to attribute those individuals with low ethnic awareness which have almost or already assimilated. The second type, called "moderate ethnicity", refers to those individuals who have a certain connection with members of their ethnic group, but their ethnic identity is not so stable as to call it "ethnic consciousness". The third type refers to people with strong ethnic consciousness, who, due to certain circumstances, did not have contacts with members of their group. This is the so-called marginal ethnicity. This type includes the so-called ethnic orphans, that is, those who do not have close ties with either their ethnic group or the "big" society.

And the fourth type, or the so-called maximum ethnicity, is a type of identity that unites people who are actively involved in the political, economic, social activities of their ethnic group and in safeguarding their interests.

An interesting and somewhat different typology is proposed by S. Lurie, a prominent ethno-sociologist: 1) identity relating to specific things with a certain symbolic value (food, clothing, works of art, etc.); 2) identity associated with the customs and cultural heritage of its ethnic community; 3) identity based on the language of the ethnic group; 4) identity that revolves around the closest people of their ethnic community; 5) identity, which is based on the support of the needs and goals of its ethnic community (Lurie 1998).

Furthermore, scientists also offer the following typology of ethnic identity. A positive ethnic identity or norm is typical for most people; it manifests itself as a balance of tolerance in relation to both: their own and other ethnic groups. This allows us to consider it as a condition for the independent and stable existence of an ethnic group on the one hand, and as a condition for peaceful intercultural cooperation in a multi-ethnic world, on the other. If there is a positive type of

ethnic identity, the positive image of an ethnic group is correlated with a positive value relation to the other ethnic groups (Kukushkyn, Stoliarenko 2000).

A high level of tolerance and readiness for interethnic contacts characterizes a positive ethnic identity according to the type of a “norm”. The positivity of attitude to oneself and other peoples, combined in the “norm”, does not imply the emotional uniqueness of these relations. In contrast to cosmopolitanism, the ideology of the “citizen of the world”, a person with a “norm” of ethnic identity possesses the natural predominance of his own ethno-cultural values. This can be considered as an initial stage of ethnocentrism, when striving for positive ethnic identity becomes a precondition for preserving the integrity and uniqueness of an ethnic community in the ethno-cultural diversity of the world.

Deviations from the “norm” based on the type of ethnic indifference, hypo-identity, are called “ethno-nihilism”. Ethno-nihilists become alienated in their own group, characterized by their reluctance to profess their own ethno-cultural values in their ethno-nihilistic tendencies. It is expressed in the sense of ethnic inferiority, sometimes negativism in relation to representatives of their ethnic group, infringement, difficulties in communication. With this type of ethno-identity, negation, which is one of the common protective mechanisms, can increase the level of aggressiveness (Korostelyna 2003).

Ethno-egoism. The transformation of ethnic self-consciousness based on the hyper-identity type consists in a hypertrophied, exaggerated desire for positive ethnic identity. Hyper-identity can be considered as a kind of ethnic “narcissism”. This involves a sharp transition from the natural advantage, according to some parameters, of one’s own ethnic group to an absolute belief in one’s own superiority over “strangers”. This typical identity is characterized by violence as a form of interaction and an aggressive style in conflict resolution. Hyper-identity is a characteristic of the “offensive” type of self-consciousness, which reflects the desire of representatives of a certain ethnic group to dominate. In interethnic interaction, hyper-identity manifests itself in the form of ethnic intolerance: from advocating a policy of limiting rights and opportunities, to the annoyance that arises as a reaction to the presence of members of other ethnic groups in the life of society. Ethno-egoism is defined as hyper-identity in its true manifestation and can also be expressed at the verbal level in a rather safe manner as a result of comprehending the “my people” construct. At the same time, ethnic egoism can assume, for example, the recognition of the right of their people to solve problems at the expense of other peoples (Korostelyna 2003).

Ethno-isolationism. This is a criterion that assesses a more profound transformation of ethnic identity, which corresponds to the formation of ethnic identity based on ethno-isolationism. This manifests itself in a clear belief in the dominance of one group of people over others, in the negative attitude to interethnic marriage ties, the recognition of the need to “cleanse” the national culture, xenophobia (hatred of everything else).

National fanaticism. The basis of this type of hyper-identity is a hypertrophied, clearly expressed desire for positive ethnic identity. In interethnic interaction, this manifests itself in various forms of ethnic intolerance: from the irritation caused by the presence of members of other ethnic groups to advocating a policy of limiting their rights and opportunities.

The radical form of hyper-identity is national fanaticism. This is readiness for any acts in the name of so-called ethnic interests, and even ethnic “cleansing”, denial of the right to use resources and social privileges of other peoples, recognition of the priority of ethnic rights of the whole people over the rights of an individual, justification of any sacrifices and means in the struggle for the well-being of their people (Bromlei 2008).

FACTORS OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF ETHNIC IDENTITY

Awareness of one's own ethnicity will depend on whether a person lives in a poly-ethnic or mono-ethnic environment. In a situation of interethnic communication, an individual has more opportunities to gain knowledge about the peculiarities of his and other ethnic groups, ethno-culture, which will promote the development of interethnic understanding and the formation of communicative skills. The lack of experience in interethnic communication leads to losing interest in such contacts as well as own ethnicity.

The main factors of the development of the ethnic identity of the person include:

- 1) peculiarities of the influence of family, school and the nearest social environment on the process of ethnic socialization;
- 2) specificity of the ethno-contact environment (ethnic homo/heterogeneity);
- 3) status relations between representatives of different ethnic groups (Kustova 2003).

The processes of formation of ethnic identity can proceed at an accelerated or slow pace depending on the social context. The kind of environment in which a person lives – multi-ethnic or mono-ethnic – will influence awareness of his own ethnic affiliation.

In the context of interethnic communication, an individual obtains more opportunities for gaining new knowledge about the peculiarities of his and other ethnic groups, which will promote formation of communication skills between representatives of different ethnic groups and the development of interethnic understanding. A child living in a mono-ethnic environment begins to realize his ethnic affiliation much earlier. Of great importance are the distinction and degree of manifestation of ethnic belonging among people living in heterogeneous environments. In particular, the fact that stronger ethnic identity is manifested in those individuals who live in a strange

environment that is significantly different from their “native” environment is experimentally confirmed (Lebedeva 1999).

To a large extent, formation of ethnic identity is influenced by human knowledge of its affiliation with a particular ethnic group – a majority group or a minority group. For children from ethnic minority groups, the process of formation of own ethnic identity usually begins earlier, as they are more aware of the dominant culture of the media and with the help of personal contacts. In contrast, in the majority culture, personal contacts and knowledge may be absent. Awareness of belonging to a certain ethnic minority group and knowledge of the differences between cultures does not indicate that people will necessarily prefer their ethnic group and will recognize their own belonging to the group (Korostelyna 2003).

During the process of transferring of norms and values of the socio-cultural environment (socialization) to the new generation, intra-group orientation is taking place among representatives of all ethnic minorities. That is, knowledge of interethnic differences develops with age, which contributes to a realistic decision of the person’s belonging to a particular group.

If a person lives in a multi-ethnic environment, the ethnic identity is more clearly understood, and knowledge about the differences between the groups is formed much earlier. But the accuracy of this knowledge, the effect of social attitudes will largely depend on the group it belongs to – that of the majority or minority. The meaning and role of signs in the perception of members of an ethnic group will vary, depending on the stage of consolidation of the ethnic group, on the peculiarities of the historical situation, as well as on the specificity of the ethnic environment. Ethno-differentiating features often reflect a certain objective reality, mostly elements of spiritual culture. But this reflection may be close to adequate, more or less distorted, or even erroneous (Hryva 2005).

Most ethnicities can be lost and perceived only as a certain symbol of unity. In other words, the ethnic community is, first of all, a community of views and attributes, rather than a cultural identity as such. It is true that attempts to define *ethnos* as a series of signs have consistently failed, since along with the unification of culture, the number of ethno-differentiating features is reduced. In other words, there is a purposeful formation of a positive ethnic identity. But even despite this, the high-status group of the majority, also defined as a “socially desirable group”, can remain a reference point (benchmark) but still “assigned” to another ethnic community. This is due to the fact that ethnic identification is not only awareness of the individual of his membership in the group, but also the acceptance of the individual by the group itself when the society “is making a decision” about which group its member belongs to (Pavlenko, Halkina 1999).

The overwhelming majority of individuals have a mono-ethnic identity that coincides with official ethnicity. Mono-ethnic identity is manifested in numerous levels of intensity. Under favorable political, socio-historical conditions, a positive

ethnic identity manifests itself, in particular, as a sense of pride, confidence, satisfaction, dignity, optimism, and patriotism. In addition, scientific research has proved the existence of a tight internal link between positive group (ethnic) identity and outgrowth (interethnic) tolerance. At the same time, in hyper-ethnic society, hyper-identity is accompanied by ethnocentric stereotypes, based attitudes and evading close interaction with representatives of other ethnic groups. Ethnic identity may change in cases when in a multi-ethnic society ("strange" group) is regarded as having a higher economic or social status than one's own. Changing ethnic identity leads to adoption of traditions, values, norms, language of another group and – providing the individual was accepted by it – to its complete assimilation (Orban-Lembryk 2008).

Strong identity with both interacting ethnic groups leads to the formation of a bi-ethnic identity. Those who have a bi-ethnic identity have the characteristics of both groups identifying themselves with both cultures. Multiple identity is the most convenient and beneficial for a person which allows to use the experience of one group to adapt to another, to absorb the wealth of another culture without compromising their own values. Such people are considered as intermediaries or bridges between different cultures.

ANALYSIS OF THE STUDY RESULTS

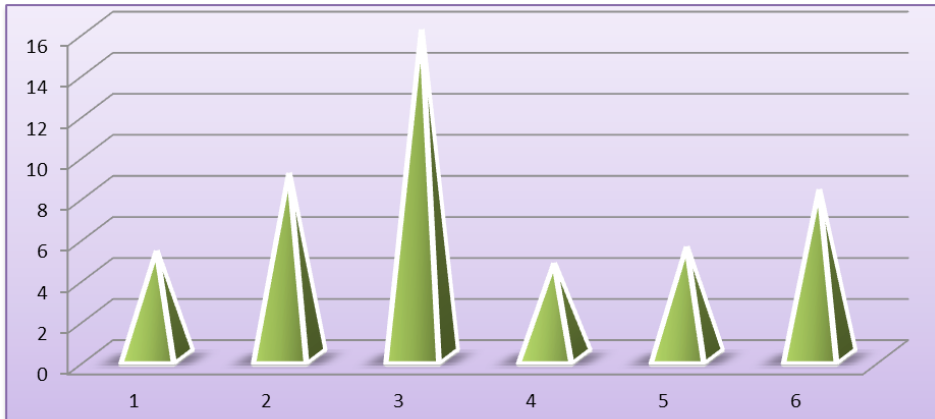
Awareness of one's bi-ethnic identity, the adoption of one's own affiliation with two ethnic communities positively affects the personal growth of those born in interethnic marriages. However, there is also a possibility of a weak, vaguely expressed ethnic identity, both with one's own and other ethnic group, which is called "marginal ethnic identity". In this case, we can observe human fluctuations between the two cultures, but as a result, it does not properly absorb the norms and values of either. Confused in identity, marginalized people often experience intrapersonal conflicts, and on the surface it can be expressed as aggressive nationalism – in favor of one or another ethnic group, depending on which one has a higher status in society (Hryva 2005).

The questionnaire was conducted among 400 students of universities of Lviv region. At the beginning of the study, we put forward the following assumptions:

- ethnic identity of students affects their tolerance in relation to representatives of other ethnic groups;
- the students with different levels of ethno-nihilism have a different level of external control;
- people with different levels of ethnic isolation will have a different level of ethnic identity as well as the desire to achieve a high social status;
- the formation of ethnic identity is conditioned by such factors as acceptance or rejection of oneself, sense of belonging, conformism, aspiration for emo-

tional comfort, knowledge (as dependence on the opinions of others), active communication in the native language.

Analysis of types of ethnic identity made it possible to determine such indicators for students (see: Figure 1).



1. - ethno-nihilism, 2. - ethnic indifference, 3. - ethnic identity (norm),
4. - ethno-egoism, 5. - ethnic isolation, 6. - ethno-fanaticism

Figure 1. Indicators of the types of students' ethnic identity

Source: Authors' own study.

From the figure it can be seen that a positive ethnic identity (norm) is the most representative type of identity. That is, the majority of interviewed students have a combination of positive attitude towards their own people with a positive attitude towards other peoples. A positive ethnic identity in a multiethnic society has the character of a norm and is inherent in the overwhelming majority of people. It creates an optimal balance of tolerance towards one's own and other ethnic groups, which, on the one hand, allows it to be viewed as a condition for the independence and stability of the existence of an ethnic group and, on the other hand, as an important condition for peaceful intercultural cooperation in a multiethnic world.

The second indicator among the types of identity proposed by the author of the methods for studying types of identity (Soldatova, Shaiherova 2008) is ethnic indifference. This indicates a blurred ethnic identity, such students have uncertainty about ethnicity and the irrelevance of the issue of ethnicity.

The third indicator is ethno-fanaticism – the willingness to go for any, even radical actions in the name of ethnic interests. Ethno-fanaticism can amount to the level of ethnic cleansing, the restriction or even the prohibition on the right to use resources for other peoples, the refusal to grant social privileges, the recognition of the priority of the ethnic rights of the whole group over the rights of an

individual, and the justification of any victims in the struggle for the well-being of their people. Such a high indicator can be explained by the existing reality in this country, i.e. military actions.

The next item is ethnic isolation – a belief in the superiority of own people over others, the recognition of the need to “cleanse” the national culture, negative attitude towards interethnic marriages, xenophobia.

Ethno-nihilism, as one of the forms of hypo-identity, is almost at the same level as ethno-isolation. Ethno-nihilism manifests itself as a departure from one's own ethnic group, search for stable socio-psychological niches not according to an ethnic criterion.

The least represented type of identity among the students is ethno-egoism. At the verbal level this type of identity can be manifested in a harmless manner as a result of the “my people” concept perception, or, conversely, through tension and irritation while communicating with representatives of other ethnic groups and claiming the right of one's people to solve problems at the expense of someone else.

We also wanted to find out if there was a need for ethnicity among the students. As a result of the survey, we identified three (low, medium, high) levels of expressiveness in the need for ethnicity (Figure 2).

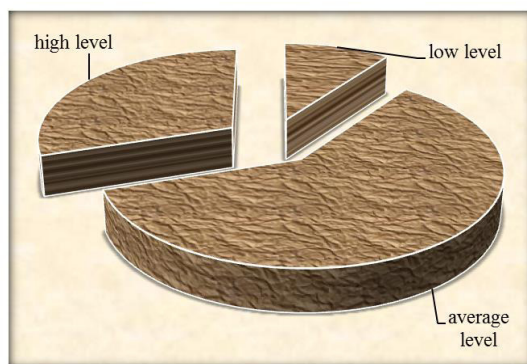


Figure 2. Indicators of levels of ethnicity

Source: Authors' own study.

As can be seen in Figure 2, 60% of respondents represent an average need for ethnicity, and 10% of students represent a low level of expression of this need. It should be noted that 30% show a high level of need for ethnicity.

Indicators of the significance of ethnic identity for students can be seen in Figure 3. Twenty percent of the students consider ethnic identity unimportant; 41% of respondents perceive ethnic identity as moderately important, and 39% of students consider ethnic identity as important.

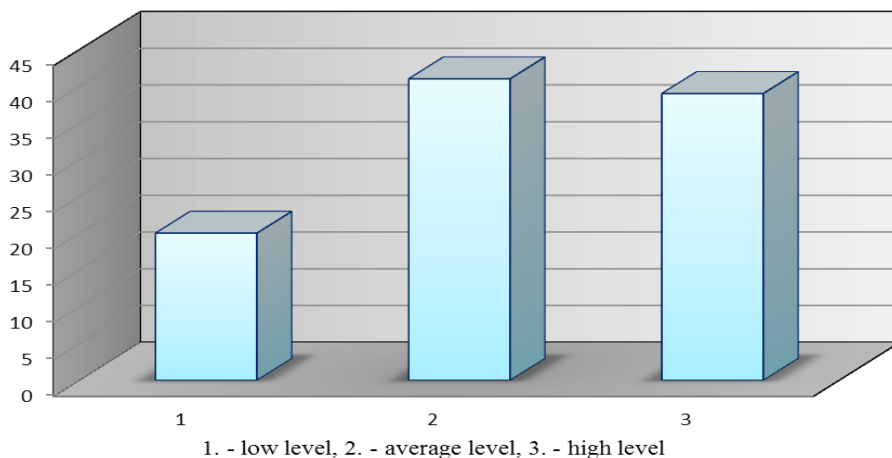


Figure 3. Indicators of levels of significance of ethnic identity

Source: Authors' own study.

For psychologists, ethnicity is interesting primarily as a psychological community that can successfully implement important functions for each individual: to help a person to orientate in the surrounding world by obtaining relatively well-ordered information; to establish common values of life, to protect the social and physical well-being.

In addition, to determine more or less typical variants of awareness of the person's own ethnic belonging, it is necessary to find out the specific factors of this identity and their significance for students.

During the research, we identified the factors that, according to the interviewed students, are most important in shaping ethnic identity. According to the students, there are certain elements of national culture: native land, language, historical past, national customs, rituals and traditions, features of the national character, knowledge about the community and similarity of its members, religion, mentality.

The elements of material culture were the least significant in the structure of respondents' self-consciousness, that is, those that slightly affect the preservation and strengthening of young people's national identity.

CONCLUSIONS

Ethnic identity is an extremely important structure of self-awareness, which acts as a form of social identity and consists in the acceptance of values, norms, models of behavior of one's ethnic group. In addition, ethnic identity is determined by the most socially meaningful forms of behavior and influences the relationship between people, ranging from interpersonal to intergovernmental.

The structure of ethnic identity includes three main components: cognitive (knowledge, the idea of the peculiarities of one's own group and comprehension of oneself as a member on the basis of ethno-differentiation features), affective (assessment of the qualities of one's own group, attitude towards membership in it, the significance of this membership), and behavioral (the real mechanism of awareness, but also of manifestation of oneself as a member of a certain *ethnos*, involvement in its social life).

For most people, a positive ethnic identity (norm) is typical, representing balanced tolerance towards own and other ethnic groups. This characterizes it, on the one hand, as the possibility of independent and stable existence of an ethnic group, on the other hand, as an important component of peaceful intercultural coexistence and interaction in a multiethnic world. Thus, a positive ethnic identity has the status of a "norm". It characterizes the correlation of the positive image of one's own ethnic group and the positive value relation towards other ethnic groups, high tolerance and readiness for interethnic contacts. Deviations from the "norm" may have the nature of ethnic indifference, hypo-identity (ethno-nihilism).

The study of psychological peculiarities of the ethnic identity of the students showed that the surveyed students are characterized by low and below-average levels of ethno-nihilism, as well as low and middle levels of ethno-isolation. Students with a low level of ethno-nihilism have a higher level of external control than those with a lower than the average level. Respondents with a low level of ethnic isolation have a higher level of ethnic indifference and a desire for social status than those with an average level of ethnic isolation.

In order to prevent destructive changes in the ethnic identity of students, it is recommended to introduce preventive measures and conduct educational work not only with teachers, but also with the students' immediate environment. It is advisable, in our opinion, to conduct a social-psychological training for students in order to establish a positive "I-concept" for them, an adequate self-assessment, and the establishment of normative ethnic identity.

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